

# the KODŌ beat

# 鼓童

## ***A Filetta's Sado Impressions***

*Kodo talked to Jean-Claude Acquaviva, leader of this year's EC main guests, the Corsican vocal group A Filetta. This is a distillation of that conversation.*



*A Filetta at work.*

*photo by Shizuka Minami*

Our impressions of Japan and Sado Island are one and the same because we came here straight from the airport and have yet to go anywhere else. And these impressions are very important because we have been invited here like brothers.

First, it is very hot! That aside, we hope that for the rest of our time in Japan we can stay in places that are as welcoming, where we can breathe, where there is no pollution, where it is green, natural and wild.

We are very impressed with Kodo, to see the precision with which they perform. Everything is very detailed, and extraordinarily disciplined, yet it is extremely artistic and musical. Working with them was

very compatible. It is no easy thing to combine serious and rigorous work with high musical and artistic quality if the music you try to collaborate with is too shaken and out of control. One can lose the emotion.

When we first thought of the collaboration it was difficult to imagine how it would be accomplished because we are a group far away from Kodo's rhythmic rigour. We come from an ancient vocal tradition in which there is no rhythm, so when we watched Kodo's CDs and DVDs we were concerned that we would make a mess of their music, disturb everything. After the first time we got together in Paris though, we saw that we were working with musicians who were able to understand our music. When we received the proposed play list from Kodo we were reassured because

we could see that a marriage of the two kinds of music was possible, and I think the results were beautiful.

Once, during the encore when we were singing a sacred song, many in the audience began dancing. That was the first time that had happened in 32 years! And the audience was clapping in rhythm from the very first phrase, even during the breaks in singing, It was wonderful! In France and Europe, they don't clap when we are not singing. They would lose the rhythm.

Kodo members are very enthusiastic and they listen to each other with great concentration. Not just musically but in every detail they take care of everything, and they do it with warmth from beginning



*The EC Finale.*

*photo by Taro Nishita*

to end. From the rehearsals right through to the ferry send off, everyone has their role which they carry off conscientiously and with warmth. In Corsica we try to do the same, welcoming the artists. We go to festivals all the time around the world, and there are occasions when you are not even introduced to the festival director, you just sing and leave! Here we enjoyed being welcomed and spending time together, and this is something we also aim for in our festival on Corsica.

We have collaborated with many genres of groups over the years, even rhythm-based groups like *Daniel Waro* in Reunion Island, who plays with 4 other percussionists. But there is a huge difference between the percussion on Reunion Island and Kodo. Because of

this experience I think it will make it much easier for us to work with other groups.

It is important for us to always keep in mind why our group was founded. The 20th century was very tough for Corsica because between the First and Second World Wars, a lot of strong people left the island. So many links with tradition disappeared in the period between the 50's and the 70's. Since the late 70's many groups were established who tried to breathe new life into the old traditions. So from the 70's to the 90's it was a period of trying to get back to the roots, to make them familiar to people again. Since the 90's – having recovered the traditions – we are trying to infuse new life into them and move forward using new arrangements and compositions.

Yesterday and the day before while we were waiting in the wings to go on stage and watching Kodo playing so powerfully, we were very excited and saying to each other 'Well, it will soon be our turn!' Someone remarked 'I feel like we are firemen!' 'Why?' 'Because now we are going to go on stage and put out the fire!'

I want very much to come back to Sado. It was an amazing experience. But next time I think I'll come in February. I like the wet and cold!



*photo by Shizuka Minami*

# Kodo in Corsica

by Yoko Fujimoto



*The Calvi Citadel.*

*photo by Masami Miyazaki*

Exactly a month after *A Filetta's* visit to Sado we found ourselves gazing at a glimmering half-moon through the Corsican evening sky. Just like that night at Earth Celebration...

On September 14 we arrived at the port of Bastia on the north-eastern side of the island. The next day we drove along the coast to Calvi, the main venue of the festival in the north-western side of the island. We were mesmerized by the clarity and blueness of the sea.

On the 16th in a square in Calvi Citadel, which juts out over the harbour, *A Filetta* and Kodo performed before a packed crowd to a standing ovation. It was a great relief to have collaborated successfully with them on Corsican soil. We are reminded again that the joy taiko brings to people's heart knows no borders.



*Concert in the Citadel square.*

*photo by Melanie Taylor*

Reunited with *A Filetta* on Corsica and surrounded by them, their staff and families, I felt as if I was losing myself in the atmosphere of the festival. Just as it should be.

Looking back – especially at Calvi – I felt free from hurry, rules and hassles. I didn't notice the staff rushing about, we felt at home and at ease as if in a bubble of tranquility created by the festival.

I had heard that *A Filetta* felt strongly that the festival should be a place of exchange among the artists. The dining room where the artists took their lunch and dinners together was symbolic of this. *A Filetta* would suddenly burst into powerful song, vibrating the room and our spirits. Guests would join in a round, everyone taken up in a swirl of musical conversation. New friendships were forged with our neighbours. Cheek by jowl and happily crowded, bottle after bottle of Corsican wine tumbled away.

E v e n  
separated by  
vast distances,  
the paths our  
two groups have  
trodden overlap  
in many ways.  
Living on islands  
for over 20  
years, through  
music we have  
both encouraged  
exchange among  
different cultures.  
And then we have  
taken what we



*Masami Miyazaki into the Corsican spirit.*

*photo by Takuro Susaki*

have learned and shared those discoveries with others.

And something I have learned from *A Filetta* on this visit is the naturally occurring atmosphere of serenity of their festival, and the sense of camaraderie engendered among the artists. This will be my souvenir for future Earth Celebrations. It is my fondest hope that we will gain a deeper understanding of each others' activities and encourage each other like siblings. With many thanks to our Corsican friends, I so look forward to our next meeting. À bientôt !

The Kodo family has expanded once more, on July 5th staff member *Mitsunaga Matsuura* and his wife *Miyoko* had a baby boy called *Mitsuyoshi*.

Kodo's principal flutist *Motofumi Yamaguchi* will hold a concert at *SuperDeluxe* in Roppongi on Oct. 29th, a collaboration of flute, piano, guitar and song and a workshop in Meguro Oct. 30th. See Kodo's web site for details.

On Dec. 18th Kodo's principal odaiko player *Yoshikazu Fujimoto* will celebrate his 60th birthday at an event at Tokyo's *Bunkyo Civic Hall*. Open only to *Friends of Kodo*, contact Kodo for more information.

# in brief . . .



## upcoming performances

### One Earth Tour Europe

#### October

- 12 Music Hall, Aberdeen, UK
- 15 The Sage, Gateshead, UK
- 16 Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, UK
- 17 Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, UK
- 19 Colston Hall, Bristol, UK
- 20 Wales Millenium Centre: Donald Cordon Thetre, Cardiff, UK
- 21 Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham, UK
- 23 Usher Hall, Edinburgh, UK
- 25,26 Philharmonie Munc, Munich, Germany
- 28 Kulter & Kongresszentrum Rosenheim, Rosenheim, Germany
- 30 Kultur & Kongresszentrum Liederhalle / Hegel Saal, Stuttgart, Germany

#### November

- 1 Meistersingerhalle Nurnberg, Nuremberg, Germany
- 3 Concertgebouw de Vereeniging Nijmegen, Nijmegen, Netherlands
- 6 Wiener Stadthalle D, Vienna, Austria
- 8 Berlin Philharmonie, Berlin, Germany

### December Concert Series

#### December

- 2 Niigata Amusement Sado
- 4,5 Niigata Niigata Kenmin Kaikan
- 7 Aichi Aichi-ken Geijutsu Gekijo
- 8,9 Osaka Sankei Hall Breeze  
(These are new dates and venue.)
- 11 Tochigi Ashikaga Shimin Kaikan
- 14 Miyagi Tokyo Electron Hall Miyagi
- 15 Kanagawa Kanagawa Kenmin Hall
- 17-19 Tokyo Bunkyo Civic Hall

### One Earth Tour North America

#### 2011 January

- 28 Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver, BC
- 30 Washington Center for the Performing Arts, Olympia, WA

#### February

- 1 Humboldt State University - Van Duzer Theater, Arcata, CA
- 3,4 UC Berkeley, Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley, CA
- 5 Marin Center, Memorial Auditorium, San Rafael, CA
- 7 Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, Scottsdale, AZ
- 10 Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, CA
- 11 Balboa Theatre, La Jolla, CA

- 13 University of Arizona, Centennial Hall, Tucson, AZ
- 16 Paramount Theatre, Austin, TX
- 17 Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House, Dallas, TX
- 21 Symphony Center, Chicago, IL
- 23 University Musical Society, Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, MI
- 25 Indiana University Auditorium, Bloomington, IN
- 27 Clowes Memorial Hall of Butler University, Indianapolis, IN

#### March

- 1,2 Byham Theater, Pittsburgh, PA
- 4 Place des Arts, Montreal, QC
- 7 National Arts Centre, Southam Hall, Ottawa, ON
- 9 Grand Theatre, Kingston, ON
- 11 Sony Centre for the Performing Arts, Toronto, ON
- 13 Symphony Hall, Boston, MA
- 17 Landmark Theater, Richmond, VA
- 19 The Community Theatre at Mayo Center for the Performing Arts, Morristown, NJ
- 20 Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY
- 22 The Stanley Theater, Utica, NY

### Tokyo Philharmonic x Kodo

2011 February 6 Hibiki no Mori Bunkyo Civic Hall, Tokyo

### Solo Projects

2010 Oct - Dec Shogo Yoshii in Cherkaoui/Jalet's *Babel*  
2011 Jan. 26-30 Yoshikazu Fujimoto guest instructor at *TaikOz January Taiko Intensive* in NSW, Australia

## Notice to Kodo Beat Readers

Kodo Beat is a newsletter focusing on the activities of Kodo and is sent quarterly to members of *Friends of Kodo*. *Friends of Kodo* is dedicated to bringing Kodo closer to our audience and fellow taiko enthusiasts. Membership is available to all. As well as receiving *Kodo Beat*, members also get special advance ticket reservations for selected concerts in Japan, the chance to buy original goods available only to them, and selected discounts on a range of Kodo goodies. For further information about these offers contact us or check our web site.

For those readers who only want the newsletter, an on-line version is available on the Internet.

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