

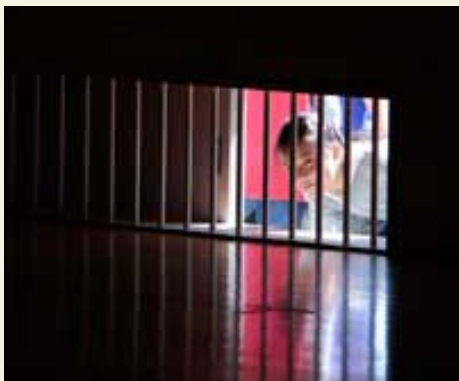
## Spring School Workshop Performance

### Tour: May 2010

Elementary Schools in  
Nagano City

The following is a report by Eri Uchida, who became a full-fledged Kodo performer this year, and took part in the [Kodo School Workshop-Performance Tour](#) for the first time in May.

“Just as all the shiny new green leaves of spring had appeared, we set off and started our tour, visiting only elementary schools this time. The children waited for us with eyes just as sparkly as the season. We would welcome them as they entered the school gym with a cheerful “Ohayo!” (Good morning) and although we were met with stiff faces, their eyes were honest and obviously curious about our presence.



A curious student, waiting for the doors to open and the Kodo performance in her school gymnasium to begin

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“Yatai-bayashi,” traditional arranged by Kodo (Saitama)

## The Elements of Kodo Performances

There are three principal elements in the make-up of a Kodo performance.

The first is pieces based upon traditional folk arts, learned from local people throughout Japan. Our intention is not simply to replicate, but, in rearranging them for the stage, attempt to capture their universal spirit and energy as they filter through our bodies.

Art rooted in the soil developed through an intimate relationship between the people and their art, and between art and nature. They are an irreplaceable treasure laden with hints for us denizens of a bewildering age. We would like as many people

as possible to be challenged by the infinite possibilities they present.

The second element of our performance is made up of compositions of friends and mentors of Kodo. These include composers Maki Ishii and Shinichiro Ikebe, Kabuki orchestra musicians Roetsu Tosha

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and Kiyoshi Semba, and jazz pianist Yosuke Yamashita.

The third element consists of original compositions by Kodo members themselves, who have used their exposure to the rhythms and sounds of the many people and places they have been lucky enough to visit as grist for their own creations.

Our performance begins with the blending of these three elements with our lives amid the sights and sounds of Sado Island. It is then forged into shape on the anvil of rehearsal.

Here are some stage photographs of just a few of our traditional arrangements. We will be taking a look at Kodo's study of these regional traditional performing arts in future issues of Kodo eNews.



*"Nishimonai," traditional arranged by Kodo (Akita)*



*"Miyake," traditional arranged by Kodo (Miyake Is.)*



*"Kenbai," traditional arranged by Kodo (Iwate)*



*"Shishi Odori," traditional arranged by Kodo (Iwate)*



## School Workshops

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Those serious expressions would last until the first beat of the drum. In the opening number, an enormous uchiwa-daiko (fan-shaped drum) takes centre stage and the kids were really excited to see it and would squeal with delight.

We performed a lot of upbeat pieces, but I got the most nervous when I had to talk to them as the MC. If I wasn't looking at them while I talked, I would lose the connection with them in a second. They taught me everyday what I said that wasn't necessary, and what was lacking in my words. I would find out what kind of message I had conveyed to my little "teachers" when their warm hands shook mine as we said goodbye after the show. Everyday I received energy from the kids I met, to use at the next school the following day."

Eri is currently in Paris taking part in the [Kaguyahime](#) performances at Opera Bastille. On the other side of the world, everyone in the Kodo Office is looking forward to hearing feedback from anyone who attends the performance.



Enthralled faces watching intricate rhythms on the chappa cymbals in "Jang-Gwara"



Making its debut on the School Workshop-Performance Tour this spring was a new piece by Kazuki Imagai called "Soha." Carrying the gigantic uchiwa-daiko is another new face on his first tour, Akira Takahashi.



Performance of "O-daiko" at an elementary school in Nagano. Sitting on the floor, they can feel the strong vibrations without the buffer of plush theatre seats



# Kitaushima

## “Kuruma-taue”

### (Spiral Rice Planting)

*Study by Observation*

Over the course of the two-year course, the [Kodo Apprentices](#) spend a great deal of time learning about the history, traditions and environment of Sado Island. Taiko is often played at festivals, which pray for good crops and celebrate the annual harvest, so their studies incorporate agricultural work to teach them the roots (excuse the pun) of the music firsthand. In June every year, they plant their own rice, which they harvest in the fall and eat in the months to come. (It is usually a 6-month supply.) In May, the apprentices went to the village of Kitaushima in Northern Sado to watch a very unique and traditional style of rice planting. Here is a report by 2nd year apprentice, Fumika Taniguchi (19), who is from Yokohama City.



“It was my first time to see this style of rice-planting. It is said to be one of the only 2 places left in Japan that still plants in this way. From the middle of the rice paddy, three female rice planters walk backwards in an outwards spiral, planting rice as they went. I was told that the three of them have to be in perfect synch, their speed and spacing identical, to be able to do kuruma-taue.

It is a tradition from 1000 years ago, that has been taught and carried out together, handed down from generation to generation, and it still remains alive as a part of their village.



I thought that was such a marvelous thing. In my hometown, there no such traditional events which are so well upheld, and I thought that young people wouldn't want to do such out-dated things, but after I came to Sado, I learnt just how wonderful the things are that are handed down from yesteryear, and I have come to see just how precious and sophisticated they really are. I really hope places like this will keep upholding their uniqueness and traditions forever and ever.”

The apprentices worked hard to complete their own rice planting in June, and will tend to the paddies over the summer months, watching over their crops until harvest in the fall. We will show you how the harvest goes later this year. They have raised the rice from seeds, and it still needs a lot of care, rain, and weeding to help it become a great crop.



In customs and practices related to manufacturing and livelihood, in Japan “Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Property” designation has been given to “Sado no Kuruma-taue” (Niigata Prefecture) and “Mibu no Hana-taue” (Hiroshima Prefecture), among others. These are ceremonies held in designated rice paddies to pray to the god of the fields, in which women dressed in attractive clothing plant rice seedlings according to protocol while the rice-planting song is sung. The ceremonies thus preserve the old rice-planting traditions of various parts of Japan. – Text Source: *Asia-Pacific Database on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)* by Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)

## ~ Yoko Fujimoto Voice Circle in the USA ~

Yoko Fujimoto is heading to the USA this month to perform and teach. We hope you'll join her in California for her Voice Circle workshop and two specials concerts with Derek Nakamoto and Maze Daiko.

### Yoko Fujimoto & Derek Nakamoto in Concert - *Our Story*



Travel brings new experiences that shape our perspectives and help create our own personal stories. Join us in a contemporary setting for a concert that offers songs from Yoko's repertoire with Kodo, as well as songs from her CD "morisa komorisa" that she and Derek crafted together. Come share in the stories of how individual experiences traveling the world influence the music we make.

#### Derek Nakamoto

Derek Nakamoto is a record producer and keyboardist who has worked with numerous major artists including Michael Bolton & Keiko Matsui. He is both the producer and one of the performers on Yoko Fujimoto's debut solo album, "[morisa komorisa](#)."

Saturday, July 17, 2010 ~ 3:00 PM ~ Japanese American National Museum ~ 369 East First Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012 ~ (213) 625-0414 ~ Free Admission all day (as part of Target Free Family Saturday) ~ [More Information](#)

### Maze Daiko Concert with special guest Yoko Fujimoto



The pioneering taiko ensemble Maze Daiko strikes new ground in this special concert blending African instruments with Japanese Taiko as well as other global influences. Mazeru is the Japanese word for "mix" and taiko (daiko) is the Japanese word for "drum". Maze Daiko creates an exhilarating mix of instrumentation and rhythms with the physical elegance and powerful sounds of taiko in their debut of several new compositions.

Also appearing will be Yoko Fujimoto, Kodo's principal vocalist since 1989. Members of Maze Daiko: Janet Koike, Cristine Sato, Elaine Fong, Kathryn Cabunoc, Tina Blaine, Carolyn West.

Friday, July 23, 2010, 8:00 PM & Saturday, July 24, 2010, 8:00 PM ~ Rhythmix Cultural Works ~ 2513 Blanding Avenue, Alameda, CA 94501 ~ Ticket info: (510) 865-5060 ~ [More Information](#)

### Voice Circle Workshop with Yoko Fujimoto



One of Yoko's self-proclaimed "life works," [Voice Circle workshops](#) help participants rediscover song and the power of their own voices.

"I really want you to experience what wonderful harmonies can be created simply by letting your voice ring out in its own unique way. Come and share time together where you can simply let your voice soar. Learn to really hear and love the sound of your voice and the voices around you." - Yoko Fujimoto

Thursday, July 29, 2010, 7:00 pm ~ Rhythmix Cultural Works ~ 2513 Blanding Avenue, Alameda, CA 94501 ~ Ticket info: (510) 865-5060 ~ [Sign up online](#)



## The Seasons of Sado Island: Summer

As Kodo Managing Director, Takao Aoki, observed in the last issue of eNews, the Japanese taiko is a remarkably pure instrument. When approached openly and directly, with the heart of a child, it can release a sense of primal energy that is similar to the awe one feels in the presence of strong natural forces, like wind, waves or thunder.

This powerful connection between people, taiko and the natural world is part of why Kodo has drawn creative inspiration from the natural beauty of Sado Island for thirty years. In every season, Sado expresses itself in a rich elemental language that has informed the island's artists, musicians and craftsmen for centuries.

### Regions

Located off the northern coast of Honshu in the Sea of Japan, Sado Island is the sixth largest island in Japan, and approx. 850 square kilometers in size. It has two mountain ranges, with a large fertile valley in the center, and about 280 kilometers

of coastline. The north part of the island (Osado) is rugged and mountainous; the central part (Kuninaka) is flat and home to the island's major agriculture; and the southern section (Kosado) is densely wooded and somewhat more tropical. Kodo Village is located in the Kosado region, near the tip of the Ogi Peninsula.

### Seasons

Autumn on Sado brings cool temperatures and landscapes of golden fields ripe with rice. Changing leaves turn the mountain sides into multi-colored tapestries that are reflected in the sea. Winter brings cold and snow and sometimes fierce storms from the north. In Spring, blossoms are everywhere, and freshly planted fields are a pale, electric green. Summer brings warm temperatures, clear waters, and a relaxed atmosphere.

It is during this gentle summer season that the people of Sado celebrate with many long-standing cultural



*Summer is the time for Noh theatre on Sado. Takigi Noh is performed outside by firelight, and both the cast and audience are mainly made up of locals.*

traditions. Sado Island has more Noh theatres, per capita, than any other area of Japan and throughout the countryside torch-lit performances begin as the sun sets. Puppet shows in the Bunya, Sekkyo and Noroma traditions are popular as well, and often held on open-air stages. Sado is also famous for its folk songs (Sado Okesa, etc), many of which were introduced to the island years ago by trading ships. These songs, along with unique dances, are performed throughout the summer. In August, the Obon Festival invites families to gather to honor the spirits of ancestors.

Other events include local festivals and firework displays, and the [Earth Celebration](#) music festival which attracts performers and visitors from around the world.

In summer, Sado's waters become crystal clear and its beaches are great for swimming. At night, one can see the lights of squid fishing boats out to sea.

Summer is just one of the constantly changing seasons of Sado, an island of many expressions. For more information on visiting Sado Island, please contact the [Sado Tourism Association](#).



*Sunset at Meotoiwa Rock, named "husband and wife" due to their side by side positioning.*





## Kodo Performances 2010

*Coming up this year*

### SPECIAL PERFORMANCES IN JAPAN

July: Kodo [Dadan](#) - Niigata, Chiba, Saitama, Kumamoto, Shizuoka, Aichi

### SPECIAL PERFORMANCES ABROAD

July: Kodo in [Kaguyahime](#) Opéra Bastille, Paris, France

September Kodo at Rencontres de Chants Polyphoniques de Calvi Festival, Corsica, France

### SOLO PROJECTS ABROAD

July 1 & 2: Yoshie Sunahata in Akram Khan's "[Gnosis](#)" - Amsterdam

July-December: Shogo Yoshii in "[Babel](#)" by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Damien Jalet and Antony Gormley - Europe

July: [Yoko Fujimoto Voice Circle](#) in the USA

### AIKAWA KOZAN MATSURI

July 25 (Sun) Aikawa, Sado Island, Japan

### EARTH CELEBRATION 2010

August 20 (Fri) – 22 (Sun): Ogi, Sado Island, Japan



Shiroyama Concerts with special guests Corsican polyphonic singing ensemble [A Filetta](#)

### ONE EARTH TOUR 2010

September: Japan - Kanto (Tokyo, Kanagawa, Gunma, Chiba)

October-November: Europe & Israel - United Kingdom, Netherlands, Austria, Germany

### SCHOOL WORKSHOP-PERFORMANCE TOUR

October-November: Niigata, Tokushima, Chiba, Yamanashi, Aichi, Kyoto, Kanagawa, Tokyo, Tochigi

### KODO DECEMBER CONCERTS IN JAPAN

A compilation of the best of 2010, this show will set the tone for Kodo as the group transitions into its 30th anniversary year.

December: Sado, Niigata, Nagoya, Osaka, Sendai, Yokohama, Tokyo

In 2011 Kodo will celebrate its milestone 30th anniversary. We are planning tours in North America and throughout Japan next year.



*Yoshie Sunahata finishes her work with Akram Khan on "Gnosis" at their performances in Amsterdam on July 1 & 2. Kodo sends a very special thanks to the Akram Khan Company for welcoming Yoshie into this project. She will bring so many wonderful experiences back to Sado to share with us all, Kodo members and apprentices alike.*



*Dadan, which essentially means "men drumming," is a new approach and bold exploration of pure physical percussion that promises to remain enthralling to the very last beat. On tour in Japan this month only. It is a must-see live, but if Japan is too far away, [check it out on DVD](#).*

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Stable, versatile and unique to Sado Island, the tarai-bune (tub boat) is still used to gather sea vegetables from the rocky coastal waters. In this photo from the Ogi Folk Museum, a fisherman carries her boat back to shore.

For more about these unique vessels, read "The Tub Boats of Sado Island; A Japanese Craftsman's Methods," by [Douglas Brooks](#). (Published by the Kodo Cultural Foundation.) Available by emailing the [Kodo Online Store](#).



**Visit our official pages on:**



*Freshly harvested sea vegetables drying in the sun. Ogi Peninsula.*

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Photography in this issue: Donna Ebata, Maiko Miyagawa, Takashi Okamoto, Tommy Stamatelos, Karen Steains, Tam Stewart, Buntaro Tanaka (bt\_arts), Laurent Ziegler and Kodo's Michiko Chida, Yasuhiko Ishihara, Taro Nishita, Melanie Taylor. EC artwork: Hideaki Masago. Special thanks to the Ogi Folk Museum and Sado Tourism Association.

Editorial, design and production: Melanie Taylor and Tam Stewart

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