

Raising the Curtain for Earth Celebration Together



By Yuichiro Funabashi (Kodo),
Shiroyama Concert Artistic Director

I remember going to see a show in a theater right after the Tohoku Pacific Earthquake. The artistic director broke the silence with a simple announcement, "We have performers and a place to perform, so if there is an audience, the curtain will rise." And the curtain did go up. I still remember those words and how they reverberated within me.

I believe this encounter with the Ranaei Family will awaken something that lies deep within us as Japanese people, conjuring distant memories from the Silk Road era. Together with KO no kai and Kodo, [our three ensembles](#) will forge a new road ahead as one.

continued on next page



Join Kodo on Sado Island this summer!

For the First Time Ever, Live Worldwide Streaming of EC!

This year, [Earth Celebration](#) steps into the 21st century as we roll out our first-ever live streaming program of festival events. Tune in August 19 through 21 to catch highlights of the Shiroyama Concerts, as well as selected workshops and live footage of other events.

For details, please follow our newly implemented [English twitter feed @Sado_EC](#) or look for [Earth Celebration on Facebook](#). Please help us spread the word so as many people as possible can experience EC around the world!



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Raising the Curtain

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These days we are reminded of the sheer force of Mother Nature, and I believe that people first made music and performing arts because they were given life in her realm. Sado is a place where even now nature and human beings coexist in harmony and where people can feel culture and performing arts in the very air they breathe.



Earth Celebration welcomes its audience from Sado Island, Niigata Prefecture, and from all over Japan and around the world. The celebration will take place at the Shiroyama Concerts, Harbour Market, the Fringe stage, workshops, and in places we have not even imagined yet, all connected by this festival and the many incredible people who gather here.

We have performers, a place to perform, and an audience. And so, the curtain will rise for Earth Celebration!



A blue noren (doorway curtain) outside Kisaki Shrine to welcome everyone to EC



Kodo Parade in the streets of Ogi during EC



Enjoy Niigata This Summer!

We hope you'll visit us for Earth Celebration, and take the time to explore Sado Island and Niigata Prefecture.

The Niigata Prefecture Tourism Guide offers detailed information on how to enjoy your visit to Niigata in all of the four seasons. Visit <http://www.enjoyniigata.com/english/> for access, accommodations, detailed event listings, and more!

You can download a Niigata Guide Book for free by visiting their website or clicking this link http://enjoyniigata.com/pamphlet/en_guide.pdf

The site also has links for pages in Korean, Chinese, Russian and Japanese.



Earth Celebration

August 19 (Fri)~21 (Sun), 2011

Ogi, Sado Island, Japan

JOIN US!

Shiroyama Concerts

August 19 (Fri) Ranaei Family & Kodo

August 20 (Sat) "Shukusai" - Kodo, Ranaei Family, KO no kai

August 21 (Sun) Kodo • Artistic Director: Yuichiro Funabashi (Kodo)

This Year's Special Guests: Ranaei Family (Iran), KO no kai (Japan)



Workshops: Hands-on Participation

O-daiko Workshop, Miyake Taiko, Utanya Don Don! (For Students), Hachijo Daiko, Ogi Okesa – Dance & Music (Sado), Kasuga Ondeko (Sado), Japanese Dance Experience with KO no kai, Kazuki Imagai's "Chappa Daisuki" (I Love Chappa), Shinobue with Yasukazu Kano (For Beginners), Ranjo-san's Japanese Flute Making Workshop, Ogi Bamboo Basket Making

Other Events (Pre-Events, Free Events, EC-Related Events)

EC Theatre, Sado Performing Arts Around Town, Fringe Events (Free Performances), Harbour Market (Food, drinks, crafts, etc at Ogi Port Park), Ogi Peninsula Bus Tours, Pre-Events Taiko Experience, Sado Takigi Noh Theatre, and more!

Tickets on sale now!

For further details, please visit the official Earth Celebration [website](#).

Kodo Close-up: Yuichiro Funabashi

By *Johnny Wales*

Yuichiro Funabashi was born on May 9th, 1974 in Kawasaki. He has one sister six years his senior. His family moved to Ninomiya in Kanagawa, west of Yokohama to a new housing development when he was three or four. His father is a businessman who was posted away from home, so he was a bit of a distant figure who appeared from time to time. Mum worked at various jobs too, so Yuichiro was a latch key kid, though at times he went to day-care after school. His mum sometimes worked there so he had to call her 'Sensei', which felt very odd.

He enjoyed primary and middle school, not working very hard at his studies, and after school and on weekends he played baseball, soccer or went swimming in the nearby ocean. In primary school he was the baseball captain, playing short stop. He would go with his friends to Yokohama to watch the pros. In middle school he kept busy by joining the volleyball club. He had been told by the older members that that the club was easy-going and they could wear their hair any style, and have Sundays off too! The minute they joined though,

He went to see Kodo and Ondekoza at concerts in the area and was astounded. That there is a world like this!

their heads were shaved and they discovered that the coach was a brute. Not only were they regularly beaten, but their Sundays were booked solid with matches too. After three years of that Yuichiro went to a large high school with over 1,200 students. He never found his place there. Though



Yuichiro Funabashi

he was gregarious as a youngster, he found himself gripped with a shyness from which he still suffers. He didn't join any teams or clubs and the three years of high school drifted by in a sort of bad dream. He had few friends and the only thing that he enjoyed at all were social studies and gym class. His parents suggested that he take up the Tea Ceremony, and so for three years he found himself surrounded by older housewives in this rather unusual and rarefied pastime.

After a gap year between high school and university, because he had done the odd part-time job helping out at archeological digs, he applied and was accepted into the Kyoto University of Art and Design in a course called in 'Conservation of Cultural Property'. This was a much better fit for him, being a new school with a small student body, it was easy to make friends. It was in Kyoto in a student district where he rented an apartment. This is where he really became involved with wadaiko. The

taiko were part of his performing arts class and about ten of the students (mostly women) became so keen they formed a club called *Wadaiko Shin*. It being an art university there was no shortage of people willing to design and make their costumes. For the next four years they practised two or three times a week and began to perform quite often too. During his second year he heard that there were actually taiko professionals making a living at it, and so he went to see Kodo and Ondekoza at concerts in the area. He was astounded. That there is a world like this! They looked so cool. That was a

huge year in his life because it was also when he met his future wife Wakako, who was in the same course and taiko group. She was from Niigata and had played fue at festivals as a child so she played flute in their group. It was love at first sight, for Yuichiro anyway, and they spent the remaining time at university together.

He decided he wanted to turn pro and was attracted to Kodo's two year Apprenticeship Programme because he could study lots of different things as well as taiko and didn't have to suddenly turn professional. His parents firmly believed that he should pursue whatever career he really enjoyed, so they supported his decision. They didn't know about Kodo so his dad's only concern was that it wasn't some religious group.

He travelled to Sado in January. It was a blizzard so he couldn't see anything of the island on the road from Ryotsu to the centre on the island's southern

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Yuichiro*continued from page 4*

coast. A trip that normally takes one hour took nearly three. They drove on and on in the whiteout in a muffled silence. It seemed he was heading to the end of the world. The thirty or so hopefuls assembled in the unheated, old wooden gym, and all he remembers about those moments was the cold. Oh, and thunder and lightning too, something he had never heard during a snow storm before. They exercised, played a bit of taiko and sang, had dinner then went to bed in the unheated classrooms. They awoke before dawn for what was supposed to be a run but became more of a trudge through the mountains of snow. They were interviewed in groups of about five and asked why they wanted to join Kodo. Yuichiro told them that he wanted to perform taiko on stage and also – as a boy from the suburbs – also was interested in trying his hand at farming.

Back home, when he got a letter telling him that he had been accepted, his joy was tinged with sadness at the realization that this meant living apart from Wakako for at least two years. She supported his decision though.

On April 1st he arrived back on Sado with eleven other apprentices. They stayed out late at a local festival that night and even though it was April he nearly froze. He wasn't completely unprepared for the rigors of apprentice life because his long and steep treks back and forth to school over the years had prepared him for the

daily ten kilometre run. Communal lifestyle did take some getting used to. They studied taiko, song, dance, fue, Kyogen, Noh, Tea Ceremony, farming, and had lectures on history and culture. Yuichiro claims to be a slow learner and has to struggle to keep up so he worked hard, certainly harder than he ever had at school. There is a part of him that doesn't

They drove on and on in the whiteout in a muffled silence. It seemed he was heading to the end of the world.

like losing and there was a definite air of competition among the other apprentices. He stuck with it, but five people dropped out during the first year.

The main difference in 2nd year was that there were now people junior to him. He was no longer at the bottom of the pile. It was a little easier and more fun. His girlfriend Wakako – who is now a freelance writer –

wrote nearly every day. Mail call was the highlight of his day. He smiles sheepishly when he admits that he didn't write back nearly as much.

For his graduation piece he did taiko of course, and Kyogen which they were doing a lot of then. Three of the seven apprentices were accepted, the other two being Kaoru Watanabe and Masami Miyazaki. As a probationary member he would finally no longer have to pay board and tuition and would even get a small monthly stipend. It felt great. He set off immediately on the school tour playing *Miyake*, *Yatai-bayashi* and *Chonlima*. He felt the school tours were a very good introduction to the stage as the pressure wasn't as great as on the One Earth Tour, and they were all kept so busy there was no time to fret. In the Fall he joined the main stage for half the tour. but discovered he wasn't ready yet for the big leap. He felt inadequate in his performance and became quite blue. He was dropped from most of the pieces, only appearing in very minor

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Yuichiro guides the Kodo taiko cart house-to-house during the Ogi Minato Matsuri, where locals wait for the lively drumming

Yuichiro*continued from page 5*

roles – playing with a single skinny drum stick – and then on at the end for the encore.

That winter he was excluded from the tour and travelled instead with Kodo's female branch group, [Hanayui](#). The 3 women were happy with his work, and in February he was accepted as a full member into Kodo. He claims to still not understand why. He was told that it hadn't been a unanimous decision, partly at least because of his shyness and hesitation to join into things.

In his third year he went on the One Earth Tour for the entire year. That was a huge step for him. That continued for seven straight years and helped him greatly with his self-confidence.

After a few years in the group he was out drinking one night with Kodo's sound engineer Takuro Susaki, who told him that his taiko would improve if he got married. So he did, and after ten years together they tied the knot. As Yuichiro is normally away from the island nine months out of the year, Wakako is still based in Kyoto working as a freelance writer, and so they get together during holidays and periodically she comes to Sado when he is in residence here.

Yuichiro feels he still has a great deal of improvement to make in his taiko. Beginning with the time he got married though – as if Takuro's words were a prophesy – he began to feel that times on stage were increasing when he was not just concentrating on how he was beating the drum, but that his world was expanding to where he could see the sights around him, and the other players. This has made playing more fun. He is also beginning to produce the kind of sound on the taiko that he wants, and can now enjoy listening to his own sound. He also enjoys being able to meet lots

of people, touring both in Japan and abroad, and feels lucky to be able to visit so many places. That he can play the taiko and make so many people happy, what could be better? He says Kodo is a great fit.

own world on the stage. As the shows are outside in the green expanse of Shiroshima Park he wants to take full advantage of that environment to create a freer, more liberating atmosphere. The Ranaei Family from Iran will be playing traditional Persian



In the grand market of Istanbul on tour in the summer of '09

He has come a long way on his taiko journey. One reason he is not on the current tour is because he is spending so much time teaching at the Apprentice Centre. The *tabi* (split-toed shoe) is on the other foot. As most teachers soon learn, there is nothing like instructing as a valuable learning experience. He also feels he really understands his charges because he has been in the very same position as they are now.

Something else that keeps him busy on Sado are his preparations for this year's [Earth Celebration](#), for which he is the artistic director for the second year. He came to Tenth Anniversary Earth Celebration the year before he joined the group as a visitor and remembers how much fun that was. He feels that he concentrated last year too much on trying to create his

and Kurdish music and be joined by KO no kai doing Nihon buyo dance. This group have put together a piece using Kodo music so it will be performed this summer for the first time with live accompaniment. He hopes to create that same joy he experienced as an audience member now that he is the director. He wants everyone to have fun.



24 Hours on Tour in Niigata

By Melanie Taylor, Staff

“On June 26 and 27, I took a ferry across to the mainland to join the One Earth Tour in Shibata and the School Workshop-Performance Tour in Niigata City. They had all been on the road for several weeks, and like any living organism, a live concert changes, so I was excited to see how the performances had evolved on their travels and over time. I was especially looking forward to seeing our performances with “real” audiences as I’d only seen them with a Kodo staff audience on Sado prior to departure, which is always somewhat more business than pleasure. Staff feedback



The Kodo in Shibata Committee had a “Happy 30th Anniversary” slideshow of posters and photographs showing our performance history with their committee.

helps with the fine tuning, so I have to concentrate so hard.

The concert in Shibata was a special performance for us because it was held by a group of locals called the “Kodo in Shibata Committee.” They have been organizing Kodo concerts in their hometown since 1990, and have hosted a Kodo-committee record of 11 One Earth Tour performances, as well as several special and ensemble performances of *Kodo Ubusuna*, *Hanayui*, *cocon*, *Ikkan Fugetsu* and more. I went to Shibata in 2008 for



Kodo in Shibata Committee in special staff vests welcoming the audience to our performance on June 26



the first time as a newbie tour manager with female unit cocon. That was a special experience in so many ways. The committee was selling tickets for a performance by a unit no one had ever seen or heard of, and their efforts filled a theatre. The Shibata Committee’s drive was amazing and the elation at the after party bonded both performer and presenter alike like relatives. It’s in the years since then as my time with Kodo has grown that I have learned how an audience comes together in a really special way to make a stage go off when the tickets are sold hand to hand, one by one, by enthusiastic people. The energy has a real snowball effect from the ticket sales right up until the finale of the performance.

I took photos of the OET performance from the AV room, spending as much

time listening to the audience as the performance... it was a great collaboration. They were applauding before the curtain went up, yelling just when our performers wanted a push into overdrive, and there were even school children dancing by their seats, giving themselves over to the beat. To me, this is so unusual for a Japanese audience, and it seemed like we’d been whisked back to Rio de Janeiro, where I remember the audience for the best hand-clapping to our *Irodori* encore that I’ve ever heard. For this performance, I’d given up the concert hall sound for the closed AV room with a monitor since I especially wanted to show our enews readers the new pieces which are quiet and yet to be photographed since the shutter sound would ruin the atmosphere. The low-lighting leaves a lot to the imagination. They say a picture paints



A new melodic piece arranged with a feminine favorite: “Matoka Saso – Momotsuzuri”

Tour Report

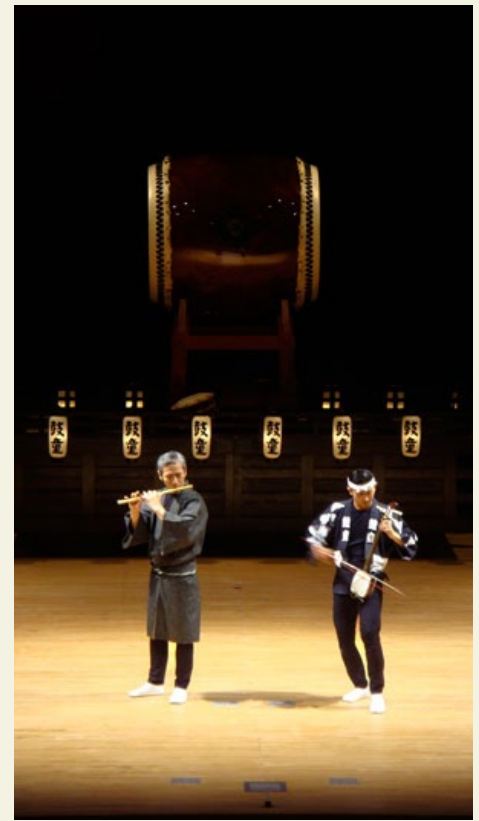
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a thousand words, but when it comes to taiko, I think it's only 300 words. I hope your imagination will try to fill in the blanks and you'll come and see the concert live sometime soon. Photos and video can't compare to taiko live.

After the performance, we loaded out (I am known for carrying heavy things at ease in a dress) and we were taken to a restaurant for dinner with the committee members where the owner welcomed us "home." It was my first time there, but it had been just over a year since our last visit, for *Ubusuna* in March 2010. Sitting around long tables, interspersed between the committee members by seat lottery, we exchanged drinks and talked about the evening's performance, Kodo over the years, and "next time." Yoshikazu is 60 now, and the committee are talking about celebrating Kenta's 60th together with Kodo, 34 years from now. With members from their teens to sixties, I'm cheering on this committee who cheer us on so constantly and passionately. There are several Kodo concert committees around Japan, keeping us coming back to their towns like families to a reunion. I hope Kodo can make more "families" like this around the world (we have some on various continents already), so the One Earth Tour can make the world feel just a little bit smaller in the best way. Joining the

tour is also a great way to catch up with our performers, who are so busy on Sado with their personal and group rehearsals. On tour, we all stay in the same hotel and have time for meals together, and this time I enjoyed catching up with Yosuke, Eri and Shogo over midnight snacks... talking about the night's performance, the tour, their own projects and dreams for travel and performance. And speaking in English just for fun.

The next day, I rode the Kodo bus with the other OET members to Niigata City and we all watched the School Workshop-Performance tour perform at a primary school in the morning. There were children from 2 schools in one gym, the primary school kids of that school and kids from a special education school who came over for the performance. Our performers had been up since dawn warming up and were raring to go. It was fun to watch the young audience as they watched Kodo. Kids are so blunt, so honest, so open. In certain parts, they were all wriggling to the beat, in others, they were silent and listening intently, almost mesmerized. The programme has some parts where the kids can sing along and another where some students can play taiko and everyone joins in on taiko and clapping along to a piece with Kodo. Sitting on the floor of that gym, I couldn't help but think that so many people in Tohoku are living in gyms, 3 months since the tsunami. Kids in other areas have civil defense drills in



Motofumi Yamaguchi's latest composition "Harukanaru-mine"

their gyms. And for this hour, the kids were having so much fun in the gym. I'm glad our drums got to visit gyms in Tohoku too this tour.

After the morning performance, the OET headed back to Sado, and I traveled to the next school with the School Tour performers. Sitting amongst the players in our Toyota van, the windows steaming up from the 5 performers around me, eating a banana and drinking a carton of orange juice (a Kodo combo) I listened to them talk. Driver Takeshi



"Ogi Oiwake," danced by Chieko Kojima and sung by Yoko Fujimoto



Tour Report

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and navigator Kusasuke, the workshop leader Ayako and the artistic director Masami, and the junior member Sho talking to himself in *kuchi-shoga* (verbalized rhythms) or talking through what he was doing through the show, one step after the other. They used the travel time to eat their lunch and prepare so they could hit the ground running at the next school for the 1:30 performance. We arrived at the next school and we loaded in (their schedule is so tight, so they gladly accepted my help) and set up, sound checked, warmed up, changed

and greeted another school of students into their gym for a performance.

This time, I was photographing the performance. Not wanting to distract the children, who were pretty hyper after lunch and perhaps at the sight of all the drums, I stayed at the back out of sight. So the best pictures I got up close were of the performers greeting the students before and farewelling the kids after the performance. The distance changed dramatically.

The kids hustled in quickly and shyly, and when they left the all wanted to high-five, shake hands, say goodbye



All smiles saying "See you!" after the performance.



Kenzo and Masayuki go head-to-head on the odaiko, with a sea of kids at their feet.



School Workshop-Performance Spring 2011 tour members after another busy day in Niigata City. L. to R. Rear: Yosuke Kusa (a.k.a. Kudasuke), Takeshi Arai, Masayuki Sakamoto. Front: Shogo Komatsuzaki (a.k.a. Sho), Yoshiko Ando (tour manager), Masami Miyazaki (artistic director), Ayako Onizawa, Kenzo Abe.

or even feel the Kodo guys' muscles. After two performances, in one day (one is tiring to say the least) the day wasn't over. Loading the truck, we all headed back to the hotel, and straight into a meeting about the day, and about the next day.

In 24 hours I saw three unique "living" live performances and I must say I really enjoyed seeing Kodo in Niigata, so close to home. After spending more time on tour abroad than in Japan, it was nice to see the local reaction of people in the same prefecture. I came away thinking about the importance of talking in person vs. Skype, live music vs. YouTube, and a sweaty, drumstick-callused handshake vs a wave of the hand from the stage. Taiko brings people together, but it's local concert committees and workshop-performances that bring us a step closer to our audiences, which is a great place to be. I'm looking forward to Earth Celebration all the more, when the audience travels to us at home on Sado Island, and getting to know more people through the exchange we have there."

Kodo 30th Anniversary One Earth Tour and School Workshop-Performance Tour continue from September.

For schedules, please see [Page 11](#).



Yoko Fujimoto in LA: *Ayagoromo - Mindful Transitions*

Yoko Fujimoto will perform with musician/composer Derek Nakamoto, from her solo album *morisa komorisa*, in a concert in Los Angeles.



Ayagoromo - Mindful Transitions will present traditional Japanese folk songs assimilated within modern world music sensibilities.

Yoko and Derek will be joined by guest artists to perform a selection of Japanese folk songs “framed” with a modern twist of Impressionistic Jazz, Classical and R&B for which Derek is known. The concert will debut new works reflecting the goal of preserving the essence of traditional music with arrangements that make the songs relevant to the present generation.

The following week, August 18-21, Yoko will take part in the [North American Taiko Conference](#) at Stanford University in California, where she will be teaching her [Voice Circle](#) workshop.

Yoko looks forward to seeing the taiko community, and friends new and old while in California this August.

Yoko Fujimoto in *Ayagoromo - Mindful Transitions*

August 13 (Sat), 2:00pm
[Japanese American National Museum](#)
Los Angeles, CA, USA

Appearing: Yoko Fujimoto (vocals),
[Derek Nakamoto](#) (piano)

Guests

[Kaoru Watanabe](#) (Japanese flutes, percussion)
[Abe Lagrimas Jr.](#) (ukelele, vibes & percussion)
[Cameron Stone](#) (cello)
Andrew Duckles (viola)

[For details & ticket sales, please click here](#)

Co-presented by
[Kodo Arts Sphere America \(KASA\)](#)





Kodo Performance Schedule

2011-2012

KODO 30TH ANNIVERSARY - ONE EARTH TOUR

September-November: [Japan](#)

Kyoto, Hyogo, Shizuoka, Gifu, Kanagawa, Ehime, Wakayama, Okayama, Tottori, Kagawa, Kochi, Yamaguchi, Hiroshima, Tokushima, Shiga, Mie, Fukuoka, Oita, Shimane, Saga, Miyazaki, Kagoshima, Kumamoto, Nagasaki, Okinawa

December: [Japan](#)

Nagoya, Osaka, Tokyo (Aoyama Theatre), Nagaoka, Niigata, Sado Island

January-March 2012: [Europe](#)

Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg

For up-to-date schedules and box office details, please visit our [website](#).

SCHOOL WORKSHOP-PERFORMANCE TOUR IN JAPAN

September-November: Niigata, Okayama, Ehime, Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama, Tochigi, Fukushima

EARTH CELEBRATION 2011

August 19 (Fri) - 21 (Sun): Sado Island, Japan **TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE!**
Shiroyama Concerts with special guests the Ranaei Family (Iran) and KO no kai (Japan)

KODO DADAN CONCERTS 2012

February 15 - 18, 2012 [Théâtre du Châtelet](#) (Paris, France)

SOLO & SMALL GROUP PROJECTS, WORKSHOPS,

NEWS & INFORMATION

Please visit the [top page of our website](#) and scroll down for details.



Kodo 30th Anniversary One Earth Tour 2011

~ JAPAN ~
September-November

Schedule is subject to change. For up-to-date schedules and box office details, please visit our [website](#).

- September 10: Ayabe, Kyoto
- September 11: Ono, Hyogo
- September 14: Hamamatsu, Shizuoka
- September 15: Gifu City
- September 17: Yokohama, Kanagawa
- September 18: Yokohama, Kanagawa
- September 19: Yaizu, Shizuoka
- September 23: Uchiko, Ehime
- September 25: Shingu, Wakayama
- September 28: Okayama City
- September 30: Kurayoshi, Tottori
- October 1: Maniwa, Okayama
- October 2: Marugame, Kagawa
- October 4: Tosashimizu, Kochi
- October 7: Kudamatsu, Yamaguchi
- October 8: Hatsukaichi, Hiroshima
- October 12: Tokushima City
- October 15: Omihachiman, Shiga
- October 16: Matsusaka, Mie
- October 19: Fukuoka City
- October 20: Oita City
- October 23: Masuda, Shimane
- October 26: Saga City
- October 28: Miyazaki City
- October 29: Kagoshima City
- November 1: Hitoyoshi, Kumamoto
- November 3: Sasebo, Nagasaki
- November 8: Urasoe, Okinawa



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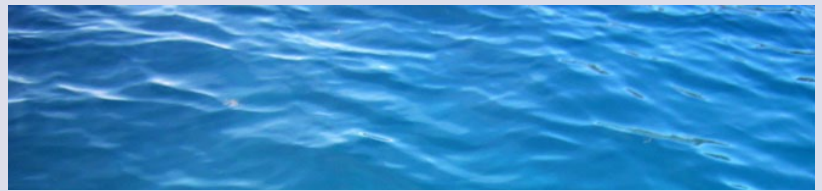


*In the wake of disaster,
Kodo started the Heartbeat
Project, a multifaceted
undertaking designed to
support relief efforts and the
people of the regions affected
by the Tohoku Pacific
Earthquake.*

*We are making new
recordings and participating
in charity concerts, fund-
raising events, etc. Thank
you for your continued
support. For updates, please
visit our [website](#).*

KODŌ

New Album:
Kodo Akatsuki



Summer sea blues, nearby Kodo Village

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