

School Workshop- Performance Tour 2012

New Programme, New Compositions, New Challenges

Since 1999, in addition to our regular appearances, Kodo has held numerous [School Workshop-Performances](#), which take place mainly at junior high schools during the months of May-June and September-November. This tour runs simultaneously alongside the One Earth Tour. The idea is to let students directly experience the appeal of the taiko in the familiar surroundings of their school gym. Up to eight performers lead these interactive performances, which include hands-on workshops that showcase the

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M.C. Funabashi explains how the large taiko is made before the children hear its mighty echoes



The cast of seven perform upbeat "Yama Warau" to conclude the performance

Collaboration with TaikOz Down Under

TaikOz is Australia's premier taiko ensemble, who have established a unique performance style that reflects the group's passionate dedication to the traditions of Japanese taiko drumming and the creation of new music for their audiences. In recent years, Kodo & TaikOz have nurtured a creative relationship, thanks to our connection through one of TaikOz's founding members and world-class shakuhachi player, former Sado no Kuni Ondekoza member Riley Lee. This link has led TaikOz members to travel to Sado to study one-on-one with veteran Kodo members. As a

progression from [our first collaboration in Australia in 2009](#), which Riley Lee was unable to take part in, this time we'll be joining TaikOz again for a thrilling collaboration with a larger cast and a brand new programme focused on the taiko. Kodo and TaikOz look

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Legend: On the Surface, Beneath, Beyond

A personal report by staff member Melanie Taylor on the new-look One Earth Tour.

It's hard to write a concert report without it being a spoiler. Stop reading now if you want to be surprised when you see our [2012 One Earth Tour "Legend"](#) on stage. If you do read on, know that I'm not going to paint the whole picture but rather share some of my observations of the stage and the audiences I experienced, which I write in the hope that everyone will see this step in Kodo's journey.

In April, I watched a couple of the run-through rehearsals at Kodo Village for the new One Earth Tour 2012 production "Legend." It was a fascinating time for me. Same rehearsal hall, same performers, joined by four new wide-eyed junior members, and the constant, steadfast taiko drums. We've been working with Kabuki great Tamasaburo Bando for some years now, yet the atmosphere was one of a new beginning. Now he had become our full-time artistic director and the air was filled with expectation, challenge, nervousness, anticipation, and eagerness to see how the new programme would come together and how it would be received. Exciting times, but a great deal of pressure for all involved.

As I watched the performers rehearse, the real curiosity for me was the "new" sound in our rehearsal hall. It was like the car had found different gears thanks to a new driver. I knew our performers were working on some new pieces and arrangements, but I didn't know the hours of practice were going to be presented in such a dynamic torrent of new life and sound. Watching Tamasaburo conduct them in

rehearsal was like watching a dance by both director and performers. Everyone was directed with fluid flicks of his expressive hands, choreographed with care and minimalist efficiency.

We held an open stage rehearsal on Sado Island and straight after, the lobby was a buzz with people saying "Did you see the costumes?"... and I had to laugh: you couldn't miss the new costumes if you tried. But after two hours of taiko performance, for me it was strange to hear more comments about the costumes than about the taiko. Every single piece featured taiko and some of the new pieces really stuck with me throughout the rehearsal process. Curious, I had to especially ask a few people and they said the taiko was "great as usual" or "awesome." So I was surprised to be confronted with nothing but comments about costumes.

The standard indigo Kodo hanten coat and the unforgettable white loincloth do also appear in "Legend." I never knew how much everyone liked these costumes until the performers got changed. For the spring tour, in the first act the costumes are casual, Western, young, and modern. In the second half, they are dazzling, brightly-coloured and flamboyant. I'm not necessarily saying I like them, but that's not the point. When confronted with the complaint that "That's not Kodo," I beg to disagree. Even in tracksuits, rehearsing on Sado, we are Kodo. I like the idea of Kodo being "Kodo," in any clothes, of it being less superficial, and more deep-rooted in the performers' approach, dedication, training and performance. All of this comes through in the feeling and the sound of the taiko. I think it is a real challenge for



Shogo Yoshii warms up for the Tokyo performance on May 20

Kodo, too. One that we can embrace. To be Kodo through and through, not just determined by the top layer you wear. Kodo in any costume. Inherently Kodo. Like a teenager, I agree that Kodo needs to experiment, and even rebel, in order to grow.

I went to Tokyo to see the concert at Tokyo International Forum on May 20. It was my first time seeing this programme with a "real" general public audience. After a few performances, the volume of feedback was overwhelming, chins were wagging on twitter and Facebook, and the reactions were strong. What Tamasaburo Bando did for Kodo when he created "Legend" reminds me of a famous quote by American psychologist and philosopher William James: "To change your life: start immediately; do it flamboyantly; no exceptions." Many people either loved it and raved because it was

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Legend: On the Surface, Beneath, Beyond
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different, or didn't for the exact same reason: it was different. The change was undoubtedly obvious.

So in Tokyo, I sat with the audience and watched the performance. As Bando had hoped, it was an "escape from everyday life" from curtain up to curtain down. The first half of the performance is a flow of three pieces back to back without missing a beat. During the first half, there was no time to applaud, even if you wanted to, and the stage really drew you in. Darkness, light, stillness and movement, tension and exploding sounds of release. At the end of the act, the curtain came down, the audience heaved as they breathed out, and then excited chatter in the stalls erupted like a drumming cacophony. I think that not offering a chance for applause was a well-chosen measure to keep the audience from releasing their energy, which made it build and build. For me, the modern costumes take some getting used to,

but even if they distract me, in the next moment the power of the taiko brings me back to attention and takes me away. Time stood still, and once I let my mind go with the drums, the fifty minutes were fleeting yet abundant with content.

The second half starts off upbeat, light, bright, and festive. Beats from Sado Island with demon drumming and beats from Hachijo Island in a new arrangement called "Tsukimachi." For me, "Tsukimachi" is a mini-production in its own right. Eight drummers create a celebration of taiko and beats and the rhythms are infectious, just like a festival. I'm hooked from the moment they gather on stage. Then the o-daiko sounds and we are taken back to Kodo's tradition, which has been a legend in its own right for years, the O-daiko and Yatai-bayashi finale handed down by Kodo members since the days of Sado no Kuni Ondekoza. The performance truly comes to its climax here, and the applause floods the stage as the performers take a bow. They pour their souls into the taiko

and the echoes move everyone present. That is Kodo's "legend" to me.

Watching this performance, I came away thinking the following: Kodo is a live ensemble. It needs to advance, to grow, to change, to evolve. This production is a new endeavour, one that Kodo will learn from in many more ways than a safe, comfortable, carbon-copy Kodo performance. If you want to see today's Kodo, brimming with energy and power, striving to evolve, change and take its performance to new levels of expression, please join us at the theater. The next tour starts in September. I sincerely hope you'll come and see our new steps. This "Legend" is surely going to be remembered in the history of Kodo. In my opinion, it's not a new Kodo, it's one new step on our journey.

For fall tour schedules, please see [page 9](#).
For "Legend" programme details, please see the [June 2012 issue of Kodo eNews](#).



Tomohiro Mitome "O-daiko"

From the Audience

On our tour in Japan we received piles of questionnaires in Japanese, and only twenty or so in English. Here is some of the valuable feedback we received in the words of our foreign audience members:

So exciting, very different, refreshing, and full of identity. Very strong use of the stage space. Subtle transitions from one piece to the other made it flow beautifully.

*Very interesting...
Overall I think there was a greater need to let the audience applaud. Both halves felt like one long piece, and there is a need to relieve tension between pieces.*

Superb.

Very powerful and quite impressive, although I'm not a fan of the bright costumes.

Loved it!

Very interesting and systematic. Well organized performance and wonderful music.

I thought that, by now, I knew what to expect from a Kodo show, yet I realized I was wrong. I see "Legend" as a very refreshing, meaningful and exciting new step in the artistic evolution of Kodo, whose new approach seems to be based not so much on the adaptation of the ancient tradition of taiko to the stage, but more importantly on a reinterpretation of it. If this is only the beginning of the Bando era, the next work cannot come soon enough for me.

School Workshop-Performance

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world of Japanese taiko. Kodo hopes this experience serves to introduce young Japanese people to their own traditional culture and perhaps even contribute in some small way to their own self-discovery. Recently, the performances are also held at elementary schools and high schools.

In 2012, due to special projects abroad in the fall, the School Performances are only touring in spring. In this issue, Kodo eNews takes a look at the new 2012 performance on the road and asked first-time director Yosuke Oda to talk freely about his programme. Here's what he had to say before the tour began in early May:

Making People Shine

I am **Yosuke Oda**, and this is my first time directing Kodo. I think that some people might be anxious to hear that I am taking the reins with no prior artistic direction experience, but as a taiko drummer I know our potential. I accepted the role thinking it was a chance to discover and share, along with my colleagues, brand new possibilities for Kodo. I didn't want to



Mariko Omi practises the new taiko, dance, song piece "Ake no Myojo"

create a programme. I wanted to use this opportunity to "mold people." I thought about the performers and what skills I wanted them to develop individually. I put those pieces into the lineup and chose the cast for each piece thinking about how each individual would be challenged and what person they would become through this opportunity. If each performer shines, then the programme will be powerful and that will really move the audience.

The highlight of my first production is a new female taiko piece. In the Kodo repertoire to date, there wasn't a piece where women played taiko to the level of *Tomoe*, *Miyake*, or *Yatai-bayashi* on center-stage. I wanted to create a piece that would challenge them, develop their skills, and make them use all of their energy. It needed to be a piece that would inspire the audience and move them to cheering. When women play pieces that men play, they can not measure up physically. And when female performers play certain feminine pieces, while they may be pleasant or beautiful, to me they are not a vehicle to create excitement and energy, or really move people in the same way as something like *Miyake*. Sometimes the female drummers secure solo parts in large ensemble pieces, but in my opinion there is no key Kodo piece that can only be played by women. I think that so long as there is no main piece just for women on the Kodo stage that we will have real difficulties training our female players well in the future. This idea led me to compose and create the piece *Ake no Myojo* (The Morning Star, Venus). This is a piece that only women can play, and it requires more skill and more physical strength than any other piece. Even though the difficulty of this piece creates an extreme situation for the performers, we rehearsed making sure that while they drummed they didn't forget that they are women. They need composure, grace, strength, speed, and to move from hard drumming to soft singing in a heartbeat. It requires



Yosuke Oda warms up his mind and body for the performance

a great deal of control and restraint to save their breath and energy to last throughout the piece.

Surely when a school audience watches this piece, the children will feel the performers' hopes, happiness and sorrow and above all determination in tough circumstances. The female performers can express motifs such as "Never give up," "Passion is like a flame," and more. I hope that each person who sees this performance will take a look at themselves and be inspired to do their utmost in their own life.

In this programme, I wanted to make both the men and women of Kodo into even better performers than ever before. I hope the challenges on this tour, both new pieces, new instruments and new parts will make them stronger as individuals and more powerful as performers.

Yosuke Oda,
2012 Kodo School Workshop-
Performance Director

Stay tuned for a performance report by staff
Melanie Taylor in our August issue.

Collaboration with TaikOz*continued from page 1*

forward to forging further cultural ties and playing together with the joyfulness of children. We look forward to seeing everyone down under in September.

Here are a few words from [TaikOz](#) founding member and artistic director Ian Cleworth about the upcoming collaboration:

Back in 2009, TaikOz had the wonderful opportunity to collaborate with five senior members of Kodo for performances in Sydney and Melbourne. Three years on, TaikOz is very honoured to see Kodo back for an extended major city tour of Australia, this time with an enlarged ensemble of ten members.

With some fantastically dynamic numbers that feature the strengths of each ensemble, including a celebratory all-in finale that will lift the roof, the

program is sure to be a winner with Australian audiences. Kodo are presenting several of their signature pieces, including *Miyake*, *Zoku*, *Stride* and *Tomoe*, as well as feature items for Chieko Kojima in *Hana Hachijo* and Yoko Fujimoto singing and accompanying herself on the koto in *Itokishi mono-e*.

In fact, it will be in this piece, and TaikOz's *Passing Through Tears Of Nectar*, that two old friends and colleagues will meet for a sure-to-be-beautiful musical match. They are none other than Yoko Fujimoto and TaikOz co-founder and shakuhachi virtuoso, Riley Lee.

Both musicians were members of Sado Kuni no Ondekoza in the 1970s and this collaboration – almost 40 years on! – will undoubtedly be a highlight of the tour. Both musicians possess a



TaikOz Artistic Director Ian Cleworth

remarkable gift for melody, a honey-like mellifluousness of tone and supreme artistry, and personally speaking, I am looking forward tremendously to hearing them on stage together. It really will be something of a historic moment!

As for TaikOz, we will be presenting a series of compositions that will highlight our percussion-playing

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TaikOz of Sydney, Australia

Kodo & TaikOz in Concert - Australia Tour 2012

Tickets Now on Sale!



Sep. 15 [Brisbane Festival](#),
Concert Hall, Queensland
Performing Arts Centre,
Brisbane, QLD

Sep. 19-20 [OzAsia Festival](#), His
Majesty's Theatre, Adelaide, SA

Sep. 22 [Canberra Theatre
Centre](#), Canberra, ACT

Sep. 24 [Hamer Hall, Arts Centre
Melbourne](#), VIC

Sep. 26 [Civic Theatre Newcastle](#),
NSW

Sep. 27 -28 [City Recital Hall
Angel Place](#), Sydney, NSW

Collaboration with TaikOz

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backgrounds. There will of course be an abundance of taiko, but several of our pieces will also include other musical elements, including the drum set, marimba, vibraphone, woodblocks, crotales, gongs, among other percussive bits and pieces. In fact, the overall aim is for each group to compliment and contrast with each other, to play off each other, to come together as one, and most of all, to create a truly synergistic effect on the stage.

What do I wish "Kodo and TaikOz In Concert" will finally achieve? Apart from being riveting, surprising, beguiling, dramatic, virtuosic, profound, inspiring, challenging, transporting, emotional and much, much more, I sincerely hope this meeting of Japanese and Australian musicians will present audiences with a deeply satisfying and rewarding musical gift.



Our annual international performing arts festival offers a range of attractions including outdoor concerts at Shiroyama Park, workshops, fringe events (free-admission performances by invited and general guests), and the Harbour Market (food/drink, crafts, ethnic goods, et al). As the name suggests, "Earth Celebration" transcends borders and cultures to bring a brilliant collage of art and music to a very special corner of the world. This summer, come and celebrate with us.

**Main events are held August 17 -19, 2012.
(Pre-Events held August 10-16.)**

Tickets on sale now!

**For details, please visit the
Earth Celebration 2012 Official Website**

Earth Celebration 2012: Shiroyama Concert “Shukusai” Guest Artist Hiromitsu Agatsuma

Contemporary Echoes of Traditions

At this year's [Earth Celebration](#), we will welcome one of Japan's leading shamisen players, [Hiromitsu Agatsuma](#), to the Shiroyama Concert “Shukusai” on August 19th. Kodo performed with Agatsuma at a concert in May 2011 and we have felt connected ever since. We both play instruments used to “beat a rhythm,” both share Japanese traditions with the world, and we are performers from the same generation. In March this year, Agatsuma came to Sado for preliminary rehearsals for Earth Celebration 2012, and the echoes of our collaborations began to reverberate on Sado. We asked Hiromitsu Agatsuma and our own [Tomohiro Mitome](#) to share some of their feelings and experiences with our readers regarding the upcoming collaboration in August.

Shamisen Player Hiromitsu Agatsuma

I knew that it would not be easy for me to jump in and perform with the Kodo members, because they spend their



Rehearsals with Agatsuma in March at Kodo Village. The delicate tones of the shamisen ring out over the deep vibrations of the taiko.

daily lives together, travel together, and create together. I took part in rehearsals with them on Sado Island in March, and of course the music didn't work perfectly right from the get go. But with time and practice, the taiko and shamisen, both deeply rooted in Japanese culture, began to resonate together naturally and echo in harmony. Of course there are fundamentals that overlap in Japanese instruments in terms of the groove and timing, but I think it was Sado that gave me that certain something... it was the first time in my life I've had that feeling. I'm personally really looking forward to spending many more hours on Sado Island with Kodo, and seeing what will come to life from that experience.

At Earth Celebration, I've also been given the opportunity to hold a lecture. I plan to talk about my activities to date, my feelings about the attraction and possibilities of the Tsugaru Shamisen and Japanese traditional music. I'll also do a short performance during the lecture. I am looking forward to seeing you all this summer on Sado Island.

From Kodo Ensemble Leader Tomohiro Mitome

Our rehearsals with Hiromitsu Agatsuma in March were really rewarding. He joined in on the Kodo pieces that we decided to collaborate on, beginning by matching the tone. Then one after the other different melodies would come forth, like using different paints to make all kinds of new colors, strong ones and subtle ones alike. I greatly admire the work and time he put into this, allowing no compromise, to refine the collaborations on traditional pieces.

Shamisen and taiko were both originally instruments used for accompaniments, but over time they have come into the limelight on stage. Mr. Agatsuma has collaborated with people from various genres, and I'm looking forward to seeing what kind of music he will create with Kodo.

The heart of our activities, exploring the possibilities of Japanese traditional music, is the same, even though we play different instruments. In the great outdoors on the Shiroyama stage, we want to share that energy with you all.



East Meets West in Montreal

Appearance in Ballet Performance "Kaguyahime: The Moon Princess" in Canada

In October 2012, Montreal-based ballet company [Les Grands Ballets Canadiens](#) will hold performances of "Kaguyahime: The Moon Princess," which will feature eight Kodo performers. "Kaguyahime" is a legendary ballet production that fuses music by composer [Maki Ishii](#) with choreography by Jiří Kylián. Two years has passed since Kodo took part in "Kaguyahime" performances with the Paris Opera Ballet on the Opera Bastille stage and we look forward to the new season in Canada this fall.

About Kaguyahime

Based on Japan's oldest story "Taketori Monogatari" (The Tale of the Bamboo-Cutter), composer Maki Ishii created "Kaguyahime Suite (symphonic suite for percussion groups)," and in 1984 the premiere was held at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, performed by Kodo and the Opera Percussionists. In 1985, the first version incorporating ballet called "Kaguyahime Ballet (for ballet, Japanese drums, percussions, and gagaku ensemble)" made its debut, featuring the Tokyo Star Dancers Ballet, Kodo, Percussion Ensemble Okada of Japan, and a gagaku ensemble featuring Sukeyasu Shiba. In 1988 Maki Ishii and choreographer Jiří Kylián, artistic director of the Netherland Dance Theater at the time,



Photo: Damian Siqueiros

Dancers: Tetyana Martyanova and Yadil Suarez Llerena

joined forces to bring a new version of Kaguyahime to life. This production first took place at the Holland Festival, featuring former Kodo member Katsuji Kondo, and was performed until the 1990's around the world. In June 2010,

seven Kodo members took part in the long awaited return performances of "Kaguyahime" with the Paris Opera Ballet at the Opera Bastille. This year, eight Kodo members will travel to Canada to take part in performances of "Kaguyahime" with Montreal-based ballet company Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

Ballet Performance "Kaguyahime: The Moon Princess"

Performance Dates: Selected dates between Oct. 11 - 27, 2012

Venue: Place des Arts Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Tickets on Sale Now! For times and box office details, please visit the [website of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens](#).



Message from the Artistic Director of Les Grands Ballets Mr. Gradimir Pankov: "Kodo's music possesses a unique evocative power. It is arresting, beautiful and utterly distinctive. We are honored to have such accomplished musicians share the stage with the dancers of Les Grands Ballets."



Kodo Performance Schedule 2012

KODO ONE EARTH TOUR 2012: LEGEND

September - October: [Japan](#)

Niigata, Iwate, Yamagata, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Shizuoka, Aichi, Shiga, Osaka, Hyogo, Shimane, Tottori, Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, Nagasaki, Miyazaki, Kagoshima, Nagano, Chiba

KODO DADAN CONCERTS 2012 (Special Supporter: Rolex (Japan) Ltd.)

July: [Japan](#)

Tokyo, Kanagawa, Aichi, Kumamoto, Kyoto

EARTH CELEBRATION 2012

August 17 (Fri) - 19 (Sun): Sado Island, Japan **TICKETS ON SALE NOW!**

Shiroyama Concerts with special guest shamisen player [Hiromitsu Agatsuma](#), & a unique version of *Dadan* directed by Tamasaburo Bando

KODO & TAIKOZ IN CONCERT - AUSTRALIA TOUR

September: Brisbane, Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, Newcastle, Sydney

KODO IN BALLET PERFORMANCE "KAGUYAHIME: THE MOON PRINCESS"

October: Montreal, Canada

SOLO & SMALL GROUP PROJECTS, SPECIAL EVENTS, WORKSHOPS, NEWS & INFORMATION

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

Kodo One Earth Tour 2012: Legend

~ JAPAN ~
September-October

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

- September 9: Kashiwazaki, Niigata
- September 11: Kuzumaki, Iwate
- September 12: Kitakami, Iwate
- September 14: Yamagata City
- September 15: Koriyama, Fukushima
- September 16: Hitachinaka, Ibaraki **SOLD OUT**
- September 20: Shizuoka City
- September 23: Fuso, Aichi
- September 26: Hikone, Shiga
- September 27: Ibaraki, Osaka
- September 30: Yabu, Hyogo
- October 2: Matsue, Shimane
- October 3: Tottori City
- October 6: Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi
- October 7: Kitakyushu, Fukuoka
- October 8: Unzen, Nagasaki
- October 12: Miyazaki City
- October 13: Kagoshima City
- October 21: Karuizawa, Nagano
- October 23: Narashino, Chiba **NEW**



Kodo Dadan Concerts On Tour in Japan Now!



July 2-4 Minato Ward, Tokyo
July 7-8 Yokohama, Kanagawa
July 10 Nagoya, Aichi
July 14-16 Yamaga, Kumamoto
July 20-22 Kyoto City

For tour details, please visit our [website](#).

On August 18, see [Kodo Dadan EC Special at Earth Celebration](#), Sado Island, Niigata

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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

Latest Album:
Kodo Akatsuki



Yellow day lilies on Sado's northern tip signal that summer has come

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