

A Season for Collaboration and Exploration

Fall has been a particularly bountiful season for Kodo that brought an abundance of inspiration and experience through new encounters, new collaborations, and exchange abroad.

The Kodo performers who took part in the [Montreal performances of Kaguyahime: The Moon Princess](#) in October with [Les Grands Ballets](#) have just returned to Japan and are currently performing in several solo and ensemble projects. The fall [One Earth Tour 2012: Legend](#) enjoyed sell-out audiences along the way on its extensive Japan tour from Tohoku to Kyushu. Our [Distinguished Members](#) took part in [Kodo Special Performances on Sado Island](#) and welcomed audiences to Sado from far and wide. These two domestic casts have regrouped and seventeen members are currently in Kagawa taking part in the sold-out [“Tamasaburo Bando’s Special Performances”](#) at Kanamaru-za.

In this issue, we hope you will enjoy reports from our [tour with TaikOz in Australia](#), the October Kaguyahime performances in Canada, and here on Sado Island where we held KASA Mix, a live-in workshop for taiko enthusiasts from around the world in September. Special thanks go to all of our kind contributors and interviewees for their time and openness. We hope their words will encourage you to join us for some of our upcoming events.

The taiko plays the role of the moon in Jiří Kylián’s “Kaguyahime”

Eva Kolarova, as the moon princess, with Sam Colbey



Kodo To Appear at the Paris Opera

We are delighted to announce that in February 2013, eight Kodo members will make a guest appearance in ballet performances of “Kaguyahime” held by France’s leading opera and ballet ensemble, [Opéra national de Paris](#). Kodo will make history as the first taiko ensemble to perform at the world’s highest-ranked theater and home of the Paris Opera, the celebrated [Palais Garnier](#). The last performances in Paris were held three years ago when Kodo took part in “Kaguyahime” with the Paris Opera Ballet at Opéra Bastille from June to July in 2010. For

further details, including box office information, please visit our [website](#).

Dates: February 1 (Fri) - 17 (Sun), 2013
Venue: Palais Garnier - Opéra National de Paris, France

[Tickets on sale Nov. 12 \(Mon\), 2012](#)

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Eiichi Saito plays the mighty o-daiko as the battle scene begins

Kaguyahime: The Moon Princess With Les Grands Ballets in Montreal

With stage photos by Joris Jan Bos

After the rehearsals and first week of performances of the ballet “Kaguyahime: The Moon Princess” with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, we talked to two of the dancers and one of the Western percussionists about the piece. We hope you’ll enjoy a look through their eyes at this “East meets West” collaboration.



Kenji Matsuyama Ribeiro with Eva Kolarova as the Moon Princess

Impressions from dancer Kenji Matsuyama Ribeiro

It’s definitely interesting to take part to this production, as I am half Japanese and my mother would tell me this story before putting me in bed to sleep. It’s interesting to see a dance version of this story, a vision of a Western person of this ancient story.

Kylián is a great choreographer, his great sense of music, refined sense of aesthetics, great fluidity of the movement... What makes this ballet different from other ballets is the “marriage” between East and West, the coming together of two opposed cultures, but most of all the use of Japanese traditional music.

What I find great about Maki Ishii’s composition is his ability of creating a very special atmosphere, as if he took us to a different world.

Having live music is always a great source of inspiration for dancers, when you have such an amazing output from the musicians we can only give our best on stage. When the percussions start to play I can feel the

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Kenji Matsuyama Ribeiro



Hamilton Nieh

Kaguyahime: The Moon Princess in Montreal continued from page 2

rhythm running in my entire body through my veins and that's when I know I'm ready to go!

The most challenging side of this production? Dancing the first solo completely blind, the lights are so strong we cannot see anything and even standing on both feet becomes a challenge.

I think the audience will enjoy this production for the music, the staging and the energy that both dancers and musicians will deliver.

Interview with Dancer Hamilton Nieh

Please share with us your impressions of the ballet "Kaguyahime."

Jiří Kylián is highly admired and most dancers today wish to dance his choreography as he is considered one of the great masters of our time. For me, it's actually the first time performing any choreography by Kylián. So, that alone is very exciting for me. The first moment we started on the choreography it was immediately satisfying because we could feel the high quality of the choreography. Kylián's aesthetic has evolved over time from neo-classical and modern to a uniquely

*Behind the scenes of
Les Grands Ballets'
rehearsals: Hamilton
Nieh and Jean-Sébastien
Couture with Eva
Kolarova*



individual very contemporary aesthetic today. Kaguyahime seems to be in the middle of this development. It is a beautiful phase of his development that still has a strong grounding in classical ballet with definitive structure and form but also incorporating fluid contemporary movement and exploration of different textures. I find it very satisfying. It may not be the most complex choreography, but even in its simplicity it is fulfilling and interesting to dance.

How does this ballet differ to other ballets?

This ballet is like no other. It's a special work of art incorporating musicians and dancers together with unique aesthetics, very extravagant yet utilitarian at the same time. There are many huge scale elements on stage, but the tone remains simple. It is also decidedly European in its aesthetic, which is unusual for North America, even for Les Grands Ballets. I

think so much choreography and so many dance performances in North America are concerned with grabbing an audience's attention, but Kaguyahime simply offers an impression. The audience may like it or not, but it's not concerned with entertaining the audience, just making statements. All the elements, from the lighting, to the dancing, to the music are in their own way quite simple and direct. But all together, they create a whole that can be deeply moving.

What are challenges for you dancing in this particular production?

It's a very different kind of music from the Western classical music we are generally used to dancing to. The first time we heard the music, it was not easy to pick up the rhythm or decipher the melody as we are used to. So the first challenge was how to recognize and understand the music. It was challenging at first, but we really just had to

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Kaguyahime: The Moon Princess in Montreal
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open our ears and listen in order to learn to recognize our cues.

How would you describe the music and what is it like to dance to a percussion-based accompaniment?

I think that dancing to percussion is very natural for dancers because it's rhythm-based. And dance is so strongly based on rhythm. It is an essential part of our training to follow rhythms and feel rhythms in our bodies, so to have such strong rhythm accompanying you is truly satisfying.

**Interview with Percussionist
Bob Slapcoff**

Please share with us your impressions of the ballet suite "Kaguyahime."

It works quite well as collaboration between the dancers and the Japanese and North American musicians. It's an exciting project and a unique experience for us. It's rare and fun for us to be in an orchestra pit, and have nobody but percussionists. It's all about percussions, and the composer uses the instruments very well. I found the

composer very respectful of taiko style. He pushes the taiko musicians to play things maybe they are not used to playing which creates interesting tension that leads to a good performance, and good experience for the audience. It's more than a concert for me.

How do you find working with Kodo and the Gagaku musicians? Are there any highlights or challenges that stand out from this experience?

I have enjoyed having chances to experience music from different cultures. The musicians from Kodo are very nice and easy to get along with, and they are excellent musicians. When you have good musicians who have good intentions, who do not bring their egos to work, good things happen. The Gagaku musicians are amazing. They have very important part in this ballet. To give the ballet feeling of an old story being told, they make it ancient and grounding. It's almost like they are acting when they are just being, the ways they behave; very calm like the way they play music.

How would you describe the music for Kaguyahime?

Mr. Ishii added percussion sounds to enhance different types of instruments for different sound effects. In the second act, he uses the traditional Japanese song (Gezan-bayashi), and we (Western percussions) come in and we make a lot of noise, going crazy! And the battle scene is one of the most powerful things I ever played. Because normally when I play say in the symphony of Shostakovich there are very powerful moments, but they do not last for that long. This goes on and on and builds up, and the audience loves it. They never get to hear something like all those drums just playing as loud as they can for that long. It's an impressive effect.

What is it like to perform in an orchestra pit or on stage with so many percussionists?

It is new for me. I have played with a lot of percussionists in sections, but sections within orchestras. Now there is no orchestra. When you play percussion in an orchestra, if you play even a triangle there is only one triangle player, playing cymbals there's only one cymbal player, so you are always somehow soloists. Here in Kaguyahime we have bigger roles, many instrument changes and we play pretty much all the time. The collaboration, mixing of styles, and great power of the music all contribute to a particularly special experience.

What do you think audiences will enjoy about this production?

Honestly I have not seen the production because I play in the orchestra pit. But I saw a video clip on Youtube, so I think they would enjoy the dance because Mr. Kylián is very famous and excellent choreographer. The lighting and staging are very interesting as well. And I would think that they would enjoy the drums most of all! I think the drums give more energy to the dancers. Because I would assume that the dancers can not help but be inspired by hearing the sound under their feet or right on stage, and the energies and vibrations created by all of us.



Percussionist Bob Slapcoff

Reflections on

Kodo & TaikOz in Concert Australia Tour - September 2012

With photos by Karen Steains

Impressions from TaikOz cast member, artistic director Ian Cleworth

Since I last wrote about the collaboration between Kodo and TaikOz, it has all come to pass. Looking back on my words, I see that I had hoped that we would be “beguiling, dramatic, virtuosic, profound, inspiring, challenging, transporting, emotional and much, much more.” And do you know what? I think we came pretty close to achieving all of these things!

Most of all, the concerts were, as I’d wished, a meeting of Japanese and Australian musicians creating a deeply satisfying and rewarding musical gift for Australian audiences. I thought a lot about using the word “gift”, because my desire was that together, Kodo and TaikOz would present an “offering from our hearts” that would go beyond providing just another “concert”.

From day one, all the players forged a strong working relationship. But, during the tour this developed on the more personal level, which, in turn, grew into a deeper feeling of mutual respect. Kodo were amazing in their total devotion to the project – every day, including concert days, was spent working on how we could make things even better. It was exciting to be a part of this energy – to not only play with passion and fire, but to contribute to the creative process in a genuine spirit of generosity.

The program sought to display the unique qualities of our two ensembles and while each group was given opportunity to shine in their own repertoire, for me, it was the many moments of collaboration that were truly special, genuinely unique, and ultimately, wonderfully synergistic. And what fun! Kodo brings a tremendous joy to their playing and it was not hard to be swept up in the intensity of their uniquely ecstatic energy.



Kodo & TaikOz in lively finale piece “Live to Last”



Shakuhaichi Grand Master Riley Lee joins Kodo in “Itoshiki mono-e”

It was an inspiring experience and TaikOz strove to meet Kodo with the same level of devotion, energy, musicality and humility. The generous reaction from audiences all over Australia tells me that our combined performance was enthusiastically received in the spirit it was given – a gift. And we can’t ask for more than that!

Interview with Kodo cast member, performer Yuichiro Funabashi

Like Kodo, TaikOz uses Japanese taiko for their performances, so what differences did you note about their playing, compared to a Kodo

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Australia

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performance? Where does the appeal in TaikOz's performances lie for you?

Firstly, their group has unique individuals for members, and the founding members Riley and Ian really pull them together. I feel their group has a good balance of generations.

Secondly, I sensed many good differences in the way they make music, how they use subtle sounds, their sound quality, touch, form, the transitions they create between pieces, and differences in their ways of expression that come from their language and culture. Also, I felt their technique on top of their strong base in Western percussion, their respect to others and Japanese culture, and above all their profound feelings towards taiko and expression. I thought it was wonderful to see that they are rooted in their community and spread the wonder of taiko there, too.

What was interesting for you about collaborating abroad and taking that collaboration on tour? What was good? What was difficult or challenging?

Even within Kodo, whether you have toured with certain performers or not is huge, because this is the main factor that deepens your understanding of what kind of person someone is and what kind of sound they will make, and so on. On a tour, there are some things that will not be solved naturally, so

as you decide which of each other's ways will be forced through and which will be conceded, the bond as a group and the bonds with its individuals will deepen.

The language gap may have been a big problem, but both of our groups are sound makers, so it seemed fast for us to bridge that gap.

Our performance-day routines are quite different, from the way we load in and spike the stage, to how we do sound checks and so forth. So it was kind of tough to fit in to each other's "daily rhythm" right until the end.

How was it for you to take part in this collaboration?

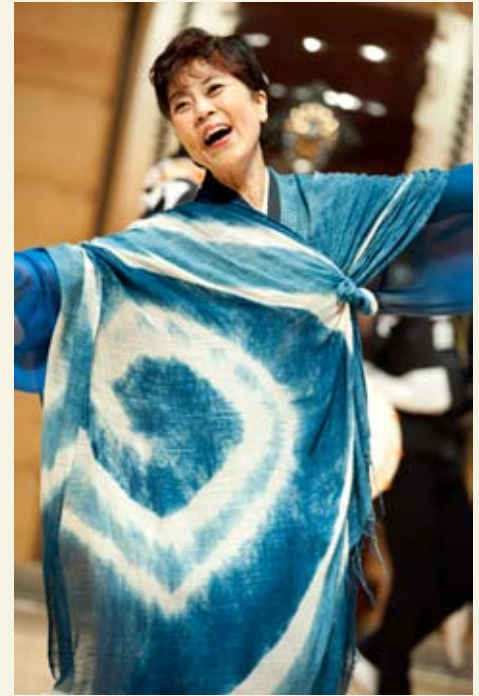
It was a good opportunity for me. Australia is a country that felt good to be in and the members of TaikOz each had great individuality. They have a warm-hearted love for taiko and I want to see them all again soon.

Please compare the performance you were expecting to the performance that took shape.

The audience reaction was better than I had imagined, and I'm so happy they were pleased by our performance. The reaction increased with every concert, and I think that is because we were able to keep boosting each other up as the tour progressed.

This was your first collaboration tour with a taiko group. Would you like to do it again? If you could collaborate with TaikOz again, what would you want to do and why?

I definitely want to do it again. I want to tour again with TaikOz and the same program, and since



Yoko Fujimoto sings an upbeat version of "Owaiyare"

we only traveled around a small part of that vast country, I'd like to go to other regions there, too. (And definitely to New Zealand next-door, as well!)

I wanted to try joining in on TaikOz's pieces more (even though their pieces are difficult), and since they have many performers with a background in Western percussion, I would definitely like to play "Kaguyahime," which we are performing now, and "Monoprism" with TaikOz.

What kind of influence did this collaboration and the Australia tour have on you?

I vaguely looked at TaikOz playing taiko and thought "Why did they choose to play taiko?" I think the answer is different for each of them, and maybe "Why taiko?" is an eternal question for us all, regardless of if we are a member of TaikOz or Kodo, or any group. It feels like from this thought about them, I began to start asking that question to myself. And, I think I was able to feel anew what my own good points are and what I lack. And of course I thought, I've got to study English...

I also want to travel around Australia on our usual Kodo-only performance tour.



Chieko Kojima in "Hana Hachijo"

2012 KASA/MIX Report

***A report by Yuta Kato, taiko player/
instructor from California and KASA/
MIX 2012 staff member.***

KASA/MIX is a biennial event that brings close to 20 taiko practitioners from not only the US, but around the world to learn from and interact with members/staff of Kodo and their Apprentice Center.

This year, I was fortunate enough to accompany KASA/MIX 2012 as a translating staff member. For a grand total of eleven days, participants from Australia, Canada, England, and the US toured through Ishikawa, Sado Island, and Tokyo, visiting taiko facilities along the way.

Out of the many highlights of this packed trip, the most meaningful must have been the time spent at Kodo's Apprentice Centre. Four days and three nights of jogging up the local hill at 6:45am, cleaning in teams after breakfast, 15 hours of workshops with Yoshikazu Fujimoto, visiting a local folk taiko practice, discussions, learning a shared piece from Toni Yagami, and a farewell party filled with wonderful food, performances, beer, tears and laughter.

If I can sum up into a word, what the participants experienced during their four days at the Apprentice Centre, it would have to be: dream. Sunny weather shining light upon vibrant nature, clean air and water, all the drums and space that one could ever want for taiko, workshops from Yoshikazu, healthy and tasty meals; all of such being experienced with 21 strangers and 16 apprentices who share a common passion for taiko.

Life at the Apprentice Centre was like a dream. And as all dreams do, they end with a wake up call from reality.



Apprentices and Michiko-san hard at work in the kitchen.



KASA/MIX participants and apprentices on the way back down the hill from a morning jog.



Yuta Kato

On the last night at the centre, well after midnight, I rose from my futon to take a trip downstairs to the bathroom. While the participants were falling asleep reminiscing their recent experiences, the apprentices were hard at work cleaning the aftermath of the farewell party. Naturally, I felt horrible. "I feel bad, can I help?" I asked Michiko Chida, who instructs and

leads the apprentices through their 2 years of training. "Iie, kore ga iin desu." she replied with a smile. "No need. This, is what's good." Her words struck me by lightning (it also had a bit to do with her beautiful smile).

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“This, is what’s good.”

Yes.

Past decisions made by participants to come across KASA/MIX, initiatives taken to be a part of this event, and the hard work put in before and after taking vacation time, is all a part of a whole experience called life. A dream is left a dream only because it is kept separate from reality. There’s no need to be sad, the time at the Apprentice Centre was not a dream.

Thank you Michiko-san for teaching me this simple, yet important concept. I have a newfound respect for Kodo and its staff who are teaching great things to the apprentices who are to become future taiko leaders.

Tonight I will cook for my parents. This time around, I won’t dread doing the dishes because that, “is what’s good.”

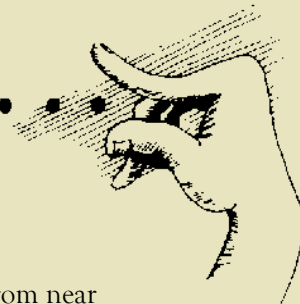


The apprentices gave us a surprise parting performance at the dock.



Group photo prior to learning “Issboni” and playing games.

in brief...



Kodo Special Performances on Sado Island

Thank you very much to everyone who joined us from near and far for the autumn series of Kodo Special Performances on Sado Island in October. This time the performances were held at Ayusu Kaikan in Ogi. The cast of four Kodo distinguished members was joined by Hanayui member Okinawan dancer Mitsue Kinjo and the second year Kodo apprentices.

Next year, we plan to hold another series of these performances in April, July and October again. We hope you'll plan a visit to Sado Island to join us at a performance and explore Sado Island. Details will be announced on our website, so please check the top page and plan an island escape with Kodo!

Collaborations with Tamasaburo Bando

Kodo appeared in the “Tamasaburo Bando Special Performances” at the Old Konpira Oshibai Kabuki Theater, Kanamaru-za, in Kotohira, Kagawa earlier this month. The performances comprised of two acts and Kodo appeared in the second act accompanying dances by Tamasaburo Bando. Kanamaru-za was originally built in 1835 and is now the oldest theater in Japan.

Our next collaboration with Tamasaburo Bando is in “Amaterasu” next year. General schedules are on our website now and we will announce detailed ticket and schedule information in early 2013. As our rehearsals progress, we will share stories from behind the scenes in our preparations for this grand production, so please stay tuned!



WOWOW Program “Blue Man x Kodo - BLUE MAN MEETS WADAIKO!” Nominated for 2012 International Emmy® Award for Arts Programming



WOWOW's “Blue Man x Kodo - BLUE MAN MEETS WADAIKO!” has been nominated for the 40th International Emmy® Awards for Arts Programming. These awards honor the world's best television programs and the 2012 winners will be announced in New York on November 19th. We eagerly await good news of a win! For more about this program, the awards and our connection to the Blue Man Group, please visit our website.

DVD “Blue Man x Kodo: Blue Man Meets Wadaiko” is on sale now at Kodo Online Store. For orders in English, please email Kodo Online Store. Email: store.eng@kodo.or.jp



Kodo Performance Schedule 2012 - 2013

KODO ONE EARTH TOUR 2012: LEGEND

December: [Japan](#)

Sado Island, Niigata, Aichi, Hiroshima, Hyogo, Kanagawa, Tokyo

2013

KODO ONE EARTH TOUR 2013: LEGEND

February - March: [U.S.A.](#)

Nevada, California, Washington, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, Ohio, D.C., West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, New York

May - June: Japan

Details to be announced

NEW

KODO IN BALLET PERFORMANCE "KAGUYAHIME"

February: Opéra National de Paris Palais Garnier, Paris, France

NEW AMATERASU

Collaboration by Tamasaburo Bando & Kodo

July-October: Tokyo, Fukuoka, Kyoto

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

Year-End Performances in Japan



- December 5: Sado Island, Niigata
- December 8-9: Niigata City
- December 11: Nagoya, Aichi
- December 13: Hiroshima City
- December 15: Amagasaki, Hyogo
- December 18: Yokohama, Kanagawa
- December 22-24: Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo

Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Legend

~ U.S.A. ~

February - March

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

- February 1: Las Vegas, NV
- February 3: Berkeley, CA
- February 5: Los Angeles, CA
- February 7: Davis, CA
- February 9: Seattle, WA
- February 10: Seattle, WA
- February 13: Chicago, IL
- February 15: Ann Arbor, MI
- February 17: Minneapolis, MN
- February 19: Des Moines, IA
- February 23: Greenville, SC
- February 25: Chapel Hill, NC
- February 28: Gainesville, FL
- March 2: Clearwater, FL
- March 9: Miami, FL
- March 11: Naples, FL
- March 14: Columbus, OH
- March 16: Washington, D.C.
- March 18: Morgantown, WV
- March 20: Easton, PA
- March 22: Princeton, NJ
- March 24: Newark, NJ
- March 25: Philadelphia, PA
- March 27: Storrs, CT
- March 29: Schenectady, NY



Kodo sends heartfelt condolences to everyone affected by Hurricane Sandy. We sincerely hope that everyone's daily life will return to normal as soon as possible.

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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



Symbols of autumn on Sado Island, side by side, chestnuts and a dragonfly

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EC artwork: Hideaki Masago. Heartbeat Project logo design: Haruna Kino

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Main design: Tam Stewart
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