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KODŌ eNEWS

Issue 39

April 2013

Back in Japan

Thank you to everyone who joined us through February and March at our performances in the USA of *Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Legend*. This tour took us to certain US cities for the first time and back to some of our favorite places, too. In two months on the road, we gave performances in eighteen states. The USA is certainly expansive! A special thank you to people who joined us inter-city, inter-state, and internationally! We were excited to share this production directed by Tamasaburo Bando outside Japan for the first time and we thank everyone who shared their feedback with us on Kodo's Facebook page and by email. Thank you so much for your support!

Now we are all back in Japan and into an April full of rehearsals for an array of upcoming domestic performances. This year's grand event is our collaboration on stage with Tamasaburo Bando in "Amaterasu." Tickets are on sale now for the first month of performances to be held in Tokyo, and the Fukuoka and Kyoto tickets will go on sale soon. In next month's issue, we will feature information on both "Amaterasu" and international performing arts festival "Earth Celebration" 2013. Stay tuned!

In late April, this year's *Kodo Special Performances on Sado Island* will commence, and we look forward to welcoming people to our home ground for concerts and taiko workshops. These run from April 26 to May 6 in the spring, and July 13-21 in the



Shogo Yoshii (black), Kenzo Abe (green), and Masaru Tsuji (dark pink) in lively "Tsukimachi" (Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Legend, USA)

summer.

In this issue, we hope you will enjoy a range of features based on our activities abroad in February and March, which include an interview with Eiichi Saito about the "Kaguyahime" performances in Paris, a report by Yuta Kato on Chieko Kojima's work in Spain as a Japanese Cultural Envoy, and impressions from the newest Kodo members of their first time abroad on tour.

Japan Cultural Envoy Chieko Kojima in Spain

*A report by Yuta Kato, taiko player/
instructor from California*

In Fall of 2012, I eagerly signed up to

assist [Chieko Kojima](#) throughout her five weeks of work in Spain as Japan's Cultural Envoy (January - February, 2013). Originally asked to be an interpreter and performance partner, I quickly realized there was more to the job than initially agreed upon. Little did I know, that this experience would

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Kaguyahime:

“Resetting Our Musical Performance Intuition”

Eiichi Saito, who appeared in the first ever performance of the “Kaguyahime” suite in 1984, also took part in this year’s ballet production at the Paris Opera. Kodo eNews’ Junko Susaki asked Eiichi to reflect on the latest performances at Palais Garnier in February.

Junko Susaki (JS): First, can you tell me about your state of mind after the Paris performances?

Eiichi Saito (ES): I was kind of like “Aah, it’s over... huh...” The day after the final performance, before we left Paris, I walked past Palais Garnier one more time, and it felt like a dream that until the previous day I had been commuting to the Opera House. I realized that from that day I would not be able to go inside the theatre freely, and right at that moment it made me feel somewhat downhearted. I then realized that a building like the majestic Garnier is a place that you usually can not get up close to at a moment’s notice, and I felt a renewed gratitude that I had been allowed to stand on such a wonderful theater’s stage.

JS: Eiichi, you have been involved with this project for over a quarter of a century now,

haven’t you!

ES: That’s right. The first performance was just wadaiko and percussion ensembles performing, without Japanese court music or ballet. And we (Kodo) didn’t really have any understanding about the piece or any of the skills to play with a conductor. Rather than expecting anything musical from us, the composer Mr. Maki Ishii said “Kodo, eat meat and do your best!” So all we could do was our best, as we were told. After that, when I saw the ballet choreographed by Jiří Kylián fused with Maki’s world, I thought “Oh, was it such a great piece all along?!” (laughs). I can’t laugh about it at all anymore.

JS: Since 2010, we have been blessed with three occasions to perform this piece. Where do the difficulties lie for Kodo in this performance?

ES: Kodo always creates a pulse together as one, a groove of rhythm and tempo as we feel each other, but for this type of piece that just won’t work. The conductor Michael de Roo controls the



Eiichi Saito drumming on stage. The leaders of the Eastern (Kodo) and Western percussion troupes perform on stage for the entire dramatic battle scene, while the other musicians drum mainly in the orchestra pit.

tempo to match the movements of the dancers who alternate on a daily basis, so if we drummed with our usual feel, it would become a completely out-of-time mess, and after the performance we (Kodo) would all feel broken with only ourselves to blame. We have to reset our own usual stage intuition, understand that the momentum of the music and the emotions of the audience are completely calculated into the musical score, and devote ourselves to playing how the composer and the conductor ask us to play. I think it was very good for Kodo in years to come that our young members now could experience this production.

JS: So, what do you envisage next for Kodo?

ES: I really want us to study more about Western percussion instruments, and to rehearse playing with a conductor in our general routine. I think it would be great if we could attack the next opportunity to perform this piece armed with sound technique and knowledge. Our artistic director Tamasaburo Bando often describes “free expression inside the mold,” and I felt this time in “Kaguyahime” that I took the first step towards attaining it, that rigidity which remains a challenge to us.



Kaguyahime, the moon princess Photos: Charles Duprat / Opéra national de Paris

Chieko Kojima in Spain*continued from page 1*

turn out to be more than just a job.

Assignment 1: Interpret for a collaboration with [Cesc Gelabert](#)

Culminating into a Work-In-Progress show, the four-week creation process developed two dance pieces; the story of *Tamamonomae*, and another that celebrated the concept of *Kagura* (Shinto dance to entertain the gods). Cesc's process of collaboration effortlessly weaved together the talents of each dancer (Chieko - Japanese folk dance, Cesc - contemporary dance influenced by his Catalan background). Although a new endeavor for Chieko, her openness to this process was worth tremendous praise. The show was a great success, and I look forward to November when the project is planned to be complete. Unexpected: Although extraordinarily established in their respective fields, Chieko and Cesc are just like little kids. When it comes to creation, their imagination is identical to that of children. This difficult way of being is probably the reason why they

remain artists whom the world looks up to for new statements.

Assignment 2: Assist in taiko workshops

For three days, Chieko taught her *onna-uchi* (women's style) taiko workshop to members of Seiya Taiko in Madrid. I remember vividly the look of awe and admiration presented by the participants after her demonstration. Then followed the fun yet informative instruction, where Chieko shared tips and tricks on how to play her style.

Unexpected: Chieko is extremely generous when it comes to teaching. The skills and philosophies attained through years of experience were shared as if it was nothing; allowing participants to get full insight into Chieko's personal and successful artistic process.



Assignment 3: Perform with Chieko

There is no doubt that Chieko is one of the most amazing performers that I have ever seen and worked with. I remember watching Kodo's first video as an early teen, admiring her beautiful movements on the TV screen. That aura has not changed a single bit within the last twenty years. Unexpected: The word "tedious," does not exist in Chieko's personal dictionary. No matter who the audience, she spends hours upon hours researching and preparing for performances.

Chieko's energy knows no limit when it comes to output. To every person that she has worked with, performed for, and has taught, she has given her utmost. The resulting reactions are positive, and very unique to Chieko.

My job as "interpreter" turned out to be much more laborious than I had expected. But the most unexpected was



Chieko Kojima and Cesc Gelabert. Their collaboration will be performed in November 2013.
Photos by Ros Ribas

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Chieko Kojima in Spain*continued from page 3*

that I had received more from Chieko than I had served. If I could say one thing to the Agency of Cultural Affairs, it would be this, “Chieko Kojima’s experiences and skills are unquestionable, and her personality allows positive and pure exchange of valuable cultural assets. Your agency has chosen the perfect person as your envoy.”



Chieko performing for the Madrid audience at the Japanese Consulate.



Isabel Romeo (left) learning techniques on how to hit from Chieko (right) during her “Chieko’s Onna-uchi (Women’s Style Taiko) Workshop”



Chieko explaining her hand-written diagram of music during her workshop for Seiwa Taiko of Madrid.

Taking to the World Stage

New Kodo members talk to Kodo eNews’ Melanie Taylor about their first tour outside Japan, and for some of them, their first time ever abroad.

Rai Tateishi:

“What is your impression of the US audience?”

They do not speak during our performances. When the performance ends, then they get worked up. In Japan, there are often voices coming out from the audience, and they clap during the pieces, so I was surprised by this difference. In the US, when they are moved, they stand up and their eyes

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Rai Tateishi (above) and Shogo Komatsuzaki (left) at an airport waiting for one of many domestic flights on the USA tour

Taking to the World Stage

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sparkle and they applaud us using their entire bodies. Their applause makes the earth tremor. The audience has a powerful impression and when each performance ends, they inject us with power!

Shogo Komatsuzaki:

“You are on tour in the USA now, but next time, where would you like to tour abroad with Kodo?”

One place on my list is South America. We are touring around in North America now and I have experienced first hand the differences in culture and expression between the North, South, East, and West. Even though it's all “America,” South America must be different, right? I think that it would feel really good to hear wadaiko blend with South American music and I want to meet people in South America who play taiko. I think it would, without a doubt, be an exciting trip in many ways.

Akiko Ando:

“What kind of reactions have you felt to Kodo's performances in the USA? To any pieces in particular?”

I strongly feel a difference in reaction between the US audiences and our audiences in Japan. The Japanese audience gets excited along with us, but I feel that the American audience listens to our performance very carefully. I especially feel that in the piece “Yui,” which we perform as an encore. This piece is not included in the main program, and when we start playing the flute for this piece, the audience stops applauding. It makes us think “Oh, they are really listening to us intently.

Yosuke Inoue:

“What feelings do you have when you are on stage with Kodo abroad?”

On this tour, my first tour abroad with Kodo, I went to see some American shows and I looked at mood and vibe of various foreign (not Japanese) people. It made me conclude that when I take to the stage, I should make my own feelings burst forth

and use my body and face even more to express myself. So I am now working to change my passive self into an active self, step by step, on stage during this tour.

Yuta Sumiyoshi:

“Which place in the USA has left an impression on you?”

The place that has left the biggest impression on me is Florida. We had a day off in Florida and we all went to Disney World together. I was surprised by the grand scale of the place and the many ways they worked to entertain their visitors. I was able to experience firsthand why they call the USA “the land of dreams.” In terms of making your visitors enjoy themselves, it made me think that there may be more devices we could use to do the same for our own audiences. This visit became great stimulation for my performances to come, and I was thoroughly refreshed by the day there, too.

Tetsumi Hanaoka:

“What difference between touring in Japan and touring abroad do you like? What difference is tough for you?”

I am enjoying trying the authentic versions of various foreign cuisine during this tour abroad. American food, as well as Mexican, Thai, Italian, Greek, etc. I can try all of these because the USA is home to people from many different nationalities. What is tough is everything in my everyday life abroad. Of course the language is difficult, and things like the way you turn on the faucets in the bathroom, etc, which are different to Japan. So everyday I struggle with things I've never come across before. (laughs)

However, learning about various cultures and ways of life will let me broaden my horizons. I hope to soak up all the things I can only experience outside Japan while I'm on foreign tours, and that I will grow from it!



Akiko Ando gives out chocolates on the tour bus on Valentine's Day



Yosuke Inoue spikes the stage with his fellow performers



Yuta Sumiyoshi in Florida holds a baby crocodile



Tetsumi Hanaoka tunes a shime-daiko (roped drum) with a smile



The Tatakokan exterior and some of Kodo's trucks. That's the Sea of Japan you can see in the centre through the trees.

Tatakokan, the Sado Island Taiko Centre

Johnny Wales talked with Shin'ichi Sogo (or 'Shinchan Sensei' as he is popularly known) who has been in charge of the Sado Island Taiko Centre, a.k.a. Tatakokan (Let's Drum Centre), for the last six years.

Only steps away from Kodo Village on the Ogi Peninsula is the [Sado Island Taiko Centre](#). Built almost entirely of wood it feels like a resort lodge in cottage country. Nestled among the trees it commands a breathtaking view of Mano Bay in the Sea of Japan. You can see Sobama Beach stretching off in the distance with a backdrop of the kilometre-high mountains that make up the northern half of Sado Island.

Within there is a gymnasium-sized rehearsal hall with large windows overlooking the ocean. The perimeter of the hall is lined with a variety of taiko. These include two great drums (*odaiko*) hand made by Kodo members (with a little help from our friend, drum maker Asano Taiko) from 600 year old *keyaki* (Japanese zelkova) logs. There are also *chudaiko* (medium-sized drums) and *okedo* (barrel) drums on stands. The Centre's location next to Kodo Village, surrounded by forest, means that you can drum away to

your heart's content. There are also two Japanese-style rooms with tatami mat floors, a gallery filled with books about taiko and Sado, a full kitchen and dining area and two large balconies with arguably the best views on Sado Island.

The centre was built and is owned by Sado Island. It is run however by Kodo, making for a mutually-beneficial relationship. As Kodo Village isn't open to the public (so the group can get some work done), visitors to Sado can now get a chance to actually see, feel and beat a taiko or even take lessons from long-time Kodo member Shin'ichi Sogo. It can also be borrowed by Kodo to use as additional rehearsal space. Throughout the year other events, concerts and workshops are also occasionally held here by a variety of groups.

For Sado, the Centre offers people another reason to visit the island. Many people – foreigners especially – only know about Sado through its connection with Kodo, and so associate Sado directly with taiko. Being able to actually play the drums when they visit helps them have a more complete

experience of the island. And you are welcome to drop by the Centre when it is open, but not in use, and look around free of charge. If Shinchan Sensei is there, he may even have time to let you have a go at the drums.

The main activity at the Centre is the Taiko Taiken (Taiko Experience) workshops. You will need to book

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The Sado Island Taiko Centre

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ahead for these. In groups ranging from 5 to 80, people of all ages can take part in these sessions led by Shinchan Sensei. He will tailor the content of the workshop to suit the experience of the participants, so whether you have never even touched a taiko, or have played for years, you are guaranteed to learn a thing or two, and have *fun* doing it. The basic workshop covers everything from the proper grip on the provided drumsticks to stance, and involves games like *Taiko Catch Ball*. You can even have a go on the odaiko. The session often climaxes with a highly therapeutic multi-part ensemble piece played by everyone involved.

You can also rent the space and use the drums by the hour at extremely reasonable rates. Get in touch for details. In Shinchan Sensei's 6 years at the helm he figures he has taught

about 25,000 people. And why not? All the Sado Island Taiko Centre offers is mountains, ocean, traditional rural Japan...and the chance to make some very ... serious ... noise.



Shinchan Sensei (right) and staff Tsugumi (centre) and Mirai (left) in the Tatakokan office



Shinchan Sensei expressing his delight in his job on the Centre's balcony. That's Sobama Beach just behind him to his right. Great camping and swimming there.

Kodo Artistic Director Tamasaburo Bando Made Commander of the French Order of Arts and Letters

Recently, Tamasaburo Bando was decorated with the highest honor of France's Order of Arts and Letters, Commander, for his contributions to performing arts and culture to date. At the award ceremony, Mr. Bando was praised as a Kabuki *onnagata* (female-role actor), for collaborations with wonderful artists worldwide, and for his performances at Paris' Théâtre du Châtelet in February this year. In 1991, he received the Chevalier medal from the same order, and this time he was awarded the highest rank for his further achievements in the subsequent years. We offer Mr. Bando our sincere congratulations.



Kodo Performance Schedule 2013

KODO ONE EARTH TOUR 2013: LEGEND FINAL PERFORMANCES

May - June: [Japan](#)

Ibaraki, Shizuoka, Aichi, Nagano, Kyoto, Osaka, Toyama, Niigata, Kanagawa, Gunma, Saitama, Tokyo

AMATERASU

Tamasaburo Bando & Kodo collaboration

July 4-28: Tokyo **Tickets On Sale Now!**

September 5 -29: Fukuoka

October 5 -27: Kyoto

EARTH CELEBRATION 2013

Annual performing arts festival hosted by Sado Island and Kodo. This year features a reunion performance with Tsugaru Shamisen player Hiromitsu Agatsuma and an enhanced outdoor version of Kodo "Dadan."

August 23 (Fri) - 25 (Sun): Sado Island, Japan (Details TBA May 2013)

KODO ONE EARTH TOUR 2013 (New production, title and details TBA)

November - December: Japan

Sado Island, Nagoya, Osaka, Okayama, Joetsu, Nagaoka, Niigata, Yokohama, Tokyo (TBC)

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 2013: Legend

~ JAPAN ~
May - June

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

- May 8: Toride, Ibaraki
- May 10: Mishima, Shizuoka
- May 12: Toyokawa, Aichi
- May 16: Matsumoto, Nagano
- May 18: Kyoto City
- May 19: Takatsuki, Osaka
- May 23: Toyama City
- May 25: Shibata, Niigata
- May 26: Minami-uonuma, Niigata
- May 28: Yokosuka, Kanagawa
- May 29: Sagami-hara, Kanagawa
- June 1: Kanra, Gunma
- June 2: Saitama City
- June 6 - 9: Taito Ward, Tokyo



Rolex Japan Presents "Amaterasu"

Appearing: [Tamasaburo Bando](#), Kodo

Special Appearance: Harei Aine

(Former [Takarazuka Revue](#) male role star)

July 4 (Thu) - 28 (Sun) **Tickets On Sale Now!**

Akasaka ACT Theater, Minato Ward, Tokyo 23 performances

September 5 (Thu) - 29 (Sun)

Hakataza Theater, Fukuoka City 23 performances

October 5 (Sat) - 27 (Sun)

Minami-za Kabuki Theater, Kyoto City 21 performances

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

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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



*Inside the Sado Island Taiko Centre's hall,
some of the taiko stand-by waiting for the next workshop*

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