



## Time to Celebrate!

Firstly, we would like to offer our sincere thanks to everyone who joined us for the Tokyo Performances of “[Amaterasu](#)” throughout July with Tamasaburo Bando and Harei Aine. We are preparing a special photo report for our October issue, but we are sure that audience members will agree that this performance is best experienced in person at the theater. Tickets are now on sale for performances in September in Fukuoka and October in Kyoto. We hope you will take the opportunity to join us there.

Secondly, we would also like to thank everyone who joined us for the summer series of “Kodo Special Performances on Sado Island” in nearby Shukunegi. The cast welcomed audience members from around Japan and even abroad.

In this issue, we have included a report with photos that let you in on the special programme directed by Chieko Kojima.

Now August is upon us, and for Kodo, that means time for [Earth Celebration](#). We have been rehearsing throughout the year with our special guest Tsugaru Shamisen player [Hiromitsu Agatsuma](#) and we can not wait to share the new pieces we have been working on together. We hope you will enjoy reading a personal account of two decades of Earth Celebration by former Kodo staff member and long-time EC team member Daniel Rosen. Like many of us at Kodo, Earth Celebration is a special time of year and an experience we hope to share with everyone again and again.

Kodo eNews will take a break until October due to office closures surrounding Earth Celebration 2013.

We will be back in October with reports from EC and Amaterasu and photos galore. If you can join us in person, all the better! See you soon?



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## Amaterasu Tokyo Performances

July 4 (Thu) - 28 (Sun) Akasaka ACT Theater, Minato Ward, Tokyo  
23 performances

Here is a glimpse of the new-look “Amaterasu” collaboration featuring Tamasaburo Bando, Kodo, and special guest Harei Aine. For schedules for upcoming performances in Western Japan, see [page 9](#).

Top: Tamasaburo Bando as Amaterasu with Yosuke Oda as Susano'o, and junior member Kosuke Urushikubo as Tsukuyomi.

Right: Tamasaburo Bando as Amaterasu, the sun goddess

Bottom: The Kodo members portray various gods in the story who rejoice when Amaterasu (Bando) comes out of her cave at last thanks to dancing by Ameno-uzume, portrayed by Harei Aine.

Photos: © Takashi Okamoto, TBS



## A Lifetime of Earth Celebration

by Daniel H. Rosen

In 1995 I was living in Osaka and working for a small advertising firm. This was before the age of the internet, and I had a subscription to the now-defunct *Kansai Time Out* magazine. Inside the pages of the June issue, I found a detailed account of one author's adventures on Sado Island during something called "[Earth Celebration](#)". I read about drumming, workshops, open-air concerts, camping on the beach and a performing arts group named Kodo. This was all apparently part of Japan's oldest outdoor music festival. How had I never heard of this before?

I did not know where Sado Island was, nor did I know anything about the Kodo drummers. But something about that article piqued my interest and I simply knew I had to go. So I grabbed a tent, a sleeping bag and change of clothes and made the half-day journey from Osaka to Sado the following weekend.

What awaited me there was an adventure well beyond my expectations. During the day I attended [workshops](#)



*Daniel explains the wonders of the festival to guests at the EC Info Centre (2004)*

with music legends like African drummer Babatunde Olatunji, as well as Kodo's own [Yoshikazu Fujimoto](#). Then in the evening I watched these same humble teachers, who had patiently taught us to drum in an intimate setting, come together on a colossal outdoor stage to create new music that originated in two completely different worlds but was woven together seamlessly. At night I camped under the stars on Sobama Beach and sat around the campfire with new friends I had just met that day, sharing *sake*

and stories of where we had come from and where we were going. Everyone at EC was a potential friend; all you had to do was say hello. It was if somehow crossing the Japan Sea together had made us all kindred spirits. In three short days I made friends that would go on to become important inspirations in my life, many of whom I still keep in touch with to this day. For three days everything seemed right with the world.

Upon returning to Osaka the daily grind of reality quickly reclaimed my newfound consciousness, but a bit of this "EC magic" always stayed with me. The experience made such a vivid impression on me, that the following year I decided to contact Kodo and ask if they might need some help at the festival. They did. In the summer of '96 I returned to the island, this time as Earth Celebration staff, and in the nearly two decades since, August has meant one thing for me and one thing only; Earth Celebration (EC).

Every year my duties changed and expanded, ranging from working at the information center to acting as an interpreter and liaison for foreign artists. The anecdotes I have



*Backstage with Huun-Huur-Tu and Kodo's Motofumi Yamaguchi (2000)*

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## A Lifetime of Earth Celebration

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accumulated throughout the years are too numerous to recount, but certain moments remain etched in my memory. I remember the first time I helped build the stage in Shiroyama Park, watching each piece of the enormous structure carried up the narrow, winding path to the venue, carefully assembled by a dedicated team that included the members of Kodo themselves. I remember hearing the Tuvan throat singers Huun-Huur-Tu sing for the first time and thinking I had never heard anything so beautifully powerful in my entire life. I remember watching and listening in amazement as the rhythms of tap dancer Tamango were echoed first by the conga beats of the legendary Giovanni Hidalgo and then matched by tabla master [Zakir Hussain](#). I am not a musician, but Earth Celebration taught me the power of collaboration and continues to inform my sensibilities in my own artistic endeavors.

But more than any of these isolated incidents, EC remains magic for me in its ability to transcend the mundane and remind us all of the best life has to offer. The festival shows us that no matter where we come from, or how we spend the other 362 days of the year, for three days life can offer new friendships, new ways of communicating, and new artistic possibilities. For most of us, “real life” is rarely like this, so the pilgrimage we make each year to Sado Island is an important reminder of life’s potential to be extraordinary.

Daniel H. Rosen currently resides in Tokyo where he is the director of the creative collective [TokyoDex](#). In 2011 he directed a social media project and [promotional video](#) designed to bring international guests back to EC after the Great Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami. This experience was captured by a TV crew from Television Niigata Network in a [ten-minute news feature](#) that aired directly after the festival.



The walk up to Shiroyama Park and the magical open-air concert arena that awaits.



In the EC Info Centre with Johnny Wales, one of the first friends Daniel met on Sobama Beach back in 1995.



In Shiroyama Park with photographer Buntaro Tanaka and cameraman Hiro Ikematsu (2011)



## Report on Kodo Special Performances on Sado Island - Summer

Last year the *Kodo Special Performances on Sado Island* began here on our home ground. In July, we held our second summer season for this concert series, which took place at the Shukunegi Community Hall, a little playhouse is a historic village where time seems to stand still. The cast was based around Kodo's *distinguished members*, who were also the founders of Kodo. They were joined by *Masami Miyazaki* and *Rai Tateishi* for the summer series, and the addition of these two resulted in a captivating new programme. Highlights included a melodic, layered duet version of "Yamauta" by *Motofumi Yamaguchi* & *Rai Tateishi*, graceful dancing by *Chieko Kojima* with *Masami Miyazaki* in "Nishimonai," and *Yoshikazu Fujimoto*'s powerful "O-daiko" (big drum) performance. The five performers all brought their own unique traits to the stage, which melded together to warmly envelop the entire audience in the cozy hall. The second year Kodo apprentices also took part in the performances bringing a youthful energy to the at-home concerts. These summer performances are the last "Special Performances" on Sado for the year, but next year we will host a new series and we look forward to sharing the attractions of both Sado Island and Kodo with new and repeat audiences then!

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*Yoshikazu Fujimoto plays "O-daiko." The big drum is always popular with young and old. These family-friendly concerts welcomed audience members aged 0 & up.*



*"Hana Hachijo"*



*"Nishimonai"*



*"Yamauta"*

**Kodo Special Performances on Sado Island**

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2nd year Kodo apprentices, joined by Masami Miyazaki and Rai Tateishi, play "Yatai-bayashi." Performing in these special concerts gives them on-stage training and experience they can use if they become Kodo members after their studies.

**Comments from the Audience**

"I was sooo moved. Moved to tears. Please take care of yourselves and do your best."  
(Female, 30s, Niigata)

"I liked the "closeness" that you do not get at a Kodo performance in Tokyo."  
(Female, 60s, Tokyo)

"The power was great. I felt the performances by the Kodo members and apprentices were brimming with individuality." (Female, 20s, Sado Island)

"I really felt the Kodo team. I enjoyed myself. Thank you."  
(Female, 40s, Kanagawa)

"I want you to share the traditions of Japan and the vibrations of Kodo far and wide, nationwide and abroad."  
(Male, 40s, Kanagawa)



## Coming Up: One Earth Tours In Japan and Europe

"Kodo One Earth Tour: Mystery," the second work directed by artistic director Tamasaburo Bando, following his first production "Legend," will debut on our home ground, Sado Island, this November. The production will then embark on a month-long tour to Aichi, Osaka, Okayama, Niigata, Kanagawa and Tokyo in 2013 and continue on a nationwide tour in 2014. For details on the late 2013 premiere season schedule, please see our [website](#).

Tamasaburo Bando's first work "Kodo One Earth Tour: Legend" debuted in May 2012 and toured throughout Japan. On its USA tour in 2013, over 10,000 audience members came to watch the performances held in 25 cities from Las Vegas to New York. At long last, this production will travel to Europe in 2014, starting its two-month tour in Italy and continuing with performances in France, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Russia. In Paris, France, "Legend" will hold five concerts back-to-back at Théâtre du Châtelet, where Kodo "Dadan" held four sell-out concerts in February 2012. For further information and schedules, please see our [website](#).



## Sado's *Bunya Ningyo* (Puppet Drama): Then and Now

***Kodo eNew's Johnny Wales visited a rehearsal of the Mushimon-za Bunya Puppet Troupe in Osaki, in the mountains of Southern Sado.***

Sado Island is blessed with a number of traditional performing arts. With the Bullet Train from Tokyo and Jet Foil hydroplane now in service it is much less remote than days past when it was an isle of exile. This remoteness no doubt contributed to the creation and preservation of a unique culture forged together from many strands from throughout Japan. The presence of Sado's gold mine – one of the largest in the world for over 300 years – eased the tax burden on its inhabitants. There is a favourable climate, rich soil and bounteous surrounding waters so islanders could and can produce more food than they consume. All these elements combined to allow enough time and wherewithal for the arts to flourish.

There are 3 different genres of puppet theatre on Sado; *Sekkyo*, *Noroma* and *Bunya*. *Bunya Ningyo* – recognized by the government as An *Important Intangible Folk Art* – is unique to Sado, though a group of enthusiasts

has recently formed on the nearby mainland. *Bunya* puppet drama is much simpler than the very grand and sophisticated *Bunraku* puppets of Osaka with its three manipulators per puppet, but no less fascinating. Think of it like comparing the Delta Blues and Grand Italian Opera. *Bunya* probably resembles today what *Bunraku* looked like in its beginnings. The two genres perform many of the same plays however, tales of maids and samurai and their honour, swordplay, bewitchings and plenty of tears. Most of the plays in the repertoire were penned by the 'Shakespeare of Japan', Chikamatsu Monzaemon.

*Bunya* traces its roots to the late 17th century Kyoto musician, Okamoto *Bunya*. His style of music, known as *Bunya Bushi* (Crying Tunes), lost favour in the capital but survives to this day on Sado. In 1872 a man from Osaki in Sado called Matsunosuke, picked up some *Sekkyo* puppets which had long existed on the island, and performed them to the accompaniment of *Bunya bushi*. *Bunya* Puppet Drama was born. He also made technical developments including the introduction of an overheard curtain and a palace upstage centre into which where fitted sliding doors allowing for quick changes of scenes. The puppets' heads were made more mobile with a jointed neck and the waist curtain was lowered so the puppets didn't have to



*Shosen Honma performing Bunya at one of the temples he cares for in Osaki.*

be held up high over one's head. To this end too an opening was placed in the back of the puppets' kimono so it could be held directly in front of the puppeteer for more precise and emotive control. This is the key to Japanese puppetry's expressive beauty. The puppeteer isn't removed from his doll through mechanical devices like strings or rods, so the puppet's body accurately mirrors the body movements of the puppeteer. All the audience had to do was pretend the puppeteers were invisible.

By the late 19th century there were more than ten troupes around Sado and a pamphlet of 1882 tells of a *Bunya* festival where plays were performed for a continuous 5 days and nights. Up till WWII, performances were still common throughout the island at temples, shrines and even the large main rooms of farmhouses, but the war nearly led to its extinction.

There are only about five or six truly active groups today. The hamlet of



*Mushimon-za performance at Osaki Matsuri, April 2012*

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**Sado's Bunya Ningyo: Then and Now**  
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Osaki, nestled in a mountain valley in Hamochi, southern Sado, is home of two troupes, the long-established Osaki-za and the Mushimon-za. This group was formed five years ago by young people who were anxious to carry on the tradition. Mushimon-za means *Stubborn Troupe* in Sado dialect. The group is taught by three of the younger (in their 60's) members of Osaki-za. The shamisen and recitation (*tayu*) is taught by Shosen Honma, the local Buddhist priest and member of a Hawaiian-style band. The Bunya reciter accompanies himself on shamisen and does all the characters' voices and exposition. Mr. Honma says he began (reluctantly at first) because he didn't want to be the generation that dropped the cultural torch.

Here is a sampling of replies from Mushimon-za when asked about the appeal of Bunya Ningyo.

Teacher Fumio Ohba says he loves to be able to make the audience feel powerful emotions, and were it not for that there would be no point in doing it. For Ai Tanaka, the appeal is the way her own movement *becomes* the movement of the puppet. She loves to lose herself while performing. Haruka Yahagi also loves the feeling of



3 very old puppets in the Osaki-za collection. These are 3 stock characters from left to right: the handsome hero, the mountain demoness and not-very-nice bad guy.



Ai Tanaka and Haruka Yahagi rehearsing.

becoming immersed in the role. She says that when she is performing the cares of the world disappear and she becomes free from thought.

Kotaro Takeuchi, one of the group's *tayu* (storyteller and shamisen player) has played many genres of music and says that one usually performs one number and its over in 3 or 5 minutes. But Bunya is fascinating because it is a long story set to music in different scenes, and you have to provide the voices for all the characters, tell the

story and fill in with music to enhance the atmosphere. Very challenging. Minori Imai likes to imagine the hearts and minds of people from the past, and it gives her a chance to make a direct connection with that past. For Kohei Sano, it is Bunya's rustic simplicity and the fact that it grew from the soil of the island.

The future of this venerable performing art now rests in their young and, let's hope, stubborn hands.



Haruka demonstrates the puppet without kimono. Bunya puppets have no legs and the left hand is merely suggested by a slightly bent wooden stick, thereby eliminating the need for the extra two puppeteers of Bunraku. The puppet's right hand is also the puppeteer's, while the left hand controls the *shingi* (heart stick) connected to the head, which can twist left and right. Pulling the string tilts the head up and down on the neck. Below the neck is the shoulder board to which the kimono is affixed. The head is made of very light paulownia wood covered with gesso and painted.

Note Haruka's left hand controlling the puppet's head and her right hand serving as the puppet's right hand. Note too that the puppet is parallel to the puppeteer so its shoulders are always square to the puppeteer's. Because of that, you might be surprised to know it's all in the feet of the puppeteer.



## Kodo Performance Schedule 2013 - 2014

### 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

### "AMATERASU"

Tamasaburo Bando & Kodo collaboration

September 5 -29: Fukuoka

October 5 -27: Kyoto

### KODO ONE EARTH TOUR 2013: MYSTERY

November - December: Japan

Sado Island, Aichi, Osaka, Okayama, Niigata, Kanagawa, Tokyo (TBC)

### 2014

### KODO ONE EARTH TOUR 2014: LEGEND

January - March: Europe

Italy, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Sweden

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

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

### "Amaterasu"

~ JAPAN ~

September, October 2013

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

September 5 (Thu) - 29 (Sun)

Hakataza Theater, Fukuoka City

[Tickets Now On Sale](#)

October 5 (Sat) - 27 (Sun)

Minami-za Kabuki Theater, Kyoto City

[Tickets Now On Sale](#)



# Earth Celebration 2013

Outdoor Festival on Sado Island, Niigata, Japan



**KODO** Taiko Performing Arts Ensemble

Shiroyama Concerts: 8/23 (Fri), 8/24 (Sat) & 8/25 (Sun)  
Ogi Shiroyama Park Special Stage

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For event details, please visit the [Earth Celebration 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



*One of the many beach lovers on Sado Island*

## Resources

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[Kodo Bravia Promotion Video](#)

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