

Season's Greetings & Goodbye to "Kodo eNews"

Welcome to the final issue of Kodo eNews. This monthly journal began in December 2009 and it takes a bow now in December 2013. We realize that as the times change, many people wish to read articles online and share, tweet and post links to our concert information, stage photos and articles. So instead of creating our PDF email newsletter, we will focus more on our online content: our [website](#), a new-look blog coming soon, and our [English](#) & [Japanese](#) Facebook pages and more. Thank you very much for subscribing to Kodo eNews and reading our news each month. The production team, past and present, have shared some of their memories of eNews and favorite things about Sado Island on page 8, as a thank you message and goodbye to you all.

At the end of November, the brand new "[One Earth Tour: Mystery](#)" began on Sado Island and is currently on tour in Japan until December 24th. This production will continue its tour in Japan in 2014 and then in North America in 2015 (TBC). For further details of our upcoming performances, please see page 10.

The Kodo Group wishes you a happy holiday season and a very happy new year. Please keep in touch with Kodo via [Facebook](#) and by subscribing to our new performance information email. Details will be available on



Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Mystery ("Shishimai")

our website in mid-December. For everyone who will join us in the near future for our "One Earth Tour" in Japan and Europe, and other solo and small ensemble [performances](#), we look forward to seeing you there! Thank you all for your support to date and in advance for 2014 and beyond!

Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Mystery

A report by Sachiko Tamashige

In the darkness, it is mostly invisible, apart from the dim outline of a mountain in the middle of the stage. Narrowing your eyes, you can see a glimpse of something moving like a wave, then giant creatures emerging that turn out to be three giant snakes

entangled with each other. As it gradually reveals its true form, you anticipate encountering an amazing, beautiful but scary world. Three snakes wriggled themselves free from each other with glinted scales in the dim light. The sound of Taiko drumming resonates one's heart beat and increases

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Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Mystery*continued from page 1*

the uncanny feeling and the eerie melody of Nohkan, the bamboo flute used in Noh and Kabuki theater, will invite you to the realm of Mystery. The three giant snakes disappear into the darkness and are followed by the several round lantern lights floating in the air like giant fireflies. Their singing voices sound like an old lullaby which transports your mind to a childhood memory or moment of nostalgia. "Where are we?" Each of you might ask yourself this question in the darkness with your mind flying freely from here to there. The sound and unusual visual effect of Kodo touches upon the deep layers of your psyche and transcends the reality around you to another world.

The brand new production, "Kodo One Earth Tour: Mystery" was revealed with this mesmerizing scene guided by the three giant snakes on November 23 at its premiere to the public on Sado Island, the homeland of Kodo. This new production directed by Tamasaburo Bando consists of 18 scenes, including ones inspired by traditional folk dance such as *Jamai*,



"Jamai," based on the great serpent dance from Iwami Kagura (Iwami Region, Shimane)

Namahage and *Shishimai*, scenes newly created by members of Kodo such as *Yomichi* and *Yuyami*, and pieces from the classic Kodo repertoire. Light, Darkness, and Reverberations are key elements that create the ambience of the mysterious space and time, where sacred beasts like lions or demons appear. This artistic collage of music and dance, "Mystery," has taken shape through numerous rehearsals and new approaches. As for *Jamai*, or

the "Serpent Dances" derived from "Orochi," or "the Great Serpent" from Iwami Kagura (dance and music for gods) of Shimane Prefecture, the Kodo performers absorbed the skills and spirit of this traditional folk dance of Kagura by learning from the local performers through an artist-in-residence experience in Shimane. Kagura was originally performed to

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"Hekireki"



Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Mystery*continued from page 2*

bring down gods on the occasion of rituals to worship or to pray for gods in the sacred places such as shrines. Japanese traditional music, dance, and festivals have their roots in ancient rituals for the gods. Taiko, or the Japanese traditional drum, also used to be regarded as a sacred instrument because of its magical power to invite the gods when wishing for rain and so on. “In the folk arts that have been handed down across Japan, there’s a sacredness, an air of mystery within prayers. The drums express this, and I’d like for the audience to feel it. I hope theater-goers will experience the same sort of otherworldly splendor that you sense at a temple or a shrine, or when you discover things in nearby woods,” said the artistic director Tamasaburo. In the “Serpent Dances” that have been handed down from old, the defeated serpent is endowed with a surprising level of sacredness.

In this performance, many things will emerge from out of the darkness. There are dramatic and theatrical elements like never before throughout the programme.

“A space or time of wonder can only be experienced by those who were actually there. Religious rituals and arts as well have been refined over a long span of time from



the inspiration of those who went before us. In this staging of drums I hope the audience will enjoy to the fullest that magical sense of space and time.” – Tamasaburo Bando

Sachiko Tamashige, Journalist

Studied social psychology and journalism at Waseda University, art history at Sotheby’s and film anthropology at Goldsmith College in London. Worked for NHK, BBC, and Channel 4 etc. between 1990 and 2001 in London. Writing for newspapers such as Japan Times, newspaper weekly magazines such as AERA, monthly magazines such as Blue Prints, etc. specializing in contemporary art, architecture, design and Japanese traditional culture.

Notes from the Producer

One day, while we were sharing a meal, the artistic director and some Kodo performers were discussing the future of Kodo. They spoke about the future direction of the group and the kind of expression they want to explore moving forward.

You could say that both our fields of performing arts and the world we live in differ greatly from that of our artistic director. For this reason alone, his demands on us create significant challenges. If we prepare for a performance with our own concepts,

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“Ake no Myojo” (left) & “Namahage” (right)



“Kodo One Earth Tour 2014: Legend” Heads to Europe

January - March 2014

“Kodo One Earth Tour: Legend” debuted in May 2012 and toured throughout Japan. On its USA tour earlier this year, over 10,000 audience members came to watch the performances held in 25 cities from Las Vegas to New York. Finally, this production will travel to Europe in early 2014, starting its two-month

tour in Italy and continuing with performances in France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Estonia, Finland, 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.

Tickets for “Kodo One Earth Tour 2014: Legend” in Europe are on sale now. For details see [page 10](#) and our [website](#).



The opening night performance of this tour will be at Auditorium Parco della Musica - Sala Santa Cecilia, Rome, Italy (Photo from 2004 tour)



“Yatai-bayashi”

Updates from KASA

Kodo Arts Sphere America (KASA) is a nonprofit organization created in 2002 by Kodo and American taiko representatives. Incorporated and operated from its base in California, KASA’s mission is to facilitate intercultural exchanges and communication between Japanese and American taiko players and communities.

KASA just created its own [Facebook page](#). They have many exciting activities in the works for 2014, so please “like” the page for regular updates!

Plans are underway for the 2014 KASA/Mix tour to Sado Island in early September. Sign up to take part in this unique opportunity to live and train with Kodo apprentices at the Kodo Apprentice Centre. Open to participants worldwide, you’ll make friends and memories to last a lifetime. Additional details will be posted as they become available. To join KASA’s mailing list, please contact KASA Program Director Donna Ebata: kodoarts@earthlink.net



Chieko Kojima

An interview with Kodo eNews' Johnny Wales, who celebrates a milestone birthday with Chieko Kojima in 2013, the year of the snake.

Chieko Kojima was born in Tochigi Prefecture in 1953. After studying jewellery design at Musashino Art University she read an essay by Ei Rokusuke in which he talked about a group of young people called Ondekoza who were making interesting music and whose eyes shone with an impressive light. Chieko had been to Sado once before because of her interest in far-flung and spiritually-intense places.



Chieko today

She went to a concert in Shinjuku and was astonished, especially by the intensity of the players' eyes, with sweat and snot (her words) flying everywhere. And when meeting them after the show these performers — who looked like wild demons on the stage — were so gentle and unaffected in real life. She was hooked, and becoming a bit of a groupie, went to every tiny venue in which they appeared, bringing gifts of fruit and homemade stew. Eventually the group's original founder, Tagayasu Den, asked if she wanted to join. Delighted, she then only had to convince her parents.

In the early years the women's roles in Ondekoza were confined largely to dancing. With Mr. Den's departure Eitetsu Hayashi took over as artistic director and the group reformed as Kodo. Eitetsu was keen to experiment. He had Chieko, for instance, playing *Yatai-bayashi* on the shimesaiko.

Chieko worked for many years as the principal dancer, doing both traditional and original work. At the age of 32 though — as the group's lone female dancer — she began to feel out of place, as if Kodo was really all about the men. In order to restore her passion for the group she needed to grab something

for herself, to embark on a journey of self-discovery. She approached Hanchō (Toshio Kawauchi, the group's leader who himself had gone to India for a couple of months of study) and he approved of a year-long sabbatical. Chieko felt something was missing from the spiritual side of recent Japanese performing arts, and had heard that this was not the case in Bali where the arts were still deeply religious in nature.

And so off she went, and found what she had been seeking. She prayed from first thing in the morning with the other dancers, making offerings at shrines dedicated to the various gods surrounding them. Performance *itself* is a kind of offering, an idea that has remained fundamental to her ever since.

One of the great differences from Japanese folk dance — where the face is essentially expressionless — with Balinese dance is that the eyes, the mouth, each individual finger, even one's toes are used in creating an expression. And you *have* to smile. She discovered that putting on an angry face is quite simple but to put



Chieko during the "Kodo & TaikoZ in Concert" tour in Australia, 2012
(Photos by Karen Steains)



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Chieko Kojima

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on a lovely and natural smile while dancing was a real challenge. Balinese dance also shows off the limbs of the dancer so it needs long and lithesome limbs and fingers. Japanese dance on the other hand hides these features beneath the kimono. Something both traditions have in common is that the dancer's centre of gravity is very low to the ground.

Not too long after returning to Sado feeling refreshed and recharged she married a fellow Kodo member. Their daughter was born a couple of years later. Chieko says that having a child really opened her eyes. It gave her a much more global outlook and made her think seriously about what kind of world she wanted for her.

Now 24, their daughter has graduated from university and plays jazz drums in her former university's big band.

When her baby was young Chieko couldn't tour with the group but she still wanted to dance. She needed a creative outlet where she could celebrate her femininity. This was also something of a reaction to the still-pervasive male atmosphere and image of Kodo. So together with Kodo's Yoko Fujimoto and Okinawan dancer Mitsue Kinjo she formed *Hanayui*. They began performing at small venues around Sado and encouraged an intimate, warm, friendly atmosphere full of laughter, where children would be encouraged to attend. They have since performed and given workshops all around the world.

Since 1998, when Chieko does a solo project with guests not associated with Kodo, she does so under the banner of *Yukiai* (*Go and Meet*). This year under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture she was invited to Barcelona to work with the renowned contemporary dancer and choreographer Cesc Gelabert. This cross-cultural project is

Chieko (front centre) with Kodo in 1983

Chieko dances "Nishimonai"



Improvisational dance, circa 1988.

the story of a fox and will require more comings and goings of the two artists before its debut.

Chieko has reached (semi-) retirement age from Kodo's stage and so will have more time in the future for solo work. Up till now she hasn't talked much publicly about being married, being a mother and about getting older. This is because she wanted to be seen without preconceptions, purely for her work as it appeared on stage. But now she wants the person she is and where she has *been* to be the base upon which she is seen. She is the sum of her experiences.

Chieko very much wants to continue travelling the world giving workshops and performances to various taiko groups. Previously she was not terribly interested in teaching, considering that

she had far too much to learn before she could take on that responsibility. Now she realizes students and teachers are actually learning together and that teaching is also a great way to learn. It is a way of passing along what she has gleaned from being with Ondekoza and Kodo for over 37 years. In turn, students use all or something of what they have learned to incorporate into their own art, helping them to forge their own artistic personalities. There is so much satisfaction in the moment when she sees that change in the expression on the face of a student who has gleaned something from her teaching. They have experienced their own revelation, or even revolution.

Chieko also wants to continue to dance, at least until she is 80. With age and experience a performer's 'presence' only grows.

Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Mystery*continued from page 3*

we cannot meet his demands. What is our artistic director aiming to do? What do we need to do to achieve those goals? These questions prompted us to ponder the very meaning of appearing on stage as opposed to just playing taiko.

The answer has to begin with us shedding the image of ourselves that we have forged to date as taiko players. In order for the Kodo performing arts ensemble to carry on, Kodo cannot merely play taiko; the group also has to experiment with new stage productions that captivate more varied and vast audiences. This ensemble has been a leader in the taiko world for many years, so we tend to end up imitating a fixed image of our own, but we do not want this image to limit our creative process.

“Mystery” incorporates lavish theatrical



elements with new costumes and props like never before. Best of all, the pieces Kodo performs in this production are almost all new compositions. This performance feels like one answer to our questions about Kodo's future, a work that was sparked by deeper

dialogue and enhanced collaboration with our artistic director. We hope that this new creation will reverberate with this renewed passion and touch the hearts of our audience.

Nobuyuki Nishimura, Producer

Kodo Juku 2013 - Eiichi Saito's Live-In Taiko Workshop

A report by Michiko Chida, Kodo Cultural Foundation

On the day that everyone was scheduled to travel here for **Kodo Juku**, a typhoon was expected to hit Sado Island. I was anxious about the storm everyday that followed that ominous weather forecast. The participants must have all been worried, too. However, it seems that our prayers were answered, and on the morning of Day 1, miraculously the waves were calm and everyone made it to Sado on schedule.

The 19 participants came from a variety of places and their ages ranged from 15 to 60 years old, but from Day 2, all of a sudden everyone clicked as a group. Their minds were set free and their taiko playing made

a really feel-good sound. During the workshops, the five male 2nd-year apprentices were in charge of all the meal preparation and from the kitchen they could really feel the “essence” of that sound.

Our encounter with all of the participants, of different ages and backgrounds, is our treasure. The apprentices are determined to see everyone again, but next time they want to be seen on the Kodo stage.



Eiichi Saito's annual Kodo Juku taiko workshops have come to be the crux of his life's work

From the Kodo eNews Production Team

We have stayed behind the scenes and our computer screens putting Kodo eNews together for the last four years, but for the final issue, here are some words and photographs from us.

Melanie Taylor

Kodo eNews Production: Issues 1 - 46 **Memorable Issue, Article or Photo:**

One of my favourite issues was [March 2011](#). It was great to relive going to Australia with Yoshikazu Fujimoto for the 5-day Taiko Intensive with TaikOz, and to read Joe Small's detailed account of being a Kodo apprentice in winter. Also, the solo work of Yoshie Sunahata and Shogo Yoshii, who I managed throughout 2010, was shared through photos and the good news of award nominations. Memorable articles were all performer interviews for the reports I wrote myself, rather than translate. I can still remember those long, in-depth conversations. Each one made me love my job more.

Favorite Season on Sado Island:

It's hard to choose one, but it has to be summer. The first time I went to Sado Island was for Earth Celebration. Each summer I went back, it felt like

coming home. I ended up making Sado my home from 2007 to 2013. Summer is the season for Earth Celebration, swims, BBQs, fireworks, visitors and summer festivals.

Favorite Place on Sado Island:

I like the two tips: Futatsugame in the north, and Sawasaki in the south. Staring out to sea from the tip of the island, you feel like you're at the edge of the world. It's liberating and the sea air always feels freshest there.

Favorite Delicacy on Sado Island:

Before I moved to Sado, I only had eyes for udon. Now, I like handmade soba too. The soba on Sado Island reminds me of the fresh pasta in Italy. It's delicious all year round, hot and cold.

Message to Kodo eNews readers:

I worked on every issue of Kodo eNews from December 2009 to December 2013. It is both a feel-good ritual and a labour of love. It has been a pleasure sharing stories and photos with all of our readers and I hope we have brought you closer to Kodo. Stay with us through our blog, website, emails and Facebook page in the years to come, too!

Sawasaki Lighthouse



Melanie at
Futatsugame, Sado's
northernmost tip



Fresh handmade
soba (buckwheat)
noodles, Shukunegi



Tam making wind chimes at Ogi Community
Centre, July 2010

Tam Stewart

Kodo eNews Production: Issues 1-23 **Memorable Issue, Article or Photo:**

There have been so many astonishing issues but Issue 4 (shown left) was memorable, with the powerful yet intimate photos of the Ubusuna cast; all of Masami Miyazaki's "Sammy" cartoons; and the feature about apprentices planting rice in spirals.

Favorite Season on Sado: All of them! One of the amazing things about Sado Island is how dramatically its character changes season to season. It has a vast, inspirational repertoire, like Kodo.

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Kodo eNews Production Team

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Favorite Places on Sado: On top of Onogame Rock on the north coast; the upper deck of the Sado Island Taiko Centre (Tatakokan); a hot ofuro (bath) at Ogi Onsen; Sobama Beach at dawn; the back streets of Shukunegi Village.

Favorite Delicacy on Sado: Buri (yellowtail) sashimi in November; wakame udon at Ryotsu Port; and anything prepared by Watanabe-san at Hananoki Inn.



Wakame Udon, Ryotsu Port

Message to Kodo eNews Readers: It was a great joy and privilege to work on so many issues, and to spend so much time on Sado Island with my friends at Kodo. It changed my life forever and I am deeply grateful, to them and to all those who cherish Kodo around the world.

Chieko Wales

Kodo eNews Production: Issues 24 - 46

Favourite Season on Sado: Spring. I came to live on Sado in January 1986. Two months later, when I found a little white ume (Japanese plum) blossom, I jumped up and down under the tree. Winter is nice too, but every early-spring flowers bring me great joy.

Favorite Place on Sado: Sobama Beach

Favorite Delicacy on Sado: Freshly harvested bamboo shoot and wakame seaweed



Japanese plum

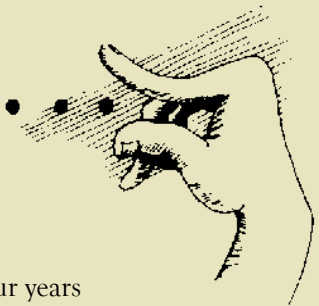


Bamboo shoot and wakame seaweed



Sobama Beach

in brief.....



In September this year, Kodo said farewell to its Daisho Rehearsal Hall in Mano on Sado Island. This is the former elementary school which was the base to Kodo's antecedent group Ondekoza in the seventies and housed Kodo until 1988. Since Kodo Village opened in 1988, the Daisho building served as Kodo's Apprentice Centre for four years and has been used as an alternate rehearsal space for the Kodo group. Now the facility has been returned to the city of Sado. We are grateful for the decades that it housed our activities and all the people we met on its grounds. For more on Daisho, please see Johnny Wales' article "Kodo and their Schools" in our [Sep. 2012 issue](#).

In other news, public relations, advertising and newsletter editorial staff member Junko Susaki will leave Kodo at the end of December 2013. We offer our sincere thanks to everyone who supported her many years of work with our group.

Kodo Performance Schedule

2013 - 2014

KODO ONE EARTH TOUR 2013: MYSTERY

December: Japan
Aichi, Osaka, Okayama, Niigata, Kanagawa, Tokyo

2014

KODO ONE EARTH TOUR 2014: LEGEND

January - March: Europe
Italy, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Estonia, Finland, Russia
*This tour no longer includes Austria due to unforeseen circumstances.

KODO ONE EARTH TOUR 2014: MYSTERY

May - June 2014: Japan
Kagoshima, Miyazaki, Fukuoka, Nagasaki, Kagawa, Ehime, Kyoto, Nagano, Niigata, Ibaraki, Saitama, Kanagawa, Chiba, Tokyo, Osaka (TBC), Shiga (TBC)
*This production will also tour in Japan in Sep. - Oct. 2014 and is scheduled to tour in North America in 2015 (TBC).

KODO SPECIAL PERFORMANCES ON SADO ISLAND 2014: SPRING
April 27 - May 6: Sado Island, Niigata

EARTH CELEBRATION 2014

August 22-24: Sado Island, Niigata

SOLO & SMALL GROUP PROJECTS, SPECIAL EVENTS, WORKSHOPS,
NEWS & INFORMATION
See our [website](#) for details.

Kodo One Earth Tour

2014: Legend

~ EUROPE ~

JANUARY - MARCH 2014

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

- January 29: Rome, Italy
- January 31: Milan, Italy
- February 1: Milan, Italy
- February 2: Milan, Italy
- February 7: Paris, France
- February 8: Paris, France
- February 9: Paris, France
- February 11: Paris, France
- February 12: Paris, France
- February 15: Poole, UK
- February 17: Birmingham, UK
- February 19: Liverpool, UK
- February 20: Manchester, UK
- February 22: Dublin, Ireland **NEW**
- February 23: Dublin, Ireland **NEW**
- February 25: Gateshead, UK
- February 28: Brighton, UK
- March 3: Munich, Germany
- March 4: Munich, Germany
- March 5: Berlin, Germany
- March 9: Stuttgart, Germany
- March 11: Frankfurt, Germany
- March 15: Hannover, Germany
- March 17: Groningen, Netherlands
- March 19: The Hague, Netherlands
- March 22: Uppsala, Sweden
- March 24: Tallinn, Estonia
- March 26: Helsinki, Finland **NEW**
- March 31: Moscow, Russia

Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Mystery

~ JAPAN ~



- Dec. 3: Nagoya, Aichi
- Dec. 7 & 8: Osaka City
- Dec. 10: Okayama City
- Dec. 13: Joetsu, Niigata
- Dec. 14: Nagaoka, Niigata **SOLD OUT**
- Dec. 15: Niigata City **SOLD OUT**
- Dec. 18: Yokohama, Kanagawa
- Dec. 20 - 23: Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo
- Dec. 24: Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo
- *Closed performance (Tickets available from Club Tourism)

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



Kodo Performance Information by Email: Coming Soon!

Would you like to receive the latest Kodo performance information by email?

To register your email address (computer/mobile phone), please send a blank email, with no subject or content, to kodoen@m.blayn.jp.

Please make sure that your device settings will allow emails from the domain "@kodo.or.jp."

This is a free service with no joining or subscription fees. We plan to launch this email service in February 2014. Please register now, and in the meantime, please keep in touch with us by checking our Facebook page and website for updates. Thank you!



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](#).



Latest Album:
Kodo Akatsuki



Winter waves on the west coast of Sado Island

Resources

[Kodo Website](#)

[Kodo on Facebook](#)

[Kodo Tour and Performance Schedules](#)

[Kodo on YouTube](#)

[Kodo CD Listening Booth](#)

[Kodo Bravia Promotion Video](#)

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[Kodo Online Store \(English\)](#)

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In brief illustration: Johnny Wales

Editorial, design and production: Melanie Taylor and Chieko Wales
Main design: Tam Stewart
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