

Artistic Director Tamasaburo Bando's Second Production

Kodo One Earth Tour: Mystery

Taking Kodo to yet another frontier, this new performance transcends the real world to enter one where sacred beasts appear. This mysterious experience will transport the audience into darkness, a place with a nostalgic air that conjures the spirit of the Japanese people and their indigenous nature. Through the music of Kodo, the profound world of "Mystery" will unfold.



Light, Darkness, & Reverberations



Tamasaburo Bando
Artistic Director

“It’s hard to put into words, but I’m aiming at a world of mystery.”

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.

Another thing is, I like people to enjoy “darkness.” The beauty of something you come across lit by candlelight, a sense of something vague yet marvelous. Mystery enfolds within it fear, humor, charm, and various other qualities. In the “Serpent Dances” that have come 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. While it’s a drum concert, playing as only drums can play, we’ve added plenty of visual interest.

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.



Born in Tokyo, Tamasaburo Bando is the leading Kabuki female-role actor of our times and a National Living Treasure. He began his activities with Kodo in 2000 and became the ensemble's artistic director in 2012.

A World of "Mystery" is Revealed

Presenting a Kodo production in a different dimension: a place where light and darkness entwine.



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Photos: Takashi Okamoto

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<http://www.kodo.or.jp>

Kodo Village, 148-1 Ogi Kanetashinden, Sado, Niigata 952-0611, Japan
Tel. 0259-86-3630 (M - F, 9:30 - 17:00) Fax. 0259-86-3631
Email: heartbeat@kodo.or.jp

From "Amaterasu" to "Mystery"

Productions where one encounters the mysteries that lie deep in the heart of Japanese folk arts, myths, and villages

Article by journalist Sachiko Tamashige

Photos: Takashi Okamoto, Sachiko Tamashige, Erika Ueda

Compiled by Erika Ueda

"Mystery": Guided by the Mysterious Power of the Serpent

Aside from the dim outline of a mountain, the stage is shrouded in darkness. Look closely, and you may catch a glimpse of something undulating in the distance, then out of the black they appear: three giant snakes, entangled with each other. As they gradually reveal themselves, it becomes clear that a spectacular and ominous world awaits. Three snakes wriggle free from each other, their scales glinting in the dim light. The sound of the taiko takes on the cadence of a heartbeat as an eerie melody is played on a *Nohkan*, the bamboo flute used in Noh and Kabuki theater. Your invitation into a mysterious realm is complete. The snakes return to the darkness while the lights of lanterns float in the air like giant fireflies. Like an ancient lullaby, voices arise, transporting you to forgotten childhood memories.

Where exactly are we? Each of you might ask yourself this question in the darkness. Kodo's unique sound and spectacle have the ability to transcend the reality around you.

In the autumn of 2013 — the year of the serpent — the brand new production, "Kodo One Earth Tour: Mystery" was revealed with this mesmerizing opening scene. Directed by Tamasaburo Bando and premiering on Sado Island, Kodo's home and base of operations, *Mystery* consists of 18 scenes, including ones inspired by traditional folk dances such as *Jamai*, *Namahage* and *Shishimai*, and contains scenes newly created by members of Kodo such as *Yomichi* and *Yuyami*, along with pieces from the classic Kodo repertoire.

The opening scene offered viewers an intriguing coincidence. This piece, *Jamai*, is based on *Orochi*, the Great Serpent Dance from *Iwami Kagura* (Iwami: a region, the west part of Shimane Prefecture/ *Kagura*: dance and music for the *kami*, or deities). This dance was created for the stage in 2013, the year of the serpent according to the Chinese calendar. After Tamasaburo assumed the role of artistic director, the members of Kodo began developing their individual skills across a wider scope of stage culture. Tamasaburo strives to push Kodo further, where each performer is capable of playing a wider variety of percussion and other instruments, as well as honing their



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.



Rehearsals for serpent dance Jamai at Kodo Village

own dancing and taiko prowess.

“The members of Kodo are due to drum wholeheartedly,” Tamasaburo said, “Their sound should truly resonate. Then I would like them to hone their skills as stage performers. To be a fine performer, each of them has to discover their own special role in the group. It is not enough for them to drum passionately and appeal to the audience. Each member must play superbly, yes, but they must move aesthetically, as well.”

As a Kabuki actor specializing in female roles, Tamasaburo had to cover all sorts of characters, ranging from a princess to a courtesan, he says. “I would like each Kodo member to take on different artistic challenges and explore the talents that lie hidden within themselves. That is how they will become world-class professional stage performers.” Tamasaburo normally does not impose his ideas on the members. He teaches fundamentals such as techniques for breathing and

moving the body. He respects the spontaneity of individual members in the hopes that he or she would work proactively with the awareness of a performing artist. Mr. Takao Aoki, one of the heads of the Kodo Group, said that Tamasaburo has a unique way of guiding Kodo members: “He deals with each individual in such a sincere and appropriate manner by understanding their potential abilities. This resulted in many members making dramatic progress and maturing into a stronger presence onstage. There are a wide variety of taiko sounds in Kabuki theater. I hope that the Kodo can absorb what Tamasaburo has built up and accomplished through his Kabuki career and discover a new frontier in the taiko arts.”

Behind the Scenes of “Mystery”

Jamai — the “Serpent Dance” — is derived from *Orochi*, known as “the Great Serpent Dance” from *Iwami Kagura*. The Kodo cast members of *Jamai* absorbed the skill and spirit of this traditional folk dance by learning from local performers while in Shimane as artists in residence. Iwami is the name of this area in the western part of Shimane Prefecture. Iwami is famous for its historical site, Iwami Ginzan, the largest silver mine in Japan, a world heritage site. *Kagura* was originally performed to summon *kami* (deities) during traditional rituals of worship in shrines and other sacred places. Japanese traditional music, dance and festival culture has its roots in these ancient rituals. Taiko, or the Japanese traditional drum, was once regarded as a sacred instrument because of its magical power to conjure up the deities for tasks such as bringing rain to a region in need.

Orochi of *Iwami Kagura* is derived from “Yamata no Orochi,” one of the mythological stories of the *Kojiki*, or “Record of Ancient Matters,” the oldest extant manuscript in Japan. The tale of *Yamata no Orochi* (the Eight-Headed, Eight-Tailed Serpent) is a widely known legend in which *Susano’o*, the rowdy younger brother of the Sun Goddess *Amaterasu*, defeats a monster serpent living near the source of the Hiigawa, or the Hii River in Izumo. The Hiigawa was known as a raging river, which when flooded would threaten the lives of villagers. Therefore, defeating the serpent was often seen as a metaphor for controlling the river. Although the interpretation of this myth varies and the image of *Susano’o* remains an enigma, *Susano’o* is a key figure among the gods of the Japanese myths and has been very popular as a kind of prankster. *Susano’o* is depicted as a hero in “Yamata no Orochi,” however he acts like a naughty boy in another story. He upsets *Amaterasu* by vandalizing the rice fields, and once threw a flayed horse at her loom. In the legend of “Ama no Iwayato,” another famous story from the *Kojiki*, he even brutally killed one of her maidens in her heavenly world. In this story, *Amaterasu* was angered and grieved by *Susano’o*’s destructive behavior and hides herself behind the heavenly Rock Cave. This threw the entire world into darkness, which might be associated with an eclipse of the sun in ancient times. The deities team up to bring back *Amaterasu*, the source of light, to the world. They



do this by playing instruments, singing and dancing outside of the Rock Cave. The goddess *Ameno-uzume no Mikoto* overturned a tub near the cave entrance and started dancing on it, exposing her body. It looked so funny that the deities laughed loudly, which led *Amaterasu* to peep through the gap of the rock to see what was going on. This is regarded as the very first *Kagura*, the origin of the performing arts in Japan and *Ameno-uzume no Mikoto* has been worshiped for it.

Susano’o does not appear in *Jamai*, as Kodo decided to focus on the dancing elements of *Orochi*. Instead, the audience could see *Susano’o* dance and beat the taiko as fiercely as thunder in “*Amaterasu*,” a previous Kodo production also directed by Tamasaburo Bando and inspired by the legend of “Ama no Iwayato” of the *Kojiki*. Tamasaburo appeared in this collaboration with Kodo as the luminous main character: *Amaterasu* herself.

“*Amaterasu*” premiered in 2006 and was staged again in the autumn of 2013, just before the opening of “Kodo One Earth Tour 2013: Mystery.” Both *Mystery* and *Amaterasu* are productions inspired by ancient Japanese



Tamasaburo Bando instructs the members of Kodo.
The production is created using various folk arts as a base, including *Iwami Kagura* from Shimane Prefecture.

myths that form the foundation of Japanese identity and culture. The year 2013 is a particularly special year, as *Sengu*, the grand relocation of the Ise Grand Shrine and the renewal of Izumo Oyashiro, or Izumo -taisha (Izumo Grand Shrine), took place within the same year.

Ise Jingu, or The Ise Grand Shrine in Mie Prefecture, is the most venerated of all shrines in Japan, and is dedicated to *Amaterasu*, or *Amaterasu-Omikami*: the Sun Goddess. According to myth, *Amaterasu* is the original ancestor of the imperial family of Japan. Based in the Yamato region of Nara Prefecture, the regime of Yamato became the ruler of the entire nation. Izumo Oyashiro in Shimane Prefecture is dedicated to *Okuninushi no Mikoto* and was believed to be in charge of the spiritual world in ancient times. As for Ise Jingu, more than 1,500 ceremonies and rituals are held there annually. The largest and most important ceremony held at Ise Jingu is called *Shikinen-Sengu*. The system of *Shikinen-Sengu* began 1,300 years ago, and is held once every 20 years. Each shrine is meticulously rebuilt its building and disassembled its treasures and artifacts refurbished, and the clothing for the deities are crafted and prepared anew. By doing this, Japanese people renew their mind

and faith in the deities and ensure the continuity of rejuvenation for the divine spirits. Traditional Japanese culture and skills are also passed on to the next generation. This belief that deities (*kami*) are rejuvenated through the renewal of buildings and furnishings, demonstrates the key concept of Shinto known as *tokowaka*: everlasting youth.

In 2013, more than 14 million people visited Ise Jingu, and over 8 million visited Izumo Oyashiro. Could it be that Tamasaburo intended to present "Amaterasu" and "Mystery" in the same year in order to celebrate the renewals of these two major Japanese shrines? When I asked Tamasaburo, he said that it was just coincidence. "I came up with the idea of a mythical theme when I decided to collaborate with Kodo. I believe that the taiko is an instrument with a primitive sound that originated from tapping objects around you during ancient times. I thought that the ancient myths, the stories of *Amaterasu* and *Susano'o*, would be appropriate for a taiko group, echoing the ancient sound."

Iwami Kagura: Feeling the Heat and Beat in Shimane Prefecture

Kodo member Yosuke Kusa admires Taizo Kobayashi, his teacher of *Iwami Kagura*: “Taizo looks so cool when he claps his hands to pray for deities in front of the household Shinto altar. Even his everyday routines show his integrity, which is also reflected in his *Kagura* performance. *Kagura* is not just about dancing — it is also the way a performer lives their life.” Yosuke met Taizo at the Kyoto University of Art and Design when Taizo ran an *Iwami Kagura* workshop. Around ten years ago, he started visiting Taizo in his hometown of Yunotsu, Shimane Prefecture.

Taizo’s primary job is making masks for *Iwami Kagura*. In September of 2013, two Kodo cast members of *Jamai* — Yosuke Kusa and Shogo Komatsuzaki — spent two weeks at Taizo's studio to learn the serpent dance, as well as experience life with the local people. Yosuke and Shogo tried to get to the heart of the *Kagura* by visiting local shrines, going for runs in the surrounding nature and exchanging ideas and music techniques through sessions with members of a local group of *Iwami Kagura*. “The local people live with the deities by practicing rituals to either purify themselves or show their gratitude,” Yosuke added, “*Iwami Kagura* is nourished and enlivened by the way the locals live their lives, and it has been handed down from their ancestors to future generations. *Iwami Kagura* is also a way for adults to teach good behavior and adherence to the social code to their children. I would like to learn not only the forms and techniques but

also its spirit, which links our lives with our direct experience on stage.”

Shogo had a similar experience. He says: “What I have learned here is the significance of prayer. It has been so vital to pray for the intangible — something beyond a human being’s abilities: praying to the gods of rice for the plentiful harvest and the gods of water to prevent floods or drought. This is the heart of *Kagura*. It is performed in the hope of maintaining food, safety and happiness. I would like to grasp the deeper meanings beyond just dancing techniques.”

During the Meiji period, government policy revolved around modernization, and Shinto priests were banned from many of their rituals. Therefore, *Kagura* was left to the hands of the general public. In the Iwami region, *Kagura* has been so popular among the local people that they have developed their own elaborate presentation style. *Orochi* is one of the most famous themes of *Iwami Kagura*. In the old days, *Orochi* (“the Great Serpent Dance”) was performed by one person wearing a simple costume representing a snake. First, a huge tube made of bamboo forms the framework, like a snake skeleton. Then it is covered with the paper used for traditional lanterns, and the body of a giant serpent was introduced. The number of serpents increased and later visual effects such as flickering eyes and smoke were added. The performance of *Orochi* became more and more of a spectacle. At the 1970 World Expo in Osaka, an *Orochi* was performed with eight serpents, and *Iwami Kagura* became widely known, accelerating the level of drama infused into *Orochi* presentation.

“I am concerned that people might forget about the origin and essence of *Kagura*,” says Taizo Kobayashi, “It is a religious ritual dedicated to the deities. Today, some performers are more interested in how to dazzle the audience with spectacle and acrobatics, but if we neglected the traditional forms handed down by former generations and their true connection to the Shinto faith, *Kagura* would lose its meaning.” Taizo is one of the key people upholding authentic *Kagura*, and is a promising young craftsman of *Kagura* masks. He started his career at an early age. When he was an elementary school



Mr. Kobayashi makes masks at the Kobayashi Workshop. An array of *Kagura* masks await their chance to spring into action.



Kagura performed at night (*yokagura*) to a lively audience of locals and tourists at Tatsuno-gozen Shrine.

student, he started visiting the studio of Katsuro Kakita, the leading *Kagura* mask maker, and eventually learned the craft from him. Taizo left his hometown for Kyoto to learn more about mask making. After more than 10 years in Kyoto as both a student and then a staff member of Kyoto University of Art and Design, he came back to Yunotsu with academic knowledge and a wider artistic view. He passionately teaches and organizes *Iwami Kagura* workshops to spark interest and understanding in *Kagura* with younger generations. He is very popular in his hometown — when he walks the streets, children wave their hands, calling him “Taizo-san.” At a local nursery school, children play *Kagura* more passionately than anything else. When *Kagura* music starts to play, it’s like a switch is flipped in the children’s minds, and they begin dancing madly with paper swords and toy instruments. Most children here are more interested in *Kagura* heroes than the ones from television and cartoons.

At Tatsunogozen Jinja, one of Yunotsu’s local shrines, you will find the stages of many *Kagura* troupes from different areas. One evening in September, Tatsunogozen Jinja was packed with locals and visitors from nearby inns. It was a casual night out, with local families strolling to the shrine to see *Iwami Kagura* after supper. Visitors came wearing sandals and *yukata*, a casual cotton kimono worn after bathing in a hot spring. Everyone was relaxed and chatting away, but once the *Kagura* started, everyone was completely engrossed in the performance. Occasionally, demons and giant snakes would emerge onstage and enter the audience, which sent a few children crying or hiding themselves in the arms of their grandmother.



Preschoolers embody various *Kagura* heroes.

“Most people tend to follow film stars and TV idols nowadays,” Taizo continued, “Some of them might be enchanted by the superficial images created by mass media. But *Kagura* is powerful — it connects directly with matters of life and death. Frightening demons and giant snakes are sacred beings. They make us aware of the importance of awe, and make us thankful to experience something beyond ourselves. *Kagura* themes deal with fundamental questions, so children are intuitively drawn to them. Without verbal explanation, there is space for children to feel and use their imagination. Therefore, they can be even more attracted by *Kagura*, I suppose.”

In different regions of Shimane Prefecture, many children are brought up with *Kagura* as a part of everyday life. The rhythm of *Kagura* permeates life in Shimane, and is sometimes considered as an impetus for returning to one’s hometown after years in cities like Tokyo and Osaka. Taizo is one of those young people who could not forget the excitement of *Kagura*.

Yosuke, along with Kodo staff member Erika Ueda, joined one of Taizo’s *Kagura* workshops at an art school in Kyoto. Since then, they continue to exchange ideas and inspire each other. It is crucial for Kodo members to develop close relationships with local folk arts performers and maintain ties with them. Most Kodo members are not necessarily trained from an early age as musicians in traditional fields like Noh or Kabuki. Therefore, Kodo members must inevitably learn different types of dances and music from different regions and then recreate them in their own original version as Kodo.



Mr. Kobayashi teaches the serpent dance *Jamai* to Kodo members at Tatsuno-gozen Shrine in Shimane.
From left: Shogo Komatsuzaki, Yosuke Kusa, and Mr. Taizo Kobayashi

An advantage for the Kodo members is that they have a wider view. They experience many different folk-art forms in addition to stage and taiko technique. Through the artist-in-residence experience, they research the history and context of the folk arts with a comprehensive, intellectual approach reminiscent of anthropologists visiting far-flung regions.

On the last day of their time as artists in residence, Yosuke and Shogo presented some of the popular Kodo repertoire to show their gratitude to Taizo and everyone they worked with. Yosuke and Shogo put on a soulful performance, and the audience was deeply moved.

"The Japanese word *fudo* means cultural climate," says Taizo. "It is written using the Chinese characters for wind and soil. I think that soil symbolizes something rooted deeply in the region, while wind is like fresh air blowing in from the outside. To me, I believe *Iwami Kagura* is the

soil, and Kodo is like the wind. It is so stimulating and rewarding for both sides to learn from each other. This will certainly lead us towards new discoveries."

Just before leaving Shimane Prefecture, Yosuke and Shogo visited Izumo-taisha with Taizo and Erika. Izumo is regarded as home for the *kami* — in fact, many believe that all deities come back to Izumo-taisha in the autumn to discuss *en*: the fate of marriages and matchmaking. It is said that one-third of the *Kojiki* is about Izumo, and that the legend of *Yamata no Orochi* originated here. The Hiigawa, or the Hii River, which runs through Izumo, frequently flooded the nearby forests, and the giant serpent might have been a metaphor for this dangerous stretch of water. When Yosuke and Shogo went down to see the bridge over the Hiigawa, it was a gloomy, rainy day, permeated by the eerie sound of the wind. Where the riverbed showed, the wind had carved scale-like patterns in the sand, not unlike the skin of a snake. Upon seeing this, Yosuke and Shogo looked at each other and shouted "*Orochi is here!*"

"Mystery"

Directed by Tamasaburo Bando

The audience may wonder what kind of idea lies behind the production of "Mystery." To address this, artistic director Tamasaburo Bando wrote the following note prior to the opening:

"It's hard to put into words, but I'm aiming to create a world of mystery. Across Japan, the folk arts have been handed down for countless generations. There's a sacredness there, an air of mystery within each prayer. The drums express this, and I would like for the audience to feel it, too. I hope theatergoers will experience the same sort of otherworldly splendor that you sense in temples, shrines, and moments of discovery in the forest. I also want people to enjoy darkness: the beauty of something you come across lit by candlelight, a sense that is both vague and marvelous. Peel back the layers surrounding mystery and you find fear, humor, charm, and other varied and significant qualities. In the "Serpent Dances" that have come 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. While it's essentially a drum concert, playing as only drums can play, we've added plenty of visual interest. A moment of wonder means nothing unless you are actually present to experience it. Religious rituals as well as the arts have been refined over centuries, using inspiration from those who came before us. In this drumming performance, I hope that the audience will enjoy to the fullest that magical sense of space and time."

Just before the opening, I asked Tamasaburo the following question: "What is 'Mystery' all about?"

"It is nearly invisible in the darkness, but you can catch a glimpse of it if you narrow your eyes. If something is hidden or obscured by a veil, the urge to reveal it becomes stronger. You long for light and the future if darkness prevents you from moving forward. You experience fear and anxiety — a craving for something. Darkness triggers a wave of emotions and whirling desires in one's mind, and this is the key to open the realm of "Mystery." When you look at the serpent dance, it allures you with its seductive beauty, and you cannot help asking the question: is the serpent really evil or a sacred spirit? "Mystery" in the darkness invites you on a trip into your internal world. When an artist performs to the best of his abilities, wholeheartedly utilizing his polished senses and training, he might be able to conjure up a magical moment on the stage. It might happen to only one performer or occur on only one night. Then, the stage is totally transformed. This is the power of theater."



"Mystery" introduces new theatrical elements and acting parts to the Kodo stage.



New lighting props were designed especially for "Mystery." A mystical atmosphere is created with both sight and sound.

The darkness of Mystery and the words of Tamasaburo remind me of the Grand Relocation of the Ise Jingu shrine last autumn. The relocation reached its climax on the evening of October 2nd, 2013, when the sacred regalia, the mirror that represents *Amaterasu*, was moved from the old shrine to the newly built one. The mirror was covered by a white silk curtain and carried out by Shinto priests in ancient traditional costume. All of this happened in darkness. Three thousands people sat in in front of the procession, hardly able to see or hear anything apart from the insects, the sound of the wind and the sound of Shinto priests' traditional shoes stepping on pebbles in the walkway. I felt mystery in the darkness for a long time. This is the 62nd relocation, and the first one in the 21st century — part of a tradition that has been handed down to us through many generations since 690 AD. We tend to light up everything. We tend to believe that things are only visible after the Modern Age began. Kodo's Mystery will evoke something deeper within us, and help us transcend our contemporary space and time for a glimpse of another dimension — an invisible world just beyond the darkness.

Reflections on Rehearsals for "Mystery"

Monologues by
Kodo Members

Left: Tamasaburo moves the lion head to explain his ideas to the performers
Below: Kodo performers rehearse with the newly created lighting props



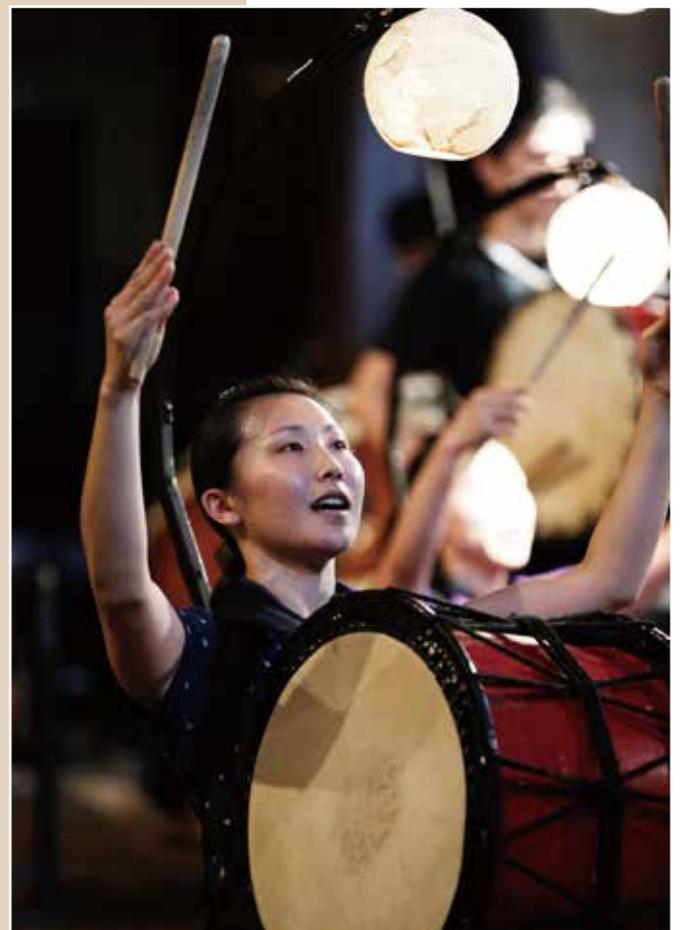
The artistic identity of "Mystery" has taken shape through numerous rehearsals and new approaches. We asked the performers, who have spent day after day intimately involved with this production, what kind of performance the audience might expect.

Yosuke Oda

"I think this production is rich in local color, but we are not performing local arts in their original form on stage, I think instead we are interpreting them cultivating a nostalgia so potent that Japanese people can almost smell their hometown air somehow. So what we are doing is something that you really can only experience at the theater. Everything else is the resonant tones of the taiko, which we beat with all our might. If you were to talk about "quintessential Kodo" in this performance, you would look at whether or not we beat the drums purely. That means whether or not we can scrape away our own desires and immerse ourselves completely in our drumming."

Yuta Sumiyoshi

"This production is different from our last one, "Legend," where the artistic direction let you catch a glimpse of classic Kodo at the end of the concert. For this performance, 90% of the compositions are new and the programme was created from scratch under Tamasaburo's guidance. I think it will be quite fresh considering these points of difference, and new elements such as the Great Serpent from Iwami Kagura (Shinto dancing and music) of Shimane Prefecture. Also, there are dramatic and theatrical





Top: Discussing choreography in the rehearsal hall
Middle: Taiko rehearsal scenes
Bottom: The introduction of new theatrical elements and acting parts

elements like never before throughout the programme. And taiko-- I think the way it has been put together is really interesting.

Recently, Tamasaburo talked to us about 'amplitude of expression.' It was a discussion of how 'Kodo always plays taiko, then does something completely different, and then we see how the ensemble has changed when they come back to playing taiko.' I think that the bigger my 'amplitude,' the better I can play new expressions on the taiko. So I really want to be proactive and try to do everything I am told."

Mariko Omi

"I love the word 'mystery,' this word reminds me of darkness. When there is darkness, the power of imagination really works, doesn't it? I think traditional arts might be what people create from that darkness. I think this production will express human curiosity getting the better of one's fear to see something exciting, yet somewhat scary. We are all enjoying the rehearsals, laughing out loud with Tamasaburo as we choreograph how we will enter the stage.

I think 'Mystery' is filled with the spirit of the Japanese people and their indigenous nature as well as nostalgic flair that Kodo brings to the production. It is kind of like an 'Imagination Jack-in-the-Box.' It's as if there is all this billowing smoke (laughs) and from the smoke something appears, then women appear, demons appear, and you wonder what will come out next?... I picture it getting more and more fun, moment by moment, for us on stage and also for the audience."

Kenzo Abe

Recently, the Iwami Kagura teacher showed us the





Top: Iwami Kagura "Great Serpent" rehearsals
Bottom: Tamasaburo instructs the Kodo members

movements of the Great Serpent, and his movement was so... it was like a real snake. There was a human being inside but he was so dedicated to the serpent's movements and it was really terrifying and mysterious. For a taiko group to do this Great Serpent dance, it may seem like an unexpected leap, but I feel the right connection to the title "Mystery" when we are rehearsing. And to make the Serpent look mysterious, as you would expect, you really need to erase any human airs. I think that our job when we bring a form of folk entertainment to the stage is to absorb the essence of the art from the local people who uphold it, and then to perform it as our own unique expression.

Tamasaburo told us that he wants to intuitively portray what he feels is beautiful, and I really feel that from his performance. It is fantastic to watch various ideas logically put together to create just that. I am moved when I rehearse with him because I realize I am in the presence of someone who makes his ideas take shape. We are still in the middle of creating the "Mystery" production and there are innumerable components to work with. I'm looking forward to linking them all up into a story that leads to a great climax.



Kodo One Earth Tour: Mystery
Artistic Director: Tamasaburo Bando
Tour Production: Kitamaesen Co., Ltd.
Photos: Takashi Okamoto

KODŌ

<http://www.kodo.or.jp>

Kodo Village, 148-1 Ogi Kanetashinden, Sado, Niigata 952-0611, Japan
Tel. 0259-86-3630 (M - F, 9:30 - 17:00) Fax. 0259-86-3631
Email: heartbeat@kodo.or.jp