Introducing Kodo
Taiko Performing Arts Ensemble

Exploring the limitless possibilities of the traditional Japanese drum, the taiko, Kodo is forging new directions for a vibrant living art form. The vibrations created by the drummers not only reach the ears of the audience, they move listeners on a visceral level. In Japanese, the word "Kodo" holds a double meaning. It can be translated as "heartbeat," the primal source of all rhythm. If read in a different context however, Kodo can also mean "children of the drum," which reflects the group’s desire to play the drums with the simple heart of a child. Since the group’s debut at the Berlin Festival in 1981, Kodo has given around 5,800 performances in over 45 countries on five continents. This figure includes 3,900 performances under the "One Earth" banner, a theme that embodies Kodo’s desire to transcend language and cultural boundaries, all while reminding their audiences of the common bonds we all share as human beings. The ensemble also participates in a wide range of projects and events, which includes headlining major international festivals, contributing to motion picture soundtracks, and collaborating with a wide variety of global performing arts leaders.

Kodo History

1970s
In 1971, a handful of young men and women gathered on Sado Island to establish Sado no Kuni Ondekoza, a group that provided Japanese youth a way to learn traditional Japanese performing arts and craft. In order to support the group financially, the original Ondekoza members began to study and perform taiko, eventually taking the sound of the drum around the globe on world tours. Members lived communally in an abandoned elementary school and spent much of their time practicing the taiko and training to run marathons. After debuting internationally in 1975, Ondekoza emerged as a professional performance group that became highly acclaimed among European and North American audiences.

1980s
As time went by, many of the members began to feel that the philosophy and goals of Ondekoza leader Tagozawa Den no longer reflected those of the group. Eventually Mr. Den left Sado, taking the name Ondekoza with him. The members who remained on Sado reorganized and founded Kodo in 1981. Although performances became the primary focus of Kodo’s activities, the initial dream to establish a centre to study Japanese traditional performing arts and crafts has never been forgotten. The first leader of Kodo, Toshio Kawauchi, envisioned "Kodo Village," a creative space where Kodo members could explore new possibilities and interact with artists from around the world. In 1984, the One Earth Tour became the ongoing banner for Kodo’s mission of bringing the sound of the taiko to the ears of the world, and in 1988 the dream of Kodo Village became a reality.

1990s
As the number of concerts increased, both domestic and international performances received the highest acclaim. More members with a background in music joined the group, and events such as “Earth Celebration” enabled more exchange with other cultures and musical genres. As taiko culture spreads internationally, Kodo emerged as an authority in the field and solidified its identity as a musical performance group. In 1997, the Kodo Cultural Foundation was established to facilitate more educational and outreach programs.

Kodo in the New Millennium
Looking for new ways to explore the profound subtleties of taiko, Kodo begins to explore richer levels of stage expression. The Kodo Cultural Foundation supports both local and international activities through social-education and outreach projects designed to give back to local communities. In 2011, Kodo celebrated its milestone 30th anniversary with a special commemorative tour throughout Japan, North America and Europe. In 2012, Kodo invited Kabuki luminary Tamasaburo Bando to become its artistic director. Kodo continues to present brand new productions every year under the direction of Tamasaburo Bando.
Message from Guest Director
Tamasaburo Bando

Kodo has reached the 35th year since it was founded. In 2000, invited by Mr Aoki to do a joint performance with Kodo, I crossed over to Sado, encountered Kodo, and here we are today. In the world of performing arts, it’s quite rare for a drum group to continue for thirty-five years. I’ve been asked many times over the years, even by professionals in the field, “Why did you choose Kodo?” Thinking about it now, it was significant for me to be able to work with a performance group that practices to the fullest. And, having come into contact with nature in Sado, as the pendulum swung back and forth between there and Kabuki in theaters in big cities, I gained a wonderful time and place to look again at myself.

I think in our times it has become very difficult to create works of art. For me, in many ways these last fifteen years have been a time of dimming hopes and dreams. In that context, I was able to meet a group of young people who are devoted to their practice, who face the drums and create things, at a far remove from our digitally developing society. I feel I was very fortunate to have come across such a group who are able to travel Japan and the world with pieces that they’ve created in their own practice space. While of course taiko drum performance is the keynote, I’ve come to realize that “Taiko pieces,” “Percussion pieces,” “Musical development,” “Staging,” “Art,” and “Entertainment” are all slightly different things, and when they magnificently come together, that’s an “Artistic Creation.”

Since the 1970s we’ve seen the birth of many taiko performing groups. As it is for art in any era, they’ve gone through phases of transition and development, in the midst of approval and disapproval. How can we advance into the future, with older performers who have experienced earlier periods finding ways, both broad and deep, to pass that on to their juniors? And how will Kodo develop in the future as an artistic field? These things are what I’m in the process of thinking about.

A live performance cannot escape time. Its fate is set, so that the instant the curtain rises, it meets the audience, and when the curtain closes it take must its leave of them. Its expression should not be just “it remains as if it were real.” While existing in a precious moment, it must please the hearts of the audience, bring them solace, conjure up the past, and bring hopes for the future — and if it does that there is no greater happiness. While dreaming of our wonderful earth, the wide cosmos, and richly fulfilled Japanese arts, I want to continue to strive and do my best.

(October 2016)
One Earth Tour
Kodo Performance Activities

The world is a kaleidoscope of people and cultures. In this age of exploding populations and lightening-fast communication, it is more important than ever that diverse cultures learn to understand and accept each other so that all may share our increasingly shrinking planet in harmony. Since ancient times the taiko has been a symbol of community, serving as a link among people, as well as a link between people and the heavens. Through the One Earth Tour, Kodo has given over 3,900 performances in almost 50 countries around the globe, making the group Japan's most internationally acclaimed performing art ensemble. Kodo will continue to bring the sound of the Japanese drum around the globe, and with the taiko's unique ability to transcend the barriers of language and custom, remind us all of our membership in that larger community – the world.

The Building Blocks of Kodo Performances

There are three principal elements that make up a Kodo performance.

The first is based upon traditional folk arts, learned from local practitioners throughout Japan. Our intention is not simply to replicate these historical arts; instead, by reinterpreting and rearranging them for the stage, we strive to capture their universal spirit and energy as they filter through our bodies.

Art forms rooted in the earth are developed through intimate relationships both between people and their art as well as between art and nature. Therein lie invaluable treasures rich with insights for people living in a bewildering age.

The second element of our performances is made up of compositions by Kodo’s friends and mentors. These include composers Maki Ishii and Shinshiro Ikbe, Kabuki musicians Roetsu Tosha and Kiyohiko Semba, and jazz pianist Yosuke Yamashita.

The third element consists of original works composed by Kodo members themselves who have leveraged their exposure to the rhythms and sounds of the many people and places they have visited as grist for their own creations.

Building a Kodo performance program begins with blending these three elements together amidst the sights and sounds of Sado Island. It is then forged into shape on the anvil of dedicated practice and rehearsal.
One Earth Tour: Legend

Message from the Director

I present to you “Kodo One Earth Tour 2012: Legend,” my first work as the new artistic director for Kodo. In this production, I wanted to create a performance that pays homage to the profound expressions of Kodo to date, adds splendor and levity, and harmonizes all elements into a single flow that undulates throughout the programme. I have also composed new pieces in the hopes that they will be passed on to future generations. In these days of tremendous challenge and difficulty, my aim is simply to create a performance that will transport the audience into an inspiring alternate reality, even if just for a brief spell. For this performance, in addition to Kodo’s standard hanten (traditional Japanese coat), I have also introduced some original costumes with additional fun and flair. I hope that both seasoned fans and first-time audience members will enjoy the entirety of this programme.

I will continue to do all within my power to excel as the Kodo artistic director, and I hope that this programme will act as a catalyst for helping Kodo to reach a new audience.

Tamasaburo Bando

Programme
Kaden
Monochrome
Ibuki
Onidaiko
Tsukimachi
O-daiko
Yatai-bayashi

Featured New Pieces
Kaden
Composed by Tamasaburo Bando, 2012
Tamasaburo Bando has been working with Kodo since 2001 and “Kaden” reflects his desire to make something “timeless to be handed on to future generations.” The title finds its roots in the musical term “cadenza,” and conjures the image of a soloist freely creating both an audio and visual expression on stage. It is also a reference to “Fushikaden” (The Flowering Spirit), the 15th century classic text by Zeami, the founder of Noh theater.

Onidaiko
Traditional, arranged by Kodo Based on traditional performing art Iwakubi Onidaiko (Sado, Niigata)
Onidaiko (demon drumming) is a tradition upheld in numerous villages around Sado, and this piece is based on one of the many variations found on the island. Onidaiko was traditionally performed as an integral part of festivals, performed as an offering in hopes of abundant crops and good health. Through the course of their tireless dancing, the young demon dancers transcend their human form and become almost deities. It is this boundless energy and essence of the divine that we try to express on stage.

Tsukimachi
Composed by Tamasaburo Bando & Shogo Yoshii
Based on traditional performing art Hachijo Daiko (Hachijo Island, Tokyo)
Tsukimachi literally means “waiting for the moon.” Since the days of the lunar calendar, people have looked to the night sky in anticipation of the moon, and what better way to pass the time waiting than playing taiko? Surrender your dancing soul to the taiko, and the beat will echo out like the roaring sea or the wind on a moonlit night.

Tours: Japan (2012, 2013) 65 performances USA (2013) 27 performances
Europe (2014) 31 performances (Italy, France, Ireland, UK, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden, Estonia, Finland, Russia)
One Earth Tour: Mystery

Message from the Director

Following “Legend,” which we started in 2012, we’re offering to our audiences the second work in the series, “Mystery.” In the earlier “Legend,” we linked in a continuous stream music by composers of different eras: Maki Ishii, Kodo’s Motofumi Yamaguchi, and some of our present new members. The work was created with the idea that the music would flow together as modern and traditional themes merged. With “Mystery” this time, we’re aiming at an enjoyable musical and visual experience of traditional performing arts from around Japan. When we say “regional performing arts,” of course we can’t actually bring those on stage. It’s Kodo’s “arrangement” of these that we’re hoping our audience will enjoy.

Everyone is drawn to mystery in their own way. For me, what has moved me on Sado Island is the great world of nature and the beauty of night darkness. Darkness is beautiful and also scary. You look at the road by the light of moon or the gleam of the stars. You look at blades of grass glistening in the night. The horizon of the sea glows dimly. You see what looks like lanterns far away. If they were near you, they’d just be ordinary lanterns, but when you see tens or hundreds of them lined up in the distance, you feel the mystery that’s in humanity itself. In this production, there’s a “Great Serpent,” “Namahage Demons,” “Lion Dance,” and so forth, but these are just a means of leading our thoughts to mystery, and I hope the viewers will find enjoyment in discovering their own place of mystery. Thank you for your understanding and appreciation.

Tamasaburo Bando

Programme
Jamai
Yomichi
Wall
Ajara
Ake no Myojo
Harewataru
Namahage
Mute
Kusa-wake
Kei Kei
Chit Chat
Shishimai
Yuyami
Color
Miyake
Yatai-bayashi
Jamai
Hekireki
One Earth Tour: Eternity

–Glimpses of "Eternity," Conjured by Taiko Music–

The third work directed by artistic director Tamasaburo Bando is a revolutionary, soul-stirring performance. "Eternity" depicts human endeavors among the workings of nature, expressing glimpses of eternity as they manifest themselves. The programme is comprised of all new compositions, incorporating dance and stage direction that challenge Kodo to reach truly profound levels of expression.

While all of the pieces featured in this production are new, Kodo's powerful and steadfast taiko drumming remains at the heart of the performance. The climax will undoubtely hit the audience like a surge of waves, shaking them to the core.

–Eternal Universe, Life, and Love–

Mankind wishes life was eternal. We have been dreaming of achieving eternity since the dawn of time, but no one has ever actually succeeded at this. Ironically, the yearning for eternity itself is also short-lived. While we all understand this paradox, we still search and long for eternity...

When I was mulling over the theme of eternity, it occurred to me that "the workings of nature" unfold in spiral patterns. By enumerating "the workings of nature," maybe we could express "eternity." Strictly speaking there probably is no such thing as "eternity," but as things that are connected to it, there's dawn, light, rain, wind, clouds, waves, stars, dusk, the night sky, and amongst all these, I saw "human beings."

Tamasaburo Bando

Programme
Yogiri
Asayake Gumo
Gosui
Seiten
Katarai
Ameyo Kazeyo
Miwaku
Takibi
Hinoko
Uruwashiki Mori
Michiru
Chokusen
Yondan

Tours: Japan (2014, 2015) 49 performances
One Earth Tour: Chaos

When Western drums collide with the reverberations of Japan’s traditional wadaiko drums, incredible percussive ideas emerge.

"Chaos" is an imaginative journey that weaves jubilant dimensions and percussive tones into a dynamic and tumultuous whole. The latest production by Kodo artistic director Tamasaburo Bando beckons you into a world of tension and release, of stillness and commotion, and of chaos and calm.

From the Director

This time I've created a piece called Chaos, and we'll be taking this on tour around Japan. When you look up the meaning of this word, which is “chaos” in English, you find “Signifying a condition in which things exist in confusion and disorder,” “At the creation of the world, the time before heaven and earth separated,” “A situation where you can’t tell one thing from another nor predict how things will develop.”

As I was working on the creation of this piece, I realized that the word “chaos” has even more complex meanings. In life itself, no matter how well things are organized, how far human beings evolve, or how advanced is our age of civilization, at the end we still live in a world of “chaos” in which there are no decisive answers. To put this across to people through the medium of music is quite difficult.

If you bind hide onto a wooden body and add rope, you get the “form” of a taiko drum. With the addition of various other instruments, it grows into a musical performance with multiple layers of colorful sound. But with the passing of time, this too will dissipate and scatter into the vast cosmos.

A work in which all the sounds of the world are intermingled – and just at the moment when one feels that all is in harmony, it returns once more to a place of chaos … this is what I wanted to create. I will be very happy if viewers of this performance will enjoy it in the spirit of “chaos.”

Tamasaburo Bando

Programme
Arrive
Toki no Ma
Pathos
Don Don Ten
Chaos
Kodama
Soyogi
Ripple
Keys
Six Phases
Senkoh
Mossa
Kukai
Kukai

Tours: Japan (2015, 2016) 35 performances
Kodo's latest "One Earth Tour" production, "Spiral" (a.k.a. "Evolution"), showcases the perpetual creative evolution of taiko performing arts ensemble Kodo under the direction of Artistic Director Tamasaburo Bando. In recent years, Kodo presented three new "Kodo One Earth Tour" productions, "Mystery" (2013), "Eternity" (2014), and "Chaos" (2015), which all intentionally excluded the most iconic symbol of the ensemble: the o-daiko, or big drum. Instead, these programmes displayed Kodo’s next generation performing new compositions — a telling sign of the group’s determination to move forward. Spiral (Evolution) begins by looking back at the innovative repertoire composed under the guidance of Artistic Director Tamasaburo Bando between 2009 and 2013. Following its premiere in Aug. 2016 at Suntory Hall in Tokyo, as one of three Kodo 35th Anniversary Commemorative Concerts, "Kodo One Earth Tour 2016: Spiral" toured throughout Japan for the rest of the year. Next, this production will tour throughout Europe in 2018 under its alternative title, "Kodo One Earth Tour: Evolution."

Message from Director Tamasaburo Bando
This time I’ve created a work called Spiral, which we’re taking on tour through Japan and around the world. We introduced this performance, made to commemorate the 35th year since the founding of Kodo, in August on the second night of a three-night concert at Tokyo’s Suntory Hall.

The aim of this piece is the thought that the variety of works that have accumulated over our past concerts combine with the new works that Kodo is performing now, creating a spiral advancing into the future.

I made some new works for this, including the fun of Monochrome at the end of the first act, and Color at the beginning of the second act. Spiral and Ayaori will be performed for the first time on tour. We also added a fresh atmosphere to the very large drums.

Kodo is evolving as it moves in a spiral from past into the future. I hope that our efforts will be appreciated in the musical world, and I look forward to your enjoyment of our performances.
From 2016 to early 2017, Kodo presented six productions around the world to celebrate its 35th anniversary, which included new works directed by Tamasaburo Bando. One of the highlights of this milestone year was a series of sold-out concerts at Suntory Hall in Tokyo, where Kodo was joined by special guest artists to perform three distinct programmes over three consecutive nights.

**First Night –Deai– (Encounters)**
Kodo welcomed two special guests, the New Japan Philharmonic and conductor Tatsuya Shimono, for the world premiere of two compositions by Japanese composers, followed by performances of iconic works by the late Maki Ishii and Isao Tomita.

**Second Night –Spiral–**
The world premiere of Kodo's latest work by directed by Tamasaburo Bando, "Spiral," showcased the dynamism of Kodo through its continual evolution, a journey that has spanned thirty-five years to date.

**Third Night –Hisho– (Soaring)**
Kodo was joined by two unique artists, street dance group DAZZLE and male rhythmic gymnastic troupe BLUE TOKYO, for an exciting collaboration that depicted the innovative future of Japanese performing arts.

**Concert for Kids**
During the three days of concerts at Suntory Hall, Sony Music Foundation presented two Kodo "Concert for Kids" performances for young children and their families.
Since 2013, Kodo has presented an annual summer series of performances at Asakusa Public Hall in Tokyo. For many years, Kodo hoped for the opportunity to hold regular performances in Asakusa, which is a sacred place for modern performing arts in Japan, and this dream was finally realized thanks to the cooperation of Asakusa's local community.

Lively Asakusa has continued to attract increasing numbers of tourists from all over the world in recent years. Kodo is truly honored to help Asakusa welcome its visitors with dynamic taiko performances.

**Kodo Asakusa Performances 2013–2017**
- 2013 "Kodo One Earth Tour: Legend"
- 2014 "Kodo One Earth Tour: Mystery"
- 2015 "DADAN 2015"
- 2016 "Spirited Summer"
- 2017 "Spirited Summer"
Share the soul's reverberations, the pulse of life.

The inaugural Kodo Special Concert "Michi" premiered in March 2015 at Yokohama's Kanagawa Arts Theatre. In 2017, Kodo will present encore performances of "Michi" at four theaters in Tokyo and Osaka.

In recent years, Kodo's next generation has honed its skills under the guidance of Tamasaburo Bando. In "Michi," which means a road or path, these young performers join the ensemble's core members to develop new forms of expression through reflection on Kodo's journey to date. Kodo constantly learns from the past as it considers the present and looks towards the future. This programme depicts the ensemble's continual quest for variety and multiplicity as it creates new works for taiko, a dynamic performing art.

Directors: Motofumi Yamaguchi (2015), Mitsuru Ishizuka (2017)
Simultaneously raw and refined, the performance piece “DADAN” features only Kodo’s young male performers. Simply meaning “drumming men” in Japanese, Dadan is directed by Tamasaburo Bando and is unique among Kodo performances in its absence of singing, dancing, flutes and female performers. Instead, this production uses taiko drums of all shapes and sizes, as well as other forms of percussion. This piece has continued to evolve on stage to this day, gaining new power and dynamism with each performance. The climax of Dadan features a succession of compelling solos. With each new drummer’s relentless and rhythmic pounding of the hirado o-daiko (big low drum), the reverberations build to soul-stirring heights. These solos then crescendo into a round of rousing ensemble pieces, completely immersing the audience in sound as they watch the taiko, and its musical possibilities, soar to new levels. One could say that this performance tests the limits of a player’s physical, technical, psychological and spiritual abilities, all at the same time.

Dadan saw its world premiere in Tokyo during September 2009, and the success of this initial run led to its foreign debut at Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, France, with four sold-out performances in 2012. Following such success abroad, Dadan toured across Japan in 2012 and was showcased twice at the “Earth Celebration” annual international performing arts festival on Sado Island. Tours in Spain and France followed during 2014, and then in October 2015, Dadan was performed in Hong Kong — a first in Asia outside of Japan. The South American debut took place in March of 2016 in Brazil, and the 2017 Dadan performances marked its first North American tour, presented as a part of Kodo’s 35th anniversary celebrations.
**Amaterasu**

In celebration of the ensemble’s 25th anniversary, Kodo presented “Amaterasu” for the first time in Tokyo in 2006. This production is a collaborative performance that both features and is directed by world-renowned Kabuki luminary Tamasaburo Bando. The Amaterasu production marked the first time Bando and Kodo shared the same stage after several years of collaborative work. Bando wished to incorporate a well-known Japanese myth into a collaborative piece with Kodo, and thus Amaterasu was created.

Since its inaugural performance, this musical dance-play has received high critical acclaim, and in 2007 Bando and Kodo were invited to give special performances at the renowned Kabuki-za Theater in Tokyo. In 2013, Amaterasu was reinvented with a brand new cast, returning to the stage for the first time in six years. This restyled production features incomparable dance by Bando who plays the lead as the sun goddess Amaterasu. Special guest Harei Aine (former Takarazuka Revue performer) portrays Ameno-uzume, while Kodo performers play taiko, koto harps and flutes as well as sing, depicting the gods who appear in this famous Japanese myth. In this season, all sixty-seven performances in three major Japanese cities (Tokyo, Kyoto and Fukuoka) welcomed sold-out audiences. Encore performances were held in Osaka in 2015.
Tamasaburo Bando x Kodo Special Performance

Yugen

Kodo's Long-Awaited Second Collaborative Work with Kabuki Luminary Tamasaburo Bando

After four successful seasons of "Amaterasu" over the past decade, Kodo returns to the stage with Tamasaburo Bando in 2017 for a brand new collaborative work, Tamasaburo Bando x Kodo Special Performance “Yugen.” The world premiere at Tokyo’s Bunkamura Orchard Hall in May 2017 will launch a tour throughout Japan with performances in Tokyo, Niigata, Aichi, Fukuoka & Kyoto.

Kodo and Kabuki actor Tamasaburo Bando first met in 2000. In 2003, Bando directed the ensemble in "Kodo One Earth Tour Special." In 2006, Kodo collaborated with Bando on stage for the first time in "Amaterasu." This collaboration between the most celebrated Kabuki onnagata (male actor specializing in female roles) of our time and a preeminent Japanese taiko ensemble created a huge sensation. The debut season of "Amaterasu" soon led to an encore season in 2007 at Tokyo’s historical Kabukiza Theatre. In 2013, the legendary third season of "Amaterasu" welcomed sell-out audiences to all 67 performances in Tokyo, Fukuoka, and Kyoto.

For over fifteen years, Tamasaburo Bando has continued to revolutionize Kodo's creative activities with his limitless imagination and exceptional aesthetic sense. The theme for the next Bando and Kodo collaboration is yugen, which means "subtle grace." This work provides Kodo with a truly unique challenge: to use taiko to conjure the subtle yet profound world of Noh Theater with Tamasaburo Bando. "Yugen" will feature an array of classical Japanese images from plays by Noh founder Zeami, incorporating themes from iconic works such as "Hagoromo" (The Feather Robe), "Dojoji" (Dojo-ji Temple), and "Shakkyo" (The Stone Bridge).

Dynamic Kodo has led the taiko world for decades, remaining dedicated to taiko as a vibrant living art form. In "Yugen," the ensemble will provide an innovative accompaniment for Tamasaburo Bando, whose elegant dancing prowess is often described as "unparalleled." Furthermore, Bando and Kodo will be joined by special guest artists Jusuke Hanayagi and the Hanayagi-ryu Dancers, who will enhance the rich color of the new work. "Yugen" invites audiences on a journey to new horizons of expression and imagination; to a creative realm where Bando’s captivating dance, Kodo’s soul-stirring taiko, and exquisite music inspired by the world of Noh, all meld into one.
Hatsune Miku x Kodo

Two of Japan’s Renowned Artists in an Exciting New Collaboration!

In the lead up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, Japanese Broadcasting Company NHK will broaden the global spotlight on sports to also reveal Japan's fascinating culture through their "This is NIPPON Premium Theater" series. These NHK productions will be broadcast nationwide and worldwide to share creative programs featuring an eclectic array of Japan’s preeminent artists, showcasing the dynamic spectrum of Japanese arts and culture.

In March 2017, Kodo appeared in "Hatsune Miku x Kodo Special Live," sharing the stage with software-character- turned-virtual-singer Hatsune Miku for their first-ever collaboration. This cutting-edge performance combined traditional Japanese drums and internationally-renowned digital live-performance programming to create exciting new forms of fusion.

Hatsune Miku performed brand new songs and a selection of her most popular numbers. She also sang with Kodo, lending her vocals to some of the ensemble's taiko compositions.

This collaboration was presented as part of the Tokyo 2020 Official Program.

Hatsune Miku

The "Hatsune Miku" voice synthesizer software was developed by Crypton Future Media. It allows users to make a female character called Hatsune Miku sing songs, simply by entering the lyrics and melody of their choice. Many creators have used Hatsune Miku to make music to share online, which has prompted a wave of interactive user activity in Japan and abroad. First gaining attention as a software character, Hatsune Miku is now popular around the world as a virtual singer with sell-out live performances and her own merchandise. In 2016, she gave performances in five major cities throughout Japan, followed by performances in North America and Taiwan, followed by year-end concerts in Beijing and Shanghai, China.
"It should be a monotonous instrument, but because of the extraordinary variety of playing styles they achieve an unbelievable range of changes in tonal quality that thrill the audience. This is made possible because of Kodo's deep research and creativity."
— Beijing Evening News / CHINA

"Indeed, if there is such a thing as perfection in music, Kodo comes as near to it as any group in the world."
— Boston Globe / USA

"Traditional rituals recast as theater, and contemporary thoughts about ancient instruments both figure in Kodo's performance, which includes ancient and modern compositions. Yet with tense, angular postures, with stylized, frozen gestures and, in one playful piece, with animal-like scampering and slithering, Kodo reminds its audience that, above all, its music is a matter of flesh and blood, wood and stretched skin. Kodo can raise the roof, but the group can also show extraordinary finesse."
— The New York Times / USA

"The members of Kodo, who live, train and work together on as a collective on Japan's Sado Island, have performed and toured in an effort to remind audiences of their membership in that much larger community: the world. That reminder was clear and mesmerizing."
— Los Angeles Times / USA

"Superlatives don't really exist to convey the primal power and bravura beauty of Kodo."
— Chicago Tribune / USA

"Excitingly varied, marvelously theatrical, fascinating from start to finish, with moments of vivid physical excitement, this programme by a small group of dancers and drummers, remaking performance arts into a modern theatrical experience, was a model of what can be done with folk art."
— The Sunday Telegraph / UK

"Balancing a deadly aggression with utter tranquility, their sound stretches from the lightest of rainfall to cataclysmic thunderclaps, from pleasant laughter to discordant fear and from silence to - just once here - a wall of sound, as high, frightening and impregnable as a mountain. Musicians, theatre directors and all interested in the sheer power of sound to feed emotions should take note."
— The Guardian / UK

"Dynamic, electrifying vision ....Nothing will prepare you for the 1,000 lb. drum assault, the precise timing or the wall of sound. An essential experience."
— Time Out / UK

"According to the programme notes for the Kodo drummer's overwhelming performance at Sadler's Wells Theatre, the massive 1000 lb. o-daiko drum has such a strong affinity with a mother's heartbeat as heard by a baby in her womb that small children fall asleep to its thunderous sound. I can vouch for that. A little girl in the audience, who had been kicking up an unholy fuss during the more tranquil numbers, slept soundly throughout the shattering o-daiko improvisation. ....the volume of Kodo's drumming, even at its most powerful, is never numbing or nauseating. There is a strain of peace that flows through the almost terrifying din, and the perfect control of these artists removes any sense of tension."
— The London Daily News / UK
"Big drums steal the show."
— The Financial Times / UK

"Sensational stuff, it leaves the audience exhausted but Kodo’s consummate artistry refreshed."
— Irish Independent / IRELAND

"The spectator is crushed by their power and then suddenly, silence. Complete silence as if life had stopped in an instant, no applause, not even a breath. I have never seen a show where the audience was so close to suffocating. Don’t miss this, the sound of their drums will be engraved forever on your memory."
— Le Quotidien de Paris / FRANCE

"Les batteurs, ne faisant qu’un avec les pulsations de leur instrument, déroulent par leurs frappes des plus saisissantes. Les sonorités peuvent évoquer la douce chute des flocons de neige ou déchirer l’air d’un coup de tonnerre."
— Le Monde / FRANCE

"Comme une cérémonie céleste qui résonne au plus profond de nous, un son qui nous enveloppe, nous métamorphose. On se sent différent en sortant, comme si une vérité avait fait surface en nous. C’est aussi une fabuleuse leçon d’optimisme venue d’un pays menacé par les forces de la terre."
— Madame FIGARO / FRANCE

"Perfección, intensidad, novedad e hiper masculinidad."
— LA NUEVA ESPAÑA / SPAIN

"Het is daar dat Kodo de wereld treft. met zijn neo-traditionele visie dat we allen een zin, bedoelt de groep ook dat lichaam en geest elkaar nodig hebben. Een Kodo-koncert ervaar je evenzeer als je het beschouwt..."
— De Standaard / BELGIUM

"Der Festsaal der Basler Mutermesse vibrierte bis in den letzten Winkel. Was europäische Musikgruppen nur mit Hilfe von Tausenden von Kilowatt- Verst a kung schaffen, gelang der japanischen Gruppe auf ihren Trommeln mit Konzentration und barer Muskelkraft."
— Basellandschaftliche Zeitung / SWITZERLAND

"DER FEINE DONNER VON KODO?
Das geschickte inszenierte sorgte so für ein standiges Auf und Ab der Gefühle, und die Augen bekamen erst noch etwas zu sehen. Die japanische Trommelkunst hat offensichtlich nichts mit westlicher Perkussionskultur zu tun, was sie weit über exotische Musikqualität hinaus, ausserst attraktiv macht. Dennoch wird mit ihr."
— Badener Tagblatt / SWITZERLAND

"Musk, getrommelt, geblasen, geschlagen und getanzt, die ohne Umweg über den Kopf direkt in den Bauch. ins Zwerchfell, in die Blutbahnen, die Glieder und - in die Seele dringt."
— Tages-Anzeiger / SWITZERLAND

"The drum as a martial art, as a circus act, as an athletic discipline, even as a phallic symbol. These are just some of the impressions offered by the formidable Japanese drumming ensemble Kodo..."
— Il Sole 24 ORE / ITALY

"Non si può parlare solo di tamburi e ritmo. I Kodo sono un’inistituzione giapponese e ogni loro esecuzione è una vera esperienza extrasensoriale."
— Il Manifesto / ITALY

"The Kodo Thrill -The streets of Athens vibrated to the beat of the Kodo drums last night..."
— Athens News / GREECE
Kodo Original Instrument Development

Kodo has developed an array of new instruments to date by combining its vast on-stage experience with its close connections to instrument manufacturers and craftsmen. In fact, many of the instruments that Kodo currently uses on stage came about thanks to unique ideas and innovations by Kodo members past and present.

Kodo continues to experiment every day in a constant quest to create sound that is more soul-stirring than ever before.

Tunable Okedo Taiko "Kanade"

Kanade is the world’s first taiko that allows each head to be individually tuned, enabling it to produce a rich range of tones. Kodo performer Masayuki Sakamoto and Mr. Yasuo Asano, president of Asano Taiko, spent countless hours on this collaborative project, using trial and error to develop this unique drum for use on the Kodo stage. Kanade demonstrates Kodo’s meticulous approach to creating sound and the skill of the craftsmen at Asano Taiko.

The innovative Asano Taiko Tunable Okedo Taiko “Kanade” won the 2015 Good Design Award. It was also selected by the judging committee as one of the top 100 entries, with its high ranking earning it a place on the “Good Design Best 100” list.

Shime-jishi Taiko

This drum was developed by Kodo especially for its own performances. It combines an elongated shime-daiko body (47cm) with two different drumheads: horse hide on one side and cow on the other. The heads are tuned and fastened with rope. Kodo performers put this drum through its paces on stage, letting it evolve into its current form through trial and error.

In Kodo performances, the shime-jishi taiko can be seen slung from a performer’s shoulder and played with bamboo sticks to elicit a sharp sound, or with a different type of drumstick in each hand to create variation. The drum can also be placed on a stand to allow a performer to beat both sides. The shime-jishi taiko always stands out with its crisp tones and the deep resonance from its long body. This drum has a powerful presence on stage even amidst numerous drums.

Kodo Original Chappa (Small Cymbals)

Chappa (small cymbals) are traditionally used to accompany other musical instruments, but recently they have also been used in solo performances on stage. As various ways of playing the chappa evolved, the necessity to improve the sound and durability became clear to Kodo.

To meet our unique performance needs, Kodo chappa were designed through a collaborative effort between a metal craftsman and our own performers, working together to determine the best material, the optimum thickness, and the best shape acoustically. Much attention was also paid to the pins and rings, which are both rugged and flexible to allow an intricate array of sound and broad range of expression.
Since 1971, Sado Island has been our home and the platform from which we reach out to the world. With nature's warm embrace evident in each of her four seasons, Sado is an extraordinary place where traditional ways of life and the island's indigenous performing arts still thrive today. This island is the fountain of our inspiration and the guiding force behind our creative lifestyle. Our goal is to find a harmonious balance between people and the natural world. Each time we venture off the island we encounter new people, customs, and traditional performing arts that are ingrained in the lifestyles of each locale. Both similarities and differences prompt us to pause and reflect upon the importance of the varied and rich cultures that color our world. These life lessons permeate our very skin and become an invisible source of our expression. It is through this process of “Living, Learning, and Creating” that we cultivate a unique aesthetic and sensitivity, reaching out toward a new world culture rooted in the rich possibilities of a peaceful coexistence between humanity and nature.

**Sado Performing Arts**

- Noh Theater
- Sado Okusa Folk Song & Dance
- Bunya Puppets
Kodo Village

Despite years of international touring and the constant infusion of global influences, Kodo is fiercely dedicated to its home of Sado Island. In 1988, we built our own Village not far from our original schoolhouse base by the sea, which over the years has grown to include living, practice, recording and office spaces, farm land, and carefully tended forests. The lives of 60 Kodo members from throughout Japan are centered in this village. The group also maintains former school buildings and their surrounding grounds in other parts of Sado Island, which house the Kodo Apprentice Centre and Fukaura Schoolhouse.
Every year since 1988, the rich natural splendor of Sado has set the stage for Earth Celebration (EC), Kodo’s international arts festival that seeks an alternative global culture through musical and cultural collaborations with artists from around the world. Produced by Kodo in cooperation with the people of Sado Island, EC is the nation’s longest running music festival, described by the New York Times as “Japan’s leading music event.” In 2016, Earth Celebration underwent a renaissance to become a new “community” that connects the world through music and art. EC’s new theme is “Children of Taiko,” in hopes that everyone who takes part, adults and children alike, will become children as they play, dance, and laugh together.

**A New EC– The Rebirth of Earth Celebration in 2016**

We want to create the space for people to think about what’s important through the culture and arts born through the wisdom and techniques that are needed to live in harmony with nature. That is the dream under which we changed our festival from one that was centered around outdoor concerts to one strongly rooted in local communities in order to give rise to a new community.

Our theme is “Children of Taiko” (everyone is a child when facing a taiko). The new Earth Celebration is a place for people of all different backgrounds, cultures and nationalities to connect with each other.

Of course, as a member of this community, Kodo will continue to participate in EC through the Kodo Village Concert, EC Theatre, the Fringe, workshops, and Experience Sado Programs among many others. We look forward to seeing you this year!

Earth Celebration Planning Committee

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**Featured Artists at Earth Celebration to Date Include:**
- Elvin Jones (USA), Yosuke Yamashita (Japan), Drummers of Burundi (Burundi), Hamza El’Din (Sudan), Love, Joy & Peace Ensemble (USA), Pung Cholam (India), Suar Angung (Indonesia/Bali), Aja Addy & Adjeley Mensah (Ghana), Milton Cardona & Eya Aranla (USA), Doudou N’Diaye Rose Percussion Orchestra (Senegal), Renegades Steel Drum Orchestra (Trinidad & Tobago), Kangsadran (Thailand), Costa Caribe (Venezuela), Seoul Kamuraku Performing Arts Company (Korea), Bulgarian Voices “Angelite” (Bulgaria), Babatunde Olatunji (Nigeria), Donal Lunney Group (Ireland), Kazumi Watanabe (Japan), Red Willow Dancers (USA), Huun-Huur-Tu (Russia/Tuva), Kim Duk Soo’s Samul Nori (Korea), Jacky Micaelli (France/Corsica), Zakir Hussain (India), Giovani Hidalgo (Puerto Rico), Airo Moreira & Flora Purim (Brazil), Badenya les Freses Coulbilays (Burkina Faso), Fanfare Cicarica (Romania), Carlos Nunez (Spain), Tamango’s Urban Tap (USA), Odulogum (Brazil), BLØF (Netherlands), A Filetta (France/Corsica), Ranee Family (Iran), K.O no kai, Anna Sato, Hiromitsu Agatsuma, Takuro Iga, Harei Aine , Blue Tokyo, DAZZLE (Japan), Leonard Eto (Japan), Seitaro Kuroda (Japan), Tatsuya Nakamura (Japan), Bac Ha, Traditional Music and Performing Arts Ensemble (Vietnam), Arte y Solera (Japan)
Education and Community Outreach

Workshops
Kodo workshops are not about teaching new pieces of music or polishing technique. The goal is rather to provide a situation where each participant can experience the joy of expressing their individuality through music. In addition to the multi-day Kodo Juku held at the Kodo Apprentice Centre, School Workshop Performances are given throughout Japan. Recently, with the opening of the Sado Island Taiko Centre, Kodo has been able to take its local community outreach work to the next level, sharing the tradition of taiko through hands-on workshops and various cultural-exchange events.

Kodo Juku
With the backdrop of Sado Island’s natural splendor, the Kodo Juku offer participants the rare opportunity for an intimate multi-day live-in workshop experience with Kodo members. Participants are invited to gather on Sado Island for a short retreat where the goals are simply to live, learn, and create.

KASA/MIX
Organized by Kodo Arts Sphere America (KASA) and held biannually, the KASA/MIX tour brings participants to Sado Island to live at Kodo’s Apprentice Centre and study taiko, dance, and song together with Kodo members. Conducted in English mainly for taiko enthusiasts from abroad, the KASA/MIX tour gives participants a taste of Japan and the Kodo way of life.

Lecture/Demonstrations
Kodo offers special educational shows where the music and instruments are explained in between songs. There is even a section where audience members can have a go at playing the drums on stage. Lecture/Demonstrations are offered as options in tandem with One Earth Tour bookings.

School Workshop Performances
Since 1999, in addition to their regular appearances, Kodo has held a number of School Workshop Performances taking place mainly at junior high schools. Kodo hopes this experience serves to introduce young Japanese people to their own traditional culture and perhaps even contribute in some small way to their own self-discovery.
Kodo Cultural Foundation

Thanks to the support of many friends, the Kodo Cultural Foundation was established in 1997 in order to increase Kodo's capacity for outreach projects on our home of Sado Island. Its primary mission is to carry out non-profit activities focused on social education and the notion of giving back to the local community. The Kodo Cultural Foundation is committed to the cultural and environmental preservation of Sado Island and oversees many ambitious projects. From the conservation of local habitats to the revitalization of rare craft traditions and Noh theaters throughout Sado Island, the highly collaborative Kodo Cultural Foundation supports many vital initiatives. If Kodo's performances were likened to a garden, then the Foundation would be the roots of the plants growing there. Its activities include holding workshops, planning the annual Earth Celebration, creating a research library, managing the Kodo Apprentice Centre and the Sado Island Taiko Centre, and carrying out research in the performing arts.

The Kodo Cultural Foundation recently launched a new Community Development Course at Fukaura Gakusha (Fukaura Schoolhouse), which helps socially-minded individuals to develop their skills to activate local communities on Sado Island and further afield. In 2014, the Foundation began a unique initiative called "EXADON," which is a course where Sado Island residents learn about playing taiko as a way to prevent dementia.

Earth Furniture

Kodo cares deeply about the natural environment of its home, including Sado's lush forests. To create a model of how a local resource could be sustainably managed, Kodo designs and manufactures interior furnishings from native, renewable timber. Cured by the sea, built by hand, and designed by Kodo Cultural Foundation chairperson and renowned designer, Makoto Shimazaki, it is sold under the name "Earth Furniture."
Kodo Apprentice Centre

In a converted schoolhouse in Kakinoura on Sado Island, the young people who will continue and expand on Kodo's traditions are trained, not just in musical technique but also in all matters of body and spirit. Beginning in April, apprentices live communally and train for two years. From this group, probationary members are selected in January of the second year. These chosen few spend one year as junior members, and if they are successful, they then become full Kodo members. Kodo seeks people of all backgrounds who are interested in becoming apprentices, and perhaps the next generation of Kodo players and staff. Apprentices live communally in the Kodo Apprentice Centre as they learn taiko, dance, song, and other traditional arts in the rich natural and cultural surroundings of Sado.

Apprenticeship Details

As well as learning to live communally, apprentices learn about certain basics of traditional Japanese culture and how to develop the body and mind specifically to play taiko and dance.

Curriculum content includes:
Music lessons (drumming, dancing, singing, playing flute, etc.), lectures on Sado’s environment, culture, history and traditions, farming (rice culture and vegetable gardening), cooking, tea ceremony, Noh/Kyogen, film appreciation, experiencing Sado’s local festivals, physical training, on-site training through assisting taiko workshops, staffing Earth Celebration and Kodo concerts on Sado and more. Participants are challenged to develop practical skills by participating in Kodo’s everyday activities.

Apprenticeship Requirements

*Any healthy person aged 18—25 may apply.
*Advanced Japanese required. (All instruction is given in Japanese.)
*Men and women of all backgrounds, experiences and nationalities are welcome.
Sado Island Taiko Centre

In 2007, the Sado Island Taiko Centre, located right next to the Kodo Village, was completed. Designed to provide learning materials and hands-on experience in the ancient art of taiko, this facility was made possible by the Sado municipal government working in cooperation with the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. It is operated by the Kodo Cultural Foundation.

In addition to providing a venue for practicing taiko and other traditional performing arts, the facility also includes classrooms for cooking classes, an exhibition space, and meeting rooms. The two-story wooden building was made from all local materials from Sado Island, and uses "Earth Furniture" made from Sado timber.

Elementary and junior high school student groups from both on and off the island, as well as the general public, are invited for workshops and gatherings at the centre. It is hoped that this facility will grow to be a place to experience the rich performing arts culture of Sado Island, as well as a place to pass on a "culture of creation" to future generations. Kodo also uses this facility as a venue for exchange with people from Sado and all over the world. We hope that we can share some of the knowledge and experience we have gained through our activities on the island and through our travels over the past three decades.

Sado Island Taiko Centre website: http://www.sadotaiken.jp/

Kodo Arts Sphere America (KASA)

Established in 2002, KASA is a United States nonprofit corporation designed to encourage, enable and support programs and opportunities for North Americans to study and understand the traditional and contemporary Japanese music of the taiko and its related performing arts. Its primary goals are to facilitate communication among community taiko groups both in Japan and North America, to perpetuate the taiko tradition and all of its related art forms, and to shed light on the inherent power of this ancient instrument to positively shape the world in which we live.

KASA website: http://www.kodoarts.org

Yoshikazu Fujimoto and Yoko Fujimoto teaching taiko and song on the 2009 Kasa Workshop Tour in the USA & Canada.
EXADON

In Japan, it is estimated that over seven million people will suffer from dementia in 2025, with one in five people aged 65 years and over developing dementia. (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2015) With this situation in mind, an initiative proposed by Dr. Yoshinori Morimoto, the director of Shiosai Clinic on Sado Island, Japan, led to the launch of the “EXADON” program in 2014. His idea brought Sado City, Kodo Cultural Foundation, and Shiosai Clinic together for a collaborative venture where they devised a new program for health promotion and nursing care prevention that focuses on the enjoyment of performing arts, such as playing taiko (traditional Japanese drums), and physical activity. Its name, “EXADON,” is a combination of three words: “EXERCISE,” “SADO,” and the sound of beating a taiko drum, “DON.”

EXADON is centered on two main projects:

1. EXADON Taiko Classes for people aged 65 years & over
2. EXADON Supporter Training Sessions to teach people to facilitate EXADON programs in local communities.

In EXADON Taiko Classes, participants set goals and their physical strength and ability is measured. Later, they can check the effects of their continued activity by comparing their initial and follow-up measurements. Some participants say that playing taiko gives them a full-body workout, while others say that coming to the taiko classes has given them new purpose in life. It is a program that anyone can enjoy, young or old, regardless of disabilities. EXADON connects people from different generations and various regions, offering people a positive activity along with peace of mind. Every year, the importance of this unique program is gaining wider recognition.

In 2014, a companion for this taiko (exercise) program was also launched, which was devised by Dr. Takako Morimoto, Shiosai Clinic Deputy Director. Based on the concept that a balanced diet is important to help prevent dementia, “Exa-don” (“-don” in this case means “meal in a bowl”) promotes eating meals made with local produce from Sado Island and incorporating ingredients said to lower the risk of dementia into one’s meals. This program helps increase public awareness of the effective measures people can take to help prevent dementia. In 2015 & 2016, the “Exa-don Idea Contest” was held on Sado to invite citizens to actively consider their diet and dementia prevention. One of the judges was Shin’ichi Sogo, an EXADON instructor & Kodo Cultural Foundation staff member. There are plans to hold future contests to encourage new ideas and further dialogue.

**About EXADON**

By Dr. Yoshinori Morimoto, Shiosai Clinic

“EXADON” is a mental and physical health issue prevention program. While the program aims to prevent an array of health problems from occurring, if such issues do develop, then the goal is to minimize the level of pain and disability caused by one’s ailments. EXADON is targeted at helping to prevent mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and dementia. It also aims to prevent or alleviate physical health issues such as locomotive syndrome and metabolic syndrome, as well as affiliated conditions such as bone fractures, gait (walking) disorders, strokes, and heart attacks.

Balanced, enjoyable exercise routines and dietary habits are effective in the prevention of mental and physical health conditions. EXADON offers people a fun exercise routine to enjoy along with taiko and performing arts. Coupled with the healthy diet companion program, “EXA-don,” participants also learn better dietary habits by eating nutritionally balanced meals. The EXADON program is filled with activities that bring people together, facilitate dialogue, support mutual understanding and compassion for others, and more. EXADON aims to create inner peace, well-being, and happiness through positive action and thoughts. ※EXADON is a registered trademark jointly owned by Kodo Cultural Foundation & Dr. Yoshinori Morimoto.
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Photo: Takashi Okamoto, Maiko Miyagawa, Kodo