



*International
Presentations of
Music & Dance*

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Kodo

“One Earth” Tour

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ATSOSHI SUGANO, *Manager*

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THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 7, 1985, AT 8:00
POWER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

A message from Kodo . . .

Thank you very much for joining us today. You have been called here by the sound of the drum. Thirteen years have passed since we first were captured by the mystery of the Japanese taiko (drum). Thirteen years have passed since we were captured by the mystery of Sado Island where we make our home. During that time the world has undergone many changes, as have we. However, our conviction that the drum (which is fundamental to folk music and dance) and Sado Island both serve as a great source of knowledge and inspiration, has grown steadily stronger. We feel that the course we have chosen will lead us to discover a different dimension of the world beyond words.

From time immemorial the taiko has been beaten by man as a medium for communication with each other and as a medium of communication between man and the gods. While beating the taiko, man comes face to face with the gods. He plays in the world of nothingness. The gods of which we speak are not, however, those revered in Christianity or the national religion of Shinto. We speak of the much simpler gods, those of Nature.

Modern civilization has broken down the community of the village; the gods have been turned away. Young people flock to the cities. The energy of the festivals has weakened. The influence of television upon the performing arts has become so persuasive that they have come to be performed for the sake of display; “just for the show.” It seems apparent that modern man has lost access to a tremendous amount of information that could be gleaned from the fantastic energy which was a part of the traditional performing arts and festivals. It has become increasingly difficult for modern man to see through to the core of these traditions which are now so shrouded in a husk of many layers. Using our bodies and our senses as a filter, we are trying to shift our way to the core. Having drawn as close to this core as we can, it becomes our task to transform our understanding into contemporary “information.”

The performance you will see today is not, therefore, the same as those of villages in days gone by. Our performance is information that has filtered through our bodies. The people in the villages carried out those traditions because they wanted to, because of their devotion to the spirit of the

village. We, too, hold that emotion to be of vital importance. We are attempting today within the confines of this theatre to reproduce for you the information that we as performers have gathered while living in the bosom of Mother Nature on Sado Island, and from our extensive travels around the world.

What happens with our bodies as we confront the drums? What do we cause to happen within your bodies? What do you cause to happen within ours? This performance can be thought of as an experiment in communication beyond words.

Nowadays, thanks to the development of communication technology, events from around the world can be transmitted within the blink of an eye. We have entered the age when that information has come to have a direct and powerful effect on our lives. With videos, digitally recorded laser discs, etc., images and sounds can be duplicated and transmitted to people in the four corners of the earth. There is, however, information that can only be transmitted by the living body, and that requires a live performance. This is one of the major reasons for our traveling around the world, playing our drums.

We ask you to open wide your eyes, ears, skin, all of your perceptual antennae, to feel with your entire body all and everything that bubbles up within as you receive that which we send from the stage. Play freely with the images as they appear, as if slowly unrolling a scroll painting.

PROGRAM

(performed without intermission)

Monochrome *Composed by Maki Ishii, 1976*

Weaving constant rhythmic patterns together with highly irregular ones, Monochrome develops spirally to an exciting climax. The listener might interpret the sounds as those of the changing of the seasons, or perhaps even as the progression of all life itself. This ambitious piece expands greatly the taiko's range and power of expression and, as such, can be considered an epochal composition. Its sister piece, Monoprism, was composed for performance with an orchestra and was premiered at Tanglewood with the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa. Monoprism received the Odaka Award for the best composition of the year.

Quena

Ten thousand years ago, members of the Mongolian race passed from the north to the south of the American continents to become the first human inhabitants of North and South America. The Quena is a vertical flute played by the Indians of the Andes mountains. It is a simple instrument made from bamboo bored with holes. With the idea that Japanese and native American culture of the distant past perhaps spring from a common source, we will play both Japanese and Andean tunes. Both use a pentatonic scale.

Torimai

In the Tohoku region on the northern tip of the main island of Japan, there are many versions of a very strenuous and lively dance known as Yamabushi Kagura. Kodo performs one from a village called Otsugunai in Iwate Prefecture at the base of Mt. Hayachine. A variety of dances are performed well into the night, but Torimai is always the first. In it, a hen and a rooster dance together and pray for fertility and new life.

Shamisen

A unique folk style of shamisen strumming is found in the Tsugaru district of the northern Tohoku region of Aomori. It is played on a "futo-zao" shamisen and is characterized by strong, fast, and intricate fingering techniques.

Chonlima *Composed by Roetsu Tōsha, 1983*

This piece features four drummers using okedo and shime daiko and two drummers on the larger miya daiko. The players pass the sounds from one to another in a way that makes this piece particularly interesting. Playing at a frenetic speed, the mood vacillates from one of pitched excitement to that of humor. This piece mixes traditional Japanese rhythms with those of a very modern feeling. The title "Chonlima" (One Thousand League Horse) refers to an old Korean story of a famous horse who was capable of running at tremendous speeds over great distances without tiring. Featured in this composition are the okedo daiko which trace their origins to Korea.

Hae. *Composed by Motofumi Yamaguchi, 1982*

"Hae" means the wind from the South. Historically, Japan has been significantly influenced by the southern islands. In using the basic scale of Okinawa and a Caribbean instrument, the steel drum, this piece expresses a heartfelt longing for the South.

Okiage

During the Meiji period, Hokkaido pulsed with new activity as workers migrated from throughout Japan to the herring industry that thrived there. Okiage is a working song used to coordinate the efforts of the fishermen as they pulled on their oars and hauled in their nets.

Miyake

Taking its name from Miyake Island, one of the Seven Islands of Izu, the miyake is a drum which is set very low to the ground, requiring an unusual and strenuous drumming technique in which the body is swung low to the ground, pivoting only on the hips. This colorful technique, which displays the youthfulness, power, and liveliness of the drummers, is at least as exciting to watch as to listen to.

Nishimonai

This dance is performed in Akita Prefecture in the late summer during the Obon Matsuri (a festival in remembrance of the dead). The dancer wears a patchwork kimono and a large woven straw hat tilted so low as to completely mask the face. The coquettish movements of the hat, leaving only the nape of the neck exposed to view, creates an atmosphere of mystery and shadow that seems in keeping with the mood of the Obon Matsuri.

Chōjūgida

This dance is based upon a well-known painting which survives from the Heian period known as Chōjūgida, which features a variety of frolicking animals and birds attired in human weeds. Kodo satirizes this painting by appearing in the form of an assortment of animals and spirits all drawn inexorably towards the drum. The drumming rhythm is derived from "Gojinjo daiko" of Ishikawa Prefecture.

Yama Uta

From the end of the Edo Period through the beginning of Meiji, a ship known as Kitamaesen carrying rice and herring made the round trip from Osaka to Hokkaido via the Japan Sea. That ship served as a means for transporting culture as well. "Umako Uta" (The Horseman's Song) from Shinshu (Nagano) is found in Tsugaru (Aomori) as "Yama Uta" (Mountain Song) and also as "Oiwake Uta" (Packhorse Driver's Song) in Hokkaido. Kodo performs "Yama Uta" on the shinobue, a horizontal bamboo flute.

O-daiko

The story is told of a baby who, upon hearing the thunderous sound of the o-daiko, dropped off into a peaceful slumber. The vibrations of the o-daiko are powerful, but one can also sense a tranquility in the sound as well. Might that not be the same tranquility felt when embraced within the arms of one's mother?

The rhythm of the o-daiko is simple. The drummer on one side beats out a basic rhythm over which the main player improvises freely. When they become "one" with the sound and the rhythm, both drummers and listeners find themselves wrapped within the embrace of the o-daiko.

The miya daiko used by Kodo measures 5½ feet across the head and weighs approximately 880 pounds.

Yatai Bayashi

Every year on December 3rd in Saitama Prefecture in an area known as Chichibu, an all-night festival is held at which highly decorated, two-storied yatai (carts) are pulled from every town and village. Hidden within the first story, unseen from outside, emanates the sound of the Yatai Bayashi. The people hauling the yatai are urged on by the powerful beating of the taiko.

Sakayauta

This traditional working song from Akita Prefecture was sung while making sake.

About the Artists

The members of Kodo live communally on Sado Island in the Sea of Japan. Each day they maintain a rigid discipline: running 12 to 24 miles, and practicing not only the traditional drums, dances and songs, but also ballet and Japanese calligraphy. Their main activity, however, centers on the taiko (drum), perhaps the most primal of musical instruments.

In ancient Japan, the taiko was the symbol of the community, and it is said that the village limits were not solely determined by geography, but by the farthest distance at which the taiko could be heard. It is Kodo's hope, on the "One Earth" Tour, to bring the sounds of the taiko to the ears of the people around the world, so that we might all be reminded of our membership in that much larger and more important village of the world.

The name Kodo has two meanings: one is "heartbeat," the other, "children of the drum." The sound of the great taiko has been compared to the sound of a mother's heartbeat as heard and felt from within the womb, and it is Kodo's desire to play the drums with the heart of a child.

Since their 1975 United States debut, when they ran the Boston Marathon and then played a concert at the finish line, Kodo has performed throughout the United States, Europe, Asia, Canada, and Mexico, receiving the highest public and critical acclaim. In 1984, among many other appearances, they performed at the World's Fair in New Orleans; at the Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles, where they had to add an extra week of performances to accommodate audience demand; and at the Berlin Festival, where they broke the attendance record for a single performance. In 1985 Kodo will tour in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan, and will be featured guests at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland.

This is Kodo's second Ann Arbor appearance; they first performed here in October 1982.

Coming Concerts

- ST. LUKE'S CHAMBER ENSEMBLE Fri. Mar. 8
Mozart: Divertimento; Zwilich: Double String Quartet; Mendelssohn: Octet (strings)
- PAUL BADURA-SKODA, *Pianist* Sun. Mar. 10
Bach: Partita No. 1 in B-flat; Frank Martin: Eight Preludes; Berg: Sonata in B minor,
Op. 1; Bach: Partita No. 6 in E minor
- ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC Thurs. Mar. 14
CHRISTOPHER HOGWOOD, *Conductor*; EMMA KIRKBY, *Soprano*; DAVID THOMAS, *Bass*
Handel: Water Music, and Cantata, *Apollo and Dafne*
- NATIONAL SYMPHONY / MSTISLAV ROSTROPOVICH Wed. Mar. 20
Beethoven: Symphony No. 4; Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- FACULTY ARTISTS CONCERT (free admission) Sun. Mar. 24
RUGGIERO RICCI, *Violinist*; HARRY SARGOUS, *Oboist*, and School of Music String
Ensemble, performing Bach Concertos
- SHERILL MILNES, *Baritone* Fri. Mar. 29
- POLISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA Thurs. Apr. 18
Lutoslawski: *Musique Funebre* (1958); Haydn: Cello Concerto in C major;
Reger: *Intermezzo*; Shostakovich: Chamber Symphony, Op. 110

Ann Arbor May Festival 1985

Wednesday-Saturday, May 1, 2, 3, 4

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

The Festival Chorus, DONALD BRYANT, *Director*

Guest Conductors

SIXTEN EHRLING PHILIPPE ENTREMONT SIR ALEXANDER GIBSON

ITZHAK PERLMAN, *Violinist* PHILIPPE ENTREMONT, *Pianist*

DAME KIRI TE KANAWA, *Soprano*

HENRY HERFORD, *Baritone* ANNE MARTINDALE WILLIAMS, *Cellist*

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