

KODŌ

“One Earth” Tour '92

Yoshiaki Oi, Director

Shinpei Harada, Lighting Designer

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Masafumi Kazama, Stage Manager

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Company Members

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Wednesday Evening, February 19, 1992, at 8:00

Thursday Evening, February 20, 1992, at 7:00

Power Center for the Performing Arts

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Kodo's “Earth Celebration”

In August 1988, a dream was realized when Kodo Village was officially opened on Sado Island and the first Earth Celebration was held. This week-long series of concerts, lectures, discussions, workshops, and art exhibitions brought together percussion companies and musicians from throughout the world and is now an annual event on Sado.

From August 21 through 23 of this year, 1992, Kodo will hold the fifth annual Earth Celebration drum festival on their Sado Island home. The first four festivals were great successes, with performers from Burundi, Sudan, Ghana, China, Korea, India, Indonesia, Japan, and the United States joining to explore the many variations on the theme *tataku*, to beat a rhythm. Earth Celebration '92 has tentatively scheduled guests Doudou N'Diaye Rose Percussion Orchestra from Senegal, and from Ghana, the drummer Aja Addy.

In simpler times, people expressed themselves through their native arts, and it is this simplicity that leads to universal understanding. The Earth Celebration festival provides the chance to experience and appreciate traditional cultural expressions from around the world.

The University Musical Society extends thanks to U-M Professor William Malm, the speaker for Wednesday night's Philips Pre-concert Presentation.

Kodo is represented by Dennis Letzler Organization, Hollywood, California.

Kodo records for Sheffield Lab and Sony Records.

PROGRAM

This performance will run approximately 90 minutes with no intermission.

SHISHI-KU (Composed by Leonard Eto, 1990)

Shishi is a mythical animal that is similar to a lion, yet also resembles wild animals such as deer and boar. She is considered a messenger of the natural Gods that do damage to people, but on the other hand, brings them meat and fur. In this piece, *Shishi* dances to celebrate the arrival of spring and expresses the joy of life after the long and harsh winter.

NISHIMONAI

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

CHONLIMA (Composed by Roetsu Tosha, 1983)

Chonlima was composed specifically for Kodo by the respected Kabuki drummer Roetsu Tosha. The piece features four drummers playing *okedo* barrel drums and roped *shime daiko*, and one drummer on a larger *miyadaiko*. The players pass the sounds from one to another, playing at a frantic speed, mixing traditional Japanese rhythms with more modern tempos and blending tense excitement with subtle humor. Translated, *Chonlima* means "One Thousand League Horse" and alludes to a stallion in a well-known Korean legend that possessed great speed and stamina.

MIYAKE

On Miyake Island, one of the seven volcanic islands of Izu south of Tokyo, there is a festival centered on this very unique style of drumming. The drums are set very low to the ground, requiring the strenuous stance. The flamboyant technique is often compared to the martial arts.

SHAMISEN

The *shamisen* is a three-stringed instrument commonly played to accompany drama and singing. A unique style of *shamisen* playing is found in the Tsugaru region in northern Aomori Prefecture. It is played on a very sturdy *shamisen* and is characterized by fast and intricate fingering techniques, sharp, percussive strumming, and long passages of improvisation.

MORINOSEI (Sacred Forest)

(Composed and arranged by Leonard Eto, 1991)

This arrangement consists of popular selections from Kodo's repertoire, using three performers, which was taken on tour through West Africa in September 1991 with great success. The Sun Dance expresses our deep sense of gratitude for the blessing of the sun, and in *Yu-Karak*, performers play the *oke-daiko*, freely creating various rhythms. With the dancing and drumming, drawn in by the African nature, a spontaneous improvisation will be created.

YAMAUTA

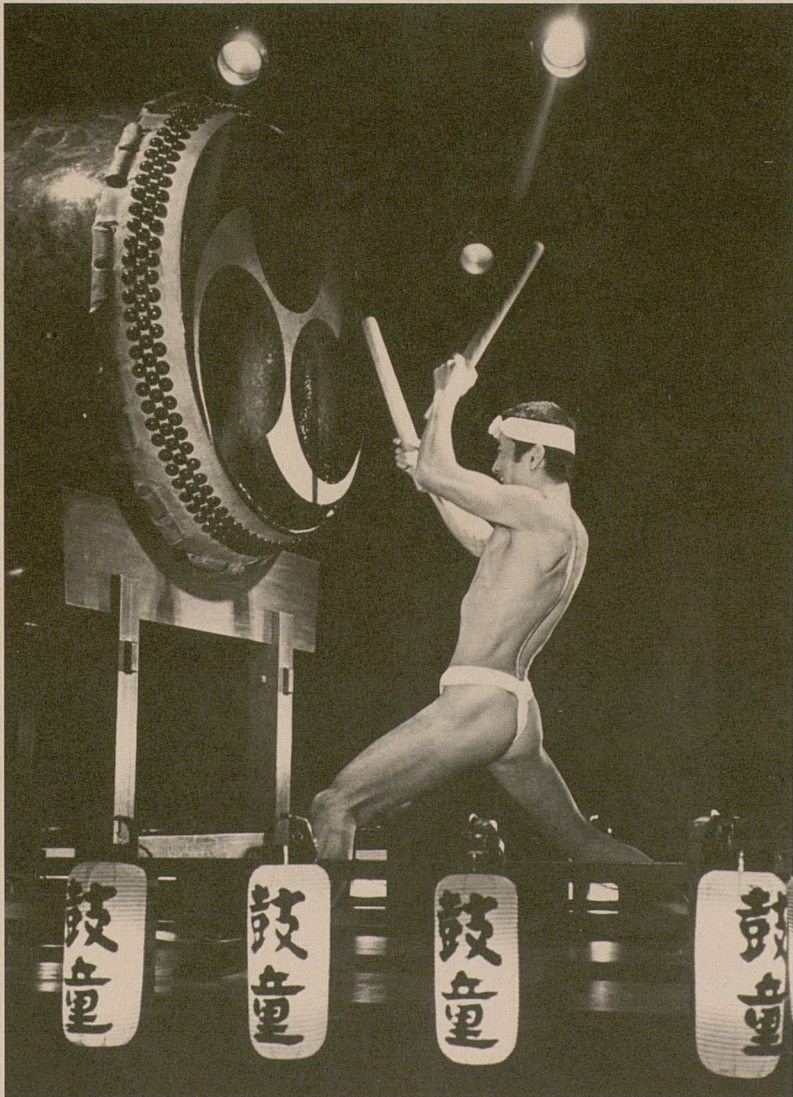
During the nineteenth century, a trade ship known as the Kitamaesen ran the route from Osaka to Hokkaido via the Sea of Japan. In addition to rice, herring, and *sake*, the ship carried culture in the form of songs and dances. As a result, slightly different versions of this flute song are called "Yama uta" (Mountain Song) in Aomori, but "Mago uta" (Horseman's Song) in Shinshu, and "Oiwake" (Fisherman's Song) in Hokkaido.

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 powerful sounds emanating from the *O-daiko* possess a deep tranquility. The arrangement is simple. The drummer on one side beats out a basic rhythm while the main player improvises freely. When they become united with each other and the rhythm, both the drummers and the listeners find themselves wrapped within the embrace of the *O-daiko*. This *miyadaiko*, carved from a single tree, measures about five feet across and weighs about 800 pounds.

YATAI-BAYASHI

Every year on December 3rd in the 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 village to village. The people hauling the *yatai* are urged on by the powerful beating of the *taiko*, concealed in the cramped first story of the carts. This gave rise to a technique of drumming while seated. Turning the two-ton fixed-axle carts at intersections requires complex teamwork and is accompanied by precise and intricate *tama-ire* solos on the *shime daiko*.



Kodo, the Japanese percussion company whose performances on the *taiko* (traditional Japanese drum) have electrified audiences on five continents, has become one of the world's most celebrated and popular performing companies. In July of 1991, Kodo celebrated its 20th anniversary with a series of three concerts held in Tokyo, and this year, 1992, commemorates its tenth anniversary of touring in North America. It is with special pride that Kodo will now revisit Toronto, Los Angeles (UCLA), Berkeley, and East Lansing and Ann Arbor, where the company first performed during its 1982 North American debut tour. By popular demand, Kodo has since returned to Ann Arbor for performances in 1985, 1988, and 1990. During its current tour, Kodo performs in 18 cities, with debut engagements in several localities. In the spring, the company will visit Italy, Germany, and Switzerland.

Drawing from its country's rich tradition of music and performance, Kodo has created a vital sound and tradition of its own, one which is decidedly contemporary in presentation. Kodo has also made a major contribution to the worldwide renaissance of interest in percussion, both through its own artistry on the *taiko* and through numerous collaborations with major jazz and popular musicians, symphony orchestras, and dance companies.

In addition to drums of assorted sizes, Kodo employs dance, mime, and a variety of other instruments, including the *shamisen*, bamboo flute, and wooden clacker. But the drums dominate a Kodo performance, and the most majestic is the *o-daiko*, a huge, decorated 800-pound instrument carved from the trunk of a single tree and played by two men. "Kodo" means both "Heartbeat" and "Children of the Drum" and expresses not only the sound of a mother's heartbeat as heard and felt from within the womb, but also the desire to play the drums purely, with the heart of a child. *The New York Post* wrote: "There is both innocence and tradition embodied in this drumming, as well as virtuosity and a subtlety of detail. Its rhythms really do move the tribal blood still running through our urban veins."

Kodo is based on Sado Island in the Sea of Japan, an isolated setting of great natural beauty and home to the company since its founding in 1971. When not on tour – approximately eight months of each year – the members live communally on Sado. Each day is spent in study, practice, and exercise, to develop the physical strength, energy, and stamina demanded in performance.

The company spent many of its early years training and rehearsing, appearing in the Far East and making debut tours to the United States and France. In 1981, they took the name "Kodo" and appeared at the Berlin Festival, where the audience called for encores for one hour, the longest ever at the Berlin Symphony Hall. Their 1984 appearances at the Los Angeles Olympic Arts Festival were the first among fifty participants to sell out. Kodo's 1985 performances at the Edinburgh International Festival were followed by extended engagements at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall and Milan's Teatro dell'Arte. The company has appeared in Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, China, Mexico, South America, and Australia, and has collaborated on original compositions with the Boston Symphony, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Circle Ensemble of Holland, and has performed with renowned American jazz drummers Max Roach and Elvin Jones.

Kodo has been profiled in such publications as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *GEO*, *Islands*, and *People* magazines. On television, they were featured in a one-hour National Public Television documentary broadcast throughout the United States and on numerous nationwide television news programs.

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

THANK YOU!

About one year ago, Joe O'Neal walked into the University Musical Society offices. The faulty wiring, the lack of heat, the poor lighting, and the crowded conditions he saw led him to enlist support to renovate the Society's offices in Burton Tower. The project is now nearing completion, thanks to the contributed labor of many people, the generous gifts of materials of many businesses, and the personal support of many donors.

As of January 27,* the following individuals have played an important role in making this project's completion a reality. We are pleased to publicly acknowledge and thank these people and their companies.

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*If we have overlooked a name, please let us know.
We apologize in advance for this omission.