

Taiko Master KENNY ENDO's CONTEMPORARY ENSEMBLE
45th Anniversary Tour
Breaking Through Tradition to Innovation



Kenny Endo, *taiko, kotsuzumi, percussion*
Kaoru Watanabe, *Nohkan, shinobue, otsuzumi, taiko*
Sumie Kaneko, *koto, shamisen, vocals*
Abe Lagrimas Jr, *ukulele, vibraphone, drums*
Sho'on Shibata, *taiko, percussion*

Photo: Ken Berry

UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON
March 30, 2022, 7:30 pm
Dodd Auditorium

PHOTOGRAPHS, RECORDING, and ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Cameras and recording devices may not be brought into the Theatre without the express prior consent of the Theatre management. Please "silence" electronic watches, pagers, and phones.

Artist's message:

Welcome to Breaking Through Tradition to Innovation!

It has been a challenging few years. During the pandemic, many people suffered and many lives were lost. Slowly, we are starting to see some recovery.

The performing arts are beginning to come back. For me, 2020, marked 45 years of performing, teaching, and composing for taiko. I feel fortunate to have made a career doing what I love.

Traditionally, taiko was used to bring good fortune, drive away evil spirits, and bring people together. We hope that our music will help to heal, inspire, transform, and bring peace to the world.

We dedicate our performance to the people of Ukraine and to people suffering from aggression all over the world.

Thank you for being here today. Please enjoy the performance.

Aloha,
Kenny Endo

Program

Clarity
Yume no Pahu
Ame, Tears of the Earth
Swing, Soul, and Sincerity
Spirit Sounds/Miyake

-intermission-

Sounds of Kabuki
Soaring
Sunflower
Symmetrical Soundscapes
Jugoya

KENNY ENDO 45th ANNIVERSARY TOUR

"His ability to interweave ... traditional taiko style with jazz drumming has enabled him to create an incredibly dynamic style ...that captivated the audience ... literally breathtaking." (*The Grateful Web, NY*)

"Kenny Endo has probably taken taiko the farthest among Americans."

(*Natural History*, the North American Taiko Conference report)

Celebrating his 45th Anniversary in Taiko, Kenny Endo stands at the vanguard of the taiko genre, as one of the leading personas in contemporary percussion and rhythm in North America and in Japan. For 45 years, he has led the way in this Japanese style of drumming in the U.S. and will celebrate with a 2022 tour: *Breaking Through Tradition to Innovation*.

As jazz percussionist and early innovator in Japanese taiko, Kenny Endo embodies the history of taiko in the U.S. His adventurous spirit continues to stretch the taiko genre, incorporating influences like funk, jazz, Afro-Cuban & Hawaiian, with roots firmly grounded in tradition. His performances are nuanced, brilliant, exciting!

"... the concert was absolutely amazing. Each performer was a master soloist in their own right, and you all came together in a very special ensemble ... all blended into a modern approach to percussion that I believe is unique in the world today." --Chair, Dept of Music, Lafayette College

Endo tours with his Contemporary Ensemble – taiko, vibes, drums, 'ukulele, flute, koto, shamisen -- performed by renowned performers from the U.S. and Japan. He has received numerous awards and accolades, including special recognition in Japan—he was the first non-national to be honored with a "natori," a stage name, in Japanese classical drumming. Most recently, he was awarded a 2022 US Artists Fellowship, which celebrates artists and cultural practitioners who have significantly contributed to the creative landscape and arts ecosystem of the country.

PROGRAM NOTES

Clarity

By Kenny Endo

This piece relates to the elusive quest for clarity of purpose. The music is inspired by African-American funk. The performers seek to create a cohesive groove through melody and non-traditional rhythms.

Yume no Pahu (Dream of the *Pahu* drum)

By Kenny Endo

This piece was inspired by *pahu* drum maker, Cioci, who had a dream that he was playing an unusually shaped *pahu* (Hawaiian drum) and chanting in a clearing in the forest. After awakening, he constructed a drum exactly like that in his dream and which is now in the Drum Museum collection in Tokyo. The first musical section is based on the Hawaiian *mele* (composition) "Ua Nani o Nu'uaniu." The second section is influenced by a Tahitian rhythm, 'titau,' arranged as a solo section. Yume no Pahu is dedicated to the indigenous people of Hawai'i in support of their struggle to control their land, their culture, and their destiny.

Ame, Tears of the Earth

By Kenny Endo

Ame means rain in Japanese. My interpretation is that the Earth is crying out. *Ame* is dedicated to victims of aggression all over the world, particularly in recent history, the events surrounding 9-11 and the current crisis in Ukraine. We hope to counter negativity with love and creativity through this musical performance.

Swing, Soul, and Sincerity

By Kenny Endo

The American singer Bobby McFerrin once said that musicians must have swing, soul, and sincerity. This piece features the melodic instruments with two rhythmic interludes by the drums and percussion.

Spirit Sounds / Miyake

By Kenny Endo / Traditional

The *odaiko* (large taiko) is traditionally carved from a single tree trunk, hundreds of years old, with skins of stretched cowhide. This work features traditional *taiko* and voice patterns found in Kabuki and an Afro-Cuban 6/8 rhythm. This composition is dedicated to the spirits of the tree and of the cow, which are united and reborn as a powerful musical instrument. When an artist's spirit becomes one with the spirit of the *taiko*, the full potential of musical experience can occur. Miyake is a powerful traditional style of festival drumming from Miyake Island, Japan. It was arranged in the 1980s into a popular composition by the *taiko* group, Kodo. This arrangement adds improvisations to the original rhythmic patterns and signature low stance.

--INTERMISSION--

Sounds of Kabuki

(traditional)

This piece features the *Nohkan*, *kotsuzumi*, *otsuzumi*, *shamisen*, and vocals performing music influenced by traditional Kabuki theatre.

Soaring

By Kenny Endo

The joy of flying with confidence and peace is depicted in this rapid but quiet piece.

Sunflower

By Kenny Endo

The sunflower is a source of light and energy. This composition features the 'ukulele, *koto*, and *shinobue* in a pentatonic scale.

Symmetrical Soundscapes

By Kenny Endo

The drummers perform mirror imagery through sounds. The first part consists of traditional patterns found in Japanese classical drumming. It then flows into solos intertwined with images of mountains and valleys. The second part is a lively mixture of Brazilian rhythms, Tokyo festival music, and improvised "conversation" between the players.

Jugoya (Crystal Clear Moon)

By Kenny Endo

Literally meaning fifteenth night, Jugoya refers to the brightest full moon of the year (in the old lunar calendar, this was the fifteenth night of the eighth month). In the modern calendar, it corresponds to the harvest moon which, throughout Asia, takes place in late September.

CONTEMPORARY ENSEMBLE BIOS

KENNY ENDO

taiko, kotsuzumi, percussion

Kenny Endo is a performer/composer and a leading spirit in contemporary *taiko*. Utilizing the traditional Japanese drum in innovative collaborations, his music blends *taiko* with rhythms influenced from around the world in original melodies and improvisation. Trained in western drums and percussion from childhood, Endo began his studies of *kumi daiko* (ensemble drumming) in 1975 with Kinnara Taiko (Los Angeles) and the San Francisco Taiko Dojo. In 1980, Endo embarked on a decade-long odyssey in Japan studying with the masters of *hogaku hayashi* (classical), *matsuri bayashi* (festival), and *kumi daiko*. He is the first non-Japanese national to be honored with a *natori* (stage name and master's license) in *hogaku hayashi*, and has an M.A. in Music specializing in ethnomusicology from the University of Hawai'i. As a composer, Endo has released ten CDs. He has performed as a *taiko* soloist with the Honolulu Symphony, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, percussionist Kiyohiko Semba, the Hawaii Opera Theater, and with singer Bobby McFerrin. Endo also serves as Artistic Director of Taiko Center of the Pacific, a school of traditional Japanese drumming in Honolulu. Working with artists in various genres, he has paved new directions in using the *taiko*, bringing a refreshing and creative approach to music through his background in western, ethnic, and traditional Japanese drumming. This year he was honored with a prestigious US Artist Fellowship Award.

KAORU WATANABE

Nohkan, shinobue, otsuzumi, taiko

Kaoru Watanabe is a practitioner of various Japanese transverse bamboo flutes, taiko drum and Western flute. His music is an evershifting blend of Japanese folk and classical traditions with contemporary improvisational and experimental music. He was born in St. Louis, Missouri to symphony musician parents. After graduating from the Manhattan School of Music with a BFA in jazz flute and saxophone performance, he moved to Japan and joined the internationally renowned *taiko* drum ensemble KODO, where he studied and performed *taiko*, traditional Japanese folk dance and song, and specialized in various *fue* (bamboo flute) such as the *nohkan*, *ryuteki* and *shinobue*. In 2005, Kaoru began acting as one of KODO's artistic directors, focusing on their world music festival, Earth Celebration; and curating and directing collaborations with such artists as Zakir Hussein, Carlos Nunez, Giovanni Hildago and Yamashita Yosuke. Kaoru left KODO and returned to NY in late 2006 to teach and continue performing *fue* and *taiko* as well as the western flute in collaboration with musicians, dancers, and visual artists of both western and eastern disciplines. Kaoru has performed and recorded with such artists as Jason Moran, Stefon Harris and with the great *Kabuki* actor Bando Tamasaburo.

SUMIE KANEKO

koto, shamisen, vocals

Sumie Kaneko started playing *koto* (Japanese zither) at the age of five. In 1995, she won the Takasaki International Competition in *koto* performance. She studied Japanese traditional music at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, then studied Jazz vocals at the Berklee College of Music. Performance highlights include: Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, TED Talk, Getty Center, Boston Ballet, and the Museum of Fine Arts. In 2014, her group, J-Trad, was invited to the Washington DC Jazz Festival by the Embassy of Japan. She was the first *shamisen* player to perform in Pulitzer Prize Paula Vogel's "The Long Christmas Ride Home" and has collaborated with many world instrumentalists. International tours include: Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Jamaica, and Bangladesh.

ABE LAGRIMAS JR

ukulele, vibraphone, drums

Abe Lagrimas Jr. is a versatile multi-instrumentalist who began his musical journey when he first sat behind the drums at the age of four. As he learned more about music, Abe gained an interest in other instruments as his career progressed, becoming highly proficient on vibraphone and `ukulele as well as drums, now performing throughout the world on all three instruments in many musical genres. Abe continued his studies and attended Berklee College of Music as a scholarship recipient. He has performed with notable artists such as Eric Marienthal, Lalo Schifrin, Gabe Baltazar, Jake Shimabukuro, James Ingram, and many others. He is a member of one of South Korea's top jazz groups, "Prelude," and a regular member of Hawaii-based groups Don Tiki and Bop Tribal, Boston-based Waitiki 7, and serves as musical director for L.A.-based vocalist Charmaine Clamor. He has released albums

on major labels Universal Music Japan, Sony Korea, Pony Canyon Records. Abe received a 2011 Na Hoku Hanohano (Hawaiian Music) Award for his Michael Jackson tribute album *Solo 'Ukulele - The King of Pop*. Abe is endorsed by Canopus Drums, Paiste Cymbals, Vic Firth Drumsticks, Beato Bags and Koolau Ukuleles. He currently resides in Los Angeles, California.

SHO'ON SHIBATA

taiko, percussion

Sho'on trained as a fellowship recipient with Kenny Endo's Taiko Center of the Pacific, prior to joining the ensemble. A trained ethnomusicologist and advocate for world music with a focus on East Asian music, he earned his BA at SUNY Potsdam in New York State, and Crane School of Music, where he founded its first taiko group. His studies included African drum and dance, trombone, and chorus. He has researched *taiko* drumming extensively in the U.S. and Japan. His research was presented during the SUNY Potsdam Learning and Research Fair, as well as its Presidential Scholars Honors Colloquium. He has an M.A. from the University of Hawai'i, Manoa, in ethnomusicology with a focus on Japan.

Special guest dancer: **YUMI HWANG**

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Kenny Endo uses taiko provided by Miyamoto Unosuke Shoten of Tokyo.

Kenny Endo's costume is designed by Anne Namba.

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