

Introducing Kodo



Exploring the limitless possibilities of the traditional Japanese drum, the taiko, Kodo is forging new directions for a vibrant living art form. In Japanese the word *Kodo* conveys two meanings: Firstly, "heartbeat," the primal source of all rhythm. The sound of the great taiko is said to resemble a mother's heartbeat as felt in the womb, and it is no myth that babies are often lulled asleep by its thunderous vibrations. Secondly, read in a different way, the word can mean "children of the drum," a reflection of Kodo's desire to play the drums simply, with the heart of a child.



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 Tagayasu 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 celebrates its milestone 30th anniversary. Tours in North America, Europe, and throughout Japan have been planned for this commemorative year.