

TAIKOPROJECT:(re)generation
Spring 2009 Tour Program Notes

Performer List

To be sent to presenter 90 days prior to presentation

Co-Artistic Directors Masato Baba, Bryan Yamami
Stage Manager John Miyasaki
Lighting Designer/Technical Advisor Scott LeGrand
Multi-media/Video Designer Bryan Yamami, Brian Nishii
Costume Designers Yuri Yoshida, Bryan Yamami, Michelle Fujii
Sound Consultant Yoko Ito

Conceived by Bryan Yamami, Founding Artistic Director
Directed by John Miyasaki



The TAIKOPROJECT is sponsored by the **Asano Taiko Co., Ltd.**
www.asano.jp

For more information, visit
www.TAIKOPROJECT.com

(re)generation (2008)

A Brief History (2003)

Developed by Bryan Yamami

Edited by Brian Nishii and Bryan Yamami

A visual and aural timeline of the history of American taiko. Our show and its place in the living history of taiko in North America.

Expanding (2007)

Written by the Original Cast, remixed by Masato Baba

“Expanding” embodies one of our main goals; to expand the boundaries of taiko performance as well as the vocabulary of taiko drumming. As taiko players might tell you, most taiko songs are taught through *kuchi shoga*, vocalizing the rhythms and then playing them on the drum.

Blending hip hop rhythms and movements with taiko, “Expanding” has become one of TAIKOPROJECT’s signature compositions.

Okage Sama De (2003)

Written by Masato Baba

“Okage Sama De” translates as giving thanks and honoring those who came before us. We wouldn’t be where we are today without the groundwork laid by the first generation of American taiko players.

Lava Cool (2008)

Composed by Masato Baba

This song is purely a dedication to Masato’s father, Russel Baba, whose melodies he grew up listening to. Lava flows through his veins, but also pours a very sweet, cool sound into his sax, shakuhachi, and shinobue.

Behind the Odaiko (2001)

Conceptualized, arranged, and written by Bryan Yamami

“Behind the Odaiko” is a deep, spiritual exploration of Odaiko (great drum) performance. The TAIKOPROJECT’s 5-foot diameter Ohiradaiko weighs 330 pounds and is one of the largest nagado (carved from a solid wood body) taiko drums held by a North American group. Out of respect for the performers, please do not laugh during this song.

Pioneers (2007)

Conceptualized, arranged, and written by the cast

A tribute to three of America’s pioneering taiko groups; San Francisco Taiko Dojo, Kinnara Taiko, and Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble.

Shi Shi Mai, written by Kinnara Taiko, arranged by Bryan Yamami

Symmetrical Soundscapes, written by Kenny Endo, arranged by Masato Baba

Tsunami, written by Seiichi Tanaka, arranged by Yuta Kato

Intermission

Many Sides (2004)

Arranged by Masato Baba, inspired by Sukerokudaiko’s “Yodan Uchi” and Shasta Taiko and Jeanne Mercer’s “Tsumujikaze.” Many Sides is preceded by the song “Hachijo,” based on Hachijo Island drumming traditions. Sukeroku taiko was founded in Tokyo in the late 1950’s and came to the U.S. with Seiichi Tanaka in the late 1960’s. It is estimated that the majority of all American taiko groups have been influenced by Sukeroku Taiko and groups across the continent have created their own interpretations of Sukeroku-style taiko.

From the Inside/Outside (2004)

Conceptualized by Bryan Yamami

Taiko, having been born in Japan but raised all over the world, including America, has become a voice of expression for multi-generational Japanese emigrants. It has grown to such a degree that now the Japanese taiko community is now taking a look at what’s going on.

Home (2003)

Choreography and lyrics by Michelle Fujii, melody composed by Byron Au Yong

Home is a reinterpretation of the odaiko’s typical role in the kumi-daiko (group taiko drumming) genre. This piece represents the dear place to anyone’s life in which one can be their true self. Home is influenced by Japanese folk dance traditions of Sanbonyanagi Sansa Odori from Iwate prefecture, Kokiriko Bushi from Toyama prefecture, and Sado Okesa from Niigata prefecture.

Gathering of Joy (2007)

Written by the Cast

Bon Odori Uta: Music and lyrics by Fujii, Seisui, choreography by Rev. Yoshio Iwanaga

Obon, the Buddhist summer festival honoring one’s ancestors, has been one of the strongest and most vibrant traditions in the Japanese American community. Celebrated as a “gathering of joy,” Obon has long been synonymous with taiko, not only as accompaniment to dancing, but with performances by “home” groups and special guests.

Truth (2007)

Written by the Cast, arranged by Traci Kato-Kiriyama

Echoes of the original cast of TAIKOPROJECT, talking about their beginnings of their taiko careers and taiko’s continuing significance in their lives.

Photos by Cherie Lockwood and TAIKOPROJECT families

Omiyage (2004)

Composed by Shoji Kameda

“Omiyage” refers to the traditional Japanese custom of gift-giving. During workshops and residency activities, the TAIKOPROJECT teaches “Omiyage” and offering it to communities as our “omiyage” in thanks for bringing us out to share our show. “Omiyage” is a celebration of the love of taiko, and the excitement of seeing taiko for the first time.

Artist Bios

Masato Baba (Co-Artistic Director) began playing and studying taiko at the age of six under his parents, jazz musician Russel Baba and taiko drummer Jeanne Mercer, who were among the first members of the San Francisco Taiko Dojo. With Shasta Taiko, Maz has performed and helped teach workshops in Alaska, Oregon, and California and was featured on the album "Spirit Drum - Taiko Stories from America". He was also a member of the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble and was an instructor and director of the Youth Group at Endo's school, The Taiko Center of the Pacific. With Endo, he has toured across the U.S., Germany, and Japan; and took part in recording Endo's last two albums: "Hibiki" and "Jugoya". Currently, Maz resides in Los Angeles and works with the On Ensemble and TAIKOPROJECT.

Bryan Yamami (Co-Artistic Director) was first introduced to taiko with San Jose Junior Taiko from 1985 - 1989 and later continued with Kinnara Taiko from 1996 - 2005. He has worked with director Samuel Bayer as a Creative Consultant on a national commercial for the 2005 Mitsubishi Eclipse and as Composer for East West Players' "EQUUS." He recently worked with director David Mamet on the film RedBelt, currently in theatres, and with director Dwight Little on the film Tekken, to be released in 2009.

John Miyasaki (Theatrical Director) is the sole founder and Artistic Director of the hereandnow theatre company. In 1984, Miyasaki began training at East West Players and worked in over 30 productions there over the ensuing 9 years. He also worked in Nobuko Miyamoto's "Talk Story" and "We Tell Stories." In 1990, he began the Asian American Theatre Project at UC Riverside and recently taught theatre at East Los Angeles College. He directed "Romeo & Juliet Pinoy/Pinay Style, Boba Stories: Tales from the hereandnow kitchen, "fentor," and "A Nickel's Worth."

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TAIKOPROJECT: (re)generation is dedicated to the memory of our mentor, friend, and favorite taiko critic, Duane Ebata. For information on the Duane Ebata Memorial Fund, dedicated to nurturing promising Asian Pacific American performing artists, please call (213)628-2725.

TAIKOPROJECT Company History

The TAIKOPROJECT was founded in 2000 in Los Angeles, California. The group was conceived by Bryan Yamami with the idea of bringing together the best young taiko players in North America to create an innovative theatrical production celebrating American taiko. That show, TAIKOPROJECT: (re)generation, seamlessly blends taiko with storytelling, music, hip hop choreography, multi-media, and dance.

Since its initial formation, TAIKOPROJECT has made history for American taiko not only with their show, but their work in the commercial and international arenas. In Spring, 2005, the TAIKOPROJECT performed in Mitsubishi Motors of North America's innovative National Commercial for the Eclipse sportscar, featuring women from the group in a breathtaking 60-second commercial spot that was one of the highest-rated commercials of 2005 when it aired. In Fall, 2005, the TAIKOPROJECT traveled to Japan for the first time to represent American taiko at the 4th Annual Tokyo International Taiko Contest. As one of 12 finalists out of over 60 groups, the TAIKOPROJECT was the first American taiko group to participate in the internationally-recognized event. The TAIKOPROJECT made history and took home the top prize, First Place, in the Adult Group category, becoming then, the first American taiko group to win the entire contest as well.

In early 2009, the TAIKOPROJECT performed for the 81st Academy Awards at the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles, sharing the stage with composer A.R. Rahman and singer John Legend. The group also recorded tracks for hip hop star Kanye West's "Glow in the Dark Tour" and for the Nike:Fast Forward commercial.

For more information, check out www.TAIKOPROJECT.com