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KENNY ENDO:
CONTEMPORARY TAIKO: BREAKING THROUGH TRADITION TO INNOVATION

Friday, April 22, 2022, at 7:30pm
Tryon Festival Theatre

PROGRAM

KENNY ENDO:

CONTEMPORARY TAIKO: BREAKING THROUGH TRADITION TO INNOVATION

FEATURING

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

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.

PART ONE

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

PART TWO

Sounds of Kabuki
Soaring
Sunflower
Symmetrical Soundscapes
Jugoya

20-minute intermission

Kenny Endo appears by arrangement with:
Pasifika Artists Network
Karen A. Fischer
1-808-283-7007, karen@pasifika-artists.com
www.pasifika-artists.com

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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.

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.

PROFILES

KENNY ENDO (taiko, kotsuzumi, percussion) 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 MA 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's (Nohkan, shinobue, otsuzumi, taiko) melodic, authentic and engaging music focuses on points of connection: the joints between Western jazz and Eastern traditional, Japanese theater and political action, the ancient and the all-too-contemporary. An acclaimed composer and instrumentalist, Watanabe was born into a musical family and began training at a young age. After graduating from the Manhattan School of Music, he devoted a decade performing with and ultimately leading the renowned taiko group KODO. His signature skill of infusing Japanese culture to disparate styles has made him a much-in-demand collaborator. Watanabe advised and contributed to Wes Anderson's Oscar-nominated score for *Isle of Dogs*; featured prominently on tours with Yo-Yo Ma's Silkroad; has supported dance companies and movement artists, including Mikhail Baryshnikov; and has composed and performed with Laurie Anderson, Jason and Alicia Hall Moran, Adam Rudolph, Vernon Reid, Rhiannon Giddens, Susie Ibarra, and Zakir Hussain, among others. As a composer, Watanabe writes for various instrumentation, utilizing a wide variety of techniques. Watanabe's pandemic-era creation, *INCENSE*, uses live-recorded sample loops of flute, drums and vocals, providing him the technical means to perform ensemble compositions as a soloist. www.watanabekaoru.com

SUMIE KANEKO (koto, shamisen, vocals) 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 recipient 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) 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, Lagrimas 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. Lagrimas continued his studies and attended Berklee College of Music as a scholarship recipient. He has performed with notable artists such as Eric Marienthal, Lalo Schiffrin, 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 LA-based vocalist Charmaine Clamor. He has released albums on major labels Universal Music Japan, Sony Korea, Pony Canyon Records. Lagrimas received a 2011 Na Hoku Hanohano (Hawaiian Music) Award

for his Michael Jackson tribute album *Solo 'Ukulele—The King of Pop*. Lagrimas 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) is a performing artist and music educator of Japanese taiko drumming and shinobue. While grounding his performance in traditional Japanese musical styles, Shibata continues to explore the possibilities of blending Japanese traditional music with a variety of other genres. Born in Fukuoka Japan, he began his musical voyage at age five through Western classical music on the piano, then drumset. He has a BA from the Crane School of Music (New York) and has studied instruments such as djembe in Jamaica, tablas in India, and janggu in South Korea. Shibata has an MA in ethnomusicology from the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

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

Kenny Endo's costume is designed by Anne Namba.