



Photo: Ken Car1

**Tsukasa Taiko
Taiko Legacy 9**

Friday, and Saturday
December 21 and 22, 2012

**Museum of
Contemporary Art
Chicago**

**Edlis Neeson
Theater**



Asian Improv aRts Midwest

Welcome to Taiko Legacy 9

Community Arts in Practice

In the ninth installment of our annual *Taiko Legacy* concert at MCA Stage, we continue to consider the relationship between cultural legacy and community advancement. As we approach our tenth anniversary next year, we have the opportunity to revisit our core philosophy and beliefs.

Through taiko we preserve traditional pedagogy and technique to sustain our cultural legacy and ethnic identity. At the same time, we face the reality of our lives in motion as we evolve our practice with an eye to future advancement. Through the ritual of taiko drumming, we endeavor to raise the bar of community art to reach artistic excellence. We ask how we can push our youth and community members to a heightened artistic experience and to a sense of achievement and pride through taiko.

These are the challenges I took on willingly when I became the executive director of Tsukasa Taiko years ago. The Asian American youth we involve in the pride and joy of community art experience are also our connection to the future. Taiko represents a commitment to maintaining Japanese traditional virtue and aesthetics. Paired with our philosophical devotion to tradition is the other side of our cultural legacy: *advancing* our cultural heritage. Tradition and future are both at play in the Japanese diaspora in Chicago, and at Tsukasa Taiko, we aim to be both rooted and in motion. Simply put, to keep with the tradition we must live with it.

Tatsu Aoki
Executive Producer and Artistic Director



Photo: Ken Carl

Tsukasa Taiko

Taiko Legacy 9

Directed by Tatsu Aoki and
Amy Homma

Hyakkyo Fukuhara,
bamboo flute
Tsuruka Fukuhara,
tusumi drum
Hamid Drake, *percussion*
and drums
Michael Zerang, *percussion*
and drums
Melody Takata (Gen Ryu Arts/
Gen Ensemble), *taiko*
Amy Homma (Tsukasa Taiko
and Gintenkai), *taiko*
Noriko Sugiyama (Tsukasa
Taiko and Gintenkai)
Grandmaster Shunojo Fujima,
kimono consultant
Yoshinojo Fujima (Fujima Ryu),
dance
Ayako Kato, *dance*
Tatsu Aoki, *bass, shamisen,*
and taiko

Tsukasa Taiko

Gintenkai Unit

Eigen Aoki
Kioto Aoki
Miyumi Aoki
Warren Hidaka
Justin Mark
Kiyomi Negi
Kenji Negi
Koji Negi
Christine Nitahara
Michelle Nitahara
Jun Takanarita

Asunaro Unit

Mark Aburano Meister
Neil Ducklow
Koki James
Morgan Mican
Kenji Mulhall
Daiyu Yoshinami
Colin Wong

Gen Ensemble

Brian Ebisuzaki
Megan Lee
Nicholas Low
Wesley Hitomo Yee

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Yukiko Aoki
Joyce Ashizawa-Yee
Steven Ducklow
Jeffrey Hidaka
Gail Itokazu
Rudy Loo
Jane Muhall
Naomi Negi

Diane Nitahara
Jackie Nitahara
Ken Nitahara
Steve Nitahara
Noriko Okutomi
Lynne Oshita
Rika Sato-James
Joanne Tohei
Bradley Yee

Kay Kawaguchi (Japan
American Service Committee)

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and Artistic Director

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What is Taiko?

Literally translated as “drum,” *taiko* is known for its thunderous sound and stunning stylized choreography. Taiko is rooted in a 2,000-year history of Japanese court, theater, ceremonial, folk, and festival music. Originally performed in multi-instrument ensembles, taiko underwent a major evolution in the mid-twentieth century with the emergence of all-drum ensembles. This new style, *kumi-daiko*, has since enjoyed tremendous popularity, particularly in the United States, where it has become a celebrated symbol of cultural heritage for the Japanese American community.

MCA Stage first presented the prototype of *Taiko Legacy* in 1998 as an experiment by Aoki that combined his Asian Jazz bass performance with a visual artist working in Suminagashi (traditional Japanese painting on water) and taiko and Korean drummers. The programs have greatly expanded and now include large drum ensembles and improvisational jazz with traditional and contemporary pan-Asian music and dance.

Tsukasa Taiko is one of the leading national taiko ensembles and was established in Chicago as a resident arts program of the Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) in 2004. Dedicated to strengthening the Chicago Japanese American/Asian American communities, Tsukasa Taiko maintains an international profile by performing around the world while remaining an active presence in the metropolitan Chicago area. Tsukasa Taiko offers classes, workshops, lectures, and demonstrations designed to teach people how to play taiko and to advance the understanding of how the cultural arts are a reflection of a community's heritage and legacy.

Artists Up Close

The MCA has organized these intimate opportunities for audience members to engage with the artists.

Family Day

On December 8, a team of young and elder drummers from Tsukasa Taiko performed and led a hands-on demonstration for visitors—a favorite holiday tradition as part of the museum's monthly Family Day.

First Night

Friday, December 21

Following the opening-night performance, audience members are invited to engage in a conversation with the artists about the work, moderated by Yolanda Cesta Cursach, Associate Director of Performance Programs.

Generous support for all dance programming in the 2012-13 season of MCA Stage is provided by David Herro and Jay Franke.

Tsukasa Taiko at JASC is a program of Asian Improv aRts Midwest and the Japanese American Service Committee of Chicago and is supported in part by the Illinois Arts Council, the MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, the Alphawood Foundation, and The Joyce Foundation.

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Tsukasa Taiko at JASC, 4427 N. Clark St.,
Chicago, IL 60640, 773.275.0097
www.taikolegacy.com

About the works

Makuake—Yassa no Aikata

Taiko Legacy 9 begins by invoking the time-honored Japanese theater practice of “calling,” a little skit traditionally performed in front of the theater to call the attention of passers-by. In the late 1970s, the original Gintenkai borrowed this tradition, opening before the main act. Today’s “calling,” *Yassa no Aikata* features distinctive festival-style drumming, voice, and dance as an opening, or *maukuake*, of the stage. A particular highlight is the kimono maneuver, *hikinuki* (pull down), a technique from grandmaster Fujima Shunojo.

Za-On (Suwari Ne)

A seventeenth-century folk tale recounts the misfortune of two festival musicians who arrived at the regional lord’s castle late and without stands or props for their drums. The show went on with two bare drums, the storied origin of a new mode of taiko drumming in a seated position on the ground. Inspired by this myth, current Gintenkai members take advantage of the unique ground position to explore novel musical ideas, complemented by Kato Ayako’s graceful dance and our international guests, Kyakko and Tsuruka.

Yo Dan 2012

Melody Takata leads the Gen ensemble in a modern rendition of classic repertoires from 1960s Tokyo. Her revision of a recognizable concept, exemplifies our ideology of enlivening the traditional spirit through community application.

Hatchobori

A waterway to the Tokyo castle and center of commerce from the 1700s, Hatchobori is the site of many period plays, including the one in which this composition originates. Now a busy district

and subway station, Hatchobori remains a hub of movement and play, the concepts that inspire our re-composition for this concert – and the art of drumming itself.

Mi. Ya. Ke.

In the 1980s, the Japanese taiko group KODO popularized the distinctive stylistic and melodic patterns of traditional drumming on Miyake island. Miyake became a signature song for taiko groups worldwide. Our re-interpretation of this classic features Chicago’s premier taiko performer, Amy Homma, and choreography from Fujima Yoshinojo.

Odoriba Suite (continued)

First premiered in Tokyo in 1976 as part of a theater work, we presented the first part of the suite last year and perform its ambitious three-part finale tonight. Witness the drums rumble and thunder, as we marry artistic excellence to community ritual.

Yamabiko 2012

Tsukasa Taiko’s founder Hide Yoshihashi inherited this work from the Japanese National Guard’s Taiko Group in Sapporo, Japan in the late 1990s. Yamabiko has been our signature ever since. Today’s rendition features senior drummer Eigen Aoki with two of Chicago’s internationally acclaimed world class percussionists, Michael Zerang and Hamid Drake.

And if you’re up for it, an encore . . .



Photo: Ken Carl

About the artists

Tsukasa Taiko

began as Tsukasa Daiko, founded in 1996 by Hide Yoshihashi in conjunction with Wakayagi Shiyu, a grandmaster of classical Japanese dance. Yoshihashi then expanded the organization in collaboration with Asian Improv aRts Midwest's executive director Tatsu Aoki. In 2004, the group established itself as a resident arts program of the Japanese American Service Committee (JASC). Tsukasa Taiko has since become the leading community taiko ensemble in the Chicago area.

In 2005, Toyoaki Shamisen was launched as a division of Tsukasa Taiko to revive the traditional musical relationship between the shamisen three-stringed lute and taiko, taking an innovative step toward a more comprehensive taiko music experience. Tsukasa Taiko's repertoire is unique in that it reaches beyond kumi-daiko (ensemble taiko) to other forms of Japanese folk and classical music, employing other instruments, such as the shamisen and shinobue, which are central to the tradition.

Tsukasa Taiko performs a broad range of musical styles, including ozashiki (geisha chamber music), minyo (folk music), and ohayashi (classical/folk/theater music), representing many Japanese musical traditions that are now rarely heard. Tsukasa Taiko is proud to have a role in the preservation, presentation, and advancement of these cultural arts and experiences. While remaining true to established tradition, we are open to innovation for our future repertoire and to expanding and evolving the taiko form to our contemporary lives.

Tsukasa Taiko maintains an international profile by performing yearlong around the world while

remaining an active, positive presence in the metropolitan Chicago area. Tsukasa Taiko has appeared in major public events such as the Asian American Jazz Festival, Chicago Jazz Festival, World Music Festival, and Poland/Malta International Theatre Festival. Tsukasa Taiko has also performed at the Smithsonian, San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art, the Chicago Cultural Center, Millennium Park, Jay Pritzker Pavilion, Orchestra Hall, Harris Theatre, and Tokyo Bunka Shutter Hall.

In addition to performing, Tsukasa Taiko presents classes, workshops, lectures, and demonstrations throughout the year for students of all experience levels. Sharing taiko and shamisen, we use cultural arts to deepen the community's understanding of its heritage and cultural legacy. Tsukasa Taiko is dedicated to strengthening the Chicago Japanese American and Asian American communities.

Tatsu Aoki

is a leading advocate of the Asian American community, prolific composer and performer of traditional and experimental music forms, filmmaker, and educator. He was born in Tokyo in 1957 to an artisan family called Toyoaki Moto and proficient in *Okiya*, the traditional line meaning a booking and training agent for Geisha ladies in downtown Tokyo's designated area. Starting at the age of 4 he was part of his family performance crew and received the essence of traditional Tokyo Geisha cultural training and studies, that combines history and flexible creativity. In the late 1960's, upon Tokyo's economic and social decline, which forced many traditional artisan family businesses to close down, and his grandmother's passing, he shifted his music

training to American pop and experimental music. By the early 70's Aoki was active in Tokyo's underground arts movement as a member of Gintenkai, an experimental ensemble which combined traditional music and new western forms. In the same period he started his work in small gage films and experimental film production, influenced by his biological father who was a movie producer at Shin Toho Studio.

In 1977 Aoki left Tokyo to study experimental filmmaking at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he is adjunct Associate Professor in the Film, Video and New Media Department and teaches film production and history. He has produced more than 30 experimental films. He is one of the most in-demand performers of bass, shamisen and taiko, contributing more than 90 recording projects and touring internationally in the last twenty-five years. He is founder and artistic director of Chicago Asian American Jazz Festival, which observes its 16th anniversary this year, and in 1999 was named president of San Francisco-based Asian Improv Records (AIR), which was nominated for a Grammy Award. He has managed or produced more than forty AIR albums, notably the Max Roach and Jon Jang collaboration *The Beijing Trio* (AIR 0044), and several projects in the hip hop and Asian Pacific American arts arenas, from film screenings to concert series.

He was named one of 2001's "Chicagoans of the year" by the Chicago Tribune for his music and has performed with masters such as Roscoe Mitchell, Don Moye, Pipa virtuoso Wu Man, and the late Chicago legend Fred Anderson. Aoki's four-suite *ROOTED: Origins of Now*, a four-movement suite for big band, pre-

miered in 2001 at Ping Tom Memorial Park, the Chicago Jazz Festival, and at MCA Stage as part of Chicago Asian American Jazz Festival. His other notable recordings include *Basser Live* (1999) and *Basser Live II* (2005), both recorded live at the MCA and artistic achievements in jazz and taiko innovation, *The MIYUMI Project* (2000), *Symphony of Two Cities* (2002), and *Posture of Reality* with pipa virtuoso Wu Man (2003). For his contribution to Chicago area arts, Asian American Institute awarded Aoki the Milestone Award in 2007. In 2010 he received the Cultural Achievement Award by Japan America Society of Chicago and a coveted 3Arts Artist Award.

Hamid Drake

is an American jazz drummer and percussionist who lives in Chicago and frequently tours internationally. He first became known for his work with legendary Chicago tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson. Drake was one of the founders, along with Foday Musa Suso and Adam Rudolph, of The Mandingo Griot Society. His other frequent collaborators include New York bassist William Parker, saxophonist David Murray, composer and percussionist Adam Rudolph, German free jazz saxophonist Peter Brötzmann, fellow drummer Michael Zerang, and Chicago free jazz saxophonist Ken Vandermark. In recent years, Drake has frequently appeared with jazz legend Archie Shepp in various configurations, including the group Phat Jam along with human beat boxer and rapper Napoleon Maddox. He works with Maddox in the jazz hip-hop group ISWAHAT as well as several Hungarian jazz groups, recording with musicians like Viktor Tóth and Mihály Dresch. In addition to the drum set, Drake performs on the frame drum, the tabla, and other hand drums. He performed and



Photo: Ken Carl

toured as the Fred Anderson Trio and Quartet with Anderson and bassist Tatsu Aoki during the 1990s.

Amy Homma

is a performer dedicated to working in the traditional Japanese cultural arts. In 1990, she joined the Wakayagi Daiko group before becoming a full-time performer and instructor with Tsukasa Taiko in 2005. Since then she has been a premier taiko performer, appearing in such venues as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, the Chicago Cultural Center, Steppenwolf Theater, Harris Theater, Chicago Jazz Festival, and Poland's Malta Music Festival. Her recent collaborators include Tatsu Aoki's Miyumi Project and Yoko Noge's Japanesque Blues, among others.

Fukuhara Hyakkyo and Fukuhara Tsuruka

is an ensemble active in the Kabuki-Nagauta tradition and certified performers from the traditional Fukuhara clan. Among only a handful of certified classical players in Japan today, they are in high demand in classical shamisen music, Kabuki music, and festival music.

Ayako Kato

is a dancer and choreographer who hails from Yokohama, Japan. In 1998, Kato established Art Union Humanscape (AUH) with double bassist Jason Roebke. Their extensive performance history throughout the United States, Japan, and Europe includes more than one hundred music and dance duets as well as extended collaborations with other musicians and dancers and, most recently, a dance installation project. Kato has been honored with a Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artist Award and funding from the

Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, the Japan Foundation, the Puffin Foundation, Illinois Arts Council, and the City of Chicago. With a background of training in classical ballet in Japan and modern dance in the United States, Kato studied Butoh with master Kazuo Ohno, as well as Tai Chi and Noh Theater dance. Since fall 2010, Kato has been an artist in residence at Hamlin Park Fieldhouse Theater as part of Chicago Moving Company's Dance Shelter Program.

Grandmaster Fujima Shunojo

taught at his own school of classical dance in Tokyo for several years before coming to the United States. For the past thirty-five years, the grandmaster has directed his own dance group in Chicago. In addition to their annual recitals, Shunojo and his dancers perform for various civic and cultural groups, colleges and universities, and in various festivals around Chicago and the Midwest. He has collaborated with Tsukasa Taiko since *Taiko Legacy 4*, in the roles of mentor and advisor.

Melody Takata

has been performing in the traditional arts for more than twenty-five years, due to her upbringing in the Japanese American community of Los Angeles. She is founder and director of GenRyu Arts, established in 1995 as Gen Taiko and incorporated in 2008. She completed the ACTA master apprentice program for shamisen with Hideko Nakajima Sensei in 2003, and, in celebration of Gen Taiko's tenth anniversary, the ACTA master apprentice program with ninety-year-old Madame Fujima Kansuma. Takata has been one of the most significant collaborators for Tsukasa Taiko's national expansion program.

Fujima Yoshinojo

is a Chicago native and Japanese American who has studied Japanese classical dance for the last twenty-five years. Born Rika Lin, she received her professional name in 2006 as a member of the Fujima Ryu of Chicago dance troupe. The performance name, or natori, is a major milestone for a practitioner of the Japanese cultural arts. She has performed in collaborations with Asian Improv aRts MidWest, Tatsu Aoki, Tsukasa Taiko, Bellissima Productions, and the Yoko Noge Japanesque project. She is also a member of Toyoaki Shamisen. In pursuit of her shihan (teaching license), she is currently continuing her training with Fujima Shunojo Sensei, Founder and Director of Fujima Ryu of Chicago.

Michael Zerang

is a first-generation American of Assyrian descent born in Chicago. He has been a professional musician, composer, and producer since 1976, focusing on improvised music, free jazz, contemporary composition, puppet theater, experimental theater, and international musical forms. Zerang has collaborated extensively on projects involving contemporary theater, dance, and other multidisciplinary forms and has received three Joseph Jefferson Awards for Original Music Composition in Theater, in collaboration with Redmoon Theater, in 1996, 1998, and 2000. As a percussionist and composer, he has more than eighty titles in his discography and has toured nationally and internationally to thirty-three countries since 1981. Zerang is a percussionist with the creative music group The Trio Waz with Tatsu Aoki and Edward Wilkerson. He tours and holds workshops in improvisational music and percussion technique, and teaches private lessons in rhythmic analysis, music composition, and percussion technique.

MCA Stage

Music

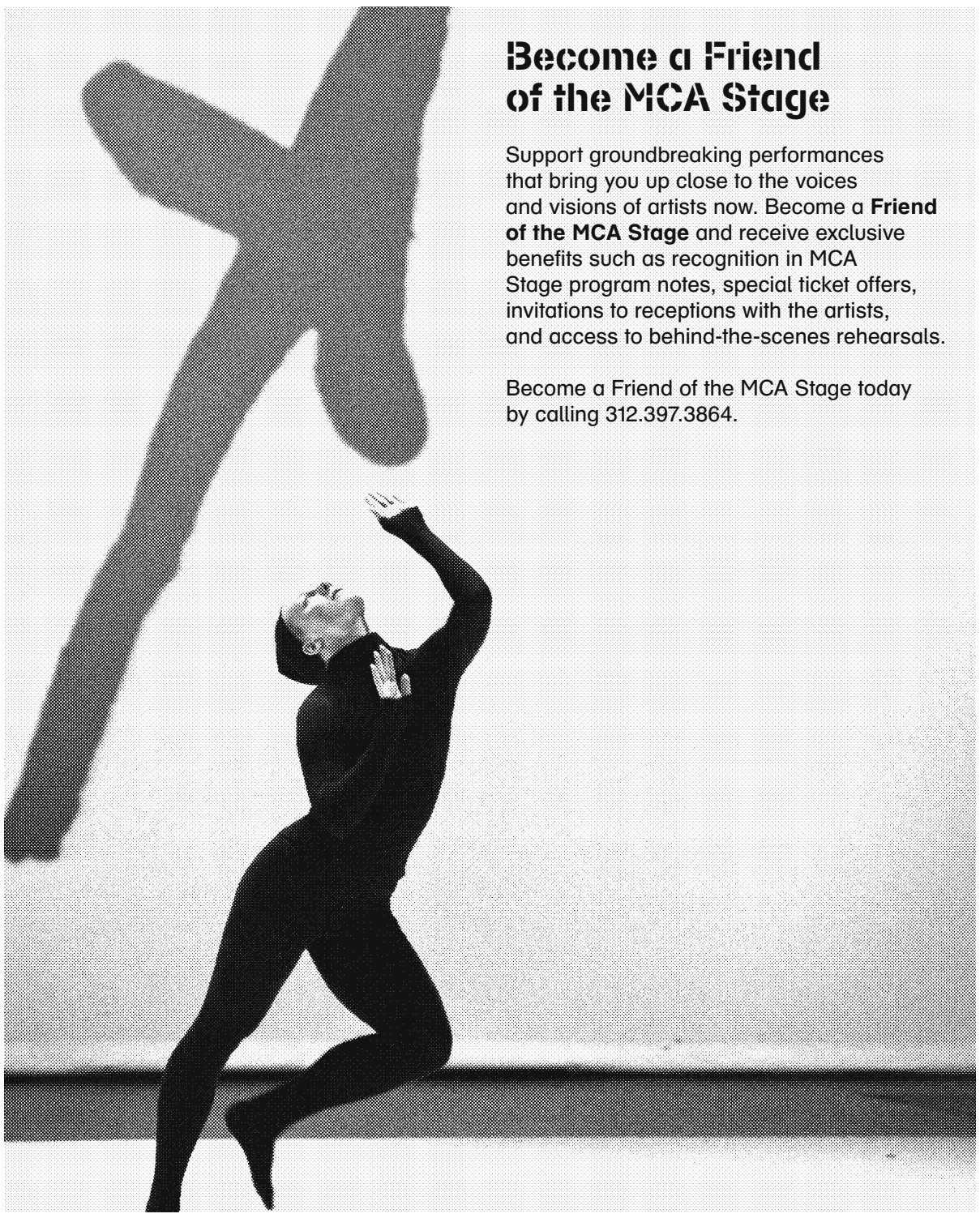
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Program notes compiled by
Yolanda Cesta Cursach

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