

FALL SEASON

Sep 17

Burnt Sugar the
Arkestra Chamber
Sweet Sweetback's
Baadasssss Song

Nov 4-6

Dorrance Dance
ETM Double Down

Copresented with
Chicago Human
Rythm Project and
Chicago Humanities
Festival

Dec 1-4, 8-11

ONEOFUS Julie Atlas
Muz and Mat Fraser
Beauty and the Beast

Dec 16-17

Tatsu Aoki
Reduction

Copresented with
Asian Improv aRts
Midwest

Dec 17-18

Tatsu Aoki
Tsukasa Taiko Legacy

Copresented with
Asian Improv aRts
Midwest

MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
CHICAGO

December 17-18, 2016

Tatsu Aoki

Tsukasa Taiko Legacy 13

Taiko	Eigen Aoki
Classical dance	Shunjo Fujima
Bamboo flute	Hyakkyou Fukuhara
Shamisen	Chizuru Kineya
Hand Drum, Percussion	Shijuro Tachibana
Taiko	Melody Takata and Gen Ensemble
Classical Dance	Sennosuke Wakatsuki

TSUKASA TAIKO

GINTENKAI UNIT:

Mark Aburano-Meister
Eigen Aoki*
Kioto Aoki
Miyumi Aoki
Neil Ducklow
Justin Mark
Kiyomi Negi
Kenji Negi
Koji Negi
Morgan Mican
Noriko Sugiyama
Jun Takanarita
Colin Wong

*alumna

YOUTH ENSEMBLE:

Kembre Daniel
Dante DiCastrì
Sheamus Hogan
Maya Iwasa
Alissa Nettum
Taira Shinohara
Lucas Willett

GEN ENSEMBLE:

Megan Lee
Kanon Myo
Lakambini O'Donnell
Wesley Hitomo Yee

PRODUCTION

Joan Ambo
(Shubukai Chicago)
Yukiko Aoki
Joyce Ashizawa-Yee
(GenRyu Arts SF)
Steven Ducklow
Cameron Hadley
(GenRyu Arts SF)
Gail Itokazu

Lenora Lee
(Asian Improv aRts SF)
Kay Kawaguchi
(Shubukai Chicago)
Naomi Negi
Lynn Oshita-Wong
Joanne Kiyoko Tohei
Veronica Sese (GenRyu Arts SF)
Bradley Yee (GenRyu Arts SF)

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Tsukasa Taiko at Japanese American Service Committee (JASC)
4427 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60640
773-275-0097
taikolegacy.com

Running time is 100 minutes with no intermission

This performance is in memory of Yoshio Frank Kawaguchi.

Generous support for MCA Dance is provided by David Herro and Jay Franke.

Tsukasa Taiko 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 & Culture at The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation; the Alphawood Foundation; Corbett, Duncan & Hubly P. C.; the JCCC Foundation; the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation; and The Joyce Foundation.

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Copresented with
Asian Improv aRts Midwest



ARTISTS UP CLOSE

MCA Stage's series of artist-centered talks, workshops, and open studios engages the public with the artists in intimate settings and provides a closer look at the creative process.

MCA STUDIO
Kabuki Workshop

Dec 19, 6–8 pm

Sennosuke Wakatsuki is modernizing the kabuki form. With percussion master Shijuro Tachibana he leads a workshop for intermediary to advanced level students and professionals in dance and theater. The class foregrounds the core skills related to traditional Japanese art and performance, and is accompanied by Hyakkyou Fukuhara (bamboo flute) and Chizuru Kineya (shamisen).

Immediately preceding the workshop, participants are invited to observe a brief Master Apprentice presentation, with shamisen apprentice Kiku Tarura performing with master artist Tatsu Aoki, and taiko apprentice Helen Nagata performing with master artist Kioto Aoki. Musical accompaniment for the duets is provided by grandmasters Tachibana, Fukuhara, Kineya, and Yoshinojo Fujima, and Grandmaster Shunojo Fujima provides traditional dance.

MCA SCREEN

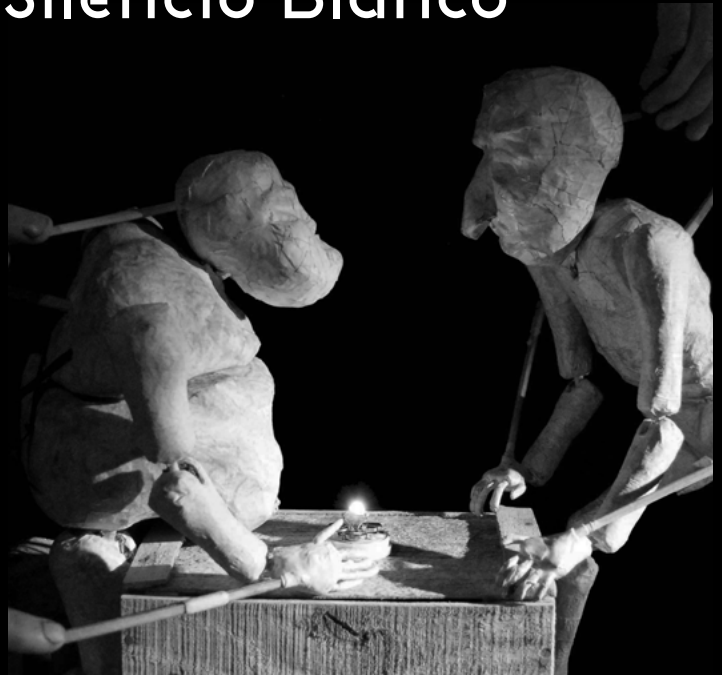
Tatsu Aoki, *formalism, structuralism, and reduction*

On December 13, Tatsu Aoki introduced a selection of his 16 mm and recent digital film works. An improvised soundscape was performed live by Jonathan Chen on electronics and Jamie Kempfers on cello.

Tatsu Aoki has been creating experimental films for more than thirty years. The sum of Aoki's massive filmography is an abstract visual journey through space and time that creates a singular world of waiting and pursuing. His body of minimalist and structuralist films gives shape to his belief in a spiritual paradise that is serene and simple yet full of change and chance. For the MCA, he screened the titles *Dream Works*, 16 mm (color, sound), 14 minutes (1981); *Decades Passed: Re-Edit* 16 mm (color, sound) 25 minutes (2003); *Ah So Desuka: Is That So,* digital image with live music: 42 minutes (2012); and *Visual Scape "Ah Sou Desuka: is that so !"*

Jan 19–22
at MCA Stage

Silencio Blanco



Silencio Blanco, El Chiflón
Photo: Lorenzo Mella

Chiflón, El Silencio del Carbón (Chiflón, Silence of the Coal)

Tickets at mcachicago.org

FROM THE ARTIST

WE HAVE MADE IT TO THE TWENTIETH YEAR SINCE
TSUKASA TAIKO'S FOUNDING—WELCOME!

As I look back on taiko's remarkable history and its being embraced by popular culture in our time, I feel compelled to make the case for the art of taiko performance. It is an argument for resisting inverting the relationship between something's popularity and the formal knowledge of its aesthetics. What will remain of our understanding of taiko after the novelty wears off?

Tsukasa Taiko Legacy and my more recent project *Reduction* are creative responses to popular taiko that foreground musical elements over dynamic and stylized drumming.

Tsukasa Taiko's vision is to promote a more expansive understanding of Asian Americans' complex historical and cultural practices. In my role, I focus on "performativities" in how we play and teach, taking care to preserve the mechanism that intertwines performance and music in Asian American culture. Without diminishing the power of the drum's image, as our musical mentors say and our dancers do, we "strike the music and dance the drums." The emphasis is on movement as move-meant, with great attention paid to our musical and physical dialogues. We also apply the components of our original taiko compositions—space, silence, time, weight, and movement—to connect the sense of beauty and value inherent to performing Japanese-ness and music.

In other words, the nature of cultural identity is not rooted in the context, but rather is the content.

For example, *gomā*, or sesame, is a common ingredient in much of Asian cuisine. It adds aromatic flavor and improves the visual presentation of an authentic dish, such as sushi, but does sprinkling sesame seeds on top make anything distinctly Japanese? That is a misconstrued idea at best.

The idea that more drumming, more powerful drumming, represents taiko is the sesame of the art form. Too much sesame is making taiko an unrecognizable dish. I am happy to resist the trend. And I invite you to share in this slowed performance to taste the whole aesthetic range of taiko.

Tatsu Aoki
Executive Producer and Artistic Director
Tsukasa Taiko

ABOUT THE WORK

"SUKEROKU MATSURI"

Led by Melody Takata and featuring original choreography inherited from Oedo Sukeroku, this piece incorporates movements inspired by Kabuki dance, featuring Gen Ensemble. The work presents a recognizable esoteric concept of taiko movement that originates from the late 1960s.

"ROKUBAN"

This original piece started as a rudimentary exercise in polyrhythmic interpretation and gradually evolved into the present ensemble work. The piece emphasizes the use of the diagonal *sukeroku* Kabuki stance and a long pause in the middle of the song that is uncharacteristic of mainstream taiko compositions.

"MIRAKU"

Literally "the joy of taste," *miraku* refers to the food culture of Japan. The essence of a dish is not represented by a strong flavor, rather a subtle layering of different aromas that blend to provide an essence of flavor. This is the theme of the song.

"NOBI"

This piece was inspired by the story of the brutal survival experiences of Japanese soldiers in the Philippines in 1959, and its title is borrowed from a famous war novel written by Ooka Shohei. Though the original story is grave and torturous, the imagery driving the composition of this piece is meant to be a serene and honest absolution.

"GFR"

Aoki and his fellow Gintenkai members were first exposed to American rock band Grand Funk Railroad (GFR) while still in junior high school. They attended the band's first live performance in Japan in 1971 and were inspired by the power trio. This song is their tribute to the band.

"HADODON"

Aoki's taiko teacher, Grandmaster Yasujiro Ohayashi, always proclaimed that one must "dance" before taiko. One must "shamisen" before taiko. It is because of this attitude, that the taiko music from Gintenkai is a uniquely formed theatrical presentation. Originally a simple dance piece, "Hadodon" has been recalibrated into a taiko composition. Therefore, the taiko

melody lines correlate with the arm and leg movements of the choreography. The *Taiko Legacy* version is a larger Kumidaiko ensemble work, featuring Shunjo Fujima and Sennosuke Wakatuki.

"SUJI—PART II"

The term *suji* refers to a literal ligament connection as well as the energies required to maintain a bond—whether through custom, tradition, or art. This is the second part of *Suji*, the first of which was presented last year. The setting for this work is a forest. In contrast, the actual taiko line is quite static. The unfolding of the orchestral concept links the music to the landscape, as it underscores the drum's central role to create sound and body movement.

"TSUKASA TAIKO 20TH ANNIVERSARY STORY"

Before art can be achieved, there are certain necessary stages of development. This medley includes our rudimentary songs and popular ensemble taiko songs for kids. These pieces form the building blocks that lead to the art embraced by community members who appreciate drumming culture and the origin of Tsukasa Taiko.

"ODORIBA: SCENE 3"

This original composition by the Gintenkai cultural troupe premiered in Tokyo in 1976 as part of a play. Taiko parts were used in the theater's pit music for several scenes and performed by seven drummers. For Tsukasa Taiko's rendition, Aoki expands the scale to connect three of the play's parts into a single, epic, large-ensemble work.

Feb 18-19
at MCA Stage

CCN-Ballet de Lorraine



CCN-Ballet de Lorraine, *SOUNDANCE*
Photo: Laurent Philippe

WORKS BY MERCÉ CUNNINGHAM AND OTHERS

Tickets at mcachicago.org



Melody Takata and Kioto Odaiko in Tsukasa Taiko: *Taiko Legacy 12*
Photo: Ken Carl



Chizuru Kineya in Tsukasa Taiko: *Reduction*
Photo: Ken Carl

WHAT IS TAIKO?



Tsukasa Taiko: *Taiko Legacy 12*
Photo: Ken Carl

Often used in Japan to refer to any kind of drum, *taiko* is recognized across the world for its highly stylized, choreographed performances that produce a thunderous sound. Rooted in a 2,000-year-old history of Japanese court, theater, and ceremonial, folk, and festival music, taiko was originally performed in multi-instrument ensembles before undergoing a major evolution in the mid-twentieth century with the emergence of all-drum ensembles. This new style, *kumi-daiko*, which roughly translates to “drum collection,” has since enjoyed wide popularity, particularly in the United States, where it has become a celebrated symbol of cultural heritage for the Japanese American community.

In 1998, Tatsu Aoki first fused taiko and visual art with an expanded solo improvisation concert at MCA Stage. The performance featured Aoki on double bass, taiko master John Sagami, Paul Kim on *buk* (Korean drum), and a slide montage of *suminagashi* (the ancient Asian technique of painting on water) works by artist Amy Lee Segami. Aoki’s debut of *Taiko Legacy* at MCA Stage in 2003 was part of US-JAPAN 150, commemorating the 150th anniversary of modern American-Japanese relations, and the first and largest taiko concert of its kind. For the eleventh anniversary of *Taiko Legacy*, and its ninth copresentation with MCA Stage, Tsukasa Taiko continues its expansion of the form by combining solo and large taiko ensemble performance with traditional court music, jazz improvisation, and traditional and contemporary pan-Asian dance.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

EIGEN AOKI began his taiko career at age four on the stage of the Japan American Service Committee’s annual Holiday Delight. He joined Tsukasa Taiko as a teenager, eventually becoming a soloist in Gintenkai, the national unit of Tsukasa Taiko’s advanced players. He has shared the stage with artists such as Mwata Bowden, Nicole Mitchell, Dohee Lee, Hamid Drake, and Michael Zerang and has performed at the Chicago Jazz Festival, Taste of Chicago, the Dusable Museum of African American History, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Aoki was featured as a soloist at the 2016 Chicago Jazz Festival with the Miyumi Project Big Band.

TATSU AOKI is a leading advocate for the Asian American community, as well as a prolific composer and performer of traditional and experimental music forms, a filmmaker, and an educator. Born in Tokyo in 1957, Aoki began performing with and studying his family’s business of *okiya* (the tradition of working as booking and training agents for geishas) at the age of four. In the late 1960s, after Tokyo’s economic and social decline, Aoki shifted his focus to American pop and experimental music. By the early 1970s, Aoki was active in Tokyo’s underground arts movement as a member of Gintenkai, an experimental ensemble that combined

traditional music and new Western forms. In the same period, he started his work in small-gauge and experimental films, influenced by his biological father, who was a movie producer at Shinto Studio. In 1977, Aoki left Tokyo to study experimental filmmaking at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he is an Adjunct Professor in the Film, Video, and New Media Department and teaches film production and history. He also is a Visiting Professor at Northwestern University.

Aoki is the Founder and Artistic Director of Chicago Asian American Jazz Festival, which observed its twentieth anniversary in 2015. Named President of San Francisco-based Asian Improv Records (AIR) in 1999, he has managed or produced more than forty AIR albums, notably the Max Roach and Jon Jang collaboration *The Beijing Trio*, and several projects in the hip-hop and Asian Pacific American arts arenas, including film screenings and concert series. In 2001, Aoki was named one of the *Chicago Tribune’s* “Chicagans of the Year” for his contributions to cross-cultural music. Aoki has performed with artists such as Roscoe Mitchell, Don Moye, pipa virtuoso Wu Man, and the late Chicago legend Fred Anderson. Aoki’s suite *ROOTED: Origins of Now* premiered in 2001 at Ping Tom Memorial Park, and was performed at the Chicago Jazz Festival and at MCA Stage as part of Chicago Asian American Jazz Festival. His additional notable



Hyakkyou Fukuhara in Tsukasa Taiko: *Taiko Legacy*
Photo: Ken Carl

releases include *Basser Live* (1999) and *Basser Live II* (2005), recorded live at MCA Stage; and *The MIYUMI Project* (2000), *Symphony of Two Cities* (2002), and *Posture of Reality* with Wu Man (2003). Aoki's awards include the Asian American Institute Milestone Award (2007), Japan America Society of Chicago Cultural Achievement Award (2010), 3Arts Artist Award (2010), Japanese American Service Committee Living in our Culture Award (2014), and National Jazz Journalist Association Jazz Heroes Award (2015).

Most recently, Aoki arranged the music of Yoko Ono for the Miyumi Ensemble's CD recording and performance at the unveiling of *Sky Landing*, the public art work by Yoko Ono for the Japanese Gardens in Chicago's Jackson Park.

HYAKKYOU FUKUHARA is one of only a handful certified performer from the traditional Fukuhara clan performing actively in the Kabuki-Nagauta tradition. Hyakkyou works in the classical tradition and in more contemporary settings, such as modern music collaborations and media arts.

SHUNOJO FUJIMA received his *natori* (professional performance name) at a young age and went on to open his own studio of classical dance in Tokyo, frequently traveling to the United States on tour with his dance troupe. Fujima now permanently resides in Chicago and performs at various civic and cultural events, schools, and festivals in the Midwest. In 2013, he received the Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation Award for his ongoing work promoting



Shunojo Fujima
Courtesy of the artist

Japanese culture in the United States.

CHIZURU KINEYA is a *nagauta shamisen* artist, a master of the instrument accredited by the legendary Kineya Shamisen clan. She began her studies at the age of six, and she now regularly performs with numerous contemporary and classical musicians in engagements in the mainstream music and performing arts scene. In addition to performing, she also leads educational workshops to share the 400-year history of the shamisen tradition. Chizuru has regularly collaborated with Tatsu Aoki and GenRyu Arts in San Francisco since her first *Taiko Legacy* engagement in 2005. Her 2012 Tokyo Shamisen CD project, *Toyoakimoto*, features Aoki and Melody Takata. She is currently working on a geisha musical theater project that



Chizuru Kineya
Courtesy of the artist

premieres in March 2017 in Tokyo, as well as on a musical collaboration with Francis Wong's ensemble that will also be released in early 2017.

MELODY TAKATA grew up in the Los Angeles area and has been performing in the traditional arts for more than twenty-five years. She is the founder and Director of GenRyu Arts. Takata completed the ACTA master apprentice program for shamisen with Hideko Nakajima Sensei in 2003 and the ACTA master apprentice program with Madame Fujima Kansuma. Takata is currently in production for new performance *Bamboo*, scheduled to premiere in San Francisco in 2017, and an untitled multidisciplinary performance work also set to debut in 2017.

SHIJURO TACHIBANA graduated from the National



Melody Takata in Tsukasa Taiko: *Reduction*
Photo: Ken Carl

Kabuki Theater specializing in *narimono*, and is a formal percussionist for Japanese classical dance and Kabuki performances at the National Kabuki Theater. In 2010, he founded Kabuki Mirai Juku, a not-for-profit organization that specializes in Kabuki workshops and concentrates on introducing traditional kabuki theater arts to children through educational outreach workshops and presentations.

SENNOSUKE WAKATSUKI is the firstborn son of Sennojo Wakatsuki and was raised training in Japanese classical dance. He graduated from Nihon University, majoring in Japanese classical dance and creative theater. In 2007, he continued his training for three years at the National Kabuki Theater of Japan, where he concentrated on Japanese classical dance, shamisen, and stage fighting. In 2010 he

made his debut performance at the National Kabuki Theater, performing the nagauta classic *Sukeroku*. In 2011 he created the organization *Wa no Kai*, which is an organization specializing in educational outreach for the Japanese traditional arts. Presently, he is an adjunct professor at Josai University in Chiba, Japan. This past October he succeeded his father as the headmaster for the Wakatsuki Dance School, and has since been travelling internationally for cultural exchange seminars.

TSUKASA TAIKO was founded as Tsukasa Daiko in 1996 by Hide Yoshihashi in conjunction with Japanese classical dance grandmaster Wakayagi Shiyu. Yoshihashi collaborated with Asian Improv aRTs Midwest's Executive Director Tatsu Aoki to expand the organization, and in 2004



Sennosuke Wakatsuki
Courtesy of the artist

Tsukasa Taiko became the resident ensemble of the Japanese American Service Committee (JASC). In 2005, Tsukasa Taiko launched the division Toyooki Shamisen to revive the traditional musical relationship between the shamisen and taiko, taking an innovative step toward a more comprehensive taiko music experience. Its repertoire is unique in the United States for merging *kumi-daiko* (ensemble taiko) with other forms of Japanese folk and classical music, and employing shamisen as well as *shinobue* (flute). Tsukasa Taiko performs a broad range of musical styles, including *ozashiki* (geisha chamber music), *minyo* (folk music), and *ohayashi* (classical/folk/theater music), and represents many Japanese musical traditions that are now rarely practiced. The group's lead role in the preservation, presentation, and

advancement of Japanese arts is recognized internationally, with notable performances at Tokyo's Bunka Shutter Hall, Poland's Malta International Theatre Festival, the Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Tsukasa Taiko has been a feature at the Asian American Jazz Festival, Chicago Jazz Festival, Chicago World Music Festival, Symphony Center, and the Harris Theater. Tsukasa Taiko also offers classes, workshops, lectures, and demonstrations throughout the year for students of all levels as part of its dedication to strengthening Chicago's Japanese American and Asian American communities and using the arts to deepen the community's understanding of its heritage and cultural legacy.

The MCA's newest affinity group, **Enact**, is a group of MCA Circle Donors dedicated to supporting the renowned programs of MCA Stage. Join today for opportunities to meet artists, gain behind-the-scenes access, and discuss groundbreaking directions with leading curators—all while providing vital support.

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For more information, contact
us at enact@mcachicago.org.

*Enact Cochair

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MCA Stage's groundbreaking performances are an integral part of MCA Chicago's artist-activated, audience-engaged programming. Along with the museum's exhibitions and educational initiatives, they encourage a broad and diverse community to experience and discuss the work and ideas of living artists.

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Validate your ticket at coat check for \$12 parking in the MCA garage (220 East Chicago Avenue) and the Bernardin garage (747 North Wabash). The \$12 parking is limited to six hours on the date of performance.

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To inquire about a lost item, call the museum at 312-280-2660. Unclaimed articles are held for thirty days.

SEATING

Please switch off all noise-making devices while you are in the theater.

Patrons are seated at the management's discretion. Food and open beverage containers are not allowed in the seating area.

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mcastage@mcachicago.org

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Program notes compiled
by Yolanda Cesta Cursach

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