Taikoproject Spring 2012 East Coast Tour

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Presents in Concert

TAIKOPROJECT
Spring 2012 East Coast Tour

Thursday, April 12, 2012
7:30 p.m.
Camp Concert Hall
Booker Hall of Music
The Stroll (2010) Composed by Bryan Yamami and Masato Baba
“The Stroll” was originally written as a welcoming song for TAIKOPROJECT’s “Rhythmic Relations 2010” concert at the John Anson Ford Amphitheatre in Hollywood, California. Utilizing portable taiko instruments, this song sets the tone for our concerts—powerful, groove-laced taiko drumming that shares the joy and energy of taiko drumming with the audience.

Expanding (2007) Composed by Bryan Yamami and 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.

Tsuki E “To The Moon” (2010) Composed by Masato Baba, Choreography by Yumi Saito
Tsuki E is about every boy’s dream of being an astronaut and going to the moon. Maz has always wanted to write a song with an Okinawan-scale and the opportunity came during the production of TP’s first album. Accredited Japanese classical dancer and TP member Yumi Saito choreographed a dance inspired by images of the moon to accompany the song.

Shi Shi Mai (2004) Composed by Kinnara Taiko, arranged by Bryan Yamami
From its inception, TAIKOPROJECT has payed homage to the pioneering taiko groups in the U.S. Kinnara Taiko was the first taiko group formed in Southern California. One of their signature pieces is the “Shi Shi Mai,” or lion dance. TP carries on Kinnara’s tradition of creating new interpretations of centuries-old traditions.

Symmetrical Soundscapes (1985) Composed by Kenny Endo, arranged by Masato Baba
Many of TP’s members have studied with pioneering American taiko master Kenny Endo at his school in Honolulu, Hawaii. One of his seminal compositions is “Symmetrical Soundscapes,” a duet on the uchiwa-taiko between two highly skilled drummers.

Tsunami (1986) Composed by Seiichi Tanaka, arranged by Yuta Kato
San Francisco Taiko Dojo was the first taiko group to form in the United States. Formed by “Tanaka-sensei,” SFTD has set the bar for intensity and raw power and energy in taiko drumming. Their signature composition is “Tsunami,” translated as “Tidal wave.” When TP performs this song, we do our absolute best to embody SFTD and Tanaka-sensei’s spirit, energy, and intensity.
Behind the Odaiko (2001) Composed by Bryan Yamami
“Behind the Odaiko” is a deep, spiritual exploration of Odaiko (great drum) performance. Out of respect for the performers, please do not laugh during this song.

Seiza “Constellations” (2010) Composed by Emily Yoshihara and Masato Baba
Seiza features the koto (Japanese zither)
This song was composed for TP’s first album, “Surrounding Suns,” released in 2010. During the creation of Seiza, we thought of our ancestors using constellations and the stars to guide them through a long journey.

Many Sides (2004) Arranged by Masato Baba, inspired by Sukeroku Taiko’s “Yodan Uchi” and Shasta Taiko and Jeanne Mercer’s “Tsumujikaze.”
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. “Many Sides” is TAIKOPROJECT’s unique interpretation of this exciting style of taiko.

Island Groove (2010) Composed by Bryan Yamami and Masato Baba
“Island Groove,” is a musical exploration of taiko and marimba, inspired by the propagation of Zimbabwean marimba bands in the U.S. Our marimba was handcrafted by Carl Dean of Portland, Oregon, and custom-made to match our taiko drums and stands. Taiko plays a background role in this tropical song, with the mellow tones of the marimba interplaying with the bright melodies of the yokobue (Japanese bamboo flute).

“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.

Here We Go Now!! (2006) Composed by Bryan Yamami and Masato Baba
This spirited composition combines traditional Japanese sling okedo taiko drums along with American drumline-style drums and choreography. It is an embodiment of our group—Japanese traditions reinterpreted with an American spirit and attitude.

This event was made possible by University of Richmond Cultural Affairs and Department of Music.

The TAIKOPROJECT is sponsored by the Asano Taiko Co., Ltd. www.asano.jp
For more information, visit www.TAIKOPROJECT.com
ARTIST BIOS

Masato Baba (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. 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. Currently, Maz resides in Los Angeles and works with the On Ensemble and TAIKOPROJECT.

Bryan Yamami (Managing Director) spearheaded the creative development of the ground-breaking taiko theatrical production, TAIKOPROJECT: (re)generation, the America's most innovative taiko theatrical production. Bryan served as creative taiko lead for the acclaimed 2005 Mitsubishi Eclipse commercial, for TP's recording sessions for Kanye West and Nike, the 2009 Academy Awards, and the 2011 Grammy Awards. He has performed with John Legend, A.R. Rahman, DJ Tiesto, rapper Xzibit, rock band 30 Seconds to Mars, and the legendary Stevie Wonder.

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 and became the first American taiko group to win First Place in the internationally-recognized event.

Since that time, they have toured to Hawaii, Mexico, Hong Kong, Japan, Greece, and across the U.S. In 2008, the group recorded tracks for hip hop star Kanye West’s “Glow in the Dark Tour” and for the Nike:Fast Forward commercial with superstar producer Squeak E. Clean. In 2009, 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. After performing for the opening of the Modern Wing in Chicago, TAIKOPROJECT performed with rock band 30 Seconds to Mars at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles, with legend Stevie Wonder at the Bonnaroo Festival in Tennessee, and was featured in a commercial campaign in Mexico for FAMSA's Kurazai motorcycle. In 2011, TAIKOPROJECT performed at the 53rd Annual Grammys telecast in a musical medley featuring teen pop star Justin Bieber and hip hop star Usher.