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Spotlight on Composers

(Portland, OR)

How does a taiko composition evolve from idea to reality? As part of Portland Taiko's (PT's) 10th Anniversary Season, PT will present a series of Composer Spotlights, focused on the guest composers who are creating several new works for the company's fall concert: *On the Shoulders of Giants*. These composers are PT's artistic "giants;" pioneers in the North American taiko community whose influence and mentorship have greatly impacted PT's growth as one of the country's leading Asian American arts organizations. Four more Composer Spotlights are scheduled in the months leading to the company's fall concert; each providing members of the public the unique opportunity to get a glimpse of works-in-progress and to be able to dialogue with those behind the process of creating them.

Asian American
Drum Performance

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The next Composer Spotlight features Hawaii-based taiko master **Kenny Endo** and will be held on **Wednesday, May 26, 2004, from 6:30-8:00 PM** at the **Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate Avenue, Portland**. Admission is \$7 or free with a PT season subscription. Call the PT office for more information: 503 288 2456 or info@portlandtaiko.org.

About Kenny Endo

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Kenny Endo began early training in western drums and percussion for performance with jazz, fusion, and classical artists. He discovered his roots through the Japanese taiko and in 1975 began working first with Kinnara Taiko of Los Angeles and then with the San Francisco Taiko Dojo. In 1980, he went to Japan to further his study of taiko drumming for ten years. He has studied and performed with masters in the Sukeroku, Suwa, Gojinjo, and Chichibu styles of group drumming. Endo is the first non-Japanese national to ever receive a 'natori' (stage name) in Hogaku Hayashi (Japanese classical drumming) and is known as *MOCHIZUKI TAJIRO* in the classical Hogaku world. He has performed extensively throughout the U.S. and Japan as well as internationally, including the U.S.S.R., England, France, Germany, Belgium, Egypt, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Canada, and Australia. Working with musicians in various genres, he has paved new directions in using the traditional taiko, bringing a refreshing and creative approach to music through his background in western, ethnic, and traditional Japanese drumming. Kenny Endo is the Artistic Director of the Taiko Center of the Pacific in Honolulu.

In 2000, Mr. Endo was commissioned by PT to create "Wind, Water, Wood" as part of the National Endowment for the Arts and the American Composers Forum's national music project celebrating the new millennium. The culminating performance was enthusiastically received by sold-out audiences and featured on National Public Radio and Oregon Public Broadcasting.

About Portland Taiko

Established in 1994, Portland Taiko is an award-winning Asian American drum performance ensemble. Through artistic excellence and innovation in taiko, Portland Taiko inspires audiences, affirms Asian American pride, builds community, and educates about our heritage and culture. The only professional taiko company in the Northwestern United States, the ensemble is widely recognized as a leading group in the North American taiko community, with tours across the country, awards from the **National Endowment for the Arts** and the **American Composers Forum**, and a year-round full-time professional artistic core. During its East Coast tour this January, PT made its **Kennedy Center debut** in Washington DC before a standing-room-only crowd at the Millennium Stage.

For thousands of years, the booming voice of the taiko, or Japanese drum, has called the community together in ceremony and celebration. Portland Taiko echoes that tradition while taking Asian American music into unexplored territory with its innovative and provocative creations. Discography: *Making Waves* (2000), *Big Bang* (2003). “*‘Big Bang’ represents both an engineering and musical triumph. This album delivers a wholly engaging mix of bone-rattling drumming interspersed by Japanese singing and chanting and occasional coloristic touches on two violins and flute.*” – Norm Weinstein, *The Beat*.

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