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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 is presenting 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. The fifth and last Composer Spotlight is scheduled next month and will provide members of the public the unique opportunity to get a glimpse of a composition-in-progress and to be able to dialogue with those behind the process of creating that piece.

The next Composer Spotlight features San Jose Taiko's **PJ and Roy Hirabayashi**, special guest emcee **Dmae Roberts** and will be held on **Wednesday, August 11, 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 PJ Hirabayashi

PJ Hirabayashi is the Creative Director of San Jose Taiko. She and her husband Roy, who is currently the Managing Director, are founding members of San Jose Taiko in 1973. PJ has developed a style for taiko which combines movement, dance, drumming, fluidity, joy, and group energy. A pioneer female professional taiko drummer, PJ has paved the way for current and future drummers with her vision and joy.

About Roy Hirabayashi

Roy Hirabayashi co-founded San Jose Taiko in 1973, and as managing director, he shares in the organization's artistic and administrative operations. He has performed with San Jose Taiko for 31 years, during which time he has created, co-composed or arranged more than 18 pieces. His principal instruments are the taiko, a Japanese drum, and the shinobue, a horizontal bamboo flute. He has toured and performed with various other taiko artists throughout the United States and Japan.

About San Jose Taiko

San Jose Taiko has been involved in a number of collaborations with such organizations as the San Jose Repertory Theatre, the Margaret Wingrove Dance Company, the Abhinaya Dance Company, the San Jose Dance Theater, and the Contemporary Asian Theater Scene. The company has performed at Carnegie Hall, and on such television programs as the Arsenio Hall Show and

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the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon. San Jose Taiko has conducted workshops, demonstrations and lectures throughout the United States, Canada, and Japan. In October 2003, the organization celebrated its thirtieth anniversary with a sold-out presentation at the San Jose Center for the Performing Arts featuring joint performances with San Francisco Taiko Dojo and Kinnara Taiko from Los Angeles. Among San Jose Taiko's many awards is a 1994 award from Arts Council Silicon Valley for community leadership in recognition of the company's efforts to foster cultural and ethnic diversity in the arts.

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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