



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 27, 2005

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## Spotlight on Composers

### (Portland, OR)

How does a taiko composition evolve from idea to reality? Following the success of last year's series of Composer Spotlights, Portland Taiko (PT) is once again presenting this intimate look into the creative process.

The company's 11<sup>th</sup> season: **Trading Thunder** features the creative & cultural convergence of the award-winning Asian American drum ensemble and Ghanaian drum master Obo Addy and his thrilling ensemble Okropong.

This composer spotlight will provide audience members the opportunity to dialogue with the company and guest composer and Ghanaian master drummer Obo Addy about the new work commissioned by Portland Taiko. Audience members will also get a glimpse of the work-in-progress which will debut at the company's home concert in September.

The Composer Spotlight will be held on **Wednesday, August 10, 2005, from 6:30-8:00 PM** at the **PSU Lincoln Hall, Room 75, 1620 SW Park 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](mailto:info@portlandtaiko.org).

### About Obo Addy

Obo Addy, one of the key originators of the seminal musical movement now known as "Worldbeat," is a prominent member of the first generation of African musicians to bring their traditional and popular music to Europe and America.

An original and respected composer whose music reaches far beyond the boundaries of his land of birth, Addy has a twenty-year presence on the international performing arts scene and has become known for his ability to celebrate past traditions while expanding to embrace new ideas and foreign influences.

During his teenage years and after World War II, he absorbed the international pop music which had seeped into his home town of Accra. He later gravitated to Highlife, the new blend of African and European instrumentation. In 1969, he was employed by the Arts Council of Ghana as a Ga master of the national music. In 1972, he and his brothers performed at the Olympic Games in Munich and embarked on an international tour. They lived in London and toured extensively until 1978 when he moved to the United States and settled in Portland, Oregon. With his wife, Susan, he created [Homowo African Arts and Cultures](#), a not-for-profit organization which hold an annual festival which has introduced thousands of people to the music of Ghana.

Asian American  
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Addy currently teaches music at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. He travels throughout the country conducting teaching residencies and performing both solo and with his performing groups. He leads two ensembles which tour nationally- Okropong, dedicated to traditional tribal music and dance of Ghana, and Kukrudu, which performs original music written by Addy. His numerous recordings include two recent works entitled "Let me Play My Drums" and "Okropong." Obo's newest recordings, Wonche Bi and Afieye Okropong, were released on the Alula label.

In 1996 Obo Addy was awarded the National Heritage Fellowship Award by the National Endowment for the Arts. This is the highest honor a traditional artist can receive in this country. He is the first African born artist to ever receive the award.

### **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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