



Asian American  
Drum Performance

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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*For immediate release*

*Photos available*

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**What:** Guest Artist Spotlight

**Who:** Portland Taiko, Asian American Drum Performance; guest artist Shohei Kikuchi.

**When:** Wednesday, August 27, 6:30pm

**Where:** Echo Theatre, 1515 SE 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Portland

**Tickets:** \$7. Advance tickets available now through PDX Ticket Network; in person at the Hollywood Theatre Box Office (4122 NE Sandy Blvd), by phone (503) 205-0715, online at [www.portlandtaiko.org](http://www.portlandtaiko.org), and at the door.

**Supported by:** Paul G. Allen Family Foundation; Autzen Foundation; Japan Foundation, Performing Arts Japan; Japan-United States Friendship Commission; Multi-Arts Production Fund; National Endowment for the Arts.

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### ***JAPANESE DANCER SHOHEI KIKUCHI JOINS PORTLAND TAIKO IN CONCERT PREVIEW***

Shohei Kikuchi, nationally and internationally celebrated choreographer and folk dancer from Japan, will join Portland Taiko in a Guest Artist Spotlight on Wednesday, August 27, 6:30pm at Echo Theatre. Kikuchi and the PT performers will give a sneak peek of their fall concert, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors*, through performing excerpts, demonstrations, and discussion.

Kikuchi has been collaborating throughout the year with Portland Taiko (PT) to create a suite of dances and drumming celebrating the spirit of Obon through the integration of music and dance in the traditions of Japan and America. Obon is a traditional Japanese holiday also celebrated in America to honor ancestors, to repay debts of gratitude, to connect to community, to celebrate the riches of Japanese American heritage, and to reawaken the spirits of the living. The collaboration comes to a breathtaking conclusion with the debut of Kikuchi's new suite of dance and taiko in the fall concert at the Newmark Theatre September 19-21.

The Guest Artist Spotlight is the second of Portland Taiko's popular Behind-the-Scenes events as a part of the collaboration with Kikuchi. The Behind-the-Scenes events are designed to give audiences a chance to see work in progress, to learn more about PT's creative process, and to meet the artists in an informal setting.

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Portland Taiko members traveled to Japan this past April to begin study and rehearsal with Kikuchi. Mr. Kikuchi is coming to Portland three times as part of his residency with Portland Taiko to develop the work and to engage in intensive rehearsals with the ensemble. He will return to Portland to perform in the suite as a guest artist in collaboration with the members of Portland Taiko. The suite will become part of the company's permanent repertoire for future performances and potential touring.

Shohei Kikuchi was born in Kamaishi City in Japan's Iwate Prefecture in 1947. In 1967, he joined the "Gekidan Warabiza" – a performing arts company whose work is based in the folk traditions of regional Japan. Warabiza has five companies, which together stage roughly 1,000 performances a year throughout Japan and on international tours.

As a member of Warabiza, Mr. Kikuchi appeared on numerous stages both nationally and internationally as a performer, in addition to producing, choreographing and directing dozens of productions and its first European Tour in 1989. During Warabiza's first American Tour in 1997, Kikuchi first collaborated with San Jose Taiko, and later produced and performed in that company's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary piece. It was during this collaboration that he met Portland Taiko's Artistic Co-Director, Michelle Fujii (then a member of San Jose Taiko), and became her teacher and mentor for two years.

Mr. Kikuchi left Warabiza in 2002 to become a freelance choreographer and performer, with the goal of revitalizing Japanese traditional folk dance. He founded his own school, "Folk Dance School Manyoshu" not only to teach traditional dance, but also to produce and choreograph new works, hoping "to spread the joy of dancing to as many people as possible."

According to Fujii, "The collaboration will be a challenging project for me, with opportunities to further experiment with movement and taiko from many angles, while pushing our group as performers and exploring the reinterpretation of traditional folk dance to reflect contemporary experience."

The international collaboration is partly funded by prestigious grants from The National Endowment for the Arts, Japan Foundation, Multi-Arts Production Fund, Japan-United States Friendship Commission, and the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation.

Tickets for the Guest Artist Spotlight are \$7. Advance tickets are available through the PDX Ticket Network at the Hollywood Theatre Box Office (4122 NE Sandy Blvd.; 1pm-9pm daily), by phone (503) 205-0715 (Mon-Fri 7am-3pm, Sat-Sun 8am-1pm), online at [www.portlandtaiko.org](http://www.portlandtaiko.org), and at the door.

The fall concert, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors*, will be held September 19-21 at the Newmark Theatre at the Portland Center for the Performing Arts. Advance tickets are available at the PCPA Box Office, [www.portlandtaiko.org](http://www.portlandtaiko.org) or 503-790-ARTS. For further information and group tickets contact Portland Taiko at (503) 288-2456, email [info@portlandtaiko.org](mailto:info@portlandtaiko.org), or visit [www.portlandtaiko.org](http://www.portlandtaiko.org).

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