



## NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release  
Photos available

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**What:** *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors*, Portland Taiko's fall concert, and *Little Feet, Big Drums!* Children's Matinée

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

**When:** *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors*, fall concert, Friday & Saturday, September 19 & 20, 8pm, Sunday, September 21, 2pm. *Little Feet, Big Drums!* Children's Matinée, Saturday, September 20, 2pm.

**Where:** Newmark Theatre, Portland Center for the Performing Arts, 1111 SW Broadway, Portland

**Advance Tickets:** Fall concert: Adults \$28.75, Seniors 62+ & Students \$21.75. Children's Matinée: Adults \$17.75, Children, Students & Seniors, \$11.75.  
PCPA Box Office M-F 9am-5pm, TicketMaster, (503) 790-ARTS (2787), or  
www.portlandtaiko.org. For discounted group tickets contact Portland Taiko (503) 288-2456 or www.portlandtaiko.org

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### **PORTLAND TAIKO, GUEST ARTIST SHOHEI KIKUCHI FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR ANCESTORS**

Portland Taiko (PT), Portland's own Asian American drum performance group, and Shohei Kikuchi, Japan's leading folk dance teacher and choreographer, present the world premiere of a suite of dance and drumming as part of PT's annual fall concert, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors*. The concert plays September 19 and 20 at 8pm, and September 21 at 2pm in the Newmark Theatre, Portland Center for the Performing Arts.

The performance is the culmination of a year-long collaboration between Kikuchi, Artistic Co-Director Michelle Fujii, and Portland Taiko's performers. According to Fujii, "The collaboration has been a challenge for me and the performers, with opportunities to further experiment with movement and taiko from many angles. It really pushed our group as performers, while exploring the reinterpretation of traditional folk dance to reflect contemporary experience."

*In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors* is the final concert of Portland Taiko's 2008 Season, and is inspired by Obon, the traditional Buddhist holiday celebrated in Japan, in which the heartbeat of the drum calls the community together,

Asian American  
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reawakening the spirits of the living, and echoing the heartbeat of our ancestors. “In the Japanese and Japanese American traditions of Bon Odori, the community comes together in the annual celebration of Obon, and Portland Taiko extends an invitation to the Portland community to join us in the dance,” says Fujii. Obon is celebrated in America in late July and August to honor ancestors, to repay debts of gratitude, to connect to community, and to celebrate the riches of Japanese American heritage.

Portland Taiko members traveled to Japan in April to study and rehearse with Kikuchi. Mr. Kikuchi then traveled 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 production 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 first 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” to teach traditional dance and to produce and choreograph new works, hoping “to spread the joy of dancing to as many people as possible.”

*Little Feet, Big Drums!*, a family-friendly, condensed version of the concert, complete with storytelling and audience participation, takes place 2pm Saturday, September 20.

Advance tickets for *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors* and *Little Feet, Dig Drums!* are available at the PCPA Box Office, [www.portlandtaiko.org](http://www.portlandtaiko.org) or 503-790-ARTS. Discounted group tickets and Patron tickets, which include special recognition, a backstage tour of the Newmark Theatre, and a special reception before the Saturday night concert are available by calling (503) 288-2546 for further information or visiting [www.portlandtaiko.org](http://www.portlandtaiko.org).

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

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