



## NEWS RELEASE

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*Photos available*

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**What:** *Homecoming*

**Who:** Portland Taiko, Asian American Drum Performance

**When:** June 13, 3pm and 8pm

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

**Tickets:** Tickets on sale now \$18 + service charges at [www.portlandtaiko.org](http://www.portlandtaiko.org), by phone 1-800-982-2787, or in person at the PCPA box office

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Asian American  
Drum Performance

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### PORTLAND TAIKO ALUMNI ROCK FOR HOMECOMING

Award winning Asian American drum ensemble Portland Taiko called in some old friends for their 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary concert, *Homecoming*. Former performers Naoko Amemiya, Rachel Ebor, Kristy Oshiro, and Ann Ishimaru take the stage as guest artists to celebrate with some of their favorite rhythms, raucous improv, compelling dance, and storytelling. *Homecoming* premieres June 13 at 3pm and 8pm at the Dolores Winningstad Theatre, Portland Center for the Performing Arts.

*Homecoming* is the second show in Portland Taiko's 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season, bringing back the best from PT's past and showcasing the artistic evolution of the ensemble and guest alumni. Artistic Director Michelle Fujii talks about her excitement for this reunion concert, "It is an honor to delve into the past repertoire of former artistic contributors. I believe the more we understand and honor our past, the stronger we can develop in the future."

Audiences will get a chance to revisit PT classics like the staging of the Japanese folk story of "Amaterasu." The hilarious antics of the sun goddess and her famous fight with her storm god brother, Susano are brought to life, as guest artists reprise their original roles for this boisterous and epic battle.

Portland Taiko celebrates centuries old Japanese traditions with an "Eisa" piece by Ebor and Oshiro. Regional "Eisa" dances couple Okinawan style paranku drums, lively chanting, and full body movement. Each prefecture in Okinawa has its own Eisa dance to honor one's ancestors and mark the end of the yearly Japanese Obon festival.

*Homecoming* also explores the influence of jazz and soul music in the modern taiko tradition with "Fusion," a piece inspired by the godfather of soul, James Brown. It references the traditional Japanese folk music and modern rhythms that birthed North American taiko. "The performers are able to express something personal in the marriage of the old and the new," says Producing Director and performer, Teresa Enrico.

Contemporary dance movement accentuates taiko rhythms and melody in the multidisciplinary piece, “To Fly.” It is inspired by the ground-breaking Asian American novel *Woman Warrior* and honors the voice of strong Asian American women in story, family, and community.

This reunion concert is a chance to bring back the community that supported and shaped Portland Taiko’s early years. Every former Portland Taiko performer has been invited to take the stage and play with the ensemble and guest artists in “Midare Matsuri,” a festival piece that has evolved over the course of the fifteen years of Portland Taiko's life, and is a fitting tribute and celebration of all the performers that have come before. Former members will share the stage with current Portland Taiko performers in this lively piece.

"We have been surprised at the positive response we have received from former performers," says Teresa Enrico. "Many are excited and eager to join us and all have fond memories of the rehearsals, performances and their time with Portland Taiko. Kyle Kajihiro one of the founding members wrote to us, 'One of our first performances was in a shopping mall. I don't even remember which one. It was a strange place to perform, but I took great pleasure in rocking that mall with the thunderous sounds of the drum. At least we got people to stop shopping for a few minutes to take in the rhythm!' It truly is going to be a Homecoming like no other."

### **Guest artists:**

Founding Co-Directors Ann Ishimaru and Zack Semke return as season guest artists after Portland Taiko’s successful season kickoff concert in May, *PT from A to Z*. Ishimaru and Semke helped found Portland Taiko in 1994, and then relocated to the Boston area in 2005. They stayed active in the taiko scene by performing with Odaiko New England. While in Boston, they played the Star Spangled Banner with Odaiko New England and jazz trumpeter Tiger Okoshi (of the Berklee School of Music) at a Red Sox-Yankees game in the World Series, at Fenway Park.

Kristy Oshiro is a Portland State University graduate and was a member of Portland Taiko from 2001 – 2007, when she moved to Sacramento to join Sacramento Taiko Dan under the direction of taiko pioneer Tiffany Tamaribuchi. She has also worked with the professional Japanese Taiko group, Shidara, served as the creative director of Placer Ume Taiko, and tours nationally and internationally with Jodaiko and Taikoza.

Multimedia artist Rachel Eborá performed with Portland Taiko from 1996-2006. Eborá is a community organizer with the Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center. At night she transforms into one of her many performer entities: drag king for The Rice Kings; eisa drummer with RyuQ Murasaki Daiko; and guest performer with Maikaze Daiko, Fresh Meat Performances, JoDaiko, Triple Threat Taiko, and the UC Queer Pin@y Conference.

Naoko Amemiya earned her B.A. in dance at Wesleyan University, with a focus on Asian American choreographers. In 1993 she began training with Grand Master Seiichi Tanaka's San Francisco Taiko Dojo, eventually becoming a performing member. She joined PT’s artistic staff in 2000. She has also performed with Los Angeles area Taikoproject, and joined Somei Yoshino Taiko Ensemble in 2004.

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