



NEWS RELEASE

April 24, 2009
For immediate release
Photos available

Contact: Michael Griggs
(503) 288-2456
info@portlandtaiko.org
www.portlandtaiko.org

What: Portland Taiko's 15th Anniversary Season

Who: Portland Taiko, Asian American Drum Performance

When: May 16, 3pm and 8pm

Where: Fir Acres Theatre, Lewis & Clark College, 0615 SW Palatine Hill Road, Portland

Tickets: \$18 on sale online at www.portlandtaiko.org, in person at the Hollywood Theatre Box Office, or by phone (503) 205-0715

Supported by: Kinsman Foundation, James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation, Oregon 150

Media Sponsor: PosterGarden

PORTLAND TAIKO LAUNCHES THEIR 15TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Alumni performers return as guest artists to launch Portland Taiko's 15th Anniversary Season with taiko drum fanfare. Founding Co-Directors Ann Ishimaru and Zack Semke take the stage with Portland Taiko in *PT from A to Z*, a reflection on the ensemble's 15 years of history, with songs from their early years and more recent compositions. The pieces explore the musical range of taiko, from subtle nuance to explosive boom. *PT from A to Z* premieres May 16 at 3pm and 8pm at Lewis & Clark College, Fir Acres Theatre.

Ishimaru and Semke left Portland to relocate to the Boston area in 2005. They stayed active in the taiko scene by performing with Odaiko New England. Among other things, 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.

Portland Taiko's first concert of their 15th Anniversary Season seemed an appropriate time to team up with their founders. Says Ishimaru, "Though we've only been gone for a few years, we're delighted and gratified to return to Portland to find PT thriving and continuing to grow artistically in new and exciting ways. The company's celebration of 15 years is a testament to the immense community support that has made that possible, from the early days of building the first drums in people's garages to the major grants and individual contributions that enabled our evolution into a professional arts organization. We are honored to return as guest artists to help mark this milestone in Portland Taiko's history."

Asian American
Drum Performance

3230 NE Columbia Blvd

Portland, OR

97211

ph: (503) 288-2456

fax: (503) 288-2460

email:
info@portlandtaiko.org

PT from A to Z will include pieces that Portland Taiko has not played since Ishimaru and Semke left the ensemble in 2005, and will showcase the wide range of the ensemble's work and the remarkable instruments they play. The polyrhythmic piece, "Resonance," highlights the contrasting sounds of the big drum, the odaiko. Performers use different styles of bachi (drum sticks) to explore a variety of sounds on the drum. Each part of a taiko creates a different sound. The "don" sounds are the loud booms from hitting the cow-hide stretched over the drum head, and are contrasted with the sharp "ka" sounds created by clicking the hard sides of the taiko. The explorations of "Resonance" culminate in pounding solos from each of the three odaikos on stage. Another piece returning to the stage is "Umi," which means ocean, and is inspired by the sounds of water. Performers produce the rain, the surf, and the thunder of the sea using the subtle differences in sound created by striking the head of the drum.

The ensemble will revisit audience favorites like "Handa Na Kayo," a "funky" taiko piece featured in the 2003 CD, *Big Bang*. The song's unusual style comes from it being in 3 count, as most of Portland Taiko's songs are in 4 or 2 meter. "Handa Na Kayo" is Tagalog, (Filipino) for "Are you ready?" and Portland Taiko's energetic response is "Let's play!" Producing Director, Teresa Enrico admits, "It's one of my favorite songs."

PT will also play the complex composition, "Fearless Hearts," which requires each performer to tightly interlock with others as their simple rhythms connect to become a complex whole. According to Artistic Director Michelle Fujii, "Fearless Hearts is definitely a test of the strength of our entire ensemble. The construction of this piece forces each performer to let go of their inner ego in order to lock the rhythms together. Every time I play this piece it is like discovering myself again. I love playing pieces like this that combine artistic beauty with personal growth."

Improvisation and innovation are at the heart of PT's current compositions, and Portland Taiko is unveiling a new piece in *PT from A to Z* that will be, in part, created by the interactions between performers and the audience. Taiko rhythms and violin melodies will be woven together with the audience's influence for a completely improvised work that is birthed anew every time it is played.

PT from A to Z debuts May 16, 3pm and 8pm, at Fir Acres Theatre, Lewis & Clark College, 0615 SW Palatine Hill Road in Portland. Tickets are on sale now for \$18 online at www.portlandtaiko.org, in person at the Hollywood Theatre Box Office, or by phone (503) 205-0715.

Special anniversary discount tickets for both *PT from A to Z* and Portland Taiko's second reunion concert, *Homecoming* on June 13 at 3pm and 8pm are \$30, and can be purchased online at www.portlandtaiko.org, in person at the Hollywood Theatre Box Office, or by phone (503) 205-0715. Season tickets for \$75 and patron season tickets for \$150 can be purchased through Portland Taiko; call (503) 288-2456 or visit www.portlandtaiko.org for more information.

#