



NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release
Photos available

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What: *Ten Tiny Taiko Dances*

Who: Portland Taiko, Asian American Drum Performance, co-curated by Mike Barber, choreographer, performer, and founder of Ten Tiny Dances

When: June 19, 3pm and 8pm and June 20, 2pm
Pre-show Discussion: June 19 6:15pm

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

Tickets: \$18 - \$20 + service charges. Tickets are on sale online at www.portlandtaiko.org, in person at the PCPA Box Office, or by phone (800) 745-3000. For group tickets call (503) 288-2456

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The Challenge of Drumming and Dancing on just 16 square feet in *Ten Tiny Taiko Dances*

Summer starts with movement and music, in the world premiere taiko and dance performances of *Ten Tiny Taiko Dances*, which premieres June 19, 3pm with additional performances at 8pm and June 20 at 2pm, at the Portland Center for the Performing Arts, Dolores Winningstad Theatre. The performance is co-curated by Asian American drum ensemble Portland Taiko and choreographer, performer, and founder of Ten Tiny Dances Mike Barber.

Approaching this project together with Mike Barber, the challenge of the Ten Tiny Dances format was intriguing to Portland Taiko's Artistic Director Michelle Fujii, "When people think of Portland Taiko they think of vast spaces with huge numbers of people, and this is just the opposite of that."

Ten Tiny Dances has been described as "an experiment in confined space." The "rules" for Ten Tiny Dances performances have varied since the first performance in 2002. For some concerts, performers have not been allowed off the tiny stage at all, or only allowed off for 15 seconds, or with one foot off, etc.

Barber explains that this year, "What is most important is for the choreographer to see that the 4 x 4 stage is a dominant artistic element." Barber is, "Interested, always, in seeing how the constraint of the stage impacts the creative process for the artist and the audience."

Over

Asian American
Drum Performance

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Barber describes this production as, “big meets tiny.” For the 20th iteration of Ten Tiny Dances Barber says that he, “relishes the idea of holding the big powerful energy of taiko on the tiny stage.” Says Barber, “It has always been important to me to find new views of the Ten Tiny Dances experience and this collaboration with Portland Taiko takes the Ten Tiny form to new territory.”

Each of the ten original dance and taiko pieces share a common thread of inspiration. Says Barber, “I’m thrilled about giving the ten performers a through line: the drum. For this event, the 4x4 stage and the drum will be constant as each artist responds, in their own way, to the creative challenge.” PT’s Michelle Fujii echoes this excitement, “The artists are now embracing not just percussive elements in general but the idea of what it means to incorporate our artform, taiko.”

In addition to both Fujii and Barber, a mélange of artists will put their minds and bodies into or onto the tiny stage, including: Seattle composer Byron Au Yong; actor, movement artist, and singer Christine Calfas; dance instructor and choreographer Subashini Ganesan; choreographer and dancer Carla Mann; composer and sound designer Heather Perkins; Oregon Ballet Theatre choreographer, Artur Sultanov; local dance group tEEth; and Portland Taiko performers, including choreographer Toru Watanabe.

Collaboration will be a central component of the artistic process, as the artists are each challenged by the constraints of 16 square feet. On March 19 the contributing artists gathered for a salon to share ideas and spark collaborative exploration. Mike Barber asked, “What happens when things get constrained, and what happens when you bring in the drum?”

At the salon, the artists discussed their artistic process. Angelle Hebert and Phillip Kraft of tEEth, are exploring “precise chaos.” Subashini Ganesan and Michelle Fujii talked about their collaboration together and, “this ancestral thing that we both seem to have,” - their Indian and Japanese traditions. Heather Perkins and Mike Barber described their reflections on the “heartbeat of the drum,” as a “magnified pulse of anger,” and said Barber, they are, “struggling not to be narrative.”

Other artists are specifically weaving their own life experiences into the tapestry of inspiration for their pieces. Michelle Fujii spoke of riding commuter trains in Japan, as the world whirled by. Passengers struggle not to emote or “to be there in the moment.” Her piece “Slipping Through My Fingers” describes that difficulty to connect and grasp something real, like “sand in an hourglass.”

Toru Watanabe’s creative work will use original masks created by contemporary artist Rick Bartow. Watanabe is inspired to create this piece by the “sense” of his own Shinto and Buddhist religious beliefs, and an experience from his work in elder care in Hokkaido, Japan. He explains that his piece honors a man he found, “an old man in a futon, dead, white to the bone.” Watanabe says, “Eleven years and no one found him. I don’t know what I can find for him.”

Ten Tiny Taiko Dances premieres June 19, 3pm with additional performances at 8pm and June 20 at 2pm, at the Portland Center for the Performing Arts, Dolores Winningstad Theatre. There is a free pre-show discussion with co-curators Michelle Fujii and Mike Barber, June 19 at 6:15pm. Tickets are \$18-20 plus service charges, and are available online at www.portlandtaiko.org, in person at the PCPA Box Office, or by phone (800) 745-3000. For more information and for group tickets, call 503.288.2456 or email info@portlandtaiko.org.

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