

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS
THE UNDISPUTED DRUMMING MASTERS
KODO
FRIDAY & SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4 & 5 AT 8:00 P.M.
& SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6 AT 3:00 P.M. IN ZELLERBACH HALL**

“Superlatives don’t really exist to convey the primal power and bravura beauty of Kodo” – *Chicago Tribune*

BERKELEY, December 20, 2004 – Combining the ancient art of Japanese drumming with a kaleidoscope of world music traditions, the acclaimed **Kodo** returns to Berkeley **Friday & Saturday, February 4 & 5 at 8:00 p.m., and Sunday, February 6 at 3:00 p.m.** The 16 member *taiko* troupe – *taiko* means drum in Japanese – includes dancers, singers and musicians, and a vast array of percussion instruments from hand cymbals to 800 pound behemoth *o-daiko* drums. While exploring the limitless possibilities of the Japanese drum, **Kodo** is forging new directions for a vibrant living art-form. “What you see on the stage are traditional Japanese instruments,” explains **Takeshi Akmine**, Managing Director. “But what we express is often very contemporary...our younger performers have rock, jazz and even classical percussion experience...you can hear different tastes.”

The name "Kodo" comes from two Japanese characters for “child” and “play,” conveying Kodo’s desire to play with the “heart of a child.” Kodo is also a homonym for “heartbeat,” the most primal of all rhythms. The group began in 1981 as an off-shoot of another *taiko* group, Ondekoza, but is considered by many to be the fountainhead of *taiko* experience and wisdom. Under the artistic direction of **Motofumi Yamaguchi**, also the featured *fue* (flute), *kobu* (Chinese fiddle), *koto* (Japanese floor harp) and *shamisen* (three-string lute) player with Kodo, the company lives communally on Sado Island, 40 miles west of the main Japanese island of Honshu, developing its own culture of living, learning and creating.

Physical conditioning is an important of Kodo’s training with several of the older members having repeatedly run marathons in Boston and elsewhere. **Yoshikazu Fujimoto**, one of Kodo's founding members and the most senior performer at 54, is not a big man but his physical prowess is in evidence when he plays the *o-daiko* costumed in a loincloth, his back rippling with muscles

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as the baseball bat-like clubs are swung overhead sending deep booms across the audience. Strength is needed not only to play the drums but also, since the company has no stage hands, everyone loads, unloads and sets-up the instruments including the *o-daiko* drums that require eight people to lift and set into place.

In addition to the 40 plus company members, Kodo takes on apprentices. The highly competitive, two year program includes rising each morning at 5 a.m. and running six miles, six days a week. Students learn traditional drumming, singing, drama and tea ceremony along with doing the farm work to raise the community's food.

Since Kodo's debut at the Berlin Festival over two decades ago, the troupe has given more than 2,600 performances on all five continents, touring up to eight months a year. While the company strives to both preserve and re-interpret traditional Japanese performing arts, touring and research trips all over the globe exert a strong influence on the group's work. Collaboration with artists across the musical spectrum include jazz drummer and composer Max Roach, Indian *tabla* drummer Zakir Hussian, Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart and Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreira. Kodo's lack of preconceptions about its music continues to produce startling new fusions and forms.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Kodo** on **Friday & Saturday, February 4 & 5** at **8:00 p.m.** and **Sunday, February 6** at **3:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$24.00, \$34.00, and \$46.00.** Performance tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded).

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The *San Francisco Chronicle* is a season sponsor of Cal Performances; *San Francisco* magazine and Classical 102.1 KDFC are season media sponsors of the 2004/05 performing arts season.

Cal Performances' 2004/2005 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday & Saturday, February 4 & 5 at 8:00 p.m. **Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus**
Sunday, February 6 at 3:00 p.m. Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

World Stage

Kodo

Program:

This revered company is known for both the musical and athletic dynamism of their performances, synthesizing thrilling sounds with the rigorous martial arts' techniques.

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