FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

University of Hawai‘i and Taiko Center for the Pacific Collaborate on “Taiko Drum and Dance”
Production Features Traditional Dance and World Premieres

The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s Department of Theatre and Dance is proud to present “Taiko Drum and Dance,” the first mainstage production of Kennedy Theatre’s Spring 2013 season. This performance will feature modern and traditional dance choreographed by UHM faculty members, in performance with taiko artist Kenny Endo and the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble. All music for the concert will be performed live. This interdisciplinary, multicultural music and dance concert will come to the Kennedy Theatre’s mainstage Feb. 8, 9, 15, and 16 at 8 p.m., and Feb. 17 at 2 p.m. Audiences will also have the opportunity to attend pre-show chats at 7:00 p.m. on Feb. 9 and 16; and students with a validated Spring 2013 UHM photo ID will be able to take advantage of the theatre’s buy-one-get-one-free program on Friday, Feb. 8.

Kenny Endo is an artist at the vanguard of taiko drumming, melding historical and contemporary Japanese performance. He received an MA in Music from the University of Hawai‘i, and studied with the groundbreaking Kinnara Taiko group in San Francisco. He also spent a decade studying with masters of Japanese classical, festival, and group drumming, and is the first non-Japanese national to be honored with a natori (stage name) in Japanese classical drumming. Utilizing traditional instruments in innovative combinations, Endo blends Japanese rhythms with music from around the world. In addition to his full performance schedule, Endo is also a recording artist and artistic director of Taiko Center of the Pacific.
Several dances will receive their world premieres at the concert. Two of these, “Empty Sky” by Kara Miller and “Jugoya” (“Crystal Clear Moon”) by Gregg Lizenbery and Amy Schiffner, have been choreographed to music composed by Kenny Endo. “Araumi” (“Stormy Sea”), choreographed by Betsy Fisher, will be performed to music composed by Kirstin Puaka, who is both a member of the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble and a professor of Asian Theatre at UHM. “This is incredibly exciting for me,” says Pauka, “because both of my worlds are coming together in this performance.”

Other pieces are direct collaborations between dancers and musicians. Betsy Fisher developed the choreography for “Yamamba de Koolau” (“Wandering Mountain Spirit”) with composer Chizuko Endo. The idea was inspired by a classical Japanese noh play, but Endo conceived and developed the piece during long drives over O‘ahu’s Koolau mountain range. In the piece, the beating of the katsugi (a small, rope-tuned drum) represents worldly and natural forces. Peggy Gaither Adams and Kenny Endo will present a new work, “Midnight Moon,” which requires dancers to learn to play uchiwa daiko (fan drums), traditionally used in a wide range of activities from kabuki theatre to worship by Nichiren Buddhist monks. Members of the Endo ensemble – who often feature athletic movement in their performances – will be dancing as well as drumming in the piece, further emphasizing the collaboration between musicians and dancers.

Several pieces are inspired by traditional dance. “Sosen” (“Ancestors”) is a bharatanatyam (classical South Indian dance) with taiko accompaniment that was created by the Ensemble and UH alumna Sonja Sironenl; current UHM graduate student Rohini Acharya reconstructed the piece and directed rehearsals for this performance. Traditional hula choreographed by Vicki Holt Takamine, featuring percussion and dance, will open the concert. The concert will also feature “Tatsumaki” (Whirlwind”), an instrumental piece composed by Hiroshi Tanaka and performed by the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble.

“Threads of Aspiration,” a music and dance finale that celebrates the collaborative spirit of the concert, features a new composition by Derek Nakamoto. Nakamoto was born and raised in Honolulu, and currently lives in Los Angeles; he has recorded, arranged, and produced music for Yoko Fujimoto, Michael Bolton, The O’Jays, Teddy Pendergrast, and Hiroshima, among others.
Peggy Gaither Adams, the concert’s director, praises all the artists for their collaborative spirit, and promises a performance that will appeal to fans of both traditional and contemporary dance and music: “We will provide our audience with bold, innovative movement coupled with big, beautiful sound. And the audience will experience an evening of the sophisticated skills and stamina of the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble.”

Partial funding for this production has been provided by the Hawai‘i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, the Mayor’s Office of Culture and the Arts, the Taiko Arts Center, the University of Hawai‘i Japan Studies endowment, the UH Center for South Asian Studies, the UHM Music department, and the University of Hawai‘i Diversity and Equity Initiative.

Tickets for “Taiko Drum and Dance” are available online at etickethawaii.com, by phone at (808) 944-2697, at participating outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre box office; the box office is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday, with extended hours on performance dates. Prices are $24 general admission; $22 seniors / military / UH faculty and staff; $15 UHAA members; $13 students; and $5 students with validated Spring 2013 UHM photo ID. Ticket prices include all service fees. Discount rates are available for groups of 10 or more. For more information, please visit hawaii.edu/kennedy or call the theatre at (808) 956-7655. For disability access, please call the theatre.

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**EVENT:** “Taiko Drum and Dance”

**PRESENTED BY:** UHM Department of Theatre and Dance

**WHEN:**
- Feb 8, 9*, 15, and 16* at 8 p.m.
- Feb 17 at 2 p.m.
- * Free pre-show chat at 7:00 p.m.

**WHERE:**
- UHM’s Kennedy Theatre Mainstage
  - 1770 East-West Road, Honolulu

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