

LISA SMITH WENGLER
CENTER FOR THE
arts
PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

presents

TAIKO PROJECT

Benzaiten



Saturday, May 21, 2022, 7:30 PM
Smothers Theatre

Assisted listening devices are available at the Box Office.

Gwynn Murril's elegant sculpture exhibition *Animal Nature* is on view in the Weisman Museum of Art through Sunday, July 31, 2022. The museum is open Tuesday–Sunday from 11 AM–5 PM.

Reserve your free tickets
to the exhibition by
scanning the QR code
or by visiting
[arts.pepperdine.edu/
museum](https://arts.pepperdine.edu/museum)



TAIKOPROJECT

Performers:

Elizabeth Au
Jen Baik
Masato Baba
Thistle Boosinger
Bevin Chan
Andrew Chen
Courtney Deguchi
Darren Endo
Risa Isogawa
Jenny Mimura
Kaz Mogi
Blaine O'Brien
Yumi Saito
Doug Sakamoto
Gaku Sasaki
Audrey Tu
Brian Yamagata
Bryan Yamami

Bryan Yamami, **Executive Director**

Masato Baba, **Artistic Director**

Yumi Saito, **Choreographer**

Nate Lee, **Lighting Designer/Technical Director**

Glenn Suravech, **Sound Designer**

Scott LeGrand, **Technical Consultant**

Sueko Oshimoto, **Costume Designer**

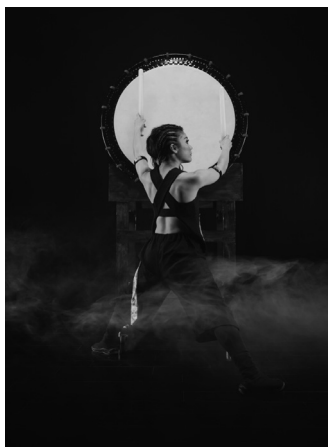
TAIKOPROJECT is sponsored by the Asano Taiko Co., Ltd.

asano.jp

For more information, visit TAIKOPROJECT.org

*All performing members of TAIKOPROJECT have been
fully vaccinated and boosted*

Program and cast subject to change



TAIKOPROJECT was founded in 2000 in Los Angeles, California by a group of young, emerging taiko drummers led by Bryan Yamami and Masato Baba. They were seeking to create a truly American style of taiko, blending traditional forms in which they were raised with an innovative and fresh aesthetic approach to the Japanese drum. Over the past 21 years, they have garnered critical acclaim from all over the world and amassed an impressive resume. The group first made waves when they became the first American taiko group to win the prestigious Tokyo International Taiko Contest in 2005, beating out all the Japanese taiko groups in attendance. That same year, they were cast

in the Mitsubishi Eclipse commercial, the first and only national ad campaign to prominently feature taiko. They followed that up with performances in some of America's highest profile events, including the 2009 Academy Awards and the 2011 GRAMMY Awards. In 2012, TAIKOPROJECT performed for the televised National Cherry Blossom Parade in Washington, DC, the fall *X-Factor* semi-finals, Syfy's *Face/Off*, and were honored with the annual Visionary Award from East West Players. In 2013, TAIKOPROJECT was featured in rock band 30 Seconds to Mars' epic "Up in the Air" music video and appeared with the band on *Conan*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, and the iHeartRadio Music Festival. They have also garnered national recognition by receiving major arts grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the MAPFund, the L.A. Arts Recovery Fund/America's Cultural Treasures Initiative, and the Japan Foundation.

TAIKOPROJECT has performed and recorded with some of the world's most well-known musical artists, including Stevie Wonder, Peter Gabriel, Alicia Keys, A.R. Rahman, John Legend, Kanye West, Sean Paul, producer Squeak E. Clean, as well as international stars such as Greek singer Antonis Remos, Persian singer Mansour, and DJ Tiësto. TAIKOPROJECT's recent activities include collaborations with Chieko Kojima and Ryutaro Kaneko of KODO, GRAMMY Award-winning Chicano rock band Quetzal, and Kabuki expert David Furumoto. TAIKOPROJECT members and students have recently appeared in trailers for Food Network's *Iron Chef Gauntlet*, Nickelodeon's "This is Me" campaign, the 2018 MTV Music and Movie Awards, and Playing for Change's 2020 release of "Biko." Last year, the ensemble recorded tracks for the Opening Ceremonies for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

taikoproject.org

Facebook: [@taikoproject](https://www.facebook.com/taikoproject) | Twitter: [@taikoproject](https://twitter.com/taikoproject)

Instagram: [@taikoproject](https://www.instagram.com/taikoproject)

PROGRAM

Ho Hai Bushi (traditional)

Arranged by Masato Baba (2020)

Choreography by Yumi Saito

Expanding

Conceived by Bryan Yamami (2003)

Arranged by Masato Baba (2020)

Azayaka

Composed by Masato Baba (2017)

Choreography by Yumi Saito

Mute

Composed by Blaine O'Brien (2019)

Kidou (Orbit)

Composed by Masato Baba (2019)

Many Sides

Arranged by Masato Baba (2003)

—INTERMISSION—

Awakening

Composed by Andrew Chen (2018)

Grounded

Composed by Masato Baba (2018)

Choreography by Yumi Saito

Jump

Composed by Kaz Mogi (2020)

Sky Boy

Composed by Masato Baba (2019)

The Drop

Composed by Bryan Yamami (2021)

New Beginnings

Composed by Bryan Yamami (2017)

THIS PROGRAM IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE



ABOUT BENZAITEN

TAIKOPROJECT's latest full-length work shatters gender stereotypes and challenges notions of femininity and masculinity in the taiko world. Channeling the Japanese goddess Benzaiten, their new concert blends percussive power and strength with consummate grace and movement. Featuring edgy and opulent new costuming by kimono couture master Sueko Oshimoto and visionary compositions by Artistic Director Masato Baba, *Benzaiten* unites Japanese tradition with modern American innovation. Instruments featured are authentic taiko drums, bamboo flutes, marimba, koto (Japanese harp), voice, and the group's 350-pound mother drum.

BIOGRAPHIES

Bryan Yamami (Executive Director) founded TAIKOPROJECT in 2000 with the idea simply to create a modern American expression of taiko with the best next-generation taiko players. He served as creative lead for the acclaimed 2005 Mitsubishi Eclipse commercial, for recording sessions for Nike and Target, and for the group's appearances on the 2009 Academy Awards, the 2011 GRAMMY Awards, *Conan*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, the *Late Late Show*, NBC's *The Voice*, Nickelodeon, and the 2018 *MTV Music & Movie Awards*. He has performed with John Legend, DJ Tiësto, rock band 30 Seconds to Mars, Sean Paul, Reggie Watts, and the legendary Stevie Wonder.

Masato Baba (Artistic Director) began playing and studying taiko at the age of six under his parents, jazz musician Russel Baba and taiko drummer Jeanne Mercer, who were among the first members of the San Francisco Taiko Dojo, the first taiko group in the United States. He was also a member of the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble, and served as instructor and director of the Youth Group at Endo's school, the Taiko Center of the Pacific. He is a founding member of TAIKOPROJECT dating back to 2000 and is recognized as one of the leading next-generation taiko and shinobue performers and composers in the United States.

Yumi Saito (Choreographer) began studying and performing Nihon Buyo (traditional Japanese dance) at the age of three under Madame Hanayagi Rokumie. In 2002, under the training of Wakana, she earned her natori and was granted the professional stage name of Hanayagi Wakaseira from the Hanayagi School in Tokyo, Japan. After furthering her studies, she returned to Japan in 2006 and earned her shihan (teaching degree). She began playing taiko in 2002 with the collegiate group, Jodaiko at UC Irvine, and joined TAIKOPROJECT in 2007. She currently serves on the instructional staff of Kishin Daiko (community group) and TAIKOPROJECT's adult beginning and youth intermediate classes.



Coming up Next at the Center for the Arts:



JENNY SCHEINMAN: *KANNAPOLIS: A MOVING PORTRAIT*

Kannapolis: A Moving Portrait offers a unique and touching glimpse of a bygone vision of America. Acclaimed musician Jenny Scheinman and her trio perform an original score of folk songs and field sounds live over H. Lee Waters's Great Depression film vignettes *Movies of Local People*, masterfully reassembled by film director Finn Taylor.

FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 2022 • 8 PM
\$20-\$40 • \$10 FOR PEPPERDINE STUDENTS

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**in memoriam*

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