FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  February 21, 2003

WHAT:  Fine Arts Center Series presents Kodo

WHEN:  Wednesday, March 12 at 7:30 p.m.

WHERE:  Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go on-line to www.fineartscenter.com/tickets

(Japanese Taiko Drummers Create Waves of Percussive Sound)

On Wednesday, March 12 at 7:30 pm, Kodo will perform at the Fine Arts Center Concert Hall.  Exploring the limitless possibilities of the traditional Japanese drum, the taiko, Kodo is forging new directions for a vibrant living art form. Kodo strives to both preserve and re-interpret traditional Japanese performing arts. In 2001, Kodo was voted "Artists of the Year" in the Classical Music field by New York Magazine.

Traditional rituals recast as theater, and contemporary thoughts about ancient instruments both figure in Kodo's performance, which includes both ancient and modern compositions. Clad in sweatbands and loincloths, the ensemble performs with a tense angularity, standing in stylized, frozen gestures and moving across the stage with an animal-like, athletic grace.

Using the taiko drum to explore new musical directions, Kodo finds ever-expanding possibilities in these ancient instruments. The Japanese characters for "Kodo" convey two meanings: First, "heartbeat" – the sound of the great taiko is said to resemble a mother's heartbeat as felt in the womb, and it is no myth that babies are often

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lulled asleep by its thunderous vibrations. Second, read in a different way, the word can mean “children” and “drum” – a reflection of Kodo’s desire to play their drums simply, with the heart of a child. Appearing with the name “Kodo” for the first time at the 1981 Berlin Festival, this performance group has since given over 2,500 performances in 43 countries, becoming Japan’s most widely-traveled and acclaimed performing arts group. “Indeed, if there is such a thing as perfection in music, Kodo comes as near to it as any group in the world.” (*The Boston Globe*)

Known for their strenuous, flamboyant technique and the free improvisation of the performers, the performance features programs such as “Monochrome”, whose companion piece, "Monoprism", was written for performance with a full orchestra and which premiered at Tanglewood by Kodo and the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Seiji Ozawa. “Managing director Takeshi Akemine does not dwell on two decades of sold-out shows preferring instead to ‘looking into the future’ as the group continues using traditional Japanese instruments while embracing other cultures and musical styles, which include rhythms with African or jazz, rock, hip-hop roots and classical percussion.” (*Vibe*)

Ensemble drummers Kazunari Abe, Kenzo Abe, Sachiko Abe, Takeshi Arai, Yoshikazu Fujimoto, Yuichiro Funabashi, Tsubasa Hori, Kazuki Imagai, Mitsuru Ishizuka, Ryutaro Kaneko, Mitsunaga Matsuura, Yosuke Oda, Ayako Onizawa, Yoshie Sunahata, Masaru Tsuji, Kaoru Watanabe perform a musical variety that exploits the best of traditional Japanese folk music compositions as well as original contemporary arrangements. Reviewers have described the Kodo experience as classical, mesmerizing, disciplined, enchanting, magical and driving rhythms that are both primal and comforting.

Tickets are $45, $35, $15; 17 and under $15; Five College Students $15. For tickets and information, call the Fine Arts Center Box Office at 545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS, or visit out our website at [www.fineartscenter.com/centerseries](http://www.fineartscenter.com/centerseries). Sponsored by WFCR 88.5 FM, New Mass. Media, Inc, and Health New England.

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