

## Artist Bios

**Naoko Amemiya** grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and has a strong background in dance and choreography. She earned her B.A. in dance at Wesleyan University, with a focus on Asian American choreographers. She found taiko to be a natural extension of her love of movement and music and in 1993 began study with Grand Master Seiichi Tanaka's San Francisco Taiko Dojo, later becoming a performing member. In 2000 Naoko joined Portland Taiko's core artistic staff. Besides touring nationally with Portland Taiko Ensemble, she was active in composition, instruction, and educational presentations. In 2003-4 she performed in Taikoproject, a Los Angeles-based taiko theater production. Naoko has a M.A. in Japanese and also translates Japanese children's books and manga into English. She and her husband Andy Nakatani have a one-year-old son, Gen.

**Ellen Reiko Bepp** is a native to the San Francisco Bay Area and began taiko training in 1974 under Grand Master Seiichi Tanaka of the San Francisco Taiko Dojo. As a member of the second generation of American taiko players, she continued on to become one of the original members of San Jose Taiko with whom she performed for eleven years. Since then she has co-founded and/or worked with various ensembles such as Tampat: A Sacred Place and Drumfire. Besides drumming, Ellen is a visual artist with an extensive background in the textile arts field as well. She has exhibited her paintings, mixed media work and art installations in galleries and museums throughout the United States since 1980. Her background in clothing design and wearable art has inspired her original costumes and stage creations for the ensemble.

**Hiroyuki Jimi Nakagawa** was born in Tokyo, Japan in 1957 and arrived in the United States in 1981. He studied jazz and performed with local bands before joining the San Francisco Taiko Dojo, directed by Grand Master Seiichi Tanaka in 1987. In 1997 he returned to Japan to continue his study of taiko and to perform with Sukeroku Daiko Hozonkai and master Kenjiro Maru of the Wakayama style festival music. He has also studied with celebrated drummer Robert Kaufman, former professor at the Berkley College of Music. Hiroyuki's refined but driving stickwork has been featured in film, video and on stage. He has collaborated with Robert Moses and Robert Moses' Kin, Dr. Anthony Brown and the Asian American Orchestra, Steven Kent/Ancient Future with renowned musician Habib Kahn. Currently an instructor for JMI (Japanese Music Institute), he is also a member of its performing group Essence.

**Kallan Yoichi Nishimoto** received Bachelor of Music degrees in Music Education and Clarinet Performance from the UOP Conservatory of Music. He currently studies shamisen with Hideko Nakajima, shakuhachi with Masayuki Koga of the Japanese Music Institute and has trained under Grand Master Seiichi Tanaka of the San Francisco Taiko Dojo. Kallan has composed music and has designed sound for the Asian American Theater Company, Asiantics Theater, Wise Fool Puppet Intervention, Cellspace as well as various film, video and dance projects. He has co-founded or worked with various funk, rock and world music ensembles such as Littleton, Bolo, Rebecca's Mask, Jane His Wife, Candide, Drumfire, and most recently, Somei Yoshino Taiko Ensemble. Kallan currently works as a producer/recording engineer at Flytrap Studios.