ARTISTS
Yamato
Masa Ogawa, artistic director
Akiko Ogawa, Gen Hidaka, Haruki Matsumoto, Hisato Fukuda, Jun Kato, Kenta Ono, Madoka Higashi, Marika Nito, Masaya Futaki, Midori Tamai, Mika Miyazaki, Saori Higashi, Subaru Imai, Takeru Matsushita, Tetsuro Okubo, Tomoko Kawauchi

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE. Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms, and unwrap all lozenges prior to the performance. Photography and recording of any kind are not permitted. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION
The heartbeat that pulses through the human body
A sound that will continue to beat to the end of humanity

This sound, overflowing with energy,
Tells the ancient tale that continues from the distant past to the eternal future

Passed on from one generation to another,
The series of this sound which never pauses even for a moment
Spins a yarn that must not be permitted to pause even today

The activities of people
So many ways to live

As long as the human world exists, this roaring sound,
Even today on the threshold of heaven and earth
Reverberates

PROGRAM: YAMATO—THE DRUMMERS OF JAPAN
JANUARY 23 / 7:30 PM
JANUARY 24 / 2:30 PM
MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

SEAGATE
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PROGRAM

Bakuon—Legend of the Heartbeat

1. Habataki – Wingbeat
Since you have been put on this earth, you must muster your courage and flap your wings, heading for the sky. You can’t cower in the nest forever. Now is the time. Now is the moment. Fly!

This piece opens the 2015–16 program, Bakuon. The combination of shimedaiko and okedodaiko create the beat, and the okedodaiko drummer dances a powerful dance on the stage. This is a composition that makes you feel the energy of a challenge, with the image of the moment of flying off into the sky.

2. Sen-nari – Thousand Sounds
My sound is one beat. Your sound is one beat. Anyone’s sound is one beat. The beats echo here, there, and everywhere. A thousand sounds reverberate in unison to finally create one sound.

On the stage, the quiet sound of the taiko drum creates the sensation that something is about to come into being. The shimedaiko, which is the smallest of the Japanese taiko drums, can express a wide range of sounds, which makes you feel the appeal and potential of the drum as an instrument. You can feel the synchronization of the hearts of the drummers, who mutually put their emotions into each beat of the shimedaiko.

3. Rekka – The Fire
This session pitches two drummers against two drummers—all four highly skilled. Enjoy the crackling tension and the lightning speed. No one will back down. Which team do you support?

4. Ittetsu – Sakura – Fubuki
If you think about it, the strength of a person is to head down a single path. The cherry tree gets through the winter and produces a momentary bloom. The resolute falling dance of the blossom is exactly the same as the path on which people must live. No complaining, no grumbling; simply devote yourself to this way of life.

Enshrined before the odaiko, the drummer faces off. There is no way out, and there can be no deception. Believing in the time spent repeatedly practicing, the drummer strikes. As the cherry blossom that embodies the way of life that the Japanese deem acceptable dances to the ground, the odaiko rings out wholeheartedly.

INTERMISSION

5. Rakuda – Happy Drumming
You walk and walk but never arrive—people’s lifetimes consist of boisterous merrymaking. It’s OK to take it easy. It’s OK to have fun. Are you having fun?

Playing the taiko drums is physically hard. The body becomes toned through daily training, and at the same time, the spirit also becomes toned. All the drummer’s energy is poured into the performance, and the drummers send out the overflowing power from their bodies to the audience topped with a smile. When this is accomplished, the energy of the smile returns.

6. Garakuta – Scrap Toys
Saying this is odds and ends at best does not mean I am being particularly petulant. It’s just little old me and there are things I want to do, things I want to say. Even odds and ends have half a soul.

It is difficult to say that the instrument called a chappa plays the leading role. However, it is not an instrument that we can do without. It seems unnecessary but is actually important, seems jarring yet pleasant, and seems unpleasant to the eye yet you cannot dislike it.

7. Bakuon – The Biggest Sound
The beat of the heart that resides in the human body... the sound that never pauses while there is life. As long as the human world exists, this roaring sound will never pause.

Yamato members concentrate all their efforts for this last piece of the program with dozens of small and large taiko drums. The heartbeat that pulses through the body of the drummer is expressed in the sound of the drums. The tale of the heartbeat spun by Yamato begins here.
Since then, more than 20 years have passed. With its original song, The Sunrise Hyu-ga Shinto shrine festival in the group’s hometown Yamato was formed in 1993, debuting at a sound that will make you experience new, is the epitome of the Japanese spirit, a roaring instrument, the wadaiko through this traditional Japanese musical from the beautiful Nara Prefecture in Japan, is in sync with the powerful sounds. This group, beat of the music, as their bodies are uplifted race faster. Audiences are overwhelmed by the make people’s bodies jump and their hearts performances are so full of intensity that they a powerful surge of energy. Their live drum with everything in their souls, creating They move their whole bodies to strike the drum made from a large 400-year-old tree. performance by hitting a Japanese taiko drums. Y amato uses this creativity to convert wadaiko into a performing art that can reverberate in Japan, Asia, and the rest of the world.

We Want to Be Creative
This is the motto of Yamato. This is why, aside from the musical instruments, the members of the group live together in a community to create everything by themselves. This includes the musical compositions, theater productions, theater settings, lighting design, choreography, performance techniques, costumes, makeup, stage settings, and props. Even the bachi (sticks) used in the performances are all their own original work. This is at the core of Y amato’s performances around the world. Yamato uses this creativity to convert wadaiko into a performing art that can reverberate in Japan, Asia, and the rest of the world.

Wadaiko has inspired many people since ancient times. The artists of Yamato hold their respect for this tradition in their hearts as they continue to create and innovate within their art.

Masa Ogawa: Artistic Director
Masa Ogawa was born in 1967 and raised in Nara Prefecture. He came across Japanese drumming when he was trying to become a glass artist, after graduating from the Art Department of Kyoto Seika University in 1991. Since then, he has worked with several Japanese drumming performance groups, and he established Japanese Drum Yamato in 1993. Yamato has progressed as a group and now has given 3,000 performances in 53 countries. Ogawa composes, choreographs, and works on theatrical designs for all the music that is performed by Yamato. He took charge of theatrical design as well as overall staging in order to complete the powerful and visually beautiful performances that combine traditional instruments with new music, finding a new direction for Japanese drum music, which had been considered only as Japanese traditional music. As a result, Yamato has gained an excellent reputation around the world, Masa Ogawa has performed as a core member since the establishment of Yamato. Currently, he also creates music for other groups and provides instruction on how to play Japanese drum for all age levels. In recent years, he has produced Yamato Show in cooperation with Asuka-mura and Nara Prefecture. He is contributing to the revitalization of the local culture.

WHAT IS BAKUON?
The theme of our new program is the story of a strong, passionate, and continuous beat. The story is based on the sound of the heartbeat in every one of us. This sound of the heartbeat is continuous from our birth, through our growth and day-to-day existence. Above all, we who carry this sound are protagonists in this story of today, during this brief moment in the endlessness of time. In all that exists between the blue sky and green earth, our hearts are continuously beating throughout all that is vividly visible in this world. It has a quiet but strong pulse. Inspired by this sound, we wove this beat into the story of Yamato.

Each beat from the taiko drums in Yamato represents its history, a life story of sweat and tears, and the vast memories within the sound of every person’s heart who is gathered here. Alas, although our place in this vast storyline may appear insignificant, we still endeavor to inscribe a new page into the story! Today we hope to share with our audience an earnest tears, and the vast memories within the sound represents its history, a life story of sweat and existence. Above all, we who carry this sound are protagonists in this story of today, during this brief moment in the endlessness of time. In all that exists between the blue sky and green earth, our hearts are continuously beating throughout all that is vividly visible in this world. It has a quiet but strong pulse. Inspired by this sound, we wove this beat into the story of Yamato.

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ABOUT YAMATO
A group of dozens of players starts its performance by hitting a Japanese taiko drum made from a large 400-year-old tree. They move their whole bodies to strike the drum with everything in their souls, creating a powerful surge of energy. Their live performances are so full of intensity that they make people’s bodies jump and their hearts race faster. Audiences are overwhelmed by the beat of the music, as their bodies are uplifted in sync with the powerful sounds. This group, from the beautiful Nara Prefecture in Japan, is able to exhibit great originality and innovation through this traditional Japanese musical instrument, the wadaiko (Japanese drum). This is the epitome of the Japanese spirit, a roaring sound that will make you experience new, exciting adventures.

Yamato was formed in 1993, debuting at a Shinto shrine festival in the group’s hometown with its original song, Hyu-ga (The Sunrise). Since then, more than 20 years have passed.

So far the group has been invited to 53 countries around the world, giving more than 3,000 performances and attracting six million viewers. Its performances, featuring various stage formations, have received rave reviews, and its fame keeps spreading. The British media has even called its sound “the music of the body.” Yamato is based in a village called Asuka, known as the birthplace of Japanese culture, and appears in international performances from six to ten months a year, with an explosion of Yamato (ancient Japanese) spirit. It is proud to be the group with the largest number of international performances among all Japanese performing arts groups.

WHAT IS THE NEWS FOR 2015-16?
After the 20th-anniversary tour, Yamato will be reborn! Yamato will tour with younger generations, ranging in age from 19 to 25—young and energetic, powerful guys! Of course, there are experienced members, as well! All of them will try to create the show of Bakuon, which means the “biggest sound” in Japanese, with many taiko drums as heavy as 500 kg. There will be at least 30-40 taiko drums.

And Yamato will try to break through the stereotypical image of taiko drumming. Taiko has the image of being traditional, but it has possibilities for people to create new music with it. Yamato will also try to start creating modern performances with taiko instruments—but in the Yamato original way, of course.!