

# レナード ETO 衛藤



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# Leonard ETO

## Profile

Leonard Eto is one of the best and most innovative contemporary taiko players whose vision and creativeness deeply molded the way taiko is performed and viewed in the world today.

Leonard Eto's distinctive hallmark is the fluidity and luminous, dancing quality of his play, the immense joy that perspires in his music and the coexistence of power and effortlessness.

Leonard was born in New York in 1963, whilst his father, the koto player Kimio Eto, was making a career in the States performing with such eminent artists as the Philadelphia Orchestra under the conductorship of Leopold Stokowski and Harry Belafonte, among others. The musical environment at home and his father's pioneering path to expand the expression of a traditional instrument into new realms deeply inspired Leonard's own quest in music.

In 1984 Leonard joined the Japanese taiko drum group Kodo and completely invested himself in researching, composing and playing taiko. He soon became Kodo's principal player, organizer, music director and composer travelling to over 50 countries. Leonard's new ways of staging and performing taiko influenced not only Kodo and subsequent taiko groups, but also well-known entertainment formations such as Stomp and Blue Man, as well as other areas of the Western music scene. His compositions for Kodo became an integral part of the contemporary taiko repertory. In 1992, Leonard left Kodo to pursue a solo career.

Leonard has always been interested in crossing borders and enjoys collaborating or improvising with artists of any musical style. In 1994, he won high acclaim for his performance with such great artists as Bob Dylan, Bon Jovi, The Chieftains, INXS, Ray Cooper, and Roger Taylor (Queen) at « The Great Music Experience » at Todaiji, the temple of the Great Buddha, in Nara, Japan. Through his participation in the Megadrums Europe Tours (1990, 1993, 1999) as well as a variety of festivals and recording sessions, he performed with such world-renowned artists as Zakir Hussain (tabla), Andreas Vollenweider (harp), Milton Cardona (per.), Doudou Ndiaye Rose (per.), Max Roach (ds.), Michael Shrieve (Santana), Siouxsie Sioux, The Creatures and others. In 2004 Leonard joined Siouxsie Sioux's U.S. tour and London concerts as special guest - a highly praised performance.

Leonard is an esteemed composer. His original works have been featured in Hollywood film productions such as « JFK », « The Lion King », « The Hunted » and « The Thin Red Line ». His compositions have also been used in ballet representations by Nina Ananiashvili - with whom he performed in 1998 - and Patrick Dupond, as well as for the figure skating performances of Elvis Stojko. « Tsu-Ku-Tsu », a work specially commissioned by Pilobolus, the renowned American modern dance company, premiered in Boston in May 2000. It opened to critical acclaim and enthusiastic audiences in New York at the Joyce Theater in June 2000, where it enjoyed a three week run. A.J. Hewat of the New York Times raves, "He's got rhythm, They've got moves: It's a fit".

# Leonard ETO

## Profile

Ever since leaving Kodo, Leonard has been producing and touring his own projects. His quest gradually developed from his collaborative activities - where he was challenging his own technical and expressive skills to gain the freedom and spontaneity to communicate with any musical style - to working on blending taiko and dance, taiko and Western drums and, the until then unthinkable, combination of taiko and digital sounds.

His formation « Blendrums » where the taiko dialogues with the sounds and movements of tap dancing opened up a completely new, unexpected dynamic and an inspiring world of stage performance where a fusion between dance and rhythm happens. It was highly praised at all venues when touring Europe in 2009.

Leonard has also been touring with an all women ensemble of taiko players and tap dancers - contesting the martial, male and power based image of taiko performance with the excellence, fluidity and dancing play of the women.

2013 finds him combining these works into a bigger production called « Theater Blendrums » aiming to give more space to the creation of a high quality stage work of dance and taiko. A storyline is incorporated into his former live performances, bringing taiko, contemporary dance, tap dance, Western drums, guitar and digital sounds together.



# Leonard ETO

## International Activities

- 1984-1992 Kodo « One Earth Tour »
- 1990 Megadrums Europe Tour with Milton Cardona, Aja Addy, Reinhard Flatischler, Wolfgang Puschnig
- 1993 Megadrums Europe Tour with Zakir Hussain, Suar Agung, Reinhard Flatischler, Wolfgang Puschnig
- 1994 Toshinori Kondo & IMA Europe Tour  
« The Great Music Experience » at Todaiji, the temple of the Great Buddha, Nara, Japan with Bob Dylan, Bon Jovi, The Chieftains, INXS, Ray Cooper, Roger Taylor and Michael Kamen among others.
- 1996 Leonard Eto with Yosuke Yamashita, Festival Music of the World in Basel (Switzerland)  
Leonard Eto Solo Europe Tour  
Kazumi Watanabe Trio Europe & Africa Tour (Japan Foundation)
- 1997 Leonard Eto Basel concerts (Switzerland)  
Leonard Eto « Club Leo » India Tour
- 1998 Nina Ananiashvili Performance (Tokyo / Japan)  
Leonard Eto Canada and US Tour: Toronto Jazz Festival (Toronto / Canada), Seattle Bumbershoot Festival with Michael Shrieve, Yuji Katsui (Seattle / USA)  
« A Tribute of Rhythm » with Zakir Hussain, Les Frères Coulibaly (Switzerland)
- 1999 Megadrums Europe Tour with Airtó Moreira, Glen Velez, Stephen Kent, Wolfgang Puschnig, Zakir Hussain, Cornelia and Reinhard Flatischler
- 2000 « Tsu-Ku-Tsu » a work commissioned by Pilobolus  
« Tsu-Ku-Tsu » premiered in Boston; three week run at the Joyce Theatre in New York (USA)
- 2001 Leonard Eto and Zakir Hussain Duo Live (Tokyo / Japan)  
International Percussion Festival (Seoul / Korea)
- 2002 Ustad Alla Rakha Memorial Concert (Mumbai / India)
- 2004 Siouxsie Sioux US Tour and London Concerts  
Leonard Eto with « Leopro » Africa and The Middle East Tour (Japan Foundation)
- 2006 Hawaii Taiko Festival (USA)  
Sacheon Taiko Festival (Sacheon / Korea)  
Korea Music Orchestra Special Concert (Ansan / Korea)
- 2007 Japan Day @ Central Park (New York / USA)  
Leonard Eto « Blendrums » with Zakir Hussain (Tokyo / Japan)
- 2008 Japan Day @ Central Park (New York / USA)  
« Blendrums Special Live » Leonard Eto and Kodo (Tokyo / Japan)
- 2009 Leonard Eto « Blendrums » Europe Tour with Natsuki Kido, Suji Slet Bubeniku Czech Republic Tour
- 2010 Spoleto Festival (Umbria / Italy)  
Leonard Eto « Blendrums » Spain Tour  
New Visions Arts Festival Hong Kong
- 2011 Leonard Eto East Africa Tour (Japan Foundation)
- 2012 Leonard Eto Central Asia Tour (Japan Foundation)

# Leonard ETO

## Talk

“My father, Kimio Eto, is the founder of the Ikuta Eto school of koto playing and has been successful in the United States from the 50s to the 60s. I was born in New York, however I stayed there only two years, so I wouldn't say my origins are in the States. But I remember viewing Japan with mixed feelings as a child and I've been in search of my identity since I was little. That's probably why I felt attracted to taiko with its profoundly Japanese spirit and became deeply involved with it in my life.

I admire my father a lot and he had a great influence on me, but he never forced me to follow in his footsteps and to play the koto. All he wanted was that I enjoy my music: ‘lead a life where music can be your friend’ he told me. This is what I always tried to live and it defines my relationship with music. It is a dialogue between what I have deep inside me and how I can express it through rhythm and sound. It is a constant process of introspection and questioning of what I am doing and who I am.

My two elder brothers also played music, so our home was always filled with music and we had many instruments, like piano, cello, contrabass, guitar, Western and Japanese. Everything but percussion instruments! Then, my brother Steve started to play percussion. I guess that inspired me to start playing the drums as well. That's how I got into percussion instruments. My brother Steve continued his musical career as an experimental percussionist and we are performing together sometimes.

Even though our family had lived in the States, I was brought up in a traditional Japanese household. Our house in Tokyo was furnished with tatamis and my father wore a kimono when he was at home. Being used to a traditional Japanese lifestyle facilitated many things for me when I joined Kodo later.

I did imagine myself making a living with music since I was very young, however I hadn't really focused on a specific instrument, but all the while I had kept on playing the drums. When I was a high school student, my eldest brother who was already a recording director introduced me to Kodo. But I was hesitant. I thought about it a lot and only joined them three years later at age 21. It was my first encounter with the taiko.

When I joined Kodo in 1984, we were learning the music used in traditional local entertainments and refined it into performing arts. In other words, Kodo didn't really have an original sound; they were still in the process of trying to find their own vision. Since I was searching for my identity at the time and Kodo was looking for their identity we found each other in this energy and I lived some very intensive years with them. My ideas and music gradually influenced Kodo's expression.



# Leonard ETO

## Talk

Touring to West Africa in 1991 and encountering the relationship the Africans have to their drums left a lasting impression on me and influenced the direction of my music. In the trance rite of the traditional African village performances I discovered a strong relationship between men and drums. The drums touched the soul of the people, made the women dance, supported and carried them when they fell in trance. There was a palpable exchange going on. This is something that has been lost in Japan, where the communication between the performers on stage and the audience became a one-way exchange. I realized that this living exchange was not possible in show business, that I had to go another path to find this more spiritual and transformational quality of music.

I have always pushed the boundaries of the taiko. I was always interested in walking a path nobody has walked before me and confronting myself with new grounds. When a new sound is born you have to deal with the criticism and bitter taste of rejection from the surrounding. But I believe that if you really have the image in yourself of where you want to go a new path will open. If you attend with sincerity to your work, your composition, your performance, your sound, the path to take becomes clear. I think this is something we, as artists, can bring into society.”



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# Leonard ETO

## Instruments

The Hirado O-daiko, Oke-daiko, and Chappa cymbals can be considered Leonard Eto's « three indispensable instruments ». They used to be considered mere accompaniment, but during his time with Kodo in the 80s Leonard experimented intensively with rhythms and playing techniques and worked out distinctive roles for each of them. As a result, these instruments gained importance not only in Kodo, but in musical entertainment throughout the world.

### **Hirado O-daiko (Flat-bodied Big Drum)**

Shorter than the classical O-daiko, the Hirado-O-daiko gives out brighter sounds than the full-bodied O-daiko because of its shallow body. A colorful variety of sounds can be obtained by using different bachi-sticks. Leonard innovated the play of the Hirado O-daiko using a long and a short bachi-stick together. This makes it possible for the long stick to quicker with the vibrations of the beat of the short stick, creating a buzzing, snaring sound, unheard until then. When he was composing « ZOKU » Leonard came up with the revolutionary idea to place the Hirado-O-daiko horizontally, in a slanted angle, on tree stumps and play it with big baseball bat-like sticks. This style has won much popularity ever since.

### **Oke-daiko (Tub Drum)**

The portable Oke-daiko has become one of the hallmarks of Leonard's music. Inspired by the traditional drumming methods of South Korea, China, and India, Leonard developed an entirely novel expressional style by utilizing the unique sound and rhythm that can only be obtained from Japan's Oke-daiko and it's potential to move and dance with the drum.

### **Chappa Cymbals (Hand Cymbals)**

Over years of investigation Leonard created a new playing style and new rhythms for the Chappa cymbals. Through his work the Chappa cymbals have evolved from simple accompaniment into a leading, solo instrument.



# Leonard ETO

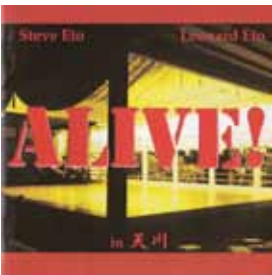
## Discography



### CD « Leo » (1998 / NGCA 1013)

When I started to think about producing a first CD – five years after having left Kodo – the big question, which I had never thought about while playing concert after concert, appeared: in which genre would my future CD be classified in music stores? Apart from what I aspire to or don't like, what is the category of my music? And how would I express this objectively in the jacket design?

For the pieces, I concentrated on ones that I had been playing live often; if there were bold but simple arrangements, there were also densely constructed ones. For the jacket design, I chose a black and white photo with my portable version of the oke-daiko that expressed the suppleness I wanted to incarnate as a soloist. A spokesperson at the music label noted that «If you had chosen the photo with the O-daiko, this CD could have only been classified with traditional Japanese music. With this design, the CD can also be classified with Jazz or New Age». How much emotion and intense feeling I put into this first CD! I will never forget the moment I had it in my hands – something I will never feel again.



### CD « Alive - in Tenkawa » (2001 / FFCA-1002)

This is a live recording of an improvisational performance with my older brother Steve who plays Heavy Metal Percussion. We played at the Tenkawa Shrine in Nara prefecture and the weather that day was very capricious in the mountains. Since the instruments suffer if they get wet, we decided not to play on the specially installed stage, but on the Nô-stage of the Shrine. We had plenty of heavy instruments like the O-daiko or the drum cans and all the staff helped carry them up the stairs to the other stage. When we had finished moving the instruments it was already concert time. We quickly changed clothes and started the concert without rehearsal or any previous arrangement. The only thing we decided was to finish the performance after one hour. From that day on this became the Eto Brothers style, we never rehearsed or met before a performance again.



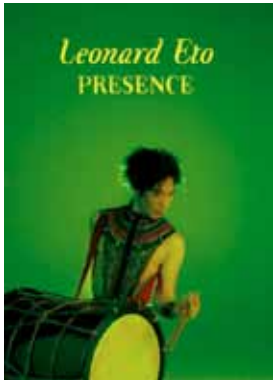
### CD « Duets » (2002 / NGCA 1006)

After releasing my first album « Leo », as a next step I thought that I wanted to record the rich sound of the collaborations with some international artists I have been meeting over the years. I invited Zakir Hussain and Aja Addy to come to Japan for recording. During the production of the album the terrorist attack 9/11 happened in New York. “What can we do as musicians? What should we do?” This question became the theme of the album. However different our ways of thinking, we have to learn to communicate from person to person. It is the same on all levels: state leaders, representatives of populations, family members and even lovers have to learn to communicate truly. Whatever background the base is always a dialogue one to one. So with these excellent artists, up to where would we be able to lead our musical dialogue? This was my response towards these events that had plunged the world into terror and confusion.



# Leonard ETO

## Discography



### DVD « Presence » (2003 / NGBA 1001)

*Revival / Taiyo Shin / Rhythm Kyo / Kingdom (Leonard Eto & Aja Addy) / Story Teller (Leonard Eto & Aja Addy) / Dak Tak / Irodori / Elephant Gate (Leonard Eto & Zakir Hussain) / Chappagogo / Hyoryu / Don Jime N° 2 (Leonard Eto & Steve Eto) / Minami no Shima*



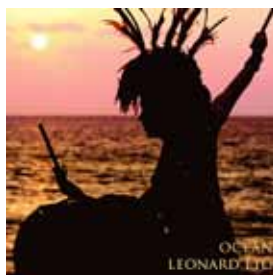
### CD « Leo +1 » (2003 / NGCA-1013)

*Welcome to Club «Leo» / Okaimono / Duo Bravo! / Irodori / Omoide / Drift / Makka na Daichi / Golden Shoes / Daibutsu Sama-Sama / Don Jime # 517*



### CD « Blend » (2005 / NGCA 1020)

2004 was a year filled with touring which led me around the world. I participated in Siouxsie and the Banshees America tour, came home a few days, and was off again for the London concert series. Then I toured with my own taiko unit « Leo Pro » in South Africa, Madagascar, Bahrain and Kuwait. After this when I started to think about composing my mind was just overflowing with the images from travelling. For example, starting with a punkish sound the image of the endlessly continuing American highway appeared in my mind. Under the strong rays of the sun this landscape was suddenly dyed in deep red. Clouds are forming and a moment later a strong rain is lashing down. The wet highway is shining and without noticing the landscape transforms into Madagascar's dense forests and we are immersed into its heavy smell. Breathing becomes difficult so I open the car window, outside the sound of the Muezzin resonates without mercy. The highway changes into marshes in no time. Red rugs spread out everywhere the taste of the Islamic world in the air... Because in my mind the colors and sounds of our beautiful planet were overflowing, the title « Blend » came just naturally.



### CD « OCEAN » (2006 / NGCA 1025)

The most noteworthy fact about this album is that it was recorded in one go in an excellent concert hall in Japan. No overdubbing. The theme is kept simple: all I wanted was to record a sound that feels good! The work on this album was also the starting point to do concerts completely without microphones. This had a big influence on the composing and arranging of the music and it naturally led to the following album which was recorded with a string quartet.

# Leonard ETO

## Discography



### CD « Aoi Tsuki » (2007 / NGCL 1002)

To work with a string quartet has been a plan I kept warm for a long time. I always dreamt of composing a symphony, but this could only be achieved if I meet an arranger who has a good feeling for my music and understands where I want to go, because classic music is so different in its way of working and training than where I come from. As a first step into this direction I thought of working with a string quartet in the same way I would with a band, instead of beginning with a big, complicated project. I had an inner vision of a « form that needs strings » and how the taiko would resonate with it and tried to sketch it down. When the musicians arrived at the studio and played a sample saying “maybe something like this”, I was overwhelmed by the beauty of the color of the sound. I had performed with orchestra before, but never had I realized the elegance of classic music as strongly. The result is an album with a calm, peaceful feeling you wouldn't expect from a taiko player. A central and very symbolic piece is « Omoide » which was composed by my father, the koto player Kimio Eto.



### CD « Blendrums » (2007 / NGCL 1001)

Nowadays there are many taiko players who played drums or Jazz before focusing on taiko. But when I started to play taiko there weren't any other people like me who listened to rock, jazz, world music, classic and traditional Japanese music. Most of the people who joined Kodo had no prior musical experience at all. That's why at that time collaborations were exceptional projects and clad with catch phrases like « Japanese taiko versus drums », « Taiko versus Jazz ». This sounds unconfident and directionless. My body had been bathed in rock or funk and I had been the first to mix it with taiko. So with this album I thought to bring forth music that had the blending of drums as its theme = Blendrums. The commonality amongst percussion instruments makes the joy of exchanging a delightful sound even bigger. This album brilliantly expresses the history of Leonard Eto's Solo activity.



### CD « Gratitude » (2008 / NGCL 1003)

This is a « Best Album » with a personal selection of pieces from the first four albums between 1997 and 2006. « Gratitude », the title of the album, expresses the respect and gratitude I feel towards all the musicians I was allowed to play with. The selected pieces have been recorded in different places from studio to concert hall, but listening to the CD you don't feel an incompatibility, the pieces flow smoothly from one to the next. I always had a prejudice against best-albums - I thought they are a too commercial approach to music - but when putting these pieces together I enjoyed the work.

# Leonard ETO

## Discography

STEVE ETO LEONARD ETO



CD « **Alive - Yokohama** » (2010 / ETO 001)

Eto Brothers: Leonard Eto (Taiko) & Steve Eto (Heavy Metal Percussion)

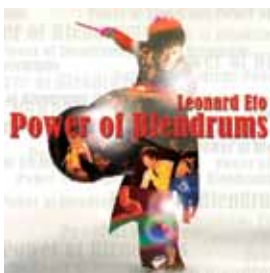
Part 1 / Part 2 / Part 3



CD « **Power and Patience** » (2011 / LEO-0129)

« Power and Patience » is a message I got from the African drummer and shaman Aja Addy. On a moonlit night in the back country of Africa he explained to me: “If you beat the drum, the women start dancing, then they will fall in trance and their soul goes on a long journey. You have to accompany them without being carried away and to continue drumming until the souls of the women come back. You have a big responsibility, that’s why the drummer needs power and patience.”

For me who was touring with Kodo at the time, this was an immense revelation, because these kinds of things can’t happen in show business. Twenty years later I am finally about to realize a work on the theme of « Power and Patience ». The compositions of this album are pieces I composed for collaborations with dance: tap dancing and modern dance. For this recording they were interpreted digitally and rearranged. This leads to the second theme of this album: how to create a groove with digital sound. In live performance there is some human freedom, but the digital doesn’t pardon anything. It doesn’t care about my feelings – so to create with machines was really a work that needed « Power and Patience »! The result is a time and space that never existed in any other work of art. A brand new sensuous rhythm that takes you to a mystical world!



DVD « **Power of Blendrums** » (2011 / LEO-0133)

Ever since releasing the CD « Blendrums » in 2007, Leonard has continued to expand the project « Blendrums » in and out Japan. In this DVD he collaborates with tap dancers and drummers in ample rhythm. It is an unique work of art that shows stage formations that cannot be seen in live concerts. It also contains many non-performing scenes. The DVD is digital, but edited by Wataru Furuta, who added smooth texture to the image.

# Leonard ETO

## Message

“The Japanese people have held a sense of fear against nature from ancient times, so we held festivals and prayed for abundant harvest and sound health. The core of the festivals have been the Japanese taiko and dancing. Japan is now in a serious situation, but as a musician, my role stays the same as before. I continue to communicate actively through music with people who have different values, search for something we have in common and arrange it in a form of music and performance. Now, we must seriously accept messages from nature which support human activities and move on. I believe that this leads to being creative. Stay positive.”

**Leonard Eto**



# Leonard ETO

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« Blendrums » : [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jy35V4mKi8&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jy35V4mKi8&feature=player_embedded)

« Theater Blendrums » : [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yieAAFf87XQ&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yieAAFf87XQ&feature=player_embedded)

facebook: [www.facebook.com/Leonard.Eto35](http://www.facebook.com/Leonard.Eto35)

Twitter: [twitter.com/leonard\\_eto](http://twitter.com/leonard_eto)



CDs: « Duets », « Blend », « Ocean », « Leo + 1 »

DVD: « Presence »

SUZAK MUSIK

Email: [info@suzakmusik.com](mailto:info@suzakmusik.com)

CDs: « Aoi Tsuki », « Blendrums », « Gratitude »

Club Leo Music

Email: [club@leoeto.com](mailto:club@leoeto.com)

CD: « Power and Patience »

DVD: « Power of Blendrums »

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