

National Gallery of Art

NEWS RELEASE

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PUBLIC INVITED TO RING IN NEW YEAR ON GIANT, RARE, EDO BELL

AT NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, JANUARY 9 AND 10;

TAIKO DRUMMERS PERFORM JANUARY 9 AND 10

WASHINGTON, DC -- A rare, 650-pound, bronze temple bell from seventeenth-century Japan was discovered in Syracuse, New York, where it has been on display in the Church of The Saviour for 82 years. The National Gallery brought the Edo-period bell to Washington and built a special pavilion for it, which will allow it to be hung and rung for the first time since it made the trip from Japan in 1916. Following Japanese tradition, Buddhist priests and the public will ring the bell in front of the East Building in celebration of the New Year.

In conjunction with the magnificent exhibition Edo: Art in Japan 1615-1868, the New Year bell ringing, Taiko drum performances, and Japanese New Year displays of pine, bamboo, and twisted straw rope, on January 9 and 10, will continue the popular Edo Festival held last fall in the East Building.

"Edo Festival/New Year's Celebration" has been made possible by the Fund for the International Exchange of Art.

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NEW YEAR EVENTS

Saturday, January 9

12:30 and 3:30 p.m. Taiko drum performances
East Building atrium

1:30 p.m. New Year bell ringing ceremony by Buddhist priests
who will ring the bell 108 times with a log striker.
East Building entrance (outside)

2 to 5 p.m. Public bell ringing
Visitors will step up to the pavilion and ring the bell
with a log striker.
East Building entrance (outside)

Sunday, January 10

12:30 and 3:30 p.m. Taiko drum performances
East Building atrium

11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Public bell ringing
East Building entrance (outside)

TAIKO DRUM PERFORMANCES

The professional Taiko drum troupe, Oedo Sukeroku Taiko, continues a vibrant, traditional art form by using their body weight to produce an extraordinary booming sound from giant, beautifully polished wooden drums, some weighing hundreds of pounds.

THE STORY OF THE BELL

Buddhist priests throughout Japan ring bronze *bonsho* temple bells in a ceremony to end the old year. People in rural villages then line up to ring the bell in a midnight ritual for good luck and blessings in the New Year. At the National Gallery, Buddhist priests will strike the giant bell 108 times to banish the 108 worldly concerns of the old year. Members of the public are invited to climb several steps to the pavilion, pull back a striker, which is a log suspended by ropes, to hit the bell once each.

The story of the bell that will be rung in Washington begins in 1676 when it was

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made in Kyoto for a Buddhist temple named Ryoseiji in Ise province. The bell remained there for over 200 years until it was acquired in the early 1900s by a medical missionary, Dr. Herbert Schwartz. In 1916, he sent the bell home as a gift to his brother, the Rector of the Church of The Saviour in Syracuse, New York, where it has remained ever since.

Last November the National Gallery of Art began a search for a Japanese temple bell to ring in the New Year. Friends of the Gallery contacted Abbot Eido Shimano Roshi of The Zen Studies Society/Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-Ji temple in the Catskill Mountains, who had previously been asked to verify the authenticity of the bell and advise Robert Murray, an elder of the Church of The Saviour, on how best to use it.

Discussions between all parties resulted in bringing the bell to Washington where the National Gallery has built a pavilion, which will enable the bell to be rung by Buddhist monks and the public in celebration of the New Year. Afterwards, the bell will be returned to Syracuse.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The National Gallery of Art, located on the National Mall at Fourth Street and Constitution Avenue, NW, is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free. For general information call (202) 737-4215 or the TDD at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov. To receive the Gallery's bimonthly Calendar of Events, call (202) 842-6662.

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