



# PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PRESIDIO



PRESS RELEASE

## *Free Memorial Day Jazz Concert*

***Music Makers: Bands Behind Barbed Wire*** : featuring Akira Tana, ensemble with vocalist Kim Nalley and taiko drummer Jimi Nakagawa

WHERE: Presidio Tunnel Tops

210 Lincoln Boulevard, San Francisco, 94129 (Presidio Tunnel Tops, East Meadow)

WHEN: Saturday, May 27, 2023, 1:00PM – 3:00PM

Event is Free to the Public

The National Japanese American Historical Society and Partnership for the Presidio present “Music Makers: Bands Behind Barbed Wire,” a special Memorial Day weekend jazz concert celebrating Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

This afternoon concert features jazz drummer bandleader **Akira Tana** and an ensemble with vocalist, **Kim Nalley** and taiko master, **Jimi Nakagawa**, with emcee **Jana Katsuyama**, KTVU-FOX2.

Blending traditional Japanese sounds with 1940s era jazz music, this concert is inspired by the legacy of musician and educator George Yoshida, who not only played in Music Makers, a big band at the Poston Incarceration Camp in Arizona, but also archived the history of Japanese American popular music in his book, *Reminiscing in Swingtime: Japanese Americans in American Popular Music, 1925-1960*.

“Music Makers: Bands Behind Barbed Wire” highlights an often-overlooked part of Japanese American history: the story of Japanese Americans and the Presidio of San Francisco. Over 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry were unjustly imprisoned in Department of Justice internment and incarceration camps by the US government. The Presidio of San Francisco played a direct role in this, illustrated in the [Exclusion Exhibition](#) in the Presidio Officers’ Club. George Yoshida and Akira Tana’s father were among those unjustly imprisoned.

Coming full circle, Akira Tana and his friends share this important story of how artists are healers—how the youthful Nisei, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Japanese Americans, like George Yoshida provided the balm to disheartened souls. “The vacuum created by the need for sustenance of hope, for distraction and for the uplifting of wounded spirits was satisfied for many by music and dance,” wrote Yoshida. The camp bands transformed dreary mess halls into spirited dance halls, creating a sense of normalcy and joy.

In tribute to veterans on this Memorial Day weekend, we also honor those who served loyally, including the Japanese American soldiers of the Military Intelligence Service stationed at the Presidio. (MISHLC [www.njahs.org/mis](http://www.njahs.org/mis))

The National Japanese American Historical Society, in partnership with the Presidio Trust and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area/National Park Service, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, invites the public to this FREE outdoor event. This public program and education project is funded in part by the Japanese American Confinement Site Grants Program administered by the National Parks Service.

Registration via: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/music-makers-bands-behind-barbed-wire-featuring-akira-tana-friends-tickets-621881673827>.

Attendees are encouraged to bring blankets for plenty of lawn-sitting.

### **Akira Tana, Jazz Percussion**

A self-taught drummer, Akira Tana played semi-professionally while studying East Asian Studies and Sociology at Harvard University. He committed himself more seriously to music after graduating, studying under Vic Firth, Alan Dawson, and percussionists from the Boston Symphony and Boston Pops Orchestras at the New England Conservatory of Music. During his studies, he had the opportunity to work with Helen Humes, Milt Jackson, Sonny Rollins, Jaki Byard, George Russell, Sonny Stitt, and other leading jazz musicians. He also played with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and several of the classical music ensembles at the New England Conservatory and at the Berkshire Music Festival at Tanglewood.

In the early 80s, he continued to accompany major artists such as Al Cohn, Art Farmer, Benny Golson, Jim Hall, Jimmy Rowles, Zoot Sims and Cedar Walton. He also performed with artists outside the jazz world, including Charles Aznavour, Lena Horne, and Van Dyke Parks. Tana recorded extensively during these years and in addition to albums with some of the foregoing also appeared with Ran Blake, Chris Connor, Carl Fontana, Jimmy Heath, Tete Montoliu, Spike Robinson, Warne Marsh and many others. In the early 90s, Tana worked with James Moody, Dizzy Gillespie, Frank Wess, Ray Bryant, J.J. Johnson, and the Manhattan Transfer, among others. With bassist Rufus Reid, he formed the band TanaReid and with Reid and Kei Akagi, the Asian American Jazz Trio.

A technically accomplished drummer, Tana's wide range is reflected by the musicians with whom he has worked. Comfortably at home accompanying singers and instrumental ballads, Tana is equally in his element playing hard bop. His most recent projects are four recordings by his group, Otonowa. These recording features jazz interpretations of Japanese folk and pop melodies that date back decades and even centuries. Otonowa has completed seven tours of the earthquake/tsunami-stricken areas of northern Japan since March 2013.

### **Kim Nalley, Vocalist**

Awarded "Most Influential African American in the Bay Area" in 2005 and "Best Jazz Group" in 2013, vocalist Dr. Kim Nalley is already being called "legendary" and "San Francisco institution." Nalley was discovered by Michael Tilson Thomas singing to packed audiences live with no amplification. MTT recorded her singing live and invited her to sing with the San Francisco Symphony. Subsequently she became a Rounder Records recording artist and went on a worldwide tour gracing concert halls from Moscow to Lincoln Center and festivals from Umbria Jazz to Monterey Jazz garnering effusive international press, awards and ranking high on the Jazz charts and Gavin Report for her many albums. Nalley had a solid background in classical music before switching to Jazz for the freedom it provided. A true Renaissance woman, Kim Nalley has been a featured writer for JazzWest and SF Chronicle's City Brights, shortlisted for a Grammy nomination, a produced playwright, an avid Lindy Hop and blues dancer and the former jazz club owner of Jazz at Pearl's.

She earned her Ph.D. in history at UC Berkeley and is a published scholar. She was shortlisted by Downbeat Critics Poll in 2017 as a "Rising Star" (Deserving Wider Recognition). Nalley's many philanthropic endeavors include founding the Kim Nalley Black Youth Jazz Scholarship, fundraising for Richmond-Ermet Aids Foundation, BLM, Next Village, SF-Marin Food Bank, and Department of Economic and Covid relief sponsored in part by Community Development/Connecticut Office of the Arts as part of their 2020 Artists Respond grant program.

### **Jimi Nakagawa, Taiko Master**

Born and raised in Tokyo, Japan, Jimi Nakagawa started playing drums when he was in high school and performed with local bands before coming to the US in 1981. In 1987, Nakagawa joined the San Francisco Taiko Dojo, directed by Grand Master Seiichi Tanaka and became a performing member and instructor to adults and children.

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. In 2009 and 2010, he was given a grant to study "tsuzumi," a Japanese hand drum with Master Saburo Mochizuki in Tokyo. In addition to studying Japanese traditional music, he has studied jazz with celebrated drummer, Robert Kaufman, a former professor at the Berklee College of Music.

In 1999, he and three other members founded a San Francisco Bay Area based taiko group, Somei Yoshino Taiko Ensemble and started his taiko school, OH-IN TAIKO, in Oakland. After 11 years of performing in the ensemble, he left the group in 2011 to pursue his career as a solo artist and expand his taiko school.

In December of 2019, Nakagawa became "Natori," or accredited master, of tsuzumi and received a name, 望月武響 (Bukyo Mochizuki).

Nakagawa has collaborated with Peter Erskine, Nguyen Le, Frank Martine, Van Anh Vo, Aaron Germain, Sheldon Brown, Robert Moses and Robert Moses Kin, Dr. Anthony Brown and the Asian American Orchestra, Steven Kent, Habib Kahn, Mary Fetting, Ali Ryerson, Charles Loos to name a few. Nakagawa's refined but driving stickwork has been featured in film, video and on stage.

### **Jana Katsuyama, Emcee**

Jana Katsuyama, reporter, newscaster, KTVU-FOX2 joined KTVU in 2007 and became part of the Ten o'clock News team in 2012. During her time at KTVU, Jana has won multiple Emmy awards and her investigation into paper automobile dealer plate loopholes led to an Assembly bill that changed California's license plate laws so new cars no longer can be on the road without a license plate.

As a journalist, Jana has covered wildfires in the North Bay and southern California, been tear-gassed while reporting on Occupy protests, flown with the Red Barons in an open cockpit plane over Lake Superior, anchored breaking news coverage during the first hours of the Boston Marathon bombing, and did live reports from Tokyo just days after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami disaster connecting with Bay Area residents in Japan.

Jana is originally from Dayton, Ohio and graduated with honors from Oberlin College with a double major in English Literature and East Asian Studies.

Jana loves the natural beauty of the Bay Area and the rich, cultural diversity of the people. She also enjoys volunteering for community organizations, helping the Northern California Cherry Blossom Queen Program, the Japanese American Citizens League, the National Japanese American Historic

Society, the Nichibei Foundation, Self-Help for the Elderly and other groups. Jana has been a member of the Asian American Journalists Association since 1999.

### **About NJAHS**

The National Japanese American Historical Society (NJAHS) is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the collection, preservation, authentic interpretation, and sharing of historical information of the Japanese American experience. NJAHS plays a significant role in the health and vibrancy of San Francisco's Japantown and its programs. Our work includes ground-breaking exhibitions and educational events for the public, historical research, and development of educational resources for teachers and students.

### **About Partnership for the Presidio**

Presidio Tunnel Tops is brought to life by the Partnership for the Presidio, an agency partnership which brings national park experiences to urban communities. Two federal agencies manage the Presidio, the Presidio Trust and the National Park Service, with support from the nonprofit Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. Together, the Partnership sustains the Presidio's natural beauty, preserves its history, maintains its funding, and creates inspiring national park experiences for all.

<https://www.presidiotunneltops.gov/>



Akira Tana



Jimi Nakagawa



Kim Nalley



Jana Katsuyama, KTVU-FOX2



George Yoshida (3<sup>rd</sup> from the right, front row) with Music Makers at Poston Incarceration Camp, AZ, 1942