



**Kiro**  
**Kiyoshi Nagata Ensemble**  
**Independent KNE004**  
**(www.kiyoshinagata.com)**

Japanese taiko drumming is known not only for its powerful sonic energy, but also for the stylized, almost choreographed movements of the performers when striking a collection of large, barrel-like drums. Obviously, the visual element is missing on an audio recording, but a good set of stereo speakers and a reasonably generous volume will help give the effect of an exciting live performance, bringing out the full nuance and timbre of the various instruments on this Toronto-based ensemble's fourth CD release.

This recording is not all thunderous percussion however. While rooted in tradition, the Kiyoshi Nagata Ensemble has expanded upon this ancient art form. Most of the numbers, all composed by members of the ensemble in the last three years or so, incorporate various other traditional Japanese instruments alongside taiko drums. These include the shinobue and shakuhachi (transverse and end blown bamboo flutes), shamisen (three-stringed lute), and an array of gongs, bells, shakers and wooden percussion, for an extremely varied and nuanced spectrum of sound and rhythm.

Vocals also figure on this recording, with *Hon-Chōshi*, featuring the powerful and expressive singing of Aki Takahashi who also composed this piece. One of the purely taiko drum pieces *Tentetsu No Kase*, composed by the group's founder Kiyoshi Nagata, features energetic and complex driving interlocking rhythms, conveying a spectrum of different timbres. And *Khanda Taiko* (composed by Heidi Chan) is a foray into the structure of South-Indian rhythm, specifically the 5-beat Khanda tala.

*Karen Ages*