

# Tempo

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 1998

## Taiko master Eto leads all-star cast

By Achy Obejas  
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

**I**t was the kind of jam you'd expect late night at the Green Mill, long after all the other clubs are closed, when the city's finest—still hungry for more of the soul stuff—show up by surprise and serendipity.

An ideal combination might find Michael Zerang, that most

### Performance review

versatile and imaginative of percussionists; the AACM's Mwata Bowden on horns and pipes; Steve Hashimoto all bluesed up; Tatsu Aoki with his big bass in tow; rascally Willy Schwarz ready to sing and play; and Chevere rhythm section Alejo Poveda and Ruben Alvarez juiced for the night.

Monday night, that all-star lineup turned up at the most

SEE ETO, PAGE 3

## Eto

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

unlikely of places: St. Scholastica Academy on the city's North Side. The occasion was a concert by Japanese taiko master Leonard Eto, whose virtuosity thrilled the several hundred lucky people who turned up for the off-night benefit for Evanston's Actors Gymnasium.

The evening began with a performance by Jellyeye, Shu Shubat's movement/percussion ensemble. The nine-member ensemble put on a powerfully athletic show in which their extravagant choreogra-

phy was in splendid display.

The Jellyeye sound is probably more march-like, and at times the players' movements are quite military-like, lacking any sign of joy. Monday, though, Shubat herself was the exception: Exuberant, obviously in her own ecstasy zone, she had the most subtlety and grace of anyone on stage.

Except for Eto, that is. Eto began his half of the show with a solo set that underscored the differences between Western and Eastern drumming. Whereas most African and Latin percussion—even when performed for spiritual reasons—is designed to provoke a physical

response to its rhythms, most Japanese traditional drumming beckons the listener into a different, more meditative trance.

Not that taiko drumming, and Eto's iconoclastic approach, isn't dramatic, flashy or vigorous. But the effect is hypnotizing.

After a remarkably dazzling solo turn, Eto brought on the all-stars. The locals took off now and again on their own wing, occasionally forcing Eto to rein them in with his own muscular style. Most valuable player honors go to Aoki, who managed to bridge the solos with smooth, classy transitions throughout the set-long experiment.