

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 3, 2006

**WHAT: The UMass Fine Arts Center presents: E= FAC²
30th Anniversary Celebration in Collaboration with the
UMass Physics Department**

WHEN: Sunday, April 30th through Thursday, May 4th

WHERE: UMass Fine Arts Center and Campus

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or

go online to www.fineartscenter.com/tickets

Press release text and press-quality images are also available on our website at
www.fineartscenter.com/press

(Art and Science Combine for the Fine Arts Center's 30th Anniversary Celebration)

Art and science come together in a celebration that includes technology, sculpture, music, dance, yoga, physics demos, juggling and everything else touched by the laws of physics. As part of its 30th Anniversary celebration, the UMass Fine Arts Center (FAC) has teamed up with the UMass Department of Physics for a week of innovative programming called E=FAC² demonstrating the unique integration of art in science and vice versa. Joining the festivities and in residence for five days guest artists MASS Ensemble will bring their world premier performance of Critical Mass, inspired by Einstein's theories, to the stage and will install a giant playable Earth Harp on the FAC plaza. It all starts with Community Day on Sunday, April 30th from 11-3pm with activities that will be fun for the entire family and culminates in the MASS Ensemble performance on Thursday, May 4th at 7:30pm in the Concert Hall.

Community Day will feature a variety of activities for the entire family, most of them free. The public will be able to watch Bill Close, Artistic Director of MASS Ensemble, install the giant Earth Harp from the roof line of the Fine Arts Center building to the plaza. An all day affair, the harp may or may not be completed that day but once it has been installed it will remain up

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through May 4th and the public will be able to come by and play it. While the installation happens there will be amazing physics demos in the lobby, physics inspired dance, UMass jugglers, Herrell's Magic Ice Cream bus, UMass Catering barbeque, Mad Science with hands-on demonstrations for the kids, 93.9 The River with a live radio feed, Einstein look-alike contest for kids and adults, a cosmos pathway, and the Physics Department's opening of the exhibit *Art of Science* showing how beautiful and mysterious science can be. The day closes at 3pm with George Parks' Minuteman Band in concert performing music from *Lord of the Rings*. Parking is free

Critical Mass takes the audience through a series of scenes that reveals a new musical instrument and musical experience that aligns with various scientific concepts. The instruments, voiceovers, projections and choreography combine to reveal an understanding and feeling that is related to each scientific principle. The principles explored all relate to the understanding of what mass is and how it transforms into energy. The music varies in style from epic symphonic rock to ambient trance, to heavy driving percussive. The musical power of the high-energy spectacle scenes is balanced by solo musical vignettes, giving the audience a dynamic range of musical experiences. The overall structure of the show is based on the life of a star, which is the largest single source of mass and energy.

In *Critical Mass*, MASS Ensemble perform on the Earth Harp, an 80' tall instrument of golden strings that resonate the concepts of wave theory and explain the nature of light and sound in music. MASS will have the bridge of the instrument resting on the stage, as the strings span out over the audience and attach to the balcony. This puts the audience inside the instrument and provides a unique and interactive experience.

Performers drumming in perfect synchronization on a giant sphere of electronic percussion surfaces known as the Drum Orb create a thermonuclear reaction of percussive energy that emanates from the stage and electrifies the audience. Audience members sail on solar waves across the universe as the ethereal MASS Ensembles Wing Harp performers send sound across time and space. *Critical Mass* tunes people of all ages into the infinite vibrations of the big bang as the Sun Sitar drones the raga of creation.

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MASS Ensemble is an internationally renowned performance group that combines the creative forces of artists, musicians, composers and choreographers. Through an exciting blend of sculpture, music, dance and the visual arts, MASS has been thrilling audiences in the U.S. and abroad. MASS Ensemble is known for large-scale instruments and kinetic performances. The Earth Harp, "The World's Largest Stringed Instrument" and other MASS invented instruments are unique to MASS, as they were designed and created by Artistic Director, Bill Close. The giant sculptural instruments provide a landscape in which the artists perform. The sound quality of the instruments is remarkable, and just one instrument is akin to an entire symphonic string section.

E=FAC² launches an annual focus and series of programs by the FAC to present programs that are innovative and collaborative with the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Departments on campus and to present artists who either use or are inspired by science and technology. Sophisticated technology and a new generation of artists raised on computers, video cameras/games, and other techno-toys create an increasing demand for new ways of creating arts. The UMass FAC hopes to raise awareness about artists and scientists using science and technology to explore new forms of expression and to increase communication and collaboration across these fields. The series will provide the campus and area schools with events and resources that complement and enhance curriculum work and stimulate an interest in and understanding of the collaboration of the arts and sciences.

E=FAC² is presented in collaboration with the UMass Physics Department and Office of Student Affairs and Campus Life and sponsored by MassMutual Financial Group, Bank of America, 93.9 The River, the Valley Advocate, the UMass Amherst Alumni Association and the Campus Center Hotel. For a complete list of events visit: www.fineartscenter.com/criticalmass. Tickets for MASS Ensemble's Critical Mass are \$30, \$25, and \$15; youth 17 and under are \$10 and Five College Students are \$15, \$10, and \$7. For tickets and information, call the Fine Arts Center Box office at 413-545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS, or go online to www.fineartscenter.com/centerseries. See attached for complete itinerary.

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