

Asian Arts & Culture Program Series



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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WHAT: Sleeping with Strangers: Asian American performance art meets Beijing Opera

WHEN: Friday, February 8, 8:00 PM

WHERE: Bowker Auditorium, UMass, Amherst

The tempestuous, sometimes mercurial and volatile relationship between two international superpowers -China and the U.S. is the subject of the production **Sleeping with Strangers**, a multi-media theatrical work, being presented at Bowker Auditorium on Friday, February 8 at 8 PM. Born of a new friendship between the Asian American performance artist Dan Kwong, and traditional Chinese opera artist, Peng Jingquan - **Sleeping with Strangers** is an ironically funny and unflinchingly honest dive into the consciousness (and unconsciousness) of the two countries. The artists ruthlessly and hilariously skewer the irrationalities of governments, cultures, and individuals as they the explore relationships between the East and the West.

The work is structured as a series of vignettes utilizing an array of theatrical techniques: monologue, Chinese opera, Western-style Theater, multimedia, poetry and slapstick comedy. For example, the eternal conflict between Socialism and Capitalism is personified through the use of puppet characters of Karl Marx and Bill Gates performing a complex Beijing Opera choreography. **Sleeping with Strangers** challenges the slumber of ignorance, antagonism, and separation.

Dan Kwong, based in Los Angeles is an award-winning solo performance artist, writer, teacher, and a visual artist. He has been presenting his work nationally and internationally since 1989. Kwong is a master storyteller who uses his own life experiences as well as historical and contemporary material to explore the subject of identity. Using humor and keen insight he combines text, movement, multimedia, martial arts and music in his productions.

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Kwong has received major fellowship awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, Asian Cultural Council, California Community Foundation, Durfee Foundation, Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, and has been twice nominated for the Alpert Award in the Arts. He is currently developing his first stage play, "Be Like Water", the story of a teenage Asian American girl who is visited by the Ghost of Bruce Lee, set to premiere at The New Los Angeles Theater Center in May 2008.

The yin to Kwong's yang is the classically trained Beijing opera artist Peng Jingquan. Jingquan began learning performing skills in 1970 under the strict system of traditional Chinese theatre in his home region of Huayuan, Hunan province, China. A student of acrobatics, body movement and other techniques of authentic Chinese theatre, he became a professional actor after ten years of apprenticeship.

The collaboration and friendship between Jingquan and Kwong began in 1999 when they participated in the Asia Pacific Performance Exchange in Los Angeles. In 2001, after performing together at the Japan America Theater in Los Angeles they came up with the idea of a new work that resulted in the creation of **Sleeping with Strangers**.

Sleeping with Strangers provides its audiences with a rich harvest of new ideas. It challenges our individual perceptions about what is it that identifies us as American or Asian—and more importantly---are we really that different?

Electronic format press release and downloadable high resolution photos for this event are available at: <http://www.umass.edu/fac/asian/press.html>

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Calendar Editor:

Performance: Sleeping with Strangers. February 8, 2008, 8:00 PM Bowker Auditorium, UMass, Amherst. Tickets: Reserved: \$20, \$15, Youth 17 & under: \$12, Five College Students: \$10 & \$7. For tickets call: 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511. Online at www.fineartscenter.com. Information: Asian Arts & Culture Program (413) 577-2486