

Asian Arts & Culture Program Series



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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**WHAT: BUTOH MASTER AKIRA KASAI PERFORMS "POLLEN
REVOLUTION"**

WHEN: OCTOBER 1, 2004

Hailed as the "Nijinsky of butoh" in Japan, master dancer Akira Kasai brings his intensely personal solo performance piece, *Pollen Revolution*, to the Bowker Auditorium stage on the University of Massachusetts Amherst campus on October 1, 2004, at 8:00 PM as the première event in the Asian Arts and Culture Program season. Tickets for reserved seating are \$20/\$15 for adults; \$10/\$7 for students, and may be reserved by calling the Fine Arts Center box office at 413-545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS. For further information and online reservations, visit the secure program site at www.fineartscenter/asian.

Pollen Revolution (Kafun Kakumei), first performed in April 2001, represents Kasai's attempt to "create infinite life" within himself, with the revolutionary result of bringing fundamental change in a dangerous world made possible by the process of "humans exploring their own environment." Wearing the costume of a woman kabuki character, Kasai moves with the mincing steps of the traditional male performers of these roles, but as the piece progresses, the kimono comes apart in flashes of frenzied motion. Samisen, voice, and electronic music support the bold, harsh persona revealed as the dance progresses, with Kasai never ceasing his seemingly improvised, constantly changing movements.

Reviewing his performance for Dance Magazine, Wendy Perron describes Kasai as “part Marcel Marceau, part Mick Jagger,” possessing “the charisma to sustain the seventy-minute dance... He would leap into the air but start another step before landing.” For those familiar with traditional butoh, this event offers a unique opportunity to witness the most cutting-edge expression of the form developed in post-war Japan by Tatsumi Hijikata as an attempt to bring Japanese dance culture back to its roots. A student and practitioner of butoh since the 1960s, Kasai has consistently incorporated other sources and traditions in his performances, always enlarging upon the possibilities of butoh in the modern age. After founding his own studio, Tenshi-Kan, in 1971, he studied eurythmics, the movement-art theory developed by the German philosopher Rudolf Steiner. Following a 1996 U.S. tour, his work moved away from the inward focus of butoh as secret ritual to collaboration with other choreographers and performers. New works performed with his Akira Kasai Dance Unite incorporated elements of street dance and freestyle choreography that were astonishing in their complexity and in the energy of his performance.

On Wednesday, September 29, Kasai will teach two Master classes, one at 11:00 AM at Hampshire College and one at 7:00 PM at Mount Holyoke College, for Five College dance students. The artist will address such topics as how to create inner energy for dance, how to create the flow of inner-time and inner-space; how to take energy for dance out of the sensory experiences of sight, hearing, touch taste and smell. The class will explore the relationship of Voice Power and the use of Exercise and Breath to dance. Participation is limited to registered students, but a few area dancers may be allowed on a space available basis. Please contact Carolyn Kilmer at 413-577-2486 to inquire about the classes.

Akira Kasai’s Fall 2004 North American Tour is produced by MAPP/MultiArts Projects & Productions, New York City. This performance is funded in part by the National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts, with lead funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Additional funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Ford Foundation. This performance is supported by The Japan Foundation through its Performing Arts JAPAN program. Addition support provided by UMass Catering.

Please visit the Asian Arts and Culture Program web site at www.fineartscenter/asian for information about the full 2004-2005 season of exciting events. ###