In fitting celebration of the Chinese New Year of the Rooster, the Asian Arts and Culture Program presents the spectacular Dances of China: A Journey of 5000 Years at the Fine Arts Center Concert Hall of the University of Massachusetts on Friday, February 18, at 7:30 PM. The company of twelve guest artists traces the history of Chinese culture through its music, court dances, acrobatics, martial arts and folk dances selected from several of China’s 56 ethnic groups. 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.

The Dances of China is produced by the San Francisco Bay Area’s Chinese Performing Artists of America and features guest artists from the People’s Republic of China, many of whom were trained at the prestigious Beijing Dance academy and were formerly principals in the Dance Drama and Opera Theatre of China. Guest choreographer, Master Peiwu Zhou, is recognized as an authority in the dance arts of China’s ethnic minorities.

The first act of The Dances of China focuses on the folk dances of China’s diverse cultures with traditional and ethnic dances such as “Lantern Festival”, “Water,” “Courting,” and “Ma-Ying Blossoms.” The dance-drama “Dragon King,” is performed as the second act, and integrates
dance, martial arts and acrobatics in a tale of fairies, celestial warriors, and deities in the court of the Dragon King.

Enthusiastic reviews have followed every performance of The Dances of China. “Powerhouse men steal the show... from the acrobatic cartwheels and martial arts-style moves of Xing Jiu Liu ... to the sword-wielding male lead Bing Wang...,” from Asian Week. “It is the best performance of its kind in recent years,” raves the Honolulu Sing Tao Daily. “The uproarious applause from the audience paid tribute to the success of the performance.”

CPAA’s artistic director, Yong Yao, has been awarded the “Dance Masterpieces of the 20th Century” Gold Award by China for his Yellow River Suite. His extensive body of choreographic work includes CPAA’s flagship production, Dragon King, which will be performed as part of the Fine Arts Center program. Mr Yao’s work has been staged in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and many US and European cities.

During their stay in Amherst, the company will visit two Springfield schools for in-class demonstrations for Chinese Language and Culture classes. Their residency is supported by a grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts.

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. ###