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BRIDGING CULTURES THROUGH CONTEMPORARY DANCE

It's been a hectic few weeks for the team at Leigh Warren & Dancers. On the back of accolades for their premiere season of *Einstein on the Beach Parts 1&2* at the beginning of June and an appearance over the weekend at Australia's International Indigenous Festival, The Dreaming 2006 in Woodford (QLD), the company is now preparing for the arrival of four of Japan's most distinguished artists and contemporary dance figures.

Celebrated Japanese director/choreographer **Uno Man** and dancers **Mako Kawano** and **Kaiji Moriyama** touch down in Adelaide on June 20 to join artistic director **Leigh Warren** and local dancers **Jo Roads** and **Deon Hastie** in the further development of *Wanderlust* - a ground-breaking cross-cultural dance work. They will be joined by talented screen media designer **Tetsutoshi Tabata**.

Wanderlust is a fusion of dance theatre and contemporary technologies drawing upon the ancient cultural traditions of both Australia and Japan. The production will premiere in Japan October 7- 15, as part of the 2006 Australia Japan Dance Exchange – with performances in Tokyo and Yamaguchi. The production will form part of celebrations throughout the year marking the anniversary of the establishment of cultural relations between Japan and Australia. Plans are underway to present the production in Australia in 2007.

The development of *Wanderlust* began in October last year with Warren, Roads and Hastie travelling to Yamaguchi (on Japan's Honshu Island), to work for several weeks with the Japanese contingent.

Leigh Warren and Uno Man have a ten year history - first working together on a 1996 production for the Hakushu Art Camp. Uno Man is particularly acknowledged for the way he expresses pathos and humour in his dramatic structures through oriental movements. His own company, **Uno Man + Company**, has performed many works on the international stage. Tetsutoshi Tabata studied the Japanese dance form butoh - before becoming deeply involved with dance performance and stage art. The co-founder of "performance unit 66b", combining body movement and multimedia - he set up the visual and sound component of the group under the name, "media drive unit cell", using real time and pre-recorded computer graphics and animation to create different textures, lighting and kinetic effects.

During their stay in Adelaide, the Japanese artists will be holding workshops for local performers, at Leigh Warren & Dancers studio in the Lion Arts Centre, over the weekend of June 24 & 25. For more information and to book a place at a workshop, contact Pam Lee at Leigh Warren & Dancers on 08 8212 5660.

The creative development of *Wanderlust* is a Neon Rising project, an Asialink Japan Dance Initiative – funded by the Australia Council, the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body and Arts SA.

Background on Uno Man (choreographer/director)

Uno Man's dance, first influenced by Tatsumi Hijikata's Butoh, has been transformed by performance. Today he has established his own world of dance that can no longer be classified as Butoh. Uno Man's unique style began to take shape around 1985; he expresses pathos and

humour in his dramatic structures through oriental movements. Uno Man joined Dai Rakuda-Kan, led by Akaji Maro in 1974. He performed in all of the company's works until 1980 – when he left to start solo activities. In 1982 he formed "Budo-Dan" - forerunner of Uno Man + Company. While presenting over ten works, Uno Man was energetically engaged in "School of Human's Mind and Body". With the company's tour to the USA, Mexico and Canada in 1992 the company name was changed to Uno Man + Company and has been internationally active ever since. His recent works include: *Hot Key* (1992), *Henbai* (1994), *Megami-N* (1995), *Shizuku* (1997), *Doc/Co* (1999), *Mure no Ao* (2000), *To be* (2001) and *Manma* (2002).

Background on Mako Kawano

Mako Kawano began dancing as a child and has become one of Japan's pre-eminent modern dancers. She studied modern dance under Mizuomi Ikeda, ballet under Emiko Suzuki, and received a domestic internship from the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Since 1987 she has been a member of the Natural Dance Theatre, a company led by Shinji Nakamura, who is a backbone choreographer in Japan, and performs a vital role as a soloist for Nakamura's work.

Background on Kaiji Moriyama

Kaiji Moriyama first began his career with a musical theatre company in Japan and then moved to the world of professional choreography. He has worked with a number of leading contemporary dance companies and innovative Japanese choreographers such as Kota Yamazaki, Yukio Ueshima, and Aki Nagatani. He was acclaimed for his performance at the 2001 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, where he was described by Kelly Apter of *The Scotsman* as "One of the most talented dancers at this year's Fringe. It's worth going for him alone." He has also toured to Australia, Hong Kong, Taipei, Seoul and Tokyo. In January 2005, his U.S. solo debut "katana"(sword) was reviewed by Anna Kisselgoff of *The New York Times* as "a dance of amazing concentration by an amazing dancer". Kaiji is unique as an artist in that he has expanded his creative horizons and branched into other fields. He has appeared in high-profile TV commercial films, and his first film project, *Cha no Aji* (*The Taste of Tea*), directed by Katsuhito Ishii, was the first Japanese film to open Director's Week at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival. Since April 2004, he has appeared on NHK, Japan's public broadcasting station, "karada de asobo (let's play by body)", which is an innovative TV program for kids, broadcast nationwide everyday. Kaiji's style has been likened to a sword, tearing through space with a smoothness and sensitivity which crosses over generational boundaries.

Background on Tetsutoshi Tabata (visual design/screen media)

Originally from Osaka, Tetsutoshi Tabata initially worked in editorial graphics and game design. From the early 1990s, he began working as an installation artist projecting computer graphics onto large kinetic sculptures. Studying the Japanese dance form butoh with Yoshito Ohno and Akiko Motofuji from 1992- 1996, he became deeply involved with dance performance and stage art. In 1994, he co-founded "performance unit 66b" as a result of work combining body movement and multimedia. In 1995, he set up the visual and sound component of the group under the name, "media drive unit cell". Cell uses real time and pre-recorded computer graphics and animation to create different, textures, lighting and kinetic effects. Since 2001, cell and 66b have been developing wearable motion sensor devices to synchronise body movement to the visual and sound media. Tetsutoshi's more recent work involves the design and image creation for PIGI system large format slide projectors. Presentations and performances include the media arts festival *Ars Electronica*, the Japan Virtual Reality Society, the Adelaide Festival and the Seoul International Dance Festival.

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For more information, interviews or company images – please contact Skye Murtagh at FWPR on 08 8231 3555