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Umusuna: Memories Before History

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House

Oct 28—31 at 7:30pm

Running time: 90 minutes, no intermission

Sankai Juku

Choreography, concept, and direction
by Ushio Amagatsu

Music by **Takashi Kako, Yas-Kaz,**

Yoichiro Yoshikawa

Lighting by **Genta Iwamura**

Season Sponsor:

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*Generous funding for Umusuna provided by
Daniel Clay Houghton.*

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provided by Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
and The Harkness Foundation for Dance.*

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The SHS Foundation.*

*Supported by the Japan Foundation through
the Performing Arts JAPAN program*

*Support for the Signature Artist Series pro-
vided by The Howard Gilman Foundation.*

WITH

Ushio Amagatsu, founder
Semimaru, since 1975
Sho Takeuchi, since 1987
Akihito Ichihara, since 1997

Ichiro Hasegawa, since 2004
Dai Matsuoka, since 2005
Norihito Ishii, since 2010
Shunsuke Momoki, since 2011

UMUSUNA is a very old word originating from ancient Japan that has the same root as ubusuna (one's place of birth). Ubusu means birth, the beginning of life, or entering the world. The word umusu also embodies the concepts of everything and nothing, existence and nothingness. Na evokes the land, the ground/soil, and one's native place.

- I Atokata: Imprints
- II All that is born
- III Memories from water
- IV In winds blown to the far distance
- V Mirror of forests
- VI Sedimentation and erosion, ad infinitum
- VII Ubusu

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Stage manager **Kazuhiko Nakahara**
Lighting technician **Satoru Suzuki**
Sound technicians **Akira Aikawa, Junko Miyazaki**
Set technician **Tsubasa Yamashita**
Costume realization by **Masayo Iiduka**
Administration **Midori Okuyama, Yasuko Takai**
North American production supervision **Doug Witney**
Production management **Corps Liminis**
North American company manager **Pat Kirby**

Production management **Pomegranate Arts**
Founder and president **Linda Brumbach**

Co-production of Biennale de la danse / Opéra National de Lyon; Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, France; Kitakyushu Performing Arts Center, Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan; Sankai Juku, Tokyo, Japan.
With the support of Shiseido.

Sankai Juku's 2015 North American tour is supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Government of Japan, Shiseido Co., Ltd, and Toyota Motor Corporation.

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FUNDAMENTAL THEMES OF SANKAI JUKU'S WORK

All of Sankai Juku's work has been directed, choreographed, and designed by Ushio Amagatsu, the founder of the company. Amagatsu sees Butoh as a "dialogue with gravity." Using this as a starting point, he has developed his own method of pursuing themes that are universal to all human beings, such as birth and death. Amagatsu's work has been recognized internationally for its originality and utilization of the language of the body, the universal nature of the themes, and the aesthetic strength of the expression.

"Dance is composed of tension and the relaxation of gravity, just like the principle of life and its process. An unborn baby who is floating inside mother's womb faces the tension of gravity as soon as s/he is born. The baby is just lying down in the beginning, and then starts to crawl, to stand on two feet, and then on one foot... That is why the dance is born with tension and relaxation."

—Ushio Amagatsu, *Vogue Hommes* (1998—99)

"I have a vision that always exists inside of me, that is, two plates searching for balance on both ends of the scale by rotating and moving up and down. One plate carries culture, each of which has its own unique characteristic that might often appear mysterious and difficult to understand to the others. However, the difference is the basis of the culture, and thus, is important. The other plate carries universality that is common to all human beings. The difference and commonness are constantly moving for seeking a balance between two."

—Ushio Amagatsu, "Dialogue avec la Gravité" in *ACTES*



USHIO AMAGATSU

Born in Yokosuka, Japan in 1949, Amagatsu founded Sankai Juku in 1975. He created *Amagatsu Sho* (1977), *Kinkan Shonen* (1978), and *Sholiba* (1979) before the first world tour in 1980. Since 1981, France and Théâtre de la Ville, Paris have become his places for creation and work, and this year he created *Bakki* for Festival d'Avignon. At Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, he created successively *Jomon Sho* (1982), *Netsu no Katachi* (1984), *Unetsu* (1986), *Shijima* (1988), *Omote* (1991), *Yuragi* (1993; 1996 Next Wave), *Hiyomeki* (1995; 1999 Next Wave), *Hibiki* (1998; 2002 Next Wave), *Kagemi* (2000; 2006 Next Wave), *Utsuri* (2003), *Toki* (2005), *Tobari* (2008), *Kara•Mi* (2010), *Umusuna* (2012), and *Meguri* (2015).

Amagatsu also works independently outside of Sankai Juku. In 1988 he created *Fushi* at the invitation of Jacob's Pillow Foundation, in the US, with music by Philip Glass. In 1989, he was appointed the artistic director of the Spiral Hall in Tokyo where he directed *Apocalypse* (1989), and *Fifth-V* (1990). In February 1997, he directed *Bluebeard's Castle* by Bartok conducted by Peter Eötvös at Tokyo International Forum. In March 1998, at Opéra National de Lyon, France, he directed Peter Eötvös's opera *Three Sisters* (world premiere), which received the Prix du Syndicat National de la Critique, France. *Three Sisters* has been seen in the 2001–02 season at Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, Opéra National de Lyon, and Wiener Festwochen

2002 in Austria. In March 2008, Amagatsu directed *Lady Sarashina*, Peter Eötvös's opera at Opéra National de Lyon (world premiere). *Lady Sarashina* received the Prix du Syndicat National de la Critique (France) and it was seen at Opéra Comique in February 2009.

Amagatsu has also presided over the Jury of the International Meeting of Dance in Bagnolet in 1992, and that year was awarded the Chevalier de l'Ordre de l'Art et des Lettres by French Cultural Ministry. In February 2002, *Hibiki* won the 26th Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production. In 2004, the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology awarded Geijyutsu Sensho Prize (Art Encouragement Prize) to Amagatsu for his outstanding artistic achievement. In 2007, *Toki* won the Grand Prix of the 6th Asahi Performing Arts Awards and Sankai Juku received the Kirin Special Grant for Dance. In July 2011, he presided over the jury of the 10th International choreographic competition of National Academy of Dance Grand Theater, Italy. In 2011, he received the Purple Ribbon Medal from the Japanese government. In October 2013, Sankai Juku received the Japan Foundation Award. In July 2014, he received the Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres of the Ministry from the French Cultural Ministry.

His latest book, *Des Rivages d'Enfance au Buto de Sankai Juku*, was published in 2013 in France. It was published in 2015 in Japan as a special version, combined with another book, *Dialogue avec la Gravité*, and adding a chapter of essays and drawings.

SANKAI JUKU

Sankai Juku is a butoh dance company founded by Ushio Amagatsu in 1975. The company has premiered a new piece approximately once every two years at Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, a center for contemporary dance. Sankai Juku is one of the few dance companies that Théâtre de la Ville, Paris has commissioned continuously for 35 years.

Ushio Amagatsu, artistic director, trained in both classical and modern dance before he became immersed in Butoh. For Amagatsu, Butoh expresses the language of the body. In the 1970s, Amagatsu drew mostly on his own individual experience for inspiration. During the 1980s he spent most of his time working in Europe and the inspiration for his work became more universal. In his works, Amagatsu presents an abstract vision of the infinite and explores evolutionary movement. Major themes that he examines are the relationship of the body to gravity and the relationship between gravity, the earth and the environment.

In 1980, Sankai Juku was invited to perform in Europe for the first time. The company went to the Nancy International Festival in France with the firm conviction that Butoh would be accepted. This engagement marked a major turning point and made a name for both Sankai Juku and the term Butoh throughout Europe. The company has toured internationally since 1980 and performed in more than 700 cities in 45 countries throughout Europe, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas. They have been highly praised in different cultures for over 35 years which is a testament to the universal nature of Sankai Juku's work. While crossing geographic borders and appealing to diverse audiences, the company has been developing the themes of its work while searching for and moving towards new realms. Sankai Juku received the Japan Foundation Award in 2013.

For more information please visit sankaijuku.com.







POMEGRANATE ARTS (North American Tour Producer)

Pomegranate Arts is an independent production company dedicated to the development of international contemporary performing arts projects. Since its inception, Pomegranate Arts has conceived, produced, or represented projects by Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, London's Improbable Theatre, Sankai Juku, Dan Zanes, Lucinda Childs, and Goran Bregovic. Special projects include the revival of Robert Wilson, Philip Glass, and Lucinda Childs' Olivier award-winning production of *Einstein on the Beach*; *Dracula: The Music and Film* with Philip Glass and the Kronos Quartet; the music theater work *Shockheaded Peter*; Brazilian vocalist Virginia Rodrigues; Drama Desk Award winning *Charlie Victor Romeo*; *Healing the Divide, A Concert for Peace and Reconciliation*, presented by Philip Glass and Richard Gere; and Hal Willner's *Came So Far for Beauty, An Evening of Leonard Cohen Songs*. Current and upcoming projects include

the international tour of *Available Light* by John Adams, Lucinda Childs, and Frank Gehry; Taylor Mac's *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*, and a new work in development by Lucinda Childs, Philip Glass, and James Turrell.

POMEGRANATE ARTS

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