



*Maureen Fleming*

## **CMA's VIVA! & Gala Around Town**

**presents**

### **Internationally Acclaimed Maureen Fleming Dance**

*"Transcends the material world and enters a realm of pure spirit...wondrous choreographic metamorphoses." – The New York Times*

**Cleveland (January 13, 2009)** - The Cleveland Museum of Art's (CMA) acclaimed **VIVA! & Gala Around Town** presents *Waters of Immortality and Other Works* by **Maureen Fleming** on Saturday, February 28, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. at PlayhouseSquare. Ms. Fleming will be accompanied by Japanese *shakuhachi* (bamboo flute) master Akikazu Nakamura and pianist Peter Phillips. Fleming's multi-disciplinary performance juxtaposes her singular movement with three-dimensional video projections, still photography by acclaimed dance photographer Lois Greenfield and lighting by Christopher Odo. *Please note: This performance contains partial nudity.*

*Waters of Immortality and Other Works* is a sensuous multimedia celebration of the feminine archetype, inspired by the lush symbolism of Irish poet William Butler Yeats. Maureen Fleming invents exquisite movement poetry, sculpting her body into nearly unbelievable, shatteringly beautiful shapes. She pushes the boundaries of the body's expressive potential and challenges the definition of what is physically possible. Part dance, part dream, part sculpture, Fleming explores our never-ending search for what is universal about the journey of the soul.

Admission to the show is \$41 and \$39 for CMA members. Student "pay what you can" rate is available at the door subject to availability. To purchase tickets visit the CMA Online Box Office at [www.clevelandart.org/tickets](http://www.clevelandart.org/tickets) or call 1-888-CMA-0033. **Maureen Fleming** will perform at PlayhouseSquare located at 1519 Euclid Avenue. Parking is available at the PlayhouseSquare Parking Garage at E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Chester Avenue, at the Hanna Parking Garage on E. 14<sup>th</sup> at Prospect, and at various nearby surface parking lots. The 2008-09 VIVA! & Gala season is sponsored by [Cleveland.com](http://Cleveland.com), WNWV The Wave and WCPN 90.3.

### **Traumatic Childhood Accident and Influence on Dance Vocabulary**

Born in Japan to American parents, Fleming was involved in a violent car accident at age two, which ironically initiated her into dance. While driving her child, Fleming's mother is confronted by a cyclist who suddenly darts in front of her. She slams on the brakes and the child flies through the windshield causing her to lose a disc between her fourth and fifth vertebrae—a condition that would normally confine a person to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. Fleming recalls that in an intuitive sense of survival as a little girl she began to create little dances with slow, twisting movements. The twisting and untwisting of joints increases blood flow, which perhaps became a gradual method of regeneration, and also made her body extremely flexible.

### **Collaboration with Philip Glass and David Henry Hwang**

To grapple with the trauma of this accident, the incident became the subject of two works by Fleming, *Eros* and *After Eros*, bringing together the composer Philip Glass, the playwright David Henry Hwang (*M. Butterfly*), and the dancer in two artistic collaborations. Hwang states that wedding Fleming's story to the myth of Eros and Psyche touched him as an intriguing way to explore themes of human transcendence. Fleming does not demonstrate transcendence. She accomplishes transcendence. Like a master sculptor, she uses her extremely supple body to mold images that reach beyond the mind's eye and into the subconscious. Pleasure, pain, ecstasy, and love are presented not as feelings or emotions; they are the states of a body, alive, vibrant, and pulsating. This is in part due to the legacy

of her extensive training with two butoh masters, Min Tanaka and the 100-year-old dance legend Kazuo Ohno.

### **Butoh Training and Influence**

Butoh, a dance developed in post-war Japan on the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, departs from the existing Japanese and European dance forms by exploring the darkest side of human nature. It emphasizes the recurring themes of birth-death-rebirth. As a pure dance form, Butoh explores the transmutation of the human body into other forms (such as animals) or abstract ideas (such as the plague) and deals with taboo subjects expressed in grotesque but profoundly moving images.

Fleming acknowledges the influence of butoh training on her dance performance, but her departure from Butoh's "dance of the dark soul" is to permeate it with light. Her subjects have more to do with the "unbearable lightness of being" than the dark corners of the soul. This, together with a superb sense of theatricality, makes her art unique. In her multi-media performances, needle-sharp lighting, video and projected images, live music and designed sound, as well as extraordinary body techniques are meshed to create surreal movement poetry that calls for suspension of rationality. It is like seeing magic, except that it is not about trickery but sublime imagery.

*In The Stairs*, set to Philip Glass's "Metamorphosis II," the body is falling down—indeed, floating in mid-air—from a very steep staircase. The exquisitely shocking image is executed with such flawless precision that it forces the mind into disbelief, as if dreaming. In a piece called *Mother and Child* Fleming becomes both, and in such a masterful way that she conveys the imagery of two dancing figures.

### **Ballet Training and International Renown**

Fleming continued her training in the United States as a scholarship student under the Cecchetti master Margaret Craske, which influenced her choreographic technique. Since 1994, she has conducted annual workshops at N.Y.U.'s Tisch School of the Arts and was recently a guest artist at The Juilliard School. She has gained international recognition and won critical acclaim from major European, American, South American, and Asian press for her singular form of multimedia performance at such venues as Italy's Spoleto Festivals, Japan's Butoh Festival, Mexico's Jose Limon Dance Festival, Iceland's Reykjavik Arts Festival, Columbia's International Danza Contemporanea, France's International Mime Festival and Korea's Seoul Performing Arts Festival, among others. For more information visit [www.MaureenFleming.com](http://www.MaureenFleming.com).

## **Viva! & Gala Around Town**

The next performance in the **Viva! & Gala Around Town** will be **ASWAT: The Golden Age of Arab Music** on Sunday, March 8 at 7:30 p.m. at PlayhouseSquare. Simon Shaheen, one of today's leading Arab composers and multi-instrumentalists, leads a traditional 15-piece Arab orchestra and a cast of leading singers from the Arab world in "Aswat" ("Voices"), a fascinating exploration of the great voices of the Golden Age of Arab music. Egypt's beloved diva Um Kulthoum and Mohammad Abdel Wahhab, Syria's Farid and Asmahan Al-Atrash, and Lebanon's Wadi' Al-Safi and Fairuz, whose voices represent the very best of this era, are interpreted by some of the finest voices of the Arab world today. Multi-media imagery and vintage film footage complement the performance.

The Ohio Arts Council helped fund this program with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The programs are also made possible by The Ernest L. and Louise M. Gartner Fund, The P. J. McMyler Musical Endowment Fund, The Anton and Rose Zverina Music Fund, and The Musart Society.

## **About The Cleveland Museum of Art**

The Cleveland Museum of Art is one of America's leading comprehensive museums with a collection that spans 6,000 years of creative achievement in the arts and is world-renowned for its quality and breadth. Currently undergoing a multi-year expansion project that will re-imagine the museum, it is a significant international forum for exhibitions, performance, scholarship, performance and art education.

The Cleveland Museum of Art has a membership of nearly 25,000 households and is generously supported by a broad range of individuals, foundations, and businesses in Cleveland and Northeastern Ohio. The Cleveland Museum of Art is generously funded by Cuyahoga County residents through Cuyahoga Arts and Culture. Additional support comes from the Ohio Arts Council, which funds CMA with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence, and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. Hours are Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. Closed on Mondays. For more information on the museum, its holdings, programs, and events, call 1-888-CMA-0033 or visit [www.ClevelandArt.org](http://www.ClevelandArt.org).

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