

REBELLIOUS BODIES

BUTOH FESTIVAL 2026

Press Release: 25 September 2026

Rebellious Bodies Festival was set up in 2023, and seeks to introduce highly inspirational, well-established Japanese butoh dancers to the UK and global audiences. The festival connects world-class performers and experimentalists, offering audiences exclusive, once-in-a-lifetime access to rare works.

This year, the festival is centred on five artists of a butoh lineage that originates with Kazuo Ohno, one of its founders. His student, and now butoh master, Mitsuyo Uesugi is joined by four extraordinary dancers who have continued to develop Ohno's form. These are Makiko Takamatsu and Seiji Tanaka as well as Mutsumi and Neiro, the butoh duet MUTSUMINEIRO.

<https://www.rebelliousbodiesfestival.com/>

Contents

Performance: Mother Forest	2
Performance: An Evening of Butoh Performance	3
Film Screenings: Kazuo Ohno's Mr. O Trilogy	5
Portrait of Mr. O	5
Mandala of Mr. O	6
Mr. O's Book of the Dead + Special Talk with Mitsuyo Uesugi	7
Workshop: Entering the Unknown: A Full-Day Butoh Intensive	8
Artist Biographies	8
Mitsuyo Uesugi	8
Makiko Takamatsu	9
Seiji Tanaka	9
MUTSUMINEIRO	9
Resources: Assets, Socials and Credits	10

Performance:
Mother Forest

The Place, London | Sat 14 Nov, 7.30pm

£22 / £18 conc. - Discount available when booked with “An Evening of Butoh Performance”

<https://theplace.org.uk/events/autumn-winter-26-mother-forest/>

Dance City, Newcastle | Tue 17 Nov, 7:30pm

£16 / £14.50 conc.

<https://www.dancecity.co.uk/performance/308299/mother-forest-rebellious-bodies-festival/>



Photo credit: Sho Sugano

Utbygda Velforening, Tjøme, Norway | Sun 22 Nov, 5:00pm

<https://apartefestival.hoopla.no/event/1951282850>

Trailer: [youtube.com/watch?v=D4YNGbJweBg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4YNGbJweBg)

Mother Forest is a striking once-in-a-lifetime ensemble piece, in which three generations of butoh lineage come together in an homage to **Kazuo Ohno** (one of the key founding figures of butoh) and his philosophy of dance as something spontaneous and unrepeatable. The group is led by **Mitsuyo Uesugi**, who trained and performed alongside Ohno for several decades, and she is joined by four extraordinary artists: **Makiko Takamatsu**, **Seiji Tanaka** and the **MUTSUMINEIRO** duo, who have each been shaped by Uesugi's practice whilst bringing their own fierce, distinctive voices to this living continuation of Ohno's spirit.

Performers:

[Mitsuyo Uesugi](#)

[Makiko Takamatsu](#)

[Seiji Tanaka](#)

[MUTSUMINEIRO](#)

[Additional text: On *Mother Forest* by Mitsuyo Uesugi]

*We are on the brink of stepping into a new realm, towards the **Mother Forest**...
This is an homage to the butoh dancer Kazuo Ohno.*

*Half a century ago... Perhaps even longer.
At the rehearsal studio in Kamihoshikawa, Mr. O opened a book of Bosch paintings: “The Garden of Earthly Delights”, “The Last Judgement”...*

*He held his hand over the pages, tenderly tracing the images with his fingers.
“I am in here. Hidden within everything. This is the kind of dance I want to do.”*

*Mr. O’s soul was parched. I spent so long in that space with him.
Do we have the courage to take this on now?
No, no doubts. Our chance has come. There is nothing to fear.*

*Because this project has now begun, and while we have our generational
differences, Mr. O’s ideas are etched into our bodies
Growing as Desire.*

*Let us play on the palm of Mr. O’s hand, clinging to each finger
With our own thirst and passion, mayhaps even to a world of despair.
But now, let us be led, delicately, boldly,
into a world of fables, brimming with mystery.*

*“The world is created within this transparent glass sphere.”**

— Mitsuyo Uesugi

*from Kambara Masaaki's *Reading Bosch's 'The Garden of Earthly Delights'*

Performance: An Evening of Butoh Performance



Photo credit: Makoto Onozuka

The Place, London | Fri 13 Nov, 7.30pm
£22 / £18 conc. - Discount available when
booked with “Mother Forest” at The Place
<https://theplace.org.uk/events/autumn-winter-26-an-evening-of-butoh-performance/>

Performers:

Mitsuyo Uesugi

Makiko Takamatsu

Seiji Tanaka

MUTSUMINEIRO

An evening of four Japanese butoh performances. **MUTSUMINEIRO** return to the UK after their UK debut in 2025 with *The Last Two*, a magical duet in which their two distinct worlds collide. **Seiji Tanaka**’s UK debut *Pulse of Absence* trembles in the space between the visible and the invisible. **Makiko Takamatsu**’s *Naked Rabbit* offers a darkly playful solo inspired by one of Japan’s oldest myths. The evening culminates with *A Requiem for Her*, as the legendary **Mitsuyo Uesugi** returns to The Place for the first time in 46 years.



Photo credit: Makoto Onozuka

A Requiem for Her - Mitsuyo Uesugi

The women that reside inside my body. From mother to grandmother, moving through time. The joys, sorrows, delights and anguish of the sex that bears life. A history of love fills my body. As they sleep beneath the ground, I tread the earth and dance with them...

Butoh legend **Mitsuyo Uesugi** continues to defy expectations of the female body with her latest solo, as she returns to The Place for the first time in 46 years.



Photo credit: Makoto Onozuka

Naked Rabbit - Makiko Takamatsu

Once upon a time, there was a rabbit who loved to deceive. Because the rabbit did nothing but lie, it was punished and had its fur coat entirely stripped away. The world turned upside down, and the moon floating in the dark blue sky became a gaping hole, opening out into the cosmos. It was the only exit. The ***Naked Rabbit*** fell headlong into the hole in the sky.

A darkly playful solo butoh work by **Makiko Takamatsu** inspired by the myth of the white hare of Inaba.

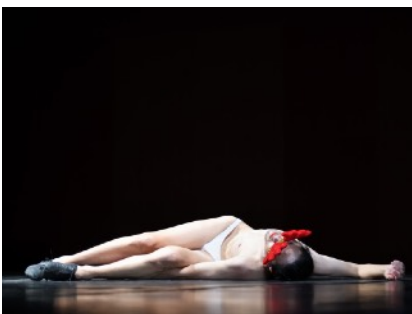


Photo credit: Gen Kasuga

Pulse of Absence - Seiji Tanaka

A Pulse of Absence ripples through every corner of space, between the visible and the invisible, where the tender and precious things lie. And so we move once again, to encounter that place that can only be reached through dance.

Seiji Tanaka brings his distinctly delicate butoh style, widely toured across Japan and Europe, to the UK for the first time.



Photo credit: Zoetica Ebb

The Last Two - MUTSUMINEIRO

With breath held, the lid of the treasure box is gently opened. The hands of the clock stop, and music never heard before floods the Kingdom of ***The Last Two***.

A pure white lake, and a twilit matsuri float.

Even as the flag burns to ash, the ashes keep dancing, And every soul forms one cockerel, crying out into the void!

Following a celebrated UK debut in 2025, butoh duo **MUTSUMINEIRO** return with a new work.

Film Screenings: **Kazuo Ohno's *Mr. O* Trilogy**

As part of **Rebellious Bodies 2026**, all three films of **Kazuo Ohno's *Mr. O*** trilogy will be screened at various locations in London. This was a project that Ohno focused on for a number of years when he took a break from performing onstage in the early 1970s. Screenings will include short introductions to the film, and the final screening - *Mr. O's Book of the Dead* - will be followed by a talk with **Mitsuyo Uesugi**, who participated in the film 50 years ago, and is visiting the UK as part of **Rebellious Bodies**.



Portrait of Mr. O

BIMI, Birkbeck University | Fri 16 Oct, 7:30pm

Free - Reservation required

<https://www.bbk.ac.uk/events/event/65213/portrait-of-mr-o>

Released: 1969

Director: Chiaki Nagano

Performer: Kazuo Ohno

Photo credit: Bob Fujisaki, courtesy of NPO Dance Archive Network

The first of three experimental films made by butoh dancer **Kazuo Ohno**, and directed by documentary filmmaker **Chiaki Nagano**. Released in 1969, it was shot over a period of about a year in and around Ohno's home, the boiler room of Shoshin Girl's school (where Ohno was working at the time as a PE teacher), the uninhabited island of Sarushima in Tokyo Bay, and Hōshōji Temple in Yokohama, Japan. The results are experimental and dreamlike, blurring the line between documentary and dance film.

This free screening will be introduced by **Dr. Irene González-López** (Birkbeck University) and **Mai Burns**, director of **Rebellious Bodies Festival**.

[Full description]

Portrait of Mr. O is the first of three experimental films made by butoh dancer **Kazuo Ohno** and directed by documentary filmmaker **Chiaki Nagano**. Released in 1969, it was shot over a period of about a year in and around Ohno's home, the boiler room of Soshin Girl's School (where Ohno was working at the time as a PE teacher), the uninhabited island of Sarushima in Tokyo Bay, and Hōshōji Temple in Yokohama, Japan. Ohno was, together with **Tatsumi Hijikata**, one of the leading figures in the creation of the art of butoh. This avant-garde performance-based art originating in Japan in the late 1950s has

by now achieved international acclaim, spanning borders, generations and geography, and making a significant impact on contemporary art and performance around the world.

Nagano and Ohno developed a unique collaborative method: Nagano described his camerawork as dancing alongside Ohno, responding to him as though he too were dancing. The results are experimental and dreamlike, blurring the line between documentary and dance film.

The event will be chaired by Dr Irene González-López (Birkbeck), and introduced by Irene González-López and Mai Burns, director of Rebellious Bodies Festival.



Courtesy of NPO Dance Archive Network

Mandala of Mr. O

RBH Cinema, Goldsmiths | Fri 30 Oct, 7:00pm
Free - Reservation required

<https://www.ticketsource.com/null/mandala-of-mr-o/2026-10-30/19:00/t-kdparry>

Released: 1971

Director: Chiaki Nagano

Performers: Kazuo Ohno, Kei Katō, Moritsuna Nakamura, Atsuko Onodera

The second instalment of **Kazuo Ohno's** experimental film trilogy, directed by documentary filmmaker **Chiaki Nagano**. Shot on a mountain in Gunma prefecture and the uninhabited island of Sarushima in Tokyo Bay, Nagano filmed Ohno as he danced taking inspiration from their surroundings. According to an interview with Nagano, this film was intended to reflect the inner life of Ohno even more so than the first film.

This free screening will mark the first time this film is being shown in the UK. It will begin with a short introduction to give context to the film, and has been put together with thanks to **Marie-Gabrielle Rotie**, Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London.

[Full description]

Mandala of Mr. O (1971) is the second of three films made by butoh dancer **Kazuo Ohno** in close collaboration with documentary filmmaker **Chiaki Nagano**. Shot on a mountain in Gunma (Japan) and the uninhabited island of Sarushima in Tokyo Bay, Nagano filmed Ohno as he danced taking inspiration from their surroundings. According to an interview with Nagano, this film was intended to reflect the inner life of Ohno even more so than the first film.

The film was originally accompanied by a programme put together by **Koichi Tanikawa**, with contributions from **Shimon Yotsuya**, **Ikuya Katō**, **Tatsumi Hijikata** and others. The

programme's subtitle read: "This is a story of the cruel and gentle dreams and memories of a house in Japan."

This newly digitally remastered screening receives its UK premiere, and forms part of **Rebellious Bodies Festival 2026**, an international programme exploring Japanese butoh and its legacies, running across London venues in autumn 2026. For the other films in Nagano and Ohno's trilogy, please see the festival's full programme.

The screening will begin with a short introduction by **Rebellious Bodies Festival Director Mai Burns**, and has been put together with thanks to **Marie-Gabrielle Rotie**, Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London.



Courtesy of NPO Dance Archive Network

***Mr. O's Book of the Dead* + Special Talk with Mitsuyo Uesugi**

The Garden Cinema | Thurs 12 Nov, 8pm

£15 / £12 for members

<https://www.thegardencinema.co.uk/film/mr-os-book-of-the-dead-qa-with-mitsuyo-uesugi/>

Hauger Art Museum, Tønsberg | Sat 21 Nov, 1:00pm

<https://apartefestival.no/Mr-O-s-Book-of-the-Dead>

Released: 1976

Director: Chiaki Nagano

Performers: Kazuo Ohno, Mitsuyo Uesugi, Moritsuna Nakamura, Atsuko Onodera, Kei Katō, Minoru Hideshima, Tomiko Takai, and others.

Trailer: youtube.com/watch?v=5Ap5vb9W89g

The final instalment of **Kazuo Ohno's** *Mr. O* trilogy, and the only one in colour. Shot in numerous places across Japan from Lake Shikotsu in Hokkaido to Yokodai Pig Farm in Kanagawa, the film features 'Mr. O' (Kazuo Ohno) and a troupe of his students. Director **Chiaki Nagano** once stated in an interview "to die is to be resurrected at the same time", and that this film was "about one of our deaths, and a starting point towards something new".

This screening will be followed by a special talk with **Mitsuyo Uesugi**, one of the students who appeared in the film, who will be sharing her experience of what it was like to work on the film 50 years ago.

Workshop: Entering the Unknown: A Full-Day Butoh Intensive

The Place, London

Sun 15 Nov, 10:30am - 5:30pm

£80 / £60 conc.

<https://theplace.org.uk/classes-courses/entering-the-unknown-a-full-day-butoh-intensive/>

Dance City, Newcastle

Tue 18 Nov, 10:00am - 5:00pm

£40 / £25 conc.

<https://www.dancecity.co.uk/class/309699/entering-the-unknown-a-full-day-butoh-intensive/>



Photo credit: Makiko Takamatsu

A full-day butoh workshop with 5 masters of the form. The morning session with duo **MUTSUMINEIRO** will work on loosening assumptions about dance.

After the lunch break, a first afternoon session is with **Seiji Tanaka**, who will guide a mobilisation of sensitivity through simple acts and gestures.

The final session of the day will be with **Mitsuyo Uesugi**, assisted by **Makiko Takamatsu**. Mitsuyo works intuitively around who is in the room and what emerges on the day, offering a rare chance to move under the direct guidance of a rooted and instinctive butoh master.

No previous butoh experience is required. All adults (18+) welcome.

Artist Biographies

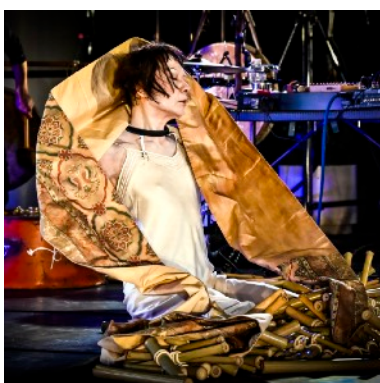


Photo credit: Makoto Onozuka

Mitsuyo Uesugi

Mitsuyo Uesugi was born in Fukuoka in 1950 and trained in classical ballet before moving to Tokyo in 1967. At twenty, she became a student of one of the key founders of butoh Kazuo Ohno, appearing in his experimental film *Mr. O's Book of the Dead* (1973) and performing in his European tour (which included The Place in London) in 1980. She went on to establish herself as one of the first female solo butoh dancers, creating work that continues to explore the depths of the body across five decades of performance. Winner of the

Dance Critics Society of Japan Award (2009). Recent work includes *Melancholia - A Portrait of M*, which was performed in the UK in 2023, and again more recently at Theatre X, Tokyo in 2024.

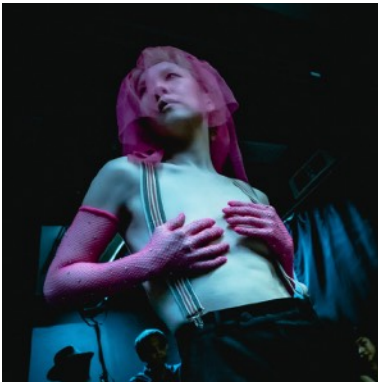


Photo credit: Tomoko Kosugi

Makiko Takamatsu

Makiko Takamatsu graduated from Tama Art University with a degree in film, winning the Kirin Art Award in 2001 for her 16mm work *Idleness Dada Theater*. As a student she danced at Shogun, the show club founded by butoh pioneer Tatsumi Hijikata, before beginning her study under Mitsuyo Uesugi in 2002. Solo butoh performance is the heart of her practice.

She premiered *Naked Rabbit* in 2023, and created the video piece that accompanies for Uesugi's *Melancholia - A Portrait of M* in 2021 and 2024. She is the sole dancer with WCN,

Yokohama's improvised music collective. In 2025 received the Dance Critics Society of Japan New Artist Award for her solo work *Idleness*.



Photo credit: Uwe Beutnagel-Buchner

Seiji Tanaka

Seiji Tanaka studied under Yoshito Ohno at the Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio before establishing his own Butoh Studio in his hometown of Nara in 2011. That same year he was invited to perform at the Düsseldorf Butoh Festival as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations of Japan-Germany relations, to critical acclaim. Since then he has toured extensively across Europe, with butoh performance and workshop tours in Germany, Belgium and Switzerland in 2017, 2019, 2021 and 2024. He continues to perform and hold workshops across

Japan and throughout Europe.



Photo credit: Maciek Zdrojewski

MUTSUMINEIRO

MUTSUMINEIRO is a Japanese butoh duo formed by Mutsumi and Neiro, who began collaborating in 2012 after meeting at the Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio, where they studied under Yoshito Ohno. Mutsumi brings a background in ballet, Neiro in mime, and together they create evocative, experimental physical works deeply influenced by Mitsuyo Uesugi. Their internationally toured piece *Tonight or Never...* established their distinctive voice. Currently based in Norway, they continue to tour globally, sharing butoh as a living and

transformative experience across cultures and audiences worldwide.

Resources: Assets, Socials and Credits

Photos, Videos, Logos:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1TKKjjUxNx6Qmla8z-jYUzC_JPaq3eWV0?usp=drive_link

Socials

Facebook: [facebook.com/rebelliousbodiesfestival](https://www.facebook.com/rebelliousbodiesfestival)

Instagram: @rebelliousbodiesfestival, @maiburnsbutoh, @thenakedrabbit, @seijitanaka77, @mutsumi_tsuki_natsu, @neironeironeiro, @rhyslawtonactor, @maria.zemlinskaya, @dancearchivenetwork

Venue/Collaborators Instagrams:

London: @theplacelondon, @thegardencinema, @birkbeckuol, @goldsmithsuol

Newcastle: @dance_city_newcastle, @surface_area_

Wales: @storielbangor

Norway: @apartefestival

Funders: @aceagrams, @japanfoundation

Funders & Supporters

Arts Council England

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NPO Dance Archive Network

Aparte Festival for Experimental Arts

Surface Area Dance Theatre

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