



Kensaku Satou by Nabua Onishi

A New Beat for Dominic Walsh

By Molly Glentzer
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Choreographer Dominic Walsh, who admits he's usually more of "a strings or sound-scapes guy," unveils a new work Friday at Asia Society Texas Center that could shake him out of his old ways.

"Uzume" is a collaboration with Japanese taiko drummer Kensaku Satou, whom Walsh met through one of his muses, Japanese ballerina Hana Sakai. She also stars in the work along with Walsh's male muse, Domenico Luciano.

"It's been interesting to see what comes out of me with the percussive energy of these vibrations," Walsh said. "It totally penetrates your skin and bones."

He said he's developed several dance vocabularies for the piece, including butoh-inspired movement that's "more primal and slow" and a section of fast, technical dancing en pointe for Sakai.

He's designed costumes (being built by Antonio Gonzalez) and collaborated with Mari Omori on sets that draw on another element of Japanese culture and tradition, Washi, the art of making paper. The influence of Japanese design on haute couture fashion also comes into play.

"Uzume" has "themes and threads" about light and darkness, but it's otherwise abstract, Walsh said.

He's traveled to Japan many times during the past decade and loves to watch Kabuki theater and butoh dancing when he's there, he said, but he wasn't a fan of taiko until he met Satou. "His work mesmerized me, seduced me almost. He's like a dancer, which goes back to the whole myth of taiko."

Legend has it that taiko was born after a rampage by the storm god Susanoo sent his sister, the sun goddess Amaterasu, fleeing underground, leaving the world dark. Amenouzume (or Uzume), the goddess of dawn, danced wildly on a wooden tub, drumming up a racket that coaxed the curious sun goddess back.

See "Uzume" at 7:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday and 2 p.m. Oct. 21 at the Asia Society Texas Center, 1370 Southmore. Tickets are \$30-\$35 at www.asiasociety.org/texas or 713-496-9901.