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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**CONTACT:** Wendy Fujihara Anderson, WOW! Productions & PR 626-683-8243 [wowproductions2@earthlink.net](mailto:wowproductions2@earthlink.net)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Midori Nishizaki Dance Group presents United States premiere of “YAObIKUNI”**

[www.yaobikuni.netfirms.com](http://www.yaobikuni.netfirms.com)

**WHAT:** Midori Nishizaki Dance Group from Japan presents US premiere “Yaobikuni” -  
**WHEN:** Two Performances: Friday – September 24<sup>th</sup> & Saturday - September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at 8:00 p.m.  
**WHERE:** UCLA – Royce Hall, 10820 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90024-6516  
**TICKET:** \$35.00 - Purchase at UCLA Central Ticket Office at 310-825-2101 or [www.uclalive.org](http://www.uclalive.org)

With this year as the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Japan and the United States cultural exchange – the Japan Cultural Bureau is sponsoring the production of Midori Nishizaki Dance Group’s “Yaobikuni” to the United States as part of their 2004 international cultural programs. This 45-member dance company has performed world-wide to great applause.

Midori Nishizaki II has worked on open air performances since began performing “Yaobikuni”, which won the Cultural Bureau Art Festival Award in 1989. Her current piece “Amida Nyorai”, also won this award in 2002. Nishizaki gained international acclaim for her performances in Spain, France and Shanghai China. She brings a sense of drama to the stage creating strong themed dances told through a contemporary performance interwoven with traditional Japanese dance introducing a new form of Japanese dance and culture to the general public.

**YAObIKUNI** - This is an old folk tale at Wakasa beach. Yaohime, daughter of a rich man has fear for getting old. She eats mermaids’ flesh which allow her to be young and live forever. However she finds immortality very hard thing. She is married to many men over hundreds of years and see their deaths. She suffers from a sin against eating the flesh. She becomes a nun and goes on a pilgrimage to remove her sin. Yaobikuni legend was spread from Wakasa through Hokuriku to Tohoku Nihonkai side while camellias and a woman divers’ fishing method were spread toward the same direction. 800 years later, Yaobikuni meets a mermaid fairy and begs forgiveness. Finally she is able to die with Buddhism power. This teaches us how we should live our limited time and how precious our life is in a paradoxical way.

Midori Nishizaki, born in Kanda, Tokyo, learned traditional Japanese dance at the age of 6 at the Nishizaki Dance Group of Nishizaki I. Nishizaki II organized the Nishizaki Midori Dance Group and School to popularize a new Japanese dance art. She worked on the television program Kinkan Folk Songs Battle for 35 years and won the Artistic Award, Dance Critics Awards and Art Festival Award for her dance performances. Nishizaki says “Dance is for Everybody” and has transformed traditional Japanese Dance into an art form that can be understood and appreciated by all. This event is supported by Consulate General of Japan’s offices in Los Angeles and San Francisco and the Japan America Society.

Contact: Wendy Fujihara Anderson [wowproductions2@earthlink.net](mailto:wowproductions2@earthlink.net) 626-683-8243 or La Quetta Shamblee

[wowproductions4@earthlink.net](mailto:wowproductions4@earthlink.net) 626-794-0015 – [www.yaobikuni.netfirms.com](http://www.yaobikuni.netfirms.com)

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