

**World Premiere of Peter Sellars' multi-disciplinary performance film –  
“this body is so impermanent...”**

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**LOS ANGELES (Mar. 4, 2021)** – At a moment when grief persists and hope seems more possible, the UCLA Film & Television Archive, the Boethius Initiative at UCLA, and Fisher Center at Bard are honored to present the World Premiere of [\*this body is so impermanent...\*](#), the latest project from renowned theater director **Peter Sellars**. The premiere will take place virtually on March 17, 2021. The multi-disciplinary performance film is a creative response to COVID-19, made in isolation by artists on three continents as a call to learn and heal together, embracing reflections on the fragility of physical being and the liberation of conscious awareness.

“The year of 2020 is forever marked in human history by COVID-19. The role of the arts is to create a series of markers next to that marker, which can memorialize and commemorate this moment in time, and also offer a window of acknowledgement, understanding, and empathy. Our project is offered in the hopes of developing, deepening, and extending the connective tissues that link the practice of the arts and medical practice,” said Sellars.

**March 17, 2021, 4 p.m. PT / 7 p.m. ET – *this body is so impermanent...***

The presentation will begin with a guided mindfulness meditation session led by Alisa Dennis Ph.D. (30 min.), followed by the World Premiere screening (75 min.) and a post-screening conversation with the audience and artists (30-40 min.).

MacArthur Fellow Peter Sellars is a distinguished professor in the UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, where he has taught since 1988. Directed by Sellars, *this body is so impermanent...* is based on a passage from the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, a foundational Buddhist text from the 1st century CE. The multi-disciplinary performance film was born of a remarkable collaboration between Sellars in Los Angeles, California, and a trio of acclaimed artists across disparate geographies and time zones: South Indian devotional singer **Ganavya** from a Sufi chapel on traditional sacred land outside of Portland, Oregon; master calligrapher **Wang Dongling** from his studio in Hangzhou, China; and improvisatory dancer **Michael Schumacher** from his apartment in Amsterdam, Netherlands; all engaging with the *Sutra* and each other in an ensemble act of creation and healing.

The passage used from the *Vimalakirti Sutra* is one of the most profound and penetrating descriptions of the human body in early literature, one that understands illness as more than affliction – that it is also a messenger. The text contrasts the body that is impermanent, that is fated to be broken and destroyed, with the body of reality, the body that is formed by all our good

actions, wisdom, generosity, love, patience, morality, transcendence, and shared kindness and courage. *this body is so impermanent...* becomes a memorial of shared suffering, and a message of beauty and hope.

“Art and medicine are both focused on healing, repair, and recovery. In art, as in medicine, diagnosis is essential in our practice, and early diagnosis is preferable. Ultimately insight and understanding have to move us beyond our natural reactions to frightening symptoms. On the other side of fear, both art and medicine are committed to the search for causes, and the discovery of meaning in the heart of suffering,” said Sellars.

### **About UCLA Film & Television Archive**

A division of the UCLA Library, the Archive is internationally renowned for rescuing, preserving and showcasing moving image media and is dedicated to ensuring that the visual achievements of our time are available for information, education and enjoyment. The Archive has over 450,000 film and television holdings conserved in a state-of-the-art facility at the Packard Humanities Institute Stoa in Santa Clarita, California, that is designed to hold materials ranging from nitrate film to digital video at all preservation standards. Many of the Archive’s projects are screened at prestigious film events around the globe.

### **About the Boethius Initiative at UCLA**

The Boethius Initiative in the School of the Arts and Architecture at UCLA invites scholars, activists and artists to work together on projects of public significance, exploring radical ways to rethink relationships of communities and complex issues using the arts as the point of entry and the point of transformation. This arts-based think tank – rooted in community, education and sustained engagement – works to generate new bodies of research and artistic work with a strong public presence, addressing issues such as climate change, economic disparities, spirituality and criminal justice.

The Initiative’s largest project is an ongoing exploration of the Buddhist caves at Dunhuang, China. This multi-faceted project began over five years ago and has created an international network of collaborators with an invitation to create new work using Dunhuang as an inspiration and model for our time, discussing issues of spirituality, migration, cultural diplomacy, art-making, the environment, food, trade, archaeology and art history.

### **About Fisher Center at Bard**

Fisher Center at Bard develops, produces and presents performing arts across disciplines through new productions and context-rich programs that challenge and inspire. As a premier professional performing arts center and a hub for research and education, the Fisher Center supports artists, students and audiences in the development and examination of artistic ideas, offering perspectives from the past and present, as well as visions of the future. Our home is the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, designed by Frank Gehry and located on the campus of Bard College in New

York's Hudson Valley. The Fisher Center demonstrates Bard's commitment to the performing arts as a cultural and educational necessity, supporting artists at all stages of their careers.

A powerful catalyst of art-making regionally, nationally, and worldwide, Fisher Center productions have been seen in more than 100 communities around the world over the past five years. In 2019 the Fisher Center won the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical for Daniel Fish's production of *Oklahoma!* which began life in 2007 as an undergraduate production at Bard and was produced professionally in the Fisher Center's SummerScape Festival in 2015 before transferring to New York City. In 2020 the Fisher Center launched UPSTREAMING, a new virtual stage aimed at broadening our commitment to reaching audiences far beyond the physical walls of our building, and developing new frontiers and technologies for artists to explore. **[fishercenter.bard.edu](https://fishercenter.bard.edu)**

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