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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS THE U.S. PREMIERE OF
EONNAGATA, CREATED AND PERFORMED BY
ROBERT LEPAGE, SYLVIE GUILLEM &
RUSSELL MALIPHANT, ON WEDNESDAY &
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9 & 10, AT 8:00 P.M. AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

This exclusive U.S. engagement of the dance-theater work explores the life of the Chevalier d'Éon

BERKELEY, January 3, 2011—*Eonnagata*, a hybrid dance-theater production from **Robert Lepage**'s theater company **Ex Machina** that is “so unique and compelling that to miss it is something you will regret forever” (*Toronto Star*), will take to the Zellerbach Hall stage on **Wednesday** and **Thursday, February 9** and **10** at **8:00 p.m.** Conceived and performed by Lepage along with legendary French dancer **Sylvie Guillem** and celebrated British choreographer **Russell Maliphant**, *Eonnagata* explores the life of Charles de Beaumont, Chevalier d'Éon, an 18th-century French diplomat, soldier and spy, whose career exploits and fluid gender identity—he lived half of his life as a man and half as a woman—made him an audacious yet enigmatic figure. *Eonnagata* alternates between telling the story of the Chevalier and “meditating on the agonies and pleasures of a soul divided between sexual identities” (*The Guardian*).

The name *Eonnagata* is derived from de Beaumont's courtly title and *onnagata*, a Kabuki theater technique used by male actors to represent women in a highly stylized fashion. The production itself is driven by the artistic passions and influences of its creators: director Lepage, who has for two decades pushed the limits of theater, mixes genres fearlessly and ventures into little-known dramatic territory while attracting a large, diverse and enthusiastic following; Guillem, a celebrated rebel of classical ballet, famous for her extraordinary physique, charisma, technique and bravery in exploring contemporary dance; and Maliphant, who blends martial arts, classical dance and technical elements such as lighting into masterworks that breathe fluidity and power. Another gifted revolutionary, the late fashion designer **Alexander McQueen**, designed the costumes for *Eonnagata*. “Collaborations don't come much more extreme than *Eonnagata*,”

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wrote *The Guardian*. The production uses all three performers to illustrate and illuminate the multiple aspects of de Beaumont's life.

THE ARTISTS

Robert Lepage is a groundbreaking, award-winning director, producer, playwright, filmmaker and actor. Born in Québec in 1957, he studied in Canada and Paris and rose to prominence when his 1984 play, *Circulations*, toured Canada and received the Best Canadian Production award at the Quinzaine Internationale de Théâtre de Québec. The next year, his play *The Dragons' Trilogy* helped Lepage earn international acclaim, and subsequent works confirmed his reputation as a theatrical genius. He was artistic director of the *Théâtre Français* at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa from 1989 to 1993 while pursuing his own creative projects in parallel.

In 1994 Lepage, created **Ex Machina**, his own multidisciplinary production company; Lepage and Ex Machina have become fixtures at Cal Performances, having made their debut here in 2001 with *The far side of the moon*, followed by *The Busker's Opera* (2005), *The Anderson Project* (2008) and *The Blue Dragon* (2009); all were co-commissioned by Cal Performances. Lepage has also produced, acted, written, designed and/or directed other plays, films, rock concerts, museum exhibits, operas (including the recent groundbreaking production of Wagner's *Ring* cycle at New York's Metropolitan Opera), architectural projections and two Cirque du Soleil shows. He has received dozens of international awards and commendations, including the *Légion d'Honneur* (France), the medal of the Officers of the *Ordre National du Québec*, the Denise Pelletier Prize (Québec's highest distinction in performing arts) and the Stanislavski Award.

Dancer **Sylvie Guillem** learned gymnastics as a child in Paris, began training at the Paris Opera Ballet School at age 11, and joined the Paris Opera Ballet in 1981 at age 16. Three years later, she was chosen by Rudolf Nureyev to be the company's youngest-ever *étoile*, or star dancer; she danced many classic ballets including Nureyev's stagings of *Don Quixote* and *Swan Lake* as well as contemporary pieces, including William Forsythe's *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*. She left Paris in 1989 to become a principal guest artist at the Royal Ballet of London,

where she danced and debuted many roles. She also began creating her own dance works, including a television program called *Evidentia* and a staging of *Giselle*. After 2000, Guillem's focus shifted from classical ballet to contemporary dance and she became an associate artist at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London. Guillem remains a complicated, controversial figure in the world of dance. *The Telegraph* (London) said of her, "she remains a phenomenon people are wary about, rather than one people learn from."

Choreographer **Russell Maliphant** was born in Canada and trained at the Royal Ballet School in London and Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet Company before pursuing a career in independent dance. He has worked with DV8 Physical Theatre, Michael Clark & Company, Laurie Booth, and Rosemary Butcher; studied anatomy, physiology and biomechanics; and been certified as a Rolfing practitioner. He formed the Russell Maliphant Company in 1996 to incorporate classical ballet, contact improvisation, yoga and martial arts into performance. Maliphant collaborated with lighting designer Michael Hulls and Sylvie Guillem on several of his own productions before embarking on *Eonnagata* with Robert Lepage. He remains an associate artist of Sadler's Wells and continues to choreograph, dance and produce with his own company.

Costume designer **Alexander McQueen** was born in London and entered apprenticeship with a Saville Row tailor at age 16. After mastering bespoke British tailoring, he worked in theatrical costuming for a number of years; with that combination of talent and experience he entered the world of high fashion in the mid-1990s and became known for his provocative runway shows. He established his own fashion line (later acquired by Gucci), and in October 1996 he became chief designer at the French couture house Givenchy. His shocking death by suicide occurred on February 11, 2010—almost exactly a year before *Eonnagata* will be staged in Berkeley. As with so much of his work, McQueen's costumes for *Eonnagata* have received critical attention: "The gorgeous costumes of the late fashion designer Alexander McQueen brilliantly combine elements of the 18th-century frock coat and farthingale with the kimono and samurai skirt" (*Eye Weekly*).

Other production talents on display in *Eonnagata* are lighting designer **Michael Hulls**, whose work on the show was described as "vivid poetry" (*The Guardian*); and sound designer

and sound manager Jean-Sébastien Côte, who began his career as a percussionist and who has designed sound and/or composed music for many Lepage productions, including *The Blue Dragon*, *The Andersen Project* and *the far side of the moon*, as well as films and opera.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the **Ex Machina**'s production of *Eonnagata*, **concieved and performed by Sylvie Guillem, Robert Lepage, & Russell Maliphant** on **Wednesday and Thursday, February 9 and 10** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$36.00, \$48.00, \$60.00, \$72.00 and \$86.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens, other students and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$5 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperformances.org.

For select performances, Cal Performances offers UCB student, faculty and staff, senior and community rush tickets. Rush tickets are announced three hours prior to a performance and are available in person only at the Ticket Office beginning one hour before the performance; quantities may be limited. Rush ticket sales are limited to one ticket per person; all sales are cash only. Rush ticket prices are \$10.00 for UCB students; \$15.00 for UCB faculty and staff (UCB ID required) and seniors age 65 or older; and \$20.00 for all other community members. Information is available on Cal Performances' Facebook page and at 510-642-9988, press 2 for the rush hotline, three hours prior to a performance only.

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Cal Performances' 2010/11 Season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 9 and 10, at 8:00 p.m. **Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus**
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Dance

Eonnagata,

Robert Lepage, creator, performer

Sylvie Guillem, creator, performer

Russell Maliphant, creator, performer

Program:

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