

FOR IMMEDIATE
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**CLASSICAL GRACE JOINS CONTEMPORARY SPIRIT IN
JAMES KUDELKA'S NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA
THURSDAY—SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30—OCTOBER 3 AT CAL PERFORMANCES**

**PROGRAM INCLUDES WORLD PREMIERE BY JAMES KUDELKA SET TO THE MUSIC OF
HENRY PURCELL; KUDELKA'S MASTERPIECE *THE FOUR SEASONS* (WEST COAST
PREMIERE); AND GEORGE BALANCHINE'S *APOLLO***

**SIGHTLINES: a pre-performance talk by artistic director James Kudelka,
Thursday, September 30 at 7:00 p.m. in Zellerbach Hall**

BERKELEY, August 24, 2004 – Under the direction of **James Kudelka**, hailed as “easily ballet’s most original choreographer” by *The New York Times*, **The National Ballet of Canada** makes its first West Coast appearance in 13 years, **Thursday–Saturday, September 30–October 2** at **8:00 p.m** and **Sunday, October 3** at **3:00 p.m.**, in Zellerbach Hall. One of the world’s finest international ballet companies, The National Ballet of Canada’s program features three works by Kudelka including the world premiere of *Chacony* set to the music of Henry Purcell; the West Coast premiere of his celebrated classic *The Four Seasons* choreographed to **Antonio Vivaldi’s** best-known score; and **George Balanchine’s** 1928 classic *Apollo* with music by **Igor Stravinsky**. Presented by Cal Performances the program showcases the full range of this top company’s technical and artistic achievements. **Ormsby Wilkins**, music director for The National Ballet of Canada, will conduct members of the **Berkeley Symphony Orchestra**. A free *Sightlines* pre-performance talk will be given by **James Kudelka** Thursday, September 30 at 7 p.m. in Zellerbach Hall.

PROGRAM

Created for The National Ballet of Canada in 1997, James Kudelka’s *The Four Seasons* premiered to universal praise. “There is no doubt now that Mr. Kudelka’s *Four Seasons* is a masterpiece for our times,” wrote dance critic Anna Kisselgoff (*The New York Times*). Kudelka’s frequent starting point is the classical music canon, in this case, Vivaldi’s much-loved work of the same name, *The Four Seasons*. Kudelka uses the four concertos to illustrate the life journey of an everyman. With an ensemble of 27 dancers, his imaginative choreography employs a different,

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major female figure in each of four stages of life. Beginning with a light and airy spring filled with youthful flirtations, the work then moves to the passion of summer captured in a romantic *pas de deux* of imaginative partnering and daring lifts, an autumn packed with vibrant, alpha-male dancing and a winter of wisdom expressed in declining body and spirit. The elegant, neutral-colored costumes culminating in winter overcoats are by Quebec designers Carmen Alie and Denis Lavoine. Evocative lighting by San Francisco David Finn and backdrops by Chris Wise carry the colors of the progressing seasons. The work contains Kudelka's trademarks of complicated classic footwork, free use of arms, intricate stage patterns and psychological depth.

Kudelka created *there, below* for BalletMet in Columbus, Ohio in 1989, a work which demonstrates why he is considered a master of the *pas de deux*. Choreographed for five couples of principle dancers, who effortlessly and silently engage in a series of *pas de deux* to Henry Purcell's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, the work advances in a serene and transcendent milieu. The sequined tights by Claudia Lynch and Howell Binkley's moody lighting along with a smoky stage add to the supernatural atmosphere. Like all of Kudelka's work, *there, below* combines the many styles he danced during his years performing.

George Balanchine's *Apollo*, first performed in 1928, marked the beginning of a lifelong collaboration between Balanchine and composer Igor Stravinsky. The ballet tells the story of the Roman god's birth and his relationships to three Muses: Calliope (poetry), Polyhymnia (mime), and Terpsichore (dance and song). After 70 years the choreography remains stylistically current showing the forward thinking of ballet's greatest choreographer.

The program also includes the world premiere of *Chacony*, a solo work set to Henry Purcell's *Chacony in G minor for Strings* and choreographed by James Kudelka.

JAMES KUDELKA

James Kudelka, raised on a dairy farm outside Newmarket, Ontario with five siblings by a Canadian mother and a Hungarian father, knew he wanted to be a dancer from a very young age. Kudelka trained classically at the National Ballet School in Toronto, graduating in 1972 to join The National Ballet of Canada, thus beginning a long relationship with the company. While a

soloist, he became increasingly absorbed in the creation of dance, developing his ideas from workshop performances to presentation in the company's regular season. In 1981, Kudelka departed from the world of classic ballet when he joined the experimental Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal as principal dancer. By 1984, he became the resident choreographer and continued to broaden his rich knowledge of dance vocabulary and styles. Major success there led to an international profile choreographing for such prestigious companies as San Francisco Ballet and American Ballet Theater as well as solo artists such as Margie Gillis and Peggy Baker. In 1992, Kudelka and The National Ballet joined forces again when he was named artist in residence. Four years later he was appointed artistic director. His relationship with The National Ballet of Canada enabled him to create and develop repertoire for a single company on a long-term basis, while allowing him to continue creating works for other artists around the world.

Kudelka refers to himself as "a conscientious observer" who creates dances that are meditations on the classic themes of love, sex and death. At the helm of Canada's largest ballet company, Kudelka works to maintain the delicate balance of representing the country's desire for serious, classical ballet while creating a place for contemporary, original ballets. His desire to propel The National Ballet of Canada more firmly into the world of contemporary ballet is palpable with most of the adventuresome new pieces for the company coming from Kudelka himself. Whether he is seen as a contemporary or classic ballet choreographer does not concern him: "To the non-classical world, I'm classical. To purists, I'm not. We're not competing in the ballet world that way."

The work of James Kudelka has been commissioned by American Ballet Theater, San Francisco Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Australian Ballet, Houston Ballet, Toronto Dance Theatre and BalletMet, as well as The National Ballet of Canada and Les Grands Ballets of Canadiens.

THE NATIONAL BALLET OF CANADA

The National Ballet of Canada with more than 50 dancers, most of them Canadians, and its own full symphony orchestra, is Canada's premier dance company and ranks with the best ballet companies in the world. Established in 1951 by English dancer Celia Franca, the company

presents not only the classical repertoire but also embraces contemporary works and encourages the creation of new ballets and the development of Canadian choreographers.

The National Ballet of Canada began earning an international reputation in 1970 when it was the only ballet company to be invited to perform at Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan. 1972 was a watershed year for the company: the first European tour occurred and Rudolf Nureyev staged his memorable *Sleeping Beauty* for the group. "He really loved this company," recollected Karen Kain, who danced opposite Nureyev in the production and is now the company's artistic associate. "There were no overt egos or jealousies. Everyone was willing to try whatever he wanted us to do." With *The Sleeping Beauty* the company made its triumphant debut at New York's Metropolitan Opera House the following year. In 1976, Alexander Grant, a former principal dancer with London's Royal Ballet and Artistic Director of Ballet for All, became the artistic director of the company. Under his leadership, the company added many works by Frederick Ashton to the repertoire. Grant was also instrumental in encouraging talented choreographers from within the company, most notably James Kudelka and Constantin Patsalas, to produce original ballets.

The legendary Erik Bruhn, considered one of the greatest classical male dancers of this century, was associated with The National Ballet of Canada for 20 years as choreographer, producer, teacher, dancer and artistic director. Reid Anderson became artistic director in 1989 and acquired or commissioned many new ballets for the company including works by William Forsythe, Jiří Kylián, Frederick Ashton, John Cranko and James Kudelka. Upon Anderson's departure to become artistic director of the Stuttgart Ballet, James Kudelka was appointed artistic director.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **The National Ballet of Canada** on **Thursday - Saturday, September 30 – October 2 at 8:00 p.m.** and **Sunday, October 3 at 3:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$36.00, \$48.00, and \$68.00**. Performance tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC

Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded).

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The San Francisco Chronicle, *San Francisco* magazine, and Classical 102.1 KDFC are season sponsors of Cal Performances' 2004/05 performing arts season.

Cal Performances' programs are supported in part by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, and the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

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CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Thursday, September 30 at 7:00 p.m.
SIGHTLINES

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph, Berkeley

Pre-concert lecture by artistic director James Kudelka. These events are free to ticketholders. *Sightlines* is a continuing program of pre- and post-performance discussions with Cal Performances' guest artists and scholars, designed to enrich the audience's experience. These events are free to ticketholders.

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Thurs. – Sat., Sept. 30 – Oct. 2 at 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, October 3 at 3:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph, Berkeley

Dance

National Ballet of Canada
James Kudelka, artistic director and choreographer
Members of the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra
Ormsby Wilkins, conductor

Program:

The Four Seasons: music by Antonio Vivaldi, *The Four Seasons*; choreography by James Kudelka (West Coast premiere)

there, below: music by Van Williams, *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*; choreography by James Kudelka

Chacony: music by Henry Purcell, *Chacony in G minor for Strings*; choreography by James Kudelka (world premiere)

Apollo: music by Igor Stravinsky, *Apollon Musagète*; choreography by George Ballanchine

Tickets: \$36.00, \$48.00, and \$68.00, available through the Cal Performance Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at Tickets.com; and at the door.