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**THE YURI YUNAKOV ENSEMBLE FEATURING CLARINETIST IVO PAPASOV
BRINGS ITS FOOT STOMPING BLEND OF JAZZ, ROCK AND FOLK MUSIC TO
CAL PERFORMANCES, OCTOBER 14**

BERKELEY, September 8, 2005 – The **Yuri Yunakov Ensemble** featuring legendary clarinetist **Ivo Papasov** bursts into Wheeler Auditorium on **October 14, 2005** at **8:00 p.m.** with an evening of high octane, hand clapping, get-up-and-dance music titled *Bulgarian Bebop*. The music, a combination of electric rock sounds of the west, traditional Bulgarian and Romani (Gypsy) music and bebop, has been dubbed wedding music. Its creators, Bulgaria's most famous music makers, **Yuri Yunakov** (saxophone), **Ivo Papasov** (clarinet), **Neshko Neshev** (accordion), and **Salif Ali** (drums), became national icons in the years leading up to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The music is best known for its haunting melodies, complex rhythms and stunning improvisations. For the last decade, the musicians have lived scattered around the world. Now, they are reuniting for an historic tour featuring the music on their new CD *Together Again*. **Kalin Kirilov** (guitar, bass) and **Carol Silverman** (vocals) join the quartet on tour. "The musicians play with the intensity of the damned straining for last-ditch salvation" (*Chicago Reader*).

In the 1970s, Papasov, Yunakov, Neshev and Ali were listening to underground tapes of Charlie Parker and experimenting with a hybrid of bebop and folk music. Bulgarians quickly fell in love with this new sound, and Ivo Papasov's band Trakiya often played to crowds of 10,000 or more, a following comparable to Bob Dylan in the United States. The Soviets tried to ban the music, but the musicians had already achieved celebrity status. Eventually, the government sanctioned their concerts, sending them around the world as musical ambassadors. Their style was labeled wedding music because of its lively rhythms that are often heard at ceremonies where dancing and music are an inherent part of the celebration. Built upon virtuosic technique, daring key changes, inventive improvisation, rapid tempos, and eclectic musical literacy, it combines a multiplicity of genres and folk styles including Turkish and Indian music.

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The Yuri Yunakov Ensemble's program at Cal Performances weaves both instrumental and vocal music from contrasting regions of the Balkans performed in Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, and Romani (Gypsy) languages, with lyrics that express the experiences of urban and village living, and the joys and sorrows of life among Roma. The repertoire highlights a popular dance form, *chochek*, and includes songs reflecting the persecution of the Roma, who have played a central role in the folk music of every country of the Balkans.

YURI YUNAKOV

The founder and director of the Ensemble **Yuri Yunakov**, Bulgaria's most famous saxophonist, was born in 1958 in Haskovo, Bulgaria, and hails from a long line of Turkish Romani musicians, including his father, grandfather, uncles, and brother. His career began with his family's band, followed by a stint as a boxer, and more music. He subsequently began a ten-year collaboration with Ivo Papasov and his band Trakiya that made many European, North American and Australian tours, playing to enthusiastic crowds. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Yunakov moved to New York City where, in 1995, he formed his own ensemble. The Yuri Yunakov Ensemble has performed at the Clearwater, Folk Parks, and the Telstra Adelaide Festivals. The group has also toured with the World Music Institute's *Gypsy Caravan* throughout North America, and has performed at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, the National Folk Festival in East Lansing, Michigan and the Chicago World Music Festival as well as toured Poland, Germany, Denmark, and Italy. Yunakov is featured on numerous recordings, such as *Orpheus Ascending*, *Balkanology* (Hannibal/Ryko), and *Bulgarian Space Folk* (Balkanton).

IVO PAPASOV

Virtuoso clarinetist **Ivo Papasov** is a living legend in Bulgaria and a phenomenon in the West. Born in 1952 in Kurdzhali, he founded the band Trakiya in 1975 that became the leading model of wedding music. He is known for his masterful, wide-ranging improvisations, daringly fast tempos and lively charisma, and his forays into jazz. In 1987, a Bulgarian journalist commented that "the hall literally exploded when Ivo Papasov, the uncontested king, got on the stage." In 2001 he was featured in the Bang On a Can Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and he recently won the BBC Audience Award for best European artist of the year, and received the People's Choice Award for world music artist of the year. Papasov has been the subject of a number of documentary films. Two CDs feature his work, *Orpheus Ascending*,

Balkanology and *Bulgarian Space Folk*. “Ivo’s album of wedding music, played first thing in the morning, provide thorough and long-lasting attitude adjustment for the busy executive,” states fan Frank Zappa.

In addition to Papasov, the Yuri Yunakov Ensemble includes four other accomplished musicians. **Neshko Neshev** (accordion) has been playing with his cousin Ivo Papasov for almost 30 years; he was one of the original members of Trakiya. He is a master of the Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, and Romani repertoires and has won numerous prizes for his expert playing at festivals and international competitions. **Salif Ali** (drum set) comes from a musical Turkish Romani family, with a father who played the *tupan* (two-headed drum) and a grandfather who played the clarinet. He is known for his high energy, wild temperament, and brilliant solo improvisations. He joined Papasov’s Trakiya in 1983 and toured extensively with the band. **Kalin Kirilov** (guitar, bass) began to sing and play the accordion at the age of four and received his first gold medal in 1981 at the Koprivshitsa festival, followed by many other medals in the following years. He is the master of multiple instruments, including accordion, *tambura* (long-necked, stringed instrument), keyboard, *ocarina* and *duduk* (flutes). **Carol Silverman** (vocals) has been involved with Balkan and Roma music and culture for over twenty years as a researcher, teacher, performer, and activist. An award-winning professor of cultural anthropology and folklore at the University of Oregon, she teaches about Balkan culture, ethnographic theory, and human rights issues among the Roma.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the **Yuri Yunakov Ensemble** featuring **Ivo Papasov** on **Friday, October 14, 2005** at **8:00 p.m.** in Wheeler Auditorium are priced at **\$32.00**. 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). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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Cal Performances 2005/2006 Centennial Season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, October 14 at 8:00 p.m.

Wheeler Auditorium, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

World Music

The Yuri Yunakov Ensemble featuring Iva Papasov
Bulgarian Bebop

Program: *Bulgarian Bebop*, combining bebop, electric rock sounds of the west and traditional Bulgarian folk music, stars Yuri Yunakov and Iva Papasov.

Tickets: \$32.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; online at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door.

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