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**CAL PERFORMANCES COMPOSER PORTRAIT SERIES FEATURES THE WORK OF
JOHN ADAMS PERFORMED BY THE NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE ALARM WILL SOUND
MARCH 5, AT 3:00 P.M. IN HERTZ HALL**

BERKELEY, February 3, 2006 – Cal Performances, in collaboration with the Miller Theatre at Columbia University, presents the Centennial Season’s third and final Composer Portrait concert, an in-depth examination of the works of American composer **John Adams** **Sunday, March 5 at 3:00 p.m.** in Hertz Hall. Initially known as a minimalist, Adams has in his later work harnessed the rhythmic energy of minimalism in a rich harmonic palette and fertile orchestral imagination. “Extravagance can be a virtue. That certainly [is] the case...for composer John Adams” stated the *Chicago Sun-Times*. The program showcases the full spectrum that is John Adams, with works ranging from his less frequently performed pieces to tour-de-force compositions. The 20-member ensemble **Alarm Will Sound** takes on the challenge of playing Adams’s remarkable creations. Led by conductor and artistic director **Alan Pierson**, the group has been hailed as “the future of classical music” by *The New York Times*.

The concert begins with Adams’s 1996 *Scratchband*, a rarely performed work that combines conventional instruments with amplified synthesizer and electric guitar, among others. *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* (1986), a piano solo from his minimalist years, follows. The third composition is the clarinet concerto *Gnarly Buttons* (1996), through which Adams tells the story of his father’s disintegrating relationship with the instrument he loved, the clarinet, as brought on by Alzheimer’s disease. Selections from *Hoodoo Zepher* (1992) will be performed as Adams incorporates acoustic and electronic music. The concert concludes with two of Adams’s masterworks: *China Gates* (1977), his first successful minimalist work; and *Chamber Symphony* (1992), a unique hybrid that combines the classical music of Schoenberg with cartoon music.

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JOHN ADAMS

Born and raised in Massachusetts in 1947, **John Adams** learned to play the clarinet from his father and performed in marching bands and community orchestras during his formative years. He began composing at age ten and heard his first orchestral pieces performed while still a teenager. After graduating from Harvard University in 1971, Adams relocated to Northern California and taught at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music before becoming composer-in-residence at the San Francisco Symphony in 1979. For the next six years, Adams created the orchestra's successful and controversial New and Unusual Music series, in addition to creating his own orchestral works. *Harmonium* (1981), *Grand Pianola Music* (1982) and *Harmonielehre* (1985) were written for and premiered by the San Francisco Symphony during this period.

Adams has also garnered accolades for his contemporary operas. In 1985, he began collaborations with poet Alice Goodman, stage director Peter Sellars and choreographer Mark Morris that lead to the creation of two of the most-performed contemporary operas in recent history: *Nixon in China* (1987) and *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991). In 1989, *Nixon in China* won the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Composition. On October 1, 2005, the San Francisco Opera premiered Adams's newest and largest opera, *Doctor Atomic*, based on the physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer and the scientific and moral crises surrounding the creation of the first atomic bomb in 1945. The result of this collaboration between Adams and Sellars is the "most inventive and emotional score to date," said *The New York Times*. "The music is delicate, strange, melodically dispersed, and harmonically tentative."

In 2004, Adams became the first recipient of the Nemmers Prize in Music Composition. The \$100,000 prize includes four weeks in residence and teaching at Northwestern over the next two years. In addition to teaching and composing, Adams has also served as music director of the Cabrillo Festival, artist-in-association with the BBC Symphony and Creative Chair of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and was awarded an honorary doctorate by Cambridge University.

Currently composer-in-residence at Carnegie Hall, Adams maintains an active life as a conductor, appearing with the world's greatest orchestras in programs combining his own works with composers as diverse as Debussy, Stravinsky and Bartók to Zappa, Reich and Glass. As a

guest conductor and director of music festivals in the United States and Europe, he has appeared with the New York, Cleveland, Chicago, Concertgebouw, and London symphony orchestras.

ALARM WILL SOUND

Formed in 2001, **Alarm Will Sound** is a 20-member ensemble committed to innovative performances and recordings of today's music. Musical artists-in-residence at Dickinson College, they have established a reputation for performing demanding music with energetic virtuosity. Described by the *London Financial Times* as "equal parts exuberance, nonchalance, and virtuosity" and as "a triumph of ensemble playing" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Alarm Will Sound is a force worth recognizing in the music world. With wide ranging experience in composition and improvisation, in jazz, early and world music, the band brings intelligence and a sense of adventure to all of its performances.

Alan Pierson, the artistic director and conductor of Alarm Will Sound, began conducting studies while pursuing a physics degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a composition degree at the Eastman School of Music. He has collaborated with many major composers and performers, including Yo-Yo Ma, Steve Reich, Augusta Read Thomas, David Lang, La Monte Young and Wu Man.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Alarm Will Sound** performing the work of **John Adams** on **Sunday, March 5** at **3:00 p.m.** in Hertz Hall are priced at **\$32.00**. 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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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday, March 5 at 3:00 p.m

Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley Campus

College Ave. at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

20th Century Music & Beyond

Composer Portraits: John Adams

Alarm Will Sound

Alan Pierson, conductor and artistic director

Program:

Adams/*Scratchband* (1996)

Short Ride in a Fast Machine (1986)

Gnarly Buttons (1996)

Selections from *Hoodoo Zephyr* (1992)

China Gates (1977)

Chamber Symphony (1992)

Tickets: \$32.00, 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.