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**MAKING IT WEST COAST DEBUT, EDWARD HALL'S ACTING TROUPE,
PROPELLER, BRINGS ITS ALL-MALE VERSION OF SHAKESPEARE'S
THE WINTER'S TALE TO CAL PERFORMANCES ON WEDNESDAY – SUNDAY,
NOVEMBER 9 – 13**

BERKELEY, September 29, 2005 – With its explosive energy, unorthodox stagecraft and creative production values, **Edward Hall's** extraordinary all-male theater ensemble **Propeller** makes its West Coast debut with Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, **Wednesday – Sunday, November 9 – 13**, in Zellerbach Playhouse. The production, which director Hall calls "A tragic fairy story, mysterious yet filled with humor and with a magical ending full of hope," is designed by **Michael Pavelka**, with lighting by **Ben Ormerod** and music by Propeller troupe members **Tony Bell, Dugald Bruce Lockhart**, and **Jules Werner**.

Making a splash wherever it goes, the British theater group garnered breathless raves in 2004 when it made its American debut with a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The *New York Observer* declared it "The finest Shakespeare in years;" *The New York Times* called it "absolutely exhilarating;" and the *Wall Street Journal* proclaimed the production "the best show in town." The company left a lasting impression above and beyond the play itself. "What stands most plainly in memory is the production's openness, its generosity. The company had more energy than the stage could contain" (*New York Sun*).

PROPELLER

Propeller continues an historic tradition, stretching back to the earliest days of Greek theater and through Shakespeare's time, of all-male theater troupes. However, the group is not mired in ancient forms or stuffy traditions, and is not trying to perpetrate a gimmick on its audiences; instead, Propeller mixes a rigorous approach to Shakespeare's texts with a modern physical aesthetic. "What's interesting about men playing women is that the audience stops

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being interested in the sexual chemistry between the actors and starts listening to the words,” Hall told *The Independent*. Propeller’s artistic influences include mask work, animation, classic and modern film, and music.

The company’s name derives from its almost stripped-down productions. Hall “aims to create productions so compact and economical that ‘we can pack our set into a flight case and get it on an airplane as excess baggage,’” wrote the *Wall Street Journal*. As a company, Propeller has a few simple rules: There are no stars—instead everyone is paid the same wage. If an actor creates a part, then he automatically receives an offer in the next production, which he can take or decline. Director Hall makes casting decisions based on what’s best for the play and the ensemble, not the actor. Actors are given as much control as possible in the creation of the story, in an effort to deepen the relationship between performer and audience. Over the years, actors have left the company and new ones have joined, keeping the ensemble fresh.

Propeller’s home is the Watermill Theatre in Newbury, Berkshire, and from this base the group has performed widely in the UK. International tours have taken Propeller to Mexico, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Malta, Poland, Turkey, Indonesia, and the United States. Director Edward Hall says the group has been “applauded, shot at, [and] challenged wherever we have gone,” and that these experiences “have made us even more determined to try and destroy the conspiracy surrounding Shakespeare. The conspiracy that perpetuates the idea that Shakespeare is very good for you, but not something that you will necessarily understand and something that you will have to endure.” Hall chafes at the idea that Shakespeare must be “dumbed down” to be accessible and popular, and Propeller’s critical raves and box office success bear out this thinking.

EDWARD HALL

Edward Hall began working at the Watermill Theatre in Newbury, Berkshire (UK) in the early 1990s and founded his all-male troupe, Propeller, in 1997. The son of the eminent British director Sir Peter Hall, Edward Hall has established himself as an independent theatrical force in Great Britain and the world. He is former acting director with the Royal Shakespeare Company, a tenure marked by a March 2002 episode in which, at age 36, he “sensationally quit the RSC” (*London Telegraph*) on the eve of rehearsals for a production of *Edward III*. The event caused a stir in British theatre circles; Hall later cited disagreements over casting for his abrupt departure.

Hall grew up an athlete, excelling in cricket and riding motorcycles, which he still rides. He studied philosophy of science at Leeds University, but left after a year to attend Mountview Theatre School. He found acting difficult—“the analytical part of my mind never quite let go,” he told *The Independent*—but discovered that he enjoyed directing. With Propeller, Hall’s ambition is to present Shakespeare in a way that he believes the Bard himself would recognize and appreciate. “I want to rediscover Shakespeare simply by doing the plays as I believe they should be done,” Hall has written, “With great clarity, speed and full of as much imagination in the staging as possible.”

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* performed by **Propeller** and directed by **Edward Hall** on **Wednesday – Friday, November 9 – 11 at 8:00 p.m.; Saturday, November 12 at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.; and Sunday, November 13 at 3:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Playhouse are priced at **\$65.00**. 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:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Weds. – Fri., November 9 – 11 at 8:00 p.m. **Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus**
Sat., November 12 at 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m. Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley
Sun., November 13 at 3:00 p.m.

Theater

Propeller

The Winter's Tale

Edward Hall, director

Program: Ed Hall's all-male theater troupe Propeller's past productions have been called "absolutely exhilarating" (*The New York Times*); the company makes its West Coast debut in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* at Zellerbach Playhouse.

Tickets: \$65.00, 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.

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