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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 23, 2005

THE CURTAIN GOES UP ON 2,035 OF THE BEST SEATS IN TOWN

ZELLERBACH HALL GETS A MAKE-OVER IN PREPARATION FOR CAL PERFORMANCES CENTENNIAL SEASON

BERKELEY, August 23, 2005 – With the curtain ready to rise on its Centennial Season, Cal Performances has an additional treat for patrons: 2,035 brand new seats from which to watch the best performing arts the world has to offer. The American premiere of the **National Ballet of China**'s breathtaking production of *Raise the Red Lantern* will be the first chance to try out the new seats. "We've been dreaming about this upgrade for the last five years," commented Cal Performances' Director **Robert Cole**. "We're thrilled that we are able to accomplish it in time for the opening of this very special season." The seats, manufactured by Irwin Seating, are covered in deep blue velour with maple arms. "Theater seats last about twenty years," explained General Manager **Doug Warrick**. "These new seats are better constructed, better balanced, and feature more wood and less metal." The hall is also receiving new aisle lighting, railings and additional accommodations for people with disabilities. This is the third round of new seats for the hall since its completion in 1968. "I think our audience will really notice the difference," said Cole.

ZELLERBACH HALL

Zellerbach Hall, the biggest and busiest of Cal Performances' five venues, was inaugurated as part of the University's Centennial in 1968. The opening included five concerts featuring the work of Igor Stravinsky with Cal alumnus Gregory Peck serving as master of ceremonies. Campus planner and architect John Galen Howard had created the first design for a large theater in 1921, but the plans were shelved due to lack of funds, a problem that continued through the depression and WWII. Finally, in 1957, a theater was part of Vernon DeMars and Donald Reay's competition-winning plan for a Berkeley Student Center on Lower Sproul Plaza.

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The opening of Zellerbach Hall allowed Cal Performances to increase the size and scope of arts presentation on campus, including bringing large dance and theater companies such as the Kirov and Bolshoi Ballets, each with more than 200 dancers, and the Grand Kabuki Theatre of Japan, with nearly 100 artists. World class artists who have graced its stage over the years include Mark Morris, Merce Cunningham, Martha Graham, Alvin Ailey, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Yo-Yo Ma, Cecilia Bartoli, John Adams, Dave Brubeck, and Ravi Shankar, to name just a few.

Zellerbach Hall is in constant demand with the annual Cal Performances' audience at nearly 250,000, plus rentals, graduations and other university events. With audience seating on three levels but only 113 feet from the front of the stage to the last row of the balcony, the theater has a surprisingly intimate feel. In the mid-70s, a poll taken by the Association of American Dance Companies revealed that, "Again and again, both modern and ballet dancers immediately singled out Zellerbach Hall as the best hall in the country." They continue to do so to this day.

ZELLERBACH FAMILY FOUNDATION

Zellerbach Hall was named in honor of **Isadore** and **Jennie Zellerbach**, whose Zellerbach Family Foundation, originally referred to as the Zellerbach Family Fund, donated \$1 million of the \$7 million cost of the hall. The Zellerbachs were well-known philanthropists who had given many gifts to the University of California for scholarships, medical research and other purposes. The Foundation continues to sustain the hall through additions to the building, upgrades and the present seat replacement project, which is also supported by the University and private donors.