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CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS THE EPIC *NINE HILLS ONE VALLEY* BY RATAN THIAM'S CHORUS REPERTORY THEATRE FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10 AND 11 AT ZELLERBACH HALL

THE ENGAGEMENT INCLUDES A MAKING THEATER EVENT, A PERFORMANCE PRACTICES WORKSHOP AND A *SIGHTLINES* POST-PERFORMANCE TALK

BERKELEY, October 11, 2006—**Chorus Repertory Theatre's** celebrated composer-writer-director-musician-actor-choreographer and "genius" (*The New York Times*), **Ratan Thiam**, one of the most important and influential theater-makers at work in the international performance scene, brings his newest masterwork, *Nine Hills One Valley* (*Chinglon Mapan Tampak Ama*), to Cal Performances **Friday and Saturday, November 10 and 11 at 8:00 p.m.** at **Zellerbach Hall**. Renowned for its disciplined performance practice, spectacular aural and visual esthetic, and potent thematic explorations, Chorus Repertory Theatre's latest production is a haunting and poetic theatrical allegory confronting the turmoil that now consumes Thiam's native Manipur in southeast India. Thiam's *Nine Hills One Valley* premiered at the **India International Centre** in New Delhi in October 2005 and was hailed by the *Washington Post* as "a landmark cultural event...visually arresting and beguilingly mythic...intensely theatrical." The 90-minute production uses classical dance, tribal martial arts, traditional costumes and folk music, is performed by the 30-member company in Meitei with English surtitles.

In addition to the performances, the engagement includes three Education and Community events. Meet Ratan Thiam as he is interviewed by Sudipto Chatterjee of the Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies (TDPS), Thursday, November 9 at 4:00 p.m. in Geballe Room, 220 Stephens Hall; this conversation is presented in association with TDPS and is free and open to the public. Thiam and guest artists will also lead a workshop featuring the music and movement that are an intrinsic part of their performances Friday, November 10 from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. at Zellerbach Hall; the free workshop is presented in association with the TDPS. Lastly, a *Sightlines* post-performance talk will be given by Thiam

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and members of the cast Friday, November 10 at Zellerbach Hall; *Sightline* events are free to all event ticketholders.

NINE HILLS ONE VALLEY

Nine Hills One Valley is “a poem by birth, a collage of many ideas without a conventional plot,” says Thiyam. This epic tale is the second part of a trilogy; the first installment, *Hey Nungshibi Prithvi (My Earth, My Love)* was produced in 2003. Through mesmerizing Manipuri choreography and striking aural and musical accompaniment, which are two trademarks of Thiyam’s performance practice, the work focuses on significant consequences that arise when cultural traditions are removed from a society.

Nine Hills One Valley invokes myth and legend with a primal cry of despair. When seven wise men, *Maichousing*, awake from nightmares, they find Manipur has been ravaged by political strife, stripped of all culture and tradition. Yet hope is restored when the *Maichousing* write new *Puyas*, books of wisdom, and seek out principals of justice, equality, governance, loyalty, homeland and obligation. The wise men urge all to look deeply within their souls to find the key to end the restlessness that has enveloped society.

In his review of the work, critic Gowri Ramnarayan of *Frontline*, India’s national magazine writes, “Thiyam’s visual spectacles have always been unrivalled. He uses dialogues as rhythms and chants, while the singing voices spell moods.....It has epic sweep but also becomes as personal as a sonnet. It billows into a universal lament, and warning.”

Nine Hills One Valley employs a traditional Indian dramaturgical structure that makes the production extraordinarily accessible; language is provided via gestures, sounds, rhythms, and melodies. Additional time-honored elements include *thang-tha*, a rigorous martial art that lends to improvised fighting on stage rather than carefully choreographed fight scenes; *wari leeba*, a narrative speech form that figuratively paints pictures through words, and *nata sankirtana*, a lyrical form of devotional singing.

RATAN THIAM

Ratan Kumar Thiam was born in Manipur to a family of artists: His father was a highly regarded guru of *raslila*, a religious operatic drama, and his mother was an accomplished *raslila* dancer. Thiam studied at National School of Drama in New Delhi. After graduating, he returned to Manipur and in 1976 he established the Chorus Repertory Theatre, which is located on the outskirts of Impahal, Manipur's capital city. The two-acre campus was designed by Thiam and includes a 300-seat auditorium called The Shrine.

Having directed more than 50 plays (original scripts as well as adaptations), Thiam's original *Chakravyuha* (The Wheel of War) catapulted him onto the world stage in 1984 and the play has since been performed more than 100 times worldwide, earning him the Fringe Firsts Award of the Edinburgh International Theatre Festival in 1987 and the Diploma of Cervantino at the International Theatre Festival in Mexico in 1990. Recent acclaimed works include *Blind Age*, *Ritusamharam*, and *Hey Nungshibi Prithvi* (My Earth, My Love).

Noted as one of the world's great directors whose theater company is one of the most exciting that India has produced in modern times, Thiam is considered on par with such other international theater figures as Peter Brook, Tadashi Suzuki, and Eugenio Barba (each has made independent trips to the politically conflicted Manipuri to witness first hand Thiam's work).

CHORUS REPERTORY THEATRE

Chorus Repertory Theatre celebrates its 30th anniversary. All company members are rigorously trained in dance, acting, martial arts, stagecraft, and design. Emphasis on vocal and breath techniques, physical stamina and control provides the means to accomplish the impressive oral and athletic feats that the production demands of its participants. "I have always found human expression more convincing when it is physically portrayed, when there is a body rhythm," says Thiam. The use of language as a means of expression is also multi-layered; while works are performed in Meitei (*Nine Hills One Valley* is accompanied by English surtitles) the Chorus Repertory Theatre has developed its own thematically-based language of theater. Words are as important for the way they sound as for their actual meaning. The aural environments of productions are a mix of text (sung, spoken, chanted), music, and movements

one can hear. Sets are few—simple black wall panels and platforms—but color saturates the costumes, which are elaborate and meticulously crafted. The lighting, designed and operated by Thiyam during performances, is used very specifically to define space, dramatic action, and rhythm.

The company has traveled throughout India, and has appeared at festivals including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, Avignon, Perth, Adelaide, Rome, Cervantino, Mitsui, and Toga. The group has also performed in London and Paris, and toured countries including Greece, the former USSR, Holland, Cuba, South America, Sri Lanka, and New Zealand. Chorus Repertory Theatre last visited Cal Performances in 2000 when it brought *Uttar-Priyadarshi* (The Final Beatitude), “an engrossing event, at once grand and intimate” (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Ratan Thiyam’s Chorus Repertory Theatre: *Nine Hills One Valley*** on **Friday, Nov 10 at 8 p.m.** and **Saturday, Nov 11 at 8 p.m.** are priced at \$24, \$36 and \$48. 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 <http://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 <http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu>.

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CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Thursday, November 9 at 4:00 p.m.

Geballe Room, UC Berkeley Campus
220 Stephens Hall, UC Berkeley

Making Theater

Meet Ratan Thiyam as he is interviewed by Sudipto Chatterjee of the Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies (TDPS). This conversation is presented in association with TDPS and is free and open to the public.

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Friday, November 10 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Zellerbach, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Workshop: Performance Practices of Chorus Repertory Theater

Ratan Thiyam and guest artists will lead a workshop featuring the music and movement that are an intrinsic part of Chorus Repertory Theatre's performances. The workshop is presented in association with TDPS and is free and open to the public.

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Friday, November 10

SIGHTLINES

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Chorus Repertory Theatre post-performance discussion will be given by Ratan Thiyam and members of the cast. *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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Friday & Saturday, November 10 & 11 at 8:00 p.m. Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Theater

Chorus Repertory Theatre: *Nine Hills One Valley*

Ratan Thiyam, writer and director

Program: Ratan Thiyam's *Nine Hills One Valley* is the latest cultural extravaganza from Chorus Repertory Theatre that performed the critically acclaimed *Uttar-Priyadarsh* at Zellerbach Hall in 2000.

Tickets: \$24, \$36 and \$48, 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.