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CAL PERFORMANCES INSTALLS THE FIRST MEYER SOUND CONSTELLATION SYSTEM IN ZELLERBACH HALL

BERKELEY, October 9, 2006 – Robert Cole, Director of Cal Performances, and **John Meyer**, President and CEO of Meyer Sound, today announced the installation of the first Meyer Sound Constellation™ electroacoustic architecture system in Zellerbach Hall. Housed in an American Institute of Architects Honors Award-winning building, the 2,000-seat hall is home to Cal Performances, the largest presenter of performing arts in Northern California and nationally recognized as one of the most influential presenters in the country. Zellerbach Hall is the site of a wide range of performances, including orchestral, operatic, chamber music, recital, jazz, theatrical, dance and all variety of ethnic performances from around the world. The University also makes use of Zellerbach Hall for graduations, lectures and other major UC Berkeley events. Zellerbach Hall is the definitive multipurpose venue.

This diversity of events at Cal Performances imposes immense demands on Zellerbach Hall's acoustics, as the needs of orchestral performances, recitals and graduations are often at odds with each other. Although the hall has an orchestra shell that helps sound project and aids musicians in hearing each other, erecting and striking it is a laborious and time-consuming process that makes it difficult to hold events of different types even as close together as consecutive days, not to mention accommodate events mixing genres on the same program. What's more, the shell does not enable the hall to fully meet the range of acoustical requirements, as it cannot sufficiently alter the hall's basic reverberation characteristics.

"We have been grappling with this issue of maximizing the hall's sound for a number of years," says Cole. "We know the acoustics are quite good, as they are—many wonderful artists have performed here with great success. There are, however, some instances, such as when a period orchestra like Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra performs, that I have wished we could

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modify the architecture of Zellerbach to better replicate the space in which the music was originally meant to be performed. Luckily, we've had the great good fortune of working with John and Helen Meyer and Meyer Sound as our partner in designing a solution."

Award-winning Meyer Sound designs and manufacturers the world's finest professional audio products used in many of the world's premiere performance venues, including Carnegie Hall and San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House. "Enhancing the sound system in Zellerbach Hall has been a labor of love on the parts of many talented people—not the least of whom is Robert Cole," says John Meyer. "Earlier this year, Robert agreed to let us set up a prototype of Constellation for the Centennial Gala concert and put the system to the test. His initial decision to allow this experiment was a leap of faith. But through our collaboration, we believe we've taken the audio experience to new levels."

There is a great demand now for venues like Zellerbach Hall to be multipurpose. "That creates a real challenge: How can one room be made to sound right for many different kinds of performances?" asks Meyer. "It seemed to me that the answer for existing venues like Zellerbach was in good planning and appropriate use of digital technology in harmony with existing acoustics. Our VRAS technology gave us the core of what we needed to solve this puzzle, and we built from there."

In illustration of Meyer's point, the situation at Zellerbach Hall reached a turning point as Cal Performances approached its Centennial Celebration and Gala in May 2006. The program for the evening was intended to portray the range of events presented by Cal Performances, and featured the Mark Morris Dance Group; San Francisco Symphony Music Director and pianist Michael Tilson Thomas accompanying *Phantom of the Opera* star Lisa Vroman; contemporary music ensemble Alarm Will Sound performing works by John Adams; and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra with a chorus of over 200 voices composed of the University of California Alumni Chorus, University Chorus and Piedmont Children's Choir.

The logistics for this spectrum of performances made it impossible to use the orchestra shell, while, at the same time, exemplifying the need for different acoustics that would

compliment each performance. Cal Performances' Centennial Celebration and Gala came just as Meyer's vision for multipurpose venues coalesced into a new approach to the challenge: Constellation electroacoustic architecture.

A longstanding relationship between Meyer Sound and Cal Performances had already resulted in installation of a substantial Meyer Sound system in Zellerbach Hall. With Constellation, Cal Performances and Meyer Sound went beyond the concerns of sound reinforcement to tackle the issue of the hall's reverberation characteristics.

"Meyer Sound's Constellation solved a major problem for us as we planned our Centennial Gala concert comprising dance, music and a large orchestra and chorus all in one evening," says Cole. "It was the only way we could pull it off."

Constellation electroacoustic architecture is a complete package of equipment and services, provided exclusively by Meyer Sound and powered by the company's VRAS™ technology, that enables a venue to provide acoustics appropriate to the needs of each program at the touch of a button, yielding numerous benefits. Constellation employs Meyer Sound's VRAS variable room acoustic system processor in combination with newly designed Stella™ loudspeakers and Constellation microphones certified by Meyer Sound. The VRAS technology, originally developed by Mark Poletti of Industrial Research Limited, employs a powerful DSP engine capable of generating multichannel reverberation and early reflections, as well as mixing, processing and routing them.

Hardware and software components of Constellation serve as enabling technology. What makes a Constellation system powerful and natural is that each installation is designed and specified for a specific venue, and rigorously tuned by highly trained professionals certified by Meyer Sound. Since Constellation incorporates a regenerative component (meaning that the hall's acoustics are an integral part of the system), design and tuning must be carefully performed to the specific needs and characteristics of each venue.

A Constellation system in Zellerbach Hall enables an audience to experience a music concert with all of the warmth and resonance of a concert hall, while a play in the same space exhibits improved intelligibility. Musicians enjoy an increased ability to hear each other, creating an onstage acoustical experience conducive to ensemble musicmaking.

The Constellation approach was new and still evolving, so putting a system in Zellerbach for the gala concert was an experiment carrying more than a little risk, albeit risk justified by a compelling need and a strong foundation of technology and experience.

Meyer and a hand-picked team of high-level Meyer Sound staff with expertise in acoustics, signal processing and sound reinforcement worked with Cole and his staff to define the system's goals and design. The system that was installed included an onstage "orchestral shell" system to provide musicians with the all-important early reflections that promote a sense of ensemble, as well as the house system, to give audiences supplemental reverberation and early reflections.

The team completed installation and tuning in time for the concert, and the event came off smoothly. Cole's confidence in the system was strengthened. "The success of the Gala experiment indicated to us that we could pursue Constellation further," he says. As the quintessential multipurpose venue, Zellerbach Hall was the perfect candidate for the initial Constellation installation. The system has now proven itself with the highly successful United States premiere of Mark Morris's production of Henry Purcell's *King Arthur*.

Cole states, "Given the vast range of events we have coming up this season at Zellerbach Hall, we are looking to Constellation to give us flexibility in pursuing our objective of achieving the finest possible musical and artistic results in every performance we present."

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