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**ATTENTION, PUZZLE FANS: THE ENIGMATIC WILL SHORTZ COMES TO
CAL PERFORMANCES MONDAY, MAY 7 AT 8:00 P.M. IN ZELLERBACH HALL**

BERKELEY, March 27, 2007 — What's a fourteen-letter word to describe **Will Shortz**? Bay Area puzzle lovers know the answer: It's "enigmatologist," and Shortz is the only academically accredited puzzle master in the world. He designed his own major program while at Indiana University, which led to his unique 1974 degree in enigmatology, the study of puzzles. When he comes to **Zellerbach Hall** on **Monday, May 7 at 8:00 p.m.** as part of Cal Performances' Strictly Speaking series, Shortz will discuss his lifelong passion for crosswords and other puzzles, explain how crosswords are created, and reveal their curious history. His program will also include audience-participation word games and a question and answer period. Shortz is the star of the documentary *Wordplay*, which caused a sensation at the Sundance Film Festival, and he is considered a cult figure among puzzle aficionados. "He's like the Wizard of Oz," says the film's director, Patrick Creadon. "He's literally the man with all the answers."

Shortz has been the puzzle master for NPR's *Weekend Edition Sunday* since the program began in 1987. He is also the crossword editor of *The New York Times*, the former editor of *Games* magazine, and the founder and director of the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament. Born in 1952 and raised on an Arabian horse farm in Indiana, Shortz sold his first puzzle when he was 14 to *Venture*, a denominational youth magazine. At 16, he became a regular contributor to Dell puzzle publications.

Shortz received a law degree from the University of Virginia. He originally entered law school with the intention of practicing law for ten years in order to make a lot of money before retiring to do what he really wanted—create puzzles. However, law was not creative enough for him, and following graduation he skipped the bar exam and began his puzzle career immediately.

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Today, Shortz enjoys his position at the *Times* because he believes the paper attracts the most intelligent, best-educated group of puzzle enthusiasts in the country. This allows him to presume a level of culture and solving skill unmatched elsewhere.

When he assumed leadership of the crosswords puzzles at *The New York Times*, Shortz made slight modifications to the games. Creators' bylines were added to the daily puzzles, whereas previously the contributors had labored anonymously. Cultural references were broadened to add such modern subjects as movies, television and rock-and-roll to the classic puzzle vocabulary. Shortz also increased the puzzle's slope of difficulty as the week progressed. He ensured that Monday's puzzle was comparatively easy, but those created for Friday and Saturday were more intellectually challenging. His goal was to offer something to everyone, from beginners to veterans.

The Shortz puzzle that has garnered the most response appeared on Election Day 1996. The clue to the middle answer across the grid was "Lead story in tomorrow's newspaper." The answer appeared to be CLINTON ELECTED. Because of intentional ambiguity in the crossing clues, however, the answer could also have been BOB DOLE ELECTED. "As soon as it appeared, my telephone started ringing," Shortz said, "Most people said, 'How dare you presume that Clinton will win!' And the people who filled in BOB DOLE thought we'd made a whopper of a mistake!"

In addition to editing the weekday and Sunday puzzles for the *Times*, Shortz is the author or editor of over 100 puzzle books. He is the founder of the World Puzzle Championship, over which he presides as the captain of the US team.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Will Shortz** on **Monday, May 7** at **8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$20.00, \$26.00, and \$32.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.net; 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.calperformances.net.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Monday, May 7 at 8:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Strictly Speaking

Will Shortz, puzzle master

Program: Will Shortz will discuss his favorite puzzles, how crosswords are created, and their curious history. He will also answer questions about puzzles and conduct word games with the audience.

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