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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS THE WEST COAST DEBUT OF THE
STATE BALLET OF GEORGIA**

**FEATURING RENOWNED BALLERINA NINA ANANIASHVILI
THURSDAY–SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14–17 AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**TWO AMERICAN PREMIERES BY YURI POSSOKHOV AND ALEKSEI RATMANSKY AND
BALANCHINE’S *DUO CONCERTANT* AND *CHACONNE* ARE PERFORMED
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14**

PLUS

**THE NEWLY- STAGED *GISELLE* BY ALEXEI FADEYECHEV IS PRESENTED
FRIDAY–SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15–17**

BERKELEY, January 4, 2008—Acclaimed ballet superstar **Nina Ananiashvili** brings her **State Ballet of Georgia** to Berkeley in two programs: an evening of mixed repertory featuring two American premieres and two Balanchine works **Thursday, February 14 at 8:00 p.m.**; and the evening-length romantic ballet, *Giselle*, **Friday & Saturday, February 15 & 16 at 8:00 p.m.** and **Sunday, February 17 at 3:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall. Ananiashvili, who has been the Artistic Director of the State Ballet of Georgia since 2004, will dance in both programs (Thursday, February 14 and Saturday, February 16). Her *Giselle* has been praised as “emotionally, technically and stylistically absolutely marvelous” (*New York Post*). Both programs will employ the **Berkeley Symphony Orchestra** under the baton of Cal Performances’ Director **Robert Cole**; additional musicians will be announced.

Ananiashvili, the former Bolshoi Ballet prima ballerina and a continuing principal guest artist for American Ballet Theatre, was invited home to the former Soviet Republic of Georgia in 2004 to help rebuild the newly-independent state’s dormant ballet company following years of civil strife. Now, in its first American tour, the State Ballet of Georgia is garnering attention and praise. “Ms. Ananiashvili’s Georgians prove to be accomplished and stylish ... the sheer polish of the men is striking (*The New York Times*).

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PROGRAMS

Program A, an evening of mixed repertory Thursday, February 14 at 8:00 p.m., opens with the American premiere of *Sagalobeli* by San Francisco Ballet choreographer-in-residence **Yuri Possokhov**, set to traditional Georgian choral music performed live by the six-member **Sagalobeli Ensemble**. Ananiashvili commissioned the piece from her former Bolshoi Ballet colleague Possokhov, asking him to capture the heart of Georgian folk and choral music. **George Balanchine's** *Duo Concertant* follows, set to music by **Igor Stravinsky** with staging by Bart Cooke and Maria Callegari; pianist and violinist to be announced. **Nina Ananiashvili** takes the solo spotlight in the American premiere of a new untitled work by Bolshoi Ballet artistic director **Aleksei Ratmansky**, set to *Chromatic Variations* by **George Bizet**; pianist to be announced. Balanchine's *Chaconne*, the all-dance finale of Gluck's opera ballet *Orfeo ed Euridice*, concludes the program with **Robert Cole** conducting the **Berkeley Symphony Orchestra**.

Program B is *Giselle*, performed on Friday and Saturday, February 15 & 16 at 8:00 p.m.; and Sunday, February 17 at 3:00 p.m., the Romantic era's most enduring ballet, performed by all the world's leading ballet companies and by nearly all great ballerinas, and today remains the cornerstone of the classical ballet repertoire. This new Georgian *Giselle* was mounted in 2006, staged by Ananiashvili's co-artistic director and former Bolshoi colleague, **Alexei Fadeychev**. Sets and costumes by **Viacheslav Okunev** are based on designs for the 1910 Diaghilev production. Robert Cole conducts the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, opening with **Nino Gogua** in the title role on February 15, with **Lasha Khozashvili** as Albrecht. **Nina Ananiashvili** performs her signature role in the February 16 *Giselle* with **Andrey Uvarov** as Albrecht. **Anna Murade** is paired with **Vasil Akhmeteli** for the February 17 program.

The role of *Giselle* was danced for the first time on June 28, 1841, in Théâtre de l'Académie Royale de Musique (Paris Opera). Poets and novelists of the time were interested in stories of the romantically supernatural, stories that told of young girls whose love was never fulfilled because of intervening powers. One of these stories told of the brides known as Wilis, who were engaged to be married, yet died before their wedding days. In the evening, they rose from their graves and danced in the moonlight. But they were as dangerous as they were

irresistible. The brides' dancing attracted young men only to trap them: their suitors were compelled to dance until they died.

The poet, novelist, and critic Theophile Gautier read the story of the Wilis as Heinrich Heine related it, and thought that it would make an effective ballet. Gautier worked with the popular librettist Vernoy de Saint-Georges and composer Adolphe Adam (the score became his masterpiece). The ballet, with choreography by Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot, was proclaimed the greatest ballet of its time.

Perrot's 1848 re-working of the original Paris production became the basis of subsequent Russian versions of the ballet. The role of Albrecht was danced by Marius Petipa who assisted in Perrot's Paris 1850 revival, and, during the mid-1880s he made a series of revisions. It is the Coralli-Perrot-Petipa legacy upon which most twentieth-century productions drew.

The version of *Giselle* to be danced in Berkeley was staged in 2006 by Alexei Fadeyev, former artistic director of the Bolshoi, who shares artistic direction of the Georgia State Ballet with Ananiashvili.

STATE BALLET OF GEORGIA

The history of the **State Ballet of Georgia** is a tale of renewal. The company was founded in 1935 by the brilliant dancer and choreographer Vakhtang Chabukiani; composer Andrey Balanchivadze (George Balanchine's brother); and designer Simon Virsaladze (longtime Chief Designer of the Bolshoi and Kirov). Russian ballet greats danced and choreographed for the company through the 1980s. Civil war, economic turmoil and social unrest plagued Georgia following its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, with devastating effect on the acclaimed ballet company. In 2004, the republic's new president, Mikhail Saakashvili, invited Ananiashvili—a star of American Ballet Theatre and one of Georgia's most internationally prominent artists in any discipline—to come home to Tbilisi and revive the troupe. She achieved a remarkable turnaround, shaping a company that has earned enthusiastic plaudits from critics and audiences at home and abroad, performing such classic ballets as Bournonville's *Swan Lake* and *Don Quixote* as well as contemporary dances by the likes of Stanton Welch and Aleksei

Ratmansky. (The State Ballet's repertoire also includes ten works by Balanchine, né Georgi Balanchivadze, also a Georgian.) Upon seeing the company at Jacob's Pillow in its American debut, Alastair Macaulay, writing in *The New York Times*, predicted a bright future: "... Put these dancers on a big stage with live music and they can do Georgia proud."

THE ARTISTS

Nina Ananiashvili was born March 28, 1963 in Tbilisi, Georgia. She graduated from the Moscow Choreographic Institute in 1981 and was accepted into the Bolshoi corps de ballet. From the beginning she danced only solos and various pas de deux at company galas. During the Bolshoi's 1982 tour to Hamburg, Germany, Ananiashvili made her debut as Odette/Odile in Grigorovich's version of *Swan Lake*. In 1983, she was officially promoted to the rank of soloist and by 1985 was a principal dancer for the Bolshoi. She was one of the first Soviet dancers to be invited to guest with the New York City Ballet. In the years that followed, Nina Ananiashvili became an international ballet superstar, invited to dance with prestigious companies around the world, her repertoire expanded to include more than 90 roles. She did not forget her native city, however. She first danced in Tbilisi in 1983 while a soloist with the Bolshoi, appearing in *Swan Lake* and in Chabukiani's version of *Don Quixote*. Later she danced *Giselle*, *La Sylphide*, and other ballets with the Tbilisi company.

Ananiashvili became a principal dancer with American Ballet Theater in 1993, and in 1996, she put the young **Aleksei Ratmansky** on the map by commissioning two new ballets for her touring group. *Charms of Mannerism* was the first of these, and in 1998 it was followed by *Dreams About Japan*. In December of 2000, Ananiashvili and **Alexei Fadeychev**, dancing partners for a decade at the Bolshoi, established their own company, Dance Theater. Since 2004, they have shared artistic duties at the State Ballet of Georgia.

After receiving his dance training at Moscow Ballet School, **Yuri Possokhov** (*Sagalobeli*) danced with the Bolshoi Ballet for ten years, working primarily with Ballet Master Yuri Grigorovich. In 1992, he joined the Royal Danish Ballet and the following December was cast as Prince Desiré in Helgi Tomasson's *The Sleeping Beauty*. Invited to join the San Francisco Ballet in 1994 as a principal dancer, he moved west. For the 2003 Repertory Season, Possokhov collaborated with Artistic Director Helgi Tomasson on a new staging of the full-

length *Don Quixote*. In February 2006, Possokhov's *Cinderella* was premiered by the Bolshoi Ballet. Following his retirement as a principal dancer, Possokhov was named choreographer-in-residence of the San Francisco Ballet in May 2006.

Aleksei Ratmansky (*untitled*) trained at the Bolshoi Ballet School in Moscow, becoming a principal with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in Canada, then the Kiev Ballet from 1995 until 1997. That year he joined the Royal Danish Ballet, for which he choreographed *The Nutcracker*. In January 2004, he was named artistic director of the Bolshoi Ballet. His recent work for the Bolshoi, a version of Shostakovich's banned Stalin-era ballet, *The Bright Stream*, has won him high critical praise.

A major artistic figure of the 20th Century, **George Balanchine** (*Chaconne, Duo Concertant*) revolutionized the look of classical ballet. Taking classicism as his base, he heightened, quickened, expanded, streamlined, and even inverted the fundamentals of the 400-year-old language of academic dance. His ballets are performed by all the major classical ballet companies throughout the world and he is regarded as the foremost contemporary choreographer of ballet, the most performed twentieth century choreographer in the world today.

BERKELEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The **Berkeley Symphony Orchestra** performs contemporary, traditional and rarely-heard symphonic literature, premiering works by emerging and established contemporary composers; showcasing Bay Area artists and soloists; working in collaboration with other artists and arts institutions; and promoting an understanding and appreciation of significant contemporary works. Maestro Kent Nagano will step down from his post as music director in 2009, wrapping up an unparalleled 31-year relationship with the Berkeley orchestra.

ROBERT COLE

Robert Cole, Director of Cal Performances and the Berkeley Festival & Exhibition, served as Associate Conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and appeared as a guest conductor with the Hartford Ballet, the Boston Civic Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic, the Sacramento, Pasadena and Chautauqua symphony orchestras, and many other symphonic, dance and operatic organizations. He was Music and Executive Director of the Ballet Society of Los

Angeles and has conducted and produced opera and musical comedy in California and New York. A graduate of the University of Southern California School of Music, he studied conducting with Leonard Bernstein and Leon Barzin at the Tanglewood Music Center, with Hans Swarowsky in Europe and with Richard Lert. He has conducted concerts for the Lake Tahoe Summer Music Festival in Lake Tahoe, California, and is Principal Guest Conductor of the Perm (Russia) Opera & Ballet Theater. Cole, who became Director of Cal Performances in 1986, has announced that he will step down in August 2009.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the **State Ballet of Georgia** with **Nina Ananiashvili** mixed repertory program on **Thursday, February 14 at 8:00 p.m.**; and *Giselle* on **Friday and Saturday, February 15 and 16 at 8:00 p.m.**, and **Sunday, February 17 at 3:00 p.m.** at Zellerbach Hall are priced at \$34.00, \$52.00, \$76.00 and \$90.00. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens, other students and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$5 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperformances.org.

For select performances, Cal Performances offers UCB student, faculty and staff, senior and community Rush Tickets. Rush Tickets are announced two hours prior to a performance and are available in person only at the Ticket Office beginning one hour before the performance; quantities may be limited. Rush Ticket sales are limited to one ticket per person; all sales are cash only. Rush Ticket prices are \$10.00 for UCB students; \$15.00 for UCB faculty and staff (UCB ID required) and seniors age 65 or older; and \$20.00 for all other community members. Information is available at 510-642-9988, press 2 for the Rush Ticket hotline, two hours prior to a performance only.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Thursday, February 14 at 8:00 p.m.
Friday & Saturday, February 15 & 16 at 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 17 at 3:00 p.m.

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

Dance

The State Ballet of Georgia
with **Nina Ananiashvili**, artistic director and ballerina
Robert Cole, conductor
Berkeley Symphony Orchestra
Additional musicians, to be announced

Program A Mixed Repertory: Thurs., Feb. 14 at 8:00 p.m.

Sagalobeli (2008): traditional Georgian choral music; choreography by Yuri Possokhov
(American premiere)

Duo Concertant (1972): music by Igor Stravinsky; choreography by George Balanchine

Untitled (2008): music by Georges Bizet; choreography by Aleksei Ratmansky (American premiere)

Chaconne (1976): music by Christoph Willibald Gluck, choreography by George Balanchine.

Program B Giselle: Fri. & Sat., Feb. 15 & 16 at 8:00 p.m.; Sun., Feb. 17 at 3:00 p.m.

Giselle (2006): music by Adolphe Adam; based on choreography by Jean Coralli, Jules Perrot and Marius Petipa with new staging by Alexei Fadeyev

Tickets: \$34.00, \$52.00, \$76.00, and \$90.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door.

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