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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS THE AMERICAN PREMIERE OF  
GUANGZHOU BALLET'S MEI LANFANG  
FRIDAY–SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19–21 AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**A *SIGHTLINES* PRE-PERFORMANCE TALK WITH BAN WANG, STANFORD PROFESSOR OF  
CHINESE LITERATURE, WILL BE GIVEN FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19 AT 7:00 P.M.  
AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**A COLLOQUIUM TITLED "MEI LANFANG, PEKING OPERA AND THE CHINESE AESTHETIC"  
FEATURES GUANGZHOU BALLET ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ZHANG DANDAN; MEI LANFANG  
BIOGRAPHER JOSHUA GOLDSTEIN; AND BAN WANG**

BERKELEY, September 14, 2007—The celebrated **Guangzhou Ballet** makes its first West Coast appearance when Cal Performances presents the American premiere of the company's full length ballet *Mei Lanfang Friday–Sunday, October 19–21* at Zellerbach Hall. The work is inspired by the life of legendary Peking Opera star Mei Lanfang (1894–1961) who introduced the United States to Peking Opera in 1930. Mei is considered one of the greatest male actors of female roles. The ballet is directed by the company's founder and co-artistic director **Zhang Dandan**; choreographed by Chinese-Canadian **Fu Xingbang** using a blend of classical ballet vocabulary, Peking Opera steps, and martial arts; and set to composer **Liu Tingyu**'s original score using Western and traditional Chinese instruments. The company's European tour of the production was hailed "a triumph for the Ghaugzhou Ballet" (*Ballet Magazine*). The engagement is Cal Performances' contribution to UC Berkeley's opening celebrations for the Chang-Lin Tien Center for East Asian Studies and the C.V. Starr East Asian Library.

A *Sightlines* pre-performance talk with Ban Wang, Professor of Chinese Literature at Stanford University, will be held Friday, October 19, 2007, at 7:00 p.m. at Zellerbach Hall. This *Sightlines* event is free to all ticket holders.

A colloquium titled "Mei Lanfang, Peking Opera and the Chinese Aesthetic" will take place Friday, October 19 from 1:00–4:00 p.m., at the Institute for East Asian Studies, 2223

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Fulton Street 6th Floor. Zhang Dandan, Guangzhou Ballet artistic director; Joshua Goldstein, Professor of History at University of Southern California and author of *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-Creation of Peking Opera 1870-1937* (2007, University of California Press), a biography of Mei Lanfang; and Ban Wang, Professor of Chinese Literature, Stanford University, discuss China's foremost dramatic art form. This event is part of UC Berkeley's opening celebrations for the Chang-Lin Tien Center for East Asian Studies and C. V. Starr East Asian Library and is presented by Cal Performances in association with the Institute for East Asian Studies, the Berkeley China Initiative and the Center for Chinese Studies. This event is free and open to the public.

### **MEI LANFANG: THE ARTIST AND THE PRODUCTION**

**Mei Lanfang** began his career at the age of eight and spent years perfecting his art—dancing, singing and acting, the essential elements of Chinese Opera. At that time, male actors were expected to perform both the male and female roles. Mei first performed the role of the *Dan* (female) in the Peking Opera at the age of 20 and continued playing heroines for the remainder of his career during which he became a household name in China. His self-taught techniques were adopted by newcomers to the art. During his 50 years on the stage, Mei Lanfang revolutionized many elements of the opera, including make-up, costumes, physical gestures, expressions and poses. He also choreographed much of his own work. In 1930, Mei Lanfang toured the United States to the delight of audiences and accolades of critics. This tour brought an awareness of the beauty and power of Peking opera to America.

A Chinese patriot during WWII, Mei retreated from the stage, refusing to perform for Japanese troops occupying the country. At the end of the war in 1946, he resumed his stage appearances, including a tour of Russia, and continued to perform until shortly before his death in 1961. His son, Mei Baoujiu, established the Mei Lanfang School, which carries on Mei's legacy and vision.

In translating Mei Lanfang's story into a ballet, choreographer **Fu Xingbang** made the decision to split the role of Mei into two, in order to illustrate the dichotomy between the separate lives that Mei led onstage and off. A male dancer plays the part of Mei in his real life,

while his stage persona is divided into four roles for four different ballerinas, each depicting one of Mei's important stage roles.

Beyond a reflection on Mei's theatrical life, the ballet also focuses on the political events, the Japanese invasion, that caused him to give up the stage. *Mei Lanfang* is divided into three acts: the first in which Mei reminisces over the great roles that he has played; the second in which Mei decides to retreat from the stage; and the third in which Mei takes on his final roles as teacher and legend. The ballet is set against a backdrop of extravagantly-colored scenery evoking the richness of Mei's legacy; the production features more than 60 ballet dancers.

### **GUANGZHOU BALLET**

Formally organized in 1994, the **Guangzhou Ballet** has since gained worldwide recognition and acclaim, winning prizes at Paris International Ballet Dance Competition, Varna International Dance Competition, Moscow International Ballet Competition, and Helsinki International Ballet Competition, among others. Designated by the Municipal Government of Guangzhou to be a trial unit for comprehensive reforms in art performance organizations, the company has grown in its thirteen years, having mounted over a dozen full-length classical ballets. Among its original works, many of which are ballet-operas, is *Mei Lanfang*, choreographed by guest co-artistic director Fu Xingbang. Other original works include *Natural Melody* and *Peach Bloom Fan*; and production *The Celestial Phoenix* was awarded the prize for excellent program at the Fifth National Opera Festival Performance Competitions in 1997.

Considered the "most innovative [troupe] in China" (*China Today*), the Guangzhou Ballet is also the nation's youngest ballet ensemble. Artistic director Zhang Dandan is continuing her efforts to reach a larger Chinese audience by charging low prices; she continues to guide the Chinese people deeper into the ballet world.

### **ZHANG DANDAN**

A celebrated ballerina with the Central Ballet Ensemble (CBE), **Zhang Dandan** retired from the stage in 1994 to launch the Guangzhou Ballet Ensemble. As a principal dancer with CBE, Zhang performed leading roles in *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, *Don Quixote*, *Romeo and Juliet*,

among others. Of her debut performance as Odette in *Swan Lake* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1986, Zhang was heralded as "very much a dancer to watch... the comparison to... Gelsey Kirland would not be out of place" (*The New York Times*). Under Zhang's leadership, the reputation of the group has grown in and outside of China.

### **FU XINGBANG**

**Fu Xingbang** is the guest co-artistic director and choreographer/instructor for the Guangzhou Ballet. He has been highly praised for his innovative and dynamic choreography which challenges the technical limits of his dancers. Fu Xingbang's training in Chinese dance, classical ballet, contemporary ballet and opera, fuels the creative energy in his choreography. Born in Guangzhou, China, Fu Xingbang received his professional training from the Beijing Ballet Institute. He furthered his dance training with the School of American Ballet Theatre and joined the Washington Ballet Company. He created the Xing Dance Theatre in 1986 in Toronto, where he resides; he has danced extensively across North America.

### **LIU TINGYU**

**Liu Tingyu** was born in Chongqing, China, and graduated in 1965 from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. He has composed more than ten Chinese modern ballets and is currently deputy director of the Central Ballet Troupe. He has also composed for sport events such as the Eleventh Asian Games and the Seventh China Nationwide Sporting Competition. In *Mei Lanfang*, he has composed for Western as well as traditional Chinese instruments.

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

Tickets for *Mei Lanfang* on **Friday & Saturday, October 19 & 20 at 8:00 p.m.**; and **Sunday, October 21 at 3:00 p.m.** at Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$32.00, \$52.00, and \$68.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at [www.calperformances.net](http://www.calperformances.net); 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.net](http://www.calperformances.net).

For select performances, Cal Performances offers Rush Tickets to UCB students, faculty and staff, senior and community members. 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 hotline, two hours prior to a performance only.

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**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS**

**Friday, October 19 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.**  
**COLLOQUIUM**

**Institute of East Asian Studies**  
**UC Berkeley Campus**  
2223 Fulton St, 6th Floor, Berkeley

Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), legendary artist of Peking Opera, is the subject of a new production by Guangzhou Ballet Company of China. Ballet artistic director, Zhang Dandan; Mei Lanfang biographer, Joshua Goldstein Professor of History, University of Southern California; and Ban Wang Professor of Chinese Literature, Stanford University highlight China's foremost dramatic art form as part of UC Berkeley's opening celebrations for the Chang-Lin Tien Center for East Asian Studies and C. V. Starr East Asian Library. The colloquium is presented by Cal Performances in association with the Institute of East Asian Studies, the Berkeley China Initiative, and the Center for Chinese Studies. This event is free and open to the public.

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**Friday, October 19 from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m.**  
**SIGHTLINES**

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

A pre-performance talk will be given by Ban Wang, Professor of Chinese Literature at Stanford University. *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. This event is free to ticket holders.

**Friday and Saturday, October 19 & 20 at 8:00 p.m. Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus**  
**Sunday, October 21 at 3:00 p.m. Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave, Berkeley**

*Dance Series*

**Guangzhou Ballet**

**Zhang Dandan**, artistic director

**Fu Xingbang**, choreographer

**Liu Tingyu**, composer

**Program:** The American premiere of *Mei Lanfang*, Guangzhou Ballet's full length work based on the life of the legendary Peking Opera artist.

**Tickets:** \$32.00, \$52.00 and \$68.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at [www.calperformances.net](http://www.calperformances.net); and at the door.

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