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**CAL PERFORMANCES AND SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENT THE
WEST COAST PREMIERE OF RACHEL PORTMAN'S THE LITTLE PRINCE
MAY 2–11 AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**SIGHTLINES: A PRE-PERFORMANCE TALK WITH DIRECTOR FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO WILL
BE HELD FRIDAY, MAY 2 AT 6:30 P.M. AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**A FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENT TITLED EXPLORATION WORKSHOP: INSIDE *THE LITTLE PRINCE*
WILL BE GIVEN SUNDAY, MAY 4 AT 11:00 A.M. AND 1:00 P.M.
AT UC BERKELEY ALUMNI HOUSE**

BERKELEY, March 28, 2008—Cal Performances and San Francisco Opera co-present the West Coast premiere of Academy Award-winning composer **Rachel Portman's** *The Little Prince*, a special presentation based on **Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's** classic children's fable. The **Francesca Zambello** production, originally staged at Houston Grand Opera, will be performed at Zellerbach Hall on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley, for six performances beginning May 2, 2008.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's story was first published more than six decades ago. A pilot crash-lands in the desert and meets an open-hearted boy from another planet; the tale is a gentle reminder to hold on to what is truly important in life. Translated into 180 languages, it has been read by children and adults around the world. Academy Award-winning composer Rachel Portman has set the tale to music, which *The New York Times* called, "unfailingly graceful...Like opera at its sixteenth-century beginnings, Ms. Portman's work lifts words in the air and carries them along." Francesca Zambello's production, with witty sets and costumes by the late **Maria Björnson**, adds richness and depth to the book's charming illustrations. The production will appeal to families, complete with affordable pricing for children 16 and under.

Romanian baritone and former Adler Fellow **Eugene Brancoveanu** sings the role of The Pilot. Tenor **Thomas Glenn**, who created the role of Robert Wilson in the world premiere of John Adams's *Doctor Atomic* at San Francisco Opera in 2005, sings the role of The Snake/Vain

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Man. Two local 12-year-olds will share the role of *The Little Prince*: **Tovi Wayne** from Modesto and **Tyler Polen** from Los Altos. **Sara Jobin** conducts members of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra; and **Sarah Meyers**, who made her San Francisco Opera debut as assistant director for *Rigoletto* (2006), will direct. The production will be sung in English with English supertitles.

A *Sightlines* pre-performance talk will be given by director Francesca Zambello on Friday, May 2 at 6:30 p.m. at Zellerbach Hall and is free to ticketholders for that evening's performance.

Also, a family-friendly event titled Exploration Workshop: Inside *The Little Prince* will be offered Sunday, May 4 at 11:00 a.m. and again at 1:00 p.m. at UC Berkeley Alumni House. Through three vignettes, participants will discover how Antoine de Saint-Exupéry reveals his views about human folly and the simple truths that people seem to forget as they grow older; explore how the story is transformed on the fantastical operatic stage through scenic design; and experience how the music illustrates the story's important message: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." The workshop is presented by Cal Performances and San Francisco Opera and will be lead by **Caroline Altman**, Director of Education at San Francisco Opera Guild. This event is free and open to the public. As space is limited, advance reservations are encouraged. For further information or to make a reservation, call (510) 643-2712.

THE LITTLE PRINCE

French aviator and writer Antoine de Saint Exupéry's most famous novella *The Little Prince* was published in the United States in 1943. The original book includes a number of drawings by Saint-Exupéry himself that were the inspiration for designer Maria Bjørnson's set and costumes. The book quickly became a classic and has been translated into more than 180 languages, selling more than 50 million copies worldwide. It is one of the top 50 bestselling books in history. *The Little Prince* has been adapted into a movie musical by Lerner and Loewe, two operas and an animated television series—truly a universally loved story about life and what is most important. "Long before the final curtain...most of the jewel-bedecked, black-tied opera

buffs in the opening night audience for the premiere of Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince*, were fumbling for hankies and brushing away tears" (*Star-Telegram*, Houston).

THE PRODUCTION TEAM

Rachel Portman is one of a very few female film composers working today. She was nominated for an Academy Award three times (*Emma*, *The Cider House Rules*, *Chocolat*), before winning the Oscar for *Emma* in 1997; she is the first woman to have won this award. In addition, she has composed scores for many films including *Infamous*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Oliver Twist*, *Beloved*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *Ethan Frome* and *Benny and Joon*, and has received numerous Grammy, Emmy, Golden Globe and BAFTA awards. Raised in England, Portman began her musical education at an early age, studying a number of instruments, including the piano. As she progressed, she focused on composition and orchestrating, creating her first work as a teenager. After completing music studies at Oxford, she landed her first assignment to score a made-for-television movie. In 1988, Portman won the British Film Institute's "Young Composer of the Year" award. Portman moves easily between scoring heavily dramatic films and light romantic comedies. *The Little Prince* is her first opera. She read the book as a child and the illustrations and themes of the story had a lasting effect. "I think that projects aimed at children are just as serious as projects aimed at adults," said Portman before the Houston premiere. "The things adults believe are important are not necessarily that important, and the things that we lose when we grow into adults are often vitally important to hold onto."

Francesca Zambello, an internationally recognized director of opera and theater, has staged classic and new productions at major theaters and opera houses in Europe and the United States. Collaborating with a vast array of artists and designers and promoting emerging talent, she takes a special interest in new music theater works, innovative productions and in producing theater and opera for wider audiences. Currently, her production of *The Little Mermaid* for Disney is on Broadway, and she is developing several new musicals, one based on *The Little House on the Prairie* series with Rachel Portman and writer Beth Henley. Zambello returns to the land of adult sensibilities when she comes to the Bay Area for San Francisco Opera's June 2008 production of Richard Wagner's *Das Rheingold*.

The Little Prince is the last finished project designed by the late **Maria Bjørnson**, who unexpectedly passed away in December 2003, six months before the premiere of the opera. She designed extensively for theater, opera and ballet and was the recipient of several international awards. She is best known for designing Andrew Lloyd Weber's *The Phantom of the Opera*, for which she won two Tony Awards, a Drama Desk and two Drama Critic's awards. Her opera credits included dozens of productions at the world's finest theaters, including Royal Opera House; La Scala; Glyndebourne; English National Opera; Netherlands Opera; Royal Shakespeare Company, Old Vic and the Globe Theatre. In 1999, Bjørnson was awarded the 19th Franco Abbiato Prize in recognition of her contributions to theater design.

Playwright-librettist-director **Nicholas Wright** was born in South Africa in 1940 and started in the theater as a child actor. He trained at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and joined the Old Vic touring company as an actor. After working in repertory, he became an assistant director in films and television. In 1969, he founded the Royal Court's Theatre Upstairs, where he was responsible for presenting a radically influential program of new plays. From 1984 to 1998, Wright was an associate director of the Royal National Theatre. His work as a director includes plays by Ken Campbell, N. F. Simpson, John Antrobus, Caryl Churchill, David Lan, Athol Fugard, Edward Bond and Brecht. In addition to the rhymed libretto for *The Little Prince*, Wright is also the author of many plays, among them *Mrs. Klein* and *Cressida*.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for *The Little Prince* **Friday & Saturday, May 2 & 3 and 9 & 10 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, May 4 & 11 at 3:00 p.m.** in **Zellerbach Hall** are priced at **\$40.00** and **\$60.00**; children 16 and under are half price. 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. Tickets can also be purchased through San Francisco Opera Ticket Office at War Memorial Opera House; at (415) 864-3330 to charge by phone; and at www.sfopera.com. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. 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 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 AND SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENT

Friday, May 2 from 6:30-7:00 p.m.

Sightlines

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

The Little Prince pre-performance talk will be given by director Francesca Zembello. *Sightlines* is a continuing program of pre-and post-performance discussions with artists and scholars, designed to enrich the concertgoer's experience. These events are free to ticketholders.

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Friday & Saturday, May 2, 3, 9 & 10 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 4 & 11 at 3:00 p.m.

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

Opera

The Little Prince

Rachel Portman, composer

Nicholas Wright, libretto

Based on the book by **Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**

Sara Jobin, conductor

Members of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra

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Sarah Meyers, director
Francesca Zambello, production
Maria Bjørnson, set and costume designer
Rick Fisher, lighting designer
Eugene Brancoveanu, baritone, The Pilot
Thomas Glenn, tenor, The Snake/Vain Man
Tovi Wayne, The Little Prince (alternating)
Tyler Polen, The Little Prince (alternating)
Marie Lenormand, The Fox
Ji Young Yang, soprano, The Rose
Tamara Wapinsky, The Water
Andrew Bidlack, The Lamplighter/Drunkard/Baobab/Hunter
Kenneth Kellogg, The King/Baobob/Hunter
Adam Lau, The Baobob/Hunter

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Tickets: \$40.00 and \$60.00; children 16 and under are half price. Tickets are available through Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.net; and at the door; and through San Francisco Opera Ticket Office at War Memorial Opera House; at (415) 864-3330 to charge by phone; and at www.sfopera.com.

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Sunday, May 4 at 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.
Workshops

Alumni House, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Dana Ave., Berkeley

Program: A family-friendly, interactive event titled Exploration Workshop: Inside *The Little Prince* led by Caroline Altman, Director of Education at San Francisco Opera Guild, explores Saint-Exupéry's timeless tale. Through three vignettes, participants will discover how the author reveals his views about human folly and the simple truths that people seem to forget as they grow older; explore how the story is transformed on the fantastical operatic stage through scenic design; and experience how perfectly the music illustrates *The Little Prince*'s important message: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." Presented by Cal Performances and San Francisco Opera.

Tickets: This event is free and open to the public. As space is limited, advanced reservations are encouraged. To make a reservation, please call (510) 643-2712 and indicate your choice of 11:00 a.m or 1:00 p.m. Walk-ups will be accommodated on a space available basis.

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