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**ROBERT COLE, DIRECTOR OF CAL PERFORMANCES,
TO STEP DOWN AT THE CLOSE OF THE 2008-09 SEASON**

**AT THE HELM SINCE 1986, COLE HAS TRANSFORMED THE PRESENTING AND
COMMISSIONING ORGANIZATION INTO AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

BERKELEY, May 15, 2007— Cal Performances’ Director **Robert Cole**, who turned Berkeley into a destination for internationally celebrated artists and one of the most admired performing arts centers in the world, today announced his decision to step down at the conclusion of the 2008-09 season. A conductor and instrumentalist by training, Cole assumed the directorship of Cal Performances in 1986 and brought a keen ear and eye for young talent as well as an aesthetic that has propelled the organization to the top ranks of performing arts presenters, regularly mounting world, American and West Coast premieres in dance, music and theater.

“For more than 20 years Cal Performances has reflected Robert Cole’s brilliant direction and contributed to the important work of the University,” commented UC Berkeley Chancellor **Robert J. Birgeneau**. “Robert has not only heightened Cal Performances’ profile in the arts world, but also the organization’s service to the educational mission of the University. The arts and sciences stand together in the important work of advancing civilization, and in this complex world nothing bridges cultural differences more effectively than the performing arts; they demonstrate the immeasurable range of human expression and our shared humanity. The University community has been the recipient of Robert’s impeccable artistic judgment, and because of it, we have all grown in our understanding and appreciation of the world.”

“I am deeply grateful to have been a part of this renowned university and vital arts community since 1986,” says Cole. “Cal Performances is a robust organization with a strong Board of Trustees and staff, and one which has benefited tremendously from the rich and diverse resources this community offers. As our Centennial capital campaign draws to a successful close

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and my 22nd season here begins, I thought it a fitting time to announce my plans for departure to allow for sufficient time for leadership succession. There is uncommon opportunity for growth at Cal Performances; what I have been able to accomplish with this talented staff and devoted Board of Trustees is only the beginning.”

Robert Cole has taken Cal Performances from a respected regional performing arts presenter that presented about 45 events annually with a budget of \$4 million, to one that shares acclaim with the greatest performing arts centers and festivals in the world, annually presenting some 80 events in 130 performances with a budget of \$14 million. Audiences have responded enthusiastically with ticket sales increasing more than ten-fold since 1986.

From the beginning of his tenure, Cole established long term relationships with important artists and scholars, commissioned and produced new works and discovered new talent. “I had the idea to make [Berkeley] more like a London, New York or Paris where the greatest artists come from all over the world,” stated Cole in a 2005 KQED interview. “That was my goal when I came here and that’s what we’ve been working on ever since.”

One of his early partnerships was with choreographer Mark Morris whom Cole first invited to Berkeley in 1987. Cole has presented a string of Mark Morris Dance Group world, U.S. and West Coast premieres and commissions including world premieres of *World Power* (1995), *Falling Down Stairs* (1997) and *Rhymes With Silver* (1997) set to music by Lou Harrison; the U.S. premieres of Morris’s staging of Jean-Philippe Rameau’s *Platée* (1998) and *King Arthur* (2006); and West Coast premieres of *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (1994), *The Hard Nut* (1996) and *Mozart Dances* (2007).

Cole also commissioned and presented an impressive list of premieres with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, including the American premiere of *Ocean* (1996), performed in Harmon Gym, and the world premiere of Cunningham’s masterpiece *Biped* (1999).

Cole additionally commissioned or co-commissioned new works from theater/opera director Peter Sellars; choreographers Twyla Tharp, Bill T. Jones and Pascal Rioult; the Kronos Quartet; actor/director Robert Lepage; and performance artist Laurie Anderson, among many

others. Highlights for Cole have been presenting the world premiere of John Adams song-play *I Was Looking at the Ceiling, and Then I Saw the Sky* (1995) with libretto by UC Berkeley poet June Jordan, directed by Sellars; *Nur Du* (Only You) by German expressionist choreographer Pina Bausch and her Tanztheater Wuppertal (1996); and the final performances of the acclaimed Berliner Ensemble before the company disbanded forever in 1999.

In 1990, Cole founded the Berkeley Festival & Exhibition of early music now a biennial weeklong international festival presented in association with the UC Berkeley Department of Music, the San Francisco Early Music Society and Early Music America. In 2003, he established the Berkeley Edge Fest, a biennial showcase for new and contemporary works of performing arts that has featured the work of John Adams, John Zorn, Lou Harrison and Terry Riley. This year's festival spotlights the work of Paul Dresher and Frederic Rzewski. *Wall Street Journal* arts critic David Littlejohn wrote in the *California Monthly*, "Cole's programming for Cal Performances has been more adventurous than Lincoln Center's and broader than in scope than that of Brooklyn Academy of Music."

To bring about these productions, Cole has forged partnerships with Royal Opera Covent Garden, the Edinburg International Festival, London's Barbican Center, the English National Opera and Lincoln Center in New York City, among many others. He has attracted new audiences to Berkeley by broadening international arts presenting to include such celebrated companies as Lyon Opera Ballet and Orchestra (1995); the Royal Court Theatre (2004); the Grand Kabuki Theater of Japan (1990, 1996 and 2005); the National Ballet of China (1995 and 2005) and both the Kirov and Bolshoi ballets and orchestras (2002-2005). Under his leadership, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre now gives more performances in Berkeley than any other place in the world outside of New York; and the many internationally celebrated artists who regularly appear at Cal Performances include Yo-Yo Ma, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Cecilia Bartoli, Ravi Shankar, Gilberto Gil, Philip Glass, Jordi Savall, Eva Yerbabuena, Paco de Lucia and Sweet Honey in the Rock. Among the many American debuts Cole has presented are tenor Ian Bostridge, violinist Julia Fischer and the esteemed early music ensemble Il Giardino Armonico. One reason many artists value Cal Performances so highly is because Cole is an artist himself and he "understands what artists need to do their best work," explains cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

Soon after Cole arrived, the campus's Student Musical Activities program was brought under his leadership. Given his training as a musician and conductor, he welcomed the opportunity to shape the extracurricular music activities composed of the University's famed Cal Band, UC Jazz Ensemble and UC Choral Ensembles which includes BareStage Theater productions.

As arts funding has continued its precipitous drop, schools have turned to Cal Performances to fill the gap. In the past 20 years, the organization has expanded arts education offerings both in schools and on campus. More than 100 programs are presented annually, including the highly popular *SchoolTime* and *Cal Performances in the Classroom* that together serve more than 22,000 K-12 students and teachers and are nationally recognized as model arts education programs. Cole is particularly proud of *AileyCamp*, the nationally acclaimed youth program, conceived by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and locally produced by Cal Performances. The camp opened on campus in 2002 and is sustained by a coalition of sponsors and patrons. Additionally, Cole has deepened the organization's commitment to higher education by working closely with UCB faculty to support their work. A full range of lectures, demonstrations and symposiums are programmed yearly for University students and community members.

In 1996, Cole along with the support of the University and key patrons, initiated the formation of a Board of Trustees to insure the stability and continuity of Cal Performances. Dean Emeritus of the Hass Business School, Earl Cheit, served as the first Board chairman.

In recognition of Cole's achievements, in 1997 UC Berkeley Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien awarded him the Berkeley Citation, the campus's highest administrative award, bestowed on an individual who has "rendered distinguished or extraordinary service to the University." In 1995, Cole was made Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters by France's Minister of Culture and Francophonie; he received the William Dawson Award for Programmatic Excellence from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters in 1998.

Robert Cole is a graduate of the University of Southern California School of Music and studied conducting with Richard Lert and Ingolf Dahl in California, with Leonard Bernstein and

Leon Barzin at the Tanglewood Music Center, and with Hans Swarowsky in Europe. Prior to his appointment in Berkeley, Cole was the Executive Director of the Brooklyn Center for Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, and previously served as Executive Director of the Bardavon 1869 Opera House in Poughkeepsie, New York. He was Associate Conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and was Music Director and Executive Director of the Ballet Society of Los Angeles. Cole has served on panels for New York State Council on the Arts, California Arts Council and National Endowment for the Arts, and on the boards of Early Music America, San Francisco Early Music Society and International Society of the Performing Arts.
