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**THE RUSSIAN PATRIARCHATE CHOIR PERFORMS MEDIEVAL RUSSIAN
LITURGICAL REPERTOIRE AND TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN FOLK SONGS FRIDAY,
OCTOBER 26 AT 8:00 P.M. AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN BERKELEY**

**A *SIGHTLINES* pre-show conversation with artistic director Anatoly Grindenko
and musicologist Victor Gavenda Friday, October 26 at First Congregational Church**

BERKELEY, September 14, 2007— The 13-member all-male **Russian Patriarchate Choir**, whose members took part in a quietly brave act of artistic rescue, will offer a program of ancient chants and Russian folk songs when they perform at Cal Performances, one night only, **October 26 at 8:00 p.m. at First Congregational Church**. The Russian Orthodox Church gave rise to one of the world's great bodies of choral works for male voices that fell into disfavor and obscurity during the Soviet era. The seldom-heard liturgical chants were at risk of being lost forever. Dedicated Russian scholar-musicians, including Russian Patriarchate Choir founder **Anatoly Grindenko** and other choir members, however, toiled quietly for years to locate the texts of the medieval chants, decode their arcane notation, decipher their complex polyphony and transcribe them for contemporary performance.

The Moscow Patriarchate Choir's Berkeley program is drawn in part from the vast repertory of anonymous chant-based works that arose during the flowering of liturgical composition under Ivan the Terrible, and in part from compositions by latter-day composers such as Rachmaninoff. The early works are presented in their original, male-chorus voicing, while the composed works have been arranged from their original mixed-chorus versions.

A *Sightlines* pre-performance conversation with Moscow Patriarchate Choir artistic director Anatoly Grindenko and musicologist Victor Gavenda will be held Friday, October 26, from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m. at First Congregational Church. This event is free to ticket holders.

The origins of liturgical singing as an art form date from the conversion of Kievan Rus (a founding Russian state located in the Ukraine) to the Byzantine form of Christianity, which took

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place in 988 A.D. under Prince Vladimir of Kiev. The story of how Vladimir settled on Orthodox Christianity as a religion for his people provides insight into the role the liturgical arts have played throughout Russia's history. The envoys sent by the prince to investigate different religions duly reported on the beliefs and practices they encountered among the Christians, the Moslems, and the Jews. But when they entered the Great Church of the Holy Wisdom, the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and beheld the splendor of Byzantine Orthodox worship—the chanting, the icons, the incense, all taking place within an immense architectural representation of the celestial dome—they are said to have not known whether they were in heaven or on earth. “We only know that this is the place where God dwells among his people.”

RUSSIAN PATRIARCHATE CHOIR

The **Russian Patriarchate Choir of Moscow** was founded by **Anatoly Grindenko** in the Trotse-Sergieva Lavra monastery in 1983. Its 13 members, including Grindenko, perform both in Russia (where it is an actual church choir) and internationally. The singers are dedicated scholars of the repertoire for male voices who led the way in the re-discovery of Orthodox church music in the late years of the Soviet Regime.

The choir employs the long-breath melodic style that characterizes chant music, prompting listeners to wonder when they breathe, so seamless are their melodic lines. The chant traditions of Greece, Constantinople, Bulgaria, Romania and the Balkans are all evident in these Russian Orthodox Church chants. The Choir exhibits a profound feeling for the spiritual impetus and liturgical purpose behind the music as well. In addition to its church music, the choir performs traditional Russian folk songs that it has restored to their original richness..

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the choir was able to begin performing internationally, bringing this music to a wider public. Through live performances and many recordings the ensemble reached a vast worldwide audience, attracted first and foremost by the beauty of the music. They have appeared throughout Europe and Scandinavia, at Festivals in Utrecht, London, Maastricht, Barcelona, Ravenna, and at Lincoln Center's 2007 Mostly Mozart Festival. Their appearance was a hit, drawing praise from *The New York Times*: "The response of the full house

grew throughout from warm to clamorous... [in appreciation of the] emphatic and dynamic performances."

ANATOLY GRINDENKO

Anatoly Grindenko was born in Kharkov in 1950 into the family of an army serviceman. His interest in music began at a very young age, later expanding to include ancient Greek culture, philosophy, religion, art, poetry, and European medieval culture. At age 18, he began to play the viola da gamba, bass, and violin. He took part in many performances on viola da gamba performing both early music as well as his interpretation of contemporary music, including works by Stockhausen, Cage, Ligeti, and Berio.

Grindenko traveled throughout Russia to study its folk music and iconic art. As his interest in Russia's past and in Orthodox Christianity grew, he left his career as a musician to work in the Troitse-Sergieva Lavra monastery in the town of Zagorsk. During his stay in the Lavra he continued to delve into the complexities of ancient Byzantine and Russian chant notation, and organized a choir of seminarians and monks. In 1983 the Danilovsky monastery opened—the first monastery to be opened during the Soviet era—and Grindenko created a choir of the brethren, learned the art of bells and even constructed a bell tower.

In 1985, with the blessing of Archbishop Pitirim, Grindenko organized the male choir at the publishing department of the Moscow Patriarchate. The choir gave its first solo concert in 1987 in Moscow Conservatory's Maly Zal. It was the very first performance of a church choir on a non-church stage after the long period of stagnation.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the **Moscow Patriarchate Choir** on **Friday, October 26** at **8:00 p.m.** at **First Congregational Church** are priced at **\$42.00**. 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, 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.

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 hotline, two hours prior to a performance only.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, October 26 from 7-7:30 p.m.
SIGHTLINES

First Congregational Church
2345 Channing Way, Berkeley

A pre-performance conversation with Moscow Patriarchate Choir artistic director Anatoly Grindenko and musicologist Victor Gavenda. *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. These events are free to ticket holders.

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Friday, October 26 at 8:00 p.m.

First Congregational Church
2345 Channing Way, Berkeley

Chamber Music and Orchestra
Moscow Patriarchate Choir
Anatoly Grindenko, artistic director

Program: The 13-member Russian Patriarchate Choir sings medieval chants and Russian folk songs when they perform in Berkeley October 26 at First Congregational Church.

Tickets: \$42.00, 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.

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