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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS THE WEST COAST PREMIERE OF
THE EIFMAN BALLET OF ST. PETERSBURG'S ONEGIN
FRIDAY– SUNDAY, MAY 1 – 3 AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**This production completes Boris Eifman's trilogy of ballets based on
Russian literary classics.**

BERKELEY, March 26, 2009—Russian choreographer **Boris Eifman** brings his new ballet *Onegin* based on Alexander Pushkin's 1830s classic verse novel to Cal Performances on **Friday and Saturday, May 1 and 2 at 8:00 p.m.** and **Sunday, May 3 at 3:00 p.m.** The ballet, which receives its West Coast premiere in Berkeley, tells the story of Eugene Onegin, a careless dandy who kills a friend in a duel and later regrets some of his youthful choices in life and love. The **Eifman Ballet of St. Petersburg**, which was born in the late 1970s, is known for its psychological explorations of new forms of dance expression. Eifman, the company's founder and choreographer, has tapped into several sources of music for *Onegin*, something he has done in the past. *Onegin* is set to the music of **Tchaikovsky's** opera *Yevgeny Onegin* and to compositions by **Alexander Sitkovetsky**, founder of the popular Russian rock band **Autograph**. Eifman has been called "one of the most creative people in Russia" (*The New York Times*).

ONEGIN

Onegin is the last third of Eifman's trilogy of ballets adapted from classics of Russian literature. It is based on Alexander Pushkin's celebrated verse novel, *Eugene Onegin*, which was published in serial form between 1825 and 1832 and which has been called "an encyclopedia of Russian life." (The other two productions in the trilogy—*The Seagull* (2007) based on Chekhov's play, and *Anna Karenina* (2005) based on Tolstoy's novel—received their world and American premieres, respectively, at Cal Performances).

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“When we bring to the stage works of great drama and classic literature, we are following in Jean-Georges Noverre’s tradition, when ballet was about performing serious works of literature,” Eifman recently told the *St. Petersburg Times*. “For me, it is very important to the spirit of the time and the emotional world of Tolstoy or Chekhov.”

In Pushkin’s story, Eugene Onegin moves to the country and strikes up a friendship with a poet named Lensky. A young acquaintance, Tatiana, falls in love with Onegin but he resists her advances; later, Onegin flirts with Tatiana’s sister, Olga, who is Lensky’s fiancée. Lensky challenges Onegin to a duel; Onegin kills Lensky and flees. Years later Onegin meets Tatiana again and tries to woo her, even though she is married, and this time he is rejected.

For the ballet, Eifman has reimagined Eugene Onegin and his fellow characters in the turbulent and controversial 1990s in post-Soviet Russia. “I transported Pushkin’s characters to our times, placing them in new circumstances—more dramatic, even extreme—when the old world is collapsing and life dictates new rules,” Eifman explained. “I needed that experiment in order to answer the question that troubles me: what is the Russian soul today? Has it preserved its uniqueness, its mystery, its attraction?”

EIFMAN BALLET OF ST. PETERSBURG

Begun in the 1970s as simply “The New Ballet,” the company now known as the **Eifman Ballet of St. Petersburg** has a three-decade history of combining relevant themes, deep psychological perception, philosophical ideas, fiery passions, audacious movement, and clear dramatic intent in its remarkable productions. The very creation of a company dedicated to performing works by a single choreographer, **Boris Eifman**, was a new concept for the Russian ballet at that time.

The company presented 27 productions in its first decade, ranging from choreographic miniatures to full-evening ballets. A new type of artist began to emerge from the Eifman troupe: one who was not only a talented dancer, but also a skilled actor, a deft technician, and a performer with a gift for transformation. Eifman productions such as *Master and Margarita* and *Sub-*

Lieutenant Romashov broke through Soviet censorship barriers, and all Eifman ballets plumbed new emotional and spiritual depths.

Today, the well-traveled company is building a new home in St. Petersburg: a Palace of Dance expressly built for ballet as well a school where three ballet troupes will rehearse and perform. A business and cultural center and multimedia space will also be part of the project, which is rising in the St. Petersburg's Prospekt Dobrolyubova district. The first phase of construction has been completed.

BORIS EIFMAN

The artistic director of the Eifman Ballet of St. Petersburg, **Boris Eifman**, has been a rebellious and controversial force in Russian ballet since the 1970s when he left the Soviet dance system and founded the New Ballet in the city then called Leningrad. Born in Siberia and educated at the Vagnova Ballet Academy and the Leningrad Conservatory, Eifman has been a prolific choreographer, creating over 40 ballets in three decades. During Soviet times he was pressured to leave the country because of his refusal to make so-called "Soviet art," but instead he remained in his homeland and chose to forego government subsidies for his troupe. The company toured Russia and played for sold-out houses of fans hungry for original artistic expression; subsequent international tours created legions of fans worldwide.

Because he is interested in the theatrical impact of his productions, Eifman does not restrict himself to classical ballet conventions. His productions sometimes employ rock music, as does *Onegin*, riveting mass action scenes and unexpected moments of stillness. This creative innovation has resulted in Eifman receiving a Russian Golden Mask award, four Golden Soffit awards for theatre from the city of St. Petersburg, and France's Order of Arts and Letters, among other awards.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Eifman Ballet of St. Petersburg** dancing *Onegin* on **Friday and Saturday, May 1 and 2 at 8:00 p.m.** and **Sunday, May 3 at 3:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at \$36, \$48, and \$62. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach

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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 for UCB students; \$15 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 PRESENTS

Friday & Saturday, May 1 & 2 at 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 3 at 3:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Campus
Bancroft Way at College Ave., Berkeley

Dance

Eifman Ballet of St. Petersburg
Boris Eifman, choreographer

Program:

Onegin (2009): music by Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Alexander Sitkovetsky, and Autograph;
choreography by Boris Eifman

Tickets: \$36, \$48 and \$62, 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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