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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 17, 2008

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS GYÖRGY KURTÁG'S
KAFKA FRAGMENTS FEATURING SOPRANO DAWN UPSHAW AND
VIOLINIST GEOFF NUTTALL, DIRECTED BY PETER SELLARS
SUNDAY & MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23 & 24
AT ZELLERBACH PLAYHOUSE**

BERKELEY, October 17, 2008—The notably original Hungarian composer **György Kurtág's** *Kafka Fragments* will be performed by the four-time Grammy Award-winning soprano **Dawn Upshaw** and the charismatic first violinist of the St. Lawrence String Quartet **Geoff Nuttall** **Sunday, November 23 at 7:00 p.m.** and **Monday, November 24 at 8:00 p.m. at Zellerbach Playhouse.** **Peter Sellars**, known for his visionary stagings of new and classic works, directs the production that debuted at Carnegie Hall in 2005, which also featured Upshaw and Nuttall. Comprising 40 short excerpts from **Franz Kafka's** diaries, letters and notebooks, “this natural coupling of writer and composer telegraphs with alliterative grace a century of modernism, a deeply felt spiritual condition and a grasping for personal expression through violently impersonal times” (*International Herald Tribune*). The staging is enhanced by filmmaker **David Machalek's** series of still projections; lighting is by **Jim Ingalls**. *Kafka Fragments* is sung in German with English supertitles.

György Kurtág completed *Kafka Fragments* in 1987, and it is the longest work—a 75-minute duo for soprano and violin—by the reclusive European composer, and is probably his best internationally known composition. The series of brief settings, ranging from less than 20 seconds to more than four minutes, uses short pieces of Kafka's writing such as aphorisms, images and anecdotes. Peter Sellars had wanted to stage the work for more than a decade prior to its 2005 debut. When Upshaw first heard the piece, she found it emotionally “devastating” and was not sure she could manage the material. She spent several years reading more Kafka and listening to more Kurtág before agreeing to participate. Nuttall has referred to the violin portion as “borderline unplayable, some of the nastiest stuff I've ever seen in terms of technique,” according to a 2005 *New York Times* article. “Ultimately, the power of Kurtág's

music lies in its ability to communicate pure emotions in a spare, rugged and stripped-down language.” *Kafka Fragments* will also be presented in Los Angeles and New York City.

GYÖRGY KURTÁG

György Kurtág was born in Lugoj, Banat (Romania), not far from the birthplace of fellow Hungarian György Ligeti. Both young composers hoped to study with Béla Bartók in Budapest in 1945, but Bartók died in the United States and Kurtág went on to study piano, composition and chamber music with other teachers at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. In the early 1950s, the Communist regime in Hungary banned the music of Bartók, Arnold Schoenberg, and middle- and late-period Igor Stravinsky.

To escape this pressure, Kurtág moved to France in 1957, studying music in Paris with Olivier Messiaen, Darius Milhaud and Max Deutsch. He also had consultations with the Hungarian art psychologist Marianne Stein, whose advice was most influential on his future development. While in Paris, he wrote his first string quartet, designating it Opus 1 to mark a decisive break from his compositions to date. He returned to Budapest in 1958, stopping for a few days in Cologne, where he first heard recordings of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Gruppen* and Ligeti's newest electronic music. This experience was important in formulating his new compositional voice.

Kurtág became professor of chamber music at the Liszt Academy in Budapest, where he worked closely with students, saying that “every note has a reason. Players must understand that.” Since the early 1970s, most of his music has involved setting words; he worked closely with singer Adrienne Csengery, who has said that Kurtág sees all his vocal works as operas in disguise.

PETER SELLARS

Celebrated theater, opera and festival director **Peter Sellars** is one of the most innovative and powerful forces in the performing arts in America and abroad, known for his groundbreaking interpretations of classic works. Whether it is Mozart, Handel, Shakespeare, Sophocles or the 16th-century Chinese playwright Tang Xianzu, Sellars strikes a universal chord

with audiences, engaging contemporary social and political issues. He has staged operas at the Chicago Lyric Opera, the Glyndebourne Festival, the Netherlands Opera, the Opéra National de Paris, the Salzburg Festival, and the San Francisco Opera, among others. Following his iconic stagings of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte* in the 1980s, Sellars established a reputation for bringing 20th-century and contemporary operas to the stage, including works by Olivier Messiaen, Paul Hindemith, and György Ligeti. Inspired by the compositions of Kaija Saariaho, Osvaldo Golijov, and Tan Dun, he has guided the creation of productions of their work that have expanded the repertoire of modern opera. He has been a driving force in the creation of many new works with longtime collaborator John Adams, including *Nixon in China*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *El Niño*, *Doctor Atomic* and, most recently, *A Flowering Tree*, which premiered in Vienna in 2006. Sellars is well known to Cal Performances' audiences. His productions of the song-play *I Was Looking at the Ceiling, and Then I Saw the Sky* with music by John Adams and libretto by the late UC Berkeley poet June Jordan and Tang Xianzu's late 16th-century classic *Peony Pavilion* were presented—and premiered—at Cal Performances in 1995 and 2006, respectively. Cal Performances co-commissioned both productions.

Sellars is a professor in the department of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA and a resident curator of the Telluride Film Festival. He is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, the Erasmus Prize, the Sundance Institute Risk-Takers Award, the Gish Prize and was recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

DAWN UPSHAW

Dawn Upshaw has achieved worldwide celebrity as a singer of opera and concert repertoire ranging from the sacred works of Bach to the newest sounds of the 21st century. In 2007, she was named a Fellow of the MacArthur Foundation, the first vocal artist to be awarded the five-year “Genius” prize, and in 2008, she was named a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Her celebrated performances on the opera stage comprise the great Mozart roles (Pamina, Ilia, Susanna, Despina) as well as modern works by Stravinsky, Poulenc and Messiaen. From Salzburg, Paris and Glyndebourne to the Metropolitan Opera, where she began her career in 1984 and has since made nearly 300 appearances, Upshaw has also championed

numerous new works created for her, including *The Great Gatsby* by John Harbison; the Grawemeyer Award-winning opera *L'Amour de Loin* and oratorio *La Passion de Simone* by Kaija Saariaho; John Adams's *Nativity* oratorio *El Niño*; and Osvaldo Golijov's chamber opera *Ainadamar* and song cycle *Ayre*.

Upshaw's 2008–09 season includes the United States premiere of Peter Sellars's production of *La Passion de Simone* at Lincoln Center, a role she reprises with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in January and at the Paris Opéra in June. She opened Carnegie Hall's season in an all-Bernstein program with Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony (broadcast on PBS) and also participated in opening-night festivities with Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Disney Hall. She sings world premiere performances of two new works written for her, by Michael Ward-Bergeman and Maria Schneider.

Upshaw has worked often with Peter Sellars. He has directed her in a staging of the Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho's opera *L'Amour de Loin* at the Helsinki Festival. Other joint projects have included successful productions of Handel's oratorio *Theodora* and John Adams's oratorio *El Niño*.

GEOFF NUTTALL

Violinist **Geoff Nuttall** began playing the violin at the age of eight after moving to London, Ontario, from College Station, Texas. He spent most of his musical studies under the tutelage of Lorand Fenyves at the Banff Centre, the University of Western Ontario, and the University of Toronto, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree. In 1989, he co-founded the St. Lawrence String Quartet, as first violinist of which he has performed over 1,700 concerts throughout North and South America, Europe, Australia and Asia, and has made a number of acclaimed recordings.

In 2005, he performed György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments* at Carnegie Hall and returned to Zankel Hall in 2006 for the In Your Ear Too Festival, performing works for solo violin by Biber and a newly commissioned work by Chris Paul Harman.

Nuttall is now on the faculty at Stanford University, where the St. Lawrence Quartet has been Ensemble-in-Residence since 1999, and can also be heard on a Naxos American Classics CD entitled *Miracles and Mud*, featuring works by Jonathan Berger. He makes his home in the Bay Area with his wife, violinist Livia Sohn.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for *Kafka Fragments* with soprano **Dawn Upshaw Sunday November 23 at 7:00 p.m. and Monday, November 24 at 8:00 p.m.** at Zellerbach Playhouse are priced at **\$68.00**. The Sunday, November 23 performance is sold out. Tickets may become available due to last minute returns. Please check with the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 for availability. Tickets for the Monday, November 24 performance 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. 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 \$10.00 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**

Sunday, November 23 at 7:00 p.m.
Monday, November 24 at 8:00 p.m.

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

Dance

Kafka Fragments

György Kurtág, composer

Peter Sellars, director

Dawn Upshaw, soprano

Geoff Nuttall, violin

Program: Hungarian composer György Kurtág's *Kafka Fragments*, comprised of short excerpts from Franz Kafka's diaries, letters and notebooks, will be performed by the four-time Grammy Award-winning soprano Dawn Upshaw and violinist Geoff Nuttall and directed by Peter Sellars.

Tickets: for Monday, November 24 are \$68.00, 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. **Sunday, November 23 performance is sold out** but tickets may become available due to last minute returns; check with Cal Performances Ticket Office.

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