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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS JAPAN'S CELEBRATED
ZENSHINZA THEATRE COMPANY IN ITS INAUGURAL TOUR OF THE
UNITED STATES NOVEMBER 13 & 14 AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**TWO DISTINCT PROGRAMS INCLUDE 18TH CENTURY *KABUKI* CLASSICS AND
A CONTEMPORARY PRODUCTION ABOUT THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM**

**Lecture/demonstration: Company members will demonstrate kabuki make-up, costume
and gesture on Friday, November 12 at 3:00 p.m. at the Berkeley Art Museum Theater**

**SchoolTime: One-hour performance for Bay Area students will be given on
Friday, November 12 at 11:00 a.m.**

BERKELEY, October 12, 2010—On its first tour of the United States, Japan's oldest and largest repertory theater ensemble **Zenshinza Theatre Company** offers two different programs on **Saturday, November 13, at 8:00 p.m.** and **Sunday, November 14, at 3:00 p.m.** at Zellerbach Hall. On Saturday, the 18th-century kabuki drama *Narukami* ("The Thunder God"), considered one of the 18 greatest plays in the kabuki repertoire and performed in the bravura *aragoto* acting style, depicts the traditional bravery and power of the kabuki hero. Paired with it is the lighthearted dance-farce *Chatsubo* ("The Tea Chest"), featuring the shenanigans of a country bumpkin and a wily thief. On Sunday, the historical drama *Honen and Shinran*, written in 2006, will tell the story of the two monks who established popular Buddhism in Japan 800 years ago. Zenshinza Theatre Company (literally "progressive theater") productions feature elaborate kabuki sets and costumes and live music on traditional instruments, including percussion, flutes and stringed instruments; the three plays are performed in Japanese with English supertitles.

A free and open to the public lecture/demonstration of kabuki make-up, costume and gesture will be given by Zenshinza Theater Company members on **Friday, November 12 from 3:00-4:30 p.m. at the Berkeley Art Museum Theater** at 2626 Bancroft Way on the UC Berkeley campus. This event is presented in association with the Berkeley Art Museum.

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A one-hour *SchoolTime* performance for Bay Area K–12 students will feature Zenshinza Theatre Company’s production of *Chatsubo* on **Friday, November 12**, at **11:00 a.m.** at **Zellerbach Hall**. Tickets are \$5.00 and must be arranged in advance; for further information, call 510.642.9988.

PROGRAM

Zenshinza Theatre Company’s first program on Saturday, November 13, *Narukami* (“The Thunder God”), is written by Tsuuchi Hanjuro, Yasuda Abun and Nakada Mansuke and was first performed in 1724. *Narukami* tells of a priest with supernatural powers who traps the dragon god of rain to spite an emperor who refuses to venerate him. To break the ensuing drought, the emperor sends a beautiful princess to tempt the priest and break the spell; the ensuing encounter is perhaps the most famous seduction scene in all kabuki. When his spell is broken, the priest transforms into the awesome thunder god Narukami and vows to pursue the princess and avenge her treachery. The traditional set includes a *hanamichi* passageway that runs parallel to the stage.

This serious drama is counterbalanced by the lively dance-farce *Chatsubo* (“The Tea Chest”), adapted for kabuki in 1921 by Okamura Shiko and choreographed by Bando Mitsunojo. *Chatsubo* is based on a *kyogen* comedy of the same name; *kyogen*, which means “mad words” or “wild speech,” originated more than seven centuries ago and relies on stock characters, such as gullible masters and wily servants, to tell comical fables. In *Chatsubo*, a country bumpkin is sent to the city to buy a crate of tea; he gets drunk on his way home, and a thief attempts to steal his cargo as he sleeps. The comical dispute plays out before a passing judge, leading to a surprise ending.

The second program on Sunday, November 14, consists of a full-length contemporary drama, *Honen and Shinran*, written by Tajima Sakae and first performed in 2006. It tells the epic story of two monks who in the 13th century established the most widely practiced forms of Buddhism in Japan. (The play was first produced in commemoration of the 800th anniversary of Honen’s death and the 750th anniversary of Shinran’s death.) Thirteenth-century Japan was rife with civil war and saw the rise of the Samurai elite; Honen (1133–1212), distressed by his fellow

monks' lack of response to the famine and destruction experienced by the common people, forms a lay ministry to feed the hungry and tend to the sick. He and his chief disciple, Shinran (1173–1262), are perceived by the elite as a threat and are exiled, which only increases their popularity among the population; today, they are sometimes considered the Martin Luther and John Calvin of Japanese Buddhism. *Honen and Shinran* will be staged in three acts with one intermission; although it is a modern production, its scenic design and lighting are in the tradition of kabuki: “flat, simple, and clear to recall Japanese paintings” (Shimpei Odagiri, *livedesignonline.com*).

ZENSHINZA THEATRE COMPANY

Zenshinza Theatre Company was founded in 1931 by two great kabuki actors of the early 20th century, **Ichikawa Ennosuke** and **Kawarazaki Chojuro**. Zenshinza revives classic dramas of the kabuki repertoire and also creates new works, such as *Honen and Shinran*, in the 400-year-old kabuki tradition. The 70-member company includes 15 vocalists and musicians who play a variety of traditional Japanese percussion, flutes and stringed instruments called *shamisen*. Zenshinza's home theater is in Kichijo-ji, Tokyo, but the company also presents its dramas at the National Theater of Japan. Between home performances and its extensive touring schedule, Zenshinza annually performs for more than 250,000 people throughout Japan.

Zenshinza's founding followed a 1928 tour of the Soviet Union by traditional kabuki players. On that tour, kabuki was seen outside of Japan for the first time. The Japanese actors on the tour were influenced by Russian directors Constantin Stanislavski and Vsevolod Meyerhold to adopt a more realistic acting style. Kabuki techniques, conversely, also influenced theater and cinema in the West. The Zenshinza company was founded on principles unusual for its day: “While traditional kabuki theatre was hierarchical and dominated by the big star actor dynasties, Zenshinza prided itself on its collective, collaborative mode of operation,” wrote Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer in *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*.

Zenshinza was one of the first troupes in Japan to mount full-scale, professional productions of Western dramas, and its actors were the first to appear in motion pictures before World War II. Today, its programs include traditional kabuki, historical dramas, Western theater—, and plays about Japanese Buddhism.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the **Zenshinza Theatre Company** on **Saturday** and **Sunday, November 13** and **14** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$48.00**, **\$60.00**, **\$72.00** and **\$86.00**. 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. 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 three 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 on Cal Performances' Facebook page and at 510-642-9988, press 2 for the rush hotline, three hours prior to a performance only.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, November 12 at 11:00 a.m.
SCHOOLTIME PERFORMANCE

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

Theater

Zenshinza Theatre Company

Program: *Chatsubo* (1921), “The Tea Chest,” adapted by Okamura Shiko and choreographed by Bando Mitsunojyo

Tickets: \$5.00 per student or adult chaperone, available in advance only through Cal Performances at (510) 642-1082. *SchoolTime* performances are open to students in kindergarten through grade 12 in Bay Area public and private schools. Supplemental study guides for the classroom are provided. For more information about the *SchoolTime* program, contact the *SchoolTime* coordinator at Cal Performances by email at eduprograms@calperfs.berkeley.edu or by phone at (510) 642-0212.

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Friday, November 12 at 3:00 p.m.

Berkeley Art Museum Theater
2626 Bancroft Way, Berkeley

Lecture/Demonstration: Company members will give a demonstration of and talk about kabuki costume, make-up and gesture in this free and open to the public event presented in association with the Berkeley Art Museum.

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Saturday, November 13 at 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, November 14 at 3:00 p.m.

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

Theater

Zenshinza Theatre Company

Program:

Saturday, November 13 at 8:00 p.m.: *Narukami* (1724), (“The Thunder God”), by Tsuuchi Hanjuro, Yasuda Abun, and Nakada Mansuke; and *Chatsubo* (1921), “The Tea Chest,” adapted by Okamura Shiko, choreographed by Bando Mitsunojyo.

Sunday, November 14 at 3:00 p.m.: *Honen and Shinran* (2006) by Tajima Sakae.

Tickets: \$48.00, \$60.00, \$72.00 and \$86.00, with special half-price tickets for children 16 and under for all performances; 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.

– Cal Performances –