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CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS
MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP IN *DIDO AND AENEAS*
FEATURING MEZZO-SOPRANO STEPHANIE BLYTHE
SEPTEMBER 16-18 AT ZELLERBACH HALL

Mark Morris will conduct the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale

BERKELEY, August 10, 2011—Cal Performances opens its 2011/2012 Dance series with “one of the great artists of our time” (*The New York Times*), **Mark Morris**, making his Bay Area conducting debut with the **Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale (PBO)** when his company, **Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG)**, brings *Dido and Aeneas* to Berkeley **Friday–Sunday, September 16–18 at Zellerbach Hall**. The music, composed by Henry Purcell and considered the first great English opera, will be performed by several notable vocalists, including the celebrated mezzo-soprano **Stephanie Blythe** singing the double role of Queen Dido and the Sorceress. This is the first time Blythe has appeared at Cal Performances but it is the return engagement of *Dido and Aeneas* which was last in Berkeley in 2000. “Mark Morris’s *Dido and Aeneas* is that remarkable rarity: a work of modern art that looks as though it has come down to us through the ages.” (*The Washington Post*)

DIDO AND AENEAS

Mark Morris’s *Dido and Aeneas* (1989) is a dance adaptation of Henry Purcell’s 1689 opera of the same title, written when Purcell was 30 years old. The story follows Virgil’s tale of the Trojan hero Aeneas’s affair with the Queen of Carthage on his way to founding Rome. In the opera, Dido reluctantly falls in love with Aeneas, only to run afoul of a Sorceress who sends him away, leaving a rueful Dido to kill herself. Choreographed and premiered while MMDG was in residency in Brussels, Belgium, Morris originally danced the roles of Dido and the Sorceress himself; his last performances were presented by Cal Performances in 2000, to great acclaim. “As he said at the time,” biographer Joan Acocella wrote in 1993, “he wanted to expand the expressiveness of male dancers; he wanted to give them what women had.” It wasn’t until 2006, the 25th anniversary of the company, that the work was returned to MMDG’s repertory. This

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year, the Dido/Sorceress role will be danced by a female member of his company, **Amber Star Merkens**, and Aeneas by **Domingo Estrada, Jr.** In addition to mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, baritone **Philip Cutlip** sings Aeneas; soprano **Yulia Van Doren** is Belinda; **Céline Ricci**, Second Woman/Second Witch; and **Brian Thorsett** as the Sailor. The production team includes designers long associated with Morris: **James F. Ingalls** (lighting design), **Christine Van Loon** (costume design) and **Robert Bordo** (set design). “It would be impossible to make too much of what Mark Morris has done with *Dido and Aeneas*, one of the oldest operas extant. He has opened it up, making its beauty accessible through dynamic choreography performed by his Monnaie Dance Group, one of the world’s best modern dance companies” (New York *Newsday*).

MARK MORRIS

Mark Morris was born on August 29, 1956, in Seattle, Washington, where he studied with Verla Flowers and Perry Brunson. He formed the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1980, and has since created more than 130 works for the company. From 1988-1991, he was Director of Dance at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, the national opera house of Belgium. Among the works created during his time there were three evening-length dances: *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*; *The Hard Nut* and *Dido and Aeneas*. In 1990, he founded the White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov. Morris is also much in demand as a ballet choreographer and has created seven works for the San Francisco Ballet since 1994 plus received commissions from many others. His work is also in the repertory of the Pacific Northwest Ballet, Boston Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, New Zealand Ballet, Houston Ballet, English National Ballet, and The Royal Ballet. Morris is noted for his musicality and has been described as “undeviating in his devotion to music.” He has worked extensively in opera, directing and choreographing productions for The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Gotham Chamber Opera, English National Opera, and The Royal Opera, Covent Garden. In 1991, he was named a Fellow of the MacArthur Foundation. He has received eleven honorary doctorates to date. In 2006, Morris received the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Mayor’s Award for Arts & Culture and a WQXR Gramophone Special Recognition Award “for being an American ambassador for classical music at home and abroad.” He is the subject of a biography, *Mark Morris* by Joan Acocella and a volume of photographs and critical essays entitled *Mark*

Morris' L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato: A Celebration. Morris is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society. In 2007, he received the Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival lifetime achievement award. In 2010, he received the prestigious Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society.

STEPHANIE BLYTHE

Stephanie Blythe, considered one of the finest mezzo-sopranos of the day, has sung in many of the renowned opera houses in the U.S. and Europe and with many of the world's finest orchestras. This season, she appeared as Fricka in the Metropolitan Opera's new productions of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* and made her debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *The Mikado*. She also appeared in concert at the Concertgebouw and with the Collegiate Chorale in Carnegie Hall. This summer she appears in concerts at the Cincinnati May Festival and the Tanglewood Festival, and next season she returns to the Metropolitan Opera for *Rodelinda*, *Aida* and the complete Ring Cycle, and appears with the New York Philharmonic. Blythe has received many awards including Musical America's Vocalist of the Year for 2009, 2007 *Opera News* Award and the 1999 Richard Tucker Award. (<http://www.opus3artists.com/artists/stephanie-blythe>)

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

The **Mark Morris Dance Group** was formed in 1980 and gave its first concert that year in New York City. The company's touring schedule steadily expanded to include cities both in the U.S. and in Europe. In 1988, MMDG was invited to become the national dance company of Belgium, and spent three years in residence at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels. The company returned to the United States in 1991 as one of the world's leading dance companies, performing across the country and at major international festivals.

Based in Brooklyn, New York, the company has maintained and strengthened its ties to several cities around the world, most notably its West Coast home Cal Performances in Berkeley and its Midwest home the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in Urbana, Illinois. MMDG also appears regularly in New York City, Boston and Seattle. MMDG was the first dance

company to appear at the Mostly Mozart Festival in 2002 and the Tanglewood Music Festival in 2003 and has since been invited to both festivals annually. The company's London seasons have garnered two Laurence Olivier Awards (1997 and 2002), and in 1995 the troupe was awarded the Hamada Prize, the Edinburgh Festival's highest honor.

MMDG is noted for its commitment to live music and collaborates with leading orchestras, opera companies and musicians such as cellist Yo-Yo Ma, Indian composer Zakir Hussain, The Bad Plus, pianists Emanuel Ax, Yoko Nozaki and Ethan Iverson and English National Opera, among others.

The Mark Morris Dance Group first came to Cal Performances in 1987, and since 1994 has returned every year. Its visits to Zellerbach Hall often include premieres, including the U.S. premieres of Morris's staging of Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Platée* (1998) and Henry Purcell's *King Arthur* (2006); and West Coast premieres of *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (1994), *The Hard Nut* (1996), *Mozart Dances* (2007), and *Romeo & Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare* (2008). Most recently, Berkeley audiences saw the West Coast premieres of *Visitation* (2009) and *Empire Garden* (2009). (<http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/>)

PHILHARMONIA BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

Since its inception in 1981, San Francisco's **Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra** has been dedicated to historically informed performance of baroque, classical and early-romantic music on original instruments. Under music director Nicholas McGegan, PBO was named 2004 Ensemble of the Year by Musical America, and, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, it has become "an ensemble for early music as fine as any in the world today." PBO has a long association with MMDG. In 1990, the band appeared at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in *Dido and Aeneas*. Subsequent performances have included Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, presented by Cal Performances in 2000, 2003 and most recently 2008; and the American premiere of Morris's production of Rameau's ballet-opera *Platée*, which was the tour de force of the 1998 Berkeley Festival & Exhibition. *Platée* was again performed in 2001 in Berkeley and in Los Angeles. Among the most recorded period instrument ensembles, PBO's

live recording of Handel's oratorio *Susanna* received a Grammy nomination and a 1991 Gramophone Magazine Award for best baroque vocal recording. (<http://www.philharmonia.org/>)

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Mark Morris Dance Group Friday, September 16—Sunday, September 18** at Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$30.00, \$50.00, \$62.00, \$76.00, \$94.00** and **\$110.00**. 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 \$5.00 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

Friday & Saturday, September 16 & 17, at 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, September 18, at 3:00 p.m.

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

Dance

Mark Morris Dance Group

Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale

Mark Morris, conductor

Stephanie Blythe, mezzo-soprano

Philip Cutlip, baritone

Yulia Van Doren, soprano

Céline Ricci, soprano

Brian Thorsett, tenor

Program:

Dido and Aeneas (1989): music by Henry Purcell; choreography by Mark Morris.

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