

FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE

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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS REZO GABRIADZE'S
FORBIDDEN CHRISTMAS OR THE DOCTOR AND THE PATIENT
STARRING MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV
JUNE 16-20 IN ZELLERBACH PLAYHOUSE**

BERKELEY, May 10, 2004 – The West Coast premiere of *Forbidden Christmas or The Doctor and The Patient*, a new work written, designed and directed by acclaimed Georgian artist **Rezo Gabriadze**, and starring **Mikhail Baryshnikov**, comes to UC Berkeley's **Zellerbach Playhouse Wednesday, June 16** through **Sunday, June 20**. Set in the 1950s in a small Georgian village, a soldier (played by Baryshnikov) returns from war to find his sweetheart freshly married to his best friend. Traumatized by the betrayal, the soldier-turned-patient and a doctor undertake a perilous and emotional journey one stormy Christmas Eve. A stunning theatrical event that includes a puppet and flying scenery, the play is part absurdist-drama, part fantasy-allegory, addressing loss, madness, self-discovery, and love with poignancy and humor. "Rezo Gabriadze is an artist of astonishing range," Mikhail Baryshnikov notes, "I am honored to be able to commission a new play by him, and to be apart of this extraordinary team of actors and collaborators."

Rezo Gabriadze, whose work has rarely been presented in the United States, developed this production in conjunction with Baryshnikov Dance Foundation. Later this summer *Forbidden Christmas or The Doctor and The Patient*, will be performed at Spoleto Festival USA, Barcelona's Festival d'Estiu, and the Lincoln Center Festival.

REZO GABRIADZE

"Rezo Gabriadze's theater is a reflection of his soul as an artist and a poet. The results of his creative work are wonderful" (*Le Figaro*). Internationally renowned artist, writer, stage and screen director, producer and marionettist **Rezo Gabriadze** was born in 1936 and raised in Kutaisi in Western Georgia. The Georgian civil war between 1992 and 1994 forced Gabriadze and other

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Georgian intellectuals without clear native birth lineages to depart, and during this period Gabriadze traveled to Russia, France and Switzerland. Gabriadze returned in 1995 to find the theater and café he had built in the capital city of Tbilisi ruined and his actors and puppeteers searching for food and shelter. A year later, Gabriadze began to create *The Battle of Stalingrad: A Requiem*, a work of puppetry about the German invasion of the Russian city during World War II, which also served to reflect the director's personal sentiments regarding the recent civil war. The work's world premiere took place that same year in Dijon, France, and became a popular and critical success at festivals in Weimar, Berlin, Avignon, and Paris. In 2002, the production received its United States premiere at the Kennedy Center, and its New York premiere at the Lincoln Center Festival. "Imagine watching a gorgeous and primitive funeral through the wrong end of a telescope—the ache of grief and the precision of ritual perceived remotely but with great emotional clarity—and you will have some idea of the effect of *The Battle of Stalingrad* ... artistry it is, beautiful, poignant, and lingering," wrote *The New York Times* of the work's intense emotional impact. *Forbidden Christmas or The Doctor and The Patient*, which promises similar visual and emotional power is written, conceived, and designed entirely by Gabriadze.

In addition to his skills as a theatrical and cinematic writer and director, Rezo Gabriadze is a painter, sculptor, and master book illustrator. His work has been shown in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Lausanne, Rome, Paris, and Berlin, and was featured in Munich's *From Einstein to Tarkovsky* exhibition. For his film work, Gabriadze has earned the Grand Prize of the International Moscow Film Festival and the Nike Prize, among others. Other awards for artistic accomplishment include the Golden Sofit, the Golden Mask, and the Triumph, Russia's highest artistic and intellectual award.

MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV

Mikhail Baryshnikov, "the greatest living dancer" (*Time* magazine), was born in Riga, Latvia, of Russian parents. He began studying ballet there, and after a few years, was accepted by the Vaganova School in Leningrad where he studied under the renowned teacher Alexander Pushkin. At 18, he entered the Kirov Ballet as a soloist and remained with the company from 1968 to 1974, earning acclaim for his technical brilliance, his gravity-defying leaps and his dramatic interpretations of classical roles. In 1974, Baryshnikov, disheartened by the artistic stagnation and

limited challenges in Soviet ballet, defected to the West at age 26. He settled in New York City as a principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre, where his virtuosity and genius awed ballet fans around the world. In 1979, Baryshnikov moved from Ballet Theater to work with George Balanchine at New York City Ballet. There he broadened his repertoire, learning more than 20 new roles in only 15 months with the company. In 1980, he returned to American Ballet Theatre, serving for ten years as artistic director and nurturing a new generation of dancers and choreographers. During his tenure with the company, he also staged and choreographed four full-length ballets. Since then Baryshnikov has danced more than 100 different works in his illustrious career, from the classic *Giselle* and *Don Quixote* to Twyla Tharp's *Push Comes to Shove* and George Balanchine's *Apollo*. He has been a leading guest artist on the world's greatest ballet stages. Many of the world's foremost choreographers have created works specifically for him.

In addition to his dancing, Baryshnikov has proved himself a skillful actor, starring in several feature films, including 1977's *The Turning Point* (which earned him an Oscar nomination), *White Nights* (1985), *Dancers* (1987), and *Company Business* (1991). He has appeared numerous times on television, most recently in the final season of the wildly popular HBO series *Sex and the City*. In 1989, he appeared on Broadway in Steven Berkoff's production of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, earning a Tony nomination and a Drama Critics Award. Rezo Gabriadze's *Forbidden Christmas or The Doctor and The Patient* marks Baryshnikov's only other United States theatrical stage performance.

Since 1990, Baryshnikov has been director and dancer with the White Oak Dance Project, a group he co-founded with choreographer Mark Morris. The small, accomplished troupe of dancers commissions and performs new and reconstructed works by both emerging and master choreographers. Since its founding the company has commissioned 43 new works and presented more than 40 international tours. Through White Oak, Baryshnikov uses his remarkable talents to expand the repertoire of American modern dance. Through spring of 2004 Baryshnikov continues to dance *Solos with Piano or Not...an Evening of Music and Dance*, a program of works by choreographers Lucinda Childs, Michael Clark, Cesc Gelabert, Tere O'Connor, Eliot Feld, and Ruth Davidson Hahn. Of Baryshnikov's performance in *Solos with Piano or Not* at Cal Performances in June 2003, the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote: "At 55, Baryshnikov plies his

trade with wonder, grace and more than a touch of genius...the man looks almost as beautiful now as he did a generation ago, and his charisma grows with the passing decades. No one holds the stage with as much ease and command." Proceeds from the tour are used for the construction of the Baryshnikov Arts Center, which is slated to open in late summer 2004. Located in New York City on the top three floors of a new six-story complex named "W. 37th Street Arts," the Baryshnikov Arts Center will include four dance studios, office space, and access to a 300-seat theater. The Center will be an international, interdisciplinary home for young and established artists to use as a creative laboratory, a meeting place, and a performing space in which to experiment and create new work.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Rezo Gabriadze's *Forbidden Christmas or The Doctor and The Patient*** starring **Mikhail Baryshnikov**, on **Wednesday–Sunday, June 16–20** in Zellerbach Playhouse, are priced at **\$65.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. For more information, call the Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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Cal Performances' presentation of *Forbidden Christmas or The Doctor and The Patient* is sponsored by Peet's Coffee & Tea.

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CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

Wednesday–Friday, June 16–18 at 8:00 p.m. **Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus**
Saturday, June 19 at 2:00 & 8:00 p.m. Bancroft Way at Telegraph, Berkeley
Sunday, June 20 at 3:00 p.m.

Special Event/Theater

Rezo Gabriadze's *Forbidden Christmas or The Doctor and The Patient*
featuring **Mikhail Baryshnikov**

Program: Staged for five actors, and starring Mikhail Baryshnikov, Rezo Gabriadze's inventive synthesis of art, drama, poetry, music and movement is set in a Georgian village and tells the tale of lost cultures, dreams, and a forbidden Christmas.

Tickets: \$65.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door.
