

FOR IMMEDIATE
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HARK! MARK MORRIS' HILARIOUS AND HEROIC HOLIDAY HIT RETURNS TO BERKELEY!

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

THE HARD NUT

**MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP'S ACCLAIMED INTERPRETATION OF THE HOLIDAY
NUTCRACKER BALLET DECEMBER 12 – 21 IN ZELLERBACH HALL**

SCHOOLTIME: Mark Morris Dance Group performs excerpts from *The Hard Nut* for Bay Area students, Wednesday, December 17 at 11:00 a.m.

BERKELEY, November 6, 2003 – In a vinyl-clad '60s suburban household, tales of bewitched princesses, international pursuit and true romance unfold in **Mark Morris'** ingenious transmutation of the *Nutcracker* ballet, *The Hard Nut*. After a one-year hiatus, Mark Morris returns his beloved holiday invention to Cal Performances for its seventh season **December 12 - 21** in Zellerbach Hall. Merry episodes of *noël* naughtiness share the spotlight with the exquisite and tender unfurling of childhood dreams, as Morris and cartoon artist **Charles Burns** make an effortless *jeté* from 19th-century bourgeoisie German materialism to its obvious American counterpart in the schmaltzy, swinging 1960s. "Morris' choreography is formally dazzling, uproariously funny," said the *San Francisco Chronicle* on the show's West Coast debut at Zellerbach Hall in 1996. "[It] deepens our love of the original...and makes us smile and marvel at the outrageous originality of Morris' genius in retelling it." As part of Cal Performances' *SchoolTime* program, the Mark Morris Dance Group will perform excerpts from *The Hard Nut* for Bay Area students **Wednesday, December 17 at 11:00 a.m.** in Zellerbach Hall.

In *The Hard Nut*, Mark Morris combines popular, modern and classical dance choreography to imbue E.T.A. Hoffmann's original "The Nutcracker and the Mouseking" fairy tale with new life, inviting the audience to experience **Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky's** splendid music in a holiday setting like never before. Cal Performances director **Robert Cole** will conduct members of

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the **Berkeley Symphony Orchestra** with the **UC Berkeley Women's Chorale** and **Perfect Fifth** choral ensemble in Tchaikovsky's complete *Nutcracker* ballet score.

THE HARD NUT

“Mr. Morris’s handsome, witty and moving production remains as savvy as it is theatrically winning,” writes the *Wall Street Journal* of last year’s production in Brooklyn of *The Hard Nut*. “And as time passes, his idiosyncratic staging stands to become as famous and lasting as Balanchine’s traditional rendering.” Unlike Alexandre Dumas’ familiar abridged version of the *Nutcracker* story for the 1892 Petipa/Ivanov ballet, *The Hard Nut* garners its title from the slightly sinister fairy tale plot of Hoffmann’s original story-within-a-story of “The Nutcracker and the Mouseking”: the evil Rat Queen, who has disfigured young Princess Pirlipat, offers an all-but-impossible challenge—the girl will regain her beauty if a young man can crack a carefully concealed “hard nut” with his teeth. Drosselmeier, the kind family friend, searches the world over and finds the hidden nut 15 years later back at home, where a suitor who is up to the challenge finally emerges. Throughout *The Hard Nut*, Morris never shies from the mysterious, but rather allows Marie to embrace the unknown on her extraordinary journey into adulthood. Graphic artist **Charles Burns**—known as the creator of “Dog Boy,” made popular by the character’s appearances on MTV’s *Liquid Television*, and such comic book fantasies as *Hard Boiled Defective Stories*, *Big Baby* and *Misterios de la Carne*—conjured the ideas for designs that place the Stahlbaum family, Marie, and the Prince in a variety of imaginative pop-art settings.

The Hard Nut premiered at Belgium’s Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in 1991; it was Morris’ final production before leaving his post as Director of Dance at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, the national opera house of Belgium. “It was my last shot, and I wanted it to be big and beautiful,” Morris told the *Oakland Tribune* in 1997. It was Morris’s parting gift to his European hosts, and was greeted with unanimous critical acclaim and uproarious applause. The production was filmed for PBS’ *Great Performances: Dance in America* series, and was first broadcast in December 1992. Cal Performances presented the West Coast premiere of *The Hard Nut* in December 1996 at Zellerbach Hall, and re-mounted the production exclusively for six successive seasons following the premiere. Because the production is large, with many dancers playing multiple parts, and features a live orchestra, chorus, and full staging, the show does not tour, and to date has only been seen in this country in Berkeley (1996 – 2001; 2003) and Brooklyn (1993 and 2002).

CAST, DIRECTORS AND ARTISTS

The cast of *The Hard Nut* retains many of the familiar *Nutcracker* characters, and features the return of many well-known MMDG members in their popular gender-bending roles: **Rob Besserer** (Drosselmeier), **Lauren Grant** (Marie), **David Leventhal** (Nutcracker/Young Drosselmeier), **June Omura** (Fritz), **Julie Worden** (Louise/Princess Pirlipat), **Kraig Patterson** (Housekeeper/Nurse), **Mara Reiner** (Barbie Doll), **Noah Vinson** (Robot) and **Utafumi Takemura** (Rat King). New casting features **John Heginbotham** in the role of Mrs. Stahlbaum/Queen, formerly performed by Peter Wing Healey. **Barry Alterman**, General Director of the Mark Morris Dance Group, is featured in the role of Marie's father, Dr. Stahlbaum, and doubles as the King in the dream sequence. Morris himself and the rest of the Mark Morris Dance Group join the principals as Party Guests, Rat Soldiers, G.I. Joes, Snowflakes, Suitors, Spaniards, Arabians, Chinese, Russians, Frenchmen, and Flowers.

Sets for *The Hard Nut*, based on Charles Burns' ideas, were designed by **Adrienne Lobel**, who also conceived the scenic design for John Adams' opera *Nixon in China* and Morris' production of Rameau's *Platée*; costumes were created by **Martin Pakledinaz**; and lighting was designed by **James F. Ingalls**.

Robert Cole, Artistic Director of Cal Performances, again conducts members of the **Berkeley Symphony Orchestra** and the **UC Berkeley Women's Chorale** and **Perfect Fifth** for the Berkeley production of *The Hard Nut*, as he has done in previous years. Mr. Cole served as Associate Conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and appeared as a guest conductor with the Hartford Ballet, the Boston Civic Orchestra, the Florida Philharmonic, the Sacramento, Pasadena and Chautauqua symphony orchestras, and many other symphonic, dance and operatic organizations. He was Music and Executive Director of the Ballet Society of Los Angeles, and has conducted and produced opera and musical comedy in California and New York. In recent seasons Mr. Cole conducted performances of Vivaldi's *Gloria* for the Mark Morris Dance Group at the University of Illinois, the opening concert of the Lake Tahoe Music Festival with the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra; and last year's *The Hard Nut* performances at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. A graduate of the University of Southern California School of Music, he studied conducting with Leonard Bernstein and Leon Barzin at the Tanglewood Music Center, with Hans Swarowsky in Europe, and with Richard Lert.

THE MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

The Mark Morris Dance Group began performing at Cal Performances in 1987, and has returned annually since 1994. The company's fall 2003 visit featured a reprise of Morris' evening-length masterpiece *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, and the world premiere of *All Fours*, set to the music of Béla Bartók. Last season, Morris presented the world premiere of *Something Lies Beyond the Scene*, his singular take on the music of William Walton and the poems of Edith Sitwell. 2001 saw an encore presentation of Rameau's comic opera-ballet *Platee* as well as a preview performance of the widely acclaimed *V*, and 2000 featured the American premiere of the English National Opera production of Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts*. Past seasons in Berkeley have also witnessed the world stage premiere of *Falling Down Stairs*, created by Morris to Bach's Suite No. 3 for Unaccompanied Cello, performed by cellist Yo-Yo Ma (March 1997); the world premiere of *Rhymes With Silver*, with a commissioned score by Lou Harrison (March 1997); the West Coast premiere of Morris' production of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (October 1995); the world premiere of *World Power*, choreographed to the music of Lou Harrison (October 1995); and *Kolam*, a work commissioned by Cal Performances as part of Yo-Yo Ma's *Silk Road Project* in Berkeley (April 2002), with musical accompaniment by Ma, Zakir Hussain, Ethan Iverson, and Ben Street.

MARK MORRIS

Director, choreographer, and dancer **Mark Morris** grew up in Seattle, Washington, where he studied with Verla Flowers and Perry Bronson. He began his professional career dancing for an eclectic group of companies: the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, Hannah Kahn Dance Company, Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians, Eliot Feld Ballet, and the Koleda Balkan Dance Ensemble. In 1980, he formed the Mark Morris Dance Group, now one of America's leading dance companies. Its talent was recognized abroad, and in 1988 Mark Morris and his company accepted positions respectively as Director of Dance and National Dance Company of Belgium for the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, the state opera house, where they remained for three years. Morris' time in Brussels was a highly creative period as he completed three acclaimed evening-length works: *The Hard Nut*; *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*; and *Dido & Aeneas*.

In 1990, with Mikhail Baryshnikov, Morris founded the White Oak Dance Project. The following year, he was named a fellow of the MacArthur Foundation. In addition to choreographing more than 100 works for the Mark Morris Dance Group, he has also set new pieces on the San Francisco Ballet, Paris Opera Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre. The Mark Morris Dance Center, at the corner of Flatbush and Lafayette Avenues in Brooklyn, was completed in September 2001. Primarily used as a home base for the company and as a dance school, the Center's three studios, which range in size and include the largest unobstructed dance studio in New York City, are available for non-profit dance companies to rent at subsidized rates. The Center was honored with a 2002 "Building Brooklyn" award from the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. The awards recognize construction projects that have had a positive impact on the borough's economy and quality of life.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Mark Morris Dance Group** in *The Hard Nut* in Zellerbach Hall **Friday, December 12 – Sunday, December 21** (no performances Dec. 15-17), are priced at **\$32.00, \$46.00** and **\$56.00**. 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. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded).

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Cal Performances thanks Linda Rawlings for her generous support of this presentation of the Mark Morris Dance Group.

Wells Fargo is the corporate sponsor of Cal Performances' presentation of *The Hard Nut*.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, December 12 at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 13 at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 14 at 3:00 p.m.
Thursday & Friday, December 18 & 19 at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 20 at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 21 at 3:00 p.m.

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

Dance

Mark Morris Dance Group

The Hard Nut

Members of the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra

Robert Cole, conductor

UC Berkeley Women's Chorale and Perfect Fifth

Mark Sumner, director

Program: The Mark Morris Dance Group returns to Cal Performances with *The Hard Nut*, Morris' critically acclaimed interpretation of the traditional *Nutcracker* ballet, set to Tchaikovsky's original score. Highlights include a Christmas party filled with bawdy bell-bottomed guests, the legendary dancing snowflakes, and a show-stopping "Waltz of the Flowers."

Tickets: \$32.00, \$46.00, and \$56.00, 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.

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Wednesday, December 17 at 11:00 a.m.

SCHOOLTIME PERFORMANCE

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Telegraph, Berkeley

Mark Morris Dance Group

Program: The Mark Morris Dance Group performs excerpts from *The Hard Nut* for Bay Area students, which features the search around the world for the elusive "hard nut"; the *pas de deux* between Marie and her Nutcracker Prince; the world-renowned "Waltz of the Flowers;" and the endearing dance of the Snowflakes.

Tickets: \$3.00 per student or adult chaperone, available in advance only through Cal Performances at (510) 642-1082. *SchoolTime* performances are open to students in grades 2 through 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.