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**JOYOUS HOLIDAY FUN RETURNS TO BERKELEY!
CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS *THE HARD NUT*, MARK MORRIS DANCE
GROUP'S SPIRITED INTERPRETATION OF THE *NUTCRACKER* BALLET,
DECEMBER 9-18 IN ZELLERBACH HALL**

**ROBERT COLE LEADS MEMBERS OF THE BERKELEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND THE
UC BERKELEY WOMEN'S CHORALE IN THE FULL TCHAIKOVSKY SCORE**

**SCHOOLTIME: Mark Morris Dance Group performs excerpts from *The Hard Nut* for
Bay Area students, Wednesday, December 14 at 11:00 a.m.**

BERKELEY, November 3, 2005 – “Tremulously heartwarming” (*Guardian*, London) with “verve, wit, [and] arresting beauty” (*Sunday Independent*, London) sums up the rave reviews garnered by **Mark Morris's** *The Hard Nut* during its sold-out 2004 UK engagement. This crowd-pleasing adaptation of the holiday *Nutcracker* ballet by the Mark Morris Dance Group returns to Zellerbach Hall for nine performances **December 9 – 18**. Merry episodes of Noël mischief and comic characterizations share the spotlight with the warm and tender love story at the center of **Tchaikovsky's** score. 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. For the eighth season, Cal Performances Director **Robert Cole** will conduct Tchaikovsky's complete *Nutcracker* ballet score; members of the **Berkeley Symphony Orchestra** and the **UC Berkeley Women's Chorale**, under the direction of **Mark Sumner**, will perform. “By definition, classic ballets do not lose their appeal - but the parodies and rewrites they spawn are often quick to date,” observed the London *Guardian*. “Mark Morris's rude, funny and romantic version of the *Nutcracker* is, however, already 13 years old, and parts of it look even sparkier and more resonant than at its premiere.”

THE HARD NUT

Unlike Alexandre Dumas' familiar bowdlerized version of the *Nutcracker* story for the 1892 Petipa/Ivanov ballet, *The Hard Nut* garners its title from the fairy tale plot of Hoffmann's original story-within-a-story of “The Nutcracker and the Mouseking.” In the story, the evil Rat

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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, with his teeth, a carefully concealed "hard nut." Drosselmeier, the kind family friend, searches the world over and eventually finds the nut at which point a suitor who is up to the challenge emerges.

The Hard Nut premiered in Belgium in 1991; it was Morris's parting gift to his European hosts before leaving his post as Director of Dance at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, the national opera house of Belgium. The production was greeted with unanimous critical acclaim and uproarious applause. Cal Performances presented the West Coast premiere of *The Hard Nut* in December 1996 at Zellerbach Hall, and has re-mounted the production every year with the exception of 2002 and 2004, when the production was presented at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and at London's Sadler's Wells, respectively. The London critical acclaim went deeper than praise for choreography and design, "Morris's eye for children's inner lives [is] piercingly acute" hails *The Telegraph*, London.

CAST, DIRECTORS AND ARTISTS

The cast of *The Hard Nut* retains many of the familiar *Nutcracker* characters in addition to G.I. Joes and Barbie Dolls of a 1960s American household. This year's casting features two important changes: for the first time, **Craig Biesecker** will portray the role of Drosselmeier, previously held by Rob Besserer; and **Guillermo Resto**, a MMDG company member from 1983-2002, returns to the company to assume the parts of Dr. Stahlbaum and the King. Returning to familiar roles are **Lauren Grant** (Marie), **David Leventhal** (Nutcracker/Young Drosselmeier), **June Omura** (Fritz), **Julie Worden** (Louise/Princess Pirlipat), **John Heginbotham** (Mrs. Stahlbaum/Queen), **Kraig Patterson** (Housekeeper/Nurse), **Utafumi Takemura** (Barbie Doll and Rat King), and **Seth Williams** (Robot). Morris himself and the rest of the Mark Morris Dance Group join the principals as Party Guests, Rat Soldiers, G.I. Joes, Snow, Suitors, Spaniards, Arabians, Chinese, Russians, Frenchmen, and Flowers.

Sets for *The Hard Nut* are based on ideas by **Charles Burns**. Longtime collaborators **Adrienne Lobel** and **James F. Ingalls** designed the sets and lighting respectively, with the

costumes created by **Martin Pakledinaz**. Lobel also conceived the scenic design for Morris's production of Rameau's *Platée* and for John Adams' opera *Nixon in China*.

Robert Cole, Director of Cal Performances and the Berkeley Festival & Exhibition, celebrates his tenth year of conducting *The Hard Nut*, eight engagements in Berkeley and one season each at Sadler's Wells in London and the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. 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. 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. He has conducted concerts for the Lake Tahoe Summer Music Festival in Lake Tahoe, California, and is Principal Guest Conductor of the Perm (Russia) Opera & Ballet Theater.

The **Mark Morris Dance Group** will celebrate 25 years of extraordinary dance and music this season with more than 100 performances on two continents, highlighted by five world premieres. The group first came to Cal Performances in 1987, and since 1994 it has returned every year. Its visits to Zellerbach Hall often include world premieres: this fall *Candleflowerdance* set to Stravinsky's *Serenade for Piano in A* was presented; *Rock of Ages*, set to Franz Schubert's *Nocturne*, first appeared here in 2004; 2003 featured *All Fours*; 2002 saw the world premiere of *Something Lies Beyond the Scene*, Morris' singular take on the music of William Walton and the poems of Edith Sitwell; as well as *Kolam*, a work commissioned by Cal Performances as part of Yo-Yo Ma's *Silk Road Project*, with musical accompaniment by Ma, Zakir Hussain, Ethan Iverson, and Ben Street. In 2001 MMDG delivered an encore presentation of Rameau's comic opera-ballet *Platée* as well as a preview performance of *V* (called "one of the few great works that modern dance has produced in a decade" by the *New York Times*), and 2000 featured the American premiere *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* (March 1997); the West Coast premiere of Morris' production of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (October 1995); and the world premiere of *World Power*, choreographed to the music of Lou Harrison (October 1995).

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's 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 the American Ballet Theatre. In fall 2001, the Dance Group opened the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, New York providing a home for the company, rehearsal space for the dance community, outreach programs

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Mark Morris Dance Group's *The Hard Nut*** in Zellerbach Hall **Friday, December 9 – Sunday, December 18** (no performances Dec. 12-14), are priced at **\$32.00, \$48.00** and **\$60.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at Tickets.com; 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 \$2.00 discount. For more information, call the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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Cal Performances' 2005/2006 Centennial Season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, December 9 at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 10 at 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 11 at 3:00 p.m.
Thursday & Friday, December 15 & 16 at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 17 at 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 18 at 3:00 p.m.

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

Special Event Dance

Mark Morris Dance Group

The Hard Nut

Members of the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra

Robert Cole, conductor

UC Berkeley Women's Chorale

Mark Sumner, director

Program: The Mark Morris Dance Group returns to Cal Performances with *The Hard Nut*, Mark Morris's critically acclaimed adaptation of the traditional *Nutcracker* ballet—complete with a Christmas party scene filled with amusing (and rather unruly) guests, the legendary dancing snowflakes, and a show-stopping “Waltz of the Flowers.”

Tickets: \$32.00, \$48.00, and \$60.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at Tickets.com; and at the door.

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(Calendar information continues on the next page.)

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Wednesday, December 14 at 11:00 a.m.

SCHOOLTIME PERFORMANCE

Dance

Mark Morris Dance Group

The Hard Nut

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Telegraph, Berkeley

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 show-stopping “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.