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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 10, 2009

**THE MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP
RETURNS TO ITS WEST COAST HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS
THE HARD NUT
MARK MORRIS'S ACCLAIMED *NUTCRACKER* BALLET
DECEMBER 11–20 AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, with Robert Cole Conducting,
Performs the Full Tchaikovsky Score**

BERKELEY, November 10, 2009—The holidays' most delectable sugar plum, **Mark Morris's *The Hard Nut***, returns to **Zellerbach Hall Friday–Sunday, December 11–13 and Thursday–Sunday, December 17–20**. “Morris’s choreography is formally dazzling, uproariously funny. It deepens our love of the original and makes us smile and marvel at the outrageous originality of Morris’s genius in retelling it” (*San Francisco Chronicle*). A Bay Area holiday favorite, this is the 10th season the **Mark Morris Dance Group** (MMDG) has performed this festive production of **Pyotr Il’yich Tchaikovsky’s** beloved *Nutcracker* ballet with its tale of childhood hopes and fears, fairytale menace and life-renewing love in Berkeley. Sets and costumes for *The Hard Nut* are based on the concept of comic-book artist and illustrator **Charles Burns**, and were designed by longtime MMDG collaborators **Adrienne Lobel** (sets), **Martin Pakledinaz** (costumes) and **James F. Ingalls** (lighting). Maestro **Robert Cole** will conduct the **Berkeley Symphony Orchestra** in Tchaikovsky’s complete *Nutcracker* ballet score. **The Children of the Piedmont Choirs Ensemble**, under the direction of **Robert Geary**, once again lend their angelic voices. “The ‘Waltz of the Snowflakes’ alone is worth the price of a ticket” (*The Guardian*).

“**An Evening with Mark Morris**” will be held on **Wednesday, December 16** at the Pacific Film Archive. Beginning at 7:00 p.m., three films will be screened each significant to and introduced by Mark Morris. The event will include *Cello Suite #3: Falling Down Stairs* (1997), the Emmy-winning documentary about Mark Morris Dance Group’s first collaboration with cellist Yo-Yo Ma; Charlie Chaplin’s *The Rink* (1916); and Vincente Minnelli’s *Cabin in the*

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Sky (1943). For the evening's schedule and tickets, call 510.642.5249. This is presented by Cal Performances in association with the Pacific Film Archive.

Osher Life Long Learning Institute is offering two courses associated with Cal Performances' events: "Vocal Music that Touches the Heart" and "Cal Performances' Dance Series." *The Hard Nut* is included in the dance course. Enrollment in a course ensures one discounted ticket per performance highlighted in class. For schedules and enrollment, visit www.oli.berkeley.edu or call 510.642.9934.

THE HARD NUT

Mark Morris updates E.T.A. Hoffmann's classic fairy tale—the basis for *The Nutcracker* ballet—by setting it in the swingin' 70s with dancing Barbie dolls, go-go boots, G.I. Joe soldiers, leaping snowflakes, inspired gender-bending casting plus 93 costume changes, over 60 set pieces and props including, 20 lbs. of confetti for the "Waltz of the Snowflakes" scene—all set to Tchaikovsky's glorious score. *The Hard Nut* takes its title from *The Nutcracker and the Mouseking*, the slightly sinister fairy-tale plot of Hoffmann's original story-within-a-story: 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 the "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. An experience for the whole family, it is "improbably touching...it frankly celebrates all that is familiar about the beloved ballet: love of family, the warmth of the holidays, [and] one little girl's lovely dream on Christmas Eve" (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

The Hard Nut premiered in Belgium in 1991; it was Morris's farewell gift to his European hosts before stepping down 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, and has re-mounted the production every year with the exception of 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008, when the production was performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, London's Sadler's Wells, Bard College in upstate New York and on hiatus, respectively.

CAST, DIRECTORS AND ARTISTS

Several dancers return to familiar *Hard Nut* roles, including **Lauren Grant** (Marie), **David Leventhal** (Nutcracker/Young Drosselmeier), **Craig Biesecker** (Drosselmeier), **June Omura** (Fritz), **Julie Worden** (Louise/Princess Pirlipat), **John Heginbotham** (Mrs. Stahlbaum/Queen), **Guillermo Resto** (Dr. Stahlbaum/King) and **Kraig Patterson** (Housekeeper/Nurse). **Shawn Gannon**, who danced with the company from 1995–2004 and danced Lord Capulet in Morris's *Romeo & Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare* during last season, returns as one of the Party Guests in Act I and, for the first time, as the Dentist in Act II. **Morris** 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.

The work of comic book artist and illustrator **Charles Burns** is the basis for the production's distinctive look. **Adrienne Lobel** (sets), **James F. Ingalls** (lighting) and **Martin Pakledinaz** (costumes) are each longtime design cohorts of Morris's. Lobel and Ingalls have collaborated with Morris on a number of works, including Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* and Purcell's *King Arthur*. Pakledinaz most recently designed the costumes for Morris's *Mozart Dances*.

Robert Cole, former Director of Cal Performances and the Berkeley Festival & Exhibition, celebrates his 13th year of conducting *The Hard Nut*, 10 engagements in Berkeley and one season each at Sadler's Wells Brooklyn Academy of Music and Bard College. 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.

MARK MORRIS

Mark Morris was born on August 29, 1956, in Seattle, Washington, where he studied as a young man with Verla Flowers and Perry Brunson. In the early years of his career, he performed with Lar Lubovitch, Hannah Kahn, Laura Dean, Eliot Feld and the Koleda Balkan Dance Ensemble. He formed the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1980, and has since created more than 120 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 tenure were three evening-length dances: *The Hard Nut*; *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*; 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. He has created seven works for the San Francisco Ballet since 1994 and received commissions from American Ballet Theatre, and the Boston Ballet, among others. His work is also in the repertory of the Pacific Northwest, Dutch National, New Zealand, Houston, English National and Royal ballet companies. 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, English National Opera and The Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Morris was named a Fellow of the MacArthur Foundation in 1991 and has received nine 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. He is the subject of a biography by Joan Acocella (Farrar, Straus & Giroux) and Marlowe & Company published 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.

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 United States and in Europe, and in 1986 it made its first national television program for the PBS series *Dance in America*. 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 United States 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. The group first came to Cal Performances in 1987, and since 1994 it has returned every year. Visits to Zellerbach Hall often include world premieres: *Candleflowerdance* (2005), *Rock of Ages* (2004), *All Fours* (2003), *Something Lies Beyond the Scene* (2003) and *Kolam* (2003). In 2001, MMDG delivered 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 the American premieres of *Four Saints in Three Acts* (2000) and *King Arthur* (2006). MMDG also appears regularly at its Midwest home the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign; in New York City; Boston; Fairfax, Virginia; and Seattle. MMDG made its debut at the Mostly Mozart Festival in 2002 and at 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.

MMDG is noted for its commitment to live music, a feature of every performance on its full international touring schedule since 1996. MMDG collaborates with leading orchestras, opera companies, and musicians including cellist Yo-Yo Ma in the Emmy Award-winning documentary *Falling Down Stairs* (1997) (see "An Evening with Mark Morris" on page one); Indian composer Zakir Hussain, Ma and jazz pianist Ethan Iverson in *Kolam* (2002); The Bad Plus in *Violet Cavern* (2004); pianists Emanuel Ax, Garrick Ohlsson and Yoko Nozaki for *Mozart Dances* (2006); and with English National Opera in *Four Saints in Three Acts* (2000) and *King Arthur* (2006), among others. MMDG's film and television projects also include *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut* and two documentaries for the U.K.'s South Bank Show.

In fall 2001, MMDG opened the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, housing rehearsal space for the dance community, outreach programs for local children, as well as a school offering dance classes to students of all ages.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for *The Hard Nut* **Friday–Sunday, December 11–13** and **Thursday–Sunday, December 17–20** in **Zellerbach Hall** are priced at **\$36.00, \$48.00** and **\$62.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.net; and at the door. Half-price tickets for ages 16 and under are available for the Friday, December 11 and Thursday & Friday, December 17 & 18 performances with curtain time at 7:00 p.m. Half-price tickets also 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, and 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. For more information call 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, December 11 at 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 12 at 2 p.m. & 8 p.m.
Sunday, December 13 at 3 p.m.
Thursday, December 17 at 7:00 p.m.
Friday, December 18 at 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 19 at 2 p.m. & 8 p.m.
Sunday, December 20 at 3 p.m.

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

Holiday

The Hard Nut

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky, composer
Mark Morris, director/choreographer
Mark Morris Dance Group
Berkeley Symphony Orchestra
Robert Cole, conductor
The Children of the Piedmont Choirs Ensemble
Robert Geary, director

Program: *The Hard Nut*, directed and choreographed by Mark Morris featuring the Mark Morris Dance Group and Berkeley Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robert Cole, with The Children of the Piedmont Choirs Ensemble, comes to Cal Performances.

Tickets: \$36.00, \$48.00 and \$62.00 with half-price discounts for children 16 and under on Friday, December 11 and Thursday & Friday, December 17 & 18, 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.

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Wednesday, December 16 at 7:00 p.m.

Pacific Film Archive, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at College Ave, Berkeley

“An Evening with Mark Morris”

Program: Choreographer Mark Morris has selected and will introduce three films each significant to him. The films include *Cello Suite #3: Falling Down Stairs* (1997), the Emmy-winning documentary about the Mark Morris Dance Group’s first collaboration with cellist Yo-Yo Ma; Charlie Chaplin’s *The Rink* (1916); and Vincente Minnelli’s *Cabin in the Sky* (1943).

Tickets: For the evening’s schedule and tickets, call 510.642.5249.

– Cal Performances –