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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS THE AMERICAN PREMIERE OF
THE PEONY PAVILION FROM THE SUZHOU KUN OPERA THEATRE OF JIANGSU
FRIDAY & SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 & 16 AT 7:00 P.M. & SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER
17 AT 3:00 P.M. IN ZELLERBACH HALL**

**THE NINE-HOUR, THREE EVENING EPIC LOVE STORY TRANSPORTS AUDIENCES
BACK TO 16TH CENTURY CHINA**

SIGHTLINES: Pre-performance discussions with Kenneth Pai (Pai Hsien-yung), producer-writer of *The Peony Pavilion*, and Ben Wang, China Institute and United Nations Language Programs, will be given Friday & Saturday September 15 & 16 at 6:00 p.m. and Sunday September 17 at 2:00 p.m. in Zellerbach Hall

A series of lectures, a three-day symposium titled *The Peony Pavilion in Context: Kun Opera and Cultural Performance from Ming to Modern Times*, and a *kunqu* master class are presented in conjunction with the production

BERKELEY, July 27, 2006 – Considered the *Romeo and Juliet* of Chinese culture, the American premiere of a new production of the Ming Dynasty opera *The Peony Pavilion: The Young Lovers' Edition* will be presented by Cal Performances over three consecutive days **Friday-Sunday, September 15-17** in Zellerbach Hall. The nine-hour, 27-scene production is re-interpreted and produced by famed Taiwanese novelist **Kenneth Pai** (Pai Hsien-yung), Professor Emeritus of Chinese literature and cultural studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The production is subtitled *The Young Lovers' Edition* reflecting Pai's decision to cast age-appropriate *kun* opera stars; the production is regarded as the most faithful reconstruction of the original opera fusing poetry, dance and music. The cast includes more than two dozen actors, singers and dancers from the **Suzhou Kun Opera Theatre of Jiangsu Province**, 20 musicians on traditional Chinese instruments and twelve acrobats, all wearing 200 exquisite handmade and embroidered costumes.

Suzhou is the birthplace of *kunqu* (*qu* means opera), the oldest living operatic tradition in China and rarely seen in the United States. In 2001, the United Nations classified *kunqu* as one

-MORE-

of the “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.” Following the Berkeley performances, the production will travel to Irvine Barclay Theater at UC Irvine (Sept. 22-24); UCLA Live’s Royce Hall (Sept. 29-Oct. 1) and UC Santa Barbara (Oct. 6-8) as a notable component of the University of California’s China initiative. The opera will be performed in Kun, a local dialect, with subtitles in English and Mandarin.

Free SIGHTLINES pre-performance discussions with Kenneth Pai (Pai Hsien-yung), producer-writer of *The Peony Pavilion*, and Ben Wang, China Institute and United Nations Language Programs, will be given Friday & Saturday September 15 & 16 at 6:00 p.m. and Sunday, September 17 at 2:00 p.m. in Zellerbach Hall. These events are free to ticket holders.

THE PEONY PAVILION

The original *Peony Pavilion* was written in 1598 by one of China’s greatest playwrights, **Tang Xianzu**, a contemporary of William Shakespeare. “From passion, a dream was born, and that dream has turned into a play,” stated Tang Xianzu about his 55-scene, 20-hour play with over 400 arias of poetry and spoken dialogue. The story, one of the most beloved tales in Chinese literature, was radical for its time given its celebration of eroticism, female sexuality and power, and marriage forged by love. The opera, written during the time of Confucian orthodoxy, challenged the strict codes of rationality, moral correctness and social etiquette that predominated. Tang Xianzu, a member of a new breed of thinkers, believed in the primacy of innate human emotion rather than a restrictive moral code.

The plot of *The Peony Pavilion* — *Romeo and Juliet* in reverse with a dash of *Tempest*-like supernatural elements — revolves around Liu, a handsome young student, and Du, the daughter of a high official. Du has an erotic dream about Liu only to discover upon awakening that her lover was a mere fantasy; she subsequently dies of a broken heart. Meantime, Liu has become enraptured by Du’s beauty when he accidentally discovers the young woman’s self-portrait hidden in her family’s garden. The ghost of Du appears and the two make love and agree to marry. Liu has his lover disinterred, despite the risk of execution for grave robbery. Through the power of their devotion, her body becomes flesh again. Moved by their deep love, the

Emperor pardons Liu's actions as a grave robber and orders the lovers to marry, an unorthodox decision at a time when arranged marriages were the accepted custom. Love triumphs over all.

Unlike recent contemporary productions which fused *kun* music with other regional Chinese or modern musical genres, the score for Pai's version uses Tang Xianzu's lyrics, arias with dialogue and asides interwoven, sung in unison with the transverse bamboo flute. The musical ensemble is also made up of various plucked, bowed and percussive instruments. Unlike Peking opera in which dance is incidental, it is an integral part of *kunqu* with the performers wearing long white sleeves that amplify their movement. In a sexually suggestive scene, love-making is expressed by the entanglement of the flowing sleeves. A previous production was labeled pornographic by the Chinese government because of the opera's eroticism.

Countering tradition that has older veteran performers in the leading roles, Pai selected two young stars from the Suzhou Kun Opera Theater of Jiangsu, a troupe renowned for its classical methods and unique location near Kunshan, the birthplace of *kunqu*.

This is not the first production of *The Peony Pavilion* performed in the United States. Theater director Peter Sellars mounted an avant garde production that had its world premiere in Vienna in 19998; Cal Performances presented its American premiere the following year. *The Peony Pavilion: The Young Lovers' Edition* had its world premiere at the National Theatre in Taipei, Taiwan in April 2004, followed by performances in Hsinchu, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Beijing, Shanghai, Macau, Tianjin and Nanjing, among other Chinese cities.

KENNETH PAI

Kenneth Pai (Pai Hsien-yung) was born in Guilin, Guangxi, China at the cusp of both the Second Sino-Japanese War and subsequent Chinese Civil War. Pai's father was the highly-regarded Kuomintang (KMT) general Pai Chung-hsi, whom he later described as a "stern, Confucian father" with "some soft spots in his heart." Kenneth Pai was diagnosed with tuberculosis at the age of seven and lived separately from his family and eight siblings during his recuperation. He and his family moved to Hong Kong in 1948 and Taiwan in 1952.

Pai went abroad in 1963 to study literary theory and creative writing at the University of Iowa. That same year, Pai's mother, with whom he had a close relationship, died, and it was this death to which Pai attributes the melancholy that pervades his work. After earning his M.A. from Iowa, he became a professor of Chinese literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and has resided in Santa Barbara ever since. Pai retired from UCSB in 1994.

Pai has written dozens of novels and short stories that have been translated into English, French, Korean, Japanese, German, and other languages. More of his work has been made into films, TV or stage plays than almost any other contemporary Taiwanese writer. Many of his works including *Jade Love*, *Kim's Last Night*, *Crystal Boys*, and *Wandering in the Garden*, *Waking from Dream* are considered Chinese-language classics.

Whether writing creative works in Taiwan or teaching Chinese literature at UC Santa Barbara, Pai's love of *kunqu* has been constant. He was involved in two prior productions of *Peony Pavilion*, in 1983 and 1992. For this version, he has created a production more suited to modern tastes while remaining faithful to the original opera and traditional performance practices of *kunqu*.

KUNQU

Known as "the mother of 100 operas," *kunqu* is the essence of Chinese opera, predating both Peking and Cantonese opera. *Kunqu* originated in the area of Kunshan in eastern China and is performed in the local dialect of Kun. Performed continuously for more than five centuries, it was almost destroyed by Japan's invasion of China and the internal political upheaval brought about by the Chinese Communist Party. *Kunqu* artists all but disappeared with many of them sent to rural areas. There is only one living member of a generation of *kunqu* masters trained in the 1920s; the students of that generation are now in their 60s.

Sensing an urgency to preserve the tradition, Pai wrote and staged this new rendition to cultivate the next generation of *kunqu* actors and audiences, and ensure its preservation for

following generations. "It's a big problem. That's why I was so anxious to train the young actors," said Pai in a recent interview in Hong Kong. The young stars underwent a year of rehearsal in addition to the required four years of *kunqu* study.

EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES EVENTS

A series of lectures, a three-day symposium titled *The Peony Pavilion in Context: Kun Opera and Cultural Performance from Ming to Modern Times*, a making theater event with Professor Pai, and a *kunqu* master class are presented in conjunction with the production of *The Peony Pavilion* (see calendar on pages 6-8). These events are organized by Cal Performances in association with the Center for Chinese Studies, Institute of East Asian Studies, the Department of Music, the Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies, and The Consortium for the Arts at UC Berkeley. All events are free and open to the public except where noted.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for *The Peony Pavilion: The Young Lovers' Edition* on **Friday-Sunday, September 15-17** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$30.00, \$46.00, \$68.00, and \$86.00**; three-performance series are priced at \$75.00, \$110.00, \$165.00 and \$210.00. 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). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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Cal Performances' 2006/2007 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CALENDAR OF EVENTS & PERFORMANCES
The Peony Pavilion: The Young Loves' Edition
September 15 – 17

Fri. & Sat., Sept. 15 & 16 from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. **Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus**
Sunday, September 17 from 2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley
SIGHTLINES

The Peony Pavilion pre-performance discussions with **Kenneth Pai** (Pai Hsien-yung), Professor Emeritus, UC Santa Barbara and **Ben Wang**, China Institute and United Nations Language Programs. *Sightlines* is a continuing program of pre- and post-performance discussions with Cal Performances' guest artists and scholars, designed to enrich the audience's experience. These events are free to ticketholders.

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Friday & Saturday, September 15 & 16 at 7:00 p.m. **Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus**
Sunday, September 17 at 3:00 p.m. Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Special Event

Suzhou Kun Opera Theatre of Jiangsu
The Peony Pavilion: The Young Lovers' Edition

Program: Suzhou Kun Opera Theatre of Jiangsu performs the American premiere of Kenneth Pai's production of *The Peony Pavilion*, the 400-year-old masterpiece of Ming Dynasty *kun* opera. The nine-hour play unfolds over three evening performances.

Tickets: Individual performance: \$30.00, \$46.00, \$68.00 and \$86.00; three performance series: \$75.00, \$110.00, \$165.00 and \$210.00, 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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Sunday, August 6
LECTURE

World Journal Auditorium
231 Adrian Road, Millbrae, CA

2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.: "The Art of *Kunqu*"

A lecture discussion by **Kenneth Pai** and **Zhu Qi**. For more information, contact the World Journal Public Relations Office at 650-259-2098. (Presented in Mandarin Chinese)

Tuesday, August 8
LECTURE

Institute of East Asian Studies
2255 Fulton Street, 6th Floor, Berkeley

6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.: "The Art of *Kunqu*"

A lecture discussion by **Kenneth Pai** and **Lindy Li Mark**. For more information, contact Center for Chinese Studies at 510-643-6321 or ccs@berkeley.edu

-MORE-

Thursday, August 10

LECTURE

Asian Art Museum

200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA

6:30 p.m.: “*The (New) Peony Pavilion: Tradition and Modernity*”

A lecture featuring Kenneth Pai and Lindy Li Mark. For more information, contact the Asian Art Museum at 415-581-3500. (Free with museum admission)

Sunday, September 10

LECTURE

Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at College Avenue, Berkeley

2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.: “Women in the Ming Dynasty”

A lecture/demonstration presented by **Lindy Li Mark** and **Matthew Sommer**, with **Ming Zeng**, master *kunqu* flutist, and a singer, TBD. For more information, contact Center for Chinese Studies at 510-643-6321 or ccs@berkeley.edu

Friday, September 15

SYMPOSIUM & LECTURE SCHEDULE

Alumni House, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Dana Court

SYMPOSIUM, DAY I

8:45 a.m.-10:30 a.m.: “The Music of Kun Opera”

Symposium chaired by **Bonnie C. Wade**, Music, University of California, Berkeley; with talks by **Joseph Lam**, Musicology, The University of Michigan, “*Kunqu*: the Civilized (*ya*) Arias of Late Ming and Early Qing China.”; **Wu Xinlei**, Literature, Nanjing University, “A Study of the *Kunqu* Scores for Complete Printed Editions of *Mudanting*”

Discussant: **Lindy Li Mark**, Anthropology, California State University, East Bay

10:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m.: “Kun Opera & The Ming-Qing Transition”

Symposium chaired by **Robert Ashmore**, EALC, University of California, Berkeley; with talks by **Katherine Carlitz**, EALL, University of Pittsburgh, “Can the Ming Survive? Politics in the Plays of Meng Chengshun (1599-ca.1684)”; **Catherine Swatek**, Asian Studies, University of British Columbia, “Who Put the Dialect in *Kunqu*? Suzhou Playwrights and Suzhou Dialect”

Discussant: **David Johnson**, History, University of California, Berkeley

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2:30 p.m.-4:30p.m.: Making Theater: Talking About *The Peony Pavilion*

Lecture discussion by **Kenneth Pai** (Producer & Scriptwriter), **Hua Wei** (Scriptwriter), and **Wang Mengchao** (Stage Designer). *Presented in association with the Department of Theater, Dance, & Performance Studies*. For more information, contact 510-642-3691.

Saturday, September 16

SYMPOSIUM & LECTURE SCHEDULE

Alumni House, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Dana Court

SYMPOSIUM, DAY II

8:45 a.m.-10:30 a.m.: “The Politics of *Kun* Opera in the *Qing*”

Symposium chaired by **Patricia Berger**, History of Art, University of California, Berkeley; with talks by **Hua Wei**, Literature & Philosophy, Academia Sinica, “Desire, Gender, and Chinese/Barbarian Conflict in Farces: A Different Kind of Comedy from the Early Qing Playwright Wu Zhensheng”; **Wei Shang**, EALC, Columbia University, “*Caizi Mudanting* and the Hermeneutics of Subversion”

Discussant: **Sophie Volpp**, EALC, University of California, Berkeley.

10:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m.: “*Kunqu* Trajectories in the 19th Century”

Symposium chaired by **Mary Ann Smart**, Music, University of California, Berkeley; with talks by **Andrea S. Goldman**, History, University of Maryland, “The Accidental Death of *Kunqu*”; **David Rolston**, Asian Languages & Cultures, The University of Michigan, “What’s the Place of *Kunqu* in the Peking Opera Repertoire?”

Discussant: **Matthew Sommer**, History, Stanford University

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2:30 p.m.-4:30p.m.: *Kunqu* Master Class

Lecture discussion by **Wang Shiyu & Zhang Jiqing**, the *kunqu* movement and vocal directors of the *Peony Pavilion* production. *Presented in association with the Department of Theater, Dance, & Performance Studies*. For more information, contact the Center for Chinese Studies at 510-642-6321 or ccs@berkeley.edu (In Mandarin Chinese with English translation)

Sunday, September 17
SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Alumni House, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Dana Court

SYMPOSIUM, DAY III

9:00 a.m.-10:45 a.m.: “*Kunqu* in a Global Context, I”

Round Table Discussion Chaired by **Wen-hsin Yeh**, History, University of California, Berkeley; with talks by **Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak**, Theatre & Dance, University of Hawaii at Manoa; **Sheila Melvin**, Music Correspondent, Asian Wall Street Journal; **Madam Hua Wenyi**, master *Kunqu* artist; **Susan Pertel Jain**, UCLA; **Haiping Yan**, Critical Studies, School of Theatre, Film & Television, UCLA; **Sudipto Chatterjee**, Theater, Dance and Performance Studies, University of California, Berkeley

11:00 a.m.-12:00 a.m.: “*Kunqu* in a Global Context, II”

Discussion with Kenneth Pai, panel presenters, and the audience

-30-