

FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE

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**CENTURIES-OLD INSTITUTION AND TREASURE OF RUSSIAN CULTURE,
THE ST. PETERSBURG ACADEMIC STATE CAPELLA
COMES TO CAL PERFORMANCES SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16 AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

BERKELEY, October 17, 2003 – Commemorating the 300th anniversary of its namesake city, the **St. Petersburg Academic State Capella** appears **Sunday, November 16 at 3:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall, part of the choral ensemble’s first-ever tour to the United States. Over 500 years have gone by since the Capella was first established in Moscow, and it has been the pride of Russia for choral music performance for centuries, as well as a center of professional music education. Highly acclaimed for its renditions of major Western choral works by Mozart, Verdi, Beethoven and Haydn, the Capella is equally well known for promoting forgotten and neglected choral works by composers of the 19th and 20th centuries. For the November 16 performance, this extraordinary ensemble of 14 soprano, 14 alto, 12 tenor and 17 bass voices presents—unaccompanied by instruments—a program of sacred hymns and Russian folk songs, designed to represent the rich history of both the choir itself and Russian choral music in general. Artistic Director and chief conductor **Vladislav Chernushenko** leads the ensemble.

THE ST. PETERSBURG ACADEMIC STATE CAPELLA

The St. Petersburg Academic State Capella, Russia’s oldest choir, has an unparalleled history among institutions of its kind. Initially named the Tsar’s Singing Clerics, it was established in 1479 by Tsar Ivan III to function as his private choir, responsible for singing religious services as well as providing entertainment on ceremonial occasions. With the founding of St. Petersburg in 1703, Tsar Peter’s choir was relocated to St. Petersburg from Moscow, and in its new home the ensemble’s Russian musical traditions met with Western European influences for the first time. In 1717, the ensemble accompanied Peter the Great on his travels to Poland, France, Germany and Holland, embarking on its first “foreign” tour.

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In the late 1700s, Empress Catherine the Great encouraged two singers in the choir, Maxim Berezovsky and Dmitry Bortniansky, to further their musical education in Italy. These singers/composers were primarily responsible for imbuing Russian choral music with a decidedly European influence, particularly Bortniansky, who was to head the Imperial Chapel from 1796 until his death in 1825. In 1837, Mikhail Glinka, considered by many to be one of the greatest composers of Russian classical music, was appointed *kapellmeister* (choir master) of the group. During his brief tenure, Glinka's famous operatic works *Ivan Susanin* and *Ruslan and Liudmila* were performed to great acclaim with the Capella's participation. Also during this time, a school was founded in connection with the Capella, to train young male vocalists in a variety of musical disciplines. Over the next several decades the choir and its affiliated orchestra would continue to give numerous public concerts, playing a major role in the advancement of both Western and Russian contemporary music in their homeland.

Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, the orchestra was transferred to the Philharmonic Society, and the choir was renamed the People's Academic Chorus. In 1920, female voices were added to the choir, at first augmenting and eventually replacing the boy sopranos and altos. Before World War II the ensemble was able to tour Europe, and between 1941 and 1943 performed nearly 500 concerts in support of the Russian war effort. Following the war, the ensemble gave many distinguished first performances of works by Shostakovich, Kabalevsky and Prokofiev under conductor Yevgeny Mravinsky.

With the appointment in 1974 of former Capella pupil **Vladislav Chernushenko** as Artistic Director, the St. Petersburg Academic State Capella began a whole new era of artistic achievement. Under Chernushenko, the choir began to tour abroad again, and in the late 1970s made a number of recordings of Russian sacred music, including excerpts of Tchaikovsky's *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*. In 1982, Rachmaninoff's choral masterpiece, the *All-Night Vigil* ("Vespers"), Op. 37, was performed in its entirety in the composer's homeland for the first time. Additionally, by promoting many lesser known choral works by composers of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Capella has played a significant role in the cultural renaissance taking place in the former Soviet Union since the early 1990s.

VLADISLAV CHERNUSHENKO

Born in 1936 in Leningrad, **Vladislav Chernushenko** received his musical education at the St. Petersburg Capella Choir College and the Leningrad Conservatory, graduating from the latter in 1967 with a specialized degree in operatic and symphonic conducting. A few years earlier, in 1962, Chernushenko founded the Leningrad Chamber Choir, which he led for 17 years. In 1974 he became the Artistic Director and principal conductor of the St. Petersburg Academic State Capella. One of Chernushenko's major accomplishments was the restoration, after years of suppression for ideological reasons, of Russian sacred music to the Capella's performances. The addition of this category of music further expanded the ensemble's sizeable and diverse repertoire, which includes oratorios, cantatas, and concert versions of operas by both Russian and Western European composers, and works by modern Russian composers. Under Chernushenko's tenure, the music of one of Russia's most prominent modern composers, Georgi Sviridov (1915-1998), has occupied a special place in the choir's repertoire. Two songs by Sviridov, "Molitva" and "Liubov' sviataya," are featured on the Cal Performances program.

In 1979, Chernushenko was appointed rector of Russia's first conservatory, the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory of St. Petersburg, which was founded in 1862. His activities there include lecturing, teaching conducting classes, and managing festivals and competitions.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the **St. Petersburg Academic State Capella** on **Sunday, November 16 at 3:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$24.00, \$32.00, and \$46.00**. Performance 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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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Sunday, November 16 at 3:00 p.m.

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

Chamber Music & Orchestra

St. Petersburg Academic State Capella

Vladislav Chernushenko, Artistic Director and chief conductor

Program:

Sacred Hymns

Dmitry Bortniansky/Priidite vospoim, liudie (“Come, O People”), Concerto No. 15
Georgi Sviridov/Molitva (“Prayer”); Liubov’ sviataya (“Sacred Love”)
Sergei Rachmaninoff/Nine otpushchayeshi (“Lord, Now Lettest Thou Thy Servant Depart”)
Pavel Chesnokov/Da ispravitsia molitva moya (“Let My Prayer Arise”); Velichit dusha moya
Ghosпода (“My Soul Magnifies the Lord”); S nami Bog (“God Is with Us”)
Aleksandr Arkhangel’sky/Simvol veri (“The Nicene Creed”)
Pyotr Tchaikovsky/Sviat Ghospod’ Bog nash (“Holy Is the Lord Our God”)

Russian Folk Songs

Siuita (“Suite of Russian Folk Songs”), arr. M. Klimov
Uzh ti pole moyo (“O Thou, Field of Mine”), arr. A. Novikov
V tiomnom lese (“In the Dark Forest”), arr. A. Pashchenko
Ey, uhnem (“The Song of the Volga Boatmen”), arr. O. Kolovsky
Kalitka (“The Wicket”), arr. A. Fliarkovsky
Korobeyniki (“The Peddlers”), arr. F. Kozlov
Dvenadtsat’ razboinikov (“The Legend of the Twelve Robbers”), arr. V. Bulin
Shto mne zhit’ i tuzhit’ (“Why Should I Live and Grieve”), arr. Poltavtsev
Na goruske, na gore (“On a Mountain, on a Hill”), arr. O. Kolovsky

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