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Photos of *Layla and Majnun* are available for download from the [online press kit](#).

**CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS A
FREE VIDEO STREAM OF THE 2016 WORLD PREMIERE OF
LAYLA AND MAJNUN
CHOREOGRAPHED BY MARK MORRIS
AND PERFORMED BY THE MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP
FEATURING ALIM QASIMOV, FARGANA QASIMOVA, AND THE SILKROAD ENSEMBLE;
WITH SETS AND COSTUMES BY PAINTER HOWARD HODGKIN
—A CAL PERFORMANCES CO-COMMISSION—
MAY 12–18, 2022**

Berkeley, May 5, 2022 — For one week only, May 12–18, Cal Performances will offer a free video stream of the world premiere of choreographer Mark Morris' *Layla and Majnun*, performed by the Mark Morris Dance Group in Zellerbach Hall, a highlight of Cal Performances' 2016–17 season. This evening-length work, a Cal Performances co-commission, can be viewed at calperformances.org/layla-and-majnun from noon PDT on Thursday, May 12 until 11:59pm PDT on Wednesday, May 18. The performance also features Azerbaijani father/daughter team of

vocalists Alim Qasimov and Fargana Qasimova and the Silkroad Ensemble. Sets and costumes for *Layla and Majnun* are by painter Howard Hodgkin.

Layla and Majnun reflects the tragic relationship between Layla and Majnun, two young lovers from Bedouin Arabia. This tale originated in 7th-century Persia and was later the foundation for the first opera of the Muslim world. The music score by Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885–1948)—at once sorrowful and ecstatic—honors the tale’s commitment to love, acceptance, devotion, and peace

Alaistair MacCauley wrote in the *New York Times* of the performance, “Mr. Morris does not so much tell the Layla–Majnun story as refract it, ritualize it, multiply it. The emphasis is all on emotion. . . Mr. Morris’s choreography deconstructs and distills the poetic legend with charm and taste.”

Layla and Majnun is the latest video released as part of the 2021–22 *Cal Performances at Home* series. Streaming is free with registration as part of Cal Performances’ ongoing efforts to promote increased access to the performing arts. Previous streams this year featured a Danish String Quartet performance of Schubert’s String Quartet in G major; the Bay Area premiere of *More Forever*, a collaboration between the Caleb Teicher & Company dance ensemble and pianist/composer Conrad Tao; Kronos Quartet performing with special guest vocalist Mahsa Vahdat; and Jason Moran and Alicia Hall Moran’s *Two Wings: The Music of Black Migration in America*.

Layla and Majnun is a Mark Morris Dance Group/Cal Performances, UC Berkeley production in association with Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Chicago, Illinois; the Hopkins Center for the Arts, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC; Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois; Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York, New York; Sadler’s Wells, London, England; University Musical Society at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan; and University of Washington World Series, Seattle, Washington.

The presentation of *Layla and Majnun* was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts’ National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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**CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:
CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS**

Cal Performances at Home video stream

Dance

Layla and Majnun (World premiere, Cal Performances co-commission)
Available to view **May 12 at 12 noon PDT – May 18 at 11:59pm PDT**

Mark Morris Dance Group

Silkroad Ensemble

Alim Qasimov, *mugham* vocals (Majnun)

Fargana Qasimova, *mugham* vocals (Layla)

Mark Morris, choreography and direction

Howard Hodgkin, scenic and costume design

James F. Ingalls, lighting design

Uzeyir Hajibeyli, music; arranged by Alim Qasimov, Johnny Gandelsman, Colin Jacobsen

Program: Mark Morris' choreography, the voices of Azerbaijan's Alim Qasimov and Fargana Qasimova, the musicality of the Silkroad Ensemble, and the visual palette of painter Howard Hodgkin combine in this world-premiere performance. The story of the tragic love between *Layla and Majnun* originated in 7th-century Arabia, and later was the foundation for the first opera of the Muslim world. Mark Morris' work expresses themes of love, tragedy, and social justice in a juxtaposition of the traditional and the new. The performance was filmed by the New York Public Library before a live audience in Zellerbach Hall on October 1, 2016.

Tickets: Free with registration at calperformances.org/layla-and-majnun. Donations are welcomed.