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For immediate release:

Shen Wei Dance Arts Brings Innovative Modern Dance to the Mondavi Center

February 13, 2008; Davis, California—Hailed by *The New York Times* as “startlingly imaginative,” **Shen Wei Dance Arts** has stunned audiences and critics with choreography that combines Eastern and Western aesthetics with strong scenic elements to create a unique fusion of dance, theater, Chinese opera, painting, and sculpture. Under the artistic direction of MacArthur Foundation “Genius” Fellow **Shen Wei**, “one of modern dance’s most important new voices” (*The Washington Post*), the company will perform *Re- (Part One)* and *Folding* at the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts** in March.

The performance will begin at 8 pm on March 14 in the Mondavi Center’s Jackson Hall on the **UC Davis** campus. Tickets are available from the Mondavi Center Ticket Office at 530.754.ARTS (2787) or online at MondaviArts.org. The event is presented as part of the Mondavi Center’s **Dance Series**. There will be a free **Pre-performance Lecture** by acclaimed choreographer **Della Davidson**, a professor in the UC Davis Department of Theatre and Dance, at 7 pm on March 14 in the Mondavi Center’s Studio Theatre. There will also be a **Post-performance Artist Q&A** featuring Shen Wei and members of the company immediately following the performance.

Born in Hunan, China, choreographer, dancer, painter, and designer Shen Wei moved to New York City in 1995 and almost immediately established himself as one of the most exciting new artists in dance. He founded his own company in 2000, and for the past seven years, Shen Wei Dance Arts has toured throughout the United States and western Europe, and in Australia, Israel, and Singapore, performing at festivals and venues including the Lincoln Center Festival, American Dance Festival, Jacob’s Pillow, and the **Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**, among many others.

“Shen Wei’s works are suffused with serenity but watching them is exhilarating,” *The Washington Post* wrote of one recent performance. “Each of the two pieces performed [*Folding* and *The Rite of Spring*] was layered in recurring and expanding visual motifs, with the whole composition blossoming in a deliberate, musically paced, and exquisitely restrained way. The interplay of elements—movement, music, décor—was infinitely absorbing. You couldn’t break away if you tried. Even after the last bows...the audience couldn’t bring itself to leave.”

Shen studied calligraphy from an early age, and beginning at the age of nine, studied Chinese opera with the **Hunan State Xian Opera Company** from 1984-89. From there he helped found the **Guangdong Modern Dance Company**, the first modern dance company in China, where he worked as a dancer and choreographer, appearing at festivals in Korea, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and India. After receiving a scholarship from

the **Nikolais/Louis Dance Lab**, Shen moved to New York City in 1995. His work soon drew international recognition in presentations at the American Dance Festival (1995), **National Theater of Taiwan** (1996), the **Place Theater** in London (1997), **Stockholm Dance House** (1999), Brighton Arts Festival (2000), the **Edinburgh Festival Theater** (2000), and other venues.

In 2000, Shen founded Shen Wei Dance Arts, which quickly established a reputation as one of the most inventive companies in dance. Shen, who is also an acclaimed painter and designer, forged a unique choreographic style that combines Eastern and Western influences and multiple artistic disciplines to create a painterly, visually arresting form of dance-theater. Using movements that are precise and inventive, he and his dancers perform highly stylized steps and gestures influenced by Western dance traditions as well as Chinese opera, acrobatics, and martial arts. Inspired by his work as a visual artist, he incorporates vivid colors, striking costume design, and imaginative use of space into theatrical works that are often likened to three-dimensional, moving paintings.

Shen has received numerous awards. He received a prestigious MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship in 2007, a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 2001, and has won honors including the Nijinsky Award for Emerging Choreographer in 2004, Australia’s 2005 Helpmann Award for Best Ballet or Dance Work, and the 2006 Les Etoiles de Ballet, Palais des Festival, in Cannes, France. He has received commissions from institutions including the American Dance Festival, Het Muziektheater Amsterdam, Lincoln Center Festival, **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**, New York City Opera, Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal, Alvin Ailey Dance Theater II, and the Mondavi Center.

The pieces to be performed on March 14 include *Re- (Part One)*, which was co-commissioned by the Mondavi Center, and *Folding*. “*Re- (Part I)* is broadly based on the feeling of the land, the people, the religion, and the culture of Tibet that I gained from my recent journeys there,” Shen has stated. “In 2000, the Guangdong Modern Dance Company invited me to make *Folding*, my first work with them since I left China in 1995. During this period, I was strongly attached to the simple action of folding: of paper, fabric, flesh—anything. *Folding* combines traditional Tibetan Mahakala Buddhist chants with the ethereal melodies of **John Tavener**. An enormous (16 meters by nine meters), hand-painted backdrop establishes a surreal atmosphere, painted with a rendition of an eighteenth-century Chinese watercolor by **Ba Da San Ren**.”

“Shen Wei Dance Arts has been able to bring together traditions of Chinese opera, acrobatics, martial arts, painting, and modern dance to create something new and inspired,” said **Don Roth**, the Mondavi Center’s executive director. “We are proud to have co-commissioned Shen’s *Re- (Part One)*, and look forward to a performance that promises to be a highlight of this season’s Dance Series.”

What: **Shen Wei Dance Arts**
Re- (Part One) and Folding
When: Friday, March 14 • 8 pm
Where: Jackson Hall
Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts
University of California, Davis
Admission: \$43/\$37/\$29 Adults • \$16/\$14/\$12 Students & Children
Tickets/Info: 530.754.ARTS (2787)
866.754.ARTS (toll-free)
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