



Contact: Joe Martin
530.754.5428

Full schedule and images available for download at:
<http://www.MondaviArts.org/pressroom>

For immediate release:

St. Petersburg Philharmonic to Play Prokofiev at Mondavi Center

October 19, 2007; Davis, California—Russia’s oldest and most acclaimed orchestra will play an all-**Prokofiev** program when the **St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra** performs at the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts** on November 17. The orchestra, which thrilled a Mondavi Center audience in its November 2004 concert, will perform under the baton of associate conductor **Nikolai Alexeev**.

The event will begin at 8 pm on November 17 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 **Western Health Advantage Classics Series**. There will be a free **Pre-performance Lecture** featuring **D. Kern Holoman**, professor, **UC Davis Department of Music** and conductor of the **UC Davis Symphony Orchestra**, beginning at 7 pm in the AGR Room of the **Buehler Alumni and Visitors Center** adjacent to the Mondavi Center.

The St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra is Russia’s oldest symphonic ensemble, tracing its origins to a group of music-loving aristocrats who founded Europe’s first philharmonic society in 1802. Over the course of the five-decade reign of legendary conductor **Evgeny Mravinsky** (who served as music director from 1938-1958), the orchestra achieved near-mythic status for precision, ensemble discipline, and rich, distinctly Russian sonorities. Known as the **Leningrad Philharmonic** for most of the Soviet era, the ensemble premiered numerous works by Soviet composers, including Prokofiev and **Shostakovich**, and often left Western audiences and critics awestruck by its performances of music from the Russian tradition.

Gramophone magazine, reviewing the ensemble’s recording of a set of **Tchaikovsky** symphonies under Mravinsky, was effusive in its praise, writing that the orchestra played “like a wild stallion, only just held in check by the willpower of its master. Every smallest movement is placed with fierce pride; at any moment it may break into such a frenzied gallop that you hardly know whether to feel exhilarated or terrified. The whipping up of excitement...is astonishing.” (The recording, issued by Deutsche Grammophon in 1986, remains a top recommendation for many critics.)

The orchestra’s unique sound, with a dark and rich string tone and strident brass, has persisted to this day under current Music Director **Yuri Temirkanov**. The orchestra was rated among Europe’s 10 best in a recent poll of European critics, and *The New Yorker* recently wrote that “no Western orchestra plays [Russian] music with so much instrumental panache.”

With Temirkanov at the helm since 1988, the SPPO has conducted an ambitious schedule of worldwide touring and recording. The orchestra's most recent performances in the U.S. during a nationwide tour in 2004 were characterized as "breathtaking" (*San Francisco Chronicle*), "stunning" (*Palm Beach Post*), "simply profound" (*Baltimore Sun*), and, according to *The New York Times*, "voluptuous, seductive, almost bursting out of its clothes, this Russian musical institution offers a nice alternative to the rail-thin, runway-model elegance of western symphony orchestras."

The St. Petersburg Philharmonic traces its origins back to the days of the Tsar, when it performed as the **Imperial Music Choir** for the Imperial Court and aristocratic audiences. Following the Revolution of 1917, the ensemble was declared a state orchestra and christened the **Petrograd Philharmonic Society**, then the Leningrad Philharmonic. Under a series of legendary music directors, including **Alexander Glazunov**, **Serge Koussevitsky**, and Mravinsky, the orchestra became known as one of the best in the world. Rechristened the St. Petersburg Philharmonic when its home city was renamed in 1991, the orchestra has toured all of the world's major music centers, and enjoyed a long and distinguished recording career that has seen it become an orchestra of choice for the recording of much of the central Russian repertoire.

The orchestra's Mondavi Center performance will take place under the baton of the Nikolai Alexeev, who was born in Leningrad in 1956. A winner of the prestigious International Herbert van Karajan Competition in 1983, Alexeev is the successor to **Mariss Jansons** as the St. Petersburg Philharmonic's associate principal conductor, and also serves as the chief conductor of the **Estonian National Symphony Orchestra** and principal guest conductor of the **Bolshoi Opera**.

The orchestra will perform a suite from Prokofiev's popular ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. Arranged by Temirkanov, it includes music from eight of the full ballet's episodes and is roughly 30 minutes in length. (Included are "Montagues and Capulets," "The Young Juliet," "Friar Laurence," "Dance," "Romeo and Juliet at Parting," "Dance of the Girls from Antilles," "Romeo at Juliet's Grave," "Masks," and "Death of Tybalt.") Also on the program is Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major, Op. 100, often considered the composer's peak achievement in the symphonic realm and a piece widely revered for its exotic melodies and triumphant finale.

"The St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra has a long reputation for being unsurpassed in Russian music, and we look forward with great anticipation to hearing the SPPO play an all-Prokofiev program," said **Don Roth**, the Mondavi Center's executive director.

What: **St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra**
Nikolai Alexeev, associate conductor

When: Saturday, November 17 • 8 pm

Where: Jackson Hall
Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts
University of California, Davis

Admission: \$75/\$65/\$55 Adults • \$37.50/\$32.50/\$27.50 Students & Children

Tickets/Info: 530.754.ARTS (2787)
866.754.ARTS (toll-free)
<http://www.MondaviArts.org>
530.754.5402 [TDD]

###