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For immediate release:

The Actor's Gang Brings *1984* to the Mondavi Center

March 5, 2008; Davis, California—George Orwell's vision of a future where "War is Peace," "Ignorance is Strength," and government surveillance is a fact of life will come to the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts** in a production of *1984* by acclaimed Los Angeles-based theatre company the **Actor's Gang**. Directed by Academy Award-winning actor, writer, and director **Tim Robbins**, the Actor's Gang production of *1984* features **Michael Gene Sullivan**'s stage adaptation of Orwell's classic dystopian novel.

The event will begin at 8 pm on April 1 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 **Theatre Series**. There will be a **Pre-performance Lecture** featuring **Buck Busfield**, chief executive officer and producing artistic director, **Theatre for Children, Inc./B Street Theatre**, beginning at 7 pm on April 1 in the AGR Room of the Buehler Alumni and Visitors Center adjacent to the Mondavi Center. There also will be a **Post-performance Q&A** featuring members of the Actor's Gang following the performance.

Founded in 1982, the Actor's Gang has more than 85 productions and 100 awards to its credit. Known for producing raw, immediate, socially minded theatre crafted to the highest of artistic standards, the Actor's Gang has been called "an enormously talented and versatile ensemble with a genius for refreshingly engaged political humor" (*San Francisco Examiner*) and "consistently raw and fresh, in all senses of the word" (*Los Angeles Times*).

The current production of *1984* has been toured internationally and received outstanding reviews. "This Michael Gene Sullivan adaptation of George Orwell's classic *1984* is multi-layered, intense, and disturbing—exactly how it should be," wrote the *South China Morning Post*. "This production successfully captures the grim mood of Orwell's world, imprisoning the audience within it for two hours."

First published in 1949, George Orwell's *1984* is surely one of the most influential novels of the twentieth century. The book depicts protagonist Winston Smith's life in Oceania, one of three continent-spanning totalitarian regimes that have control of human society in the wake of a series of wars and nuclear exchanges. Smith lives in a world in which citizens are under constant electronic surveillance and government strives to control every nuance of language in order to maximize control over the citizenry. He works for the Ministry of Truth, where his job is to rewrite history to conform to the ruling party's political doctrine, but he becomes increasingly disgruntled with the job, keeping a diary of increasingly subversive thoughts—itsself an act of

defiance punishable by death. He falls in love with Julia, a woman who repairs the ministry's machinery, and enters into an illicit relationship that leads him further into the world of those few who question the government monopoly on truth and power. Finally, he is caught, imprisoned, and tortured.

In the nearly 60 years since its publication, Orwell's novel has never seemed to fall into irrelevance, even after its titular year came and went. Generation after generation of readers has found parallels between the fictional world of *1984* and current events, and many of the ideas first expressed in the book have become iconic. In particular, the ability of governments to use modern technology to spy on civilian populations has frequently drawn comparisons to the actions of "Big Brother," the party leader in *1984*.

Among those finding significant parallels between *1984* and the current era of world politics is Director Tim Robbins. Robbins received Sullivan's stage adaptation of the book two years ago, and it prompted him to reread the novel. "I immediately read *1984* again and was floored by its relevance, its insight, its warnings, and unfortunately realized that this book was more vibrant and necessary now than it had ever been," Robbins has stated.

Robbins and the Actor's Gang brought Sullivan's version of *1984* to the stage, and the production has been praised by critics for its quality and topical relevance. "The adaptation of *1984* ... was, in Orwellian terms, doubleplusgood," wrote *The Australian*. "Though originally seen as an indictment of communist regimes, it's quite alarming to see how George Orwell's *1984* can just as easily relate to Western capitalism. For director Robbins, Hollywood actor and critic of the Bush administration, *1984* is a perfect vehicle to vent his frustration...."

In addition to his work with the Actor's Gang, of which he is a co-founder, Robbins has a long list of film credits including key roles in *The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Player*, *Bull Durham*, *Jacob's Ladder*, *Bob Roberts*, *The Hudsucker Proxy*, *Short Cuts*, *High Fidelity*, and many others. He has won numerous awards, including an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor, as well as a Golden Globe Award, a Screen Actors Guild Award, and A Critic's Choice Award for his role in *Mystic River*. As a director Robbins has distinguished himself with works including *Dead Man Walking*, which he also wrote and produced, and which won multiple awards, including the Humanitas Award, four awards at the Berlin Film Festival, and the Oscar for Best Actress for **Susan Sarandon**. He has also written seven plays, including *Embedded*, which has been performed on national and international tours by the Actor's Gang.

Michael Gene Sullivan is the head writer for the Tony-award-winning **San Francisco Mime Troupe** where he has written, performed in, or directed more than 20 productions. He has also worked **American Conservatory Theater**, **Denver Center Theatre Company**, the **Berkeley Repertory Theater**, and **San Jose Repertory Theater**, and has toured nationally and internationally. Sullivan is also resident playwright for the **Magic Theatre's** Young California Writers Project.

Cameron Dye, who plays Winston Smith in the current production of *1984*, has appeared in several Actors' Gang productions including *Alagazam*. He has guest starred or recurred in numerous episodes of television programs including *JAG*, *Frasier*, *Smallville*, and *ER*. Film credits include the 1980s cult classic *Valley Girl* and *Up Through the Tavern*. Rounding out the cast are **Keythe Farley** as O' Brien, **Kali Hollister** as Julia, and **Justin Zsebe**, **V.J. Foster**, and **Steven M. Porter**, each playing multiple roles.

"The Actor's Gang has a distinguished history of producing top-quality, socially minded theatre for more than a quarter century, and we look forward to a provocative production of *1984*," said **Don Roth**, the Mondavi Center's executive director.

What: **The Actor's Gang**
1984

When: Tuesday, April 1 ▪ 8 pm

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

Admission: \$44/\$35/\$29 Adults • \$22/\$17.50/\$14.50 Students, Children

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