

CONTACT:
Christina Kellogg 510.643.6714
ckellogg@calperformances.org
Joe Yang 510.642.9121
scyang@calperformances.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 1, 2013

**VOICES OF AFGHANISTAN RETURNS TO CAL PERFORMANCES
FEATURING USTAD FARIDA MAHWASH, HOMAYOUN SAKHI AND HIS
ENSEMBLE ON SATURDAY, MARCH 2, IN WHEELER AUDITORIUM**

BERKELEY, February 1, 2013—Two legends of Afghan music, Ustad Farida Mahwash and Homayoun Sakhi, return to Cal Performances with a program of traditional and contemporary Afghan music titled *Voices of Afghanistan*. Mahwash, Afghanistan’s leading female vocalist, and Sakhi, a *rubâb* virtuoso and leader of his eponymously named ensemble, will perform on Saturday, March 2 at 8:00 p.m. in Wheeler Auditorium. The Sakhi Ensemble consists of a quartet of esteemed musicians: Khalil Ragheb (harmonium), Pervez Sakhi (*tula*) Abbas Kosimov (*doyra*) and Ezmarrai Aref (*tabla*). In the group’s first Cal Performances engagement, part of 2010 Ojai North!, Mahwash was praised for her performance in which “words, expression, ornamentation and piercing plaintive sound combined with mesmerizing naturalness” (*The New York Times*).

Sawol-jawab—the interplay of questions and answers—is the foundation upon which much of Afghan music rests. With implications beyond the stage, it posits that only the most thoughtfully constructed questions can elicit meaningful answers. Mahwash and the musicians from The Sakhi Ensemble test this belief at every performance. For their tour, artistic director Sakhi has created an acoustically rich crossroad in which the musicians explore the interconnectedness of the seeker and sought, sacred and secular, traditional and contemporary. Afghanistan is a regional hub of cultural and social activity and is home to a vast array of musical genres. The *ghazals*, folk songs and traditional melodies spotlighted on tour, speak to the human need for love, grace and transcendency.

Long considered “the voice of Afghanistan” and the first woman to be granted the honorific title of Ustad (Maestra), Farida Mahwash is celebrated around the globe for her *ghazal* repertoire. Her story is one of unyielding perseverance as witnessed by the great personal risk she encountered by performing in public during the early years of Taliban rule.

-MORE-

After decades of political turmoil, she was forced to leave Afghanistan in 1991. She moved to Pakistan where she took refuge from the two warring sides of the time, each of whom warned her to sing for their cause or else face assassination. Her plight was recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and she was granted political asylum in the United States.

Usatad Mahwash was born into a conservative Afghan family. Her mother was a Quran teacher and religion loomed large throughout her upbringing. For many years, her interest in music was suppressed. Upon completion of her studies, Farida accepted a position in the Kabul Radio Station. There, she was discovered by the station's director who encouraged her to pursue singing as a career. Her musky voice with its command of the subtle art of ornamentation has dazzled audiences worldwide, as she shares the country's rich musical heritage through her performances and recordings. For further information go to demgmt.com.

Homayoun Sakhi was born in Kabul in 1976 into one of Afghanistan's leading musical families. From the age of ten, he studied *rubâb* with his father, Ghulam Sakhi, in the traditional form of apprenticeship known as *ustâd-shâgird* (Persian for "master-apprentice"). His artistry demonstrates how an imaginative musician working within a traditional musical idiom can enrich and expand its expressive power while respecting what had been passed down from master musicians of the past. Sakhi's personal story illustrates the extraordinarily challenging conditions under which he and his fellow Afghan musicians have pursued their art. During Afghanistan's many years of armed conflict, when music was controlled, censored, and finally, banned altogether, the classical *rubâb* style to which Sakhi had devoted his career not only survived but reached new creative heights. He was granted residency in the United States, and settled in Fremont, California, bringing with him the sophisticated and original *rubâb* style that he had developed. Fremont claims the largest concentration of Afghans in the United States. In Fremont, Sakhi established himself as a leader of the local musical community, and received National and International acclaim for both his work as a performer, teacher and composer. As a composer, he has created works for Kronos Quartet and Hannibal Lokumbe and has collaborated with celebrated musicians from around the globe. He is now working on some of his most

-MORE-

passionate compositions to date for Ustad Mahwash. More information is available at demgmt.com.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for *Voices of Afghanistan* on Saturday, March 2 at 8:00 p.m. are priced at \$36.00. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens, other students and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$5.00 discount (Special Events excluded). For select performances, Cal Performances offers UCB student, faculty and staff, senior, and community rush tickets. Rush tickets are announced three hours prior to a performance on Cal Performances' Facebook page and at 510-642-9988 and are available in person only at the Ticket Office beginning one hour before the performance; one ticket per person; all sales are cash only. For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit www.calperformances.org.

#

Cal Performances thanks Wells Fargo, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Bank of America for their major support of the Season.

KDFC is media sponsor of the 2012/13 Season

#

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Saturday, March 2 at 8:00 p.m.

**Wheeler Auditorium, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley**

World Stage

Voices of Afghanistan

Ustad Farida Mahwash, vocals

-MORE-

Homayoun Sakhi, *rubâb*

Khalil Ragheb, *harmonium*

Pervez Sakhi, *tula* (flute)

Abbos Kosimov, *doyra*

Ezmarrai Aref, *tabla*

Program: An evening of traditional Afghan music performed by songstress Ustad Farida Mahwash and *rubab* master Homayoun Sakhi and his ensemble.

Tickets: \$36.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door.

- Cal Performances -

-MORE-