

FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE

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**MUSICAL ALCHEMIST BOBBY McFERRIN RETURNS FOR HIS FIRST  
SOLO PERFORMANCE IN THE BAY AREA IN FIVE YEARS,  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 AT 8:00 P.M.**

**CONCERT OPENS CAL PERFORMANCES' 2004/05 SEASON**

**BERKELEY, July 30, 2004** – An extraordinary artist whose vast array of vocal talents place him in a category of one, **Bobby McFerrin** gives a rare solo performance to open Cal Performances 2004/05 season **Saturday, September 11 at 8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall. A ten-time Grammy Award-winner, McFerrin is one of the world's most celebrated vocal innovators and improvisers, in addition to being recognized as an accomplished classical conductor. Cal Performances' Special Event engagement marks McFerrin's first solo appearance in the Bay Area since 1999, and with his four-octave range, remarkable improvisational techniques and skill for playfully sparking audience participation, he has carved out a unique place in contemporary vocal performance. Each solo concert resonates with the thrill of the unexpected, due to its unscripted nature, and has the potential to visit virtually every genre of music under the sun, because McFerrin has vocalized them all. "A musical phenomenon...his signature is pure enthusiasm," *The New York Times* writes of Bobby McFerrin. "No matter what kind of music he happens to be performing or witnessing, he throws himself into it totally, his infectious smile challenging the audience to enjoy the performance as much as he does. Mozart or Gershwin, it doesn't matter. Simply listen and be moved; get down with it."

**BOBBY McFERRIN**

Born to opera singing parents in New York in 1950 (McFerrin's father, Robert McFerrin, Sr., was the first African-American male soloist at the Metropolitan Opera), the family moved to Hollywood in 1958 when Robert McFerrin was hired to be the singing voice for Sidney Poitier in the film version of *Porgy and Bess*. Young Bobby McFerrin's first love was the clarinet, but he switched to the piano when a mouthful of braces forced the aspiring reedman to abandon the instrument. He went on to form the Bobby Mack Quartet in high school, followed by a cross-country tour with the Ice Follies and a stint as a pianist in a lounge band.

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In 1977, McFerrin decided to come out from behind the piano to test his skills as a vocalist, and in 1978 he started singing with the group Astral Project in New Orleans, and later toured with jazz vocalist Jon Hendricks. Inspired by the completely improvised solo concerts of pianist Keith Jarrett, McFerrin and his manager Linda Goldstein decided to develop his career as a solo vocalist. Bill Cosby arranged for his 1980 performance at the Playboy Jazz Festival, and a year later McFerrin made a triumphant appearance at the Kool Jazz Festival in New York. Shortly afterwards, McFerrin released his debut album, *Bobby McFerrin*, on the Elektra/Asylum label.

In 1983 McFerrin undertook his first tour of Europe as an unaccompanied vocalist, performing without any prepared material. Audiences were bewildered at first, and then utterly astonished. Tapes of those concerts were made into the album *The Voice*, a landmark recording that heralded the arrival of a major musical talent. German critics called *stimmwunder*, or “wonder voice.”

The 1980s saw McFerrin engaging in a wide range of collaborations, earning his first Grammy in 1985 for *Another Night in Tunisia* with the Manhattan Transfer. Subsequent Grammy Awards came for the film score to *Round Midnight* (1986) and McFerrin’s musical contribution to *How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin*, a recorded version of the children’s story narrated by Jack Nicholson. By the late ‘80s, McFerrin had taken his solo performances from the Hollywood Bowl to Carnegie Hall to the premiere concert halls of Europe and Asia. He released *Simple Pleasures* in 1988, a recorded homage to his favorite music of the 1960s. A joyous ditty created on the spot in the recording studio became the ubiquitous global hit “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” *Simple Pleasures* was nominated for a 1988 Grammy for Album of the Year, while “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” won both Record of the Year and coveted Song of the Year awards.

Resisting the deluge of offers for concerts and events brought on by his sudden popularity, McFerrin took a surprise sabbatical to study conducting under Leonard Bernstein, Gustav Meier and Seiji Ozawa. In 1990, on his 40th birthday, McFerrin was given the opportunity to conduct the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, which he has continued to do

throughout his career (his last performance with the SFS was July 2000). He later recorded *Hush* with friend and famed cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and in 1994 was named creative director of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. In 1995 he released the critically acclaimed *Paper Music*, his first recording as a conductor.

McFerrin's wide-ranging career has produced twelve recordings and ten Grammy Awards, a slew of documentary, feature and animated short film credits (notably the scores for *Knick Knack*, *Tin Toy* and other shorts for Emeryville's Pixar Studios), and numerous guest appearances on fellow artists' recordings, including those of Wynton Marsalis, Laurie Anderson, Jack DeJohnette, Quincy Jones, Pharroah Sanders, Rob Wasserman and Robin Williams, to name just a few. McFerrin's most recent full-length CD, 2002's *Beyond Words* (Blue Note), is representative of many of the vocalist's worldly interests; 16 original compositions blend African, Asian, Spanish, and Middle Eastern musical elements, and feature contributions by Chick Corea, Richard Bona, Omar Hakim, and Cyro Baptista. Continuing the family tradition, McFerrin's son Taylor joins his father on mouth percussion on a track called "Taylor Made."

### TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Bobby McFerrin** on **Saturday, September 11** at **8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$32.00**, **\$46.00**, and **\$68.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at [www.calperfs.berkeley.edu](http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu); and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at [www.calperfs.berkeley.edu](http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu).

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*The San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Francisco* magazine, and Classical 102.1 KDFC are season sponsors of Cal Performances' 2004/05 performing arts season.

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**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS**

**Saturday, September 11 at 8:00 p.m.**

**Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus**  
Bancroft Way at Telegraph, Berkeley

*Special Event*

**Bobby McFerrin**

**Program:** One of the world's most celebrated vocal innovators and improvisers launches Cal Performances 2004/05 season with a rare solo performance.

**Tickets:** \$32.00, \$46.00, and \$68.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at [www.calperfs.berkeley.edu](http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu); and at the door.

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