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**THE INCOMPARABLE SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK RETURNS TO CAL
PERFORMANCES FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24 AT 8:00 P.M. AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**SCHOOLTIME: 1-HOUR SHOW FOR BAY AREA STUDENTS THURSDAY,
FEBRUARY 23 AT 10:30 A.M. & 1:00 P.M.**

BERKELEY, January 23, 2006 – She is a musical legend, a vocal supernova, a clarion call for justice and the promise of respite, acceptance and succor. She is African-American harmonizing, gospel, R&B, jazz, blues, rap and Caribbean soul. She is **Sweet Honey and the Rock**, and trying to describe her would be “like trying to describe seeing Moses part the Red Sea. Unless you were there, you can't fully take it in” (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*). Sweet Honey singers **Arnaé, Ysaye Maria Barnwell, Nitanju Bolade Casel, Aisha Kahlil, Carol Maillard, Louise Robinson**, and sign language interpreter **Shirley Childress Saxton**, bring their powerful, indescribable music to Cal Performances for one night only on **Friday, February 24 at 8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall. Additionally, Sweet Honey in the Rock will give a *SchoolTime* performance for Bay Area students in Zellerbach Hall on **Thursday, March 2 at 10:30 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.**; tickets available in advance only.

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK

Founded in 1973 by **Bernice Johnson Reagon** as a supplement to her vocal workshop, **Sweet Honey in the Rock** has weathered the test of time thanks to its unwavering commitment to the struggle for justice, stunning vocal prowess, soulful harmonies and intricate rhythms. Although there have been more than 20 members in the ensemble through the years, their toughest personnel decision happened in 2004 when their founder retired. After much soul-searching, the group decided to continue, and they still deliver inspiring concerts that “captivate and enthrall” (*Tulsa World*).

Yasaye M. Barnwell is a native New Yorker now living in Washington, D.C., where she has, since 1979, performed with Sweet Honey in the Rock. She appears as a vocalist and/or

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instrumentalist on more than thirty recordings with Sweet Honey in the Rock, as well as with other artists. In addition to being a singer with a vocal range of over three octaves, Barnwell spends much of her time off-stage working as master teacher and choral clinician in cultural performance theory. In her first year with Sweet Honey, Barnwell provided leadership in developing the group's practice of making concerts accessible to the Deaf through Sign Language interpretation.

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, **Carol Maillard** attended college in Washington, D.C. at the Catholic University of America where she studied violin and majored in drama. While in D.C., she began her professional acting career with the D.C. Black Repertory Company. A founding member of Sweet Honey in the Rock, she rejoined the group full time in 1992. Maillard is also a versatile and talented actress, writer and producer. Her film credits include *Beloved* and *Thirty Years to Life*. A children's book based on her composition *Still the Same Me* is scheduled to be published by Simon and Schuster later this year.

A native of Chicago, Illinois, **Arnaé**'s life in music began at the age three with piano lessons and a spot in the family singing group, performing songs comprising the African-American religious traditions. She has worked as a public radio producer and announcer, and for five years was a producer and artistic director of the Smithsonian Institution's acclaimed jazz repertory series. Arnaé has performed with the group intermittingly since 1994 and was delighted to join Sweet Honey full time in 2004.

Nitanju Bolade Casel brought to Sweet Honey her unique performance experience in African vocal styles, jazz, improvisational rhythms, and hip hop after four years of study, performance and cultural organizing in Dakar, Senegal. Her extensive training, research, and teaching experience in African-derived traditions has its base in those pioneering communities of the late sixties which led the way to redefining and making accessible African expressive culture in the United States.

Joining Sweet Honey in the Rock in 1981, **Aisha Kahlil**, vocalist, composer, dancer/choreographer, and teacher, came as an extraordinary vocal experimental innovator with

an impressive range to explore jazz, blues, African traditional and contemporary vocal styles and techniques. She received the CASA (Contemporary A Capella Society Association) Best Soloist award for her performances of *Fulani Chant* and *See See Rider* on the CD *In This Land* (Earthbeat! 1992).

Louise Robinson is a native New Yorker who began her relationship with music in the children's choir at church. Robinson has had the good fortune of expressing her creative talents in many arenas, including: studio voice-over work, background vocals, film, directing, and producing. For the past sixteen years, Robinson has been touring and performing with the vocal ensemble Street Sounds, which she founded in 1989. After 26 years, Robinson returns to Sweet Honey. "It is a full circle, and I am excited to rejoin the women who have carried on and kept this vibrant."

Shirley Childress Saxton is a veteran professional Sign Language interpreter, having learned American Sign Language from her deaf parents. In their honor, she founded the Herbert and Thomasina Childress Scholarship Fund to assist other Children of Deaf Adults (C.O.D.A.) to explore sign interpreting as a career option. Saxton began working as Sign Language interpreter for Sweet Honey in the Rock in 1980.

Over the past 32 years, Sweet Honey in the Rock has recorded 17 albums in addition to various projects, special appearances, and collaborations in film, books, and music. The group garnered a Grammy Award in 1989 for work on the Smithsonian Folkways/Columbia recording, *Vision Shared: A Tribute to Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly*.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Sweet Honey in the Rock** on **Friday, February 24** at **8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$24.00**, **\$34.00**, and **\$46.00**. 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; 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.

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Cal Performances' 2005/2006 Centennial Season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

The *Contra Costa Times* and Classical 102.1 KDFC are season media sponsors of the 2005/06 performing arts season.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Thursday, February 23 at 10:30 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.
SCHOOLTIME PERFORMANCES

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

Sweet Honey in the Rock

Program: The Grammy Award-winning African-American female *a cappella* ensemble presents a one-hour program for Bay Area schoolchildren.

Tickets: \$3.00 per student or adult chaperone, available **in advance only** through Cal Performances at (510) 642-1082. *SchoolTime* performances are open to students in grades 2 through 12 in Bay Area public and private schools. Supplemental study guides for the classroom are provided. For more information about the *SchoolTime* program, contact the *SchoolTime* coordinator at Cal Performances by email at eduprograms@calperfs.berkeley.edu, or by phone at (510) 642-0212.

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Friday, February 24 at 8:00 p.m.

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

World Stage

Sweet Honey in the Rock

Program: The six-member *a cappella* ensemble returns to Cal Performances for a not-to-be-missed performance celebrating African American tradition, culture, and music.

Tickets: \$24.00, \$34.00, and \$46.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door.