

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**MELODIES OF AFRICA COME TO CAL PERFORMANCES IN ACOUSTIC AFRICA
FEATURING VUSI MAHLASELA, HABIB KOITÉ AND DOBET GNAHORÉ
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18 AT 8:00 P. M. IN ZELLERBACH HALL**

SchoolTime: Special one-hour performance for students Wednesday, October 18 at 11:00 a.m.

BERKELEY, September 8, 2006—*Acoustic Africa*, an inspiring evening of contemporary African music comes to Cal Performances on **Wednesday, October 18 at 8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall. The concert highlights the music of **Vusi Mahlasela, Habib Koité** and **Dobet Gnahoré**, three of Africa's most gifted musician-singer-songwriters. The artists write and perform music inspired by their cultural roots, remaining true to their regions' musical heritage while exploring international musical influences. After the decades of synthesized, studio-based African music in the 1980s and 1990s, Mahlasela, Koité and Gnahoré are part of a return to acoustic music. The three musicians are, additionally, activists who use music as a vehicle to raise awareness of some of Africa's most pressing social and political concerns, such as apartheid, ethnic conflict, AIDS and poverty. *Acoustic Africa* will draw from the artists' CD of the same name (Putumayo, fall 2006 release), as well as other selections from the artists' repertoire. Koité's band **Bamada** will also perform.

Vusi Mahlasela will give a *SchoolTime* performance for Bay Area students Wednesday, October 18 at 11:00 a.m. in Zellerbach Hall. Tickets are available in advance only.

VUSI MAHLASELA

Known as "The Voice," South African musician **Vusi Mahlasela** uses music to address the social and political concerns in his native country. A singer, guitarist, percussionist, composer, and poet, Mahlasela's music played a key role in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. His musical message of change eventually caught the eye of the South African leadership; Vusi Mahlasela performed at Nelson Mandela's 1994 inauguration. His music has been featured in several films, including *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*, the story of the relationship between music and the anti-apartheid movement, and *Tsotsi*, winner of

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the 2006 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Mahlasela continues to be involved in political activism; he is a goodwill ambassador to Nelson Mandela's 46664 Foundation to raise AIDS awareness and his music now addresses the need for forgiveness and reconciliation in South Africa. Mahlasela performed at Cal Performances in 2005 with Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

HABIB KOITÉ AND BAMADA

Hailing from Mali, guitar player **Habib Koité** has created a musical style all his own. He is intimately familiar with traditional Malian music, as he comes from a long line of *griots*, West African praise singers, musicians, and keepers of family histories. He integrates traditional music and contemporary guitar practice, playing on open strings as is done on an African *kamala n'goni*, and tuning his guitar to the pentatonic scale, a scale similar to the mode of Malian music. Together with his band **Bamada** (a nickname for residents of Bamako, Mali, translated as "in the mouth of the crocodile"), he works to build musical ties between conflicting ethnic groups in Mali by building a pan-Malian culture. "Many villages and communities have their own kind of music," Koité explains. "Usually, Malian musicians play only their own ethnic music, but me, I go everywhere. My job is to take all these traditions and to make something with them, to use them in my music." Koité's band brings together musicians from several ethnic groups, and his songs blend music and language from across Mali. According to *The New York Times*, "Habib Koité's reputation as a guitar player has become almost mythical. . . ."

DOBET GNAHORÉ

Singer, dancer, and percussionist **Dobet Gnahoré** is the youngest of the musicians featured in *Acoustic Africa*. At just 23 years old, she has developed an artistic identity that brings together musical styles from across Africa. Since fleeing the political turmoil in her native Ivory Coast, Dobet Gnahoré creates music that recalls a time when the country was open to diverse cultures and speaks out against the conflict in the region. She also sings in many different languages, trying to break down cultural barriers. She says that through her music she's "talking to the nation, I'm telling the politicians that I'm tired of seeing blood pouring, tired of seeing people disappear." Sean Barlow of *Afropop Worldwide* says, "Wow! Dobet Gnahoré is one helluva talented artist. Powerful singing combined with a charismatic stage presence,

original choreography, and theatricality. . . ." Gnahoré currently resides in France, and the *Acoustic Africa* concert marks her eagerly-anticipated US debut.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Acoustic Africa** at Cal Performances, **Wednesday, October 18 at 8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$22.00, \$30.00** and **\$42.00**. 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, 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 the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu

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Cal Performances 2006/2007 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Classical 102.1 KDFC is 2006/2007 season media sponsor.

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(Calendar of events continues on the next page.)

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Wednesday, October 18 at 11:00 a.m.
SCHOOLTIME PERFORMANCE

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

Acoustic Africa
with **Vusi Mahlasela**

Program: In a one-hour performance for school children, Vusi Mahlasela will tell stories and perform songs from *Acoustic Africa* and other albums.

Tickets: \$4.00 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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Wednesday, October 18 at 8:00 p.m.

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

World Stage

Acoustic Africa

Featuring **Habib Koité** and **Bamada, Vusi Mahlasela**, and **Dobet Gnahoré**

Program: An evening of acoustic music by three of Africa's most gifted musicians in conjunction with the release of a new CD, *Acoustic Africa* (Putumayo).

Tickets: \$22.00, \$30.00, and \$42.00, 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.