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**A NATURAL WONDER OF THE MUSIC WORLD, BOBBY McFERRIN, RETURNS TO
ZELLERBACH HALL WITH HIS IMPROVISATIONAL VOCAL ORCHESTRA
VOICESTRA WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24 AT 8:00 P.M.**

BERKELEY, December 13, 2006—**Bobby McFerrin**, ten-time Grammy winner, conductor of classical music and composer of one of the best known songs in the last fifty years, performs **Wednesday, January 24 at 8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall. With his four-octave range, stunning improvisational techniques and ability to spark audience participation, McFerrin has carved out a unique place in contemporary vocal performance. Joining him on stage is his 12-member vocal band **Voicestra** that he began more than 20 years ago. The music for the concert will be improvised and has the potential to visit virtually every genre of music because McFerrin and Voicestra have done them all. “A musical phenomenon...his signature is pure enthusiasm,” *The New York Times* writes of 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.” In the words of his most famous song, his concert is sure to encourage the audience “don’t worry, be happy.”

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), **Bobby McFerrin** moved with his family 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* (Elektra/Asylum).

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 most recent 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 12 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."

VOICESTRA

Comprised of 12 uniquely gifted singers with broad stylistic experience ranging from jazz to R&B to Indian classical opera, **Voicestra** serves as a rich compositional palate for McFerrin's expeditions into the musical universe. Bobby founded Voicestra in 1986 to explore interactive group singing in his performances, and it has since evolved into a medium for deeply spiritual and powerful improvisations. Voicestra is not just a choir, but a flexible and richly textured instrument through which Bobby can experiment with and express his unique vocal style and musical stream of consciousness. The music is entirely improvised and captures everything in the performance: the day, the time, the theater, the audience. Melodies, rhythms and textures traverse from singer to singer, perpetually morphing in reaction to the moment and McFerrin's instincts.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Bobby McFerrin** on **Wednesday, January 24 at 8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$32.00**, **\$48.00**, and **\$62.00**. 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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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Wednesday, January 24 at 8:00 p.m.

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

Special Event

Bobby McFerrin

Program: Bobby McFerrin, one of the world's most celebrated vocal innovators and improvisers, performs with his vocal band Voicestra.

Tickets: \$32.00, \$48.00, and \$62.00, 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.
