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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS THE WEST COAST PREMIERE OF
SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK'S INDABA!
SATURDAY, APRIL 5 AT 8:00 P.M. AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**THE GRAMMY-WINNING ENSEMBLE PERFORMS ITS ORIGINAL COMPOSITION FEATURING THE
PACIFIC MOZART ENSEMBLE, OAKLAND SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS' YOUTH CHOIR AND
BAY AREA PERCUSSIONISTS AND INSTRUMENTALISTS**

**SCHOOLTIME: A SPECIAL 1-HOUR PERFORMANCE FEATURING MUSIC FROM SWEET HONEY
IN THE ROCK'S VAST REPERTOIRE WILL BE GIVEN FOR BAY AREA STUDENTS ON
FRIDAY, APRIL 4 AT 11:00 A.M.**

BERKELEY, March 5, 2008—"Soulful, spirited, sumptuous, stirring" (*Washington Post*)—the internationally renowned *a cappella* **Sweet Honey in the Rock** returns to Cal Performances **Saturday, April 5 at 8:00 p.m.** at Zellerbach Hall. Through the years, the ensemble, currently a quintet of vocalists with **Ysaye M. Barnwell, Nitanju Bolade Casel, Aisha Kahlil, Carol Maillard** and **Louise Robinson** and sign language interpreter **Shirley Childress Saxton**, has inspired listeners with indescribably powerful and uplifting music. The program will feature the West Coast premiere of a Gospel work titled ***Indaba!***, commissioned by Washington Performing Arts Society, written by Sweet Honey in the Rock members and first performed at The Kennedy Center in 2006; the Berkeley performance will be the second performance of the work. The Zulu word *indaba* means "to gather the right people together at the right time to discuss the right issues." The 40-minute suite of songs is "a radiant new gospel work" (*The Washington Post*) and is a musical dialogue between youth and their elders. The performance also features the vocalists of **Pacific Mozart Ensemble** under the leadership of **Lynne Morrow** and the youth choir from **Oakland School for the Arts** directed by Cultural Heritage Choir's **Melanie DeMore**; a group of Bay Area musicians will complete the ensemble. The program also includes songs from Sweet Honey in the Rock's recently Grammy-nominated CD *Experience... 101*; and from the company's immense collection of original songs based on work songs, spirituals, gospel, blues, jazz and love songs.

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Sweet Honey in the Rock will give a *SchoolTime* performance for Bay Area students in Zellerbach Hall on **Friday, April 4 at 11:00 a.m.**; tickets available in advance only.

Indaba! was originally commissioned by Washington Performing Arts Society (WPA S) in honor of the organization's 40th anniversary; the WPAS is home base theater of Sweet Honey in the Rock. The seven songs that make up *Indaba!* were written by Sweet Honey in the Rock members with Casel, Kahlil, Maillard and Robinson contributing one each and Barnwell writing two; former Sweet Honey member Arnaé composed an additional piece. The largest and most complex originally produced production the company has undertaken, *Indaba* opens with a *Prayer*, performed by Sweet Honey, asking that the community be blessed with children. The prayer is followed by an affirmation from the elders to the youth that *We Believe In You*. The youth then affirm that though they may be young, they understand that they are *Members of the World Community* and then raise the *Questions* that all youth raise. The teenagers in dialogue with their parents struggle to *Get Along*, particularly as they share their *Vision of Tomorrow*. The entire community (including the audience) is invited to come together in the final song celebrating *Joy In The Morning*.

In the first half of the concert, Sweet Honey will perform songs from its repertoire as well as songs from its newest CD *Experience... 101*. The idea for the CD originated from "examining some of the lessons that we, the women of Sweet Honey in the Rock, have learned and would love to share," explains member/producer Casel. *Experience* has been hailed as "life-affirming... the lessons within are truly lovely and ultimately worthy of anyone's appreciation" (*Now Magazine*).

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK

Founded in 1973 by **Bernice Johnson Reagon** as an addition 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. Reagon retired in 2004 and the remaining singers decided to continue performing, with the recent return of original member Louise Robinson. The vocalists and sign language interpreter

continue Sweet Honey's three-decades-long journey to create music out of the rich textures of African American legacy and traditions.

Over the past 34 years, Sweet Honey in the Rock has recorded 21 albums in addition to various projects, special appearances and collaborations in film, books and music. The group won a Grammy Award in 1989 for work on the Smithsonian Folkways/Columbia recording, *Vision Shared: A Tribute to Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly*.

Sweet Honey in the Rock has been a vital and innovative cultural presence in Washington, D.C., and in communities of conscience around the world. Through a repertoire that includes work songs, spirituals, gospel, blues, jazz and love songs, the women of Sweet Honey in the Rock find the elemental strength of a rock and the sweet nourishment of honey. Steeped in the sacred music of the Black church, the clarion calls of the civil rights movement, and songs of the struggle for justice everywhere, “great Black music is what we sing—a *cappella* style with a political ring,” says member Nitanju Bolade Casel.

Sweet Honey in the Rock, a longtime Bay Area favorite ensemble that has performed in Zellerbach Hall for over twenty years, augments its annual concerts in Berkeley with various community activities including *SchoolTime* performances for local school children, vocal workshops, and master classes. In 2007, the singers participated in a Music and Message symposium with UC Berkeley faculty on the history of music and the Civil Rights Movement. This year, the group will work extensively with the Oakland School of the Arts youth choir in preparation for the Bay Area premiere of *Indaba!*

Ysaye 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 instrumentalist on more than 25 recordings with Sweet Honey in the Rock and 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 American 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*, was published by Simon & Schuster last year.

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 organization 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 innovator with an impressive range to explore jazz, blues, African traditional and contemporary vocal styles and techniques. She received the CASA (Contemporary A Cappella 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 and film, direction and production. A founding member of Sweet Honey in the Rock, Robinson left the ensemble intermittently, starring in on and off Broadway productions as well as touring and performing with the vocal ensemble Street Sounds, which she founded in 1989. After 26 years, Robinson returned to Sweet Honey in 2004. "It is a full circle, and I am excited to rejoin the women who have carried on and kept this vibrant," said Robinson of her return.

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.

PACIFIC MOZART ENSEMBLE

Founded by Artistic Director **Richard Grant** in 1980, the Pacific Mozart Ensemble (PME) has grown to fill an important role in the cultural life of the San Francisco Bay Area, presenting courageous and innovative programs of many works that have never been performed in concert settings. Under the leadership of Grant and recently appointed Music Director **Lynne Morrow**, the all-volunteer group has been delivering passionate, expert and engaging choral performances of music from Brahms to Brubeck the Beach Boys. Perhaps best known for its collaborations with contemporary composers and artists—of which include John Williams, Dave Brubeck, David Lang, Meredith Monk, the American Bach Soloists, Berkeley Symphony Orchestra and the Oakland East Bay Symphony—the ensemble has been featured in local concerts featuring indie rocker Sufjan Stevens and avant garde composer and musician John Zorn. Additionally, PME has made three European tours and numerous recordings, including the 2006 Grammy-nominated Harmonia Mundi recording of Bernstein's Mass with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester under the direction of Kent Nagano.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Sweet Honey in the Rock** on **Saturday, April 5** 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.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 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperformances.org.

For select performances, Cal Performances offers UCB student, faculty and staff, senior and community rush tickets. Rush tickets are announced two hours prior to a performance and are available in person only at the Ticket Office beginning one hour before the performance; quantities may be limited. Rush ticket sales are limited to one ticket per person; all sales are cash only. Rush ticket prices are \$10.00 for UCB students; \$15.00 for UCB faculty and staff (UCB ID required) and seniors age 65 or older; and \$20.00 for all other community members. Information is available at 510-642-9988, press 2 for the rush hotline, two hours prior to a performance only.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, April 4 at 11:00 a.m.
SCHOOLTIME PERFORMANCE

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., 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: \$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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Saturday, April 5 at 8:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

World Stage

Sweet Honey in the Rock

Ysaye M. Barnwell

Nitanju Bolade Casel

Aisha Kahlil

Carol Maillard

Louise Robinson

Shirley Childress Saxton, sign language interpreter

Pacific Mozart Ensemble

Richard Grant, artistic director

Lynne Morrow, music director

Oakland School for the Arts' Youth Choir

Melanie DeMore, music director

and various instrumentalists, to be announced

Program: The a cappella ensemble returns to Cal Performances. Included on the program is the Bay Area premiere of *Indaba!*, a Sweet Honey in the Rock original work performed in collaboration with Pacific Mozart Ensemble, the Oakland School for the Arts Youth Choir and various Bay Area instrumentalists.

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.calperformances.net; and at the door.

– Cal Performances –