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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS MALIAN GUITARIST AND VOCALIST
HABIB KOITÉ AND HIS BAND BAMADA ON
FRIDAY, APRIL 3 AT 8:00 P.M. AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

BERKELEY, February 25, 2009—The “gentle giant of Malian music” (*Songlines*), **Habib Koité**, will bring his distinctive blend of music from his west African homeland to a Cal Performances audience on **Friday, April 3 at 8:00 p.m.** at Zellerbach Hall. Joined by his band, **Bamada**, the beloved guitarist and singer is riding on the critical and popular success of his 2007 *Afriki*, his first studio album in six years. Koité, who descends from a noble line of traditional Malian troubadours known as *Khassonké griots*, is admired worldwide for his musical range, unique voice and eclectic approach to playing guitar. “First there was Hendrix, then Stevie Ray Vaughan, and now Habib,” praises singer and guitarist Bonnie Raitt. The press has noted this high praise among Koité’s musical peers: “His reputation as a guitar player has become almost mythical, combining rock and classical techniques with Malian tunings that make the guitar sound like a *kora* or *n’goni*” (*The New York Times*).

Habib Koité is one of the most popular African musicians in the world today, having performed nearly 1,000 concerts internationally since 1994 and selling more than 250,000 albums worldwide. Born in 1958 into a family of traditional West African singers, Koité inherited his musical passion from his paternal grandfather, who played the Malian four-stringed *kamele n’goni*. Koité adapted the techniques from that traditional instrument to the guitar. He first developed his own unique style of playing while accompanying his *griot* mother at social gatherings and events. “Nobody really taught me to sing or play the guitar,” he explains. “I watched my parents, and it washed off on me.”

Koité planned to study engineering, but at the insistence of an uncle he enrolled in the National Institute of Arts (INA) in Bamako, Mali, in 1978. He graduated at the top of his class in 1982 and stayed to teach. While at INA, Koité met and performed with a number of Malian

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artists, including Kélétigui Diabaté and Toumani Diabaté; Kélétigui continues to play in Koité's band today. Koité's music blends the many regional variations and styles of Mali, but is dominated by *danssa*, a popular rhythm from his hometown of Keyes. He calls his version *danssa doso*, appending the word for "hunter's music." "I put these two words together to symbolize the music of all ethnic groups in Mali," Koité said. "I'm curious about all the music in the world, but I make music from Mali."

Koité formed a band in 1988 and named it **Bamada** (roughly translated, "in the mouth of the crocodile"), a nickname for the residents of Bamako. Some members of the band have been friends with Koité since childhood. Koité took first prize in 1991 at the Voxpole Festival in Perpignan, France, winning enough money to record two songs, including *Cigarette A Bana* (Cigarette Is Finished), which was a hit throughout West Africa. A subsequent hit single, *Nanalé* (The Swallow), won the prestigious Radio France International Discoveries Prize and made it possible for Bamada to tour outside of Africa for the first time in 1994. In 1995, Koité recorded his first album, *Muso Ko*, which reached number two on the European World Music charts. His second album, *Ma Ya*, was released in 1998 and spent three months atop the European World Music charts and 20 weeks in the top 20 on the *College Music Journal's* Top 20 New World Music chart.

Koité has performed at many major European venues including the Montreux Jazz Festival, WOMAD and the World Roots Festival. In 2000, he toured with the avant-garde Art Ensemble of Chicago throughout Europe and Turkey. He has been featured on National Public Radio, Public Radio International, *CNN World Beat*, *Late Night with David Letterman* and in *People* magazine, *Rolling Stone* and *Le Monde*.

Koité's most recent studio album, *Afriki*, was recorded on three continents—in Mali, Belgium and Vermont—and features Bamada and several guest artists, including the late violinist Hassey Sarré and a troupe of traditional African animal horn players. "Listening to the record is like having an old friend coming to visit, full of great tales and smiles," Koite explained in a *Songlines* interview.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Habib Koité & Bamada** on **Friday, April 3** at **8:00 p.m.** in **Zellerbach Hall** are priced at **\$22.00, \$28.00** and **\$36.00**. 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 for UCB students; \$15 for UCB faculty and staff (UCB ID required) and seniors age 65 or older; and \$20 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 3 at 8:00 p.m.

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

World Stage

Habib Koité & Bamada

Program:

Malian guitarist and vocalist Habib Koité and his band Bamada present an evening of pan-Malian music. The playlist will be announced from the stage.

Tickets: \$22, \$28 and \$36, 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.

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