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CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS
JORDI SAVALL AND HESPÈRION XXI IN LUX FEMINAE
AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
TUESDAY, MARCH 16 AT 8:00 P.M.

BERKELEY, February 16, 2010—Gambist and maestro **Jordi Savall** brings his period instrument ensemble **Hespèrion XXI** to Berkeley's **First Congregational Church** on **Tuesday, March 16 at 8:00 p.m.** with a program titled *Lux Feminae (900–1600): Seven Portraits of the Woman in Ancient Hesperia*, featuring soprano **Montserrat Figueras**. The program is an anthology of more than a dozen poems and songs focusing on the many aspects of womanhood from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and was spearheaded by Figueras. Members of Hespèrion XXI featured in the original 2006 Alia Vox recording join Figueras in the performance: **Ariana Savall** and **Begoña Olavide** (voice), **Pierre Hamon** (flute) and **Driss El Maloumi** (*oud*). Songs in various languages including Hebrew, Arabic and Basque cross not only linguistic lines but also ethnic boundaries and the line between sacred and secular forms of art. Savall “resuscitates old music with the scholarly care of an archaeologist, then presents it as a vibrant, living tradition,” states *The New York Times*.

LUX FEMINAE

Soprano Montserrat Figueras recalls how *Lux Feminae* came to fruition as a project paying “homage to the light of Woman. Having sung of that light for so long through music and poetry, I naturally became aware that it has not always been free to shine.” The 15-piece work of poems and songs—some written by women—consists of seven fundamental aspects of femininity: mysticism, sensuality, motherhood, love, lament, rejoicing and wisdom. The endeavor bore a “highly personal, luxuriously produced” (*Early Music*) recording in 2006, with an accompanying hardbound 170-page booklet comprised of notes in six languages and reproductions of medieval Iberian artwork and music manuscript.

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The eclectic anthology of songs in *Lux Feminae* demonstrates the ethnic diversity of the Iberian Peninsula in the span of nearly a millennium. This program is framed by *Flavit Auster*, a sequence in honor of the Blessed Virgin from the *Codex Las Huelgas*, which begins and ends the program. Music from Arabic, Sephardic, Basque and Spanish cultures form a narrative of the woman around the Codex, including a *jarcha*, the final refrain of a *muwashshah*, a lyric genre of the Islamic-Iberian peninsula. In between the traditional songs are pieces written by notable composers such as **Beatriz de Dia**, the most famous out of a small group of female troubadours who were active during the 12th and 13th centuries. De Dia's **Cançó Estat ai en greu cossirier**, with its brazen, lovelorn text, brings Figueras's vision of the "Femina Nova" to life. **Cantiga d'Amigo Ondas do mare** by **Martín Codax** is one of seven *cantigas d'amigo* that the composer wrote in his lifetime; Codax's *cantigas* are unique in that he is among the two authors (out of 88) who used only an archaic strophic form known as aaB, a rhymed distich followed by a refrain. *Early Music* praised Figueras's performance of female poet **Um Al-Kiram's Hal sabil likhalwa** as "particularly seductive...(and) especially convincing."

JORDI SAVALL

Jordi Savall began his musical training at the age of six as a member of the boys' choir of Igualada, Barcelona, where he was born. In 1965, a year after graduating from his cello studies at the Barcelona Conservatory of Music, Savall began to teach himself the *viola da gamba* and to study ancient music. Savall began studying with August Wenziger at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, Switzerland in 1968, becoming Wenziger's successor in 1973. Now regarded as one of early music's most devoted advocates, Savall's approach to reviving early music couples hundreds of annual performances and an aggressive scholarly appetite. "No one plays this eccentric, eloquent instrument more beautifully than Savall...[he] has recaptured, as far as anyone can tell, not just the technique but also the artistic spirit of the Renaissance musicians who made the viol the center of their world" (*The New Yorker*).

Savall's primary *viola da gamba* was built in 1697 in London by Barak Norman, and was at one time converted into a cello. Savall had it restored as a seven-string instrument with the traditional, moveable gut frets. The antique instrument, combined with Savall's meticulous research and formidable technique, produces the closest possible re-creation of early music and

its practice, shedding new light on old standards. “When we play something like *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*,” notes Savall, “it’s almost like new music to us.... I’m not sure a standard orchestra hears music like that” (*The Fretboard Journal*).

Savall has made over 170 recordings. He inaugurated his own early-music label, Alia Vox, in 1998. His most widely known recording is of the music for Alain Corneau’s film, *Tous les Matins du Monde* (“All the Mornings of the World”), which won a César Award for best soundtrack. The film features music of composers Marais and Sainte-Colombe, arranged and performed by Savall. In 2006, his double CD, *Don Quijote de la Mancha, Romances y Músicas*, was nominated for a Grammy Award and won a Gramophone Award in the early music category.

Savall was named an Officer in the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1988 and the *Creu de Sant Jordi* by the Generalitat de Catalunya (Spain) in 1990. Additionally, he has received many honors, including the Medalla de Oro de las Bellas Artes by the Spanish Culture and Education Ministry in 1998; Doctor Honoris Causa of the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium (2000); “Victoire de la Musique” in recognition of his professional achievements (2002); the Gold Medal of the Parliament of Catalonia (2003); and the German Preise der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik (2003). Savall was appointed Intercultural Ambassador for the European Union as part of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008. In 2009, Savall was awarded the Georg Friedrich Handel Prize by the composer’s native city of Halle, as well as Catalonia’s National Prize for Culture.

MONTSERRAT FIGUERAS

Born in Barcelona to a family of music lovers, **Montserrat Figueras** began studying voice at an early age. She brings to her performances an extensive knowledge of original vocal techniques dating from the age of the Troubadours; knowledge of traditional Catalan, Iberian and Mediterranean singing; and experience singing Spanish religious polyphony. The alchemy between these three elements leads to a very personal musical interpretation, far from the influence of post-romantic models.

“[Figueras]...looks beyond the cold facts of notation to grasp the spirit of the age: her smoky, penetrating, flatly expressive voice falls somewhere between grand opera and rural folk singing, and combines the best aspects of both” (*The New Yorker*). Figueras has made important contributions to modern understanding of medieval and Renaissance music with her recordings of works by Luis Mila, Tarquinio Merula and Alonso Mudarra. In 2003, she released *Ninna Nanna*, a collection of lullabies covering five centuries. *The New York Times* called the recording “cherishable” and “an instant classic.”

With husband and longtime musical collaborator Jordi Savall, Figueras co-founded the ensembles Hespèrion XX, Le Concert des Nations and La Capella Reial de Catalunya. Savall and Figueras were named “Artists for Peace” by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2008.

HESPÈRION XXI

Jordi Savall, Montserrat Figueras, Lorenzo Alpert (winds and percussion) and Hopkinson Smith (plucked instruments) founded Hespèrion XX in 1974 with the aim of studying and interpreting early music and the Hispanic and European repertoire written before 1800. The group is characterized by its eclectic artistic choices, extensive repertoire and deep knowledge of different styles and periods. Although Alpert and Smith no longer perform with the group, **Hespèrion XXI** has been augmented with other exceptional musicians for this tour: **Pierre Hamon**, *flautas* (Spanish flute); **Sergi Casademunt**, tenor viola de gamba; **Philippe Pierlot**, bass viola de gamba; **Begoña Olavide**, *psalterio* (a string instrument); **Driss El Maloumi**, *oud* (a pear-shaped instrument similar to a lute); **Dimitri Psonis**, *santur* (hammered dulcimer of Iran); **Enrique Solinis**, *vihuela de mano y guitarra* (Spanish guitar); **David Mayoral**, percussion; plus Savall on the soprano viola de gamba and *rebab* (an Arabic string instrument).

TICKET INFORMATION

This performance is sold out. Tickets for **Hespèrion XXI** with **Jordi Savall** on **Tuesday, March 16 at 8:00 p.m.** in **First Congregational Church** are priced at **\$52.00** and may become available due to last-minute returns. Call the Cal Performances Ticket Office at (510) 642-9988 for availability. If available, half-price tickets are offered for purchase by UC

Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students 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 three 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 on Cal Performances' Facebook page and at (510) 642-9988, press 2 for the rush hotline, three hours prior to a performance only.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Tuesday, March 16 at 8:00 p.m.

First Congregational Church
2345 Channing Way, Berkeley

Music Before 1850

Hespèrion XXI

Montserrat Figueras, soprano

Jordi Savall, director and *viola da gamba*

Program: *Lux Feminae (900–1600): Seven Portraits of the Woman in Ancient Hesperia*
O Lux

Anonymous, from *Codex Las Huelgas*/Flavit auster

Anon./Sibila latina Judicii Signum II

Anon./Jarcha Gar kom lebare

De Dia/Cançó Estat ai en greu cossirier

Cárceres/Villancico: Soleta so jo aci

Anon./Villancico: Niña y Viña

Anon./Villancico: Yo me soy la morenica

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Anon./Alma, Buscarte Has En Mi
Al Kiram/Hal sabil likhalwa
Codax/Cantiga d' Amigo Ondas do mare
Cárceres/Villancico: Soleta i Verge estich
Anon./Nana Aurtxo txikia negarez
Anon./Plany d'Estel-lina
Anon./Saeta antiga

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