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SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK RETURNS TO CAL PERFORMANCES
THURSDAY, APRIL 22 AT 8:00 P.M. AT ZELLERBACH HALL

SchoolTime: One-hour Performances for Bay Area Students Will Be Given
Friday, April 23 at 11:00 a.m.

Louise Robinson leads a *Swinging Circles* Workshop on Friday, April 23 at 2:00 p.m. at
The Jazzschool

BERKELEY, March 12, 2010—Dubbed “a national treasure” by First Lady Michelle Obama, the internationally renowned *a cappella* group **Sweet Honey In The Rock** returns to Cal Performances **Thursday, April 22 at 8:00 p.m.** at **Zellerbach Hall** for its annual visit. The soulful and spirited ensemble, currently a sextet comprising vocalists **Ysaye M. Barnwell, Nitanju Bolade Casel, Aisha Kahlil, Carol Maillard** and **Louise Robinson** and sign language interpreter **Shirley Childress Saxton**, has inspired listeners with powerful and uplifting music through the years. The program, to be announced from the stage, will feature a mix of classics and new works from the company’s immense repertoire based on work songs, spirituals, gospel, blues, jazz and love songs.

A one-hour *SchoolTime* performance for Bay Area K-12 students will feature select songs by Sweet Honey In The Rock on **Friday, April 23 at 11:00 a.m.** at **Zellerbach Hall**. Tickets are \$4.00 and must be arranged in advance; for further information, call 510.642.9988.

Founding member of the ensemble Louise Robinson leads a *Swinging Circles* workshop at **The Jazzschool** on **Friday, April 23 at 2:00 p.m.** In this two-hour class, Robinson uses a swing tune to teach lead and group singing, rhythm, individual style, characterization and improvisation. Enrollment is limited to 60. Call 510.845.5373 or email swing@jazzschool.com to register.

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SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK

For over 36 years, **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. Founded in 1973 by **Bernice Johnson Reagon** as an addition to her vocal workshop, the group has weathered the test of time due to its unwavering commitment to the struggle for justice, stunning vocal prowess, soulful harmonies and intricate rhythms.

Through a vast repertoire, 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.

Reagon retired in 2004 and the remaining singers decided to continue performing. More than twenty different vocal artists have made up the group, some leaving the group and returning a few years later like 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.

Sweet Honey In The Rock has recorded more than 20 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*. In 2009, Sweet Honey was invited to participate in the first concert of Barack Obama’s presidency in the White House in honor of Black History Month. The group composed an original song entitled “My Family” for the HBO television special *A Family Is a Family Is a Family: A Rosie O’Donnell Celebration* that debuted in January 2010.

A longtime Bay Area favorite ensemble that has performed in Zellerbach Hall for over 20 years, Sweet Honey In The Rock augments its annual visits to Berkeley with various community activities, including *SchoolTime* performances for local schoolchildren, 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. The group worked extensively with the Oakland School of the Arts youth choir for the 2008 Bay Area premiere of the seven-song Gospel work *Indaba!* at Cal Performances.

Ysaye M. Barnwell is a native New Yorker now living in Washington DC, 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 offstage 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 DC, at the Catholic University of America, where she studied violin and majored in drama. While in DC, she began her professional acting career with the DC 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 in 2007.

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 1960s that 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.

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.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Sweet Honey In The Rock** on **Thursday, April 22 at 8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach **Hall** are priced at **\$26.00, \$38.00, \$48.00 and \$60.00**. 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 \$5.00 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

Thursday, April 22 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
Carol Maillard
Nitanju Bolade Casel
Aisha Kahlil
Louise Robinson
Shirley Childress Saxton

Program: The women of Grammy-winning Sweet Honey In The Rock return with their soulful and inspirational music.

Tickets: \$26.00, \$38.00, \$48.00 and \$60.00, 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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Friday, April 23 at 11:00 a.m.
SCHOOLTIME PERFORMANCE

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

World Stage
Sweet Honey In The Rock

Program: Sweet Honey In The Rock presents a special one-hour performance for 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 kindergarten through grade 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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Friday, April 23 at 2:00 p.m.
WORKSHOP

The Jazzschool for Music Study and Performance
2087 Addison St., Berkeley, CA 94704

Louise Robinson, a founder and singer of Sweet Honey In The Rock, uses a swing tune to teach lead and group singing, rhythm, individual style, characterization, unison, engaging the body in performance, and improvisation. Experience the fun in performing an arrangement created by the way you SWING! Enrollment is limited to 60. Comfortable clothing and advance reservations are strongly encouraged. Call 510.845.5373 or email swing@jazzschool.com to register.

– Cal Performances –