

Cal Performances Presents

Wednesday, January 24, 2007, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Bobby McFerrin & Voicestra



Voicestra is
Nicolas Bearde
Joey Blake
Pierre Cooke
Judi Donaghy
Sussan Deyhim
Kirsten Falke-Boyd
Beth Quist
Rhiannon
Marlon Saunders
Janis Siegel
Roger Treece
Dave Worm

Cal Performances' 2006–2007 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

About the Artists

Bobby McFerrin & Voicestra

Comprising 12 gifted singers with broad stylistic experience ranging from jazz to R&B to Indian classical opera, Voicestra serves as a rich compositional palate for Bobby 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 Bobby's instincts. For many audiences, a Voicestra performance is akin to a religious experience, providing them the rare opportunity to witness as well as participate in a musical celebration of spontaneity.

Bobby on Voicestra

My favorite, most inspiring times in concert have always been the impromptu moments on stage when the audience participates. At some point, I began to realize that I wanted to work with other singers, and the idea for Voicestra seemed to develop from these spontaneous group efforts in my performances.

Voicestra is a 12-piece ensemble, and the music we sing encompasses all kinds of materials: world music, African chants, Indian ragas, storytelling, new songs based on the alphabet and contemporary vocal compositions. We released the album *Circlesongs* in 1997 on Sony Classical, and it remains one of my favorite recordings.

Circlesongs are all improvisational. It comes from the notion that villages in Africa could get together, and the Shaman would come up with something to celebrate and he would give out

parts for them to sing. This was affirmed a little bit by a woman from Africa who I met in Vienna one year, who was traveling with a group which had come directly from a village in Africa. She didn't speak a word of English, but she did speak French. Voicestra had just done this concert and backstage, when we came out, she started speaking to me in French. We had someone interpreting, and she said, "This is just like home. This is exactly what we would do in my village. The chief would give us a part to sing, and this would be the song."

My belief is that this is the most accessible way of people getting together who don't know each other. It's a primal singing without words that seems to be genetically transmitted to my bones and that goes directly to my spirit. One of the simplest forms of prayer and meditation is through chanting, and singing in community is extremely powerful. Gathering people in a space and making them sing instantly puts down all barriers and destroys all differences in creed, gender and race.

So this is what Voicestra still does now. We came from doing a heavily produced show to just a community of singers, 12 of us. And me standing in the middle. And I start to sing and I find something and I give out the part to an individual singer for then to sing, to riff on, to chant, and then it changes; it can change, it can shift, it can last one minute to 101 minutes. You understand why tribes in Africa, when they celebrate and dance, can go for hours and hours: the power of the drum, the beat, how it goes on and on, like your heartbeat. It's relentless. It keeps shifting and going and it's essential. And it's all improvised, every last bit of it.

The Singers

Bobby McFerrin is one of the natural wonders of the music world. A 10-time Grammy Award winner, he is one of the world's best-known vocal innovators and improvisers, a world-renowned

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classical conductor, the creator of “Don’t Worry Be Happy,” one of the most popular songs of the late 20th century, and a passionate spokesman for music education. His recordings have sold over 20 million copies, and his collaborations, including those with Yo-Yo Ma, Chick Corea, the Vienna Philharmonic and Herbie Hancock, have established him as an ambassador of both the classical and jazz worlds.

With a four-octave range and a vast array of vocal techniques, McFerrin is no mere singer; he is music’s last true Renaissance man, a vocal explorer who has combined jazz, folk and a multitude of world music influences—choral, *a cappella* and classical—with his own ingredients. As a conductor, Bobby is able to convey his innate musicality in an entirely different context. He has worked with such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic.

“Unconventional” is a good way to describe the career of Bobby McFerrin. Those familiar with McFerrin’s shows, whether as a conductor or a vocalist, know that each one is a unique event that resonates with the unexpected. He is that rare artist who has the ability to reach beyond musical genres and stereotypes for a sound that is entirely his own. As one of the foremost guardians of music’s rich heritage, he remains at the vanguard with his natural, beautiful and timeless music that transcends all borders and embraces all cultures.

Visit www.bobbymcferrin.com for more information, interactive games, sheet music and Bobby merchandise.

A long-time Northern California resident and an original member of Bobby McFerrin’s Voicestra, **Nicolas Bearde** was born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee and has been singing since he can remember. He has recorded on many projects, collaborating with Michael Bolton, Disney Films, the *a cappella* ensemble SoVoSó, Victor Fields and Puff Johnson. In

addition to his musical endeavors, Nicolas is a stage and film actor as well as a voiceover artist for radio and television. His film and TV credits include *True Crime* (Clint Eastwood), *Pacific Heights* (Michael Keaton) and recurring roles on *Nash Bridges* (Don Johnson). Nicolas has two solo CDs, *Crossing the Line* and his most recent, *All About Love*. Visit him on the web at www.nicolasbearde.com.

Raised in a family of musicians and gospel singers, **Joey Blake**’s multiple skills include singer, producer, musician (piano, guitar, bass, percussion), composer and dancer. He studied classical voice and vocal jazz arranging at Phil Mattson’s School for Vocalists in Spokane, Washington, developing his deeply resonant and expressive bass vocals. One of the original members of Voicestra, Joey currently performs with the ensemble SoVoSó, a six-member *a cappella* ensemble that spun off from Voicestra, for which he has produced four CDs. Joey’s desire to teach is motivated by his need to give back to the music that fills his life with so much joy. He taught at the Oakland College Prep School, served briefly as Director of Music at Oakland’s Golden Gate Academy and was commissioned by the Oakland Youth Chorus to write and arrange for its professional touring ensemble, Vocal Motion. Joey has continued his teaching and is currently on staff at the Berkeley Jazz School as Conductor of the Berkeley Jazz School A Cappella Ensemble, as well as Young Performers International. In addition to Bobby, Joey has worked extensively with Kenny Loggins and Mickey Hart. Joey also works with the organization One World Music, presenting Team Building Workshops through music, with the hope that through this work the world will become more harmonious, within the workplace and in our everyday contact with each other.

A native of New York City, **Pierre Cooke** is an accomplished singer, songwriter and performer, who performs for live and studio projects. In

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addition to full-time teaching, he tours internationally with various productions and has sung with such luminaries as Take 6, Stephanie Mills and Shirley Caesar. He has performed and recorded with Bobby McFerrin over the past five years. After having worked on a number of collaborative efforts, Pierre looks forward to working on his own solo project.

Composer, vocalist and performance artist **Sussan Deyhim** was born in Tehran and has been based in New York since 1980. Her collaborations with filmmaker Shirin Neshat have received much critical acclaim, including the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Biennial. Sussan's catalog of CDs includes the solo albums *Madman of God*, *Shy Angels* with Bill Laswell and *Turbulent* on her label, IsleX Records; *Majoun* (Sony Classical) and *Desert Equations* with Richard Horowitz; and *Shadows* (ECM) with H. Goebbels. Her collaborative media piece, *Logic of the Birds*, was produced and presented at the Lincoln Center Summer Festival in New York, Minneapolis's Walker Art Center, Artangel and the Iranian Heritage Foundation in London, and across Europe by Change. Her soundtrack appearances include *Any Given Sunday*, directed by Oliver Stone (music by Richard Horowitz); *Unfaithful*, directed by Adrian Lyne (music by Jan Kaczmarek); and *The Last Temptation of Christ*, directed by Martin Scorsese (music by Peter Gabriel). Visit her on the web at www.sussandeyhim.com.

Judi Donaghy has worked in a wide variety of musical venues, including opera, musical theater, jazz, folk, country, gospel, pop and R&B. In addition to her work with Voicestra, she regularly sings with Urbanstride, The Girls, The Wolverine's Classic Jazz Orchestra, and Judi, Cliff 'n' Dave. Judi has sung on more than 30 CDs to date, two of which are her own productions, *Sink or Swing* and *Ballads & Bossa*. By day, Judi heads the Voice Department at McNally

Smith College of Music (colloquially, Musictech College) in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Detroit, March 1940: **Kirsten Falke-Boyd** was born in a blizzard to a family who tossed into her DNA three generations of performing in vaudeville, cabaret, opera, radio—and in the summers, the Borscht Circuit. After a memorable career as a child singer in the Catskills, she begged for adult help from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the Akademie Mozarteum in Salzburg, Berlin's Kirchliche Hochschule für Musik, Bobby McFerrin & Voicestra and other good friends. Happy results included the Ted Mack Amateur Hour, the New York Metropolitan Opera High School finals, winner of the New York City National Arts Club Musicians Award and a Lincoln Center appearance as a soloist with the Concert Opera Society. She went on to perform roles in opera, oratorio, musical comedy, television, documentary film and jazz ensembles in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her CD appearances include children's music and Rumi poetry in song. During a seven-year residence in Berlin, she was an active soprano soloist, appearing and recording with the RIAS Kammerchor (Berlin Philharmonic) and the Kammerchor Ernst Senff. She was also an organist for funerals (it was a living!). She lives in Berkeley, teaches voice and studies with Lilian Loran.

Beth Quist is a multi-instrumentalist, vocalist and composer who began playing piano at age two. Her early musical influences were *Batman*, *Star Trek* and *Dr. Zhivago*. "I'm a Little Leopard Prowling Around in Sneakers" was her first musical composition at age eight. Her music combines influences from the Balkans, Middle East and India with her Western upbringing. She recently finished a two-plus-year creation contract with Cirque du Soleil as the lead soprano and instrumentalist for the Las Vegas production of *KA*. She also performs solo in addition to sing-

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ing with Bobby McFerrin's Voicestra. Visit her on the web at www.bethquist.com.

Rhiannon is a singer, performance artist, composer and master teacher who has been bringing her potent blend of jazz, world music, improvisation and storytelling to audiences for over three decades. From her stellar collaborations with Bobby McFerrin and Voicestra to her groundbreaking solo performances, Rhiannon enthalls and inspires her audiences. The unique body-based vocal improvisation process that she teaches internationally is a result of living on the cutting edge of music and theater. Rhiannon is also deeply interested in the healing power of music, and takes her songs and improvisations beyond the realm of clubs and concert halls, to those at the end of life and those struggling to begin life: hospice patients and premature ba-

bies. Above all, Rhiannon is a singer—a captivating entertainer and a true collaborative artist, with a vision of music as a vehicle for healing, transformation and social change. Visit her on the web at www.rhiannonmusic.com.

Singer-songwriter **Marlon Saunders** studied at the Peabody Conservatory and Berklee College of Music, where he now serves on the voice faculty. In addition to his work with Bobby McFerrin, Marlon has worked with many artists over the years, including Sting, Lauryn Hill, Nine Inch Nails and Donald Brown, and has penned songs for such artists as Barry White, Vanessa Rubin and Maysa Leek. One of his compositions is featured in the HBO special, *Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives*. Marlon's recently released CD, *Enter My Mind*, has been hailed as “timeless music” (*Vibe*) and as an in-

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vation into “a sun-drenched place of romantic and spiritual love, of inspired funk, passion and rich imagery” (*Baltimore Sun*). Visit him on the web at www.marlonsaunders.com.

Over the past three decades, the voice of **Janis Siegel** a nine-time Grammy Award winner and a 17-time Grammy nominee has been an undeniable force in The Manhattan Transfer’s diverse musical catalog. Alongside her career as a founding member of this 32-year musical institution, Siegel has sustained a solo career that has spawned more than a half dozen finely crafted solo albums and numerous collaborative projects, amassed a large international fan base and garnered consistently high critical praise. Diversity has been a hallmark of Siegel’s career. Some of her favorite collaborations over the years have been with jazz pianist Fred Hersch (with whom she has made three recordings), Bobby McFerrin, Turkish electronic composer Ilhan Mimaroglu and the Beaux Arts Trio, as well as projects with Richie Cole, Jay McShann, Lew Soloff and Leon Ware. Janis has recorded three CDs for Telarc Records: *I Wish You Love* (2002); *Friday Night Special* (2003), featuring Joey DeFrancesco; and, most recently, *Sketches of Broadway*, featuring classic Broadway hits by Irving Berlin, Lerner and Loewe, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Stephen Sondheim and others.

Roger Treece has spent the past several years writing and producing a Bobby McFerrin choral CD, combining McFerrin’s world-renowned innovations with his own melodic and compositional expertise to yield a genuine innovation in choral music. Roger’s work as a composer, arranger and producer has earned him two Grammy Award nominations, 14 *Down Beat* awards and top film-score prize at the Hollywood Film Festival. Recent commissions have come from the Ravinia Festival (for the Chicago Symphony and Chicago Children’s Choir), the Los Angeles Master Chorale and, in collaboration with McFerrin, the Danish

National Symphony. In addition to his work with Voicestra, he has collaborated with such notable jazz artists as The Manhattan Transfer, New York Voices, Mark Murphy, Janis Siegel and Toninho Horta. Roger’s work also encompasses music for advertising, film and worldwide radio and television for Disney, PBS, Microsoft, United Way and McDonald’s. Roger travels as a performer, clinician, guest teacher and conductor throughout North America and Europe.

Oakland native **David Worm** began his singing career in 1985 with the Bay Area groups Jazz Mouth and Vocal Front and in 1989 became a founding member of Voicestra. David is also one of the original founding members of SoVoSó, the *a cappella* group which has released six albums and tours internationally. Other current projects include collaborations with Bowl Full of Sound (an innovative quintet with Rhiannon and Joey Blake) and David’s own original acoustic rock band, Glass House, which has recorded CDs for Organelle Records. David has worked extensively with the Bay Area Dance community, having scored or co-written original works for ODC, Robert Moses Kin (a work which received an Isadora Duncan Award), Tandy Beal, Project Bandaloop (an Isadora Duncan Award nominee), Axis Dance (a Meet the Composer grant recipient and another Isadora Duncan Award nominee), Cherie Carson, June Watenabe, Mary Carbonara and Suzanne Gallo. David’s music has also been used in scoring the film documentaries *Step Up* for director Tamas Wormser and *Love Francesca* for producer Julie LaSalle. David has over 40 record credits as a session singer, is in-house producer for Sales America.com and has appeared in music videos for Kawasaki and Levi Strauss.