

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

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Wednesday, February 12, 2014, 8pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Sweet Honey In The Rock



Dwight Carter

*From left: Louise Robinson, Shirley Childress Saxton, Nitanju Bolade Casel, Carol Maillard, Aisha Kahlil*

### *40th Anniversary...Forty & Fierce*

*Tonight's program will be announced from the stage.*

*Cal Performances' 2013-2014 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK  
40TH ANNIVERSARY...FORTY & FIERCE

**F**ORTY & FIERCE, in development for almost a year, is Sweet Honey's first collaboration with noted director and choreographer Dianne McIntyre. The show is wrapped visually and contextually in a scrapbook motif that takes the audience on a musical and visual journey back to the group's inception and humble beginnings in 1973. The ladies perform a series of newly arranged medleys and many of their most popular songs, and retrace their personal recollections of memorable cultural and historical moments that have anchored and shaped the ensemble's resilient spirit and legacy. *Forty & Fierce* also includes a special pre-show presentation, *SHE-ROCKS 5 Radio*, a musical retrospective hosted by Epatha Merkerson that features songs culled from Sweet Honey's 23 album releases. The show will also feature a series of video projected images and archival montages that will be thematically tied into personal anecdotes and narrative storytelling by each of Sweet Honey's core members—Louise Robinson, Carol Maillard, Nitanju Bolade Casel, Aisha Kahlil, and Shirley Childress Saxton (American Sign Language interpreter)—plus guest vocalist Navasha Daya, bassist Parker McAllister, and a percussionist.

## CAST

*Sweet Honey In The Rock*

Louis Robinson, Carol Maillard, Nitanju Bolade Casel,  
Aisha Kahlil, Shirley Childress Saxton

*Guest Performers*

*Vocals* Navasha Daya

*Bass* Parker McAllister

*Percussion* TBA

*Director & Choreographer* Dianne McIntyre

*Lighting Design* Guy Smith

*Visual Designer* Robert Montenegro

*Production Manager & Technical Director* Ves Weaver

*Sound Engineer* Art Steele

*Road Manager* Dwana Makeba

*Booking Agency* Jeanna Disney, IMN

*Management* Ramon Hervey II, Hervey & Company

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK has maintained a rich and distinguished legacy as one of the most revered and treasured a cappella ensembles in contemporary music. Over the past four decades, the Grammy Award-nominated group has stayed true to its adventurous and diverse mixture of blues, jazz, gospel, R&B, and African music, with more recent excursions into symphonic music and collaborations in dance-theater. This year, the ensemble celebrates its 40th anniversary by presenting *Forty & Fierce*, their most adventurous live performance presentation in their illustrious career.

The ever-growing list of Sweet Honey's musical and activist achievements since its founding as a quartet in 1973 by Dr. Bernice Reagon at workshop at the D.C. Black Repertory Company in Washington, D.C. The ladies have performed in Nairobi and Beijing at the U.N. World Conference on Women; toured Europe, Japan, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand; and been the subject of two PBS documentaries, *Gotta Make This Journey*, produced and directed by Michelle Parkerson, and *Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise Your Voice*, produced and directed by Emmy Award-winner Stanley Nelson. They have recorded film soundtracks, received several Grammy nominations (including one for their 2007 children record *Experience 101*), and shared Grammys for their participation in the multi-artist record *Folkways: A Vision Shared—A Tribute to Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly*, as well as for their contribution to *cELLAbration: A Tribute to Ella Jenkins*. In November 2012, they again honored Woody Guthrie in a centennial celebration of his birth presented at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., which was broadcast on PBS in 2013. On the first observance of Martin Luther King Day in 1986, Sweet Honey appeared in a PBS television special, *The Dream and the Drum*, and in early 2012 performed at the unveiling ceremonies for the monument to Dr. King on the National Mall.

The same year, Sweet Honey debuted their first orchestral collaboration, providing the lyrics for composer William Banfield's

Symphony No. 10 ("Affirmations for a New World"), co-commissioned by the National Symphony Orchestra and the Kennedy Center. They also released the thought-provoking single and video "Are We a Nation?," inspired by the controversial immigration law that was enacted in Arizona. The song captured a Gold Songwriter Award from the 27th Mid-Atlantic Song Contest and was featured on an all-star compilation, *Bordersongs*, which raised money for No More Deaths, an organization that provides water and humanitarian aid along the Arizona-Mexico border. Their latest two-CD set, *A Tribute—Live! Jazz at Lincoln Center*, released in February 2013, pays homage to the great female African-American vocalists whose songs and activism helped shape the group, including Abbey Lincoln, Odetta, Miriam Makeba, and Nina Simone. Last year, the ladies performed several major tribute performances with their contemporary jazz trio, Honey Men—musical director-pianist Stacey Wade, bassist Parker McAllister, and drummer-percussionist Jovol Bell—which played on Sweet Honey's live recording at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Last year, Sweet Honey received the distinguished award presented by the Search for Common Ground Organization and the Keeper of the Flame Award by the National Delta Sigma Theta Sorority at their 100th anniversary celebration and national convention (both held Washington, D.C.). The year 2013 was also highlighted by Sweet Honey's performance at the national memorial service for the late Nelson Mandela at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., the successful launching of their first online fundraising effort with Indie Gogo, and the retirement of Dr. Ysaye Barnwell, a Sweet Honey member for 34 years. In addition, the Brooklyn Academy of Music's annual DanceAfrica 2013 featured Sweet Honey as guest performers with Chuck Davis's African American Dance Ensemble and the BAM Restoration Dance Africa Ensemble.

In 2008, Sweet Honey was commissioned by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to write an original music score for *Go in Grace*, which was directed and choreographed by

Ailey member Hope Boykin. *Go in Grace* debuted as part the Ailey company's 50th anniversary season and tour and featured Sweet Honey performing as singers and dancers. The *Go in Grace* score was also recorded and released independently by Sweet Honey's SHE-ROCKS 5 label.



**Nitanju Bolade Casel** joined Sweet Honey In The Rock in 1985, and has served behind the scenes in the office of treasurer for over 25 years. As a dancer and choreographer, the former Assistant Director of the Art of Black Dance and Music and Director of Young Afrique Dance Company in Massachusetts, Ms. Casel has also taught at Boston University, Roxbury Community College, and the Joy of Movement Center. She has volunteered with the National Association of Music Educators as a public service announcer, and donated the use of her composition, *Run, to Respond, Inc.* (New England's first domestic violence agency). After years of studying, performing, and cultural organizing in the United States and abroad, she was cofounder of Artistes des Échanges Africaines, in Dakar, Senegal, which worked in alliance with local artists and organizations to strengthen the cultural ties between African and African-American culture. Her film credits include *Beloved*, *Freedom Song*, and *The Box*. In May 2012, she received an honorary doctorate degree from the Chicago Theological Seminary.

Through her publishing company Clear Ice Music, her compositions have been licensed in multiple disciplines, including the 2006 Australian Broadcasting Company's educational series *Sing!*, Pearson's educational series, and Mystic Seaport's *Black Hands, Blue Seas: The African American Maritime Experience*. Ms. Casel placed as a finalist in the International Songwriter's Competitions (2006, 2007) and the Great American Song Contest (2011), runner-up in the Song of the Year Contest (2011), and,

most recently, a finalist in the 2013 John Lennon Songwriting Contest. As the producer of the Grammy-nominated recording *Experience...101* by Sweet Honey In The Rock, she also produced their most current release: *A Tribute—Live! Jazz at Lincoln Center*. Ms. Casel currently resides on the East Coast with her husband, Oso Tayari (a martial arts legend), and son, Obadele (a hard-working college student).



**Aisha Kahlil** possesses a dynamic, innate power and range in jazz, blues, traditional, contemporary, and traditional African vocal styles and techniques. Her performances of "See See Rider" and "Fulani Chant" earned her the title of best soloist from the Contemporary A Cappella Society of America. "Fulani Chant," written by Ms. Kahlil, was also included on the soundtrack to *Down in the Delta*, directed by Maya Angelou, and in *Climb Against the Odds*, a film produced by the Breast Cancer Fund. Her composition "Wodaabe Nights" was featured in the film *Africans in America*.

She has appeared in Joseph Papp's off-Broadway production of *The Haggadah*, co-composed and performed in the musical *Two Thousand Seasons*, and performed the music of Ma Rainey in the Jazz in the Palm Court series at the Smithsonian Institution.

Ms. Kahlil's film credits include *Beloved*, starring Oprah Winfrey, and original music for the film *Freedom Song*, starring Danny Glover. Her arrangement of "Strange Fruit" was featured in *Freedom Never Dies*, a PBS production of the life of Harry Moore.

In 2005, Ms. Kahlil was a finalist with her own group, MyKa and the Whole World Band, in the annual Battle of the Bands contest, sponsored by Discmakers, and is a winner in the International Songwriting Competition performance category with her original song, "The Jewel Light."

A master teacher in voice and dance, Ms. Kahlil has taught at the Institute for

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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Contemporary Dance, the Joy of Motion, the Boston Center for the Arts, Leslie College, and the D.C. Black Repertory Company. She has taught and lectured at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and at Maharishi International University.

Ms. Kahlil has toured with her band in the islands of Hawaii, performing at the Four Seasons Lodge at Koele, at Cassanova's, and at Studio Maui, where she also taught workshops in vocal improvisation and movement. She has recently presented her signature workshops at the Kripalu Yoga Institute.

*Journey to My-Ka*, a compilation of her own original compositions and arrangements, is her first solo release.



**Carol Maillard** was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Although she originally attended Catholic University of America on scholarship as a violin performance major, she soon began writing music and performing with the drama department and eventually changed her major to theater.

This passion for the stage brought her to the D.C. Black Repertory Company and the beginnings of the vocal ensemble that was to become *Sweet Honey In The Rock*. Ms. Maillard is an accomplished actress and has performed in film, television, and on stage. Her theater credits encompass a wide range of styles, from musical comedy and revues to drama and experimental theater. She has performed on and off Broadway with the Negro Ensemble Company and the New York Shakespeare Festival, and at the Actors Studio. She can be seen in the feature films *Beloved* and *Thirty Years to Life*. On television, Ms. Maillard has appeared in *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide*, and *Halleluiah!* on PBS, *Law & Order*, and *Law & Order: SVU*.

Ms. Maillard was conceptual and creative producer for the documentary film

*Sweet Honey In The Rock: Raise Your Voice!* on the PBS series *American Masters*. Produced and directed by Stanley Nelson, the film chronicled Sweet Honey's 30th anniversary year. She also produced the accompanying soundtrack for the film.

Ms. Maillard lives in Manhattan and is the mother of Jordan Maillard Ware, who is currently attending Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. SGMKJ!



**Louise Robinson**, a native New Yorker, studied concert bass for six years and attended the High School of Music and Art.

A graduate of Howard University with a B.F.A., Ms. Robinson began her professional career at Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage. She accepted Robert Hooks's invitation to become a member of the new D.C. Black Repertory Company Acting Ensemble. It was out of this theater company that Ms. Robinson, along with Carol Maillard, Bernice Johnson Reagon, and Mie, formed the a cappella quartet *Sweet Honey In The Rock*.

Ms. Robinson's colorful career has taken her up many paths, including performances, both on and off Broadway, and in film and studio recording. She has also worn the producer's hat as she, along with Ms. Maillard and Smokey Ronald Stevens, produced *A Sho Nuff Variety Revue*, a series of performances showcasing some of New York's finest talent, including Adolph Caesar, Sandra Reaves-Phillips, and legendary tap dancers Gregory Hines, Avon Long, and Joe Attles.

Ms. Robinson was the founding director of the Bay Area a cappella quintet Street Sounds, taking their music around the country and the world for 14 years.

Ms. Robinson returned to *Sweet Honey In The Rock* in 2004, and combines her experience in theater and music to offer a workshop that explores the creative freedom in us all.



**Shirley Childress Saxton** is passionate about her work and has been the ASL interpreter for Sweet Honey In The Rock since 1981. She is a skilled professional Sign language interpreter having learned

American Sign Language (ASL) from her Deaf parents. In their honor, she founded the Herbert and Thomasina Childress Scholarship Fund to assist other children of Deaf adults (CODA) to explore Sign interpreting as a career option.

Ms. Saxton has interpreted for students in college and high school classrooms, for

employees at staff meetings and conferences, for congregants at religious services, and for performing artists and writers. She holds a bachelor's degree in Deaf education from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and has studied adult education at the University of the District of Columbia.

A native of Washington, D.C., Ms. Saxton is an avid reader, loves photography, and has written several articles about her work as Sign language interpreter and her life experiences with her Deaf parents. Ms. Saxton's family, sons Reginald and Deon, and sisters Maxine and Khaula all Sign.