

November 17, 2008
For Immediate Release

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**San Francisco
International Arts Festival
Announces Line-up for
Sixth Annual Gathering
Sasha Waltz & Guests to Headline
PLUS The Return of the Akhe Group from Russia
Artists from 14 Countries and New York City
Travel to SF to Join Their Bay Area Peers On-Stage
Box Office Opens & Discounted Tickets on Sale
March 1, 2009**

Calendar Editors Please Note

Who: Multiple Artists

What: The Sixth Annual San Francisco International Arts Festival

Where: Multiple Venues

When: Wednesday May 20 – Sunday June 7, 2009

Tickets: \$12-\$25. Full Time Students & Seniors \$16

Box Office for Advance Purchase: www.sfiarf.org and 1-800-838-3006

For more information: 415-399-9554

November 17, 2008, San Francisco. In exactly six months and three days the Sixth Annual San Francisco International Arts Festival (SFIARF) will kick off on **May 20** with more than **40 performances** being presented by **16 arts organizations** at multiple

venues throughout the City. With its annual theme, *The Truth in Knowing/Now: Threads in Time, Place, Culture*, SFIARF 2009 will include numerous **World Premieres, US Debuts & International Collaborations** featuring leading artists from the Bay Area performing alongside their peers from around the world. This year's festival includes dance, music, opera and theatre with events taking place at the **Asian Art Museum, Cowell Theatre, the Green Room** and the **Herbst Theatre** in the **War Memorial Performing Arts Center, Kanbar Hall** in the **Jewish Community & Cultural Center, Project Artaud Theater** and **Union Square**.

Executive director, **Andrew Wood** said of this year's event, "We are tremendously excited by the 2009 program. It has been over two and a half years in the making and we are very pleased with the results. I would like to thank the artists, our presenting partners and the numerous foundations, sponsors and governments who have worked with us over this protracted period to raise the money to bring the 2009 festival to fruition."

SFIARF 2009 will feature artists from the Bay Area, New York City and the countries of **Afghanistan, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Peru, Russia, South Korea, Sweden** and **Switzerland**.

Dance

Headlining the Festival, in what will be the company's only appearances in the U.S. in 2009, is German tour de force **Sasha Waltz & Guests** with the Northern California premiere of the evening length *Travelogue I - Twenty to eight*. The company celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2008 and has re-staged its first ever work on a new generation of dancers (it is the Americas premiere of this version of the piece). Originally choreographed by Sasha Waltz in 1993, *Travelogue I - Twenty to eight* is a dance classic, having lost neither volatility nor relevance with the passing of the years. Waltz portrays the times with humour, aggression and sensuality.

Also in the world of contemporary dance, SFIARF and the **Mark Foehringer Dance Project** will co-present the U.S. debut of the **Ballet Nacional del Peru**. Foehringer has spent much of the last year setting new work on the Peruvian national company and his own company represented the United States at the **Nueves Danzas Festival** in Lima during the summer of 2008. Whilst they were there the two companies took the

opportunity to rehearse some of the work together. The concerts at SFIAF will include the fruits of those labors. The full program is still to be announced.

Choreographer **Sara Shelton Mann** will direct the world premiere of *¡Catapulta!* a multi-disciplinary performance piece featuring the original music of composer, singer and physician **Rupa Marya** in collaboration with Latino theatre/dance/circus ensemble, **Malamaña**, Rupa's band **The April Fishes, the Day Laborers Choir** and the work of visual artist, photographer and film maker **Lars Howlett**.

Set in the border areas between the United States and Mexico and the inner cities and agricultural regions of California, *¡Catapulta!* celebrates the lives of undocumented Latino immigrants and tells stories of crossing from their perspective. The piece puts a human face on the invisible people who pick our food in the fields, clean up after us in restaurants and perform all manner of essential tasks that make positive contributions to the running of society and yet who are demonized by the news media and tracked down like animals by the U.S. authorities. The piece takes its inspiration from Rupa's work as a doctor in the emergency room at San Francisco General Hospital treating undocumented people—many of whom do not seek treatment until their condition is chronic because of the fear of being reported and deported, a mode of behavior that costs some their lives.

Theatre

Making a triumphal return to the SFIAF stage is the **AKHE Group** from St. Petersburg, Russia who will present the US premiere of their new work, *Gobo.Digital Glossary*. Audiences, artists and critics raved about the AKHE Group the last time they performed at SFIAF in 2005 and this year's performance is a much anticipated occasion by the leading exponents of what they have dubbed "Russian Engineering Theatre."

Other international theatre companies performing in SFIAF 2009 include **Cho-In Theatre** from South Korea who will be making their U.S. debut with a fascinating non-verbal physical theatre piece based on the traditional folk tale *The Angel and the Woodcutter*. Cho-In Theatre perform entirely without words, using body movements, puppets and beautiful music they tell complex stories which have a powerful anti-war message. Their productions are rich in Korea's history and culture. They have

performed in festivals around the world and recently were a hit at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. All Koreans know the angel and the woodcutter story but they have never seen it take this format before and the plot has been dramatically altered in a major way. It is truly an international piece of theatre that uses Korean symbols and folklore to highlight the human condition. The piece is presented by SFIARF and the **Korean Cultural Center**.

In contrast to Cho-In Theatre is the British company, **Hoipolloi** whose show *Story of a Rabbit* is very reliant on text and it's delivery by the company's artistic director, **Shôn Dale-Jones** who has created a character that has become his de-facto alter-ego. **Hugh Hughes** is a loveable, seemingly simple and disarmingly naive Welsh man who tells stories to visitors over a cup of tea (300 visitors at a time). The solo performance by Dale-Jones (with live musical accompaniment) is first rate; his portrayal of Hugh is beyond a text book example of creating a character; it is more akin to building a world that the audience inhabits *with* the character. Dale-Jones paints Hugh's universe with a painstaking attention to detail and a very subtle and ingenious structure that on the stage comes across as naturally scattered, impromptu and effortless. The audience is taken on a journey that is punctuated with canny observations, pearls of wisdom and philosophical jewels that are as simply profound as they are humorous. *Story of a Rabbit* is actually a treatise on life and death drawn from two different fatalities, the death of Hugh/Dale-Jones' father and the death of a neighbour's rabbit whilst it was in Hugh's care. The show is highly interactive with Hugh regularly reaching over the fourth wall to engage and involve the audience.

A late edition to the Festival's theatre line up is New York's **Bond Street Theatre** who have created a collaborative work with **Exile Theatre of Kabul** from Afghanistan. Titled *Beyond the Mirror*, the piece was written collectively by the Bond Street Theatre and Exile Theatre ensembles, and directed by **Mahmoud Shah Salimi** and **Joanna Sherman**. Referencing the past 20 years of Afghan history, woven through myths and memories, family histories and first-hand accounts, traditional dances and live music, story-telling and filmed montages, *Beyond the Mirror* weaves an intricate tapestry of events, both desperate and hopeful.

The play was originally scheduled to receive its San Francisco premiere in September of 2008, but problems in securing the Afghani artists' work visas caused the production to be postponed. The performances will be co-presented by SFIAF and Bond Street Theatre.

Music

The Bay Area's **Gamelan Sekar Jaya** (GSJ) presents *Larassanti: Three Evenings (and Thirty Years) of Balinese Music and Dance*, a dazzling array of pieces to celebrate thirty years of artistic interchange with Bali. GSJ will focus on themes that have helped define the fifty-member "Bay Area treasure" (*Dancetera*): balance, harmony, and collaboration across cultures. The evening's highlight will be a world premiere of *Rwa Bhineda* by master artists-in-residence **I Dewa Putu Berata** and **Emiko Saraswati Susilo**. The concert will also feature **I Made Moja**, a dancer with a multidisciplinary background in painting, Shadow Theater, and set design; and other company performers skilled in the delicate hand and eye motions of Balinese dance.

ROVA Saxophone Quartet presents *Rovaté 2009: Fissures, Futures* an ambitious improvisational music project by a team of composer-musicians and Berlin media artist **Lillevan** that will use digital animation to create "visual music." The project is a continuation of Rova's recent foray into employing the visual arts as either an inspiration for, or an actual tool in the creation of original music. Special guests include analogue electronics genius **Thomas Lehn** from Germany, and avant-garde viola master **Charlotte Hug** from Switzerland. Additionally USA-based musician/composers, **Carla Kihlstedt** (Oakland, CA) and **Lisle Ellis** (New York City) have also been invited as guests.

SFIAF, the **Sangati Center** and the **Asian Art Museum** will co-present the U.S. debut of North Indian classical music's rising sitar player, **Smita Nagdev** from Bhopal, India. A protégé of the legendary sarod player Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Smita draws from a deeply nuanced, improvisatory musical tradition in order to craft an experience of awakening and peace through music. Nagdev's solo debut will take place at **Samsung Hall** in the Asian Art Museum and artistic director of the Sangati Center, **Gautam Tejas Ganeshan**, is currently putting the finishing touches to a second joint concert where Nagdev will play alongside some of the Bay Area's leading practitioners of Indian classical music.

Guatemala will be represented by folk hero, singer and guitar player **Ranferi Aguilar** who will be performing Mayan inspired music as part of a joint concert alongside the Bay Area's **Ana Nitmar**. SFIAF 2009 will also feature concerts by **Trio Fibonacci** from Montreal making their west coast debut and the Bay Area's **Nanos Operetta** making their second Festival appearance having also performed in 2005.

SFIAF 2009 will kick off with the organization's traditional **Artist Welcome Reception**, which in 2009 will take place on **Wednesday May 20 at 6:00pm** in the **Green Room** of the **Veterans Building**. This will be followed by the opening performance at the **Herbst Theatre** by the **Earplay Ensemble**—SFIAF's longest running presenting partners having given concerts at all six festivals. The international program will include a new commissioned work by the ground breaking Greek composer, **Nicolas Tzortzis** who will travel from his home in Paris to attend the world premiere of the piece. Also featured on the program will be the work of Britain's **Jonathan Harvey** and French Canadian **Linda Bouchard**.

SFIAF 2009 Presenting Partners

Asian Art Museum, Bond Street Theatre, Earplay, Gamelan Sekar Jaya, Korean Cultural Center, La Raza Centro Legal, Mark Foehringer Dance Project, Martin Productions, Mixed Bag Productions, MJM Management, Nanos Operetta, NexMap Productions, Rova:Arts, Rupa Marya, Sangati Center

Tickets & SFIAF Early Bird Special

Tickets go on sale on **March 1st** and, as is SFIAF's tradition, 5% of single tickets for all shows will be on sale for an **incredible \$12 each** until **March 31**. **Starting April 1st** (or before if Early Bird Tickets sell out) single tickets will be **\$20 in advance** and **discounts are available** for ticket purchases to multiple shows. **Tickets are \$25 at the door**.

Funders

SFIAF 2009 is funded in part by the following organizations (partial list): Association of Performing Arts Presenters, British Council, Canadian Ministry of Culture, Goethe Institute, Multi-Arts Production Fund, National Endowment for the Arts, Potrero Nuevo Fund, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Entertainment Commission, South

Korean Ministry of Culture, Trust for Mutual Understanding, Wells Fargo Foundation, WESTAF and Zellerbach Family Foundation.

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SFIAF Mission

SFIAF's mission is to promote the arts and San Francisco through production of an annual, multi-disciplinary festival that brings together the world community of artists and audiences. The festival:

- Works with multiple artists and arts organizations to commission and present innovative, collaborative performances and projects that push the boundaries of artistic excellence and genre that are focused on increasing human awareness, appreciation and understanding.
- Is a catalyst for the emergence of a cohesive, culturally and socially diverse artistic community in San Francisco that is actively engaged in addressing the civic, social, and cultural issues of our environment and time.
- Establishes San Francisco as a model for integration of the arts into the fabric of the community in a meaningful, productive and mutually beneficial fashion.

SFIAF's goals are

- To frame the work of Bay Area artists within an international context.
- To insure the City of San Francisco's future allure as a vibrant, creative artist community by informing and enriching the arts at home through encouraging an innovative international dialogue between Bay Area artists and their peers throughout the world.
- To collaborate with other San Francisco arts organizations to share our resources and stage the Festival in the most cost effective manner possible.

- To provide rich and meaningful learning experiences through a wide range of residency activities aimed at multiple sectors of the population.
- To promote the festival to a local, statewide, national and international audience.
- To raise the City's profile as an international culture destination.
- To demonstrate how the arts perform a vital role in stimulating and positively impacting the economy of San Francisco.

Curatorial Priorities

SFIAF seeks to achieve a balance between the following three criteria when considering projects for inclusion in the Festival.

- Projects in which Bay Area based artists are participating as a lead artist in an international collaboration.
- Projects in which Bay Area artists are performing as part of a shared bill or in repertory with artists from other countries.
- Projects that feature world-class artists from outside of the United States whose work has a consistent record of excellence.

SFIAF Background & Rationale

SFIAF was established in September 2002 for the specific purpose of launching in San Francisco an annual, multi-disciplinary, multi-venue arts festival of international scope and appeal. To date, five festivals have been successfully implemented.

Rather than building a festival that is the sole responsibility of a single producer, SFIAF is dedicated to working with an array of San Francisco arts organizations to develop a paradigm that utilizes the shared resources of multiple local presenters to reach mutually beneficial goals. In addition to direct responsibility for its own productions and programs, SFIAF provides coordination, administrative, fundraising and promotional support and overall leadership in presenting the festival. SFIAF's core values are based on principals of cultural and economic equity. In addition to working with larger institutions, SFIAF places a high priority on the participation of culturally diverse and smaller arts organizations that represent the City's broad demographics. Activating and supporting relationships between large and small organizations and individual artists is also a key component of SFIAF.