

Saturday, March 2, 2013, 8pm  
Wheeler Auditorium

## *Voices of Afghanistan*

featuring

Ustad Farida Mahwash

♫

Homayoun Sakhi and the Sakhi Ensemble

Ustad Farida Mahwash *vocals*  
Homayoun Sakhi *rubâb, vocals, musical director, composer*  
Khalil Ragheb *harmonium, vocals*  
Pervez Sakhi *tula*  
Abbos Kosimov *doyra*  
Ezmarai Aref *tabla*

### PROGRAM

Par-e-tawos

*Translation: Peacock feather*

Dilem amada dar josh Ustad Farida Mahwash ♫ Homayoun Sakhi  
*Sung in Dari. Translation: My heart is grieving and singing like a bird for you.*

Ba tu naqshe sohbat mah Ustad Farida Mahwash  
*Sung in Dari. Translation: My words have admired you well.*

Rubâb Homayoun Sakhi ♫ Ensemble  
*Folk instrumental*

Biya Biya janana Ustad Farida Mahwash ♫ Homayoun Sakhi  
*Sung in Dari. Translation: Come, come, O my love, or else I will go crazy for you.*

Bad az khuda Ustad Farida Mahwash  
*Sufi song, sung in Dari. Translation: After God, you are the only god of my heart.*

INTERMISSION



Rubâb Homayoun Sakhi  
*Folk instrumental*

Zim Zim Zim Ustad Farida Mahwash ♫ Homayoun Sakhi  
*Love song, sung in Dari*

Sta pa yari ke Ustad Farida Mahwash ♫ Homayoun Sakhi  
*Sung in Pashto. Translation: I am in pain without you, O my love, come.*

Rubâb Homayoun Sakhi  
*Classical raga*

Ishq mani biya Ustad Farida Mahwash  
*Sung in Dari. Translation: You are my love and soul.*

Beshnaw az nay Ustad Farida Mahwash  
*Sufi poem by Rumi. Translation: Song of the reed.*

*Artist management by Dawn Elder (demgmt.com).*

*Cal Performances' 2012–2013 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

**VOICES OF AFGHANISTAN** is an evening of traditional Afghan music performed by some of the finest musicians from Central Asia and Afghanistan. The program features celebrated singer Ustad Farida Mahwash and *rubâb* master, composer, and vocalist Homayoun Sakhi and his eponymously named ensemble, with Khalil Ragheb (*harmonium*), Pervez Sakhi (*tula* and *rubâb*), Ezmarai Aref (*tabla*), and Abbas Kosimov (*doyra*). The concert also features the premiere of several new works composed by Homayoun Sakhi and performed by the group.

*Sawol-jawab*—the interplay of questions and answers—is the foundation upon which much of Afghan music rests. With implications beyond the stage, it posits that only the most thoughtfully constructed questions can elicit meaningful answers. Ustad Mahwash and the musicians of the Sakhi Ensemble test this belief at every performance. For their inaugural tour, artistic director Homayoun Sakhi has created an acoustically rich crossroads in which the musicians explore the interconnectedness of the seeker and sought, sacred and secular, traditional and contemporary. Afghanistan is a regional hub of cultural and social activity and is home to a vast array of musical genres. The *ghazals*, folk songs, and traditional melodies performed tonight speak to the human need for love, grace, and transcendence.

Together, these remarkable Afghan artists bring together and perform a blend of *ghazals*, Afghan folk songs imbued with Sufi mysticism, and ever-evolving new takes on Afghanistan's musical legacy. They give hope of an era of freedom and joy yet to come through their music for their beloved homeland.



Long considered “the Voice of Afghanistan” and the first woman to be granted the honorific title of Ustad (“Maestra”), **Farida Mahwash** (*vocals*) is celebrated around the globe for her *ghazal*

repertoire. Her story is one of unyielding perseverance as witnessed by the great personal risk she encountered by performing in public during the early years of Taliban rule. After decades of political turmoil, she was forced to leave Afghanistan in 1991. She moved to Pakistan, where she took refuge from the two warring sides of the time, each of whom warned her to sing for their cause or else face assassination. Her plight was recognized by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and she was granted political asylum in the United States.

Ustad Mahwash was born into a conservative Afghan family. Her mother was a Quran teacher and religion loomed large throughout her upbringing. For many years, her interest in music was suppressed. Upon completion of her studies, Ustad Mahwash accepted a position in the Kabul Radio Station. There, she was discovered by the station's director who encouraged her to pursue singing as a career. Her musky voice with its command of the subtle art of ornamentation has dazzled audiences worldwide, as she shares the country's rich musical heritage through her performances and recordings.



**Homayoun Sakhi** (*rubâb*) was born in Kabul in 1976 into one of Afghanistan's leading musical families. From the age of ten, he studied *rubâb* with his father, Ghulam Sakhi, in the traditional form of apprenticeship known as *ustâd-shâgird* (Persian for “master-apprentice”).

His artistry demonstrates how an imaginative musician working within a traditional musical idiom can enrich and expand its expressive power while respecting what had been passed down from master musicians of the past. Mr. Sakhi's personal story illustrates the extraordinarily challenging conditions under which he and his fellow Afghan musicians have pursued their art. During Afghanistan's many years of armed conflict, when music was controlled, censored, and,

finally, banned altogether, the classical *rubâb* style to which Mr. Sakhi had devoted his career not only survived but reached new creative heights. He was granted residency in the United States and settled in Fremont, California, bringing with him the sophisticated and original *rubâb* style that he had developed. Fremont, a city of some 200,000 that lies southeast of San Francisco, claims the largest concentration of Afghans in the United States and is known to many as “Little Kabul.” In Fremont, Mr. Sakhi established himself as a leader of the local musical community, and received national and international acclaim for his work as a performer, composer, and teacher. As a composer, he has created works for the Kronos Quartet, Hannibal Lokumbe, and the Berlin Symphony, has collaborated with celebrated musicians from around the globe, and is now working on some of his most passionate compositions to date for Ustad Farida Mahwash.

#### SAKHI ENSEMBLE



**Abbas Kosimov** (*doyra*) of Uzbekistan is considered one of the most entertaining and explosive *doyra* players in the history of frame drumming. Both a traditional master and a contemporary innovator, Mr. Kosimov has broadened the scope and repertoire of his country's principal percussion instrument, to the point where all younger players imitate his techniques. Uzbekistan and Afghanistan share a great deal of history and culture, and the Sakhi Ensemble gives him an opportunity to showcase his virtuosity and signature style in one of the leading Central Asian music ensembles of our time.

Mr. Kosimov grew up in a family of musicians in Uzbekistan. His father played *santoor* (hammered dulcimer) and his brother the *ney* (flute). Mr. Kosimov began studying *doyra* at the age of ten with Tochi Nogamo, the principal teacher of the tradition. Up to the age of 20,

Mr. Kosimov concentrated on classic rhythms and solos. He mastered the basics quickly, and then began to branch out on his own, leading him in unexpected directions. “Back home in Uzbekistan,” Mr. Kosimov recalled, “I practiced a lot, six or seven hours a day. I listened to jazz music, drum-set players, conga players, *djembe* players, *tabla*, and I mixed it all together and put it on *doyra*.”

This was unprecedented. The *doyra* is a roughly 2,000-year-old instrument, originally played by women and used as an accompaniment to singing, typically holding down a 6/8 rhythm. The instrument's frame is a single piece of wood, cut from a walnut or Russian acacia tree. Its face is made from cow skin, curved all the way around and glued to the inside of the frame. A set of 64 rings are attached to the frame, evenly spaced around the perimeter. The rings are heard, like those on a tambourine, adding a hi-hat like effect to the instrument's deep drum tones. Around 1950, men began to play the *doyra*. The instrument became smaller, and the style and repertoire began to develop in new ways.

But no prior player has come close to Mr. Kosimov's innovations. Inspired by North Indian *tabla* players, Mr. Kosimov worked on his finger tapping technique, perfecting soft and hard strokes, and developing personalized rolls and slaps. He mastered rhythms in different time signatures, 7/8, 11/8, and others. In 2008, Mr. Kosimov was asked to be a guest performer on one of Ustad Zakir Hussain's Masters of Percussion tours in the United States and has continued to perform as one of the Masters with Mr. Hussain. Homayoun Sakhi met Mr. Kosimov at about the same time, recognizing that Uzbek and Afghan musics are very close. In fact, Uzbek-Afghans account for over 20% of the country's population. Mr. Kosimov's facility with North Indian classical music—another important ingredient in Afghan music—was also a great asset. Theirs was an instant musical and personal friendship, and the two have been performing together ever since. So it was only a natural that when Mr. Sakhi began to curate *Voices of Afghanistan* that he ask Mr. Kosimov to be a part of it.



**Khalil Ragheb** (*harmonium*) was born in Kabul and started playing music when he was nine years old. At age 16, he began making special guest appearances with an amateur musical group, and very soon after was asked to perform with a leading Afghan orchestra for Radio Afghanistan with one of the country's leading vocalists, Ahmad Zaher. As Mr. Ragheb matured, he also began singing and performing, garnering the attention of educators throughout the region. He was awarded a scholarship to study in Iran and then in Germany. Upon taking residence in the United States, Mr. Ragheb moved to Fremont, where he reunited with Ustad Farida Mahwash, who asked him to work in her group. At the same time, he established and hosted a new TV show, *Sound and Image of Afghanistan*, which he continues to host today.



**Pervez Sakhi** (*tula*), born in Kabul, is the younger brother of Homayoun Sakhi and the son of one of Afghanistan's leading musical families. From the age of ten, he studied *tula* (an end-blown flute) and *rubâb* with his father Ghulam, in

the traditional form of apprenticeship known as *ustâd-shâgird* (Persian for "master-apprentice"), and continues his studies with his brother Homayoun today.



**Eymarai Aref** (*tabla*) was born in Kabul and began studying Afghan percussion at an early age, under the masters. Upon coming to the United States, Mr. Aref resided in Little Kabul (Fremont). He soon

began performing with numerous groups in the area, including Ustad Farida Mahwash and the Sakhi Ensemble.