

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 23, 2013

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Skirball Cultural Center announces line-up for
seventeenth annual FREE community concert series

SUNSET CONCERTS

Thursday evenings, July 25–August 29, at 8:00 p.m.



2013 season features exceptional indie, folk, and world music—from uplifting tunes arising from Sierra Leone’s civil unrest, to Israeli poetry set to Indian devotional sounds, to richly textured pop-folk at the center of the L.A. music scene.

LOS ANGELES, CA—The Skirball Cultural Center announces the line-up for its seventeenth annual free Sunset Concerts. The 2013 season features an eclectic mix of traditions and styles, from the Americas to North India (by way of Israel) to West Africa. The schedule is as follows: **The Belle Brigade** (July 25); the West Coast premiere and debut U.S. tour of **Shye Ben-Tzur** (August 1); **Sierra Leone’s Refugee All Stars** (August 8); **Mamak Khadem and Ensemble** (August 15); a collaboration between **Maria Muldaur and The Campbell Brothers** in its world premiere (August 22); and **Dendê and Band** (August 29).

The six Thursday night concerts are presented free of charge in the Skirball’s idyllic central courtyard. Ready for the night’s festivities, attendees arrive early to dine under the stars, visit the museum galleries, and explore the Skirball’s stunning architecture and hillside setting. As the bands take the stage, music fans of all ages sing along, dance in the aisles, and gather at the foot of the stage to celebrate with the performers.

This year, the Skirball turns its eye to the local indie scene while staying true to its world music roots. Jordan Peimer, Vice President of Programs, explains, “This is part of a new, multiyear plan to integrate popular music rooted in world traditions into our programming and reframe our exploration of what is truly global. When you hear The Belle Brigade’s reworking of 1970s folk-rock live on stage, or the Muldaur/Campbell collaboration for the very first time, you’ll experience exciting new sounds grounded in the finest traditions of America.”

Peimer continues, “Year after year, the Sunset Concerts are a perfect summertime happening. We invite our loyal following as well as new audiences to come celebrate our diverse cultural heritages.”

About the Artists

Thursday, July 25: The Belle Brigade

Siblings and Los Angeles natives **Barbara and Ethan Gruska** of **The Belle Brigade** released their self-titled debut album in 2011 to critical acclaim. *Paste* magazine remarked, “Their DNA-sharing vocal chords are able to vibrate perfectly together, creating full, textured harmonies that seem to rise above the instrumentation while flowing along it.” The Gruska duo shares an accomplished musical lineage. Their father, Jay Gruska, is a songwriter and composer who released two albums of his own on Warner Bros. Records in the early 1980s and wrote hit songs for other artists (including Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson, and Dusty Springfield), as well as hours of music for film and television. The siblings’ maternal grandfather is Oscar- and Grammy-winning film composer John Williams (*Star Wars*, *Jaws*, *E.T.*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*), whom they both cite as a huge musical influence. Not surprisingly, both Gruskas began playing music at a young age. Ethan Gruska has been singing for as long as he can remember, taking a few piano lessons as a kid but then starting to play piano and write songs in earnest at the age of fourteen. He studied classical composition for a year at Cal Arts in Valencia, CA. Barbara Gruska studied jazz drumming at both Oberlin College and Cal Arts before dropping out to hit the road with The Bird and The Bee’s Inara George, followed by tours with Benji Hughes and Rilo Kiley’s Jenny Lewis.

Thursday, August 1: Shye Ben-Tzur

Shye Ben-Tzur is an acclaimed Israeli composer, producer, and performer who, after falling in love with Indian culture, established North India as his creative base. His music blends Sufi *qawwali* vocal styles and Hebrew poetry with North Indian rhythms, flamenco guitar bass lines, and an East/West percussion mix.

Ben-Tzur grew up studying music and playing in rock bands, but after attending a concert in Israel by Indian classical musicians Hariprasad Chaurasia and Zakir Hussain, he became interested in Indian music. He traveled to India for what was supposed to be a short trip to learn about the music and the culture; he ended up staying for more than a decade. At Ajmer in India, Rajasthan’s most important Sufi shrine, Ben-Tzur trained and collaborated with the *qawwali* musicians of Ajmer. Ben-Tzur has toured throughout Israel, and in 2004, he performed at Jahan-e-Khusrau, the prestigious international Sufi music festival held in New Delhi. He also performed with his group at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2009, which led *Songlines* magazine to note, “Shye Ben-Tzur, an Israeli flautist, vocalist, and composer, enraptured the crowd. This was a clear example of how music and art crosses political and religious boundaries.” His debut album *Heeyam* (“Supreme Love”) was recorded in India, Israel, and the U.S., and was released in 2003 to critical acclaim. Ben-Tzur’s sophomore album, *Shoshan*, released on EarthSync in 2010, was a natural progression, a cross-cultural mix of passions, genres, languages, and infectious beats. “The songs on *Shoshan* are love songs to God, to music itself, as I experience it and try to express it,” states Ben-Tzur. “Christian, Jewish, Muslim—it’s all one approach and outlook in the search for unity. It’s not always finding it, but it’s the longing for it.” He made his North American debut in September 2012 at the Ashkenaz Festival in Canada, and this current tour marks his highly anticipated U.S. debut performances.

Thursday, August 8: Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars

Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars have emerged from the ashes of war and attracted fans across the globe with their songs of hope, faith, and joy. The band is a potent example of the redeeming power of music and the ability of the human spirit to persevere through unimaginable hardship. From their humble beginnings in West African refugee camps, Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars have performed on some of the world's most prestigious stages and matured into one of Africa's top touring and recording bands.

Throughout the 1990s, the West African country of Sierra Leone was devastated by a bloody, horrifying war that forced millions to flee their homes. **Ruben Koroma** and his wife **Grace** left Sierra Leone in 1997 and found themselves in the Kalia refugee camp near the border with Sierra Leone. When it became clear they would not be heading back to their homeland, they joined up with guitarist **Francis John Langba (a.k.a. Franco)**, and bassist **Idrissa Bangura (a.k.a. Mallam)**, and other musicians in the camp to entertain their fellow refugees. A Canadian relief agency donated two beat-up electric guitars, a single microphone, and a meager sound system, and Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars were born. American filmmakers Zach Niles and Banker White encountered the All Stars in the Sembakounya Camp and were so inspired by their story that they ended up following the musicians for three years as they moved from camp to camp, bringing much-needed joy to the refugees with their heartfelt performances. The film that documented this moving saga, *Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars*, was a critical success and introduced the world to the personalities and dramatic stories behind the band, not to mention their instantly appealing music. "As harrowing as these personal tales may be," wrote *The New York Times*, "the music buoying them is uplifting." The movie, the debut album, *Living Like a Refugee*, and eventual U.S. tours helped expand the band's following, and soon the All Stars found themselves playing in front of audiences of tens of thousands at New York's Central Park SummerStage, Japan's Fuji Rock Festival, and the Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival. They appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, participated in the U2 tribute album *In the Name of Love: Africa Celebrates U2*, and earned praise and support from Sir Paul McCartney, Keith Richards, Ice Cube, Angelina Jolie, and others, all inspired by their life-affirming story and captivating music. In one of the most surreal moments of their climb to fame, Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars opened for Aerosmith at the 12,000-capacity Mohegan Sun Arena in Uncasville, CT. The band's second album, *Rise & Shine* (produced by Los Lobos' Steve Berlin), brought new accolades and was awarded 2010 Album of the Year on the prestigious World Music Charts Europe. The latest album, *Radio Salone*, represents a new musical high point for the group. With an active year of touring planned, the All Stars look forward to building their global audience and bringing their message of hope and celebration to fans old and new. The August 9 performance marks the band's highly anticipated return to the Skirball, the band's first since making its U.S. debut during the 2006 season of the Sunset Concerts.

Thursday, August 15: Mamak Khadem and Ensemble

Called "one of the wonders of world trance music" by the *Los Angeles Times*, **Mamak Khadem's** music is anchored in the diversity of Iran, where many languages, rituals, and beliefs are woven into a vibrant tapestry. Khadem taps into that fabric and reaches outside of Iran to honor what she calls "the connectivity of all cultures." For her Sunset Concerts performance, Khadem will present a special collaboration with musicians from the Middle East and beyond, including: **Ruben Harutynuyan** from Armenia; **Mehdi Bagheri** from Kurdistan, Iran; **Vahid Bayat** from Azerbaijan, Iran; **Sofia Lambropoulou** from Greece; **Afif Taian** from Syria; and **TJ Troy** from Los Angeles. Prior to the show, Khadem and her ensemble will give instruction on traditional Kurdish and Azeri dances to audience members.

The classically trained Khadem studied extensively in both Iran and the United States, seizing every opportunity to train with the finest traditional Persian vocalists and learn classical Indian vocal tradition at the Ali Akbar Khan College of Music in northern California. She moved to Los Angeles from Tehran as a teenager, and her work reflects her life experience straddling and reconciling two cultures, old and new, and creating beauty from their synergies and contrasts. In her work as longtime lead singer of the acclaimed cross-cultural ensemble Axiom of Choice, as well as on her two subsequent solo albums, the powerful singer created an emotional and spiritual body of work that inspires deeper appreciation of cultural diversity in general and of Persian arts and culture in particular. Khadem's latest work, *A Window to Color*, is a conceptual album inspired by the poetry of Iran's late gifted poet and artist Sohrab Sepehri. Khadem's distinctive, expressive powerhouse of a voice has been heard on numerous film scores including *The Peacemaker*, *Traffic*, and *Dracula 2000*, and TV series including *The Profiler*,

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and *Battlestar Galactica*. She tours actively and globally, playing such prestigious venues as Washington's Smithsonian Museum, Perth Concert Hall in Australia, the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles, and The House of World Culture in Berlin. Khadem resides in Los Angeles, where she teaches classical Persian music and conducts workshops for non-musicians that incorporate singing, meditation, and movement.

Thursday, August 22: Maria Muldaur and The Campbell Brothers (world premiere collaboration)

Maria Muldaur is best known worldwide for her 1974 mega-hit "Midnight at the Oasis," which received several Grammy nominations and enshrined her forever in the hearts of Baby Boomers everywhere. In the thirty-nine years since, Muldaur has toured extensively worldwide and has recorded thirty-nine solo albums covering all genres of American roots music, including gospel, R&B, jazz, and big band (not to mention several award-winning children's albums). In recent years, Muldaur has settled comfortably into her favorite idiom, the blues. Often joining forces with some of the top names in the business, she has recorded and produced on average one album per year, several of which have been nominated for Grammy and other awards. Her critically acclaimed 2001 release, *Richland Woman Blues*, was nominated for a Grammy and also by the Blues Foundation as Best Traditional Blues Album of the Year. The same can be said for the follow-up to that album, *Sweet Lovin' Ol' Soul*. For her 2009 release, *Maria Muldaur & Her Garden of Joy*, she revisited her original jug-band roots, teaming up with John Sebastian, David Grisman, and Dan Hicks. The album was nominated for Best Traditional Blues Album of the Year by the Blues Foundation, and garnered Muldaur her sixth Grammy nomination. For 2011's, *Steady Love*, she returned to her much-beloved New Orleans (her "musical and spiritual home") to record a contemporary electric blues album that reflects "Bluesiana Music," her own brand of New Orleans-flavored blues, R&B, and "swamp funk."

Joining Maria Muldaur for their world premiere collaboration are **The Campbell Brothers**, whose music combines African American gospel music with electric steel guitar and vocals. This compelling, rich variety of material from the African American Holiness-Pentecostal repertoire comes with a Campbell twist: the growling, wailing, shouting, singing and swinging voice of the steel guitar. Pedal steel guitarist **Chuck Campbell** and his lap steel-playing brother **Darick Campbell** are two of the finest in this tradition. Rounding out the band is a high-energy rhythm section featuring brother **Phil Campbell** on electric guitar and his son **Carlton Campbell** on drums. The Campbell Brothers, who have been playing together for nearly two decades, have performed at some of the world's most prestigious venues including the Hollywood Bowl, the Kennedy Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Symphony Space. Peimer says, "The marriage of Maria's voice to the Campbell's sacred steel gospel was inevitable. In fact anyone who hears it will say it should have happened sooner."

Thursday, August 29: Dendê & Band

Dendê is an Afro-Brazilian percussionist, singer, composer, bandleader, teacher, and multi-instrumentalist. He has been a professional musician since the age of fourteen, when he performed as part of Timbalada, Carlinhos Brown's superstar percussion ensemble. Since 2001, Dendê has been splitting his time between New York and Brazil, and has played with Mongo Santamaria, Giovanni Hidalgo, Zakir Hussain, David Byrne, and Vinicius Cantuária. His own bands include the folkloric music and dance troupe Ologundê, the acoustic Samba de Três, and Arrastão do Dendê, a traditional Afro bloco (samba party band). However, it's as leader and principal songwriter of his flagship band that Dendê has made his greatest impact. The band, formerly called Hãhãhães, has been packing clubs and festivals for the past five years, most notably at the David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center, the Millennium Stage at the Kennedy Center, the Lake Eden Arts Festival in North Carolina, the Heineken Kalalu World Music Festival in Saint Lucia, Joe's Pub, World Cafe Live, and Johnny D's Uptown Restaurant & Music Club in Boston. As the *Boston Herald* touted, Dendê & Band is "a delicious mix...polyrhythmic power and joyous melodies...an irresistible call to the dance floor." Combining Brazil's rhythm-heavy music with the grooves of Afrobeat, reggae, merengue, and others from around the world, Dendê & Band's live show as well as the band's debut album, *Bahia de Todos os Santos*, showcase sizzling showmanship and versatility. Peimer adds, "Dendê's performances are joyous explorations of both the Latin and African roots of Brazilian music. I defy anyone to sit passively during this concert."

Editors, please note:

2013 SUNSET CONCERTS
Skirball Cultural Center

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FREE ADMISSION; no reservations
Limited seating on a first-come, first-served basis

Sunset Concerts parking: \$10 per car (cash only). Carpooling is encouraged.
Street parking is strictly prohibited.
Or take Metro Rapid 761.

SCHEDULE:

All concerts begin at 8:00 p.m., doors open at 7:00 p.m.

The Belle Brigade - Thursday, July 25

Shye Ben-Tzur - Thursday, August 1 (West Coast premiere, debut U.S. tour)

Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars - Thursday, August 8

Mamak Khadem and Ensemble - Thursday, August 15

Maria Muldaur and The Campbell Brothers - Thursday, August 22 (world premiere collaboration)

Dendê and Band - Thursday, August 29

All Skirball exhibitions (except Noah's Ark) are free and open until 10:00 p.m. during Sunset Concerts, including *Gary Baseman: The Door Is Always Open* and *Visions and Values: Jewish Life from Antiquity to America*.

Zeidler's Café's dinner buffet starts at 6:00 p.m. Reservations are required and can be made starting two weeks prior to the Thursday evening concert by calling (310) 440-4575. Lighter fare can be purchased at Zeidler's Cart.

Guests may bring their own food.

Note: No outside alcoholic beverages or chairs are permitted.

THE 2013 SUNSET CONCERTS SERIES IS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY:

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About the Skirball Cultural Center

The Skirball Cultural Center is dedicated to exploring the connections between 4,000 years of Jewish heritage and the vitality

of American democratic ideals. It welcomes and seeks to inspire people of every ethnic and cultural identity. Guided by our respective memories and experiences, together we aspire to build a society in which all of us can feel at home. The Skirball Cultural Center achieves its mission through educational programs that explore literary, visual, and performing arts from around the world; through the display and interpretation of its permanent collections and changing exhibitions; through an interactive family destination inspired by the Noah's Ark story; and through outreach to the community.

Visiting the Skirball Cultural Center

The Skirball Cultural Center is located at 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049. The Skirball is also accessible by Metro Rapid 761. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday 12:00–5:00 p.m.; Saturday–Sunday 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; closed Mondays and holidays. Admission to exhibitions: \$10 General; \$7 Seniors, Full-Time Students, and Children over 12; \$5 Children 2–12. Exhibitions are always free to Skirball Members and Children under 2. Exhibitions are free to all visitors on Thursdays. For general information, the public may call (310) 440-4500 or visit www.skirball.org. The Skirball is also home to Zeidler's Café, which serves innovative California cuisine in an elegant setting, and Audrey's Museum Store, which sells books, contemporary art, music, jewelry, and more.

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