

MEDIA CONTACT:
Scott Horton Communications
510-735-9200
scott@worldartswest.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAN FRANCISCO ETHNIC DANCE FESTIVAL KICKS OFF CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
OF THE 1915 PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION

FRIDAY, FEB. 20 WITH FREE PERFORMANCE AT SF CITY HALL ROTUNDA

BALINESE, SWEDISH AND CONTEMPORARY DANCE PERFORMANCES UNDERSCORE
LEGACY OF WORLD DANCE AND MUSIC IN SAN FRANCISCO

MONTHLY FRIDAY SERIES CONTINUES THROUGH DECEMBER AND SF ETHNIC
DANCE FESTIVAL RETURNS TO THE PALACE OF FINE ARTS IN JUNE

San Francisco, CA, January 15, 2015 --The San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival will launch its celebration of the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) with special performances at San Francisco City Hall on February 20, 2015. The free noontime event will feature music and dance of Indonesia performed by the Bay Area's own Gamelan Sekar Jaya, contemporary work by fifth-generation San Franciscan Margaret Jenkins and the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company, and visiting Swedish dancers led by Leif and Margareta Virtanen of Norberg, Sweden. The performance kicks off a weekend of Bay Area events celebrating the centennial of the PPIE, and commences a year of free world dance and music performances in the rotunda presented by the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival and Dancers' Group, in partnership with San Francisco Grants for the Arts and San Francisco City Hall. For more information about the February 20 performance and the 2015 San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, visit www.sfethnicdancefestival.org.

The 2015 San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival commemorates the centennial of the Exposition with a season of performances and events from February to December. At its center, the annual, month-long Festival performance series in June will return to the Palace of Fine Arts, which is the only grand structure remaining from the historic 1915 World's Fair.

"The Panama-Pacific International Exposition was the first major world's fair on the West Coast of the United States," said San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival

Executive Director Julie Mushet, noting that more than 18 million people attended the fair, which featured over 80,000 exhibits from 42 foreign countries. "The 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition left a lasting imprint on the San Francisco Bay Area, especially in regards to world dance and music. A vast breadth of world cultures could be experienced as never before, but often, they were not presented respectfully. Today, 100 years later, our Festival strives to shine a spotlight on that legacy, but with a commitment to the respect that all cultures deserve."

The February 20th celebration will feature performances reflecting on the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, including dance and music from Indonesia, a culture represented at the PPIE as the Dutch East Indies. Indonesia was the largest former Dutch colony, where nutmeg, peppers, cloves and cinnamon were the desired indigenous spices. The Dutch soon introduced non-indigenous cash crops like coffee, tea, cacao, tobacco, rubber, sugar, and opium to the culture. During World War II, Japan occupied Indonesia and dismantled much of the Dutch colonial state and economy, and following the Japanese surrender in August 1945, Indonesian nationalists declared independence which they fought to secure during the subsequent Indonesian National Revolution. The Netherlands formally recognized Indonesian sovereignty in 1949. Gamelan Sekar Jaya's uplifting performance will include a ceremony with nutmeg, pepper cloves, and cinnamon, returning to the source of Indonesia's colonial turmoil, while celebrating the magnificent beauty and resiliency of Balinese dance and music traditions dating back centuries.

Following the Balinese dance will be a contemporary dance performance by the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company especially selected for the event and including excerpts from the Company's recent 40th anniversary premiere, *Times Bones*. Jenkins, whose family has been in San Francisco since before the 1915 PPIE and part of its cultural life for more than five generations, says, "I was delighted and honored to be asked to participate in the 100th anniversary of the Pan Pacific International Expo. I feel very connected though my family and its history to this important event. Any opportunity that we have to celebrate and bring attention to the human spirit, the arts, the diversity, and ingenuity that is San Francisco is a grand goal. My company and I look forward to being one of many arts organizations who will fill the rotunda of City Hall with energy and compassion. City Hall has always been a site for human rights, the funding of the arts through Grants for the Arts, for political activism, for gatherings, and for making a difference."

The program will close with a performance by a group of local and international Swedish dancers inspired by a collection of intricately costumed dolls that are part of the Hearst Museum collection at UC Berkeley, which were created for and displayed in the Swedish Pavilion at the 1915 PPIE. The dolls, which represent different regions of Sweden, were purchased by Phoebe Hearst after the PPIE, and donated to the museum in 1971.

The Swedish dancers will be led by Leif and Margareta Virtanen, highly regarded dancers from Norberg, Sweden. They began performing 35 years ago and have become respected instructors of Swedish Dance. In 1988 they became the leaders of the local polska group in Norberg and began travelling around Sweden to teach.

The pair has won numerous dance competitions, including the Hälsingehambon, the largest folk dance competition in Sweden. Impressively, they won this competition twice and during years in which over 1,500 couples participated. In 1989, they both earned a Silver medal in polska dancing, the highest level of recognition in an event focused on Sweden's oldest historical folk dance tradition.

Leif and Margareta are now international emissaries of Swedish folk dance, receiving repeated invitations to teach at festivals in the United States, the Netherlands, Italy, Norway, and Denmark. In addition, they have for many years organized training camps and courses around Sweden with participants from the EU and the US. It is their vision to preserve Swedish dance traditions from the 1800's to early 1900's and to share this rich cultural heritage with the rest of the world.

The program will culminate with a grand finale that will include many local artists joining the dancers from Sweden for a lively, traditional Swedish hambo.

Special thanks to the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation for their support of this event.

The 2015 Rotunda Dance Series celebrating the 100th anniversary of the PPIE will continue with monthly performances through December 4, featuring artists including Hālau o Keikiali'i, Kaiwen You Chinese Dance, Nimely Pan African Dance Company, Shinichi Iova-Koga, and many other Bay Area artists sustaining dance and music from around the world. December 4 was the closing day for the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, and the 2015 season will close with a tribute to the Kuna people of Panama, who were perhaps the most impacted by the opening of the Panama Canal in 1915.

The free Rotunda Dance Series programs have been co-presented monthly since 2010 with Dancers' Group, in partnership with San Francisco Grants for the Arts, and San Francisco City Hall.