



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Art Gallery of Hamilton *performance* series presents

La musique du coeur (Music of the Heart)

Ultimate Jam 2

featuring renowned musicians

Saidah Baba Talibah, Sharon Musgrave and Njacko Backo

with special guests Donna Grantis and Brian Griffiths

Last year's event sold out weeks in advance! The Art Gallery of Hamilton *performance* series presents ***La musique du coeur (Music of the Heart) – Ultimate Jam 2***, an evening with renowned musicians Saidah Baba Talibah, Sharon Musgrave, Njacko Backo, Donna Grantis and Brian Griffiths, on **Friday, February 25 at 8 pm** at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, 123 King Street West, downtown Hamilton.

This intimate evening showcases music through the lens of a Black History Month celebration. Our renowned artists take the stage to share their gift of music from the heart, or in the spirit of the AGH's year-long highlight of French and Francophone art and culture – *la musique du coeur!*

The Department of Canadian Heritage supports the AGH *performance series*. The AGH gratefully acknowledges the support of the City of Hamilton, Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Tickets are \$18 for AGH Members, \$20 for students and seniors and \$22 for general admission. Tickets may be purchased online at www.artgalleryofhamilton.com, at the AGH Front Desk during Gallery hours or by calling 905-527-6610, ext. 232.

The year 2011 at the Art Gallery of Hamilton is devoted to *The French Connection*, a year-long celebration of French and Francophone art and culture, presented by TD. *The French Connection* activities include exhibitions, performances, film screenings, hands-on art workshops for adults, families and children, talks, tours and more. For more information, please visit www.artgalleryofhamilton.com

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MEDIA CONTACTS

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Backgrounder – Artist Bios

Saidah Baba Talibah, singer, dancer, actress, writer and artist, cultivated her penchant for performing before birth, in the womb of her mother, renowned jazz/blues singer, Salome Bey. She has appeared in *Showboat* and *The Adventures of a Black Girl In Search Of God*, was a lead vocalist in the rock/soul/fusion band *Blaxäm* and sang with the Canadian Idol band for three seasons. Saidah also sang for Maestro Fresh-Wes, k-os, Redman, Marc Jordan, By Divine Right, Michael Bubl , Alannah Myles, Skydiggers, Divine Brown, Johnny Reid and Jully Black. Presently, Saidah is creating a soundscape of her life through song, collaborating with some great singer/songwriters and musicians. This will soon be released for the world to enjoy. In the meantime, visit www.sbtmusic.com for a taste.

Sharon Musgrave was born in England and raised in Canada. She returned to England to commence her music career. Sharon has performed on four continents, promoting herself on stage, radio and television with various artists. As lead vocalist she was asked by WEA in 1992 to record with jazz recording artist Julian Joseph which resulted in touring prestigious venues and opening up for such acts as Herbie Hancock. As a singer/songwriter Sharon has also worked with notable writers Terry Briton, Courtney Pine, Steve Harvey, and Jimmy Haynes while touring as a back-up vocalist. Her session work included Maxi Priest, Duran Duran, Simply Red, and Tears for Fears. In 1991, Sharon worked with British pop producer William Orbit with their resulting single *Fascinating Rhythm* topping the charts and leading to a world tour. Just before returning to her home town in Hamilton in 1998, she completed the jazz fusion album *Get in the Swing* and her first solo project, *Selah*. Sharon's unique vocal styling -- a blend of soul, jazz, and R&B -- is now amalgamated with what she calls folk-rock, funk-jazz rhythms. Her voice is strong, soothing, sultry with a dynamic range, revealing an accomplished singer-songwriter heading back to the international stage.

Multi-talented artist **Njacko Backo** was born in Cameroon and grew up making instruments, playing music, and learning the music of his ancestors. He studied drumming (toum and kak), kalimba (also called the thumb piano, which Njacko he plays with his fingers), percussion (various instruments), and an African harp called zaa koua.

Njacko left Cameroon at the age of 17 and traveled through several Central and West African countries working in clubs and studying traditional and popular African music. While living in Europe, Njacko continued to work as a musician, dancer and choreographer and worked with groups like Africa Salimata, Ernest Ciss , Sosoba, Vinjama, and Mioso Mika. He began his recording career with his first two albums: *Le Destin* and *Bamilek  Reggae*.

Njacko currently lives in Toronto. He formed his band Njacko Backo and Kalimba Kalimba in 1990 and has released 10 full-length albums to date; his latest being *Ou est L'Amour* in 2010. He received the Fiati Memorial Award for Best Traditional Performance from Toronto-based Music Africa in 1999, and an honourable mention in the World Music category of the 2006 International Songwriting Competition. Njacko's song *Afrique R veille Toi (Africa Wake Up)* was recently awarded 1st Place at the 17th Annual Billboard World Song Contest.

Njacko teaches extensively in the Greater Toronto Area through an organization called *Mariposa in the Schools* and has produced instructional African drumming CD and DVDs.

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Guitarist **Brian Griffiths** started his musical career with the group Rapid Transit and has worked with such notables as Dan Lanois, Emily Lou Harris and Willie Nelson.

As a session musician, **Donna Grantis** has performed with artists Amanda Marshall, Kardinal Offishall, Divine Brown, Jacksoul, acoustic guitar virtuoso Tony McManus and blues legend Coco Montoya, among others.

2010 performance highlights include: two European tours; a Toronto Jazz Festival main stage performance opening for jazz icon John Scofield; an invitation by Paul Smith (Paul Reed Smith guitars) to perform at an exclusive event alongside artists Orianthi (Michael Jackson) and Mike Scott (Prince); and The Sistah's Project, a concert featuring performances by some of the country's top African Canadian female vocalists, including Molly Johnson and Kellylee Evans .

Also in 2010, Donna participated in two full-length releases with artists Shakura S'Aida and Saidah Baba Talibah. In addition to performing as a featured guitarist on Shakura's internationally released *Brown Sugar*, Donna co-wrote nine original songs on the album and was the Musical Director of the project. Similarly, Donna was a featured guitarist on Saidah's highly anticipated debut album (*S*)*Cream*, co-wrote six songs on the record and was the Musical Director of the group.

Looking ahead, Donna will be recording her self-titled debut solo album this year with the Donna Grantis Electric Band. As a graduate from McGill University's Jazz Performance program, Donna combines a jazz sensibility with her blues and classic rock roots.