

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hallie Baron

Director, Marketing Communications

Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties

(415) 512-6429

hallieb@sfjcf.org

IT SOUNDS BETTER IN AMHARIC!

Ethiopian-Israeli Actor Brings His Acclaimed One-Man Show to the Bay Area

Saturday and Sunday, February 11 & 12 – Museum of the African Diaspora

Wednesday, February 15 – University of California, Davis

Thursday, February 16 – University of California, Berkeley

Saturday, February 18 – Congregation Shomrei Torah

Sunday, February 19 – Claremont Hotel, Berkeley (Be'chol Lashon)

Monday, February 20 – San Jose State

Details for all shows are below.

San Francisco, CA (February 2, 2006) – In celebration of Black History Month and the Ethiopian-Jewish community, Ethiopian-Israeli Actor Yossi Vassa brings his one-man show, *It Sounds Better In Amharic*, to the Bay Area for several performances, February 11 through February 20, 2006. After each performance, Vassa will be talking to the audience and answering questions. Sponsored by the Israel Center of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties, in partnership with Be'chol Lashon, a program of the Institute for Jewish & Community Research, *It Sounds Better In Amharic* is not only entertaining and moving, but also educates audiences on the enriching cultural impact Ethiopian Jews have had on Israeli culture.

It Sounds Better in Amharic is a personal account of a 700-kilometer journey on foot from Ethiopia to a refugee camp in Sudan, followed by an airplane flight to a new home in Israel. Vassa mixes nostalgic memories of life in Ethiopia with hilarious perspectives on adjusting to modern-day Israel. Included are the tensions surrounding the issue of which land is “home” and which is the Diaspora (the latter being a major physical and psychological issue for the Jewish and African people as a result of leaving one homeland for another). This highly acclaimed production has been presented over 400 times in Hebrew. In English, it has toured throughout the United States, Canada and Europe.

In a review of the performance, *The Jerusalem Post* stated, ‘Determined to tell the story of his people, *It Sounds Better in Amharic* is a cathartic experience.’

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Vassa, co-writer and actor, was born in Ethiopia and made aliya (Hebrew for "immigrated") to Israel in 1985 at age 10. After graduating from Haifa University's Theatre Arts department, Vassa completed his compulsory military service, where he was an actor in the IDF Theatre Company. With Shmuel Beru, Vassa has produced two Amharic television programs about life in Israel. These shows are very popular with the Ethiopian community, and thousands of tapes have been sold in Israel and abroad. Vassa also has acted in numerous Israeli films, including Danny Wolman's Foreign Sister and Go, Be and Die directed by Radok.

Shai Ben Atar, co-writer and director of It Sounds Better In Amharic, was born in Israel. His play Separation was well received at Tel Aviv's Festival for Short Plays, and another of his plays, Where is the IDF?, was produced by the Nephesh Theatre and currently is being performed in schools throughout Israel. Ben Atar has served as leading scriptwriter for Israel TV1's children and youth programming. His current play, co-written with leading Israeli actress and entertainer Hanna Laslow, was produced for the Kameri Theatre and has been nominated for Best Entertainment of the Year.

For more information, articles, reviews and video relating to It Sounds Better in Amharic, go to: www.nepheshtheatre.co.il/amharit_index_en.html

For additional information about this week's performance schedule, contact The Israel Center, 415.512.6203, www.israelcenter@sfjcf.org.

The Institute for Jewish & Community Research in San Francisco is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to the growth and security of the Jewish community.

The Israel Center provides a cultural bridge that connects Bay Area Jews with their counterparts in Israel. The Jewish Community Federation is the central organization for fundraising, planning, outreach and leadership development for Jewish communities in San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties. In FY 2004-05, the Federation's annual campaign allocated \$16.9 million to some 60 agencies providing social services, educational and cultural programs in the Bay Area, in the U.S., Israel and elsewhere in the world. In fiscal year 2005, the Federation's Endowment Fund, with assets exceeding \$1.05 million, provided more than \$215 million for a variety of grants, seed projects and emergency needs in fiscal year 2004/2005. For information, call 415.777.0411 or visit www.sfjcf.org <<http://www.sfjcf.org>> .

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YOSSI VASSA DATES

Museum of the African Diaspora (MOAD)

Saturday, February 11, 2006, 1:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 12, 2006, 12:30 p.m.

Free with museum admission.

Space is limited, reservations at www.moadsf.org

685 Mission Street, San Francisco

415.358.7200

University of California, Davis

Wednesday, February 15, 2006, 7:30 p.m.

The Campus Coffee House (CO-HO)

Free admission.

530.756.3708

University of California, Berkeley

Thursday, February 16, 7:30 p.m.

145 Dwinelle Hall, UC Berkeley

Students Free, Public \$5

510.845.7793

Congregation Shomrei Torah

Saturday, February 18, 2006, 7:00 p.m.

1717 Yulupa Ave., Santa Rosa

Admission: \$10

707.578.5519

Be'chol Lashon

In the first half of this two-part event, Vassa performs It Sounds Better In Amharic. The second half of the show features the mesmerizing voices and original songs of Yemenite-Israeli singers Shirli & Miriam Zafri.

Sunday February 19, 2006, 7:30 p.m.

Claremont Resort and Spa, Berkeley

Admission: \$10 adults, \$5 students (w/ID), seniors or disabled.

Advance tickets available at www.inticketing.com.

Tickets Available at the Door beginning at 6:30

Information: www.jewishresearch.org

San Jose State University

Monday, February 20, 2006, 4:00 p.m.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Room 225 & 229

One Washington Square, San Jose

Free admission.

408.924.6245