



Among those on the WOMAD lineup are British-born South Indian singer Sheila Chandra; Russia's folk/classical Terem Quartet; and American rappers PM Dawn

World-Class Sounds

Peter Gabriel headlines global WOMAD festival

BY MICHAEL SNYDER

CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

ROLL OVER Beethoven, and tell Beavis and Butt-Head, Casey Kasem and everybody at the Grand Ol' Opry the news. There's a whole world of music out there that has nothing to do with grunge rock, heavy-metal power ballads, or country music. This is not to suggest that all Western pop is creatively bankrupt, but rather to glory in blasts of fresh sound from foreign lands.

It's African high life and Jamaican reggae; it's soca and calypso from the Caribbean and samba from Brazil; it's Bulgarian folk music and traditional Celtic lamentation; it's a flamenco from Spain and a raga from India.

Occasionally, it will sneak up the American charts in one form or another, usually Caribbean, sometimes watered-down. But up until now, it's been considered a novelty on our shores by all but a handful of open-minded pan-culturalists.

It's world music — the melodies and rhythms that make our brothers and sisters in other lands dance, sing, exult, cry and ponder. When it's done right, no translation is necessary.

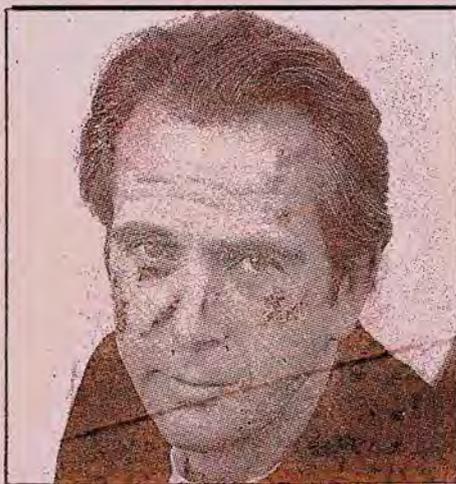
Next Sunday afternoon, the Bay Area will get a good dose of myriad sounds from all points on the globe when the touring WOMAD festival — headlining British rock star Peter Gabriel — sets up in Golden Gate Park for a noon to 5 p.m. concert, with music and dance workshops and interactive computer exhibits. Cost is \$10; kids under 12 are free.

This is the local stop on the first North American tour assembled by WOMAD (World of Music, Arts and Dance) — a nonprofit organization established in England during the early '80s and dedicated to fostering awareness of traditional and contemporary international art and culture in all of its diversity and magnificence.

WOMAD is a pet project for Gabriel, who has dipped into Third World rhythms and styles freely throughout his recording career (his duets with Senegalese pop singer Youssou N'Dour on "Shaking the Tree" and "In Your Eyes," the African folk influence on "Biko," etc.).

Although the first WOMAD show in 1982 (conceived by Gabriel with journalist Thomas Brooman) was a financial failure, the organization retrenched and bounced back during the past decade to present a series of concerts at

WOMAD takes place from noon to 5 p.m. next Sunday at the Polo Field in Golden Gate Park.



Peter Gabriel: He's always had a vision beyond most entertainers'

more than 60 locales in 19 countries. Musicians from approximately 90 nations have taken the stage under the WOMAD banner.

Gabriel has been in and out as one of the directors of the project, but his protean Real World record label was a 1988 outgrowth of his involvement with WOMAD. Real World has coordinated recording sessions in conjunction with the various WOMAD festivals, giving a forum to numerous worthy but obscure acts from remote outposts. Despite having just finished his own triumphant "Secret World" U.S. tour, Gabriel agreed to take the top slot on this WOMAD swing through America in order to call attention to the festival.

"The fact that it would be headlined by Gabriel sold it to some of the promoters," said Brooman, artistic director of WOMAD and one of the directors of Real World. "Peter has always had a vision beyond most entertainers'. This is all about music enabling people to speak to each other across cultures. It feels worthwhile supporting great artists and taking them to new audiences, standing for musical eclecticism in the face of narrowness."

Besides Gabriel, there are other well-known Western pop musicians on the roster of artists slated to perform full-length sets on WOMAD's two main stages. They include Ireland's Sinead O'Connor, Crowded House from New Zealand and Australia, Stereo MC's, James and ex-P.I.L. member Jah Wobble from Great Britain, and the brainy American rap group P.M. Dawn.

It's hoped they will broaden the WOMAD audience. Not all of the participants are so familiar or conventional:

Sheila Chandra is the British-born singer of South Indian descent who fronted the new-wave/raga-rock band Monsoon in the early '80s; Geoffrey Oryema is an exiled Ugandan singer and instrumentalist — a master of the "thumb piano" — who lives in Paris; the Drummers of Burundi is a percussion orchestra from a tiny African country; and the Terem Quartet from Russia plays a balalaika-charged blend of folk classical and traditional music.

Other performers on the bill, Jamaican reggae stars Ziggy Marley & the Melody Makers and Inner Circle, are no strangers to the U.S. Top 40. In fact, Inner Circle's recent success with "Bad Boys," the group's top-ten hit single, may be indicative of a major shift in American musical tastes.

That means three songs by artists who specialize in reggae have scraped the top of Billboard's pop singles chart in 1993. Like the Inner Circle track, UB40's version of the Elvis Presley favorite "Can't Help Falling in Love" (currently at No. 1) and Snow's ragamuffin reggae tune "Informer" have spent time at the pinnacle.

In the past, Miriam Makeba, Mongo Santamaria, Kyu Sakamoto, Hugh Masekela and the Singing Nun were aberrations on American radio. Suddenly, there appears to be a market for all sorts of musical exotica in Western civilization. The world-music sections at local CD stores are expanding daily. As usual, the Bay Area — a hotbed of multicultural activity — was ahead of the curve.

On our turf, salsa parties and samba lessons have been chic for a number of years. Klezmer music and the blissful swell of the Bulgarian Women's Choir are familiar sounds around here. In the mid-'80s, multiracial local bands, including the Looters, Freaky Executives and Zulu Spear, fomented a dance-crazy cross-cultural movement with African, Jamaican, Latin and American strains and called it "world beat." Even as far back as the '60s, Carlos Santana had achieved a Latin-rock synthesis in the local scene.

Today, there are quite a few Bay Area musicians who push the envelope. Peter Apfelbaum's East-West jazz fusion group the Hieroglyphics Ensemble, Ancient Future and its new-age/Asian melange and the 10-woman Eastern European folk choir Kitka leap to mind. Reggae Calendar International, a local publication, lists as many events in one night as it used to list in a week. Furthermore, world beat has seeped into techno and house music for the dance clubs.

Audiences are growing, and Doug Wendt is ecstatic. Wendt is the San Francisco journalist and DJ who presides

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San Francisco

OPERA

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 AT 7:30 PM

I Vespri Siciliani

(The Sicilian Vespers) by GIUSEPPE VERDI

with CAROL VANESS, CHRIS MERRITT, JAMES MORRIS and TIMOTHY NOBLE

Also September 17, 23, 26 (M), 29, October 2

New Production

In Italian with English Supertitles

Cast: Vaness, Guo, Merritt, Noble, Morris, Locke, Skinner

Production: Mackerras, Alden, Steinberg, Murin

This production is made possible by a gift from The L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 AT 8:00 PM

Daughter of the Regiment

(La Fille du Régiment) by GAETANO DONIZETTI

with KATHLEEN BATTLE, FELICITY PALMER, MOLLIE SUGDEN, FRANK LOPARDO and MICHEL TREMPONT

Also September 18, 21, 24, 26, 30, October 3 (M)

In French with English Supertitles

Cast: Battle, Palmer, Sugden, Lopardo, Trempont, Sénéchal

Production: Campanella, Donnell, Montresor, Arhelger

Production courtesy of San Diego Opera.

This production is made possible by a gift from Sybase, Inc.

TODAY AT 1:30 PM (FREE CONCERT)

Opera in the Park

Sponsored by the San Francisco Examiner Charities, Inc.

With Carol Vaness, Manhua Gao, Yanyu Guo, Susan Quittmeyer, Chris Merritt, James Morris and Timothy Noble, and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras. Don't miss the broadcast of Opera in the Park on KKHI 95.7 FM/1550 AM tonight at 8 pm.

OPENS NEXT SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 AT 2:00 PM

La Bohème

by GIACOMO PUCCINI

with VERONICA VILLARROEL and ROBERTO ARONICA

Also September 22, 25, 28, October 6, 9, 13, 16, December 2, 5 (M), 9, 11

In Italian with English Supertitles

September 19 (M), 22, 25, 28, October 6, 9, 13, 16

Cast: Villarroel, Panagoulas, Aronica, De La Mora (10/6, 9, 13), Shimell/Ledbetter (10/9, 13, 16), Skinner, Vasquez, Capecchi

Production: Mackerras/Summers (10/9, 13), Bernhard, Mitchell, Munn

December 2, 5 (M), 9, 11

Cast: Racette, Fortuna, Lima, Ledbetter, Milne, Vasquez, Capecchi

Production: Summers, Bernhard, Mitchell, Munn

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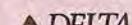
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Grand Tier	\$ 95	\$100
Dress Circle	\$ 66	\$ 70
Balcony Circle	\$ 56	\$ 60
Balcony Rows A-F	\$ 42	\$ 45
Balcony Rows G-L	\$ 36	\$ 38
Balcony Sides	\$ 16	\$ 20
Box	\$110	\$115

*Supertitles cannot be seen from these seats.
Some sections are sold-out for some performances.
Program and casting subject to change.



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WOMAD

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over the crammed-to-the-walls world-music dance parties at the Kennel Club every Saturday and Sunday night. "Pop and rock have become so derivative," he says. "It's all been done before. America was overdue for some new music."

The charting reggae singles have been a source of satisfaction for Wendt, but he's still a little cynical. "There's no doubt why UB40 has its hit. They did an Elvis song. You have to pick something safe and predictable to get airplay. Snow is another story. The guy is a white Canadian, but he's singing Jamaican patois in a dialect so heavy that MTV has to run subtitles on a video of a song that was No. 1 in the U.S. for nearly a month."

Harry Belafonte's "Banana Boat Song," the Andrews Sisters' "Rum and Coca-Cola," Johnny Nash's "I Can See Clearly Now," Buster Poindexter's version of the Soca number "Hot, Hot, Hot," Musical Youth's "Pass the Dutchie" and Blondie's cover of the Jamaican rock-steady song "The Tide is High" slipped mild Caribbean styles onto the airwaves at various times in the past 50 years. During the '60s, Millie Small's ska romp "My Boy Lollipop" and Desmond Dekker's proto-reggae "The Israelites" were Top 40 hits in this country performed by actual Jamaicans.

Even though reggae legend Bob Marley was an international superstar in the '70s, he never had a commercial breakthrough in the United States. Meanwhile, American and English pop musicians Paul Simon, Stevie Wonder, the Police, Men at Work and Culture Club added the loping reggae beat to their compositions and made hit singles. Ragamuffin reggae — the dance-hall hip-hop hybrid — fueled rap hits by Queen Latifah, Shinehead and Shaggy. Reggae had staying power, and it finally became part of the fabric of pop.

Gabriel, Simon and Talking Heads leader David Byrne are accused of cultural imperialism by some, but that ignores their contributions. If international music is beginning to find an audience in America, they are partially responsible for enlightening the masses.

Gabriel uses Real World artists as session musicians when he is in the studio laboring over his own tracks. Simon plundered South African township jive for his incredibly successful "Graceland" album. Talking Heads recordings and Byrne's collaborations with Brian Eno frequently adapted various genres of world music, from African tribal rhythms to zydeco music. Byrne concentrated wholly on Afro-Cuban and Latin styles for a solo album, "Rei Momo."

Byrne's commitment to world music has manifested itself in other projects. He already has compiled and released anthologies of Brazilian, Cuban and Indian

pop music for his Warner Bros.-distributed Luaka Bop label. Luaka Bop also distributes a recording by Zap Mama — a stimulating Belgium-based vocal quintet of five women of African and European backgrounds.

World music is becoming all-pervasive. Industrial and new-beat music from Belgium and Germany grind out of the loudspeakers at underground clubs. Beautiful Yemenite singer Ofra Haza unsheds her sinuous voice on a series of dance-pop hits. The Gipsy Kings remake "Volare." Kanda Bongo Man and his band sweep into town to fire up a concert of Soukous, the pop music of Zaire.

THE Wailing Souls, a pair of boyhood buddies from the Jamaican ghetto, traverses roots-reggae music, r & b, blues, rap, rock, ska and electronic house music to score airplay on pop, urban, alternative and college radio formats. German-born guitarist Ottmar Liebert, who will headline the Warfield on Saturday, earns a gold record in the United States for his melting-pot instrumental music, which brings flamenco together with a range of other styles — Indian, Japanese, Arabic — and conventional pop.

Laibach, the best-known rock band from the former Yugoslavian republic of Slovenia, does a brutally noisy, depressing album interpretation of the Beatles' "Let It Be." Mory Kante, a native of Guinea who plays an African stringed harp called the kora, moves to Paris and records a sort of Afro-house track, "Yeke Yeke," that goes to No. 1 in seven countries.

Local nightclubs sell out shows by Cheb Khaled, Cheba Fadela and other exponents of rai — the controversial Algerian dance music. Charismatic West Indian singer-songwriter Arrow, the king of calypso Mighty Sparrow, the French-Algerian group Les Negresses Vertes and reggae poet and rapper Linton Kwesi Johnson pack them in at Slim's.

And here comes WOMAD.

ACCORDING to Chandra, who will perform her haunting solo vocals to a taped drone accompaniment, the festival is as inspiring for the performers as it is for the audience. "You're free to see workshops and other bands, and there's a warm respectful feeling between the artists," she said. "I've always admired Davy Spillane, who plays the pipes, and I wanted to meet him, so I went to one of his workshops. Someone recognized me there and said, 'You should do a song with him.' We did, and it was wonderful."

All the prognostications are on track. The '90s will be the decade of world music. "People are hungry for something fresh," Wendt said. "It's time for this music to be part of the daily menu, instead of some exotic once-a-year dish. You don't have to understand the language. That's the power of world music. The rhythm, the melody and the emotion will carry you."