



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Maria Villarreal  
(213) 228-7555

## **Los Angeles Public Library launches new program series, “Poetic Voices of the Muslim World,” March 12 – May 18, 2013**

Los Angeles Public Library invites you to explore the rich tapestry of Muslim art through “Poetic Voices of the Muslim World,” a free series developed by Poets House and City Lore, featuring a travelling exhibit now on display at Central Library, 630 W. Fifth St., along with four poetry readings and musical performances at the Central Library and the Westwood Branch, 1246 Glendon Avenue, Westwood. The first event, “Song of the Reed: Rumi,” begins at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 12, at the Westwood Branch.

According to **Amazon** and **Time Magazine**, the most popular and bestselling poet in America is a 13<sup>th</sup> century Persian mystic, Rumi. It is his work that launches the series on March 12, when Dr. Jawid Mojaddedi, a renowned Rumi scholar and Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies at Rutgers University, discusses--in English--the beauty of Rumi’s extensive poem, the *Masnavi*: its folk tales, sacred history, entertaining stories and lessons, all written in rhyming couplets.

Following Dr. Mojaddedi’s talk, a performance of Rumi’s poems is set to entrancing Sufi music in English and Persian by composer and Persian classical music performer Amir Vahab and his ensemble. The lively folk and traditional music features the ethereal sounding *nay* (reed flute), *saz* (seven-stringed long neck lute), and *daf* (large frame drum) instruments. The concert concludes with a dynamic drumming performance.

The series returns to Westwood Branch on Saturday, April 6, at 2 p.m., with the program, “Reading and Talk with Poet Persis Karim.” Born in the San Francisco Bay Area to an Iranian father and French mother, poet and San Jose State University Professor Dr. Karim discusses how key political events prompted her to claim her identity as an Iranian American through the study of literature and the writing of poetry. She also talks about her work editing and translating writing by Iranian women and how it challenges media portrayals of Iranian women as veiled and silenced.

-more-

Peter Persic, Public Relations & Marketing Director

On Saturday, April 13, at 2 p.m. the series moves to Central Library with “Poetry from Anatolia: the Ottoman Lyric and the Turkish Folk Song.” Translator, scholar and “living encyclopedia” of Turkish verse, Dr. Kemal Silay introduces two rich but parallel traditions from the Ottoman Empire: the complex and cosmopolitan *divan* lyrics of the Ottoman court poet Fûzulî, who wrote *Layla and Majnun* (the Muslim world’s *Romeo and Juliet*), and the Turkish vernacular sung poetry of Anatolia’s aşik troubadour Yunus Emre—and explores how they both express a distinctly Turkish worldview. Dr. Silay is a professor and Director of the Turkish Studies Program at Indiana University.

The poetic portion of the series concludes at Central Library on Saturday, May 18, at 2 p.m. with “Words of Praise: the Qasida” featuring University of Chicago Professor Dr. Michael Sells and musician Zafer Tawil and his ensemble. The *qasida* is a long rhymed ode common to Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Urdu literature. Arab Bedouins originated the form as an oral poem in praise of the tribe or denigrating its enemies. Dr. Sells’ talk reveals the remarkable richness of language and range of emotions evoked by Arabic Golden Age poets Imru al-Qays and al-Mutanabbi.

The discussion is followed by a *maqam*, a type of musical melody, performance by Palestinian composer and musician Zafer Tawil and his ensemble. Tawil has performed with some of the most celebrated world music artists, including violinist and *oud* master Simon Shaheen and *Rai* singer Cheb Mami.

Currently on display at Central Library, as part of the visual arts element of the series, is a lushly-illustrated and vibrant travelling exhibit of 18 panels featuring photography and calligraphic text, as well as sample passages from the poets Rumi, Adonis and Hafiz. This free exhibit will move on to five other cities as part of the program series.

In addition to Poets House and City Lore, the series is presented in partnership with the American Library Association, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art.

Los Angeles Public Library serves the largest and most diverse population of any library in the United States through its Central Library, 72 branch libraries, and Web-based services accessed at [www.lapl.org](http://www.lapl.org).

###