



Contact: Joe Martin
530.754.5428

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For immediate release:

Dee Dee Bridgewater to Explore Links Between Jazz and Malian Music at Mondavi Center

September 19, 2007; Davis, California—**Dee Dee Bridgewater**, a two-time Grammy Award winner and a recipient of Broadway’s coveted Tony Award, will perform music from her latest recording, *Red Earth*, at the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts** on October 20. Featuring an eight-piece ensemble including Malian musicians and traditional African instruments as well as her regular jazz trio, the performance will explore the connections between the music of Mali and the traditions of American jazz.

The event will begin at 8 pm on October 20 in the Mondavi Center’s Jackson Hall on the **UC Davis** campus. Tickets are available from the Mondavi Center Ticket Office at 530.754.ARTS (2787) or online at MondaviArts.org. The event is presented as part of Mondavi Center’s **90.9 KXJZ Improvisations Series**.

Few entertainers in any genre can boast the remarkable versatility of Dee Dee Bridgewater. A supremely accomplished singer and actress, Bridgewater has won numerous honors for her work on the musical stage, including a Tony Award for her performance in *The Wiz*. She won two Grammys for her 1997 album *Dear Ella*, a tribute to **Ella Fitzgerald**, and six of her recordings have been nominated for the Grammy in the Best Jazz Vocal Album category. She has been named a Commandeur de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the **French Ministry of Culture**, and is the only American to be inducted to the Haut Conseil de la Francophonie.

Her most recent recording is *Red Earth*, which Bridgewater has called her “ode to Mali and to Africa,” and from which much of the Mondavi Center performance material will be drawn. “*Red Earth* goes beyond a concept album,” wrote *Downbeat*. “It’s a profound homecoming that sonically pleases the ear and spiritually offers deliverance to the singer.”

Born in Memphis, Tennessee, Bridgewater grew up in Flint, Michigan, in a household immersed in jazz. Her father, **Matthew Garrett**, was a prominent trumpeter who taught several rising stars including **Booker Little**, **Charles Lloyd**, and **George Coleman**, while her mother was a devoted fan of Ella Fitzgerald, the great singer whose music has been the strongest influence on Bridgewater’s performance style. Bridgewater began performing rock and rhythm and blues in local clubs while still a teenager before studying at **Michigan State University** and the **University of Illinois**. She made her first international tour performing in the Soviet Union with the **University of Illinois Big Band** in 1969, and the following year created a sensation in her New York City debut as part of the **Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band**. Bridgewater worked in concert and on recordings

with many of the biggest stars in jazz, including **Dexter Gordon**, **Sonny Rollins**, **Dizzy Gillespie**, **Horace Silver**, and **Max Roach**.

In 1974, she was offered the role of Glinda the Good Witch in the original production of *The Wiz*, an adaptation of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by **Ken Harper**. The production was an enormous hit, and Bridgewater won a Tony for Best Featured Actress in a Musical. This success led to appearances in numerous other stage productions in Tokyo, Los Angeles, Paris, and London, where she was nominated for the prestigious Laurence Olivier Award for her portrayal of jazz legend **Billie Holiday** in **Stephen Stahl**'s musical *Lady Day*. All the while, Bridgewater has maintained a high profile as a jazz vocalist, releasing 10 albums under her own name and performing at major festivals all over the world.

Her most recent recording, *Red Earth*, represents the fruits of Bridgewater's decision to explore what she calls her "African roots." Elected in 1999 as one of the United Nations' first ambassadors for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Bridgewater was granted the opportunity to travel to Africa, visiting villages involved with various FAO programs. Her visits also allowed her to explore the music and culture of various African regions, which led to her realization that she had a special love and affinity for the music of Mali. When she finally visited the country in 2004, she felt instinctively that she had found her ancestral home and started the musical journey that would lead to the *Red Earth* CD on Emarcy Records and her current international tour.

In 2006, Bridgewater returned to Mali and began working with noted producer **Cheick Tidiane Seck**, who introduced her to many of the country's renowned musicians. She began to conceptualize the melding of Malian instruments and jazz, recruiting musicians such as the Grammy-winning **Toumani Diabaté** (*kora*), **Bassekou Kouyaté** (*n'goni*), **Baba Sissoko** (talking drums), and singer **Oumou Sangaré** to collaborate on the project, along with her long-time trio partners **Edsel Gomez** (piano), **Ira Coleman** (bass), and **Minino Garay** (drums). In sessions produced by Seck, the ensemble recorded material in which Bridgewater's lyrics update and reflect upon the ancient African "griot" tradition, such as "The Griots (Sakhodougou)," "Bad Spirits (Bani)," and "Red Earth (Massane Cisse)." Also on the recording are jazz standards such as **Mongo Santamaria**'s "Afro Blue" and **Wayne Shorter**'s "Footprints."

Performing with Bridgewater at the Mondavi Center will be her usual trio of Gomez, Edsel, and Garay, along with Malian musicians **Lansiné Kouyaté** (*balafon*), **Baba Sissoko** (*n'goni, tamani*, vocals), **Cherif Soumanou** (*kora*), and vocalists **Mamani Kéita** and **Kabiné Kouyaté**.

"Dee Dee Bridgewater has been one of the most respected vocalists in jazz for more than three decades, and we look forward to hearing her exciting new project exploring the common ground between traditional Malian music and American jazz," said **Don Roth**, the Mondavi Center's executive director.

What: Dee Dee Bridgewater
When: Saturday, October 20 • 8 pm
Where: Jackson Hall
Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts
University of California, Davis
Admission: \$42/\$37/\$32 Adults • \$21/\$18.50/\$16 Students & Children
Tickets/Info: 530.754.ARTS (2787)
866.754.ARTS (toll-free)
<http://www.MondaviArts.org>
530.754.5402 [TDD]

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