



ROBERT AND MARGRIT  
**MONDAVI CENTER**  
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
**UC DAVIS**



#### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

Jessica Kelly, [jjkelly@mc.ucdavis.edu](mailto:jjkelly@mc.ucdavis.edu), 530-754-5428

#### **FULL SCHEDULE AND IMAGES**

<http://mondaviarts.org/press>

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **The Mondavi Center Presents the Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa**

**Davis, Calif.**—The **Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa**, under the leadership of **artistic director Bamba Dembele**, performs **Friday, Nov. 14, at 8 p.m.** in **Jackson Hall** of the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, UC Davis**. Uniting behind a rich musical history, the countries of West Africa have formed this incredible, unique ensemble that combines traditional rhythms, instruments, folklore, and mythology to paint a vivid picture of West African life.

“This will be the first visit to the Mondavi Center by the Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa, and under Bamba Dembele's leadership this ensemble is sure to continue our strong history of presenting the great touring artists of Africa,” said **Don Roth, Mondavi Center executive director**.

**Pricing** is \$45/35/25 for regular tickets and \$22.50/17.50/12.50 for students and children. Purchase tickets online at [MondaviArts.org](http://MondaviArts.org), through the Mondavi Center box office at 530-754-2787 or 866-754-2787 (toll-free), or at the door. Accommodations for persons with disabilities are available upon request.

The Mondavi Center Arts Education Program will also present the Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa as part of the **2008–09 School Matinee Series** on **Friday, Nov. 14, at 11 a.m.** at **Jackson Hall**. The School Matinee Series is made available for teachers and students, including homeschoolers. Performances in this series support the California Department of Education Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards. Teachers, educators, and others interested in purchasing tickets should call 530-754-4689.

The **Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa** comprises singers, dancers and musicians from countries such as Togo, Senegal, Guinea, Ghana, Benin, Côte D'Ivoire and Mauritania. The ensemble was formed in 1970 in West Africa under the support of the government to revive folkloric music forms, fostering the arts and culture of indigenous peoples. The group proved strong as it carried on these traditions, surviving defections, the rivalries of other musical ensembles by factions in the region, and even the unfortunate deaths of some founding members. What has allowed the group to carry on so successfully is its unique blending of traditional West African melodies and musical styles with the musical stylizations of the Western world. In the words of artistic director Bamba Dembele, “We play Mandingo music: It’s part Mali, part Guinea, part Cote d’Ivoire; in short, it is West African music.”

The Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa has gained great notoriety at home and throughout the world. In Europe, the ensemble has become known to lovers of Sahel music. Singer Oumou Sangare started her professional career with the ensemble, as did Toumany Diabate, the prince of Kora. "Now it's the young who have come with new inspiration for the music," says Dembele. "We used to always play praise songs and ballads. Now we leave out the praise songs and add music that makes people move. That's how we conquered Europe and the U.S."

The ensemble's music now combines various African styles—Congolese soukous nudges West African Mandingo, reggae meets Latin. Overall, an explosion of sound greets dancers and music lovers. While many have heard and followed the success of various ensembles from this area of the world, the Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa sets itself apart with a unique style that presents an authentic yet contemporary edge.

- **Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa**
- **Fri., Nov. 14, 8 p.m.**
- **Mondavi Center, Jackson Hall**
- **9399 Old Davis Road, Davis, CA 95616 (GPS)**
- **\$45/35/25 regular; \$22.50/17.50/12.50 students, children**
- **530-754-2787**  
**866-754-2787 (toll-free)**  
**530-754-5402 (TDD)**  
[MondaviArts.org](http://MondaviArts.org)

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