

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 26, 2010

WHAT: Rokia Traoré
WHEN: Wednesday, April 14 at 7:30PM
WHERE: UMass Amherst Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
TICKETS: Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go online to <http://www.umasstix.com/>
IMAGES: To download images relating to this press release please go online to <http://www.fineartscenter.com/centerwide/pressRoom/>

CALENDAR LISTING:

“Gloriously funky” (*The Guardian*, UK) Malian singer-songwriter Rokia Traoré performs with her Western-African fusion band
Wednesday, April 14, 7:30PM
UMass Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
\$30, \$25, \$15; Five College/GCC/STCC and youth 17 & under: \$5
Information: FAC Box Office 413-545-2511 or 800-999-UMAS or www.fineartscenter.com

AFRICAN DIVA AND HER WESTERN-AFRICAN ROCK FUSION BAND PERFORM AT THE FAC

Celebrated internationally for her energetic live performances, Rokia Traoré and her band create an intimate new contemporary sound that is profoundly African. With subtle, bluesy guitar playing and captivating voice, she spellbinds one moment with a haunting ballad and then rocks the house with high-energy Afro-pop the next. Traoré brings her sinuously persuasive voice, beguiling stage presence and irresistible Western-African fusion band to the UMass Fine Arts Center Concert Hall on Wednesday, April 14th at 7:30 PM. There will be a pre-performance talk by WFCR’s Jazz Safari host Kart Njiri at 6:30 PM in the rear seating area of the Concert Hall.

Playing blues-tinged guitar and backed by a band of Western and African instruments that lay shimmering carpets beneath her quiet songs and rock the house with high-energy Afro-pop on others, the “gloriously funky” (*The Guardian*, UK) singer-songwriter delivers “arguably the most exciting, most thrilling live African music show around” (*Time Out London*).

Since she first achieved notice in the West in the late 1990s, Traoré has consistently reshaped Western concepts of contemporary African music. The daughter of a Malian diplomat who was posted to the US, Europe, and the Middle East, she studied in Brussels and worked in a hip-hop band before deciding to go back to Mali to create the music she wanted, which was to be, she said, "not pop, not jazz, not classical but something contemporary with traditional instruments." Supporting herself through menial jobs while building a catalogue of original songs and a band of African and Western musicians to play them, she broke through with a French festival performance for which she was hailed as the "African Discovery of 1997."

In the 13 years and four albums since then, Traoré has continued her "gentle transition from traditional Malian instruments towards electric ones" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*), delighting audiences around the world while challenging more conservative world music devotees. Her high-profile collaborations have included such artists as the Kronos Quartet, rock musician Peter Gabriel, jazz singer Dianne Reeves, and the maverick director Peter Sellars, whose shows in Vienna and London celebrating Mozart's 250th birthday included Traoré's musical work, which has brought comparisons to a *griot*, or hereditary musician, in Mali's 13th-century Mandé Empire. Her most recent album, *Tchamantché*, won the Victoires de la Musique, the French equivalent of the Grammy Award, for Best World Album.

Said National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, "Traoré's meld of African and rock aesthetics is understated, as comfortable as it is cool. The world's less-developed societies have produced many singers who seek to balance musical style, and cultural perspective, and address the larger world. Few manage it with the grace and style of Rokia Traoré."

Tickets for Rokia Traoré are \$30, \$25, \$15; a special discount for Five College/GCC/STCC students and youth 17 & under is \$5. Tickets are available from the Fine Arts Center Box Office at 545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS, or on the Fine Arts Center ticket website at <http://www.umasstix.com/>.

The performance is sponsored by 88.5FM WFCR/WNNX 640AM and is funded in part by the Expeditions program of the New England Foundation for the Arts, made possible with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support from the six New England state arts agencies.

Images suitable for press coverage are available at the Fine Arts Center website: <http://www.fineartscenter.com/centerwide/pressRoom/>.

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