

@THE FAC NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 4th, 2011

- WHAT:** Acoustic Africa
WHEN: Wednesday, March 2 at 7:30 PM
WHERE: Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
TICKETS: Call 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/>

THE FAC PRESENTS AN EXHILERATING CONCERT OF CONTEMPORARY AND TRADITIONAL AFRICAN GUITAR MUSIC

"[Acoustic Africa's] engaging performance overcame language barriers, communicating in a way that transcended differences of race, culture, ethnicity and religion."

—LA Times

On Wednesday, March 2, the UMass Fine Arts Center presents **Acoustic Africa**, a thrilling musical journey that focuses on the richness of contemporary and traditional African song traditions. The Acoustic Africa tour features **Habib Koité**, the Malian superstar whose exciting concerts have endeared him to audiences worldwide, **Oliver Mtukudzi**, the bestselling artist in his home country of Zimbabwe, and **Afel Bocoum**, a guitarist, singer, and composer from Mali whose songs evoke the evolution of traditional Malian society. The Acoustic Africa tour was inspired by a recording session that featured many of Africa's greatest singer-songwriters in stripped-down displays of acoustic mastery.

One of Africa's most exciting performers, Habib Koité plays music that reflects the diverse musical traditions of his Malian homeland. Accompanied by his band Bamada, Koité has released a number of successful and critically acclaimed albums

including *Ma Ya* and *Baro*, and *Afriki*, his latest recording, released in 2007. Koité has appeared on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, in major magazines such as *People* and *Rolling Stone*, and has gained a strong fan base by integrating the rock and folk sounds of the western world without watering down his cherished Malian roots.

Descended from a line of griots, traditional troubadours who provide wit, wisdom, and entertainment to the public, Koité takes this role to the world at large, using his charisma and magnetism to translate the essence of his culture for new audiences. After nearly 1,000 concerts on some of the world's most prestigious stages, Koité is one of Africa's most popular musicians.

Lovingly called "Tuku," Oliver Mtukudzi began recording in the mid-1970s as a member of Wagon Wheels, a band that also featured the legendary Thomas Mapfumo. After Wagon Wheels rolled to fame in southern Africa, Tuku formed Black Spirits, the band that has backed him throughout his career, and has released numerous albums, including the acclaimed *Vhunze Moto* and *The Oliver Mtukudzi Collection*. Mtukudzi's music is heavily influenced by *chimurenga*, the genre pioneered by Mapfumo that is inspired by the hypnotic rhythms of the *mbira* (thumb piano). His music also incorporates pop influences, South Africa *mbaqanga*, the energetic Zimbabwean pop style *jit*, and the traditional *kateke* drumming of his clan, the Korekore. One of Tuku's biggest fans is Bonnie Raitt, who has not only called Tuku "a treasure," but has also used his music as inspiration for the song "One Belief Away" on her album *Fundamental*.

Afel Bocoum began his music career with his uncle, the famed Ali Farka Touré, in the group Asco, a collaboration that lasted some thirty years. In the 1980s, he founded Alkibar, in which he plays the guitar, sings, and composes. Bocoum sings mainly in Sonrai, his mother tongue, but also in Tamashek, the language of the Tuareg, and in Bambara. In spite of his growing success, Bocoum remains gentle and unassuming, modestly directing the energy this recognition brings him towards the welfare of his people and the inspiration they give to his music. In 2002, Afel collaborated with the lead singer of Blur, Damon Albarn, on the extremely popular

album *Mali Music*. The gigs they played together were well received, especially the concert at the Barbican in London in June 2003. With remarkable subtlety and a sure talent, Bocoum has proved that he is a true "messenger of the great river," and it's certain he will actively contribute to keeping Malian music at the forefront of the international scene.

Acoustic Africa is sponsored by the Baystate Heart and Vascular Program, *Preview Magazine*, and 93.9 FM The River. Tickets are \$30, \$25, and \$15; Five College/GCC/STCC students and youth 17 and under are \$10. Tickets are available from the Fine Arts Center Box Office at 545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS, or on the secure Fine Arts Center ticket website at <http://www.umasstix.com/>.

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PHOTOS

Hi-res photos available for download:

<http://www.umass.edu/fac/centerwide/pressRoom/index.html>

PRESS PASSES

Limited press passes are available. Please contact Shawn Farley at 413-545-4159 or sfarley@admin.umass.edu

ABOUT THE FAC

The Fine Arts Center, located on the UMass Amherst campus, is a presenter of music, dance, theater and the visual arts, bringing hundreds of outstanding and provocative artists to the Pioneer Valley for over 35 years.

CALENDAR LISTING

The UMass Fine Arts Center presents @ THE FAC

Acoustic Africa: Traditional and Contemporary African Guitar Music

Wednesday, March 2 at 7:30 PM

Fine Arts Center Concert Hall

Tickets: \$30, \$25, \$15; Five College/GCC/STCC students and youth 17 and under: \$10. Call 545-2511, 800-999-UMAS or purchase online at <http://www.umasstix.com>.