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For immediate release:

NPR Host Terry Gross to Speak at the Mondavi Center

March 21, 2008; Davis, California—**Terry Gross**, the host of **National Public Radio's** *Fresh Air*, will speak at the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, UC Davis**. As host of the popular, nationally syndicated program she has interviewed figures as diverse as former President **Bill Clinton**, rock singer **Bruce Springsteen**, author **Norman Mailer**, actor **John Travolta**, and countless others, and received numerous honors for her interview style that is simultaneously friendly and informal, yet also probing and incisive. In a lecture entitled *All I Did Was Ask: An Evening with the Host of NPR's Fresh Air*, Gross will talk about her life and her experiences—and give the audience a chance to interview her in a question-and-answer session following the lecture.

The event will begin at 8 pm April 21 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 the Mondavi Center's **Distinguished Speakers Series**.

As the host of *Fresh Air*, NPR's weekday magazine of contemporary arts and issues, Terry Gross' interviews reach more than 4.5 million listeners through nearly 500 public radio stations. She is known for her thoughtful, probing interview style that allows even the most guarded guests to relax and speak freely, which has enabled her to get answers to controversial or challenging questions the interview subjects might not usually want to answer. She has been called "a trusted voice and arbiter in the cultural landscape" by *The New York Times* and "certainly the best cultural interviewer in America, and one of the best all-around interviewers, period" by *The Boston Phoenix*.

Born in 1951, Gross grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and after earning a degree in English at the **State University of New York, Buffalo**, began a career as a teacher. She soon gravitated to public radio, working at a station in Buffalo before moving on to WHYY in Philadelphia in 1975, where she began to host *Fresh Air*. The program started as a local interview show but grew in popularity until it was put into national syndication by NPR in 1987 and eventually became public radio's most listened-to program after *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*.

Gross' work on *Fresh Air* has been widely acclaimed. In 1994, the program received a Peabody Award, which cited Gross for her "probing questions and unusual insights." In 1999, America Women in Radio and Television gave Gross a Gracie Award in the category National Network Radio Personality. In 2003, Gross received the Edward R. Murrow Award from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for advancing the "growth, quality, and positive image of radio." Her other awards include the National Book Foundation's 2007 Literarian Award for Outstanding Service to the American Literary Community.

Over the years, Gross has interviewed many of the most celebrated artists, writers, actors, musicians, politicians, and broadcasters of our time. Most interviews, such as those with author **Philip Roth** and jazz great **Sonny Rollins**, are marked by an amicable banter between guest and host and result in the revered subjects opening up much more than usual. Some others have been controversial, as when Fox News anchor **Bill O'Reilly** walked out of a 2003 interview after being asked to respond to criticism that had been printed about him in *People*. Similarly, a 2005 interview with **Lynne Cheney**, author and wife of Vice President **Dick Cheney**, became controversial when the discussion moved from Cheney's most recent book to questions about the Cheney's lesbian daughter and the Bush administration's advocacy for a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. In one other notable interview, rock star **Gene Simmons** of **Kiss** made a number of comments that were sufficiently embarrassing for him to refuse to allow his interview to be posted online, although transcripts appear in Gross' book *All I Did Was Ask: Conversations with Writers, Actors, Musicians, and Artists*. The interview prompted *Entertainment Weekly* to name Simmons its male "Crackpot of the Year."

"Anyone who agrees to be interviewed must decide where to draw the line between what is public and what is private," Gross has stated regarding her interview style. "But the line can shift, depending on who is asking the questions. What puts someone on guard isn't necessarily the fear of being 'found out.' It sometimes is just the fear of being misunderstood."

In her speaking engagements, Terry Gross plays sound bites from interviews that went especially well or especially badly to illustrate her discussion of interviewing techniques. She also does something else that she never does on *Fresh Air*: she talks about her own life and career, and gives the audience a chance to interview her.

"Terry Gross has, for good reason, become one of most popular and appealing journalists working for National Public Radio, with a long history of interviewing many of the most interesting figures in our culture," said **Don Roth**, the Mondavi Center's executive director. "We look forward to a lecture filled with interesting insights from her long career."

What: Terry Gross
All I Did Was Ask: An Evening with the Host of NPR's Fresh Air

When: Monday, April 21 • 8 pm

Where: Jackson Hall
Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts
University of California, Davis

Admission: \$40/\$34/\$29 Adults • \$20/\$17/\$14.50 Students & Children

Tickets/Info: 530.754.ARTS (2787)
866.754.ARTS (toll-free)
<http://www.MondaviArts.org>
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