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The Mondavi Center Presents Juan de Marcos and the Afro-Cuban All Stars

Davis, Calif.—The Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, UC Davis, presents the **Afro-Cuban All Stars** on **Thursday, Feb. 26, at 8 p.m.** in **Jackson Hall**. Led by singer and guitarist **Juan de Marcos**, the mastermind behind the **Buena Vista Social Club**, this exuberant, 17-piece jazz orchestra plays the “sons,” mambos and cha-chas from Havana’s “golden era”—but with more than enough modern edge and funk to keep the music swinging hard and in the present.

Says **Jeremy Ganter**, Mondavi Center associate executive director, “The All Stars bring the Afro-Latin equivalent of an orchestral wall of sound to the Jackson Hall stage. And, of course, they’re fun!”

Pricing is \$40/30/20 for regular tickets and \$20/15/10 for students and children. Purchase tickets online at 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. This event is presented as part of the Mondavi Center’s **World Stage: Music Series**, which continues with **Danú and Dervish** on **March 10**.

The **Afro-Cuban All Stars** is a unique orchestra that always has been devoted to promoting the full range of Cuban music, one that embraces several generations and all musical styles. Over the years many of the band’s musicians have become international stars, including brilliant performers such as Rubén González, Ibrahim Ferrer, Guillermo Rubalcava and Manuel “The Guajiro” Mirabal.

The genesis of the Afro-Cuban All Stars has its roots in the early 1990s. At this time, the son ensemble Sierra Maestra, headed by **Juan de Marcos**, received a lot of international exposure. As a consequence, de Marcos was introduced to Nick Gold, president of World Music Records (at that time a small independent label). That encounter led to a couple of very successful tours of Europe. The group then went to London and recorded “Dundumbanza,” considered one of the jewels of the world music scene of the early ’90s. (In retrospect, this recording opened the doors to the further incredible boom of the traditional Cuban music of the period.) Months later, de Marcos got the go-ahead to do an album celebrating the classic Cuban sound of the ’50s—a recording whose personnel would feature many great musicians. An agreement reached, the plan was to prepare two projects: one featuring a Cuban big band, the other record favoring a more traditional sound reminiscent of the acoustic style of Nico Saquito or Portabales.

In March 1996, they recorded the GRAMMY-nominated album “A toda Cuba le Gusta,” featuring nearly 60 performers. Then, with the addition of celebrated artists such as Compay Segundo, Omara Portuondo, Eliades Ochoa and legendary American guitarist **Ry Cooder**, what became the legendary **Buena Vista Social Club** CD was recorded. Finally, with a small budget, they also recorded the first solo album of Rubén González. This was destined to be one of the most successful of the Buena Vista series of recordings. During the spring of 1997, along with the release in Europe of the three albums, de Marcos and a select group of stellar musicians started touring all over the continent under the banner of a band christened the Afro-Cuban All Stars. The original line up, familiar from the records, included Ruben González and Guillermo Rubalcava (piano); Orlando López (bass); Amadito Valdés (timbale); Carlos González and Roberto Valdés (bongos); Ángel Terry (congas); Daniel Ramos, Alejandro Pichardo and “Guajiro” Mirabal (trumpets); Alberto “Molote” Martínez and Jesús “Aguaje” Ramos (trombones); and Raúl Planas, Manuel Licea, Pío Leiva, Ibrahim Ferrer and Félix Baloy (lead singers). After several years of tremendous and unexpected success—including four GRAMMY

nominations, several documentaries and films, and many other distinctions—the All Stars are certainly the best known and most successful Cuban orchestra in the world.

With the Afro-Cuban All Stars, de Marcos has developed a concept more than simply creating a band. His approach has allowed him to expand his creative range by incorporating contemporary styles of Cuban music. In addition, he takes a fluid approach to adjusting the orchestra's line-up, changing or adding musicians to best reflect the different styles of music from the various periods the band features. The Afro-Cubans are the same orchestra that can be seen in those distinct performances captured in the famous Oscar-nominated Buena Vista Social Club documentary by Wim Wenders, the Tony Knox documentary "Salon of Dreams," and the DVDs "Live in Japan" and "Live in The Hague." In 2002, de Marcos founded his own independent label, DM Ahora! Records, with which he released the Afro-Cuban All Stars' albums "Live in Japan" and "Step Forward," which was GRAMMY-nominated in 2006. He also released "A Diario" (Telmary) and "Goza Pepillo" (Interactivo), projects that represent a new generation of Cuban music, one that fuses hip-hop with contemporary Cuban genres. More recently, de Marcos, along with his wife Glicería Abreu, founded GG and LL, a musical production company based in Mexico City that aims to create a space for the new Latin American Music.

The recent plans for the Afro-Cuban All Stars include the recording this year of the album "Breaking the Rules." This documents de Marcos' latest project, where he has gathered the most remarkable expatriate Cuban musicians from around the world. This new version of the Afro-Cuban All Stars currently is touring internationally.

Juan de Marcos Gonzalez, a central figure in Cuban music for three decades, has set himself a lifetime mission: to show the wealth, diversity and vitality of Cuban music to the world. His work with super groups and incredible artists such as the Afro-Cuban All Stars, the Buena Vista Social Club, Ruben Gonzalez, Ibrahim Ferrer, Sierra Maestra and others has had extraordinary success in introducing the whole range of Cuban music around the globe.

De Marcos was born in Havana in 1954 and grew up surrounded by music. In the mid-70s, he co-founded the group Sierra Maestra. Styled as a traditional Cuban septeto group, the band achieved great success, recording 14 albums in Cuba, Africa and Europe, touring many countries and receiving various awards. In the '90s, de Marcos continued to delve into the now-neglected golden age of Cuban music. Things really took off a few years later when de Marcos' signature group, the Afro-Cuban All Stars, released "A toda Cuba le gusta." This was the first album to be recorded during the now-legendary Buena Vista Social Club sessions, and de Marcos' band proved to be a springboard for the success that followed. Following the album's release, Juan de Marcos led the Afro-Cuban All Stars and the Ruben Gonzalez Ensemble on their debut European and U.S. tours.

De Marcos has been responsible for creating and producing some of the most important and seminal recordings of 20th-century Cuban music. During his career, he has arranged, conducted, produced or co-produced more than 25 albums. His work with the Afro-Cuban All Stars has been nominated for four GRAMMY Awards, and the band is hailed by "DownBeat" magazine for its continued excellence. No one has done more to invigorate the revival and growth of Cuban music than the incomparable Juan de Marcos.

- **Juan de Marcos and the Afro-Cuban All Stars**
- **Thu., Feb. 26, 8 p.m.**
- **Mondavi Center, Jackson Hall**
- **9399 Old Davis Road, Davis, CA 95616 (GPS)**
- **\$40/30/20 regular; \$20/15/10 students, children**
- **530-754-2787**
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