



## MEDIA RELATIONS CONTACT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### Songs of the Civil Rights Movement: Mavis Staples Sings at the Mondavi Center

**Davis, Calif.**—The **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, UC Davis**, presents legendary soul and gospel singer **Mavis Staples**, **Wednesday, Jan. 14**, at **8 p.m.** in **Jackson Hall**. Featuring songs of the Civil Rights Era from Staples' album "**We'll Never Turn Back**" (2007), the program is presented in honor of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. There will be a **Pre-performance Lecture** with music writer and historian **Jon Fox** at **7 p.m.** in the **Studio Theatre**.

Said soul music authority **Rob Bowman** of "**We'll Never Turn Back**," "For [more than] 50 years, Mavis Staples has been a national treasure, working her vocal magic on the highways and byways of gospel, folk and soul music. With both her family group, the Staple Singers, and as a solo artist in her own right, she has helped to define much of what is righteous and soulful in American music."

Concluded CBS' **Bill Flanagan**, "While these songs might have been written long ago out of a longing for justice overdue, Mavis Staples uses them now to express righteous anger for promises broken. [She] has molded bits and pieces from 50 years ago into great rock & roll ... Don't miss it."

**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. This event is presented as part of the Mondavi Center's **American Heritage Series**, which continues with **Punch Brothers** featuring **Chris Thile** on **Feb. 14**.

In a related event, **Mavis Staples** and Milmon Harrison, UC Davis professor of African American studies, will participate in "**Civil Rights: The Music and the Movement**," a **Forum@MC** panel discussion hosted by **Jeffrey Callison** of **KXJZ's "Insight."** The discussion takes place on **Wednesday, Jan. 14**, at **5 p.m.** in the **Studio Theatre**. As with all **Forum@MC** events, admission is free.

"**Mavis Staples** was a child of the Civil Rights Movement, and in this performance she brings us music that was such an important part of the fabric of that era. We are especially glad to bring this performance to the Mondavi Center just a few days before the holiday marking the birth date of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.," said **Don Roth**, **Mondavi Center executive director**. "We are also very glad that Mavis Staples will join us for a **Forum@MC**, in which she will share her remembrances and perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement."

**Mavis Staples** began her career with her family group, the **Staple Singers**, in 1950. Initially singing locally at churches and appearing on a weekly radio show, the Staples scored a hit in 1956 with "Uncloudy Day" for the VeeJay label. When Mavis graduated high school in 1957, the Staple Singers took their music on the road. Led by family patriarch Roebuck "**Pops**" **Staples** on guitar, and including the voices of Mavis and her siblings Cleo, Yvonne and Pervis, the Staples were called "God's Greatest Hitmakers."

With Mavis' voice and Pops' songs, singing and guitar playing, the Staples evolved from enormously popular gospel singers (with recordings on United and Riverside as well as VeeJay) to become the most spectacular and influential spiritually based group in America. By the mid-1960s, the Staple Singers, inspired by Pops' close friendship with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., became the spiritual and musical voices of the Civil Rights Movement. They covered contemporary pop hits with positive messages, including Bob Dylan's "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" and a version of Stephen Stills' "For What It's Worth." The Staples sang "message" songs like "Long Walk To D.C." and "When Will We Be Paid?," bringing their moving and articulate music to a huge number of young people. The group signed to the famed Stax Records label in 1968, joining their gospel harmonies and deep faith with musical accompaniment from members of Booker T. and the MGs. The Staple Singers hit the Top 40 eight times between 1971 and 1975, including two No. 1 singles, "I'll Take You There" and "Let's Do It Again," and a No. 2 single, "Who Took the Merry Out of Christmas?" Now a long ways from their early roots as a pure gospel group, the Staple Singers were bona fide pop stars.

Mavis Staples recorded her first solo album, "Mavis Staples," for Stax in 1969. After another Stax release, "Only for the Lonely," in 1970, she released a soundtrack album, "A Piece of the Action," on Curtis Mayfield's Curtom label. A 1984 album (also self-titled) preceded two albums under the direction of rock megastar Prince: 1989's "Time Waits for No One," followed by 1993's "The Voice," which "People" magazine named to its Top 10 Albums that year. In 1996, she released "Spirituals & Gospels: A Tribute to Mahalia Jackson," a moving song cycle honoring Jackson, a very close family friend and a huge influence on Mavis' life.

During her career Staples has appeared in many films and television shows, and her voice has been sampled by some of the biggest selling hip-hop artists, including Salt 'N' Pepa, Ice Cube and Ludacris. Mavis has recorded with a wide variety of musicians, from her close friend Bob Dylan (with whom she was nominated for a 2003 GRAMMY Award) to The Band, Ray Charles, Nona Hendryx, George Jones, Natalie Merchant, Ann Peebles and Delbert McClinton. She has provided vocals on current albums by Los Lobos and Dr. John, and she appears on recent tribute albums to Johnny Paycheck, Stephen Foster and Bob Dylan. Her brand-new album, "Mavis Staples Live: Hope at the Hideout," was released on ANTI- in November 2008. Read more at [MavisStaples.com](http://MavisStaples.com).

- **Mavis Staples**
- **Wed., Jan. 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**
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