



For Immediate Release

COAST TO COAST MONK
**MEREDITH MONK'S 'SONGS OF ASCENSION' RECEIVES
WORLD PREMIERE AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY FOLLOWED BY
PERFORMANCES IN THE ALEXANDER VALLEY AND
LOS ANGELES IN CALIFORNIA; SHOWS ALSO SCHEDULED FOR
THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, FEBRUARY 1 AND
THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, MARCH 5 IN NEW YORK**

Meredith Monk has a major year ahead beginning with a three-week tour of California, where she will present the world premiere of “Songs of Ascension,” a groundbreaking evening-length work she created with visual artist Ann Hamilton. It premiered at Stanford University on October 18. Other highlights include dates at the Whitney Museum of American Art, where she will present the premiere of “Sound Travel 2” on February 1 and at the Guggenheim Museum, where she will present the New York premiere of a site-specific version of “Songs of Ascension” entitled “Ascension Variations” on March 5.

SONGS OF ASCENSION: “Songs of Ascension,” Monk’s compelling, radically new work, is inspired by her fascination with the symbols of ascension and circling that are integral to most spiritual practices, both religious and secular, including the great Buddhist Stupas, the steps up Mt. Sinai, Aztec pyramids and the Tawaf around the Ka’bah in Islam. For “Songs of Ascension,” Monk composed movement and sound that is constantly shifting and changing, evolving and expanding. With music that is Messiaen-like in its visionary spirit, the work radiates with Monk’s sweet wit, humanity and singular physicality. Of special note is her gentle eradication of the fourth wall; she ever-so subtly—through light and sound—incorporates the audience into the world she creates on stage. Circling the theater’s walls, Ann Hamilton’s film visually embraces the audience.

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In addition to voice, Monk's luminous score includes winds, percussion and strings. Adding to this seamless integration of music, dance and film are costumes by Yoshio Yabara and a lighting design by Elaine Buckholtz. "Ascension" was previewed at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis this past June. The proscenium-like version of "Ascension" will be next seen at the REDCAT in Los Angeles, where it will be performed October 29-November 2.

Recalling her classic site-specific works, "Juice" and "Education of the Girlchild," "Songs of Ascension" has also been structured to accommodate various spaces. Between Stanford and REDCAT, the work will be presented at the Ann Hamilton Tower at the Oliver Ranch in the Alexander Valley, CA from October 24-26, where musicians and dancers climb and descend the Tower's spiraling staircase. Ann Hamilton, with whom Monk collaborated on "mercy," completed the 80 story high tower in 2007.

VOICE TRAVEL 2: Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble will take over a series of galleries at the Whitney Museum of Art on February 1, where it will be joined by a string quartet led by Todd Reynolds; M6: Meredith Monk Music Third Generation; and the Claudia Quintet for a four-hour performance of classic Monk works and new pieces. The original "Voice Travel" was a three-day celebration of Monk's music that took place in various venues as part of the 2000 Lincoln Center Festival in New York City.

THE GUGGENHEM MUSEUM OF ART: Over 130 performers, including 25 dancers, 80 to 100 choral singers from the Stone Wall Chorus and the Montclair State University Chorus, plus eight members of Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble, will present "Ascension Variations" adapted to the unique spiraling space of the Guggenheim Museum on March 5. This site-specific version of "Songs of Ascension" is performed in conjunction with "The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860-1989," an exhibit curated by Alexandra Munroe, the Museum's Senior Curator of Asian Art.

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ABOUT MEREDITH MONK: is a composer, singer, director/choreographer and creator of new opera, music theater works, films and installations. A pioneer in what is now called “extended vocal technique” and “interdisciplinary performance,” Monk creates works that thrive at the intersection of music and movement, image and object, light and sound in an effort to discover and weave together new modes of perception. Her groundbreaking exploration of the voice as an instrument, as an eloquent language in and of itself, expands the boundaries of musical composition, creating landscapes of sound that unearth feelings, energies, and memories for which we have no words. She has alternately been proclaimed as a “magician of the voice” and “one of America’s coolest composers.” During a career that spans more than 40 years she has been acclaimed by audiences and critics as a major creative force in the performing arts.

Since graduating Sarah Lawrence College in 1964, Monk has received numerous awards including the prestigious MacArthur “Genius” Award in 1995, two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Brandeis Creative Arts Award, three “Obies” (including an award for Sustained Achievement), two Villager Awards, two “Bessie” awards for Sustained Creative Achievement, the 1986 National Music Theatre Award, the 1992 Dance Magazine Award, and a 2005 ASCAP Concert Music Award. In 2006 she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and named a United States Artists Fellow. In 2007 she received the Demetrio Stratos International Award for musical experimentation, and in 2008, the premio Arlecchino d'Oro from the Mantova Festival in Italy. Monk holds honorary Doctor of Arts degrees from Bard College, the University of the Arts, The Juilliard School, the San Francisco Art Institute and the Boston Conservatory. Her recordings *Dolmen Music* (ECM New Series) and *Our Lady of Late: The Vanguard Tapes* (Wergo) were honored with the German Critics Prize for Best Records of 1981 and 1986. Her music has been heard in numerous films, including *La Nouvelle Vague* by Jean-Luc Godard and *The Big Lebowski* by Joel and Ethan Coen. In 2000, Monk began a publishing relationship with Boosey & Hawkes. Several of her scores, including her recently released *Piano Album*, are now available to the general public.

In 1968 Ms. Monk founded The House, a company dedicated to an interdisciplinary approach to performance. In 1978 she formed Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble to expand her musical textures and forms. She has made more than a dozen recordings, most of which are on the ECM New Series label. Her music has been performed by numerous soloists and groups including The Chorus of the San Francisco Symphony, Musica Sacra, The Pacific Mozart Ensemble, Double Edge, Björk, and Bang On A Can All-Stars, among others.

Monk is a pioneer in site-specific performance, creating works such as *Juice: A Theater Cantata In 3 Installments* (1969) and *American Archeology #1: Roosevelt Island* (1994). She is also an accomplished filmmaker who has made a series of award-winning films including *Ellis Island* (1981) and her first feature, *Book Of Days* (1988), which was aired on PBS, shown at the New York Film Festival and selected for the Whitney Museum’s Biennial. Both films were released on DVD in February 2007. A retrospective art exhibition, *Meredith Monk: Archeology of an Artist*, opened at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center in 1996. Other recent art exhibits are comprised of a major installation, *Art Performs Life* at The Walker Art Center, a show, *Shrines* at the Frederieke Taylor / TZ’ Art Gallery, inclusion in the 2002 Biennial at the Whitney Museum, ev+a 2002 Exhibition at Limerick City Gallery of Art and group exhibits *Show People* at

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**MEREDITH MONK
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Exit Art and *Between Thought and Sound: Graphic Notation in Contemporary Music* at The Kitchen. A monograph, *Meredith Monk*, edited by Deborah Jowitt was released by Johns Hopkins Press in 1997.

In October 1999 Monk performed a *Vocal Offering* for His Holiness, the Dalai Lama as part of the World Festival of Sacred Music in Los Angeles. In July 2000 her music was honored by a three concert retrospective entitled *Voice Travel* as part of the Lincoln Center Festival. Monk's first orchestra piece, *Possible Sky* (commissioned by Michael Tilson Thomas for the New World Symphony), premiered in April 2003 in Miami and was performed by the Hamburg Symphony in 2006. *Stringsongs*, her first composition for string quartet (commissioned by the Kronos Quartet) had its world premiere at the Barbican Center in January 2005. Recent projects include *Basket Rondo* for the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, the Meredith Monk Piano Album published by Boosey & Hawkes, and a new CD, *impermanence*, on the ECM label.

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