



For Immediate Release

**MONK ON DVD**  
**MEREDITH MONK'S "ELLIS ISLAND" AND**  
**"BOOK OF DAYS" TO BE RELEASED ON DVD**

A pioneering composer, singer, director and choreographer, Meredith Monk has been making groundbreaking films since the 1960s. Two of these award-winning evocations of time and memory—"Ellis Island" and "Book of Days"—will be released on one DVD on February 26. The DVD, Monk's first, includes an hour-long discussion between Monk and John Killacky about the works and their relation to her aesthetic vision.

**ABOUT THE FILMS:** In "Ellis Island," shot on the crumbling site prior to its reconstruction, Monk crafts a poetic imagining of the immigrants' blinding sense of dislocation as they passed through Ellis Island at the turn of the century. The 1981 film juxtaposes black and white, almost ghostly images of actors embodying the spirit of American immigrants against color shots of the restored building and its modern-day visitors. Monk's somber score and soft chanting provide the background for Jerry Pantzer's haunting cinematography. The 28-minute film was awarded the CINE Golden Eagle, Special Jury Prizes from the Atlanta and San Francisco Film and Video Festivals, and has been shown by PBS in the United States, Channel Four in England and ZDF in West Germany. "Ellis Island" was produced and co-directed by Bob Rosen.

Monk plays further with the clash of past and present in "Book of Days," her first feature-length film. Beginning and ending in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "Book of Days" largely takes place during the Middle Ages in a small, anonymous village affected by religious conflicts and a deadly Plague. Leaping back and forth across centuries, the 1988 film suggests connections between these epidemics and contemporary cultural frictions, fears of AIDS and nuclear destruction. A beautiful, young, medieval girl gifted with visions of the future serves as the bridge between eras. Monk seamlessly blends her music, vocalizations and choreography with Jerry Pantzer's cinematography, which expresses the film's themes through shadows, shapes and textures, in both black and white and color. Yoshio Yabara serves as both art director and costume designer for the 75-minute film, which was

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produced by Catherine Tatge and Dominique Lasseur. “Book of Days” premiered at the New York Film Festival, was released theatrically and aired on PBS.

**ON THE HORIZON:** Next up for Monk is a performance with the Bang-on-a-Can All-Stars at New York City’s Merkin Hall on March 1. Monk will also perform at California State University in Fullerton, CA on March 3, and with her Vocal Ensemble and the Stonewall Chorale at Merkin Hall on March 31.

On May 10–13, Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble will perform at the inauguration of visual artist Ann Hamilton’s “Tower Project,” a dramatic concrete structure commissioned by Steve Oliver for his collection of site-specific sculpture in Geyserville, CA. The Tower and its winding, spiral staircases will be the site of a new collaboration between Monk, Hamilton and the Kronos Quartet, set to premiere in 2008. Hamilton and Monk previously collaborated on “mercy,” which premiered at the American Dance Festival in July 2001 and was performed at BAM’s 2002 Next Wave Series, among other venues. “Stringsongs,” Monk’s first composition for string quartet, was commissioned by the Kronos Quartet and had its world premiere at the Barbican Center in January 2005.

Monk has made more than a dozen recordings, most of which are on the ECM New Series label. Her latest recording for ECM is “impermanence,” which received its New York City premiere as part of BAM’s 2006 Next Wave Festival.

Monk’s uncanny brilliance has been recognized with countless awards including a MacArthur “Genius” Award, two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Brandeis Creative Arts Award, three Obies (including an award for Sustained Achievement), two Villager Awards, a Bessie Award for Sustained Creative Achievement, the 1986 National Music Theatre Award, sixteen ASCAP Awards for Musical Composition, the 1992 Dance Magazine Award, the 1996 Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival Award, a 2005 ASCAP Concert Music Award and a 2006 United States Artists grant. Monk recently transferred her entire archive to the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts.

The “Ellis Island” and “Book of Days” DVD may be purchased from The House Foundation for the Arts by visiting [www.meredithmonk.org](http://www.meredithmonk.org).

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**DVD Credits—Authoring: Michael Grenadier. Package Design: Yuki Iwashiro. Menu Design: Bill McMullen. Production Coordinator: Jonathan Nye. Post Production: Postworks, NY, Digital Intermediate Colorist Scot Olive. Music ©Meredith Monk. “Book of Days” CD available from ECM New Series. This DVD was made possible by a gift from Haruno Arai.**

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