



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Art Gallery of Hamilton *performance* series presents
THE ULTIMATE JAM
featuring renowned musicians Kobèna Acquaa-Harrison,
Diana Braithwaite, Harrison Kennedy,
Madagascar Slim and Chris Whitely

The Art Gallery of Hamilton is pleased to present **The Ultimate Jam**, an evening with renowned musicians **Kobèna Acquaa-Harrison, Diana Braithwaite, Harrison Kennedy, Madagascar Slim** and **Chris Whitely**, on **Friday, February 12 at 8 pm** at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, 123 King Street West, downtown Hamilton.

“The Art Gallery of Hamilton is delighted to include **The Ultimate Jam** in our Black History Month celebrations and as part of our year-long celebration of African arts and culture,” says AGH President and CEO Louise Dompierre. “I know that bringing together these outstanding award-winning musicians for an evening of playing, singing, and conversation will be a highlight of this very special year.”

This performance is sponsored by TD Canada Trust Music in celebration of Black History Month. The Department of Canadian Heritage supports the AGH performance series.

Tickets are \$16 for AGH Members, \$18 for students and seniors and \$20 for general admission. Tickets may be purchased online at www.artgalleryofhamilton.com, at the AGH Front Desk during Gallery hours or by calling 905-527-6610, ext. 232.

The year 2010 at the Art Gallery of Hamilton is devoted to *Vital Africa*, a year-long celebration of African art and culture and its influence on the world, presented by TD Bank Financial Group. *Vital Africa* activities include exhibitions, performances, film screenings, hands-on art workshops for adults, families and children, talks, tours and more. Honourary patron for *Vital Africa* is the Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander.

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MEDIA CONTACTS

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Backgrounder – Artist Bios

Born in Ghana, West Africa, **Kobèna Aquaa-Harrison** is an award-winning multi-instrumentalist often heard playing gyil (marimba), drums or guitar. Kobè is the bandleader of Toronto's all-star African band, Djungle Bouti Orchestra (a 15-strong "funky African hip hop-jazz unit"), a CKLN FM radio host and festival director. His music is a unique mix of ancient groove, contemporary sound, the familiar and the exotic. Self-taught, he is a masterful improviser performing with artists of many genres from all sides of the ocean.

Dubbed "Canada's National Treasure" and called "the Sweetheart of the Blues", **Diana Braithwaite** is one of today's most authentic blues singers. She was catapulted to prominence when she opened for John Lee Hooker at Toronto's Brunswick House with the Chaser Blues Band. She has toured internationally, won Chicago's African-American Women in the Arts Award, had original songs featured on a soundtrack for a Gemini Award-winning film, and has released three recordings and had work featured on several compilations. "There's something unique about her voice. Close your eyes when she sings and you are back in the 1940s."

Three-time Juno nominee **Harrison Kennedy** is a vocal chameleon, at ease performing funk, soul, R&B, rock, folk, jazz and blues. Kennedy was a member of the 1970s Detroit scene with The Chairmen of the Board, a soul music group whose singles sold millions and hit the U.S. Hot 100, U.S. R&B, and UK Singles charts. An acclaimed guitar player, singer and songwriter, he grew up deep in the Blues tradition; his music "has the soulfulness of a gospel singer overtaken by the fire of the blues within the sensibilities of roots music."

Madagascar Slim, born Randriamananjara Radofa Besata Jean Longin, taught himself to play music on his older brother's guitar when he was just a child. His music, inspired by recordings of BB King, Jimi Hendrix, and the traditional songs of Madagascar, mix together to create a unique sound that is equal parts roots, blues, folk, R&B, reggae, and world music. Sent by his parents to study accounting at Seneca College in Toronto, Slim couldn't let go of his music. While in school he became a founding member of a French Canadian folk ensemble, La Ridiane. Slim now has three Juno Awards to his name: World Music Album of the Year in 2000 for his solo album *Omnisource*; another in the same category for his 2005 collaboration with the world music group African Guitar Summit; and Roots & Traditional Album of the Year prize in 2001 for another collaboration, this time with folk music group Tri-Continental.

Kansas-born **Chris Whitely** moved to Toronto where the teenaged Whitely met – and was greatly influenced by -- the legendary Blues artist Lonnie Johnson. The multi-instrumentalist now dubbed "a major part of the roots music scene" tours widely throughout North America, the UK, and Europe. He has appeared on over 200 recordings, playing guitar, trumpet, harmonica and pedal steel. His own recordings have been well received, garnering Jazz Report Blues Album of the year, six Juno nominations, and four Maple Blues Awards. He has also written songs for other artists, and has composed music for radio, television and film.