**Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI)** 

## Direct Dizinc Displacement Approach for Efficient Detection of Cu<sup>2+</sup> in Aqueous Media: Acetate versus Phenolate Bridging Platforms

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**Figure S1**. <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of compound **3** in  $D_2O$ .



Figure S2. ESI mass spectrum of compound 3 in  $H_2O / MeOH (1:1)$  mixture.



**Figure S3**. Job's plot for compound **3** and Cu<sup>2+</sup> binding ( $\lambda_{ex}$  at 354 nm and  $\lambda_{em}$  at 452 nm) in an aqueous buffer solution (pH 7.4, 10 mM HEPES, H<sub>2</sub>O : MeOH; 9 : 1) at 25 °C by emission spectroscopy. In the plot, the value 0.4 supports a nearly 1:2 compound, **3**:Cu<sup>2+</sup> binding stoichiometry.



**Figure S4**. (a) Emission spectra of compound **3** (50  $\mu$ M) in an aqueous buffer solution (pH 7.4, 0.01 M HEPES) with 2 equivalents of Cu<sup>2+</sup> solution (100  $\mu$ M) and 40 equivalents of Zn<sup>2+</sup> solution to the mixture of **3** and Cu<sup>2+</sup> ion.



**Figure S5.** "Naked eye" colorimetric detection of  $Cu^{2+}$  ion: (a) Compound **3** (1000  $\mu$ M) and **3** +  $Cu^{2+}$  (2000  $\mu$ M) on visible light; (b) Compound **3** (100  $\mu$ M) and **2** +  $Cu^{2+}$  (200  $\mu$ M) under UV lamp light (365 nm).



**Figure S6**. <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of compound **2** in  $D_2O$ .<sup>1</sup>



**Figure S7**. <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum of compound **2** in a D<sub>2</sub>O/MeOD (4:1) mixture. (Though the compound is highly soluble in water, some MeOD is required for solubility purposes.<sup>1</sup>)



**Figure S8.**  $^{1}$ H- $^{1}$ H COSY NMR spectrum of compound 2 in D<sub>2</sub>O. $^{1}$ 



**Figure S9.** Crystal structure of (a) Compound  $\mathbf{1}^2$  and (b)  $\mathbf{2}^1$ . Thermal ellipsoids at 30 % probability. Solvent waters are omitted for clarity from the drawing.



**Figure S10.** (a) UV-Vis spectra of **2** (50  $\mu$ M) with different cations (100  $\mu$ M) in aqueous buffer solution (pH 7.4, 0.01 M HEPES). (b) Absorbance titration of compound **2** (50  $\mu$ M) in aqueous buffer solution (pH 7.4, 0.01 M HEPES) with an increasing amount of Cu<sup>2+</sup> titrant (100  $\mu$ M).<sup>1</sup>



**Figure S11.** (a) Emission spectra of **2** (50  $\mu$ M,  $\lambda_{ex} = 352$  nm,  $\lambda_{em} = 452$  nm) with different cations (each with a concentration of 100  $\mu$ M). (b) Emission titration of **2** (50  $\mu$ M) in aqueous buffer solution (pH 7.4, 0.01 M HEPES) with increasing amounts of Cu<sup>2+</sup> solution (100  $\mu$ M).<sup>1</sup>



**Figure S12**. Non-linear curve fitting of copper binding from emission titration data. (a) Compound **1** and increasing amounts of  $Cu^{2+}$ ; (b) Compound **2** and increasing amounts of  $Cu^{2+}$ .<sup>1</sup>



**Figure S13**. Job's plot for compound **2** and  $Cu^{2+}$  binding ( $\lambda_{max}$  at 352 nm) in an aqueous buffer solution (pH 7.4, 10 mM HEPES) at 25 °C by (a) by UV-vis spectroscopy (against a  $Cu^{2+}$  concentration; value of 0.6 suggests nearly 1 : 2 compound 2 :  $Cu^{2+}$  binding stoichiometry), and (b) by emission spectroscopy (plot against compound **2** concentration; value of 0.4 shows nearly a 1 : 2 compound **2** :  $Cu^{2+}$  binding stoichiometry).<sup>1</sup>



**Figure S14**. (a) Emission spectra of Compound **2** (50  $\mu$ M) in an aqueous buffer solution (pH 7.4, 0.01 M HEPES) with 2 equivalents of Cu<sup>2+</sup> (100  $\mu$ M solution) and 40 equivalents of Zn<sup>2+</sup> (solution) to the mixture of **2** and Cu<sup>2+</sup> ion. (b) Expanded spectra.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure S15.** (*Row A*) Emission spectra of **2** (50  $\mu$ M) in aqueous buffer solution (pH 7.4, 0.01 M HEPES) with different cations (500  $\mu$ M), the bar on far left is only compound **2**. (*Row B*) Emission spectra of a mixture of **2** (50  $\mu$ M) with other metal ions (500  $\mu$ M) and with Cu<sup>2+</sup> solution (100  $\mu$ M)<sup>1</sup>.



**Figure S16.** Crystal structures of copper acetate and D/L lysine-based schiff base complex obtained from one pot reactions and one pot crystallization methods. (a) Mononuclear purple and (b) dinuclear blue complexes.<sup>3</sup>

## **References:**

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