

Wednesday, April 25, 2007, 8pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Salif Keita



*Cal Performances' 2006–2007 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

# About the Artist

**Salif Keita's** career as a musician will always be colored by the fact that he is a member of the Royal Family of Mali. He can trace his ancestors all the way back to Soundjata Keita, who founded a kingdom Mali in 1240. It has never been easy for Salif Keita to explain the reasons for his total break with tradition when he decided to become a musician. Perhaps it was something to do with the fact that he is an albino, an outsider from the word "go." He had originally planned to become a teacher but, because of trouble finding a job, he changed his mind. That a man from the Royal Family would choose the life of a musician in Mali in the 1960s elicited a storm of protest, and Keita was expelled from school. However, he soon formed a trio with his brothers and began to play on the streets and in the nightclubs of Bamako, Mali's capitol.

In 1970, he was invited to play in the Rail Band, an orchestra supported in part by public money that played in the restaurant of the railway hotel in Bamako. In the Rail Band, he came into contact with guitarist Kanté Manfila, who had many of the same ideas as Keita concerning the blending of disparate styles. Mali has always been a melting pot for various musical styles, mainly because it stands as the last outpost of black Africa. Arabic, French, Spanish and local Malian traditions have influenced its music. After three years, Keita and Manfila moved on

to the (then) second most prolific group in Mali, Les Ambassadeurs, that performed a more modern repertoire. The group's popularity soared, and in 1978 Salif Keita was appointed Minister for Music and Culture by the president of neighboring Guinea. In gratitude, Keita composed the song "Mandjou," which became an enormous success. Keita and Manfila continued to develop their fusion music and create hypnotic sounds, one after another. Several of Les Ambassadeurs' historical recordings from the late 1970s are still available on CD.

In the early 1980s, Keita dissolved Les Ambassadeurs and embarked on a solo career. Since then, his influence has been felt in many areas—from Western pop and rock to Pink Floyd, among others—and he has collaborated with such notable Western artists as Carlos Santana, Wayne Shorter and Josef Zawinul. Today, Salif Keita is one of world music's most central and influential artists, and each and every one of his albums is greeted with great expectation.

His latest album, *M'Bemba*, was released by Decca in June 2006 and is the first of Keita's albums to be recorded in Mali, in a studio he built for himself in Bamako. *M'Bemba* features outstanding performances by Kanté Manfila and Ousmane Kouyaté of Les Ambassadeurs, percussionist Mino Cinélu and griot *kora* master Toumani Diabate.

## *Musicians*

Salif Keita	<i>vocals</i>
Diely Moussa Kouyaté	<i>guitar</i>
Ousmane Kouyaté	<i>guitar</i>
Souleymane Doumbia	<i>percussion</i>
Harouna Samake	<i>n'goni</i>
Mamadou Kone	<i>calabash</i>
Marie-Line Marolany	<i>backing vocals</i>
Maria Marolany	<i>backing vocals</i>
Mike Clinton	<i>bass</i>
Ghislain Roger Biwandu	<i>drums</i>