

Friday, March 14, 2008, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Angélique Kidjo



Angélique Kidjo	<i>vocals</i>
Habib Faye	<i>bass, music director</i>
João Mota	<i>guitar</i>
Rubens de la Corte	<i>guitar</i>
Ibrahim Diagne	<i>percussion</i>
Harvey Wirht	<i>drums</i>

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Angélique Kidjo

The explosive growth in the popularity of world music during the past several decades has broadened the boundaries of our world, reminding listeners of the vast cultural wealth and diversity in this wired age. The music of African-born songstress Angélique Kidjo offers another perspective: that the world is also much smaller than we think, and that no matter how far flung its peoples may be, subtle lines of interconnection span the globe, uniting its people.

Ms. Kidjo, whose work has earned her a Grammy Award and four Grammy nominations, has cross-pollinated the West African traditions of her childhood in Benin with elements of American R&B, funk and jazz, as well as influences from Europe and Latin America. Throughout her career, she has collaborated with such renowned international artists as Carlos Santana and Gilberto Gil. Her duet with Dave Matthews on the song “Twoya,” which appeared on her 2002 album *Black Ivory Soul*, was a critical success that helped to expand and diversify her fan base.

The daughter of an actress, dancer and theatrical producer, Ms. Kidjo was born in Quidah, a coastal city in the West African country of Benin. Inheriting her mother’s love of performing, she made her stage debut with her mother’s theatrical troupe. Inspired by the rock, pop and soul music of Jimi Hendrix, Santana, Miriam Makeba, James Brown and Aretha Franklin, she was singing professionally by her 20th birthday. Although her debut album, *Pretty*, produced by Cameroon-based vocalist Ekambi Brilliant, yielded a hit single, “Ninive,” the oppressive political environment of Benin led her to relocate in 1980 to Paris, the capital of world music, where her international career began to blossom.

Over the years, Ms. Kidjo has delved deeply into the African roots of music from the United States, Brazil and the Caribbean. The results of her explorations are the Grammy-nominated trilogy of albums, *Oremi*, *Black Ivory Soul* and *Oyaya*. With her latest album, *Djin Djin* (pronounced “gin gin,” and winner of the 2008 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary World Album), Ms. Kidjo returns to the soul of Benin—and shares it with a cast of all-star guests, in a marriage of cultures that has significance far beyond music alone. Inspired by the traditions and culture of Ms. Kidjo’s native land, the album’s title refers to the sound of the bell that greets the beginning of a new day for Africa.

Although Ms. Kidjo has written and sung extensively in French and English, for *Djin Djin* the lyrics came to her from further back in her history: Some of the songs on the album are sung in the indigenous languages of Benin, Nigeria and Togo. Her songs embrace the joys and sorrows of life: the magic of birth (“Salala”); the uniqueness of each person, even on this crowded planet (“Arouna”); the temptations of violence (“Mama Golo Papa”); the healing and learning potential of music (“Awan N’La”); the lessons offered as youth yields to age (“Sedjedo”); and isolation deepens in modern society (“Emma”).

Angélique Kidjo’s striking voice, charismatic stage presence and fluency in multiple cultures and languages have won her the respect of her peers, expanded her following across national borders and made her one of the most popular artists on the current world scene. These qualities have also enabled her to dedicate herself at a high level to global charity work, speaking out on behalf of the world’s children in her capacity as a goodwill ambassador for UNICEF.