

Thursday, October 9, 2008, 8pm  
 Friday, October 10, 2008, 8pm  
 Zellerbach Hall

## Cesária Evora



Cesária Evora	<i>vocals</i>
Fernando Andrade	<i>piano</i>
Domingos Fernandes	<i>saxophone</i>
João Alves	<i>guitar</i>
José Neves	<i>bass</i>
Paulino Vieira	<i>cavaquinho</i>
Antero dos Santos	<i>percussion</i>
Ademiro Miranda	<i>percussion</i>

*Cal Performances' 2008–2009 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo Bank.*

Twenty years ago, while in her early 40s, Cape Verdean vocalist **Cesária Evora** returned to the stage after a performing hiatus of nearly two decades, during which time she raised her family. Within a few years, in 1988, she was lured from her Portuguese/Creole-speaking island home off the western coast of Africa to Paris to record her breakthrough album. *La Diva aux pieds nus* (translated as “The Barefoot Diva,” in reference to her penchant for performing barefooted) proved to be a revelation to listeners. Soon she captivated audiences first in France, then throughout the rest of Europe.

Ten years ago, Ms. Evora was finally introduced to the United States, enthralled American listeners with her honey-toned and soft-burred voice. Today, as a Grammy Award-winner and one of the world’s most recognizable and sublime singers, her discography comprises 10 studio recordings, two best-of albums and a remix collection.

Her latest album, *Rogamar* (praise the sea, pray to the sea), is a celebration of the sea, almost an incantation, from the opening track “Sombras di Distino” (“Shadows of Destiny,” a *morna* composed by Manuel de Novas), to Teófilo Chantre’s “Vaga Lenta” (“Slow Wave”), which closes the album on a note of hope. For the sea haunts the collective Cape Verdean imagination. While holding the promise of a better life on distant shores, it is also merciless as it parts lovers or breaks up families. Poets sing the blue sea—Mar Azul—as seen from the Avenida Marginal along the bay of Mindelo, but seamen fear the dangerous coasts more than the high sea. *Rogamar* tells of the perilous crossing from São Vicente to Sant’Anton, on a typical insular *Sanjon* (Saint John) rhythm. Recorded in Mindelo, Paris and Rio de Janeiro, the album is produced by pianist Fernando Andrade, who has been accompanying Cesária on stage since 1999.

Known to her friends as Cize, Ms. Evora was born on August 27, 1941, in Mindelo, Cape Verde, an impoverished island off the coast of Senegal and a former Portuguese colony. When she was in her teens, she performed music with her father and his cousin in clubs for tips. In her early 20s, Ms. Evora appeared on several local radio shows. However, she stopped performing in the early 1970s to raise a family. She didn’t return to the stage until 1985.

At that time, Ms. Evora was invited by the singer Bana and a women’s association to Lisbon, Portugal, to record some demos that resulted in her first album, *Tchitchi Roti*. However, it was José da Silva, a French record label owner with Cape Verdean bloodlines, who invited her to Paris to enter the studio and record *The Barefoot Diva*. Her emotive *mornas* and cooking *coladeras* found favor throughout France, and in 1991 she performed at the Angoulême Festival, which received favorable press notice.

A couple months later when her third album, *Mar Azul*, was released, Ms. Evora became a radio favorite. Her concerts began attracting a diverse audience, and *Le Monde* celebrated her as “a lively fifty-year-old [who] sings *morna* with mischievous devotion” and extolled her as a new talent who “belongs to the world nobility of bar singers.” In 1992, following the release of *Miss Perfumado*, Ms. Evora became a star. Two December concerts at the Paris Theatre de la Ville sold out a month in advance. Quickly, the word spread to the rest of the world.

US audiences were introduced to Ms. Evora in the mid-1990s. She was an immediate hit. Her 1995 album *Cesária Evora* was nominated for a Grammy, and she embarked on her first North American tour. Her New York City date at the Bottom Line attracted such curious noteworthies as Madonna, David Byrne and Branford Marsalis. Soon, earlier albums released in France were issued in the United States for the first time, and she became a concert-hall favorite.

Ms. Evora collaborated with Brazilian great Caetano Veloso on the album *Red Hot & Rio* in 1996 and later linked up with Veloso, Bonnie Raitt and Cuban jazz pianist Chucho Valdés on her 2001 hit album, *São Vicente di Longe*. Named after the Cape Verdean island she hails from, the CD was recorded in Havana, Paris and Rio de Janeiro. *Billboard* praised the disc, writing that “Evora animates her mournful voice with lively arrangements accented by strings, piano, horns and percussion. The result is a gorgeous, uplifting album.”

In 2003, she won a Grammy Award for her album *Voz D’Amor* (Portuguese for “Voice of Love”). On it, she sings classic songs of her island nation as well as new compositions written exclusively for her voice—one of the world’s most transfixing.

## About the Artist

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While earlier in her career she was described as “Billie Holiday’s long-lost twin sister, Édith Piaf on a cloudy day, Susana Baca on a steady diet of cognac and cigarettes,” today it takes only a couple of notes to identify her.

Garnering several gold records and a total of six Grammy nominations, Ms. Evora has been heralded as a rare original whose music is both heartfelt and transcendent. *The New York Times* has characterized her music as having “melodies as graceful and knowing as the Mona Lisa’s smile.” Critic Renée Graham, noting that Ms. Evora has a “beguiling voice of longing, cured by cognac, cigarettes and melancholy,” has written in the *Boston Globe*: “Her voice doesn’t come at you all at once. She will not bellow songs for effect or attention,

nor will she attack the notes as if they owe her money. It is a subtle, unlabored sound, dramatic but not flamboyant, which washes over listeners slowly but indelibly.”

Don Heckman of the *Los Angeles Times* lauds the Cape Verdean songstress in concert: “What was it that made Evora’s performance so effective? Her whiskey- and cigarette-tinged voice, of course, but beyond that the sense of presence that may be the single most defining quality of divas of every style.”

Cesária Evora, who says, “My talent is to sing,” is one of the true treasures of passionate, intimate music. She is a vocalist who crosses borders with ease and derives great joy from the melancholic. She sings from the heart and soul.