

Cesaria Evora

Tuesday and Wednesday, November 11–12, 8 pm, 2003
Zellerbach Hall

The Band

Ademiro Jose Paris Mirada, percussion
Antonio Pina Alves, cavaquinho
Domingos A. Gomes Fernandes, saxophone and percussion
Fernando Jose Lopes Andrade, piano
Joao Jose De Pina Alves, guitar and cavaquinho
Julian Corrales Subida, violin
Virgilio Julio Duarte, acoustic bass guitar

Tonight's performance will be announced from the stage.

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For a singer in her 60s to be on tour for eight months every year is remarkable. It's even more impressive considering renowned Cape Verdean vocalist Cesaria Evora didn't begin her ascent into international acclaim until the 1991 release of her album *Mar Azul*, when she was 50. So, today, at an age when most people are beginning to consider retirement, Evora continues to sing her enrapturing repertoire of mornas (slow-paced, blues-steeped songs with mournful and often fatalistic lyrics) and coladeras (spirited up-tempo tunes that share a kinship with Brazilian samba). "The Barefoot Diva," so nicknamed because she performs her shows without shoes, also frequents the studio to record new songs.

Evora's latest recording, *Voz D'Amor* (Portuguese for "Voice of Love") on Bluebird, is her first studio album in two years and her tenth overall. The captivating 14-song collection features Evora singing classic songs of her island nation as well as new compositions written exclusively for her voice—one of the world's most recognizable and transfixing. While earlier in her career she was described as "Billie Holiday's long-lost twin sister" or "Edith Piaf on a cloudy day," today she has become an artist in her own right, and it takes only a few notes of her honey-toned and soft-burred vocals to identify her.

While in her teens and early 20s, Evora had a career in Cape Verdean clubs and on radio shows. However, she went on hiatus from singing professionally to raise a family. She didn't return to the stage until 1985.

In 1988, she was invited to Paris by a French record label owner with Cape Verdean bloodlines to record *La Diva Aux Pieds Nus* ("The Barefoot Diva"), which found favor in the expatriate Cape Verdean community in France. It wasn't long before she found equal appreciation in the rest of Europe, though her break in the United States didn't come until 1995, with the release of her self-titled album, which became a hit and was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Relaxing on one of her rare days off (she performs, on average, 16-17 shows each month), Evora says that even though *Voz D'Amor* is her first new release in a couple of years, she has been no stranger in the studio. "Whenever I have time off during my tours, I like going into the studio to

record one or two songs to prepare for my next album. Because there always seems to be so little time, over the years I have learned this is the best way for me to do a recording.”

The source material for Evora’s songs ranges from contemporary composers that she favors to the tunes of her Cape Verdean youth. “I listen and listen to songs, then I discuss them with my producers.” When asked if she is interested in composing her own songs, she laughs and replies, “No, my talent is to sing.” She laughs again and adds, “One time I did write lyrics for a song without even knowing it. I was very angry with a friend who had borrowed my car and not returned it right away. When she returned, I expressed my anger to her. Another friend was writing down what I said, which then became the lyrics to a new song.”