

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 1, 2025

[Press Room](#)



Photos of Angélique Kidjo (right) and Yo-Yo Ma (left) are available for download from their Cal Performances' [online press kit](#).
(Photo credit: Brantley Gutierrez)

CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS
SARABANDE AFRICAINE
ANGÉLIQUE KIDJO AND YO-YO MA
AT THE GREEK THEATRE
LABOR DAY WEEKEND: SAT, AUG 30

Kidjo and Ma connect African and European music traditions in *Sarabande Africaine* at the historic outdoor amphitheater on the UC Berkeley campus

Tickets are available now

Berkeley, July 1, 2025 —Cal Performances presents vocalist **Angélique Kidjo** and cellist **Yo-Yo Ma** at UC Berkeley's historic Greek Theatre, in a special Labor Day weekend performance on Saturday, August 30 at 8pm. The two will be joined onstage by **Thierry Vaton**, **David Donatien**, and special guest **Sinkane** to perform the Bay Area premiere of their *Sarabande Africaine*, a program that surfaces the many centuries of interaction between African musical idioms and western music. Known for their work as both artists and activists, the two luminaries of the international music scene use the Baroque *sarabande* dance form—and its possible African antecedent, a dance to worship the

Congolese spirit Zarabanda—as a springboard to reveal the many threads that connect the cultures, genres, and traditions that underpin cultural thinking.

The concert is part of Cal Performances' *Illuminations*: “Exile & Sanctuary” programming for the 2025–26 season that connects seven unique performances to academic research on the UC Berkeley campus. Exile is defined in this thematic context as more than physical displacement, but as a rupture of identity, a stripping away of the familiar that leaves an individual or community without a sense of belonging. Sanctuary, alternatively, can represent both a refuge and a creative space where new forms of belonging are forged.

Ma shares, “Every day there are moments when all of us can feel we are on the *inside* of something and also when we feel we are on the *outside* of something. To be able to understand both at the same time and oscillate between the two gives us a larger perspective on the world.” Kidjo expounds, “If your mind is open, and there is no fear, it’s easier to listen, and to question yourself.”

A visionary artistic thinker, Kidjo’s participation was central to both the performance and public programming components of the 2021–22 *Illuminations* theme “[Place and Displacement](#).” The 2021 Bay Area premiere of her original musical theater work *Yemandja* presented in Zellerbach Hall was set against the backdrop of slavery in 19th-century West Africa, and offered a critical perspective in understanding the yearlong theme. During that same season, Kidjo took part in the *Illuminations* panel discussion [Bias in Our Algorithms and Society](#), for which she was joined by leading campus scholars including Jennifer Chayes, the current Dean of UC Berkeley’s College of Computing, Data Science, and participated in a campus dialogue with faculty and members of the Black Studies Collaboratory that focused on [Music, Diaspora, and the World](#). Videos of these talks and those with other artists and Berkeley scholars exploring topics related to *Illuminations* themes can be found on Cal Performances’ *Illuminations* [YouTube playlist](#).

In addition to their connections to *Illuminations*, both Kidjo and Yo-Yo Ma are frequent artistic collaborators with Cal Performances. Kidjo served as the organization’s Artist in Residence during the 2021–22 season, a role that featured the Bay Area premiere of *Yemandja*, co-commissioned by Cal Performances, and a concert performance of her reinterpretation of the Talking Heads’ *Remain in Light* album. She returned to Zellerbach Hall with her band for a performance in 2024. Ma has performed for Berkeley audiences since 1997, performing Bach’s complete cello suites at the Greek Theater in 2018 as well as appearing in recitals with pianists Emanuel Ax and Kathryn Stott and

violinist Leonidas Kavakos; as a member of the Silkroad Ensemble and of the Goat Rodeo Sessions; and alongside the Mark Morris Dance Group. In recognition of his exceptional achievement in the performing arts, Cal Performances honored Ma with its [Award of Distinction](#) in 2014.

**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:
CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS**

Saturday, August 30, 8pm

Hearst Greek Theatre
2001 Gayley Road, UC Berkeley campus

Special Event

[***Sarabande Africaine***](#)

Angélique Kidjo and Yo-Yo Ma

Angélique Kidjo, *vocals*

Yo-Yo Ma, *cello*

with

Thierry Vaton, *piano*

David Donatien, *percussion*

and special guest Sinkane, *vocals, guitar, keyboards*

Program: Two endlessly curious musicians, Angélique Kidjo and Yo-Yo Ma, come together with musicians Thierry Vaton, David Donatien, and special guest Sinkane to search beyond the edges of their musical backgrounds, exposing the ways humans have all been connected for a very long time; it's a collaboration that asks listeners to joyfully question the tenets of genre and tradition that underpin cultural thinking.

An Illuminations: "Exile & Sanctuary" event. Visit calperformances.org/illuminations to learn more.

Tickets: \$65–\$285 (prices subject to change). Tickets for all performances are available at calperformances.org, by phone at (510) 642-9988, or in person at the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, Tuesday–Friday, 12–5:30pm and Saturday–Sunday, 1–5pm. For Ticket Office summer closures, please visit Cal Performances' website.

UC Berkeley students can access exclusive discounts, including half-price tickets in all sections of the venue. Information about UC Berkeley student tickets and discounts is available at calperformances.org/ucb-students; information about other discounts can be found at calperformances.org/discounts.

There is a \$15 per order service charge on ticket purchases made by phone or online that are not part of a subscription package. There is no fee for tickets purchased in person at the Zellerbach Hall Ticket Office unless they are part of a subscription. There is a \$20 service charge on all subscription orders.

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