



Friday, April 26, 2024, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Angélique Kidjo

Angélique Kidjo, *vocals*
Michael Olatuja, *bass*
Etienne Stadwijk, *keys*
Magatte Sow, *percussion*
Joshua Keitt, *drums*

*This program will be performed without intermission
and last approximately 75 minutes.*

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Five-time Grammy Award winner **Angélique Kidjo** is one of the greatest artists in international music today, a creative force with 16 albums to her name. *Time* magazine has called her “Africa’s premier diva,” and named her one of the 100 most influential people in the world for 2021. The BBC has included her in its list of the continent’s 50 most iconic figures, and in 2011, the *Guardian* listed her as one of their Top 100 Most Inspiring Women in the World. *Forbes* magazine has ranked Kidjo as the first woman in their list of the Most Powerful Celebrities in Africa. She is the recent recipient of the prestigious 2015 Crystal Award given by the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland; the 2016 Am-

After exploring the roads of Africa’s diaspora, offering a refreshing and electrifying take on the Talking Heads album *Remain In Light*, and reflecting on an icon of the Americas—celebrated salsa singer Celia Cruz, on Kidjo’s latest album, *Mother Nature*, the award-winning luminary joins forces with many of her musical progeny, including some of the most captivating young creators of West African music, Afro-beat, Afro-pop, dancehall, hip-hop, and alt-R&B. The result is a truly visionary body of work, rooted in a deep understanding of musical tradition yet endlessly forward-thinking and inventive. *Mother Nature* fulfills a promise Kidjo first made upon accepting the award for Best Global Music



Patrick Fouque

nesty International Ambassador of Conscience Award; the 2018 German Sustainability Award; the 2023 Vilcek Prize in Music; and the 2023 Polar Music Prize.

As a performer, her striking voice, stage presence, and fluency in multiple cultures and languages have won respect from her peers and expanded her following across national borders. Kidjo 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.

Album at the 2016 Grammys, then reiterated after winning the Best World Music Album prize in 2020 and proudly proclaiming: “The new generation of artists coming from Africa are going to take you by storm, and the time has come.” In sharing this album with the world, Kidjo hopes that her songs might inspire the kind of togetherness that ultimately leads to transcendent change. “This album is a love letter to Mother Earth and all the values we hold dear: truth, trust, love, connection,” says Kidjo. “For our own survival, we need to

recognize the humanity that we all share and learn how to live together. There's just no other way.”

Kidjo's Grammy Award-winning *Celia* was recorded in New York and Paris, produced by David Donatien and mixed by Russell Elevado (D'Angelo, Kamasi Washington). Over the course of 10 beloved songs from Cruz's extensive catalogue but with special focus on her work from the 1950s, Kidjo's voice soars in lockstep with a grand presentation of rhythmic touchstones that delve deep into the history of music from Africa and its influence on the music of Cuba. Her interpretation of the Talking Heads' classic 1980 album, *Remain in Light*, was recorded with superstar producer Jeff Bhasker (Kanye West, Rolling Stones, Beyoncé), taking classic songs such as “Cross-eyed and Painless,” “Once in a Lifetime,” and “Born Under Punches (The Heat Goes On)” and reinterpreting them with electrifying rhythms, African guitars, and layered backing vocals.

Kidjo's star-studded album *Djin Djin* won a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary World Album in 2008, and her album *Oyo* was nominated for the same award in 2011. In January 2014, her first book, a memoir titled *Spirit Rising: My Life, My Music* (Harper Collins) and her twelfth album, *Eve* (Savoy/429 Records), were released to critical acclaim. *Eve* later went on to win the Grammy Award for Best World Music Album in 2015, and her historic, orchestral album *Angélique Kidjo Sings with the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg* (Savoy/429 Records) won a Grammy for Best World Music Album in 2016.

Kidjo has gone on to perform this genre-bending work with international orchestras including the Bruckner Orchestra, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and the Philharmonie de Paris. Her collaboration with Philip Glass, *Ifé: Three Yorùbá Songs*, made its US debut at a sold-out concert with the San Francisco Symphony in June 2015.

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In 2019, Kidjo helped Philip Glass premiere his latest work, Symphony No. 12, *Lodger*, a symphonic re-imagining of the David Bowie album of the same name, at a sold-out performance with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In addition to performing this new orchestral concert, Kidjo continues to tour globally performing the high-energy concert she's become famous for with her four-piece band.

Kidjo also travels the world advocating on behalf of children in her capacity as a UNICEF and OXFAM goodwill Ambassador. At the G7 Summit in 2019, President Macron of France named Kidjo the spokesperson for the AFAWA initiative (Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa) to help close the financing gap for women entrepreneurs in Africa. She has also created her own charitable foundation, Batonga, dedicated to supporting the education of young girls in Africa.