



Johnny Castellanos

Saturday, October 25, 2025, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Lila Downs *Día de los Muertos*

with

George Sáenz, *musical director and accordion*
Josh Deutsch, *trumpet*
Nikki Campbell, *percussion*
Lautaro Burgos, *drums*
Sinuhé Padilla, *jarana*
Luis Guzman, *bass*
Rafael Gomes, *guitar*

This performance is made possible in part by Dr. Rupali Das-Melnyk and Dr. Ostap Melnyk.

The daughter of a Mixtec Indian mother and a Scottish-American father, Lila Downs is a Grammy- and Latin Grammy-winning Mexican-American singer-songwriter, composer, and anthropologist. One of the most influential artists on the Latin American scene, she is renowned for her genre-blending music and fierce social activism.

Downs was born in Oaxaca, Mexico, and spent her formative years navigating her indigenous heritage and her father's American background, living between Mexico, California, and Minnesota. Her dual cultural identity became the driving force behind her music, leading her to study classical voice and cultural anthropology at the University of Minnesota.

Downs rose to prominence in the late 1990s and gained international acclaim with her 2001 album *Border (La Linea)*. Her powerful, emotive contralto voice soars over a fu-

sion of musical styles—including traditional Mexican folk, mariachi, jazz, blues, and rock—and her own compositions often combine genres and rhythms as diverse as Mexican *rancheras* and *corridos*, boleros, jazz standards, hip-hop, *cumbia*, and North American folk music. Throughout her career, Downs has released numerous critically acclaimed albums, including *Una Sangre (One Blood)* and *Pecados y Milagros*, which have earned her multiple awards.

Beyond her musical accomplishments, Downs is a passionate humanitarian and activist, using her platform to advocate for indigenous communities and migrant rights. Her songs, sung in Spanish, English, and various native Mexican languages, often address issues of social justice, immigration, identity, and women's issues. By fearlessly celebrating her heritage, Downs has become a global ambassador for Mexican culture and a voice for the voiceless.

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