



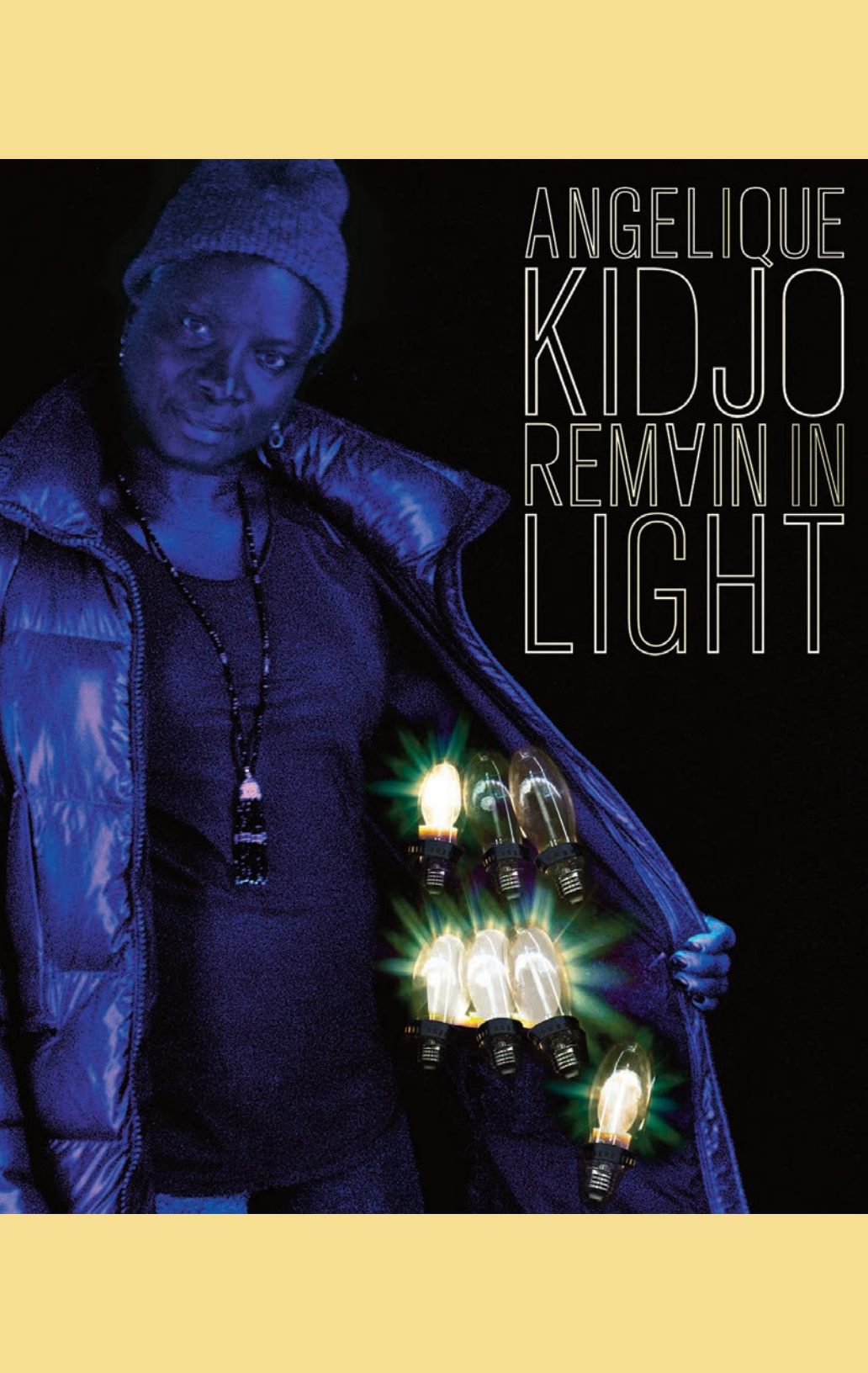
music dance theater

Cal Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY



Angélique Kidjo
Remain in Light

A woman with a serious expression is shown from the chest up. She is wearing a dark, quilted puffer jacket over a dark top and a dark knit beanie. She is holding several glowing incandescent light bulbs in her hands, which are positioned in front of her. The bulbs are illuminated, casting a warm glow. The background is dark, and the overall lighting is dim, with the primary light source being the bulbs she is holding. The text 'ANGELIQUE KIDJO REMVIN IN LIGHT' is overlaid on the right side of the image in a white, outlined, sans-serif font.

ANGELIQUE
KIDJO
REMYN IN
LIGHT

Friday, October 29, 2021, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

2021-22 SEASON ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Angélique Kidjo
Remain in Light

Angélique Kidjo, *lead vocals*
Dominic James, *guitar*
Michael Olatuja, *bass*
Yayo Serka, *drums*
Magatte Sow, *percussion*

Patrick Murray, *tour manager and sound engineer*

*This performance will last approximately one hour and 45 minutes
and be performed without an intermission.*



In 2018, global pop star and four-time Grammy Award winner Angélique Kidjo has partnered with 2015 Grammy Producer of the Year Jeff Bhasker (Kanye West, The Rolling Stones, Beyoncé) for a full circle reimagining of the Talking Heads' 1980 landmark album *Remain in Light* (Kravenworks Records). The original album, considered to be one of the greatest of that decade, was influenced by music from West Africa, notably Fela Kuti's Afrobeat. This remarkable new collaboration was seen as a radical statement and positioned the Benin-born artist in ways she had never been heard before.

The diverse cast of collaborators included Fela Kuti's musical director Tony Allen on drums, Vampire Weekend's Ezra Koenig singing in Kidjo's native tongue of Fon, Black Panther film score percussionist Magatte Sow, Blood Orange's Davonté Hynes, the Antibalas horns with arrangements by Martin Perna, legendary studio bassist Pino Paladino, Kidjo's longtime guitarist Dominic James, and African jazz guitarist Lionel Loueke, among others. The album artwork was conceptualized by noted African-American visual artist Kerry James Marshall, who counts the original album as an important creative touchstone.

In 2017, Kidjo premiered this musical project at New York's Carnegie Hall and at Bonaaroo (famously, David Byrne stepped from audience to stage to sing with Kidjo during the concert). The shows were met with rave reviews, and Kidjo continues to perform the program in concerts throughout the world.

Kidjo first crossed paths with the original album when she fled Benin and moved to Paris in 1983. She recognized the music as African, but the rhythms were harder for her to place. It stayed in her mind, but she kept it to herself because some of her music teachers and fellow students at the time dismissed her opinions because she was a young African woman who wouldn't, in their opinion, know anything about rock and roll. But the idea of an album continued to inhabit her subconscious.

Still inspired by the experience of recording the celebratory material for 2014's *Eve*, Kidjo took other songs and folkloric tales she heard

while researching *Eve* and wove them into the fabric of the *Remain in Light* songs, which she first recorded as demos in her home studio. Later, when recording "Cross-eyed and Painless" with Tony Allen, she effortlessly dropped in lyrics from Fela Kuti's 1970s classic "Lady," reaffirming and strengthening that initial inspiration while extending it into something new, modern, and uplifting.

"I started working on *Remain in Light* and I would pick a song and it would match these Beninese traditional songs I heard," she recalls. "It was just so organic and normal that the whole thing fell into place. You have all these puzzle pieces—you see the picture appear and then you put the stuff in places.

"It was a challenge reinterpreting this iconic masterpiece," says Bhasker. "We didn't simply want to 'cover' what the brilliant producer Brian Eno and revolutionary Talking Heads created, but rather put our own spin on it. Rip out its guts and turn it on its head. As they were inspired to take an African form and rock it, we took rock and brought it back to Africa. I think the result is a beautiful full-circle experience that I hope enhances both worlds and brings cultures closer together."

Kidjo had met Bhasker at a benefit concert in London where he was the music director and she was a guest of honor. The two instantly hit it off, the only sticking point being trying to figure out what they would do together. They later met in Los Angeles, where Bhasker told her he just needed a kernel of an idea. A short time later, she sent him two Talking Heads demos—many of the vocal tracks were never rerecorded again because the demo performances were so strong—and a week later, he was onboard for the whole album.

"From the first day of the recording, we picked up right where we left off. It's one of the most fun-filled and enriching projects I've ever worked on; it's the reason I make music," Bhasker explains.

Remain in Light was made anew. The first clue was the stunning new black-light photo of Kidjo by Kerry James Marshall. The African-ness of the sound comes out through the same mesmerizing African polyrhythms that made

the original music so ground-breaking, but there are also different languages echoed in counter melodies of the haunting “The Overload,” the edgy “Listening Wind,” and others that are added by Kidjo.

The delivery of David Byrne’s lyrics is a classic study in contrasts while embracing the bigger ideas. Whereas the vocals were originally self-conscious, arty, ironic, and sometimes alienated, Kidjo’s voice and additional lyrics are a clarion call that sheds new light on the politics in “Born Under Punches,” the empowerment of

women on the “Great Curve,” and the issue of tackling the African skin bleaching phenomenon on “Seen and Not Seen.”

“When it comes to music, I don’t have much fear,” says Kidjo, who is also renowned for her humanitarian efforts. “If you are inspired to do something, then there is truth in that. My music has been a weapon for constructing bridges. We have so much in common, yet we are so divided that we may not take a pause to think about what we may have in common. We think things divide us, but not much truly divides us.”

ABOUT THE ARTIST

This year, Cal Performances welcomes singer, composer, activist, and humanitarian Angélique Kidjo as the organization’s first season-long artist-in-residence, visiting for two performances and participating in an array of public programs and collaborations with students, faculty, and campus partners. A formidable presence on international stages, Kidjo is a four-time Grammy winner and was recently named one of *Time* magazine’s “100 Most Influential People of 2021” for her work as a performer, mentor, and cultural ambassador. The Benin-born singer has been honored for her activist work by the World Economic Forum and Amnesty International, and was included on the BBC’s list of Africa’s 50 most iconic figures and the *Guardian*’s list of the “Top 100 Most Inspiring Women in the World.” For her latest recording, *Mother Nature*, released earlier this year, she joins forces with some of the most captivating young creators of West African music, Afrobeat, Afro-pop, hip hop, and R&B, the results reflecting a newly heightened awareness of Kidjo’s own musical legacy and the remarkable influence she has had on younger generations.

In Berkeley, Kidjo performs her unique take on the Talking Heads’ seminal 1980 album *Remain in Light* at tonight’s concert; she returns to campus in the spring with the Bay Area premiere of *Yemandja: A Story of Africa*, a new musical theater production co-commissioned by Cal Performances, on Saturday April 23 at 8pm

at Zellerbach Hall. *Yemandja* is presented as part of the 2021–22 season’s *Illuminations: “Place and Displacement”* series, which explores effects of migration and gentrification on individuals and communities through a wide variety of performances, public programs, and academic encounters.

“One of the great pleasures this season is welcoming Angélique Kidjo, who hasn’t appeared here in nearly a decade, back to Berkeley as our first season-long artist-in-residence,” said Jeremy Geffen, Cal Performances’ executive and artistic director. “Having been a presenter, collaborator, and fan of her work for years, I know firsthand of her passion, conviction, and boundless curiosity. She brings inextinguishable energy—more so than most of her more junior colleagues, actually!—to bear in both her performances and her community outreach work.

“As an immigrant who fled a dictatorship in her home country of Benin,” Geffen continues, “Angélique draws from her personal experiences a deep sense of conviction as well as profound passion for exploring the breadth and depth of the human experience—qualities that make her the perfect partner for our season-long *Illuminations* programming. And most importantly, she comes to our campus hoping to learn as much as to share. By inviting her to meet with faculty and students, Cal Performances reinforces and supports the university’s interest in cultivating and sustaining a diverse, equitable, informed, inclusive, and accessible community.”

Kidjo anticipates working closely with students, remarking: “I want to know more about the driving force behind UC Berkeley students—how they see the future, how we can share the road with them, and how they can educate us—because they are living in a world changing faster than anything we have seen before.” She continues, “What is interesting for me as a mother, artist, and citizen of this world, is the question, ‘How do we create a better world for one another, within all these challenges we are facing?’ We are going to have a great time together this season, but also come out of this with something substantial to build our future on.”

During her campus visits, Kidjo will work closely with students, faculty, and a host of campus partners in a series of academic collaborations and public programs rooted in issues close to her heart, including questions of equity in the fields of technology and data collection. Her residency this fall has already included interactions with students at the Haas School of Business, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars, and others. Two panel discussions with UC Berkeley faculty took place on Thursday, October 28, both free and open to the public:

- “Music, Diaspora, and the World” was co-sponsored by Townsend Center for the Humanities and the Social Science Matrix. For it, Kidjo joined UC Berkeley faculty members Tianna Paschel, associate professor in the Department of African American Studies and the Department of Sociology; Ivy Mills, lecturer on the Visual and Literary Cultures of Africa and the African Diaspora; and Victoria Grubbs, lecturer and Black Studies Collaboratory Postdoctoral Fellow, for a conversation addressing the history and circulation of African musical forms and musicians, and their worldwide significance and social power.
- “Place and Displacement: Bias in Our Algorithms and Society” was presented in collaboration with the Division of Computing, Data Science, and Society, and featured Kidjo in conversation with Jennifer Chayes, Associate Provost of the Division of Computing, Data Science, and Society, and Dean of the School of Information; PhD candidate Devin Guillory, who works in the fields of computer vision and machine learning; and Nika Haghtalab, an assistant professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences. Experts in computer science and machine learning, the UC Berkeley faculty joined Kidjo to explore how algorithms and machine learning tools reflect the biases of individuals and the data used to train them. It touched on current research and promising interventions that aim to make algorithms more just and equitable.

Both sessions were recorded on video and are now available for viewing on the Beyond the Stage page of Cal Performances’ website.

Kidjo returns during the spring semester to perform the Bay Area premiere of her Cal Performances-commissioned *Yemandja: A Story of Africa*. Named after a Yoruban deity, *Yemandja* is Kidjo’s first foray into musical theater, a parable about gods and humans that explores through song what happens when people are robbed of their culture. In this fully staged production—directed by Chicago-based director, actor, and playwright Cheryl Lynn Bruce and featuring stage design by the revered contemporary painter Kerry James Marshall—Kidjo plans to explore themes of love, betrayal, honor, and revenge against the backdrop of slavery in 19th-century West Africa, singing a libretto written by her daughter, Naïma Hebrail Kidjo, and supported by a full cast of musicians, singers, dancers, and actors.

Yemandja: A Story of Africa has been co-commissioned by Cal Performances, Arts Emerson, the Broad Stage at Santa Monica College, Ruth and Stephen Hendel, the Kennedy Center, and MASS MoCA.

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Jeremy Geffen

Several years ago, I had the pleasure of witnessing the program you are about to experience; taking my seat on that occasion, I thought I had a pretty good idea of what to expect, but believe me, nothing could have prepared me for the supernova of energy that blasted from the stage when the great **Angélique Kidjo** and her A-team band launched into Kidjo's vivid, pulsating, supremely confident and original retake on the Talking Heads' iconic 1980 album *Remain in Light*. If you've already experienced Angélique in concert, you know what I'm talking about; if not, fasten your seat belts!

A few years later, when I accepted my new position at Cal Performances, one of my immediate and strongest desires was to bring Kidjo's *Remain in Light* program to Berkeley audiences, so this evening's concert represents something of a dream fulfilled. And I couldn't be more pleased that you've joined us for the occasion.

Happily, there's much more to come. If tonight's concert concludes Kidjo's opening week as Cal Performances' first season-long artist-in-residence—see pp. 7–9 for more about what took place earlier in the week; most of these events will remain available on the Beyond the Stage page of our website for some time, for viewing by the general public—I'm happy to confirm that Kidjo will be returning in April with more special events involving the university community, as well as the Bay Area premiere of her brilliant new *Yemandja: A Story of Africa* (a Cal Performances co-commission). Named for a Yoruban deity, *Yemandja* promises to be a panoramic work of magical realism, a parable about gods and humans that illuminates through song what can happen when people are robbed of their culture. Please see our website for much more on this thrilling presentation (Apr 23 at Zellerbach Hall).

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Kidjo's appearance tonight serves as a rich reminder of the transformational power of the live performing arts. There's truly nothing to compare with the alchemy that takes place when friends and strangers come together to experience great art—music, theater, dance—together under the same roof. I'm so pleased you could join us here this evening!

When the pandemic forced Cal Performances to close its doors in March 2020, no one could have imagined what lay ahead. Since then, we've witnessed a worldwide health crisis unlike any experienced during our lifetimes, an extended period of political turmoil, recurring incidents of civil unrest and racially motivated violence, and a consciousness-raising human rights movement that has forever—and significantly—changed how each of us views social justice in our time.

Of course, the pandemic remains with us to this date and future challenges—including many adjustments to “normal” procedures and policies—can certainly be expected. I encourage you to check Cal Performances' website regularly for the most current information regarding our COVID-19 response. First and foremost, I assure you that there is nothing more important to us than the health and safety of our audience, artists, and staff. (And I remind one and all that proof of vaccination is mandatory today, as is protective masking throughout the event.)

This weekend, October draws to a close with a special Halloween appearance by Chicago's brilliant performance collective **Manual Cinema** in its wildly original production of *Frankenstein*, after which our season continues as New York's pioneering **Ballet Hispanico** (Nov 6) makes its Berkeley debut with a special 50th anniversary program. (Our full calendar offers much more

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of the same, packed with the kind of adventurous and ambitious programming you've come to expect from Cal Performances.) In particular, I want to direct your attention to this year's *Illuminations*: "Place and Displacement" programming, through which we'll explore loss and renewal, disempowerment and hope, while seeking paths forward for reclaiming and celebrating vital cultural connections that can fall victim to political and social upheaval.

Please take the opportunity to explore the complete schedule through our website and season brochure and begin planning your performance calendar; now is the perfect time to guarantee that you have the best seats for all the events you plan to attend.

Throughout history, the performing arts have survived incredible challenges: periods of war, economic collapse, and, yes, terrible disease. And if it will take time for us—collectively and individually—to process the events of the past 18 months, I'm certain that the arts have the power to play a critical role as we come to terms with what we have experienced and move together toward recovery.

I know you join us in looking forward to what lies ahead, to coming together once again to encounter the life-changing experiences that only the live performing arts deliver. We can't wait to share it all with you during the coming year.

Cal Performances is back. Welcome home!

Jeremy Geffen

Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances

COVID-19 Information

Proof of vaccination status is required for entrance and masking is mandatory throughout the event.

COVID-19 information is updated as necessary; please see Cal Performances' website for the most up-to-date policies and information.

UC Berkeley does not promise or guarantee that all patrons or employees on site are vaccinated.

Unvaccinated individuals may be present as a result of exemptions, exceptions, fraudulent verification, or checker error.

None of these precautions eliminate the risk of exposure to COVID-19.