

Afro-Pop singer Angelique Kidjo to perform Oct. 2 at UCSD

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AFRO-POP SINGER ANGELIQUE KIDJO TO PERFORM OCT. 2 AT UCSD

Angelique Kidjo, an Afro-Pop singer from Benin, West Africa, will perform at 8 p.m. Oct. 2 in Mandeville Auditorium at the University of California, San Diego. Her appearance is sponsored by the University Events Office.

Kidjo's music bridges the rhythms and spirits of Africa with the vibes of the New World's African diaspora. She fuses bits of South African choruses, jazz, French, English and Fon (her native tongue) into a unique, homogeneous vocal language rendered in her emotionally charged contralto.

"My parents taught me to respect every style, every culture and every language," says Kidjo. "Music is a language that everyone has to learn and understand some will understand nothing, but they will feel it."

Of Kidjo's "charismatic presence," the New York Times writes: "Her voice moves upward from a strong, assertive contralto to a bright alto; she can summon a gospel rasp or a long-lined ballad style that moves from tenderness to high emotion ... Singing about unity and compassion, (she) wants to reach the world without giving up her own musical and verbal languages."

Kidjo began performing at age six in a theater troupe. She is one of nine children whose father was a musician and her mother, director of the theater troupe. She became enamoured with music. As a teenager she was inspired to write songs by the sounds of Jimi Hendrix, Santana, Miriam Makeba, James Brown and Aretha Franklin. Before her 20th birthday, she was one of Benin's few professional female vocalists. She relocated to Paris, thrived in the African music underground, soon had her own band, married a French bassist/arranger/song writer and continued her musical odyssey.

Today, Kidjo is considered a world musician. She has five albums, the most recent, "Oremi," released this summer. "This album was written mainly in France," says Kidjo. "But when I came to the U.S., I had to have some collaboration, because I couldn't say I wanted to talk to America without having people from that country expressing themselves. That's why I call this album 'Oremi' (friends). It expresses an African person with her roots and what she got from black America."

Billboard magazine describes the range of Kidjo's music and emotion in "Oremi:" "In some tunes, she's a jazz nightclub chanteuse crooning her soul secrets; in others, she's a raw, Afro-erotic power woman."

Kidjo says the idea of "Oremi" goes back to her childhood, a little girl eager to explore the African heritage of American music. "Oremi could be the first part of a trilogy I would like to make the second stop being Brazil, the third, Haiti and Cuba. My head is always turning, but I will learn and try hard to challenge myself, keep on learning, keep on moving."

Tickets for the Angelique Kidjo performance at UCSD are \$17 general admission, \$15 for faculty, staff and senior citizens, and \$12 for students. Tickets are available at the UCSD Box Office, 534-8497, and at Ticketmaster outlets at 220-8497. For information on the entire season of events sponsored by the University Events Office, visit the website, <http://ueo.ucsd.edu>, or call the UCSD University Events Office at 534-4090.

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