



Angélique Kidjo's *Remain in Light*

Angélique Kidjo / *Vocals*
Dominic James / *Guitar*
Magatte Sow / *Percussion*
Michael Olatuja / *Bass*
Yayo Serka / *Drums*

Sunday Evening, February 16, 2020 at 7:00
Michigan Theater
Ann Arbor

73rd Performance of the 141st Annual Season
Traditions & Crosscurrents

This evening's performance is supported by Matt and Nicole Lester, Jo Wiese Johnson and Timothy Johnson, and Agnes Moy-Sarns and David Sarns.

Media partnership provided by WEMU 89.1 FM, WRCJ 90.9 FM, WDET 101.9 FM, and Ann Arbor's 107one.

Special thanks to Tiffany Ng, U-M assistant professor of carillon and university carillonist, for coordinating this evening's pre-concert music on the Charles Baird Carillon.

Angélique Kidjo appears by arrangement with Partisan Arts.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

PROGRAM

This evening's program will be announced by the artists from the stage and is performed without intermission.

ARTISTS

Global pop star and four-time Grammy Award-winner **Angélique Kidjo** partnered with 2015 Grammy Award-winner “Producer of the Year” Jeff Bhasker (Kanye West, The Rolling Stones, Beyonce) for a full circle re-imagining of Talking Heads’ 1980 landmark album *Remain in Light* released by Kravenworks Records. The original album, considered to be one of the greatest albums of that decade, was influenced by music from West Africa, notably Nigerian artist Fela Kuti’s Afrobeat. This remarkable new collaboration is a radical statement and positions the Benin-born artist as she’s never been heard before. 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, Ms. Kidjo premiered *Remain in Light* at New York’s Carnegie Hall and at Bonnaroo (David Byrne came out of the audience to sing with her during the Carnegie Hall show). Ms. Kidjo first crossed paths with the original album when she fled Benin and moved to Paris in 1983. She recognized it as African, but the rhythms were harder for her to place. It stayed with her, 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 album continued to inhabit her subconscious.

Still inspired by the experience of recording the celebratory material for 2014’s *Eve*, she 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 “Crosseyed 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 Mr. 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 culture closer together.”

Ms. Kidjo had met Mr. Bhasker at a benefit concert in London where he was the musical director and she was a guest of honor. The two instantly hit it off and the only sticking point was trying to figure out what they would do together. They later met in Los Angeles where Mr. 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 re-recorded 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,

UMS ARCHIVES

This evening's performance marks **Angélique Kidjo**'s third performance under UMS auspices, following her UMS debut in February 2013 in Hill Auditorium. She most recently appeared at UMS in February 2017 in a performance of Philip Glass' *Three Yorùbá Songs* with the Bruckner Orchester Linz conducted by Dennis Russell Davies in Hill Auditorium.

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," Mr. Bhasker explains.

Remain in Light is made anew. The first clue is the stunning new black light album cover photo of Ms. Kidjo by Kerry James Marshall. The African-ness of the sound comes out in same mesmerizing African polyrhythms that made the original 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 Ms. 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, Ms. 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 tackling the African skin bleaching phenomenon on "Seen and Not Seen."

"When it comes to music, I don't have much fear," says Ms. Kidjo, who is also well-known 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 there are things to divide us, but not much divides us."

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THIS EVENING'S PERFORMANCE**

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(Power Center)
Must have a ticket to that evening's performance of Dorrance Dance to attend.
- 2/22 You Can Dance: Dorrance Dance
(Ann Arbor YMCA, 400 W. Washington Street, 1:30 pm)
Registration opens 45 minutes prior to the start of the event.
- 3/13 UMS 101: Tarek Yamani Trio
(Michigan League, Michigan Room, 6:00–7:30 pm)
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