California Polytechnic State University

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CONTACT: LISA WOSKE
(805) 756-7110

Angelique Kidjo Brings Afro-Brazilian Pop to Performing Arts Center Nov. 4

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA – “A beautiful ethnic tapestry.” That’s how the New York Post describes the electrifying Afro-pop/Brazilian rhythms of soulful singer Angelique Kidjo, performing at 8 p.m. on Thursday, November 4, 2004 at the Christopher Cohan Center.

Backed by an eight-member band on a tour filled with joyful, spunky, dance-inspiring beats, a Kidjo concert promises a pumped-up evening of driving drums, zesty samba-like grooves, and a sound that is uniquely Angelique Kidjo.

Cal Poly Arts presents the West African-born/Paris- and Brooklyn-based songstress, whose blend of West African traditions with elements of American R&B, funk and jazz, as well as influences from Europe and Latin America, has garnered three Grammy nominations.

Music’s ability to cross borders, transcend boundaries, and unite people is one of the key inspirations behind Kidjo’s artistry.

Throughout her career, Kidjo has collaborated with a diverse group of artists, like Santana and Gilberto Gil. Her duet with Dave Matthews on the song “Iwoya,” which appeared on her “Black Ivory Soul,” was a critical success that greatly helped widen her fan base.

Kidjo’s previous two releases explored African roots in international music: “Oremi” incorporated the music found in the U.S.; “Black Ivory Soul” featured music from Brazil.

Her latest album in the trilogy, “Oyaya!” fuses African and French lyrics to music that draws upon musical traditions of the Caribbean Diaspora.

Kidjo penned 13 original songs in a variety of indigenous Caribbean styles, including salsa, calypso, merengue and ska. Kidjo sings the numbers in English, French and African languages Yoruba and Fon.
“I went to Cuba two years ago and met some old musicians there,” Kidjo says. “It gave me strength and inspiration, because you realize that music is really the thread of the memory of humankind. You saw old people that, once they picked up their instruments and started singing, were transformed into something else.”

She continues, “You have the example of the Buena Vista Social Club, but actually going to Cuba, you understand why the Buena Vista Social Club worked...It’s not something fake. It’s their life.”

Ultimately, Angelique Kidjo’s music personifies the theme of interconnection and universalism. “There’s only own humankind — I believe that in my gut,” Kidjo confirms.

“The reason I believe this so strongly is because I was raised in Africa and if you are raised in nature, you understand and respect every life. (Once) you understand that, there’s no need to hate anybody anymore. There’s no need to say ‘they’ and ‘we’...we are all one.”

Tickets for the performance range from $22 - $34, with student discounts available, and may be purchased at the Performing Arts Ticket Office, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. To order by phone, call 805/756-2787; to order by fax: 805/756-6088. Order on-line at www.pacslo.org.

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