

MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA 2022 Benefit Features World Premiere of Angélique Kidjo's *Yemandja*

Theatrical production written by Naima Hebrail Kidjo, directed by Cheryl Lynn Bruce, and featuring production design by Kerry James Marshall

North Adams, MA, December 8, 2021— *Yemandja*, a new music theater work conceived by and starring global music songstress and four-time Grammy award winner, Angélique Kidjo will be the centerpiece of MASS MoCA's annual benefit on Saturday March 5, 2022 at 4:00pm. A post-performance cocktail hour will be followed by dinner with the cast and an art auction in MASS MoCA's Building 6: The Robert W. Wilson Building. In addition to the benefit performance on March 5, a general admission evening performance of *Yemandja* will be held on March 4.

Inspired by her ancestors, her family, and Africa's resilience, singer and storyteller Angélique Kidjo's timely theatrical work is both a family drama and historical thriller, redolent of Greek tragedy with themes of love, betrayal, honor, free will. Set in 19th century Dahomey, the West African kingdom that once occupied the territory that is now Benin, the slave trade is omnipresent. In the port city of Ouidah, where the world of the gods is close to that of men, *Yemandja*—a deity of water and fertility, played by Kidjo—has given her protégée Omolola a secret gift: the power of song to change the course of history. But there is one caveat: the power only works if one's heart is pure. As DeSalta, a Brazilian slave trader who has struck a deal with King Akaba and controls the city, kills or enslaves those around Omolola, she struggles to access her song, her desire for revenge threatening to surpass her will to be a positive force.

Written by Naima Hebrail Kidjo, this fully staged production is directed by Cheryl Lynn Bruce, designed by Kerry James Marshall and features a cast of 14 performers and musicians.

Yemandja has been in rehearsals and production as part of MASS MOCA's artist-in-residency program and will travel to The Broad Stage in Santa Monica, Cal Performances in Berkeley, the Kennedy Center and the Holland Festival following the world premiere. Additional performances are planned for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 seasons.

MASS MoCA 2022 Benefit & Performance

Saturday, March 5, 4pm

On sale January 5

Tickets start at \$250

General Admission Performance

Friday, March 4, 8pm

MASS MOCA member presale: January 13

General on sale: January 14

Pricing to be announced

MASSACHUSETTS MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

1040 MASS MoCA WAY

NORTH ADAMS MASSACHUSETTS 01247

PH 413 664 4481 FAX 413 663 8548

www.massmoca.org

Yemandja Creative Team

Conceived by Angélique Kidjo, Jean Hebrail & Naïma Hebrail Kidjo

Book & Lyrics by Naïma Hebrail Kidjo

Music by Angélique Kidjo & Jean Hebrail

Developed with and Directed by Cheryl Lynn Bruce

Production Designer Kerry James Marshall

Music Director Darryl Archibald

Lighting Designer Kathy A. Perkins

Projections Designer Rasean Davonte Johnson

Costume Designer Mary Jane Marcasiano

Choreographer Beatrice Capote

Sound Designer Kumi Ishizawa

Dramaturg Iyvon E.

Sensitivity Coach Ann James

Casting Andrea Zee

Yemandja is co-commissioned by ArtsEmerson, The Broad Stage at Santa Monica College, Brown University Arts Institute, Cal Performances, Ruth and Stephen Hendel, Holland Festival, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, MASS MoCA and Yale Schwarzman Center. Produced by THE OFFICE performing arts + film.

YProgramming at MASS MoCA is made possible in part by the Barr Foundation, Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, Mass Cultural Council, and the Joe Thompson "Yes" Fund.

MASS MoCA's Artist-in-Residence program is supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Additional support is provided by the Arthur F. & Alice E. Adams Charitable Foundation and the New England Foundation for the Arts through the New England Arts Resilience Fund, part of the United States Regional Arts Resilience Fund, an initiative of the U.S. Regional Arts Organizations and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with major funding from the federal CARES Act from the National Endowment for the Arts.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest centers for making and enjoying today's most evocative art. With vast galleries and a stunning collection of indoor and outdoor performing arts venues, MASS MoCA is able to embrace all forms of art: music, sculpture, dance, film, painting, photography, theater, and new, boundary-crossing works of art that defy easy classification. Much of the work we show in our light-filled spaces, on our technically sophisticated stages, and within our lovely network of late 19th-century courtyards is made here during extended fabrication and rehearsal residencies that bring hundreds of the world's most brilliant and innovative artists to North Adams all year round. For more information about MASS MoCA, visit www.massmoca.org.

For more information, please contact:

Christian Barclay

Communications Manager, MASS MoCA

cbarclay@massmoca.org