



Chava Alberstein

Saturday, October 16, 2004, 8 pm
Zellerbach Hall

Chava Alberstein, *vocals and guitar*
Oved Efrat, *guitar*
Avi Agababa, *percussion*

Matthias Muller, *sound engineer*

***Tonight's performance will be approximately 90 minutes in length.
There will be no intermission.***

This performance has been made possible, in part, by the Friends of Cal Performances.

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The Wallace Foundation, and the Zellerbach Family Foundation for their generous support.*

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Chava Alberstein is undoubtedly Israel's most accomplished singer, having released more than 54 recordings since the late 1960s, many of them huge bestsellers. Calling someone her country's greatest singer would be a huge compliment to most performers. In the case of Alberstein, however, it only tells a small part of the story.

Alberstein *is* Israel; her development as an artist mirrors Israel's development as a country; her growing pains are Israel's growing pains. Alberstein and Israel are even the same age and both share a tiny but powerful stature.

But Chava Alberstein sees herself as much as a singer of the world as just a singer of her beloved country. "Even though I have lived in Israel nearly my entire life, I am constantly questioning my place in the world," she says. "Maybe this searching comes from being an artist; maybe it comes from being a Jew. I'm not really sure."

This bittersweet tension between the national and the universal is most evident in her recordings, from tender love songs to defiant songs about peace and oppression. There are prayerful songs celebrating the beauty of the human form and more melancholy songs about loss, poverty, and solitude.

In 1998, Alberstein released *The Well*, an album of Yiddish poems she had transformed into folk songs, with the renowned group The Klezmatics. "In Israel, you would be hard-pressed to find anyone today composing and singing in Yiddish," she says. "Some people still see Yiddish as the language of 'soft' Jews who can't protect themselves. But I believe I understand both the joy and depth of the language."

Yiddish was the mother tongue of Alberstein's family in the small town in Szczecin, Poland, where Chava was born. Her family moved to Israel when Alberstein was only four years old, but Chava says she has never totally lost the feeling of being a stranger.

"No matter where I am, even if it's in my own country, I feel like a bit of a guest," she said. "People can appreciate this today, because they move around so much. Every country you go to in the world is filled with so-called foreigners."

Since the very first time she sang in public—a four-song set that included songs in French, Spanish, Yiddish, and a gospel standard in English—Chava has been a performer of "world music."

Chava has released more than 40 albums in Hebrew, six of which have been awarded the Kinor David prize, Israel's Grammy. She has also released seven albums in Yiddish, and an English album of standards ranging from Gershwin to Lennon and McCartney. A dozen of these records have gone gold, six platinum, and one triple-platinum.

Alberstein's early Hebrew recordings—with names like *Songs of My Beloved Country*, *Beaches*, and *Like a Wildflower*—speak to Israel as a fledgling country. "Israel was like a little child in those days," Chava recalls. "Discovering all the parts of her body."

With a half-century of life and song under her belt, Alberstein, like Israel, has come to understand that good art, like good statecraft, is best achieved by looking both inward and outward. She is a singer who accomplishes that greatest, most precious rarity of all—she speaks for a culture, a tradition.

Chava Alberstein's album *Foreign Letters*, produced by Ben Mink, was released in Europe by Naïve and in North America on Rounder/Universal in 2001. *Voices, A Musical Celebration*, a public television special starring Chava Alberstein, aired worldwide starting in November 2001. In September of 2003, a box set featuring Chava's earlier recordings—including more than 200 songs never before heard on CD—was released in Israel. Her latest album, *Motzai Khag (End of the Holiday)*, was released to rave reviews in Israel and the US (Rounder Records) in January 2004.

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