

*Clarice Presents*

# MOONLIGHT BENJAMIN



Thursday, March 27, 2025 • 8PM

KOGOD THEATRE

AT THE CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND

*Clarice Presents*

## MOONLIGHT BENJAMIN

Moonlight Benjamin, *vocals*

Matthis Pascaud, *guitar*

Matthieu-Vial Collet, *guitar*

Quentin Rochas, *bass*

Simon Lemonnier, *drums*

**Selections to be announced from stage.**

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*This performance is supported in part by the Maryland State Arts Council and The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.*



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## ABOUT MOONLIGHT BENJAMIN

Nicknamed “The Caribbean Patti Smith” by The Guardian, **MOONLIGHT BENJAMIN** plays a powerful and original music blending Caribbean Vodou melodies and a 70s blues rock inspired by Dr John, Alabama Shakes, the Black Keys or Oumou Sangaré. The encounter between Moonlight’s powerful and rebellious voice, and the tension of saturated guitars, turns the Vodou trance into a new and explosive style.

Between 2018 and 2021, she has been named by Martin Gore (Depeche Mode) as his 2020 favorite, airplayed by Iggy Pop himself at the BBC, featured on both Songlines and FRoots covers (UK), and reviewed by major media such as The Guardian, The Financial Times and The New York Times. She also performed 65 gigs in 2019, across 15 countries, and in major festivals and venues in Europe and North America.

Moonlight Benjamin’s new show/third album, *Wayo*, is a spellbinding “cry of pain,” which showcases her thundering vocals and lyrical themes on faith, energy and our connection to the source. These new songs from Haiti’s Vodou priestess delve deep, immersing her philosophical messages in heavy blues rapture, killer riffs and hand-clapping, foot-stomping percussion, with influences as far reaching as Dr John, Malian singer Oumou Sangaré and Alabama Shakes. Until now, Moonlight’s muse has always been her motherland, the Caribbean island of Haiti, but in *Wayo*, the Vodou priestess changes her tune: “There are still a few songs about Haiti, of course, but the writing, the story, the common thread in this album, it’s more universal. It deals more with the philosophical side of things... Our anchoring to the earth, our connection to the source.”

Born to Vodou parents in Haiti’s Port au Prince, Moonlight spent her childhood in a Roman Catholic orphanage where she was adopted by Reverend Doucet Alvarez after her own mother died in childbirth. Raised on gospel music, it was only in her late teens that she began to explore her Vodou roots, before leaving Haiti in 2002 to begin jazz training in France. It was in 2017 that Moonlight met artistic director and guitarist, Matthis Pascaud, the collaboration from which her unique, volcanic sound was born. The unanticipated musical combination which put her on the map has undergone quite a transformation since the duo’s collaboration began. *Siltane*, composed in both French and Creole, alternated the classic rock band set up with traditional drums and stripped-back, Vodou-inspired chants; *Simido* did away with the assortment of styles, zeroing in on the winning formula of Moonlight’s signature Creole vocals over pure, unadulterated rock. Now on *Wayo*, she delves into a deeper sound, tracing the rock genre back to its roots: blues music.

*Bafon*, the album’s second official single, is a bold message of hope; Moonlight’s defiant vocals recount the story of Baron, spirit guardian of the dead and master of the cemetery, as he addresses the grieving masses present for Haiti’s funeral to announce that she is not dead, that Haiti still carries life within her. “Taye Banda,” transports us with its foot-stomping, frantic drums, driving home the message that it is our thoughts that create reality—the power to make or break, the power to cultivate positivity, lies in our minds. The lilting riffs on “Ouvé Lesprit,” pull us into a lighter, uplifting tonality, the lyrics imploring us to open our minds to change. mances at prestigious festivals and ongoing contributions to the global music scene.

## ENGAGEMENT ON CAMPUS AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Moonlight Benjamin and her band performed for and spoke to several musicology classes yesterday in the UMD School of Music. After tonight’s performance, members of the DC chapter of the Association of Haitian Professionals will have a meet-and-greet with Moonlight.

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