

East Bay Express

ARTS & CULTURE

Andean Hearties

Inti-Illimani still climbing the heights

By **Anneli Rufus**

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When a musical group is still touring after thirty years, you can only deduce that, at some point, it was great. Only rarely can you say it *still* is. But **Inti-Illimani**, the Chilean *nueva canción* ensemble set to perform at UC Berkeley's Zellerbach Auditorium on Tuesday, April 8, is rare and then some. How many world-renowned outfits -- and this one has shared stages with Peter Gabriel, Bruce Springsteen, Mercedes Sosa, Sting, Pete Seeger, Wynton Marsalis, and John Williams -- include not only guitar, violin, bongo, piccolo, and hammered dulcimer but also the lute-like *charango*, flutey *quena*, panpipey *rondador*, twelve-stringed *triple*, and some thirty wind, string, and percussion instruments in all? And sings at least some of its South American and African-tinged songs of hope, struggle, and inspiration in Andean dialect? And was founded by a bunch of idealistic engineering students?

Three new members have joined the band, whose Zellerbach gig (8 pm) is part of Cal Performances' *Celebración de las Culturas de Iberoamérica*, and whose long and illustrious career the university honored officially with a Human Rights Award in 1997.

Tickets: \$20-\$36. 510-642-9988.