

## DAOUDA DIABATE'S FADENYA

This is the **second** of three CDs intended to present the musical treasury of the Sambla-, Tusia- and Siamou-**Diabates**. The most striking feature in their music is the rich ornamented virtuoso balafon solo. You could say that it speaks! Indeed, what outsiders consider to be beautiful music is in reality our language transposed into music. We learn it in early childhood alongside the spoken language. We can tell everything verbally expressible with the tunes of the balafon.

We Diabates have always been on the top of the West African music scene. The Sundjata epic from the 13<sup>th</sup> century explains how the name **Dian-baga-te** (the irresistible) was given to our ancestor, a hunter originally called Oulamba **Traore**. Since then we are **jelis**, for whom storytelling, composing and playing music is a family profession. This, however, doesn't mean that we adore the cold ashes of the past. There is a permanent artistic competition among us that guarantees the survival and, above all, the continuous development of our musical tradition. For this reason I named this CD-collection **Fadenya**. For us of the Mande culture, **Fa-den-ya** (children of the same father but not the same mother) is associated with challenge, courage, competition and aggression.

Our original musical instrument might have been the **donso-ngoni** – the hunter's harp. Today, the Diabates in the north-western Mande area - Mali, Senegal and Gambia - mainly play the **kora**, a 23-string harp-lute. We in the Southeast - Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso - are more focused on the **balafon** (a xylophone).

After the disintegration of the Mande empire my ancestors headed to the East. Some of them settled down in the area of Orodara among the **Siamou**, others in Banfoulagbe among the **Tusia** and my direct ancestors in Tué (Torosso on the modern maps) among the **Sambla**. Since then the balafon plays a central role in the everyday life of these peoples. Each village, each important family, and every profession has its own piece of music that functions like a **coat of arms**. Music is composed for every important occasion, and any work carried out by the village community is accompanied by music.

On my CDs **Kamalenya** (2006) and **Balanfola** (2008) I have already shown the unique sound of the **Tusia** balafon. On this CD my former teacher **Daouda** presents the highlights of the Tusia balafontradition. His stunning virtuosity has been a great attraction (and a nightmare for other balafonists) for decades. Some people therefore believe that he **is** one of the three bush-spirits who - according to an ancient legend - gave the balafon to the mankind... My brother **Sabwe** plays the first accompaniment in the bass, I play the second accompaniment and my great-uncle **GoGardi** plays the dundun.

### 1. FEN MIN TE NYOGON TO

... calls for solidarity in the family and in the society. Only by the resulting power and positive energy can great things be achieved. It is played both for traditional celebrations and for labouring in the field to convey this message to the people.

### 2. DABA BE KOROLA

... is played to spur the men working in the field. If a youth wants to get married he has to prove his strength at work. Young men used to challenge each other at their work to see (and in order to show the girls) who is the best. This is one of those notorious solo pieces of Daouda that reduce other balafonists to despair...

### 3. YERE NYINI

.. tells that people have to make a living on their own. To wait for help from others is a waste of time. **Yere nyini** is predominantly played at funerals in order to tell how the deceased person has handled this topic. For other balafonists this is the "give up, don't even try" solo piece of Daouda.

#### 4. NYAMOGOYA DUNDUN

This piece is an appeal to young men to seek a woman to live in love and fidelity with. Another "give up, don't even try" solo piece.

#### 5. KAMALEN DO SORO

... tells about envy and jealousy in the society. The desire to become better than the others is in itself correct, but one should always act honestly and sincerely. Envy and jealousy bring only destruction.

#### 6. MUSO GWE

... are African women of light complexion. As a child, they are pampered and kept away from everyday work. As a woman, they are highly sought after and they know it very well ... This piece reminds the young men that skin colour makes no difference and a life with a **muso gwe** brings lot of problems and difficulties. This is Daouda's favourite song.

#### 7. FANTAN DUSU TE GAN

**Fantan** are destitute people. Lot of them undertake the poor jobs to get ahead and are, due to their low wage, often angry with their employer. But it's no use, because they need him for the chance to make money and free themselves from the misery.

#### 8. FAMADEN

... tells about an entirely different stratum. This is about children from very influential families, who live in luxury without much effort. This piece is played at ceremonies to commend the merits of their ancestors (because the children themselves have nothing to look back on)...

#### 9. SA NI NYANI

... reminds work-shy shirkers who can't be bothered to work that they will die in misery if they don't change their mind. A famous solo piece of Daouda...

#### 10. TSYE BENA NA AN KAN

Everyone has to discover his talents and use them as a chance in life. Therefore, one should neither leer at others nor envy their opportunities and benefits. Another solo piece of Daouda...

#### 11. TSYE MAN DOGO

Farming, the essential profession in our areas, requires physical strength. This virtuosic piece of music - "small but powerful" - is the **Kamalen-Donkili** and, at the same time, the personal coat of arms of Daouda because - as he says - with great ideas even a person of small stature like him can become a "great man". In the Mande world **Kamalen** (young man) is associated with strength, courage and energy; **Donkili** means song.

#### 12. DIABO

... means: to be in for a shock. Imagine - Daouda explains - you are giving a concert, you are fully satisfied with yourself, you enjoy the applause and, all of a sudden, you discover your own teacher or a top-class fellow musician in the audience.

#### 13. SO MIN MAN NYI

When different people meet, there always arise conflicts, because the perspectives and actions of one side are too dissenting and difficult to understand for the other side. But these differences and conflicts are important because they make it possible for both parties to gather new experiences and advance.

Mamadou Diabate