

MAMADOU DIABATE & BEKADIYA

With this CD I would like to present my group **Bekadiya** and, at the same time, my new musical way. The most striking feature of our music is, perhaps, the rich ornamented virtuous xylophone solo. You could say that it speaks! Indeed, what you might consider to be beautiful music is in reality **the spoken language of my people, the Sambla, transposed into music**. Everything that can be expressed verbally can also be expressed in this musical language. The Sambla children learn it simultaneously with the spoken one. As far as I know, none of the other great xylophone cultures of the world (Cambodia, Indonesia, Mozambique, Uganda etc.) have xylophones that speak. This phenomenon is only found among the Sambla and some tiny enchanted Gur cultures in West Africa. My CD *Sababu* (EX 470-2), contains three beautiful examples, my CD *Keneya* (EX 510-2) is fully devoted to this music.

Other characteristics of our music are: the **Chaconne-like composition technique** (variations on a permanently repeated basso ostinato), **vertical and horizontal polymetrics** (very seldom used features in the European music) and the **interlocking technique** (the instrumental parts are connected together like cog-wheels to create a dense, melodic and rhythmic composite). Bekadiya combines **all these Sambla-features with modern, western Grooves and Jazz elements**. All this might sound frightening, but don't worry, our music is light, entertaining and easy to follow - until you try to imitate or to play it...

The musicians:

- **Achim Tang** (double bass)
- **Thomas Berghammer** (trumpet)
- **Werner Wurm** (trombone)
- **Shayan Fathi** (percussion)
- **Nicholas Baker** (kpanlogo)
- **Louis Sanou** (Jula-balafon, jembe, vocal)

proved to be ideal partners for this experiment. The crystal-clear, natural voice of **Fatoumata Dambele**, you might know her from Farafina's recent CD *Kanou*, heightens the attractiveness of Jarabi, Sira Fila and Sida.

On this CD, additionally to the Jula-balafon, I play the jembe, dundun (bass drum), lunga (talking drum) and the small drum set of the Sambla called pi.

SIRA FILA (TWO WAYS)

A bee bi fo (Welcome) is the opening piece of our concerts.

Bee ni na n kan says that you can't please everybody.

3. Diya is a Jembe-disputation with my brother *Louis*. He belongs to those few musicians who are able to play accompaniment to my allegedly unpredictable and capricious balafon solos.

4. Sira Fila (Two ways) was composed around 1995 for Solo-Balafon, when I started to wonder, whether to go to live in Europe. Now I live in Austria and this melody occupies my mind whenever I am homesick. Recently I am homesick for Austria too while travelling... *Achim's* supreme double-bass part was created in September 2002 when we received the word about my mother's death.

5. Dugubaden (City child). Lot of children in the villages of Burkina Faso dream about life in a town and after a stay there some of them are reluctant to leave. After return they even pretend not to have the faintest idea about farming. This came in my mind

during a jembe workshop in a Vienna school, where all cows were lilac-coloured on the children's paintings.

6. Folikelaw (The musicians) with *Werner's* and *Thomas's* virtuosic solos and *Nicholas's* subtle kpanlogo part says that musicians should think positive, otherwise they can't compose.

7. Fonkwa (Thrashing millet) has its roots in the old Sambla farming tradition. Due to its polymetric and polyrhythmic construction (a self evident feature for the Sambla), it always troubles western musicians. They either don't find the beat or, if found, lose it. *Achim* and *Shayan*, however, succeeded in amplifying the swinging in this music.

8. Nyimaya (Benefaction) Even the proverb says, one good turn might deserve another, do not count on gratitude. But be confident, God knows your deeds.

9. Bololabara (Manual work) is again a piece for jembe fans.

10. Sadou is the name of a woman I can't forget. The sparking solos of *Shayan* and *Thomas* recall my happiness with her.

11. **Jarabi** (Love) Love is a miracle but it makes people blind and deaf, and, there is no medicine against it. - sings *Fatoumata*.

12. Sida (AIDS) sounds like a torrential dance music but it is rather a warning against rashness in love-affairs.

Mamadou Diabate