

Mamadou Diabate`s Percussion Mania

KANUYA

In this recording I present my most beautiful experiences and musical discoveries in the past few years. KANUYA (means friendship, esteem and respect) is due to my hosts, who introduced me to their musical world and made this CD possible: Studio Percussion Graz (*Günter Meinhart, Raphael Meinhart, Bernhard Richter, Stefan Padinger, Christian Pollheimer, Jörg Haberl, Alberto Lovison*), Edison Tadeu, Wolfgang Puschnig, Jon Sass, Silvio Gabriel, Ismael Barrios and Insingizi (*Vusa Mkhaya Ndlovu, Blessings Nqo Nkomo, Dumisani Ramadu Moyo*).

Also, thanks is due to my fellow travellers of Percussion Mania (*Abdoulaye Dembele, Seydou Diabate, Yacouba Konate, Madou Kote von Farafina, Zakaria Kone, Karim Sanou*), my long-time sound engineer Kurt Richter and Claude Luisier, who designed my concert balafon.

1. Korolenko

Korolenko means ancient history. In this piece, I tell the origin of our balafon tradition that I heard from my grandfather:

Once upon a time there was a hunter in Sembella who came home one day with a strange thing instead of prey. He said it had been given by bush spirits. In fact, with this thing the people could neither satisfy hunger nor till a field. Rather, it spoke the language of the spirits, and with its tones they could even appease the evils and call the well-wishers for help. From then on the hunter concentrated almost exclusively on this new object. Day in, day out, he squatted in front of his hut or on the edge of his field, he strummed on it. At first the villagers found it funny but when his condition did not improve, they declared him insane and gave him a wide berth. The children however were magically attracted and seized every opportunity to play with that thing. Gradually it got a central role in all their games. In doing so they learned the language of the spirits and taught their language to the thing. Their only sorrow was that in the evening they had to leave it behind. They wanted to have it along always and everywhere. They claimed that, accompanied by the talking thing, even the work would be easier. (Yes, at that time the children also had to work hard.) Thus it came that they, after becoming adults, had no objection if their children wanted to go to that hunter. Their grandchildren they brought themselves to him for education. At that time it was already self-evident that every family had a balafon and all activities of the village community were accompanied by balafon music.

Why am I telling all this? Not because of the almost forgotten history, nor because of the music that is allegedly from that hunter, but because of the deeper meaning that I only realized as an adult; if we want to shape the future, we should begin with the children. They are the future. That is why I love to give workshops for children and for the same reason - with the help of benevolent Austrians and Germans - I have built a primary school in Burkina Faso (<http://sababu.mamadoudiabate.com>).

2. Nyengo

... are people who, driven by envy and jealousy, constantly whine and try to put a spoke in each other's wheel. They should rather try to reinvent themselves. The flutist is Wolfgang Puschnig.

3. Tsyegana

... tells the story of a bachelor who, while enjoying the sunny side of freedom and independence, suffers from loneliness.

4. Furu te feere

Many believe that money could buy everything - even *the* man or *the* woman for life. True love is not a question of money. As soon as the money spent or the so acquired partner gets a better offer, the relationship is over.

5. Taama diyara

In *Taama diyara* (successful journey) I say that we, musicians from Africa, have found work, good friends and a new home in Austria. Vusa, Ramadou und Blessings of *Insingizi* from Zimbabwe agree with me.

6. Percussion Mania

This title was chosen because not only the music but also its origin sounds a bit crazy. I always wanted a "Guinea" balafon on my CDs, and in the studio Abdoulaye Dembele, a great specialist on this instrument, played some pieces for selection.

- *"You Abdoulaye"* - I said to him when he finished – *"they are all very nice but I would like to have the piece you played at sound check."*

- *"Whaat?"* - he asked rather puzzled – *"That was only a jingle for Kurt that he could adjust the mikes right!"*

- *"Then please do it again. For this CD. I make the arrangements for the accompaniment!"* - I replied.

7. Sadama fa ni ba

This song I dedicated to my brother Sadama. He, father of 14 children, is also the head of the Sambla-Diabates. He is father and mother in one (fa ni ba) for all of us - a difficult task. His CD Sambla Fadenya shows that he is an excellent musician, a brilliant interpreter of tradition and a gifted composer too. In this piece I tell him that I will continue to do my best in order to help him. The tuba player is Jon Sass.

8. Baji

"Baji jara, baji konona fen bee be jensenna" (Dries the sea, all sea creatures die) is a metaphor that says that there are no perpetual protection and security and therefore you should take precautions in time.

9. Den kolon te fili

Mostly driven by exaggerated expectations many Africans try their luck in Europe. This song is dedicated to those whose dreams have not been met and therefore they feel like castaways. They are wrong. Their family at home is and remains always there for them. Ismael Barrios plays the fine conga part and the jembe player, showing his lion's claws here, is the young Zakaria Kone.

10. Groovytas - Marakadon - Marekatu

In West Africa, over a river of groovy rhythms with peaceful grazing claves and cáscaras on its banks, hovers a space ship from the constellation Groovitas. Packed with exhausted travellers who have long forgotten what their legs were for. Just landed, they were infected and almost killed by the dance virus Marakadon, so stunted were their legs. But they could not stop dancing. With a last effort they managed to escape to South America, not knowing that there the Brazilian dance virus Marekatu was waiting for them... Will they survive?

11. Aw ni baara

With *Aw ni Baara* (thanks for the work) I would like to thank all participants of our musical discovery.

12. Kanuya

Our travellers from Groovytas have recovered their strength in Styria (Austria) and able to perceive the beauty of our planet: above the raging bass part of Stefan Padinger the pulsating sound clouds of balafon, vibraphone, marimba, xylophone and drums created by the Percussion Studio Graz. High in the sky the sun god Silvio Gabriel is laughing.

Mamadou Diabate