

Mamadou Diabate's Percussion Mania

Kamalenya

To demonstrate power, energy and courage, in order to be considered as an adult, is one of the most beautiful traditions – not only in Africa but world-wide, as Jérôme Ségur's exciting video documentation “Becoming a man in Melanesia” shows. In Africa, in the Mande language area this is called “**Kamalenya**”.

The name of my group is its program: **Percussion Mania** is precisely that – an intoxicating battle of rhythms, in which not only we musicians are supposed to fall into a trance. All instruments originate from the traditional music of west Africa, all musicians were born and grew up in Burkina Faso; our music, however, is not traditional music at all. It is shaped by our experiences and concert trips, by co-operation with musicians of other cultures and by life in Europe. Nevertheless this CD represents our “Kamalenya” –our demonstration of power, energy and courage – in the sense of the tradition.

I was born into a Jeli family in Burkina Faso in 1973. These families have maintained the art of making music for many centuries. (The first Diabate was mentioned in the Sundjata Epos from the 13th century.) At the age of five I began my professional training: I travelled with different musician families and finally created the group Landaya, which in 1998 won the first prize of the SNC in Burkina Faso. I compose and play the balaphon as well as various rhythm instruments. I also give workshops, in order to make people familiar with the variety of West African music.

Karim Sanou does not originate from a typical West African family of musicians. So it is all the more amazing that, from his childhood on and against the resistance of his parents, he did everything to become a musician. He was born in 1974 and grew up in the oldest and most traditional quarter of his home town Bobo Dioulasso, where music, dance and mask cult mark all important aspects of life. He is a talented jembe player; his musical spectrum also includes the dundun (bass drum), the lunga (talking drum) and the ngon (hunter harp).

Louis Sanou was born in 1982 in Bobo Dioulasso. He was about 10 years old when he decided to become a musician – as he says – through the influence of my way of playing the balaphon. The hard years of learning jembe and balaphon followed. Today he is not only an outstanding jembe soloist, but also a very good balaphonist. He is one of the few who can accompany my strongly polymetric soli at all... I am very proud of him.

1. Geleya (*Price Rise*)

The life is not easy. While you have to work more for the same pay, the prices rise. You believe you have put a bit money aside, then there comes an urgent bill to be paid immediately. The life is not easy...

2. Kamalenya (Power and Courage)

This music is my „Kamalenya“ and at the same time my image of Africa. Though I live in Europe, I get all my power and energy from Africa and look for them there again and again. There I spent my childhood and there lie my roots. I could live anywhere in the world but my first home is and remains Africa.

3. Hakili ani kunnadiya (Spirit and Chance)

This rap I dedicate to all school children. Loss of education is one of the largest problems in the world, in particular in Africa. If you don't learn reading and writing, you don't get a chance. In Torosso, where I was born, there were no schools and my parents could not afford to send me to Bobo Dioulasso. It was very difficult to catch up on everything.

4. Landaya denw (Our Tradition)

You have to respect your parents and your tradition, even if you believe they are against you. What you can learn from them, you can not find in books.

5. Konoba (Like a Vulture)

Freelance musicians don't have an easy time. Sometimes I feel like a vulture circling high up in the sky, in any weather, to look for prey.

6. Tunga diyara (The Journey was Successful)

For me it is very important to animate my concert audience. It is, however, very difficult, if we don't understand each other's language. I composed this piece in Russia, where we succeeded in "retuning" our audience, which at first was sitting there with stony faces. Since then I am confident that I will overcome the language barriers in the future, too. I dedicate this song to all friends of my music, above all Andre Heller, Achim Tang, Willi Resetarits, Christian Kolonovits, Sigi Finkel, Werner Wurm, Thomas Berghammer, Arkady Shilkloper and Wolfgang Meyering.

7. Fato Foli (Folly)

Free improvisation for 6 Dunduns. In the recording studio, when our technician left for a phone call, we started to fool around with our bass drums. This is the result. (Not bad, is it?)

8. Jorolin (Worry)

Improvisation is nice and lovely, if you are alone and carry no responsibility for others. If, however, you have children or want to have some, you must plan for their future.

9. Mogojuguya (Malevolence)

It is a mistake to believe that bad-willed people could be calmed with gifts.

10. Faantan mogoba (Wrong Pride)

There are people needing much more assistance than the beggars at the roadside, but they are too proud to show this or ask for something. If you ask directly whether they have a problem or need assistance, they give you an annoyed no. This piece I dedicate to my friend DJ ZIPFLO (Manfred Rudolf), who is exceptionally versed in the high art of helping without asking questions.

11. Mun ye mun ye (How Music Develops)

One day, while walking on the road, I was eating an apple. Suddenly I noticed that my steps and the chewing of the apple formed the following rhythm: Pabobopabobopa papapapabo - pa. So this piece was invented.

12. Tanchi

I met the Indonesian group **Samba Sunda** during the TFF Rudolstadt/Germany in 2003. I was working on this piece when they stormed into my room in order to see who was playing Sundanese music. They did not want to believe that I was playing Tusia music from Africa; I had never met Sundanese people nor heard their music before. Later, when they were practising, I was surprised: how on earth could these people play Tusia music so well, without having met Tusia people nor having studied their music before? Thereupon they said that they did not know what I was talking about, they had been playing Sundanese music all the time. In 2004 I visited them in Bandung and we gave a beautiful concert together. Since then I am permanently homesick for Indonesia.

13. Jemejugu

This is my second „Kamalenya“ on this CD, composed for solo balaphon. During a flight from Paris to Ouagadougou I fell asleep and suddenly, in my dream, I found myself sitting among my ancestors, who had all been top-class balaphonists in their time. They wanted to know what I have been doing in Europe. I sat down at the balaphon and, without opening my mouth, told it to them – exactly what can be heard here. In my culture the balaphon speaks.

Mamadou Diabate