

PRESENTS



Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa

A World Stage Event

Friday, November 14, 2008 • 8 pm
Jackson Hall, Mondavi Center, UC Davis

There will be one intermission.

Bamba Dembele, Artistic Director

The artists and your fellow audience members appreciate silence during the performance. Please be sure that you have switched off cellular phones, watch alarms, and pager signals. Videotaping, photographing, and audio recording are strictly forbidden. Violators are subject to removal.

PROGRAM

Soubala Molea: A romantic instrumental about lovers and the joys of experiencing nature together under the stars, the moon, and the softness of the night.

Aloubin: A wedding song. The Godmother presents her daughter and sings for marriage and asks the *doun doun* (percussion) players to play music for the festivities.

Ibiri Bembaloudan: To improve your community and the world, one must always do better than your family has already done before you.

Sinkola: Everyone must respect the person with power and this person must not abuse the privilege of his power.

Djou Djou Nama: When farmers are laboring in the fields and working in a line, the young girls of the village are in a line behind them singing this song and playing the *doun doun* and *djembe* to encourage and inspire the men to work for Nama, who is the ideal of good work and efficiency.

Intermission

Douga: A flute and *balafon* duo to give warriors the courage to be as aggressive in war as a douga (vulture).

Lombalia: It is important for two people to get to know each other so they can understand one another and enjoy mutual respect in their relationship.

Kousan: An instrumental saying no matter how well you do in life, one must always strive to do better for the happiness of others around you.

Djefrile: A song to speak of the importance of kindness to the youngest children who are as fragile as small birds.

Sorobale: We are all in God's grace. He protects and loves us. When life is difficult it is God's way of helping us to grow and improve ourselves.

Kononi: A song for families paying tribute to the importance of our parents in our lives. When we lose them we have lost all. Our families will help us, but they can never replace our parents.

THE PERFORMERS

Bamba Dembele – Artistic Director and Djembe (drum)
 Kadidia Diabate – Lead singer and dancer
 Lountan Kouyate – Lead singer and dancer
 Miriam Diarra – Chorus singer and dancer
 Assitan Traore – Chorus singer and dancer
 Modibo Diawara – Cora (African harp)
 Bourama Diabate – Ngoni (African guitar)
 Kelemonzon Diabate – Ngoni bass (African bass guitar)
 Djiguiba Barry – Flute
 Mory Kouyate – Balafon (xylophone)
 Lanse Diabate – Balafon (xylophone)

Percussion Players

Salif Sissoko – Talking drum
 Mamoudou Diakite – Dancer & Djembe (drum)
 Bandjoukou Kone – Djembe (drum)
 Makan Kone – Djembe (drum)
 Birama Kone – Doun Doun

SONG AND DANCE ENSEMBLE OF WEST AFRICA

Bamba Dembele, Music Director

This extraordinary group of West African traditional musicians is directed by Bamba Dembele, a star of the Super Rail Band of Bamako as well as the percussionist in the Super Djata Band Karkar. Founded in 1985, the Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa is a high-level orchestra of percussionists, musicians, and dancers from the West African nation of Mali. The ensemble is highly accomplished and widely respected, known for exciting performances that are inspired by traditional music and shaped by the group members' own identities.

Based on the traditional sounds and rhythms of Mali, the Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa produces a powerful sound using well-known instruments—the *cora*, *n'goni*, *balaphon*, *djembe*, *doun doun*, and flute—and incorporating such regional Malian styles as Peuhl, Malinke, Senufo, and Bambara.

The Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa has toured widely outside Africa. The ensemble has become well known to lovers of Sahel music, particularly in Europe, where it has performed in France, the U.K., the Netherlands, Belgium, and elsewhere. The group has also served as a launching pad for the popular singer Oumou Sangare and the renowned *cora* master Toumany Diabate, both of whom started their professional careers with the ensemble.

The Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa offers astounding performances to its audience—varied percussion instruments, excellent dancers whose muscles seem to be capable of any move at any speed, and a very elaborate visual presentation with colorful, inventive costumes. It is a modern ballet as if from another world, with graceful movements and virtuoso performances that convey irresistible drive and force to the audience. Somewhere between tradition and modernity, the troupe works along a straight line of West African ballets, *djembés*, *dunums*, *balaphons*, and traditional songs and dances. Its repertory is rich and varied, its performances memorable.