

# STRINGS SHOWCASE OF MANDE MELODY



Mande Strings, American History U.S. Tour — Oct.-Nov. 2016

[www.cradleofjazz.org](http://www.cradleofjazz.org)

## Malian String Trio to tour U.S., reveals the Mande touch in jazz and the Blues

On the heels of Kokanko Sata's successful 2014 U.S. tour, Cradle of Jazz Project raises the bar even higher by bringing together three of Bamako's finest stringed musicians for a showcase of Mande melody.

In October and November of 2016, **Kokanko Sata Dumbia** will team with **Assakaba Dramé** and **Lamine Soumano** to bring the strength of Mande stringed melody to American classrooms and concert halls. The Strings Showcase features guitar, kora, and two Malian ngoni styles—the lute-styled *jeli ngoni*, and the harp-styled *kamalen ngoni*. Delivering an exquisite demonstration of both modern and traditional Malian sounds, this tour also provides a unique lens for jazz, blues, and rock artists to get hands-on experience with the unique scales and rhythms which formed the backbone of much early American music.

Early leading Blues authority Paul Oliver noted that blues melodic sources are best traced to stringed styles of the West African Savannah, citing the "melodic-rhythmic interdependence" of harps such as the ngoni and kora.... Lucy Duran (BBC Radio) reports the jeli ngoni is "heavily redolent of the blues," noting similarities in "pentatonic scales, 6/8 rhythm and...fingering techniques that include slides, pulls, hammers and vibrato..." Jazz sax pioneer Sidney Bechet, among others, self-identified as the descendent of a West African hunter's jeli...

Through concert, lectures, & teaching residencies, this Strings Show-



"Music is knowledge," said Kokanko. "Think about dyeing cloth. This cloth is red. But if you add another color similar to that, it will still be the same color. So having a connection to jazz... I can add my music to that

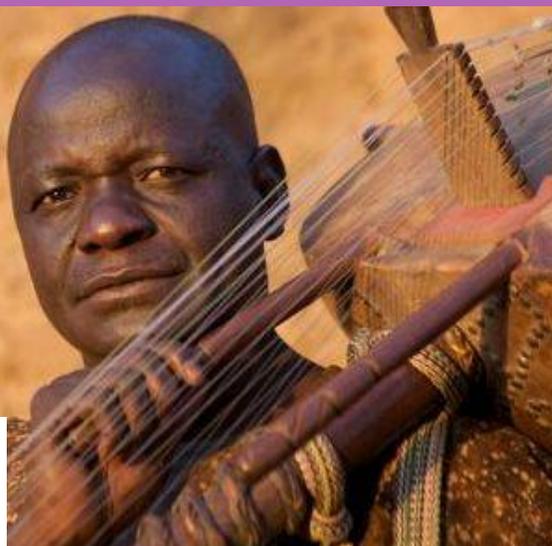
For clips of these artists and the Mande influence in early American music...

<https://youtu.be/fmsOMqX408M>



"I first met Kokanko Sata singing and playing her ngoni on a boat on the Niger River in 2000- a beautiful and timeless moment. We've toured together a couple of times since then and her music always knocks me out... such a powerful,

"The djeli ngoni is the driving force in this ensemble, with Assakaba adding virtuosic depth at every turn. He and my beloved teacher and friend Lamine have made incredible music together for a decade."  
-Drew Heller, *Toubab Krewe*



"Lamine Soumano plays the kora, guitar, djeli n'goni, congas, as well as being a wonderful and unique vocalist... A tireless artist, Lamine is also a wonderful teacher, composer, and arranger whose students include the group Toubab Krewe. Lamine is our chief in-house arranger at Studio

[contactus@cradleofjazz.org](mailto:contactus@cradleofjazz.org) - 864-420-6407- Julie Moore; Drew Heller

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## Meet the artists:

**Lamine Soumano—kora, guitar:** This proficient musician & respected teacher was born and raised in Kirina, Mali, growing up to take the position of jeli. Lamine's reputation is now international. Soumano has been lead guitar and kora player for some of West Africa's biggest stars: Ami Koita, Adama Dramé, and Fantini Toure. He is the mentor and touring partner to Asheville, NC-based Toubab Krewe, and a guide for Fulbright-mtvU Fellows as a teacher, arranger, and video editor. He has toured and taught extensively throughout Africa, Europe, & the U.S.

**Kokanko Sata Doumbia-kamalen ngoni, calabash, vocals:** Born to a jeli mother and blacksmith father, Wasulu-musician Kokanko Sata defied odds to become one of Mali's few female kamalen ngoni masters. Along with her skills with the "youth harp," Doumbia brings bluesy Wasulu vocals and fierce percussion solos to the stage. She has wowed crowds from London to the Lincoln Center in collaborations with Damon Albarn, sung duets with Abigail Washburn, and jammed with Bela Fleck. She has rocked a packed house with Toubab Krewe. But her favorite part her 2014 US tour was her time with young American students.

**Assakaba Dramé-jeli ngoni:** Assakaba is master of an instrument little known outside the Savannah and Sahel of West Africa but critical within that region: the jeli (or bamana) ngoni. This instrument has caught the particular attention of scholars interested in the pre-history of jazz and the blues, due to its strong stylistic similarities to Delta Blues. Dramé has toured and taught extensively though Europe and Africa with artists such as Miriam Koné.

**Assigué Dolo-interpreter:** Assigué is passionate about working with both Dogon and Mande artists for the preservation and transmission of traditional arts. Dolo is also active in Malian political science, translating for the foreign press in war-torn Northern Mali in 2012, then later for the British Foreign Press 2013 interviews of Malian presidential candidates.

## Contact Us

Call **Julie Moore** for more information about booking the Strings Showcase of Mande Melody, Oct-Nov. 2016.

### Cradle of Jazz Project

129 Pittman Rd  
Landrum, SC 29356

(864) 420-6407

[Julie@cradleofjazz.org](mailto:Julie@cradleofjazz.org)

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[www.cradleofjazz.org](http://www.cradleofjazz.org)

...Illuminating the connections between West Africa and the West through music and education...

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