

Ballaké and Derek for Music Before 1800
24 March 2024

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PTTgbci4Kg>
https://youtu.be/dlQPFT_MiXs

Social Media Video:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1OxEU-FC6WbqWLLbZpXJZ4brL2cXqobC9?usp=sharing>

Photos:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/f3u2min1ocla0nmt6vtub/h?dl=0&rlkey=7emwvrzpcncy7ltad011ka3w4t>

Promo Banners and Video Promo

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FS0BqbJ7sXYjoQ19GD_Dksibm7PWhXNC?usp=sharing

Ballake Hospitality:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/v3zxgsaei6oqkkc/Tech%20Rider%20and%20hospitality%20Ballake%20SOLO.pdf?dl=0>

Combined Tech Rider:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18q9F5U87QwptxsXbupGUdhwe7IWYD9pG?usp=share_link

MATSULI vinyl press pack

<https://www.dropbox.com/transfer/AAAAANJ8ol3sG0-mHiCol2Qnz2NRA1-mdP1ZnHgJDsQjtPf mKbze9nk>

Bio:

Malian virtuoso Ballaké Sissoko has taken over the mantle of the greatest touring kora player. Derek Gripper is South Africa's leading guitarist whose love of the kora set him transcribing and recording some of its greatest works. "In the complex web of themes and variations spun by Sissoko's twenty-two strings and Gripper's six, a new African string theory is elaborated.

In collaboration with the Alliance Francais and Air France.

Short

Malian virtuoso Ballaké Sissoko has taken over the mantle of the greatest touring kora player. Derek Gripper is South Africa's leading guitarist whose love of the kora set him transcribing and recording some of its greatest works, changing the face of classical guitar and giving the instrument its very first African repertoire.

Long

Malian virtuoso Ballaké Sissoko has taken over the mantle of greatest touring virtuoso on the kora. Ballaké is a seminal improviser with an ability to unlock every possible nuance on the kora with subtleties rarely heard on any instrument.

Derek Gripper is a classical guitarist from South Africa whose love of the kora set him transcribing and recording some of the greatest works of the instrument and starting a twenty year career performing this music all over the world, changing the face of classical guitar and giving the instrument its very first African repertoire.

The two musicians met in 2022 in Paris for one show. They share no common verbal language yet managed to perform a unique show together of completely improvised music. They returned to the stage in London a month later, and then to the recording studio for a full-length album to be released in 2023. Their performances and recordings are all achieved without any verbal communication, just a mutual love of their shared repertoire and the possibilities of the plucked string.

Taking the griot practice of spontaneous variation to a new level Ballaké and Derek explore Mande music almost as Keith Jarrett explored jazz in his improvised solo piano concerts: unpremeditated listening, allowing music to flow freely between improvisation and quotation, taking off from a shared musical language, in their case not jazz, but Manding music.

END

Specific addition for MB1800 (and classical series):

For their 2024 performance for Music Before 1800 Ballaké and Derek will work closely with musicologist Lucy Durán to unearth rare gems from the kora's early recording history, the only and oldest records in existence beyond the "libraries on fire" which are the players themselves. Recordings housed in the British Library and in private collections will be transcribed and learned by Gripper, combining with Ballaké's encyclopedic knowledge of the music's oral history and his ability to create spontaneous variations of ancient accompaniments to songs which, in many cases, are over eight hundred years old.

The possibility of performing an "early music" can only exist in a written culture. But the existence of ancient music passed from one hand to another also makes us realise that even within a written history, the possibility of early music is an impossibility, because all music is modern music. The past, however, is an inspiration. It is a source material, be it encountered in memory or through a written text. The interaction and understanding of that text is as changeable as the fallibility of memory. It is this creativity of remembering and forgetting that is at the center of Ballaké and Derek's musical explorations. What does the hand remember? What does the score offer? How does the score on the paper interact with the score in the hand? This is the creativity of remembering and misremembering, a creativity which has kept our musical traditions alive and constantly re-invigorated our archives of written and recorded ethnographies.