

# Les Ballets Africains of the Republic of Guinea

in

## “SILO: THE PATH OF LIFE”

Family Performance, Saturday Afternoon, October 16, 4:00

Saturday Evening, October 16, 8:00

Sunday Afternoon, October 17, 4:00

Power Center for the Performing Arts, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Artistic Director	Italo Zambo
Technical Director	Hamidou Bangoura
Choreographer	Mohamed Kemoko Sano
Lighting Designer	Tim Speechley
Sound Engineer	David Jensen
Regisseur	Ibrahima Conte
Administrator	Ibrahima Gueye
Tour Manager	Vince Paul
Management	Rikki Stein
	Pan African Arts Management

*Female Dancers/Singers:* Manana Cisse, Diely Kanni Diawara, Naitou Camara, Marie Bangoura, Macire Souare, Maimouna Diawara, Sayon Bangoura, Hawa Conde, Fadima Traore, M'mah Toure, Mouminata Camara, Marie Petou Camara

*Male Dancers/Singers:* Sekou II Conde, Bangaly Bangoura, Yamoussa Soumah, Moustapha Bangoura, Amadou Dioulde Diallo, Mamadouba Camara, Mamdouba Soumah, Hamidou Koivogui, Sekou Sylla, Aboubacar Bangoura, Papa Cherif Haidara, Karim Keita

*Musicians:* Gbanworo Keita, Laurent Camara, Seny Toure, Mohamed Sylla, Younoussa Camara, Mamadi Mansare, Koca Salé Dioubate, Fode Kalissa, Abou Sylla, Mohamed Lamine Sylla

XXI Century Culture Inc., A division of Columbia Artists Management Inc.,  
in association with Pan African Arts Management Ltd.

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**“SILO: THE PATH OF LIFE”**  
**Act One - A Guinean fishing village**

**Scene 1:**

**Kadan:** Rhythm of celebration - Origin: Makono-Kankan - Guinea Highlands  
**Silo:** The Path - Origin: Mandingo - Gabou - Guinea-Bissau

The curtain rises to reveal the Khême Kouyé (The Giant) - protector of the population, defender of moral values and corrector of wrongdoers - accompanied by the noble Griot - repository of his people's history and respected throughout his society as the personification of wisdom and virtue. A wild bull, who has been causing havoc in the district, enters and whirls frenziedly around the stage. Spying the Griot, he prepares to attack but is prevented from doing so by the power of the Silabö Sona (Path Opener) - sacred horsetail which embodies the Giant's strength and power.

**N'Goron:** The Bull's Dance - Origin: Guinea Highlands

The young villagers returning home after a party find themselves in the presence of the Khême Kouyé they bow and depart in haste. All but one reckless youth, who challenges the authority of the Giant and the traditions he embodies. Roughly pushing aside the Griot, he snatches the sacred horsetail and is convulsed by the surge of energy which engulfs him and he falls into a trance.

His younger brother runs to the village to inform their mother. This brave widow, devoted to her sons, is in a state of constant tension between happiness brought to her by the goodness of the younger and sadness caused by the wickedness of the elder, whose deplorable excesses she is unable to restrain. She arrives panic stricken, bearing a calabash of water which she empties into the face of her foolish son. He awakens. Horrified, both the mother and her younger son realize that the youth has become completely obsessed. However wicked he was before has been multiplied ten-fold.

**Nimbangö:** Song of Praise - Origin: Katako-Boke - Coastal Guinea

It is now morning and the village prepares to celebrate their annual 'Festival of the Lake'. The drummers gather and beat out a mighty joyous rhythm to alert all of the surrounding countryside of the impending festivities.

**Tolon Makili - Call to the Festival**

- a) **Mankan:** The sound - Origin: Guinea Highlands
- b) **Lama:** Harmony - Origin: Guinea Highlands
- c) **Sofas:** The warriors - Origin: Guinea Highlands
- d) **Zaguila:** Rhythm of Celebration - Origin: Forest Region
- e) **Kadan:** Rhythm of Celebration - Origin: Makono-Kankan - Guinea Highlands

The elder women of the village come to pay their respects to the widow, this happy scene is interrupted by the crazed elder son, who humiliates his mother yet again.

**Denke-Woroba:** Celebrating fecundity - Origin: Macenta-Forest Region

**Scene 2:**

On his way to participate in the celebrations, the Griot encounters a kora player and flautist and they play a plaintive melody to the delight of the gathering villagers, who join in.

**Nya Nya Le:** A song of consolation - Origin: Kouroussa - (Malinke) Guinea Highlands

The elder son aggresses the musicians who leave the stage. Falling prey to his passions and flouting noble African traditions, he attempts to rape a young girl. Horrified, the Griot manages to restrain him.

**Sila Tounounama:** 'I have lost my way' - Origin: Manadingo-Gabou - Guinea-Bissau

The initiates are instructed in their chosen professions.

**Gombo:** Song of the Fetish Priest - Origin: Macenta - Forest Region

The male initiates are subjected to a number of ordeals, tests of strength and agility in combat.

**Baw O:** Rhythm and percussion - Origin: Macenta - Forest Region

## Scene 2:

### Return to the Village

The villagers prepare for the initiates' homecoming

**N'Denouyo:** Song of Welcome - Origin: Soussou - Forekariah Coastal Guinea

**Dondoli Kourou:** Reception - Origin: Soussou - Forekariah Coastal Guinea

The girl initiates from Coastal Guinea return to the village.

**Mane Benna:** Song of the initiate - Origin: Soussou - Forekariah - Coastal Guinea

The boy initiates from the Guinean Highlands return to the village.

**Kassa Don (Tamakan):** The march of the giants - Origins: Siguiiri - Guinea Highlands

The girl initiates from the Forest Region return to the village.

**Zadekoue:** Dance of the female initiates - Origin: Macenta - Forest Region

The boy initiates from Central Guinea return to the village.

**Koumoudiki:** Dance of the male initiates - Origin: Koniagui - Koundara - Central Guinea

The noble Griot sings his song of welcome.

**Nimbango:** Praise to the Goddess of Fecundity - Origin: Katako - Boke - Coastal Guinea

**La Houniyo:** Song of Celebration - Origin: Kissidougou - Forest Region

**Guinee Wely:** Song of Celebration - Origin: Pita - Central Guinea

The village sings a song of celebration, featuring the kora, flute and bolon.

**Gbadjala:** Ballad for young girls - Origin: Mandingo - Gabou - Guinea Bissau

**Sila Tounounama:** 'I have lost my way' - Origin: Mandingo - Gabou - Guinea-Bissau

The Griot sings a song of advice to the young people of the village, reminding them of the great sadness brought to the village by the elder son; entreating them not to make the same mistake, bringing tears to the eyes of their mothers.

**Mokana Mousso Lakassi:** Don't make the woman cry - Origin: Kankan - Guinea Highlands

### The Finale

**Silo:** The Path: music and lyrics - Origin: Mandingo - Gabou Guinea-Bissau

Mortified by his behavior, the villagers leave him to his own devices. Once alone, the full dimensions of his tortured spirit are revealed.

**Wakee:** Rhythm and percussion. Origin - Peuhl - Central Guinea

At the Lake's edge the fishermen continue their work, using every form of traditional fishing implements.

**Somonodon:** Dance and song of the fishermen. Origin: Guinea Highlands

**Heda:** Rhythm and percussion - Origin: Peuhl - Central Guinea

**Djagba:** Rhythm and percussion - Origin: Macenta - Forest Region

**Kadan:** Rhythm of celebration - Origin: Makono-Kankan - Guinea Highlands

The youngest son catches a prize fish, which he and his brother fight over. In the midst of this dispute, the bull returns, the fisherman flee, several of them wounded. In his madness, the elder son, oblivious to the danger, tries to escape with the fish. The bull wounds him and carries him off on its horns.

**Guimi Nyaki:** The buzzing of the bees - Origin: Peuhl - Central Guinea

Sorrowfully, the Griot informs the mother of the tragedy. The youngest son enters bearing his brother's blood stained shirt. Arming himself with bow and arrows he sets off to seek revenge. His mother, distraught at losing both of her sons, runs off into the forest.

**Sila Ye Minto:** 'Where is the Path' - Origin: Mandingo - Guinea Highlands

### Scene 3:

#### The Fruit Harvest

In a nearby village, young male and female villagers use the occasion of the fruit Harvest to frolic and flirt with each other.

**Karan-Karan:** Pastoral Music - Origin: Guinea Highlands

**Kanakassi:** 'Don't Cry' - Origin: Guinea Highlands

**Naye-Naye (Pengoloya)** Music and lyrics - lullaby - Origin: Boke - Coastal Guinea

**Tombo Nagbe:** The harvest - music and lyrics - Origin: Guinea Highlands

The celebration is interrupted by the bull who bursts into the gathering still carrying the unfortunate youth. The villagers flee. Throwing his senseless victim to the ground, the beast gallops off. The anguished widow arrives and finds her son. Failing to revive him, she begins dragging him to safety.

**Messe:** Mother's milk - Origin; Baga - Coastal Guinea

The bull returns to the clearing where he had left his victim, enraged at his disappearance, the beast swirls around in a dance of fury.

**N'Goron:** The Bull's Dance - Rhythm and percussion - Origin: Guinea Highlands

In the village the young harvesters return and the games continue.

**So-Lawolili:** Celebratory rhythm - Origin: Guinea Highlands

**Tantamba:** Rhythm and percussion of the Landouma - Origin: Boke - Coastal Guinea

The youngest son arrives and asks the villagers if they have seen or heard anything about the bull of his brother. They tell him what happened earlier, showing him the direction that the bull had taken.

**Macei-Fare:** Rhythm and percussion - Origin: Coastal Guinea

### Scene 4:

The courageous widow continues dragging her son's body towards the safety of their village. She pleads to the heavens for the strength to continue.

**Gna La Sa Mounay:** Lament from the Landouma - Origin: Boke - Coastal Guinea

The bull appears, triumphant. The widow shields her son's body in a last vain effort to protect him. The young son enters and challenges the bull who attacks and finally wounds the brave youth. As the bull prepares to charge for the last time, the Khême Kouyé appears, brandishing the sacred horsetail. The bull is frozen, unable to advance on his victims. Dismissing the beast who submissively withdraws, the Giant then raises up the youngest son and heals his wounds. He then revives the elder son.

**N'Goron:** The Bull's Dance - Rhythm and percussion - Origin: Guinea Highlands

Clean of heart and spirit, the elder son prostrates himself before the Giant and then embraces his mother and brother, begging their forgiveness. Their shouts of joy attract the villagers and a great crowd gathers to celebrate the return of their beloved sister and her two sons. Remembering his past behavior the reformed youth is filled with shame and decides to leave the village. The young girl who had been the victim of the attempted rape, calls him back to the gathering, where he is surrounded by the villagers who, with great love and affection show him that he is fully forgiven. Overjoyed, the whole village begins to dance and sing proclaiming their happiness and contentment.

**M'Besoma:** Song of Farewell to Evil - Origin: Guinean Highlands

Suddenly, the celebration is interrupted with thunderous drumming and the solemn sound of the sacred horns. The Khême Kouyé reappears to announce the arrival of a momentous occasion. The time for initiation has come. The Fetish Priest enters and bows before the Giant, who orders him to carry the young girls and boys into the forest.

**Woleli:** The Call: Rhythm and percussion - Origin: Guinea Highlands

**Keela:** The Message - Origin: Guinea Highlands

The mothers sing as they see their children leaving, praying that they will come back safe and sound.

**Babawouye:** Salutation - Origin: Macenta-Forest Region

## Intermission

### Act Two - In the Sacred Forest

#### Scene 1:

**Initiation:** The Fetish Priest, his assistants and the forest spirits gather to begin the initiation ritual.

**Kengoue:** The sound of the Crin - Origin: Macenta - Forest Region

The young girls arrive for initiation.

**Babawouye:** Music and lyrics - Origin: Macenta - Forest Region

The boys arrive for initiation.

**Simina:** Music and lyrics - Origin: Macenta - Forest Region

The young initiates are offered to the great Nimba - Goddess of fecundity - where, in the most secret part of the initiation ceremony, they are cleansed and prepared for their passage into adulthood.

**Serebondi:** Music and lyrics celebrating fecundity - Origin: Macenta - Forest Region

The Timonia - Goddess of purification - gives birth to the girls.

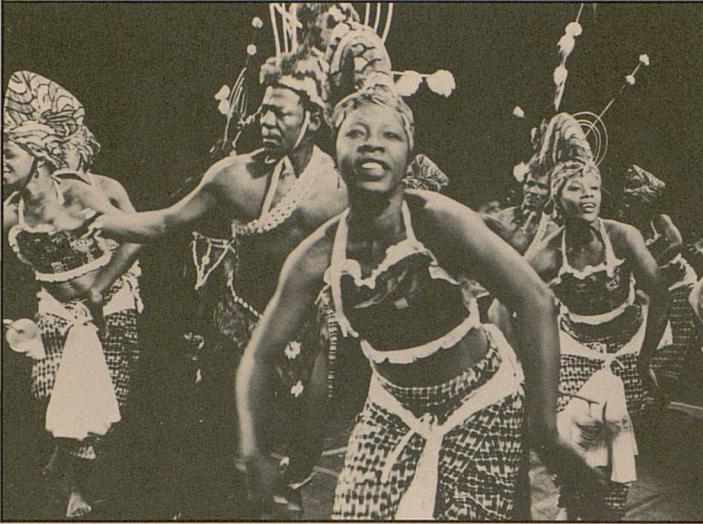
**Synthe Fare:** The Dance of Fire - Origin: Soussou - Bouffa - Coastal Guinea

**Mane Benna:** Song of the Initiate - Origin: Soussou - Forekariah - Coastal Guinea

The boys come forth from the Timonia and are received by the Fetish Priest.

**Koliba:** Dance of the Fetish Priest - Origin: Macenta - Forest Region

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



In an illustrious career spanning almost four decades, **Les Ballets Africains** has performed in the four corners of the world and is universally recognized as Africa's most renowned and accomplished touring company. The distinguished Guinean choreographer Keita Fodeba formed the ensemble in 1952 from the cream of Guinean artists. Between 1952 and 1958, they performed all over the world to considerable public and critical

acclaim, appearing in major theatres and astounding audiences everywhere.

After the country won its independence in 1958, the company became the national ensemble of the Republic of Guinea. Since that time, the company has been recognized and encouraged in their role of roving ambassadors, carrying with them on their travels the pride and aspirations of their people. The company's ultimate mission is to foster a greater understanding of Africa with a view to creating favorable conditions for a healthy and fruitful cooperation between Africa and the rest of the world.

Whether in Sydney, Rio, Berlin, Tokyo, Moscow or Los Angeles, their performance has always received tumultuous acclaim. Today, with the continued encouragement of a dynamic and supportive Guinean Ministry of Culture, Les Ballets Africains tours extensively, sometimes remaining on the road for as long as two years at a time.

This company of 35 dancers and musicians performs a vast repertoire which includes a blend of traditional dance, music and story-telling, laced with superb demonstrations of spectacle, acrobatics, comedy and drama. The dances represent the four natural regions of Guinea and feature a wide array of musical instruments including the Kora, the Peuhl flute and the Balophone as well as countless percussion instruments, notably the Djimbe and the Doundoun, for which Guinea is famous. Brilliantly colored costumes and pulsing rhythms add to the excitement. Les Ballets Africains reminds all Africans of the richness and splendor of their heritage and allows others to appreciate the vivid imagery and gain an understanding of African culture.

*This marks the company's second visit to Ann Arbor under UMS auspices.*

**The Republic of Guinea** is situated on the west coast of Africa. It goes deep inland and is bordered by Guinea Bisseau, Senegal, Mali, Cote D'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Guinea can be divided into four natural regions: Haute Guinea, Maritime Guinea, Forest Region and Fouta Djallon. These areas constitute some of the most fantastic and varied scenery in West Africa, from humid coastal plains and swamps to the fertile and forested hills and plateaus of the interior.

The population of seven million are mostly Muslim and consist of a number of ethnic groups, the three principal ones being the Sousou from the coast and the Mandike and Fulani in the north and central regions. The main languages are those of these three groups, with French being the official national language.