

Mamady Keita's "Kassa"

BY B. MICHAEL WILLIAMS

MAMADY KEITA IS AMONG THE foremost jembe players in the world. A longtime member and former artistic director of the Djoliba National Ballet of Guinea, he now resides in Belgium, where he continues to perform and teach the rhythms and culture of his native land. His recordings, on the

Fonti Musicali label, exemplify the artistry of the jembe.

This transcription of "Kassa" comes from Mamady's first CD recording, *Wassolon* (Fonti Musicali fmd 159), with his ensemble known as Sewa Kan. "Kassa" is a traditional Malinke rhythm of harvest, accompanying the work of

farmers in the fields. The ensemble on this recording consists of one lead jembe, one supporting jembe, and three graduated bass drums: a low-pitched dundun, middle-pitched sangba (on which is attached a bell) and high-pitched kenkeni, along with a gourd rattle (shekere) called djabara.

Kassá Mamady Keita (Jembe Ensemble)

Transcription by Michael Williams

Intro
(Fade in)

The musical score is written for seven instruments: Lead Jembe, Jembe 2, Bell, Sangba, Kenkeni, Dundun, and Shekere. The time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two measures. The first measure shows the instruments gradually entering. The second measure shows the instruments playing together. The Lead Jembe and Jembe 2 parts are represented by horizontal lines with a small vertical bar indicating a strike. The Bell part consists of a series of 'x' marks. The Sangba, Kenkeni, and Dundun parts are represented by musical notation with stems and flags. The Shekere part is represented by horizontal lines with a small vertical bar indicating a strike.

All parts gradually louder until call is sounded.

The performance begins with the dunduns and bell alone playing an interlocking pattern that gradually increases in volume, setting up a call-and-response vocal between Keita and the ensemble. At the song's conclusion, a jembe call is sounded and the drumming begins in earnest. The ensemble of cyclical, inter-

locking rhythms supports Keita's virtuosic jembe solo—a dazzling display of improvisational skill. The call-and-response vocal returns in the middle of the performance, this time interspersed with short statements from Keita's solo jembe.

Keita's solo initially grows out of a leading motive characterized by a steady

off-beat pattern (see bar 4), which interlocks with the fixed accompaniment motive of the supporting jembe. This leading motive is gradually transcended, however, as the soloist begins to explore new realms of time perception through the use of polyrhythm (also referred to in this article as "cross rhythm"), syncopation

	Jembe			Sangba, Kenkeni, Dundun		
Notation Key						
	Tone	Slap	Muffled Slap	Open Tone	Muffled Tone (stick press)	Optional Notes

and tonal variation achieved through various combinations of slaps and tones (also referred to here as “tonal configuration” or “sonority patterning”).

In this improvisation, Keita shows a distinct preference for the 4:3 cross rhythm created through a rhythmic sequence consisting of a triplet followed by a single 16th note. This sequence may be found in various tonal configurations throughout the solo (see bars 20, 47, 49 and 61). A partial statement of this same sequence may be found in bar 13, as well as in the call sounded in bar 1 and again in bar 81.

Another example of the 4:3 cross rhythm may be found at bar 91, where the cross rhythm is created within a fixed 16th pattern. A ternary sonority pattern

(slap, slap, tone) is executed within an overall binary (16th) subdivision to create a polyrhythmic relationship to the main quarter-note pulse. This use of tonal configuration to create polyrhythm may also be found at bar 25, where a 3:2 cross rhythm is created through the sounding of a binary sonority pattern (slap, slap, tone, tone) within an overall ternary (16th triplet) subdivision.

Two additional examples of altered time perception deserve mention. At bar 58, a four-bar phrase is constructed using a triplet/duplet rhythmic sequence. This series of triplet/duplet figures begins with a contracted gesture consisting of a triplet followed by a single 16th note. This creates an anticipation of each main beat over the span of three bars, culminating in the now-familiar 4:3 triplet/16th cross rhythm in bar 61. The aural result of this systematic procedure is a gradual increase in rhythmic tension, which is ultimately resolved on the final beat of the four-bar phrase.

The same triplet/duplet figure (which ultimately derives from the call motive in bar 1) is used in a slightly different manner in bars 83-85. Here, rather than contracting the gesture by a 16th note as he did in bar 58, Mamady *extends* the motive by a 16th note, creating what amounts to a 4:5 cross rhythm that undergoes two complete sequences. The first sequence begins on the downbeat of bar 83 and runs to the end of beat 1 in bar 84 (five beats), and the second runs from beat 2 of bar 84 to the end of beat 2 in bar 85 (also five beats). In each of these five-beat spans, the triplet/duplet figure occurs exactly four times, hence the 4:5 cross rhythm.

Though his polyrhythmic excursions

are indeed impressive, the driving force behind Keita's solo technique may be found in his masterful manipulation of syncopation together with an almost melodic approach to improvisation achieved through sonority patterning. Some notable examples of this technique may be found at bars 27-30, 32-34, 38-42, 51-53, 62-80, 92-96 and 100-108.

One will note the conspicuous absence of bass strokes in both solo and supporting jembe parts in this transcription. According to Mark Sunkett, it is common among Guinean drummers to favor the slap and open tones, as contrasted with drummers from Mali, for example, who utilize the bass stroke prominently (Sunkett 1995, 36-38). In his article “A Guide to the Jembe,” Eric Charry alludes to this phenomenon in his description of the fundamental jembe accompaniment patterns, in which he notes the occasional omission of the bass stroke by Guinean players (Charry 1996, 69).

This transcription reveals Mamady Keita's mastery of improvisation—a skillful juxtaposition of polyrhythmic ideas with quasi-melodic, syncopated lines. Study and practice of Keita's work provides valuable insight into the technique and structure of jembe improvisation. What cannot be captured on paper is the emotion and expressiveness, the sheer joy and power of his performance—an experience well worth hearing for oneself.

REFERENCES

- Charry, Eric. 1996. “A Guide to the Jembe,” *Percussive Notes*, 34/2: 66-72.
 Keita, Mamady. 1989. *Wassolon*. Fonti Musicali, fmd 159.
 Sunkett, Mark. 1995. *Mandiani Drum and Dance*. Tempe, AZ: White Cliffs Media.

A DAY OF PERCUSSION WITH SPECIAL GUEST BOB BECKER

Composer in Residence at the Virginia Waterfront International Arts Festival
Saturday, May 3, 1997

Chandler Recital Hall, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA

Bob Becker, a founding member of the percussion ensemble *Nexus*, will join guest artists Chris Norton, marimba soloist, University of Western Kentucky; John Federson, timpanist, North Carolina Symphony; Eric Schweikert, timpanist, Fort Wayne Symphony, and Rober W. Cross, principal percussionist, Virginia Symphony, in a concert of Becker's music from his solo CD album, *There Is A Time*.

Preceding the concert, The Tidewater Chapter of the Percussive Arts Society and Old Dominion University, together with the Festival, will host a “Day of Percussion” at Old Dominion University on Saturday, May 3, featuring the percussionists mentioned above.

Later that evening, the American premiere of Bob Becker's full orchestral work, *Music On The Moon*, will be performed by The Virginia Symphony on the same program as *Carmina Burana* at Chrysler Hall in Norfolk at 8 p.m.



RHYTHM FUSION

Import and Export Percussion Instruments of the World

Congas	Shakers
Djimbes	Rattles
Frame Drums	Whistles
Doumbeks	Sound Makers
Rain Sticks	Gifts & Art
Tapes & International CDs	

1541C Pacific Ave. • Santa Cruz, CA
 Mail order: P.O. Box 3226, Santa Cruz, CA 95063
 (831) 423-2048 Fax: (831) 423-2073 Dealers Welcome!
 E-MAIL: Rhythm@cruzio.com HTTP://www.Rhythmfusion.com



Frank Giorgini's UDU DRUMS
 UDU CLAYTONE DRUMS with electronic capabilities
 UDU Inc. Rt. 67 Box 126, Freehold, NY 12431
 (518) 634-2559 - Fax (518) 634-2488
 1-800 UDU-DRUM

Kassá

Mamady Keita
(Solo Jembe)

Transcription by Michael Williams

1

Call

3

3

> > >

4

(Play 6x)

7

3

3

10

3

3

3

3

13

3

3

16

3

19

3

3

3

3

22

3

3

25

28

31

(Play 4x)

34

37

To vocal solo

38

41

44

47

50

53

56

58

61

64

67

70

73

76

79

82

(Kenkeni, sangba, dundun return to intro and vamp to end.)

85

88

91

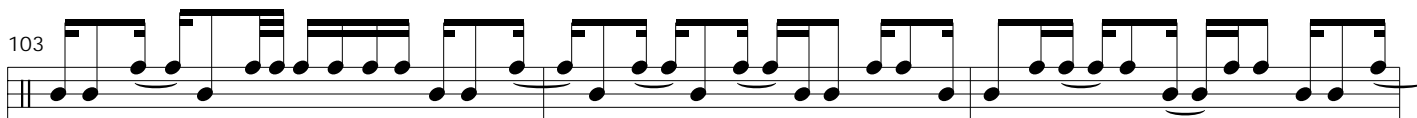
94

97

Gradually softer to end

(Play 9x)

100



Repeat ad lib and fade

PN

EXPERIMENTAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

*Quarterly Journal for the Design, Construction
and Enjoyment of Unusual Instruments*

Who's doing what with unusual musical instruments
— articles on instruments of every description,
discussions of acoustics, tools and techniques,
reviews of literature & recordings.

Subscriptions are \$24/year
(U.S. \$27 in Canada; U.S. \$34 overseas).
Send that amount, or write for a sample issue, to:

EXPERIMENTAL
MUSICAL
INSTRUMENTS
Box 784 PN,
Nicasio, CA 94946



Subscribe To **DRUM!** The Alternative Magazine For Drummers & Percussionists

Recent issues have featured the
drummers of **Lollapalooza**, **Terry
Bozzio**, **Dennis Chambers**,
Vinnie Paul, **Ed Mann**, **Neil
Peart**, **Don Alias** and **Cindy
Blackman**, plus up-to-date
equipment and drumming news
months before it appears in any other drumming magazine,
and lessons in ethnic rhythms, hand drums, jazz and funk.



**AND NOW YOU GET TWO EXTRA ISSUES PER YEAR
AT OUR REGULAR SUBSCRIPTION PRICE!**

Yes, I want to subscribe to **DRUM!** I've enclosed \$19.95 for
eight issues. (Canada & Mexico: \$35.95; Foreign: \$54.95.)

Method of payment: Check/Money Order VISA MasterCard
Card # _____ Ex. Date _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Prov. _____

Zip/P.C. _____

Send to: DRUM!, 1275 Lincoln Ave., #13, San Jose, CA
95113. For faster service FAX this form to 408-971-0382.

Basic rate: \$19.95. Canada & Mexico: \$35.95. All other countries: \$54.95.
Orders are payable in U.S. dollars by check, money order VISA or MasterCard.
Your first issue will be shipped immediately by first class mail. **PAS**

PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP NOW AVAILABLE!

PAS announces the Larrie Londin Memorial Scholarship. To apply for this scholarship send PAS an application form, a three-minute video, and a 100- to 200-word essay explaining how the scholarship would be used (college, summer camp, special course, private teacher, etc.); and why you qualify (financial need is **not** a consideration). All application materials must be in the Lawton, Oklahoma PAS office **no later than June 2, 1997**. Winners will be contacted around June 16, 1997.

Larrie Londin Memorial Scholarship eligibility: For ages 18-24 (scholarships up to \$1000), the student must be enrolled in a school of music at an accredited college or university. For ages 17 and under (scholarships up to \$500) there are no special requirements.

Call the PAS office at (405) 353-1455 for an application form.





EQUILIBRIUM

MOON RISE

CHRIS & SHOKO PERCUSSION DUO

Knock out young superstars of the future! Command performances for The Emperor & Empress of Japan.

Feel the culture-shock of these two percussionists

"shout, dance, bound...an abundance of unfolding expression"

All originals with Senon Mouse and Afro Blue to round out this superb CD.

Released in North America by arrangement with Ongaku No Tomo Sha

CALLIOPE SWINES "BACK FROM THE FUTURE!"

Xylophone, Hand Drums, Recorders, Sackbuts, Crumhorns, Viols & Schwams!

Hot Picks of the Month 1. "Calliope Dances. A Renaissance Revel" --Playboy Magazine 3

"The Superb ensemble Calliope consists of four musicians who sing and play their hearts out." --San Francisco Chronicle

"Ben Harm's amazes with his hand drumming virtuosity and unique stylings of captivating solo xylophone with Renaissance Band arrangements of George Hamilton Green's Log Cabin Blues, Jovial Jasper, Cross Corners, Rainbow Ripples"

UNICYCLE MAN - TED PILTZECKER

"Since vibraphone is not all that common an instrument, it's not that often I get to hear a new CD from a vibist. And, even more of a rarity is when it is a collection as enjoyable as Ted Piltzcker's "Unicycle Man." Great tunes, and great playing by a truly all-star line-up. This made my afternoon!"

--Gary Burton

VEREDEROS - MUSIC FOR FLUTE AND PERCUSSION PAYTON MAC DONALD AND JESSICA JOHNSON

"Outstand performances of contemporary flute and percussion music including Lou Harrison's First Concerto for Flute and Percussion and Cindy McTee's Stepping Out. Including six new works by Michael Udow, Payton MacDonald and Jessica Johnson. Rhythmically resounding, melodious, compositionally sound--this one's a gem!"

--Imagination '97

SHATTERED MIRROR - MICHAEL UDOW

"a rara avis amongst percussionists-a performer and pedagogue who also displays a fecundity of imagination and a flair for composition...showcases his compositional talents in five works, proves adept at portraying contrasting sonic landscapes, from peaks of passionate intensity, such as the opening measures of The Shattered Mirror and the virtuosic outbursts in Bog Music, to hypnotic, trance-like valleys, such as the chant-like marimba solo in Bird Whispered, Your Children and Dying."

--John R. Raush PN - Feb. 1996

IMAGINARY LANDSCAPE

"Knockout performances by this high-energy ensemble captures the essence of timbral subtleties of exquisite percussion playing in this high-end audiophile recording supervised by many of the composers." --Imagination '97 (Rouse - Ku-Ka-Ilimoku, Spencer - Tribeca Sunflower, Ishii Marimbastuck, Cage - Imaginary Landscape No. 3, Blume - Viny, Preehl - A Cord of Three Strands, Beavers - Shadowplays

BORDER CROSSING

"This high-energy, contemporary percussion CD contains seven seriously eclectic compositions, with over 30 different performers featured. Odun Badagris by Christopher Rouse highlights the performance of a superb percussion quintet. Michael Udow's vapor Trails - leaving our ears smokin'." --Jim Lambert - PN December 1996 (also includes Udow-Flashback, Hollander-The Whole Toy Laid Down,

Shapiro-Sextet, Vayo-Border Crossing, Daugherty-Lex)

-- NANCY & MICHAEL UDOW

"Dynamic Music & Dance Duo" "Not to be Missed" "Perfect Equilibrium"

VISIT EQUILIBRIUM'S WEB SITE AT: <http://members.mol.com/equilibri> e-mail: equilibri@aol.com

or reach us by mail: EQUILIBRIUM, P.O. Box 305, DEXTER, MI 48130 or by phone or FAX: (313) 426-5814



SPECIALTY BRASS MALLETS
THREADED & EPOXIED IN 6 SIZES

#1 & #2 The Magic Flute Mallets,
3/8 inch up to 1 inch



LOG DRUMS: Superbly hand crafted
from 1 pitch to 3 chromatic octaves!

DESIGNED BY MICHAEL UDOW



FANTASTIC PICCOLO
WOODBLOCKS 8 SIZES

Ideal for Marimba Spiritual,
Marimbastuck, Music of Chris Rouse
& your creative improv