

Yacouba Sissoko - Short Bio (November 2021)

Master kora player Yacouba Sissoko devotes his musical gift to expand the awareness of West African history and culture, spread the word of peace, and empower his listeners to take charge and realize their imagined futures. His performances have a magical effect on audiences as he skillfully transforms the traditional songs and stories of his forefathers into modern day messages of peace, love, and harmony.

Yacouba was born to a well-known Djeli family in Kita, Mali. For centuries, Djelis have been the musical storytellers, a position that is inherited through a family bloodline. Highly respected within their communities, they are the keepers of the factual history and the fictional fables of past rulers, nobles, social groups and families. The kora, a 21-stringed plucked instrument with a gourd resonator, is the traditional instrument accompanying their songs.

At the age of 9, Yacouba started learning the kora and the oral traditions associated with it from his grandfather. By 15, he was touring the country sharing the stories passed down through his family for centuries. He attended the National Institute of the Arts in Bamako, where he immediately caught the attention of the music world there and began touring with noted artists and ensembles such as Ami Koita, Kandia Kouyate, the Raoul Fulero Ensemble, and l'Ensemble National du Mali (the orchestra that both his mother and grandmother sang with).

Rooted to give back to the community, Yacouba offers cultural programs and benefit concerts all over the world. He continues to blend his virtuosity effortlessly with other musical styles, ranging from Indian ragas to Appalachian tunes. Currently, Yacouba can be seen performing regularly with Regina Carter and his own band, SIYA.