



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Music Initiative

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Aga Khan Music Initiative and Grammy nominee Bassekou Kouyaté create “Garana Roots”



Beirut, Lebanon and Tunis, Tunisia, 14-15 May 2016 - Aga Khan Music Initiative and Grammy nominee Bassekou Kouyaté from Mali team up to create “Garana Roots” – a music project that celebrates the heritage and centuries’-old music from Garana, historic region in the centre of Mali where Bassekou hails from.

The world premiere of “Bassekou Kouyaté & Garana Roots” will be presented at the Spring Festival. Long-term co-presenting partner of AKMI, Spring Festival is a biennial event in North Africa and the Middle East. The first concert will take place at the Sunflower Theatre in Beirut on Saturday 14 May and then at the Hamra Theatre in Tunis on Sunday 15 May.

Multi-award winner, with four acclaimed solo albums and numerous collaborations with Toumani Diabate, Ali Farka Toure, Taj Mahal, Damon Albarn, Bela Fleck and many others, Bassekou is surely one of Africa’s most charismatic and brilliant performers, known for his bluesy-rock sound that fuses the music of his native Segou in central Mali with popular African-American styles.

In his first AKMI-commissioned programme, Bassekou Kouyaté & Garana Roots, Bassekou and his fellow artists showcase the rich soundscape of the middle Niger valley and feature entrancing songs and hypnotic rhythms of local dances. In the hands of this great maestro, Garana Roots will bring these sounds to international audiences for the first time, revealing a new side to Mali’s celebrated musical heritage.

Garana Roots is a quintet led by master ngoni player, Bassekou Kouyate, with his eldest son Mamadou Kouyaté on ngoni bass; Moctar Kouyaté on calabash and percussion; his daughter Oumou Deli Kouyaté on vocals; and special guest, legendary singer and one-string fiddle player, Zoumana (‘Zou’) Tereta. Zoumana’s rasping vocals and virtuoso playing of the soku are quintessentially from the region of Segou, and have already featured on Bassekou’s albums, they have won Zou a cult following.

The Spring Festival was created and launched in 2004 and over the years, has worked towards developing Spring Festival into something beyond a festival—it is a platform that links audiences and artists, art and issues, the global stage with local stages, and people beyond the barriers of borders. Building on the foundations set by the previous editions in offering a programme that celebrates both accomplishment and diversity, this year’s artist line-up is as innovative as it is inspiring. Our month-long, which opens in Beirut on 28 April 2016 and runs in both Beirut and Tunis until 26 May 2016, features over 100 artists from different

countries, including China, Lebanon, Kuwait, India, Mali, Iraq, Palestine, Switzerland, Tunisia, Algeria, Canada, Syria, Jordan and Portugal.

Bassekou Kouyaté & Garana Roots is curated by the Aga Khan Music Initiative, for a world premiere at the Spring Festival 2016.

For more information on the performances and to purchase tickets, please follow the links:

Programme: <http://mawred.org/programs-and-activities/spring-festival/>

Beirut tickets: https://www.antoineticketing.com/index.php?event_id=2111

Tunis tickets: <http://www.tiklik.tn/catalogsearch/result/?q=bassekou&x=0&y=0>

NOTES

Bassekou Kouyaté, from Mali, is a master player of the ngoni, one of West Africa's oldest instruments. A griot (hereditary musician) from a long line of ngoni players, Bassekou has taken this traditional lute (which may date as far back as ancient Egypt), with its skin sound table and long fretless neck, to audiences around the world, transforming it through the use of amplification, pedal effects and playing techniques borrowed from the electric guitar.

Multi-award winner, with four acclaimed solo albums and numerous collaborations (Toumani Diabate, Ali Farka Toure, Taj Mahal, Damon Albarn, Dee Dee Bridgwater, Bela Fleck, AfroCubism and many others), Bassekou is surely one of Africa's most charismatic and brilliant performers, known for his bluesy-rock sound that fuses the music of his native Segou in central Mali with popular African-American styles.

But no matter how far he has wandered into the world of fusion, Bassekou remains firmly in touch with his roots – in his home village, Garana, where he grew up, and where most of his family still live and practice centuries'-old music of oral tradition. This is the inspiration behind Bassekou's new project, Garana Roots.

As a boy, Bassekou learnt the styles and songs of all these ethnicities, playing at life-cycle and other celebratory festivities in the villages dotted through the countryside around Garana. The idea behind Garana Roots is to showcase the rich soundscape of this part of the middle Niger valley. Garana Roots will feature entrancing songs like Mari Sow, Bina Ba and Njaaro, evocative of the pre-colonial era. It will include the hypnotic, syncopated rhythms of local dances such as the bara and janjigi, which remain largely unknown outside the region. In the hands of this great maestro, Garana Roots will bring these sounds to international audiences for the first time, revealing a new side to Mali's celebrated musical heritage.

Aga Khan Music Initiative is an interregional music and arts education programme with worldwide performance, outreach, mentoring, and artistic production activities. The Initiative was launched by His Highness the Aga Khan to support talented musicians and music educators working to preserve, transmit, and further develop their musical heritage in contemporary forms. The Music Initiative began its work in Central Asia, subsequently expanding its cultural development activities to include artistic communities and audiences in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. AKMI designs and implements a country-specific set of activities for each country into which it invests and works to promote revitalisation of cultural heritage both as a source of livelihood for musicians and as a means to strengthen pluralism in nations where it is challenged by social, political, and economic constraints.

Read online at: <https://www.akdn.org/press-release/aga-khan-music-initiative-and-grammy-nominee-bassekou-kouyaté-create-“garana-roots”>