

Farafina Sangbaralla – Nansady Keita
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In Nansady Keita's new release, "Farafina Sangbaralla," centuries-old musical traditions meet the next generation of great *djembe folas* (djembe players) from Guinea, West Africa.

Through a succession of beautiful rhythms and songs, Keita's ensemble pays tribute to the artistic and cultural traditions created by the African Malinké people of his home village (*Farafina Sangbaralla* means the "Black People of Sangbaralla" in the Malinke language). Sangbaralla is located in the northeastern part of Guinea in the Hamana Region, where the djembe, kesedenen, sangban and dununba drums were born.

Nansady Keita's powerful djembe solos offer levels of clarity, precision and sheer speed that rival the most accomplished players in the world today. This is particularly apparent on the opening track, *Dootalama*, where Keita's lead djembe sounds an energetic clarion call, inviting us to join in the singing, dancing and joyful celebration to come.

The CD provides an acoustic window into the heart of the rhythmic repertoire of the Hamana region in Guinea, including songs from the Dunun, Soli, Kassa and Mamaya families, among others. Each track expresses Keita's deep knowledge of Malinké music and decades of study under great djembe masters, including Djoumeh Camara and uncle, world-renowned *djembe fola*, Famoudou Konaté.

Farafina Sangbaralla presents a wonderful opportunity to experience the intricate polyrhythms of the traditional djembe orchestra, often joined by the balafon (African xylophone) and bolon (string bass). Together, these instruments create the foundation on which griottes (oral historians) sing of the joys and challenges of village life and the essential importance of community -- a message which rings true to both African and Western ears today.

- review by Amy Lusk of *Diamana Diya*, Chicago, Illinois