

Adelaide Festival Review: Horizons: Trio Da Kali

A beautifully engulfing mix of Mande and West African music with traditional instruments creatively and complementarily paired with European classical instruments

4.5

All the way from Western Africa, **Trio Da Kali** delightfully delivered Adelaide audiences a belting of brilliant vocals paired with traditional instruments in the Mande griot music style – but with a twist, as they were complementarily paired with European classical instruments played by the members of the Australian String Quartet.

Adelaide was lucky to have the opportunity to experience **Trio Da Kali** who had travelled all the way from Mali, a landlocked country in West Africa, to bring their Mande griot music to South Australia. This newly established trio, who have all known each other for years, is made up of a long line of distinguished griots – specialist hereditary musical artisans in the Mande culture. The trio includes Hawa Kassé Mady Diabaté on lead vocals, Fodé Lassana Diabaté on the Balafon (West African xylophone with calabash (gourds) tied underneath, which are used as resonators) and Mamadou Kouyaté on Bass ngoni (a four string bass made from a gourd) which provide rich new musical notes to Adelaide ears.

The evening was enthusiastically opened by curator of the performance, David Harrington, a professional violinist whose group Kronos had previously recorded with the fabulous **Trio Da Kali** who he raved about, and for good reason.

Pre-interval, **Trio Da Kali** performed solo, giving the audience an enchanting taste of the Mande culture's rich musical history, all the way from the other side of the world, with the musicians focussing on familiar songs that Hawa Kassé Mady grew up with. The trio's smiling and delightfully light-hearted energy was electric, flowing into the bodies of the mesmerised audience – especially from Fodé Lassana whose gleeful cheers and giggles spread a happy energy.

Post-interval, the headlining act was joined by members of the Australian String Quartet playing two violins, a viola (a slightly larger violin with a deeper sound) and a cello. These musicians added a dramatic flair to the traditional Mande griot tunes, with lighter elements of interspersed string plucking which beautifully complemented the bouncing playing of the Balafon and staccato vocals. The high energy continued between the disparate instruments as the musicians enthusiastically bounced off of each other.

Horizons: Trio Da Kali provided a taste of stunning music from the other side of the world, performing a blend of Mande music and classical European musical instruments, creating a performance deservedly worthy of its standing ovation. Throughout the performance, songs went from slower rhythms by the deep bass ngoni and gentler balafon playing interspersed with upbeat tunes bursting with powerful rounded vibrato vocals from Hawa Kassé Mady, which also smoothly slid back into deeper and subtler singing.

A note must be made of the beauty of many wood-based instruments, especially the resonating wooden sounds of the Balafon, within the famed wooden walls and ceiling of UKARIA, amplifying the immersive intensity and beauty of the performance.

If you missed it, you've missed a magical music moment for South Australia, where two very different musical cultures came together to create a beautifully cohesive blend of disparate yet complementary instruments, which still allowed the Mande griot music to be the shining star of the show.

Reviewed by **Georgina Smerd**