

Sidiki Conde

Guinea: dancer, choreographer, musician,
founder of Tokounou Dance Company

Object: krin log drum

*Kana miri fela morya ma ka dantambi, i ke wali
yiraka morlu la, ini sewa ila dunuya teroh.
(Mandinka)*

*[Don't think too much about your disability. Show
what you can do for society, and be grateful for this
life...and enjoy yourself.]*

All my education was in traditional music and dance. I lost the use of my legs when I was fourteen. Because of my disability, my father sent me to his village, Mansalia near the city of Kankan. One day, there was a big dance festival in the town. That dance inspired me and opened my mind. I forgot my pain and was full of happiness. One day, my uncle Nam Famoroko asked me what I wanted to do. He was blind but played the djembe (drum) so well. He played and I danced on my hands, beating the rhythm on the ground. He taught me how to play the drum. We played for the people, and they gave us rice and money, and so I came into my job. We formed a group to play for baby-naming ceremonies and festivals.

And then someone from the city of Kankan came to see us play and invited me to join the Orchestre National de Kankan. I was with them for five years, and then we performed at the national festival in Conakry. So that is how I travelled, group by group, all the way to the United States. I met Kemoko Sano and joined Les Merveilles de Guinee. He was my teacher about art and dance, and he gave me hope. First we toured in Guinea and, after that, we went to Mali. Then we had a chance in 1998 to come to New York City to perform at Lincoln Center. Kemoko Sano's tribe used the krin. They transmit messages like the telephone. When I first saw this, I asked him how they played it and he explained it to me. Before Les Ballets Africains would perform, they would use the krin. He gave it to me. Every time I play, I think of Mr. Sano.



Bio:

Sidiki Conde is a dancer, drummer, and singer from Guinea, West Africa, who, despite losing the use of his legs when he was 14, followed his dream to become a dancer. In 1986, he joined the dance company Les Merveilles de Guinee as rehearsal master and performed with them internationally. In 1999, Sidiki founded Tokounou, named after his tribal village, with veterans of Les Merveilles and Les Ballets Africains. Through Tokounou's song, dance, and musical arrangements, Conde celebrates the traditional arts of Guinea and chronicles his unique journey as a person with a disability. In 2007, he was honored by the National Endowment for the Arts with a National Heritage Fellowship. Sidiki leads mesmerizing performances that will thrill audiences with the power of the human spirit. Tokounou offers performances and workshops in traditional West African song and dance for adults and children of all ages and abilities. For more information, visit sidikiconde.com