

<b>Institution:</b> SOAS University of London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 33 - Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Curating new expressions of Mali's musical heritage: Trio De Kali and the Kronos Quartet		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2000–2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Professor Lucy Durán	Professor of Music	1993–present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> September 2015–31 July 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Durán's four decades of research on music of West Africa led her to form an ensemble of Malian musicians, Trio Da Kali, to revive a pre-colonial style now rarely performed. This ensemble has toured widely in the USA, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. They collaborated with the US-based string quartet, the Kronos Quartet, and the two ensembles released an award-winning album, Ladilikan, featuring new materials from further collaborations. This project generated artistic, educational and economic benefits for the musicians, music producers and audiences involved, with 17,000 album sales, 3,000,000 streams, 25,000 views on YouTube, also reaching nearly 5,000 people through concerts. Scores were downloaded nearly 640 times from the Kronos Quartet website 50 for the Future, securing a performance-based future for the music.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>In Mali, oral transmission of the specialized musical knowledge and skills of Mande music, and the repertoire and instruments of acoustic musical performance, are threatened by the impact of globalization and digital media. This heritage is now in danger of being eclipsed by global styles like hip-hop and by the presence of militants in Mali, who since 2012 have been attempting with violence to ban music throughout the country.</p> <p>Since 1993, Professor Lucy Durán has researched traditional styles and repertoires of the Mande, a widespread ethnic/linguistic people of Mali and neighbouring countries. She is the author of many research publications in ethnomusicological and African Studies journals and edited volumes, and producer of ethnographic films [3.4, 3.6]. Durán's research expertise in West African music and her knowledge of musical repertoires go hand-in-hand with her working relationships with leading performers. From 2009 to 2012 she was PI on the AHRC-funded Growing into Music (GBP496,872). Outputs included AHRC-award-winning films [3.5] documenting families of hereditary musicians teaching their children musical skills. Durán has increasingly prioritized the production of albums as a form of research-based advocacy for Mali's rich musical heritage. Producing CDs (23 albums featuring leading West African musicians) has become a major strand of her research methodology and outputs, as working with musicians in the studio provides deep insights into repertoire, aesthetics and style [3.2, 3.3].</p> <p>Collaborating in this way with celebrated custodians of the pre-colonial repertoires of hereditary musicians, in both the film and CD projects, brought to Durán's attention the potential for synergy between African and Western 'classical' traditions. These insights led to a series of creative musical projects intended to showcase and enhance Mali's rich pre-colonial musical heritage and to make it accessible to audiences around the world. The research explored dynamic heritage-making that could traverse different perspectives to increase its reach and audience, making it a lived tradition and livelihood.</p>		

In 2012, Durán was asked by the Aga Khan Music Programme to suggest Malian musicians whose style would complement the strings of a Western classical quartet. Her previous Grammy-nominated productions of Mali music had introduced her to the singer Hawa Kasseemady Diabaté and to the young musician Mamadou Kouyaté, player of the West African lute ngoni, as well as to Lassana Diabaté, master of the 22-key xylophone balafon, whom she chose as her musical advisor on *Growing into Music* (2009–2012). She invited the three musicians to form a new ensemble, Trio Da Kali, specifically to work with the Kronos Quartet, with a view to replicating a historic pre-colonial format and matching the acoustic presentation of Western classical music, but with a contemporary sound. She was arranger and co-producer with both ensembles as they created, performed and recorded new music together. This included two songs by gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, sung in Bambara (Mali's main language). Otherwise their music draws on a repertoire of Malian 'songs of advice' known in Bambara as *ladilikan* [3.4]. This in turn led to the award-winning album *Ladilikan* [3.1].

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 Durán, L. (2017). *Ladilikan: Trio Da Kali and Kronos Quartet* (CD and LP album). World Circuit Records WCD093. Music production and sleeve notes by L. Durán. Reviewed in *Songlines* 132 (2017), pp. 34–35. Submitted to REF2021. **Album of the Year awards from Songlines and fRoots (2018).**

3.2 Durán, L. (2011). 'Music production as tool of research and impact' (journal article). *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 20(2), pp. 229–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411912.2011.596653>. **Peer-reviewed**

3.3 Durán, L. (producer) and Kasse Mady Diabaté (2002). *Kassi Kasse – Mande Music from Mali* (CD album). Discos Corason/EMI Hemisphere 724354371325. Available on request. **Grammy Nomination (2003).**

3.4 Durán, L. (2017). "An Jèra Cèla" (We Share a Husband): Song as Social Comment on Polygamy in Southern Mali' (journal article). *Mande Studies*, 19, pp. 169–202. <https://doi.org/10.2979/mande.19.1.11> **Peer-reviewed**

3.5 Durán, L. (2013). *Growing into Music in Mali. Part I: Da kali – the pledge to the art of the griot; Part II: Do farala a kan: something has been added* (feature-length documentary films). [www.growingintomusic.co.uk](http://www.growingintomusic.co.uk) and [www.mali-cuba.com](http://www.mali-cuba.com) **Output from AHRC research grant**

3.6 Durán, L. and Diallo, M. (2017). *Tegere Tulon, handclapping songs of Mali* (film featuring Hawa Kasseemady Diabaté). Audio recordings and 18-minute documentary film shot in Mali, published on Kronos Quartet 50 for The Future website in 2018: <http://50fff.kronosquartet.org/composers/hawa-diabate>

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact of Durán's research on African music stemmed from a unique musical collaboration between the Kronos Quartet and Trio Da Kali. This project benefitted a) music performers, principally the world-renowned Kronos Quartet in their first production with Malian music and the musicians of Trio Da Kali, but also other hereditary musicians of West Africa, and other, especially young, string quartets; b) audiences in concert halls and festivals of the USA, UK, France, Spain, Australia and New Zealand; c) other producers, including a TV production company (ROOTS), and Instruments4africa. By bringing together the written and oral traditions of Western classical and Malian music, the project generated a) economic and professional development benefits to established Western and Malian performers, boosting creative expression among early career and young musicians; b) cultural, aesthetic and educational benefit to international audiences; and c) artistic and economic benefit to cultural producers in Mali and the USA, where global audiences for concerts, CDs, downloads and scores numbered at least 500,000.

#### *Impact on music performers: economic and professional development benefit to performers*

The Kronos-Da Kali collaboration, facilitated by Durán's research, was premiered live in the University of Maryland, USA in 2014 and performed at the Montreux Jazz Festival (2015, capacity audience of 500). It was recorded in 2015 by the prestigious UK label World Circuit Records and released in 2017. It was then performed to full-capacity audiences at venues including San Francisco Jazz Center, 2018 (audience of 800); Coutances Jazz Festival, Brittany, 2018 (1,000);

Barbican Centre, London, 2018 (2,000); Brighton Festival, 2018 (800). The May 2020 concert in Paris was cancelled due to COVID-19.

The resulting album *Ladilikan* (CD and LP) and its first release 'Eh Ya Ye' came top of the World Music Charts Europe for 3 months (2017) [5.1], received 5-star reviews in the UK national press, and won fRoots' Best album of the year 2017, as well as Songlines' Best World Music Album of 2017 and Best Fusion Album 2018 [5.2a, p3; 5.2b p6; 5.2c, p13]. It had sold 17,000 CDs and LPs, reached 3,000,000 streams [5.3a] and scored nearly 250,000 plays on YouTube by 10 June 2020 [5.3b and c]. Critical acclaim came from, among others, Folk Radio UK who described the album as 'A bold fusion of the musical traditions from the West and those of Africa', considering that 'If it is true that music crosses all boundaries and connects all of us with our common humanity . . . then *Ladilikan* shines brightly as a wonderful example of putting that idea into practice.' [5.4a] The Guardian viewed *Ladilikan* as 'a superb album', noting that 'It was Durán's matchmaking that brought [the groups] together' and that 'the traditional music they perform is an endangered species in contemporary Mali' [5.4b]. A concert review by music journalist Paul Bradshaw described how the combination of 'Hawa's emotional and soulful voice . . . along with a re-working of "God Shall Wipe All Tears Away", complete with Bambara lyrics' – the latter composed by Durán – 'resulted in an elegant and most memorable evening of totally uplifting music' [5.4c].

The project launched Trio Da Kali as an independent ensemble: an EP, *Trio Da Kali*, produced by Durán, appeared in 2015, and the group toured the USA in 2018. After seeing a performance in San Francisco, international tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussein commented: 'the music is so pristine and so pure and the positive energy just glows out of their being' [5.5]. The Kronos Quartet then released their scores for the project, and the first performance by the Trio with another string quartet took place at the Músicas de Mundo Madrid festival in June 2019, followed by their appearance at WOMADelaide festival 2020 where their performance with Pocket String Quartet was the first of its kind both in Australia and at the WOMAD festival [5.4d].

*Artistic benefit to Western and Malian performers through cross-traditional collaborations*  
By introducing Kronos Quartet to Malian music through Trio Da Kali, Durán supported creative innovations and the exchange of cultural traditions within a context of transforming traditional power relations. In this collaboration, Kronos notated fixed arrangements of Trio Da Kali's songs, whereas Trio Da Kali worked entirely by memory and oral transmission. With access to the music scores, any professional string quartet could perform this project with Trio Da Kali, whereas the Trio was indispensable. This reversed the usual power relations of African and Euro-American collaborations.

Before the project, neither the Kronos Quartet nor the Trio Da Kali musicians had experienced each other's music. David Harrington, leader of Kronos, found it 'incredible to be brought into a world of music I'd never encountered' [5.4b]. In a workshop at the Carnegie Hall (2016), the quartet discussed their experience of working with balafon player Lassana Diabaté and consequent transformations of their playing style [5.6]. Prior to joining the Trio, singer Hawa had no exposure to Western classical music, had never heard a string quartet or gospel, and had only once left Mali. One of the greatest voices of West Africa, Hawa remarked: 'before my encounter with Kronos, I had a lot of difficulties on stage, since I mainly had experience of performing at wedding parties in Mali. But once I began to sing with Kronos, I got many new ideas about how to perform on stage in concert' [5.5].

On the *Ladilikan* album, she performed 2 songs by gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, whose music she had never previously encountered; she commented that 'the experience of listening to Mahalia Jackson . . . has taught me so many really important things . . . it's given me a new musical dimension. Now I can go into many different places and bring that knowledge into whatever I sing' [5.5]. Similarly, Lassana Diabaté told The Guardian that 'Working with Kronos has changed the way he perceives his instrument' as he had 'found a way to make music on the balafon in a classical style where people sit and listen' [5.4b].

A further outcome has been the commissioning by Kronos of a composition by singer Hawa, only one of three African musicians featured in their “50 For The Future” project. The piece ‘Tegere Tulon’, based on girls’ handclapping songs in Mali, premiered at the San Francisco Jazz Center in 2019, with Kronos and the San Francisco Girls Chorus, produced by Durán.

*Artistic benefits to young string quartets through developing and sharing new repertoire*

As part of their project 50 for the Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire, Kronos commissioned new pieces from each of the Trio members, which were transcribed as freely downloadable string quartet scores for performance by young string quartets around the world. Balafon player Lassana composed a suite, ‘Sunjata’s Time’, which Durán produced and recorded for the project. In 2016, the Kronos Quartet held workshops on this piece with the Ligeti, Argus, and Friction Quartets at the Carnegie Hall. ‘Sunjata’s Time’ was performed 15 times by young string quartets at various venues by 2020 [5.3d], including by the Ligeti Quartet, alongside works by Stravinsky, Bartók and Adams, among others, and at the Carnegie Hall, New York [5.6]. The scores, including Hawa’s composition ‘Tegere Tulon’ (handclapping songs of Mali), were downloaded nearly 640 times from 2016 according to estimates provided by Kronos [5.3d]. One member of the young Dragon Quartet from the Ruth Asawa School of the Arts, San Francisco, commented on the impact of playing this composition at the Kronos Festival 2018: ‘as someone who doesn’t listen to . . . music that’s not from my own country . . . it really gives you a different perspective to what kind of music there is out there, and what you can use to make and connect other things with it . . . I’m so glad to be part of this’ [5.5c].

*Increasing awareness and understanding of West African music among audiences*

Overall, through the live concert series in the UK and the US, music by the Kronos Quartet and Trio Da Kali reached almost 5,000 people, in addition to the 17,000 in album sales, 3,000,000 streams and 250,000 YouTube views [5.3a, b, c, d]. The live performances were educational. A member of the Kronos Quartet board described a ‘two-way conversation where the musicians are speaking to you directly, and you are responding to them’ [5.7]. Kinobe, a US-based Ugandan multi-instrumentalist musician who supported the tour, explained that ‘people have the desire to know more about the music so they come to me with all these questions, and I start to feel the desire that people have to get deeper into the music.’ He indicated that at concerts by the Trio, up to 90% of the audience bought their CDs or LPs [5.5d]. A Ghanaian film maker at the UK premiere at the Barbican, London (May 2019) described Trio Da Kali as ‘revolutionaries’, adding that ‘the Barbican smashed it tonight and everyone deserves to listen to this music. It’s really powerful’ [5.8]. Speaking of the album, professional banjo player Lee Knight said he ‘had never heard of the trio before’ but that ‘it was a Kronos CD and it looked appealing to me and I got it and it blew me away. All the sounds and the instrumentals, and the way the Trio blended in with the quartet and of course the lead singer . . . it was exquisite. I’ve got 30-40 Kronos albums and that’s definitely in my top three’ [5.5e].

*Impact on cultural producers*

The intention behind the creation of Trio Da Kali was to showcase a style of Malian music that harked back to the pre-colonial era, in contrast to the more rock-pop focus of most Malian musicians today. This threw light on older forms of music, and also raised awareness of pre-colonial African history. Two members of the Trio performed in the award-winning 2016 TV series remake of ROOTS. Durán advised the producers of the TV series to create a more accurate picture of pre-colonial Mandinka society and culture, which became powerfully juxtaposed with later scenes of slavery and was a needed antidote to prevalent attitudes towards African societies. She advised on the introduction of the instruments balafon and ngoni, and brought Hawa and Lassana to the film set in South Africa. Producer Mark Wolper said that ‘Dr Lucy Durán was critical to most every aspect of our Africa shooting, development and even post-production. She served to vet our scripts for history, culture and language. She led us in our music development and implementation on the set. Musically she led all the Africa-based music and lyrics in conjunction with our composers. In addition, she often directed and advised us on the additional experts and talent [i.e. Malian musicians] that we need to maintain authenticity of the program’ [5.9]. The series was broadcast in the USA and UK (BBC 4) in 2016; it was critically acclaimed in The Guardian [5.4e], and NPR noted how ‘music play[ed] an important part throughout’ [5.4f].

In May–July 2020, Paul Chandler, the Mali country director for the US music charity Instruments4Africa, hosted Trio Da Kali at the virtual festival Kunu Bi Sini in Mali. He indicated the Trio were ‘making an impact on the music scene in Mali in a number of very positive ways’ and said he had received ‘very positive feedback from members of the public about their set, which was outstanding.’ Describing Trio Da Kali as ‘unlike any existing acoustic groups of Mali; their format is unique’, ‘work[ing] primarily within the parameters of Mali’s traditional music but . . . in highly creative ways’, he noted how ‘the experience of working with the classical medium of the Kronos Quartet has had a profound effect on the sound they produce and their attention to detail.’ He also described the effect of the collaboration on Hawa, believing that because it had ‘exposed her to new ways of singing and new repertoires’, she ‘developed a more rounded and expressive vocal quality and performance style, which she is passing on to the new generation of female singers.’ [5.10]

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1. Screenshot – World Music Charts Europe Spotify listing – October 2017.

5.2. *Album Awards:*

a) ‘fRoots Albums of the year Critics Poll 2017’, p3; fRoots Magazine, 2017 b) ‘Songlines Best Albums of 2017’, Songlines, 1 March 2018 [p6]; c) ‘Songlines Music Awards 2018 –The Winners are Announced!’ Songlines October 2018 [p13]

5.3. *Streaming + downloads data:*

a) Email from Bertelsmann Music Group, 20 March 2020; b) Eh Ya Ye, from Ladilikan <https://youtu.be/hxDsn-8eymk> (219,4544 views and 88 comments as of June 10, 2020); c) The Ladilikan album is on YouTube (16,234 views and 372 upvotes as of 10 June 2020) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXj8ZwynXTU>; d) Email from Kronos Quartet, 21 October 2020

5.4. *Press reviews:*

a) Paul Vanderyken ‘Trio Da Kali and Kronos Quartet’, Folk Radio UK (August 2017) ; b) Damian Fowler ‘There’s a griot goin’ on’, The Guardian, Oct 20, 2017; c) Paul Bradshaw 2017 ‘Mali’s Trio Da Kali live in Stoke Newington Old Church’, posted Oct 27, 2017. <https://ancienttofuture.com>; d) Jane Cornwell, ‘WOMADelaide’, Songlines 157 (May 2020), p.67; e) Julia Raeside ‘Roots Reviews: This remake is brutal and harrowing – but it needs to be’, The Guardian Feb 9 2017; f) David Bianculli ‘In Its Retelling, ‘Roots’ Is Powerful, Must-See Television’, NPR 26 May 2016.

5.5. *Musicians’ testimonials:*

a) Interview transcript Hawa Kassemady Diabaté telephone interview by Malian Journalist Hamidou Barry, July 29, 2020

The following transcripts from short interviews recorded by Duran in May 2018 in San Francisco Jazz Centre: b) Zakir Hussein, Indian tabla virtuoso; c) Lucy Neligen, first violinist, Dragon Quartet; d) Herbert Kinobe, Singer-songwriter and musician; e) Lee Knight, folk singer and storyteller

5.6. *Carnegie Hall Workshops:*

a) Kronos Quartet Workshop: Fodé Lassana Diabaté, ‘Sunjata’s Time’ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQBI\\_OIBjIM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQBI_OIBjIM); b) Ligeti Quartet Performance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlllHFUBP3I> Time code: 22:30-28:35 (922 views).

5.7. Email from Board Member, Kronos Performing Arts Association, April 2018.

5.8. Transcript of clip of Ghanaian documentary maker, recorded by Durán, May 2018, Barbican, London.

5.9. Email from Mark Wolper, The Wolper Organisation, TV Producer, Roots (2016), Sept 2016

5.10. Letter from Paul Chandler the Mali country director for US charity Instruments4africa, August 2020