

# Get to Know Guides

## Balimaya Project



With [Balimaya Project](#), traditional West African music meets jazz through a collision of collective polyrhythms, blazing frontline horns and kora stylings. The project reconciles the jazz and sounds of Black London with folkloric West African music mobilizing the repertoire and instrumentation of the Mandé peoples of Senegal and Mali.

### Get to Know... [Yahael Camara Onono](#)

Yahael Camara Onono is a second-generation Londoner born to Nigerian and Senegalese parents. He is the lead djembe player, composer, and bandleader of [Balimaya Project](#). The band's debut-album, released in July 2021 titled *Wolo So*, was referred to as 'one of the most significant releases of 2021' by BBC Radio 6 and was featured on *The Guardian's* 'Album of the Year' list. Yahael and the majority of the band's unique position as young UK-born men of African origin has given them a unique insight into what it takes to make the infusion of tradition and contemporary music work, allowing them to have a huge impact on the UK music and fashion scene.



### WHAT IS MANDÉ MUSIC?

Dating back to the Mandé empire almost eight centuries ago in modern-day Mali and Guinea, Mandé music represents the rich musical legacy of Mandé culture orally preserved by generations of traditional musicians and singers. Examples of classical instruments within this tradition include the stringed instrument kora, the lute-like ngoni, and the wooden xylophone known as a balafon.

# Artist Inspiration

The word 'Balimaya' comes from the Maninka language and means the essence of kinship. In Mandé society, the ideology of kinship is engrained in the moral fabric of its people. Family ties are not limited to blood relations but an extended family model established through marriages and shared ethnic histories. Balimaya Project draws inspiration from this sense of an extended family model and shared heritage. Understanding community as a well of strength and an emotional investment, Balimaya Project draws from the shared histories and experiences that prevail across their communities.

## ACTIVITY

Listen to Balimaya Project's songs & discography on Spotify, particularly the pieces entitled [Seasons of Baraka](#) and [City of God](#).

Try to deconstruct and separate which sounds are coming from which kind of instruments and musical styles; contemporary jazz, traditional Mandé music, or other musical styles.



## Learn More



### FURTHER VIEWINGS

[Short Form Documentary on Wolo So, Balimaya Project's debut album](#) →

[Introducing... Balimaya Project](#) →

[The Balimaya Project and why we should be excited about Mandé jazz](#) →

[Balimaya Project, Seasons of Baraka](#) →

[Balimaya Project's performance of City of God in Horniman Sunken](#) →

[Balimaya Project, Live at End of the Road \(EOTR\) Festival 2021](#) →

[Balimaya Project, Spotify channel](#) →



### FURTHER READINGS

[Mandé Music in the Black Atlantic: Migration and World Music Record Production](#) →

[African Music, Ideology and Utopia](#) →

[Jazz as African Diasporic Music](#) →

[The New African Diaspora and the past in Jazz](#) →

[Mandé Music: Traditional and Modern Music of the Maninka and Mandinka of Western Africa](#) →

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