



CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Kora Concert Kicks Off Library's New Series Celebrating Sacred Songs and Rituals

Cambridge, MA, September 13, 2022 -- Master kora player Yacouba Sissoko will play music from West Africa's Mandinka Djely tradition at the Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway, on Thursday, September 22, at 6:30 p.m. The performance kicks off the Library's new music series celebrating sacred songs and rituals from across the world. The series is supported by the Friends of the Cambridge Public Library.

Throughout West African history, Djelys, also known as griots, were influential members of the community. Djelys were musicians, storytellers, and respected oral historians. Djelys also served as jurists, interpreters of current events, and advisers to rulers. The music of Djelys celebrated social life, cultural identity, and family backgrounds. The Djely's signature instrument is the kora, a 21-string lute with a large gourd resonator, central to the traditional and popular music of many West African countries.

The Djely and kora play an important role in the founding of the Mali Empire which, at the height of its power and influence in the 14th century, encompassed present day Chad, Niger, Mali, Senegal, and the Gambia. *The Epic of Sundiata*, which chronicles the life of Sundiata Keita the founder of the Mali Empire, attributes Sundiata's rise to the power and the influence of his Djely. Once played only by men, kora players today include women such as Sona Djorbateh, the French Gambian artist. [Registration is required to participate in this in-person program.](#)

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About the Cambridge Public Library:

At the Cambridge Public Library, we welcome all, inspire minds and empower community. We support a Cambridge where everyone has equitable opportunities to learn, people live their best lives, and democracy thrives. [Visit our website](#) to learn more.