

Aly Camara Aly is a dynamic drummer who was born and raised in the city of Conakry in Guinea, West Africa. He began drumming at age seven and has received his instruction from Yamoussa "Yahdi" Camara, Aboubacar Fatou Abou Camara and Mohamed Kemoko Sano. Aly began drumming professionally at the age of 11 with Solei D'Afrique and has since performed with many African ballets including Les Merveilles de Guinea, Fareta de Guinea, Konkoure Bamba, Fatala and more. Aly has enthralled audiences with his incredible drumming across Africa, all over Europe, and throughout the United States. Currently he is living in Atlanta, GA teaching, performing and sharing culture and tradition in the U.S. Aly is from the Susu ethnic group and brings extensive knowledge of traditional rhythms and songs from Guinea, Mali, Senegal and other areas of West Africa. He plays and teaches djembe, dunun, kenkeni, sangban, krin, balon and gongoma. Aly lives in Atlanta with his wife Sharon and three children.

Fode Camara Fode began his drum training at the age of five under Master Drummer Fatouabou Camara in Guinea, West Africa. He was recruited in 1998 by the National Circus of Guinea to serve as its Musical Director. In 1998 an international search for the world's best West African musicians was conducted by Mamadou Mansour, Director of Les Ballets d'Afrique Noire, to take part in a production entitled Mandinka Epic. Fode was chosen as the lead Djembe player in the internationally celebrated production, which enjoyed a 32-city world tour. Fode Camara resides in Pittsburgh, PA. Fode teaches locally and tours extensively as a guest artist and instructor. He honors his family through his artistic expression of Guinea's musical traditions.

Marietou Cisse Marietou Cisse is a dancer from the Republique of Guinea, West Africa. She has been dancing since she was eight years old. She was trained as a professional dancer by the renowned director of Ballet Djoliba, Les Merveilles de Guinea and Les Ballets Africains, Kemoko Sano and is a former member of Les Ambassadors de Guinea, Les Solayi D'Afrique, and Les Merveilles De Guinea. She is loved by her students and can do amazing things with percussive dance!

Chuck Cogliandro Chuck has been a project engineer for General Motors, a chauffeur for the stars, a wanderer and reader, and an in-house analyst for a mystery shopping company. Since 1992, Chuck's passion has been bringing people together in the shared joy of music, rhythm and drumming. He is currently a musician, a healer, a son, a brother to two sisters, a husband to Kelly, a friend to many, and a lover of life. He has traveled to Guinea with his friend and teacher Mohamed DaCosta, and has studied West African music with many great artists and teachers, including Brother Yusef Crowder, Stone Montgomery, Mohamed Diaby, and Aly Camara. He has been trained in various healing methods by Barbara Brennan, Peter and Jamy Faust, and Kimberly Cahill. Chuck loves to be a part of groups that are attuned in rhythm and movement in order to remember that the source for all of us is with the Divine. Chuck lives in Decatur, GA with his wife Kelly.

Bolokada Conde Born and raised in the village of Morowaya, Guinea, Bolokada Conde has performed for thousands of people at the highest level and takes pride in sharing the Malinke rhythms, songs, and culture with sheer passion, patience, and remarkable zeal in not only spellbinding performances, but also in every day class settings. “Bolo” started out as a young musical prodigy who became a sensation in the Sankaran region of Guinea, West Africa. As a master folklorist, he became the premier djembe player in all the major village celebrations in the region for many years.

Bolokada later joined the world famous *Les Percussion du Guinee* ballet company as their lead drummer and has since traveled and performed in major performance venues all over the world. His mission is to share the epic rhythms, stories, and culture of the Malinke people and nurture your musical life journey. Since 2004, he has been performing and teaching in the United States and currently resides in Greenville, SC.

Mohamed DaCosta Born in Boke, Guinea of Sousou descent, Mohamed has been a student and teacher of traditional West African dance and drums for over 25 years. He began as a child and has been a professional artist for over 25 years, appearing in France, Germany, Russia, the Gambia and the US. He currently resides in Gainesville, Florida, where he is a Lecturer and Instructor on staff in the University of Florida School of Theater and Dance and Center for African Studies.

Tom Harris, MS Tom has been building West African drums in the Atlanta area since 1996. He has led drum-building workshops at schools, camps, colleges and communities in the Southeast. A majority of his drum-building activities have centered around helping youth-at-risk in schools and therapeutic settings. He founded the Therapeutic Drumming Program at Youth Villages 16 years ago and now trains and certifies Therapeutic Drumming Instructors in his drumming center in Douglasville, Georgia. He also founded the professional Djembe ensemble Ten Blocks Away and enjoys playing with them in the Atlanta area. Tom lives in Douglasville with his wife Ursula and daughter Sada.

Robin “Bountourabi” Leftwich Bountou has been a student of West African art and culture for over 25 years. Her three trips to Guinea, West Africa have given her a unique and authentic perspective on the role of the djembe in African ceremonies, celebrations, and everyday life. Bountou’s combined experiences and training have allowed her to become known as a very respected and knowledgeable teacher. She has a special talent for sharing her love of the djembe and African culture with students of all levels. In 2010, Bountou co-founded Happy Beat Drumming with Rachel Juren. Since that time, she has traveled throughout the Southeast teaching drumming, drum-building, performing, consulting, and providing workshops.

Bountou has studied in Guinea with Fode Moussa Camara and various teachers from the Gbassikolo Ballet. She has also studied with Aly Camara, Mohammed DaCosta, Famoudou Konate, Mamady Keita, John Scalici, Jim Donovan, Ubaka Hill, Bill Scheidt and Tom Harris. Additionally, Bountou has been an Associate Professor with Tam Tam Mandingue in Winston-Salem and is a recent graduate of the

Therapeutic Drumming Instructor Training program with Tom Harris. The sum of Bountou's philosophy is, "When I learn, I learn to give away, not to keep. This isn't a great secret to hold onto, it's a tradition meant to be shared. May I forever find myself to be of service to the djembe."

Forrest "Fodé" Matthews began studying West African music in 2003, at the age of 11 and is a close student of Fode Lavia Camara. Forrest has traveled to Guinea twice, spending a total of 6 months living and training with the artists of Ballet Gbassikolo du Kaloum as well as organizing and performing in the KALOUM DJEMBE Festival with Fode Lavia. He has also studied extensively with Bolokada Conde, Aly Camara, Mohamed DaCosta, Abdoulaye "Felu" Kouyate, Mohamed Dioubate, and Mamady Keita and Bill Scheidt of the TTM Djembe Academy. Forrest currently resides in Greensboro, North Carolina and works as a freelance artist doing teaching programs and instrument repair throughout the Southeast.

Andrew Moore Andrew has studied the djembe and West African music since 1996, providing music in African dance classes from Atlanta to Hawaii and performing throughout the Southeast US. In 1999 he traveled to Guinea with his teacher Mohamed Diaby to study with Mustafa Diaby. Andrew is a carpenter in Landrum, SC where he lives with his wife Julie, sons Carson and Cyrus and daughter Cora.

Kevin Munro Kevin has been playing and studying African drums since 1991. He resides in Charlottesville, VA with his wife Hannah Catherine and children Claire and Angus, where he directs Ursa Drums, a studio for building drums and teaching. Kevin is the director of the Charlottesville Community Drum Choir, a community-based African drum troupe.

Will Ridenour Will is a professional musician from Greensboro, NC specializing in the kora, a 21-stringed harp-lute from West Africa. Since 1999, Will has studied with master kora and percussion teachers in Mali, Senegal, Sweden, and the US, including 3 study trips to Senegal and Mali. His primary kora teachers are Dially Mady Cissoko and Jely Fily Sacko from Mali, and Youssoupha Cissokho and Madya Diébate from Senegal. He has also studied djembe and dunun in the US with Mohammed DaCosta, Madou Dembele, and Sandy Blocker, and in Mali with Arouna Sidibe and Brulaye Doumbia.

Will holds a B.A. in Anthropology from UNC-Chapel Hill and has been the recipient of two NC Arts Council grants for musical projects centering around the kora. He has performed in 40 US states and 28 countries worldwide with various groups, and has scored productions for dance, theater, and documentary film. In 2014, Will released his first solo kora album, Colors of Flying. He currently performs and records with Diali Cissokho & Kaira Ba, Paperhand Puppet Intervention, and many other collaborative projects. www.willridenour.com.

Bill Scheidt Bill picked up an African drum for the first time more than 20 years ago, having studied a variety of Western instruments from age five. Since then he has

traveled to Africa six times, spent more than a year and a half living in rural African villages, and studied percussion at Berklee College of Music. Bill is a Senior Certified Professor in Mamady Keita's international school of the djembe, Tam Tam Mandingue (TTM). In earning the TTM Senior Professor certification, Bill joins a small handful of drummers from around the world who have been commissioned by Mamady Keita to preserve and teach the music, culture, spirit and traditions of the Mandingue djembe. Bill lives in Winston-Salem, NC with his wife Leah and son Finn, where he is the Director of TTM Winston Salem.

Amo Soumah Aboubacar Soumah, popularly called "Amo", was born and raised in Conakry, Guinea, West Africa. He hails from the popular Guinean Gbassikolo Drum and Dance Company, which is directed by Fode 'Lavia' Camara's father, Mr. Jbril 'Badjibi' Camara, of which Amo was a member from 2000-2006. He first discovered his love for his country's traditional music at the age of eight, and rose to the title of "Djembe Fola". Since arriving in the United States in 2006, he has been a well sought after performer. He currently works with Agbedidi African Ensemble in the School of Theatre and Dance at the University of Florida, under the direction of Mohamed DaCosta.

Abou Sylla Abou is a Master Balafon player and Griot. He has toured the world with the internationally famous African dance troupe Les Ballets Africains and was a founding member of the award winning African dance company Les Merveilles de Guinea. Born in Kindia, a village in Guinea, West Africa, Abou comes from a Djeli family. Djelis are musicians, singers, and storytellers through whom African history is told. Abou's primary instrument is the balafon (a wooden xylophone), and he is considered one of the world's best players. Abou Sylla traveled around the world with the internationally acclaimed Ballets Africains, the Guinean national dance troupe, and the To Kouyate Company, a traditional music ensemble.

Abou received the Artists' Fellowship in Music Composition with New York Foundation of the Arts, in 2000. He continues to perform with the award winning group Les Merveilles d'Afrique (Baguette d'Or - golden drum stick, and the Djembe d'Or -golden djembe - drum prizes in the second and third National Guinean Percussion and Rhythm Competitions), a company created by Mohamed Kemoko Sano, choreographer of Les Ballets Africains. Abou Sylla teaches workshops in traditional African music all over the US, including the University of Florida, and Wesleyan University, CT.

Julia 'Fatim' Tarr Julia lives in Durham, NC in a bustling house full of life, including three kids (Lily, Forest & Andasia), husband (Jeremy), dog (Suzie), a small flock of chickens and a weedy but productive garden. Around the turn of the millennium, Julia spent a lot of time in Guinea, studying dance primarily with Damaye "Buntu" Soumah and Sekuna Sylla of Ballet Djoliba. While in Guinea, Julia danced all over Conakry at Dundunbas with friends, at rehearsals for Ballet Nafaya, and in villages across Sankaran with Bolokada Conde. Also during this time, Julia co-founded Ballet Warraba, a dance company performing traditional Guinean music and dance, and Sabu International School, an elementary school for refugees from Sierra Leone

and Guinean children living in Conakry. Currently, Julia will complete a Masters of Social Work at UNC this May.

Karen M. Thomson A yoga teacher since 1974, a psychic reader since 1976, a full-time college English professor for 20 years, and a pianist all of her life, Karen Moore Thomson, Ph.D., RYT 200, was selected by the Wesleyan College Alumnae Association as the 2015 recipient of the "Distinguished Achievement in a Profession" award, a designation which honors the multi-faceted nature of her life's work. She was named one of the top 5 psychics in Atlanta in 2013 by CBS Atlanta and was a finalist in 2015 for the Top 50 Psychics in America. Also, she also holds certification as an Advanced Yoga Teacher.

With a Ph.D. in English and serving on Kennesaw State University's faculty for 19 years with 1 year on the faculty at Dalton Jr. College while finishing her dissertation, Karen left a successful 20-year career in the academic world as a tenured Full Professor of English at KSU in order to work full-time in the field of spiritual awareness and healing, as well as a professional pianist. She also teaches classes on how to read the Tarot symbols, Meditation, Alternative Healing Techniques, Dream Interpretation, Spiritual Approaches to Death and Dying, Near Death Experiences, Native American Spirituality, and conducts Past Life Regressions and other types of Healing Sessions. She was trained as a classical pianist, has played on the concert stage, and has long enjoyed playing the piano for weddings, receptions, holiday events, church services, and Episcopal retreats.

Karen feels honored to work as a metaphysical teacher, reader, healer, pianist, and creative artist. She is the founder and director of The Center for Healing and Spiritual Awareness, which includes The Buckhead Yoga Room. For further information on her work and to contact Karen, you are invited to visit her website at www.MetaphysicalHealer.net, view her personal Facebook page "Karen Moore Thomson," and to "Like" her page on Facebook "The Center for Healing and Spiritual Awareness."