

# Traditional African musical instruments

A PHOTO ESSAY

JUSUF WANYOIKE

## Traditional African musical instruments

Music has been an integral part of African tribes cultures. It defined African spirituality, and also formed a way of entertainment. Africans over the course of history have invented musical instruments to accompany their music.



*The Kora. This is a west African string musical instrument*

*Dating back to the 13th century Mali empire. Its origin*

*Various folklore. It is said the instrument was lent to*

*the griots (specific members of the tribe whose role is*

*storytelling, singing, poets and playing instruments) by the*

*jinns. It is made of a calabash for sound resonance and long*

*fret like stick where strings are tied with leather straps for tuning*

*The kora remains an important musical instrument in west Africa*

*Inspiring modern musicians like Sona Jobarteh, Balake Sissiko,*

*Sidiki Diabateh and many others. Its influence has gone beyond*

*African shores now being played in western countries overseas.*



*The balafon. It is a west African percussion instrument similar to xylophone. It resonates sound with gourds and played with wooden sticks. It is made of*

*bamboo frame and wooden keys mostly from rose wood. It traces to the Mande, Senoufo and Gur people of West Africa. Its influence has spread all over the West Africa being played in Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea and other African countries.*



*Nyanzigi is a Kenyan 5-8 string classical instrument played by the Luo tribe of Kenya and Uganda. It is made from a round wooden resonator covered in cow skin.*



*Zeze. A musical instrument from sub Sahara Africa. Its difficult to trace its roots as its widely spread over various eastern, central and southern Africa tribes. It comes in various versions. It has two strings and is played with a bow. It is mostly used to accompany song and dance.*



*Drums come in various shapes, type and names in Africa. They are the commonest instruments in African tribes. They were used for musical purpose and communication. African music is rhythmical and hence drums are and were key element of African music.*

This are just few of the many African musical instruments, invented and developed entirely without foreign influence. More instruments include ngoni, African flute, wandede among others. African instrument have inspired modern music forms and genres. Blue grass music, Jazz, gospel are all genres influenced by the rhythmical nature of African music. Modern instruments like the Banjo are hybrids from west African traditional instruments.



*Rokia Traoré performs in France. You can see the various west African musical instruments in play. Like the kora, ngoni among others. For more context look on youtube Rokia Traoré - project roots.*

## References

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