

Dylan Amadeus Davis



American kora musician

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BIOGRAPHY

Dylan Amadeus Davis (b. 1993) is a classically trained West African harpist specializing in the kora, a 21-stringed instrument central to the Mandinka Griot tradition. His musical journey began in The Gambia and Senegal, where he studied under master Griot musicians, immersing himself in the ancient repertoire and techniques of the deeply rooted tradition.

While Dylan is committed to preserving the cultural significance of the kora, he also pushes its boundaries by blending traditional West African music with modern influences. His work is inspired by jazz innovators like Thelonious Monk and Keith Jarrett, allowing him to create a sound that is both deeply traditional and refreshingly contemporary.

Dylan's primary instrument is a modern kora crafted by renowned French maker Kora Kaëlig, designed for large audiences with advanced electronic amplification. Still, the traditional kora passed down to him by his teacher, Jali Mady Suso, remains central to his practice. Its physicality and legacy ground his music in the Griot heritage, serving as a bridge between the past and his evolving explorations.

In both performance and composition, Dylan seeks to introduce the kora to contemporary audiences, preserving its rich history while exploring new sonic landscapes. His work maintains a fusion of cultural preservation and creative innovation, dedicated to expanding the presence of the kora in today's global music scene.

EXPERIENCE

Kora Studies, The Gambia, Senegal, and Mali (2017-2018)

Studied traditional Mandinka repertoire and techniques with Griot masters during a 6-month intensive residency. Following this, traveled extensively through Senegal and Mali, recording and collaborating with various kora masters, expanding both traditional techniques and contemporary applications.

Teaching Experience

Kora Instructor, *U.S. and Peru (2020–Present)*

Teaching students at all levels, focusing on both the preservation of traditional kora techniques and exploring innovative approaches to the instrument.

Kumbengo Koras, *Colorado (2019–2020)*

Assisted in the construction, repair, and teaching of the kora at the only U.S.-based kora shop, gaining hands-on experience with the instrument's physical and cultural intricacies.

Performance & Residency Highlights

- *Rockaway Film Festival, NYC (2024)*

Presented kora music that merges traditional Griot sounds with contemporary improvisation, expanding the instrument's reach to RFF's audience.

- *Mandinka Culture Celebration, Bed-Stuy, NYC (2024)*

Featured artist, celebrating and promoting the cultural significance of the Mandinka Griot tradition through live performance.

- *Cultura Viviente, Peru (2022–2023)*

Music resident, where collaborative performances introduced the kora to new audiences, combining traditional and modern musical elements.

- *Taos Inn, New Mexico (2021–2022)*

Weekly musical residency, blending classical West African music with improvisational techniques for diverse audiences.

- *Sol's, Taos, New Mexico (2021)*

Resident musician, performing regularly in a space known for fostering innovative cultural experiences.