



sabani
leni stern

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for oumou delli
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all songs by leni stern
*except by leni stern,
haruna samake,
and mamadou kone

photography and artwork
by sandrine lee

leni stern :
electric and acoustic guitar
n'goni ba, tiple, voice
haruna samake :
camela n'goni, karignan
mamadou kone aka prince :
calabash, talking drum, shakers

special guests:
ami sacko: voice
buba sacko: n'goni
zoumana tareta: voice and sokou
produced by leni stern
recorded and mixed by abou cisse
mastered by fred kevorkian



Still Bleeding

The rain has stopped
The wind's calmed down
The waters are receding
The sun's back up there in the sky
But i,
But i'm still bleeding

The streets are crowded
Life resumes
We gather in the evenings
The moon's back up there in the sky
But i,
But i'm still bleeding

It takes some time to heal a heart
It's much easier to break it
The memories that still are haunting me,
Are tearing me apart
Take time to fade
Quiet down
Wish i could shake it
Wish i could

If i could
Get away from here
And no one saw me leaving
I'd take my heart and hide it well
'Cause i
'Cause i'm still bleeding

Sorcerer

You who can talk to the spirits
Throws the shells so I can see
So that I can be certain
'Bout what's going on with me

When you walk in the forest
Late at night
And someone calls your name
Don't look around now
Don't turn back
You'll never be the same, the same
No, you'll never be the same

You, who can talk.....

When you walk in the forest
Late at night
And you see the trees are dancing
See them turn and weave
And laugh and sigh
Things are gonna be alright, alright
Things are gonna be alright

You who can talk.....

When you walk in the forest
Late at night
And you see the lions are chasing
Don't you worry, you're gonna be just fine
Those are sorcerers embracing, yeah, sorcerers embracing

You who can talk....

Like a Thief


Like a thief in the night
When everyone is fast asleep
Love comes on velvet feet
Silent and soothing
Quiet and sweet

Like fog, that rises from the fields
When morning comes
When sunrays warm the air
It hides and disappears.
And it returns at dusk
To coat the evening air in silence
White softness covers everything

Like an undertow that grabs you
Pulls you, throws you
Carries you far out to sea
And leaves you there
The solid sands of shore
Become a distant memory

There's nothing anyone can do
No one can change it
Yes, I see
Not all the angels or the hand of god
Can rescue me

Like a thief in the night.....



I was born

I was born hungry
Never felt like I
Could get enough
There's a hole on my hart
Lord help me
Lord in the heavens above

I was born restless
Never felt like I
Stood on solid ground
The earth is moving
Like all the stars
We're spinning around

I was born to privilege
But horse thieves
Welcomed me
I lived in an elegant universe
'Til you set me free

Papillon

You walk along the same old street
And nothing feels the same
You're dancing to your favorite beat
And still, you feel like someone else is moving

You're motionless and silent
Somewhere deep inside
And though you try your best to hide
You're just waiting for the day to pass

And when you smile
I feel the sadest,
'cause I know
How far you have to go
To find a little peace and happiness

There's more to life than we can see
This much I know
And flowers grow, and crickets sing
When storms have passed
And leveled everything

You're heart's still heavy
I can see
No matter what I say or do
Life's just a big old mystery
But you, my friend, will always
I am shure
Keep butterflies for company
Keep butterflies for company.

song notes -

"like a thief" was inspired by the flamenco singer diego el cigalla and his record "corren tiempos de alegria". when i was a little kid and wouldn't behave my grandmother used to tell me that i had fallen off the back of a horse when the gypsies came through town. she had taken me in out of the goodness of her heart, but if i didn't start behaving myself, she would give me back to them. i don't know if it's true that my great grandmother ran off with a chimney sweeper, a gypsy, and that i have a little gypsy in me, but i have always loved their music.

"the cat stole the moon" - that's what little kids in mali shout on new moon nights. and you have to give them candy or coins for letting you know.

"an saba" means the three of us or just us three. that's what haruna said when i told him of my idea to make a trio cd. we have spent so much time just playing like this. it's effortless for us and full of memories. of places we have been together, of adventures we've had. i don't why i waited so long to record like this.

"djanfa" means betrayed. this song features zoumana tareta, the great malien soukou player and singer. he's been around longer than the rest of us, so it is his job to share some of his wisdom when we are together. those are the times when i feel most privileged to be part of an african community. i remember the time he told abou, our engineer that he was too skinny and he had to eat more. he talked about the time when he didn't have anything to eat for days. how he made it through those hard times. we all sat and listened like children when he got going that way. in this song he sings about all of us, haruna, prince, abou and me. it's a real special honor.

"papillon" - when my friend adam's wife got sick, they talked about what they would like to be, if it was true that there is reincarnation and we all have more than one life to live. she said she would like to be a butterfly. i met adam in a little cafe on the lower east side, to see how he was doing and i swear when we stepped outside i almost collided with a few butterflies that came towards us and started flying around adam. it happens a lot he says.



I have been playing the n'goni since I first came to Mali in 2006 to perform at The Festival in the Desert. I met Bassekou Kouyate there, Mali's most famous n'goni player. He and his whole family have been teaching me ever since. Last September we performed together at the presidential palace to celebrate the 50th anniversary of independence. 50 years - 50 n'gonies. In the 50 n'goni orchestra, I sat next to the n'goni ba, the instrument of Bassekou's father, played by his brother Fousseini. I fell in love with its warm, soft sound. The n'goni ba is tuned to C, a fourth below the jelly n'goni in F that I had played so far. 'Still Bleeding' is the first song I composed on this instrument.

Haruna Samake

was born in a small village near Bamako, the capital of Mali in West Africa. His father was the imam and all the villagers came to pray in his mosque, at least once a week. The camela n'goni is the instrument of the hunters. Most hunters in West Africa are also doctors. By observing the animals they track, they learn about the plants in the forest. They see an injured deer rub his leg against a particular tree and cut the bark to make bandages for people's injuries, for example (penicillin is found in the bark of a tree). The wisdom of traditional African medicine is passed on through the hunters. They are also sorcerers, a belief that originated in their extraordinary courage. They faced a lion armed with only a spear, they caught poisonous snakes to milk the venom in their mouths and make heart medicine from it. Hunters spend days, even months in the forest, where it is believed the spirits live...and they learn from them. They communicate with the spirits with the help of cowrie shells or a blackboard with lines and spaces drawn in white flower. People speak about them in hushed voices.



So it was highly inappropriate for the little son of the imam to sit in the large courtyard of their house and play with a small camela n'goni that he had carved himself out of a calabash half, a stick and some fishing line! The hunters however liked the little boy and started to teach him how to play the instrument and they gave him a real camela n'goni after a while. A famous Malian singer named Sidibe heard people talking about the imam's little son that played the hunters harp and hired him to play in her band. That's how Haruna came to Bamako and eventually joined Salif Keita's band, where I met him. The camela n'goni is a pentatonic instrument that is most popular in Wassoulou music from the south of Mali. Haruna has taken the instrument far past its origin and can play any style of music on it, from the mandingue scales of segou and guinne, to the Congolese guitars to American blues.

MK Called **Prince** was born in Mopti, the city of the 3 rivers, the West African center of trading since hundreds of years. Mopti is located in the middle of the country, halfway between Bamako and Timbuktu. 4 of the Malian ethnicities, the peul, the bamabara, the dogon and the bobos, meet in mopti. Prince knows all of their rhythms and dances. He is half peul, half bobo. The rhythm of this song comes from the bobo people. Prince plays it on the calabash. One day before the recording he took me on his mo-ped to the market and we bought a calabash. They are used for so many things in Africa, instruments like the kora and the camela n'goni, household purposes like salad bowls and water containers.....they often get decorated with cowrie shells and used as shakers in wassoulou music. Prince uses his upside down, like a bass drum when he plays with his fists and a rimshot when he play with his rings. He can actually sound like a whole drum set on a calabash. The man that cleaned and carved the calabash while we where waiting was a samake, like haruna. Prince said that you can trust a samake.

