

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a vibrant yellow, orange, and black patterned dress, is captured in a dynamic pose on a stage. She has her right arm extended forward, palm up, as if gesturing or speaking. In the background, several audience members are visible, some smiling and looking towards the performer. The lighting is dramatic, with a mix of blue and warm tones. The overall atmosphere is one of a live performance or theatrical production.

adverse
camber
productions

THE
OLD **WOMAN**,
THE **BUFFALO**
AND THE **LION** OF
MANDING

Jan Blake **storyteller**
Kouame Sereba **musician**
Raymond Sereba **musician**

THE OLD WOMAN, THE BUFFALO AND THE LION OF MANDING

An Adverse Camber and The Akua Storytelling Project production
in association with mac birmingham, supported by the Albany.
Originally commissioned by Festival at the Edge Storytelling Festival.

The performance takes place in two halves with an interval.



Welcome to this performance of *The Old Woman, the Buffalo and the Lion of Manding.*

I was lucky enough to enjoy the first public performance of this piece at Festival at the Edge Storytelling Festival in 2009. Since then, it's been a real privilege to produce a series of national tours for the piece, working closely with the artists and a creative team supporting their original work.

Storytelling is a long-standing artform which is experiencing a very real resurgence. For all our fantastic digital connectedness, there's unique electricity when human beings gather together to tell and re-imagine stories. Epic tales have passed through many generations before we experience them. Through them we gain insight into the shared emotions and unique cultural perspectives which have shaped humanity for many hundreds of years.

In storytelling, nothing is written down. The storyteller is free to respond to the feel of each performance. In African and Caribbean storytelling traditions, especially, there is also no separation between word, movement and song. Jan, Raymond and Kouame embody these traditions in their performances together. They react differently to each other, to the story and each audience throughout each show. So we invite you to relax, share in the camaraderie as it unfolds and enjoy the experience. **We'd love to hear your feedback, so please do get in touch.**

Best wishes



Naomi Wilds

Adverse Camber productions

ABOUT THE STORY

The Birth of Sundiata Keita is known and told across Francophone Africa to this day as a warrior story of kingship and battle. It is not an invented story. It is told as history from the 13th century, passed down through griots; storytellers, praise singers and guardians of cultural knowledge whose role is to preserve the culture and identity of a people. During recent upheavals in Mali, this was one of the stories which was forbidden to be told, as all traditional ceremonies and folklore were banned. Epic stories are rich reservoirs of cultural identity, so can be primary targets in turbulent times.

In choosing to tell this story, Jan Blake expressed her respect for the griots who hold the story's traditions by choosing to tell a more rarely heard perspective – that of the three tenacious women who have a formative influence on Sundiata as a young boy.

This also reflects her voice as a storyteller, known for her rich store of tales of powerful women, drawn from cultures across the globe and especially from Africa, the Caribbean and Arabia.

The first powerful woman we meet is Koné, the old woman of the title. She's been abandoned by her community, who no longer share alms or 'jaka' with her. She has turned her rage into an immense buffalo which is now terrorising the community of hunters.

Second, we meet her grand-daughter, Sogolon Kédjou. Sogolon is known as the 'buffalo woman' for the hump on her back, her stoop and disfigured complexion and is ridiculed for her appearance. Yet, she also holds within her the secret of Mali's potential future, as the mother of a prophesised king who can bring the twelve kingdoms of Mali together.

The third woman in this triumvirate is Sassouma Berété, first wife to the current King Maghan Kon Fatta. She has her own son, first in line to the throne and therefore has a vested interest in trying to prevent this prophecy from coming about.

Jan was commissioned, along with musicians Raymond Sereba and Kouame Sereba to create this piece by Festival at the Edge Storytelling Festival (see page 21 for more details). The musicians grew up with this story in Africa and together all three artists draw on their long-standing deep knowledge of storytelling and music traditions to create the piece.

Another influence was D.T. Niane's book *Sundiata, An Epic of Old Mali* (Longman African Writers), itself based largely on the work of a griot from Guinea, Mamadou Kouyaté. As the griot says, in the conclusion to the preface, "Listen to my word, you who want to know; by my mouth you will learn the history of Mali. Listen to the story of the son of the Buffalo, the son of the Lion... the man of many names against whom sorcery could avail nothing."

Naomi Wilds



FAMILY TREE



Buffalo

(symbol of Sundiata's mothers side)

Koné The Old Woman

Grandmother to

Sogolon Kédjou

marries

Buffalo Woman (2nd wife)

Mother to

Sundiata Keita - The Lion

Other names for Sundiata are: **Mari-Djata Sogolon**

Other Children to Sogolon Kedjou and Maghan Kon Fatta are:

King Maghan also has a 3rd wife



Lion

(symbol of Sundiata's fathers side)

King Maghan

Kon Fatta

Father to

of Manding

Djata Manghan Djata (Djata = 'lion')

married to

Sassouma Berété

(1st wife)

Mother to

**Dankaran
Touman**

(eldest boy)

**Nana
Triban**

(girl)

Sogolon Konkalan Sogolon Djarou

HUNTERS AND GRIOTS

Hunters

Simbon Kalaba

Kirama and **Kankajan** (brothers who hunt the buffalo)

Griots

Gnankouman Doa (King Maghan Kon Fatta's Griot)

Father to **Balla Fasséké** (Sundiata Keita's Griot)



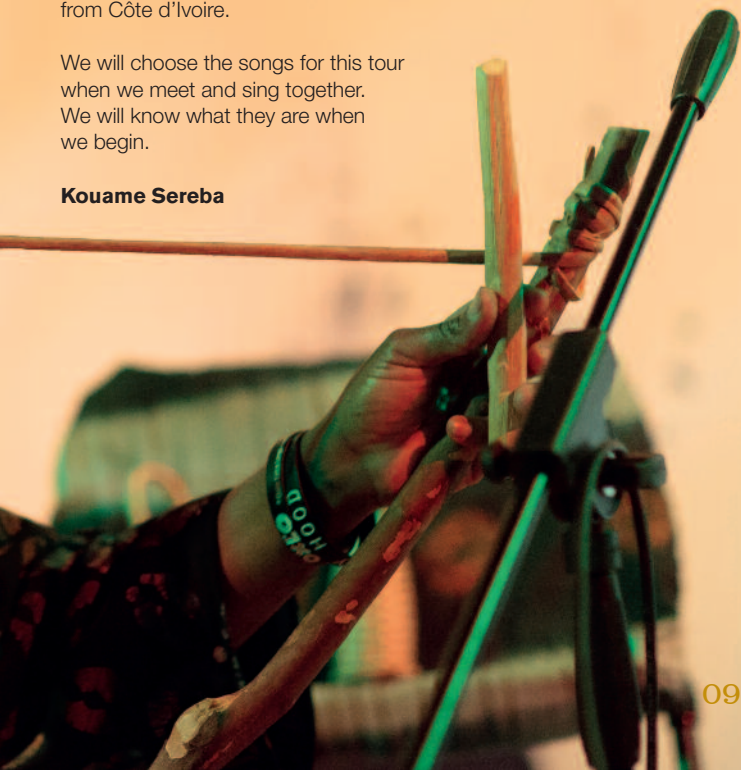
ABOUT THE MUSIC

In my tradition, storytelling always goes with music or songs, or both. I can't remember a story told by my father without songs. The musical bow (dodo) was traditionally used in a small group of people, usually by the eldest in the village, to bring them to the world of storytelling.

For the songs in this show, we chose to be free. We chose to use sound, vocals and songs we are inspired by, which spring from the meeting between the three of us. It has always been like that when we meet. Jan Blake has been naturally singing these songs with us for many years now. Most of the songs have their origin from old traditions of the Gban people. Raymond and I are Gban, from Côte d'Ivoire.

We will choose the songs for this tour when we meet and sing together. We will know what they are when we begin.

Kouame Sereba



HOW THE SHOW WAS MADE...

More about Adverse Camber

Adverse Camber is an independent production company, based amongst the historic mills of Cromford, Derbyshire.

The company acts as a catalyst, bringing artists, partners, venues, audiences and resources together to create and tour outstanding works of storytelling and music. We are energised by the feedback of audiences at our tours, so please do get in touch and let us know your responses to the show.

Adverse Camber supports the ambitions of outstanding UK storytellers who are reaching for new horizons in their work. We work closely with venues to reach out to more diverse audiences, transporting people into the diverse soundscapes and imaginative material of these rich oral tales.

We are inspired by the work of artists across many cultures for whom oral traditions are fundamental source material for their own creativity. In storytelling, artists and audiences are part of a shared experience, so audiences are at the heart of everything we do.



The Old Woman, the Buffalo and the Lion of Manding began life as a commission from Festival at the Edge Storytelling Festival (FATE), one of the UK's leading and most longstanding festivals celebrating oral storytelling in all its forms (see p21). Jan Blake, known the length and breadth of the country for her beautiful, powerful storytelling, had worked with musicians Kouame Sereba and Raymond Sereba individually for many years but never all together until the opportunity of this commission arose. They'd promised themselves that if the chance came for them to work together, the Sundiata story was their chosen inspiration for collaboration. When Festival at the Edge approached them with the proposal to commission a new piece, these aspirations became reality.

After two brilliant premieres at Festival at the Edge in 2009, conversations with Adverse Camber led to a wider creative team working with the artists (through resources and support from Arts Council England and the National Lottery) on the creation of a design for a series of national tours - featuring clothes made from traditional African print fabrics.

Ahead of the tour, workshops introduced audiences to the melodies and rhythms of West African singing traditions. Venue partners mac birmingham and The Albany added their valuable support to this process. Audiences, which included up to 61% of first time storytelling attenders in some venues, were won over.

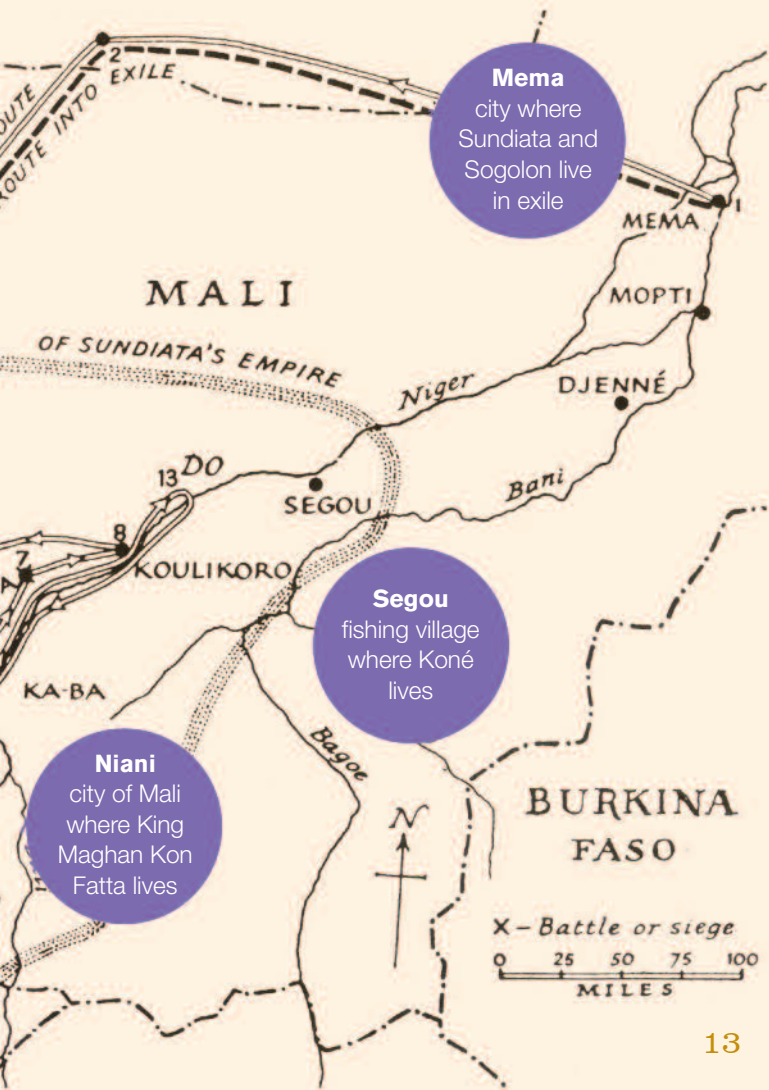
'It drew me in to the atmosphere of Mali, the connection with past and present. The presence of the storyteller and the musicianship fit together so well'.

As the collaboration between these artists and Adverse Camber continue to reach new audiences, interest is building in a further piece telling more stories of Sundiata Keita.

Sign up to receive our e-newsletters to be the first to know as ideas develop and follow news of other Adverse Camber shows being commissioned, developed and toured near you. Find out more about Adverse Camber on pages 22-23.



Sosso
city where
Balla Fasséké
is sent





Jan Blake

Jan Blake is one of Europe's leading storytellers, and has been performing worldwide for nearly thirty years. Specialising in stories from Africa, the Caribbean, and Arabia, she has a well-earned reputation for dynamic and generous storytelling. Recent highlights include Hay Festival, Kerala and Dhaka, the World Wildlife Fund's One Planet Leaders Programme, and the Viljandi Harvest Festival, in Estonia. In 2011, she was the recipient of the biannual *Thüringe Märchen Preis*, awarded to scholars or performers who have devoted their lives to the service of storytelling.



Kouame Sereba

Kouame Sereba grew up in the Côte d'Ivoire, where the *The Old Woman*, *The Buffalo*, and *the Lion of Manding* continues to be told by griots - traditional storytellers - today. By the age of 20, he had travelled across the African continent where he visited and lived in Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Sudan, and Egypt. Now resident in Norway, Kouame was honoured Folk Musician of the Year at the Folkelarm Awards in 2009 and tours both nationally and internationally.

A photograph of Raymond Sereba, a man with a shaved head, looking upwards and to the right. He is wearing a patterned yellow and black garment. He is playing a light-colored acoustic guitar. The background is dark with blue and purple stage lighting. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the lower left of the image, containing text.

Raymond Sereba

Raymond Sereba moved to Norway in 1983, like his brother Kouame, and is an actor, dancer, and musician. Raymond has toured concerts both as a solo artist and with various groups and performers. His richly diverse work has included being a principal dancer for the Ballet National Côte d'Ivoire, undertaking commissions for the Oslo World Music Festival, and holding workshops for children and young people in Palestine.

CREATIVE TEAM

A creative team worked with Jan, Kouame and Raymond to develop *The Old Woman, the Buffalo and the Lion of Manding* for national touring. We are grateful to Arts Council England and the National Lottery for their support of this project.

Artistic Advisor

Harmage Singh Kalirai

Harmage trained as an actor at the Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama in London, Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris, and at the Ladislav Fialka Mime School in Prague. He has worked as professional actor for over twenty-five years in TV, Film, Radio and Theatre. His theatre directing and producing credits include work for the Royal National Theatre, Waterman Arts Centre, M6 theatre company and the Asian Cooperative Theatre (ACT) He directed *Arrange That Marriage* for DesiPulp and *The Drum* in Birmingham, which toured England. In Kolkata, India he directed *In The Further Soil* (Produced by Sampad & Teamwork in conjunction with The British Council and ICCR, India). He has also led workshops and taught theatre skills with actors, youth and community theatre groups in England, Germany, Norway and India.

Designer

Matt Edwards

Matt trained at the Motley Theatre Design School in London and has designed for Vanessa Redgrave. He was awarded Best Design for the London New Play Festival. He has over ten years experience in Theatre Set and Costume design, Installation Art, Design for Choreography and Film and Television set design. He also designs, produces and installs for galleries and exhibitions and is a qualified teacher with experience of working with students at all levels, including teaching in Ghana with Global Link. His recent designs include *The BFG*, by Roald Dahl for Harrogate Theatre (Director Phil Lowe) and *Under A Foreign Sky*, by Paula B. Stanic (Director Natalie Wilson) opening at the Unicorn Theatre and touring the UK.



Costume Makers

**Joanna Close, Molly Bray
and Silje Hostvedt Isaksen**

Lighting Designer Stuart Walton

Stuart is a Production Manager, Lighting Designer, and Music Composer who has worked all over the world with a diverse range of artists and companies including, Dreamthinkspeak, Young Shakespeare company, Srishti Dance Creations, Rifco, The European Chamber Opera, Rejects Revenge, Zero Culture, Brouhaha, London City Opera amongst many others. Stuart is also a musician and recording engineer and produces and performs with his band *The Bloogs*.

Technical Managers

**Gethin Stacey (Sound) and
Matt Blackmore (Lighting)**

Gethin Stacey runs Sound Hire Wales, and based in West Wales. Matt Blackmore, based in Yorkshire, works with Northern Ballet Theatre and a wide range of medium to large scale productions. This is Matt's second tour and Gethin's third tour with Adverse Camber.

Company Manager

Bea Udeh

Bea joins Adverse Camber to support its latest national tour. An arts manager and producer, Bea has worked in the arts and media sector for over 15 years including Nottingham Playhouse, Arts Council England and the BBC. She was recently project manager for a European-funded business development support programme for the creative industries sector in Nottingham for New Art Exchange. During 2014-2015, Bea was Tour Producer for the Mouthy Poets collective national tour.



Marketing Associate

Jenny Babenko

Jenny has worked with Adverse Camber since 2013 and is now the company's lead Marketing Associate, working closely between the company and venues to develop relationships with new and more diverse audiences across the range of the company's touring programme. Prior to joining Adverse Camber, Jenny has worked at The Lowry in Salford Quays, West Yorkshire Arts Marketing, Derbyshire Dales District Council and as a freelance marketer for a range of organisations. She is currently a board member for the Wirksworth Festival.

Producer

Naomi Wilds

Naomi Wilds founded Adverse Camber in 2006. She studied English Literature at the University of Leeds, winning the Crabtree Prize in 1987 and gaining an MA by Research in Narrative Strategies in 1991. After working for various arts organisations such as West Yorkshire Playhouse and Sinfonia Viva, she specialised in literature development for Derby City Council and the East Midlands Literature Development Network from 1999 to 2005. Naomi has produced ten national tours for Adverse Camber, raising substantial funds for artistic and organisational development. In 2009, Naomi was one of four East Midlands producers to receive a bursary from Arts Council England in recognition of her work.

SPOTLIGHT ON STORYTELLING



taking **storytelling** to the edge

Festival at the Edge

Festival at the Edge is the oldest storytelling festival in England and Wales, and as well as bringing together the finest storytellers from around the world, the festival is the only event to annually commission new and innovative storytelling performances. The festival takes place annually over the third full weekend in July (Fri - Sun) on a stunning greenfield site on Wenlock Edge, just outside the historic town of Much Wenlock, Shropshire. The programme begins on Friday at 7pm and closes at 5pm Sunday.

The Festival is family friendly, with a children's festival that runs alongside the main programme and on-site camping in a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. Festival at the Edge - taking storytelling to the edge for 25 years in 2016.

Festival at the Edge
3rd full weekend in July
www.festivalattheedge.org



Adverse Camber also recommends the following UK Storytelling festivals:

Beyond the Border (Wales)
beyondtheborder.com

Cape Clear festival (Ireland)
capeclearstorytelling.com

The Scottish Storytelling Festival
scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk

For more information on where to find storytelling all year round, visit www.sfs.org.uk

Adverse Camber Productions

Adverse Camber produces electric encounters through storytelling and music. We take risks on behalf of new and excellent creative work which broadens audiences' awareness of oral traditions.

This programme illuminates the source material and craft which has gone into creating the piece you've seen today. The destination we always work towards is the experience of sharing stories and music with audiences. We hope you enjoy the experience, and are always keen to hear from you to help inform our future work. Please like us on Facebook or Twitter, sign up for our newsletters and fill in our feedback cards to be part of our ongoing journey and get first news of more shows coming soon.

Special thanks to our funders Arts Council England and the National Lottery to whom we are exceptionally grateful, our venue partners, and everyone in the growing Adverse Camber team.



Adverse Camber Team

Producer

Naomi Wilds

Artistic Advisor

Paula Crutchlow

Marketing Associates

Jenny Babenko
and **Palmer Squared**

Associate Producer

Louisa Davies

Assistant Producer

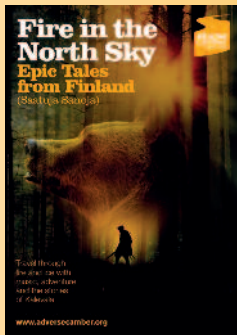
Amy Marsh

Participation Associate

Jan Reynolds

www.adversecamber.org

LOOK OUT FOR FUTURE ADVERSE CAMBER TOURS



Fire in the North Sky: Epic Tales from Finland (Saatuja Sanoja)

Be transported by songs, adventure and the stories of *Kalevala* - Finland's national epic and cultural treasure. Travel to the extremes of the Finnish landscape - the vast forests and lakes, the harshness of winter, the intoxicating summers.

With Nick Hennessey (storyteller), Anna-Kaisa Liedes (vocals), Kristiina Ilmonen (flutes, percussion, vocals) and Timo Väänänen (kantele, pyngyr, vocals)



The Shahnameh: The Epic Book of Kings

Breathe in the passion-filled adventure, lust and romance of this sweeping legendary history of Iran, as two outstanding artists bring exhilaration, energy, poetry and humour to epic tales of Persia and the ultimate heroic warrior Rostam, ultimately on a quest for peace.

With Xanthe Gresham-Knight (storyteller) and Arash Moradi (daf, setar, shurangiz)



 /adversecamberstories

 @adversecamber20

www.adversecamber.org



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



 **fate**
taking storytelling to the edge

