**Souleymane Solo Sana**

**West African Dancer, Instructor, and Choreographer**

**Mande Tradition**

**603 C Dalton Drive, Essex Junction, Vermont 05452**

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**KEY QUALIFICATIONS:**

Souleymane “Solo” Sana is an accomplished traditional dancer from Mali, West Africa. A former principal member for one of the premiere companies of Mali, Ballet Du District de Bamako, he is a leader among artists. Solo’s presence at local ceremonies and festivals in Mali has always been in high demand, performing with renown griots and musicians as well as internationally known artists such as Djeneba Seck and Oumou Sangare. With an extensive knowledge of traditional dances of the Mande culture he is highly sought after as an instructor for private and group lessons, teaching students from around the world including internationally acclaimed dancers, university instructors, and Broadway performers. Currently Solo splits his time between teaching and performing in the United States and running ***Kono Gnaga***, his NGO in Mali with a mission to preserve traditional dance and music. Solo made his choreographic premiere in New York City in the Spring of 2014 and has most recently embarked on the creation of ***Sira Koro***, a dance and music ensemble in Mali, where Solo serves as Artistic Director and Choreographer with a mission to bring new perspective to traditions while simultaneously providing opportunities for young artists in Mali.

**Select Companies:**

Jeh Kulu Dance and Drum Theater, USA 2011 - 2017

Ballet Du District de Bamako, Mali 2005- 2011

Troupe de Farafinko, Burkina Faso 2002-2003

Troupe de Lonkoba, Burkina Faso 2000-2001

**Professional Experience:**

December 2017- Present – **Artistic Director,** Sira Koro, Bamako Mali. A part of Solo’s NGO Kono Gnaga, he recently created a dance and music ensemble in Mali, where he serves as Artistic Director and lead choreographer with the objective to honor and celebrate traditional music and dance while simultaneously providing opportunities to young artists in Mali. Sira Koro’s premiered its first production in February 2018 in Bamako.

November 2014 - Present – **Executive Director,** Kono Gnaga, Inc., Burlington Vermont and Bamako Mali. Kono Gnaga is a 501c3 non-profit organization in the US, with a local chapter in Mali. The organization focuses on the preservation of traditional music and dance in Mali and other parts of Africa through research, arts education, and arts for development. Solo has lead research teams to outlying villages for the purpose of information gathering and documentation as well as formed a partnership with a local Bamako school implementing a dance and music program taught by local artists into the curriculum. [www.konognaga.org](http://www.konognaga.org)

September 2016, **Artist in Residence,** The American International School, Monrovia, Liberia. Led a team of local Liberian artists and taught students from multiple grades the music and dance of Liberia and Mali, emphasizing the importance of the local traditions.

October 2011 – December 2017, **Performer, Instructor, and Choreographer**, Jeh Kulu Dance and Drum Theater**,** Burlington Vermont. Performs, teaches weekly classes, workshops, and school residencies, and creats original choreography for Jeh Kulu, a traditional West African Dance and Drum Ensemble founded in 1993 in Vermont. Assisted with the creation and direction of the 2012 Premiere of *Sundiata Keita: The Lion King of Mali.* Notable residencies include Tap Kids Summer Intensive and Middlebury Language Camp.

August 2013, **Team Leader**, *More Than Me* Residency, Monrovia, Liberia. Designed and facilitated a month long residency for select girls of the More Than Me organization, an NGO focused on getting young girls from the most vulnerable part of Monrovia off the street. Coordinated Liberian musicians and dancers to teach and choreograph a traditional Liberian dance for the girls to perform at the grand opening of the More than Me Academy, which was attended by President Sirleaf- Johnson. ([www.morethanme.org](http://www.morethanme.org))

November 2012, **Artist in Residence and Choreographer**, University of North Carolina –Greensboro. Instructed beginner to advance intensive West African Dance Classes for the University’s Dance Department. Created original choreography for Robin Gee’s Sugarfoote Productions and was a featured performer at the fall production.

**Select Festivals and Residencies:**

2018, Dance Instructor**, Camp Fareta,** California

2018 Dance Instructor, **Oberlin College Workshops,** Cleveland, Ohio

2018 Dance Instructor, **Djamano Cora Festival,** Oakland, CA

2017, 2018 Dance Instructor, **Djapo Festival**, Cleveland, Ohio

2017, 2018, Dance Instructor, **Atlanta African Dance and Drum Festival**

2017, Dance Instructor, **Jamaica African Dance Festival**, Jamaica

2017 Dance Instructor, **Austin Dance Africa Fest,** Austin, Texas

2015, 2014, Dance Instructor, Choreographer, and Performer, **Maimouna Keita Annual Dance and Drum Conference, NYC**

2015, Dance Instructor, **Northampton West African Dance and Drum Festival**, Northampton, MA.

2014, 2015 Dance Instructor, **Kipekee African Diaspora Dance & Drum Festival**, Houston, Texas.

2014, Dance Instructor, **Kankouran Dance and Drum Conference**, Washington, DC

2013 Fall Semester, 2012-2013, 2011-2012, Dance Instructor, **University of Vermont**

2013 Guest Instructor, **East Carolina University**, Greenville, NC.

2012 Artist in Residence at **UNC-Greensboro** - creating original choreography for Robin Gee’s Sugarfoote Productions

2012, 2013, 2014, Dance Instructor **Brown University’s, Rhythm of Change Festival**

2011-2014 Dance Instructor**,** **Vermont’s Annual West African Dance and Drum Festival**

2005-2011 Performer and Choreographer for **Ballet Du District, Mali**

2004-2011 Performer on Tour with International Recording Star **Djeneba Seck** - Cote D’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Mali

**Other US Commissions:**

* Choreographer for Jeh Kulu Dance and Drum Theater 2011-2017
* Choreography for Maimouna Keita Dance and Drum Theater, NYC Spring 2014
* Choreography for Sugarfoote Productions, UNC – Greensboro 2012

**Other Performances with Notable Artists (2003-2011):**

Babani Kone, Mali

Djeneba Seck, Mali

Djelika Diawara, Mali

Chorus de Oumou Sangare, Mali

Fati Nationale, Mali

Abdoulaye Diabate, Mali

Kadiatou Bagayojo, Mali

Fantany Toure, Mali

Aminata Kouyate, Mali

Oumou Sangare, Mali

Deniba Sanogo, Mali

**Music Video Appearances (2003-2011):**

*\*Created choreography for select videos*

Djeneba Seck, Mali – *multiple productions*

Djelika Diawara, Mali - *multiple productions*

Fati Nationale, Mali

Super Gala, Mali

Kadiatou Bagayojo, Mali - *multiple productions*

**Awards-Competitions Fundings:**

Biennale Arts and Cultural Festival of Mali – 2005 – ***First Place***

Competition de Top Vacances Couture au Burkina *–****Second Place***

**Notable Festivals:**

Festival International de Volubilis, Morocco - 2009

Le Voix du Bamako - 2007

Biennale Arts and Culture Festival of Mali *(Performances and Choreography)* - 2005,2008,2010

**Other Professional Experience:**

Caregiver, Home Instead, South Burlington, Vermont September 2013 - Present

Sales, Associate, Macy’s Burlington Vermont January-June 2013

**Education:**

* ***3 Graduate Level Credits***, St. Michaels College, Vermont Arts Connect Teaching Artist Professional Development Program through the Vermont Arts Council
* Ecolo Dogono – Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso

**Certifications:**

* American Red Cross CPR and First Aid Certified
* US Citizen as of December 2017

**Languages:**

Bambara, Dioula, Mossi, French, English