Philharmonie Luxembourg

Sæalif Keita
«So Kono»:
concert acoustique

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Salif Keita vocals, guitar
Guimba Kouyaté guitar
Makan Tounkara n'goni
Tiere Daou calabash

RTL

Concert exceptionnel

22.05.25

Jeudi / Donnerstag / Thursday

19:30 90' without intermission

Grand Auditorium

The legendary singer Salif Keita makes a grand return with «So Kono», an acoustic and deeply intimate album. Salif Keita, «the golden voice of Africa», reveals himself for the first time in a stripped-down acoustic format, reconnecting with his roots and his guitar, his long-time companion instrument.

The idea of an acoustic album had long been dismissed by the artist himself. «*I'm not a guitarist; I use the guitar to compose»,* he used to say, reluctant to expose this level of vulnerability. However, in 2023, during the Kyotophonie Festival in Japan organized by photographer Lucille Reyboz and encouraged by producer Laurent Bizot (Nø Førmat!), something changed. Surrounded by the spirituality of a Zen temple and supported by his loyal musicians – Badié Tounkara on ngoni and Mamadou Koné on percussion – Salif agreed to lay himself bare like never before. The title «So Kono», meaning «in the room» in Mandinka, reflects both the simplicity and depth of this album.

Recorded in the intimacy of his hotel room, «So Kono» captures the very essence of Salif Keita: a powerful voice, shaped by trials and travels, elevated by minimalist arrangements. Blending reimagined classics and new compositions, this album resonates as a sincere and timeless work, reaffirming why Salif Keita is considered one of the greatest living singers, across all cultures and continents.

Salif Keita vocals, guitar

Salif Keita was born on August 25 1949 in Djoliba, Mali. As a singer-songwriter, he is known for blending elements of a wide range of local African music traditions – especially Mande – with jazz, rhythm and blues, and other international popular-music styles to pioneer the Afropop dance music genre. In spite of a noble lineage tracing back to Sundiata Keita, the 13th-century founder of the Malian empire, Salif Keita grew up as an outsider in several important respects. First, he was raised not in an environment of royal affluence, but in a poor farming household. Second, owing to his albinism – a condition traditionally viewed as a harbinger of misfortune – he found himself a pariah, rejected both by his family and his community. His choice to pursue music, moreover, violated the occupational prohibitions of his noble status and, consequently, distanced him even further from his family. When he was 18 years old, Keita moved to Mali's capital, Bamako, and began performing as a singer in nightclubs. After about two years, he joined the popular government-sponsored group Rail Band, notable for its electrified mixture of traditional Mande music and Afro-Caribbean popular styles. In the early 1970s, Keita and Rail Band guitarist Kanté Manfila left for Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, to join Les Ambassadeurs du Motel (later Les Ambassadeurs Internationales), a rival group that was similarly recognized for its fusion of local African traditions with internationally appealing popular genres. By the late '70s Keita's singing and innovative work with Les Ambassadeurs resonated strongly and positively beyond the boundaries of Côte d'Ivoire and Mali; for his ever-broadening fan base, he was the «golden voice of Africa». Indeed, in 1977 Guinean president Sékou Touré conferred on him the National Order of Guinea, a prestigious honour. Keita reciprocated by composing Mandjou, a praise song for Touré and the people of Mali. The song was accompanied melodically by guitars, organ, and saxophone – a combination that had by that time become Keita's signature sound. In the early 1980s, Keita moved to Paris to pursue a solo career. His highly successful debut album, «Soro» (1987), was a remarkably adventurous work, tapping stylistic elements from American and European rock and pop music, jazz, funk, and rhythm and blues, and fusing them with Mande music, especially hunters' songs. Of several albums released in the 1990s, «Amen» (1991) was the most enthusiastically received. Keita returned to Bamako in 2001, and released «Moffou» to great acclaim the following year. For that album, Keita recorded with numerous guest artists representing a broad spectrum of African and non-African acoustic traditions. As one of several family members who had experienced firsthand the challenges of albinism, in 2005 Keita established the Salif Keita Global Foundation, an organization dedicated to raising awareness of the struggles of albinos and to ensuring their equitable treatment in all societies. He addressed his own albinism in his 2009 release, «La différence», a musical celebration of difference. Proceeds from the album were donated to his foundation. «Talé» (2012) incorporated trance, dub, and hip-hop and featured collaborations with Bobby McFerrin and Esperanza Spalding. With the release of the personal and transcendent «Un Autre blanc» (Another White) in 2018, Keita announced his retirement from recording in order to devote himself more fully to his foundation. Salif Keita last performed at the Philharmonie Luxembourg during the 2009/10 season.

Prochain concert du cycle «Autour du monde»
Nächstes Konzert in der Reihe «Autour du monde»
Next concert in the series «Autour du monde»

11.10.2025

Festival atlântico | Mayra Andrade
reEncanto

Mayra Andrade vocals
Djodje Almeida guitar

20:00 90'
Grand Auditorium

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