

SIAMA'S CONGO MUSIC

STUDY GUIDE





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MEET SIAMA AND DALLAS

Siama is from a small African village in a country called DR Congo where his Mama always told her nine children, "Discover what makes you happy and do it (a LOT!) because happiness is your gift to the world."

When Siama was 12 years old he found his happiness in playing guitar. Music brought him all over the world and now he lives in America. Dallas grew up in a small American town where she loved singing and making up songs. She and Siama met through playing music. They became best friends and were having such a good time that they decided to get married and play music together all the time.

Now they play lots of concerts and record songs and do radio shows...and their favorite thing is singing with kids so they created a new CD especially for kids and named it, "The Land of Yangalele" (yawn-gah-LAY-lay), which means "The Land of Happiness."

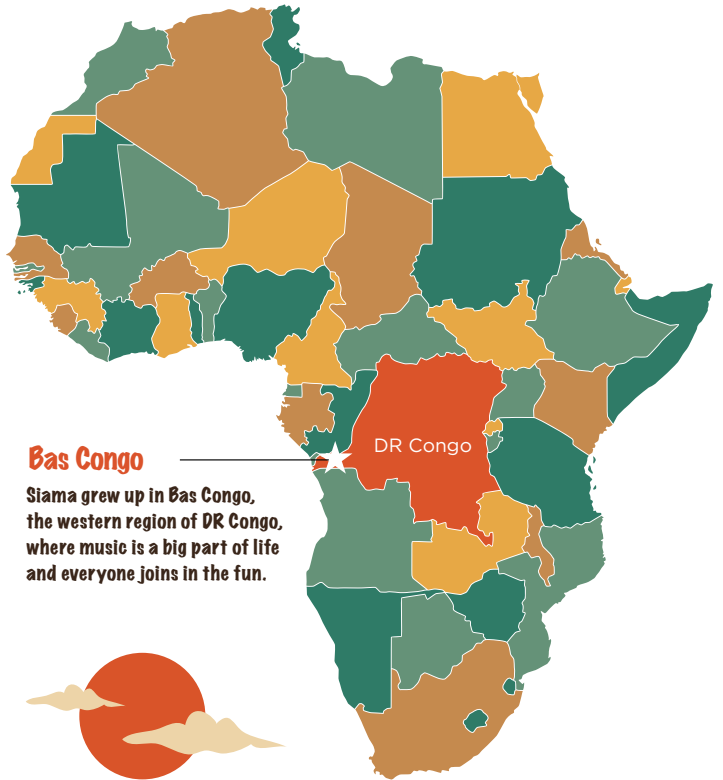




DR CONGO MAP & DEETS

LANGUAGES: 242 languages are spoken in DR Congo and most people there speak several languages.

- Lingala Congo's National language
- French European language
- Kikongo Traditional Bas Congo language of Western DR Congo



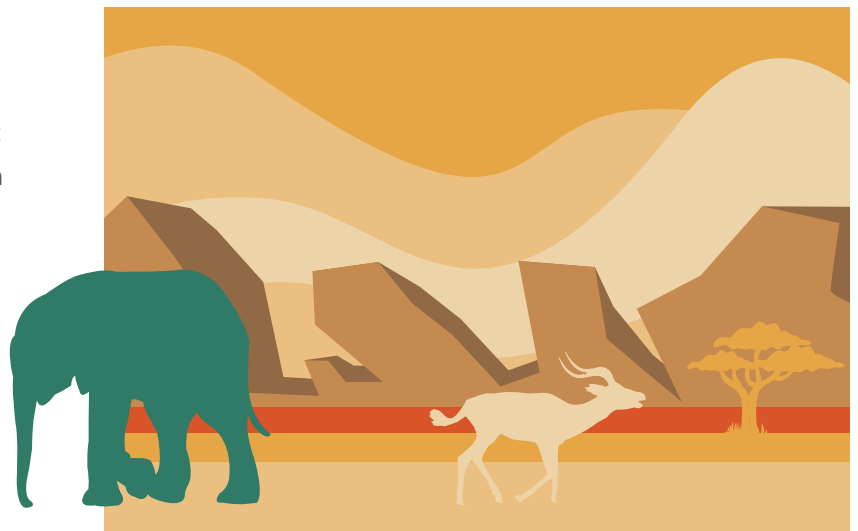
Siama and Dallas with family

CLIMATE: DR Congo is a very large country and has distinctly different climates:

- Hot and humid in the Congo River basin
- Cool and dry in the southern highlands
- Cold, alpine climate in the mountains



MINERALS in DR CONGO:
Copper, Gold, Diamonds, Tin, Cobalt & Coltan





MUSIC IN DR CONGO

Music is a big part of everyday life in DR Congo and everyone participates by singing, clapping, dancing and making up songs together. Drumming or instruments are used to signal dinner time or a celebration or when it's time for school. There are lullabies to help kids fall asleep and romantic love songs and funny songs to make people laugh. People sing while they're working or while they're walking somewhere because music makes everything more enjoyable. Siama's family sits under the stars in the evening, listening to the crickets and telling stories that soon turn into songs with everyone adding their beautiful voices and rhythms.

Siama's 3 Favorite Styles of Congolese Music:

TRADITIONAL BAKONGO MUSIC

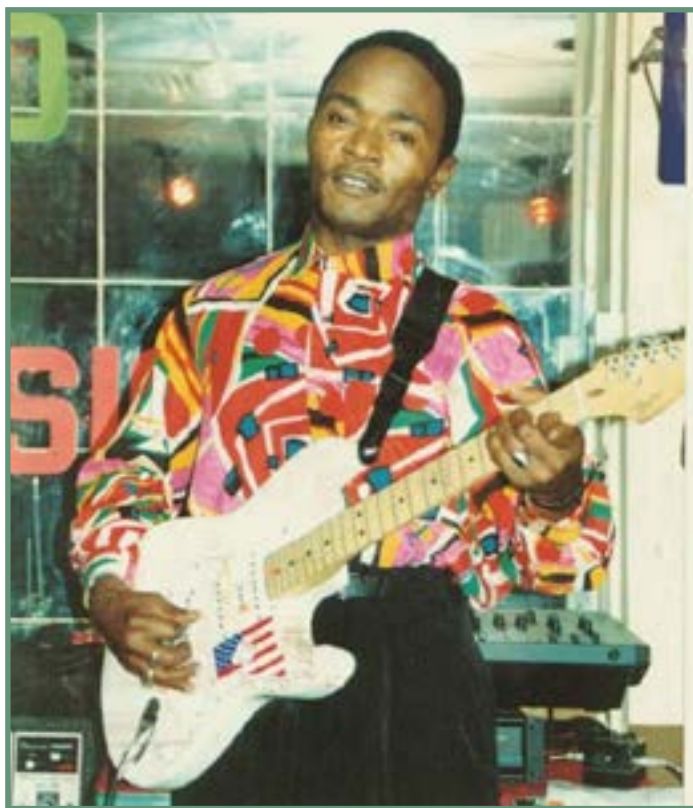
The music of Siama's ancestors has great rhythm for dancing and everyone sings along. The songs feature voices layered over triplet patterns played by hand drums, shakers made from tin cans and traditional instruments made from wood and metal. ("Triplet" means 3 so a triplet pattern is counted as, "1-2-3, 1-2-3")

Listen to this song by [Ntuko Congo](#)

CONGOLESE RUMBA

In the 1930s-'40s, Congolese radio stations played Afro-Cuban "son" music. Congolese musicians loved it and began learning the popular songs. Soon they were creating their own version of this sweet, gentle dance music. Over time, they replaced the Cuban horns with guitar and this became the signature of Congolese Rumba.

Listen to "[Mwana Mama](#)" by famous singer [Lucie Eyenga](#) is a rumba classic



Young Siama in 1994

SOUKOUS

Congolese Rumba music evolved into Soukous. Featuring a drum kit instead of hand drums and with a faster, driving tempo, Soukous is really fun to dance to. Funky, intricate Guitar and Bass lines are crucial to the Soukous sound. Soukous bands often have lots of musicians and their fans dance for hours and hours.

Listen to "[Sisili](#)", a song Siama wrote for [Moni Mamba](#) (Siama's playing guitar on this one.)





INSTRUMENTS USED IN SIAMA'S MUSIC

Metal Shakers

When Dallas and Siama visited family in DR Congo, a friend made these beautiful metal shakers for them. To create the shakers, he bent metal cans into cone shapes, filled them buck shot and welded them together.

Sounds like: “shake shake shake”



Thumb Piano

There are many types of thumb pianos throughout Africa, each featuring a unique regional design. Siama's Papa played a Congolese thumb piano called a, “likembe” (lee-KEHM-bay”), which had 8 notes. The one in the photograph, called an, “mbira” (m-BEE-rah), is from a country called Zimbabwe and it's Siama's favorite because it has a lot of notes.

Sounds like: an entrancing, relaxing sound like a bell or music box



Balafon *(BAWL-ah-phone)*

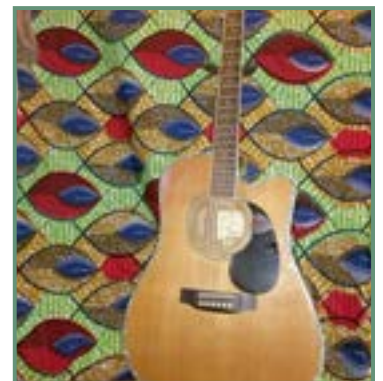
Different types of balafon are found all over Africa. The one in the photograph is from Ghana. Balafon is played by hitting the notes with rubber-tipped mallets. The longer the wooden note, the lower the sound. In Bakongo tradition, only the chief of the village could own a balafon and it was so long that it was played by 3 people with huge mallets.

Sounds like: a wooden xylophone or marimba



Acoustic Guitar

A guitar is a wooden instrument, usually with 6 strings which are pressed into the neck with the left hand and plucked with the right hand just above the hole. The modern guitar appears to have first been created in Spain. *(There are many stringed instruments found throughout Africa, including a fiddle-like instrument which was introduced to Europe long ago and the banjo, which Africans brought to America.)*





LISTEN AND LEARN BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

Traditional Bakongo Music Ko Yimbi Ko (by Siamas & Dallas)

“Yimbi” (YEEM-bee) is a hawk and “KO” means No. When Siamas was little, sometimes while he and his friends were playing soccer a big hawk would fly in circles overhead. The kids would shout at him to go away, saying, “Ko, Yimbi! Ko!”.

Can you hear a Shaker?...a Guitar?...Drums?... Hands Clapping?

Once you can hear the hand claps, clap along to the beat 1-2, 1-2.

Traditional Bakongo Music usually has a triplet pattern. Listening to the rhythm, can you count 1-2-3 out loud? Can you count 1-2-3 while you clap to 1-2, 1-2?

Traditional Bakongo Music Yele Yele (YAY-lay YAY-lay) by Siamas

Siamas wrote this song in the style of a Bakongo celebration song. It welcomes ancestors to a fun gathering and asks for blessings. “Yele” is a fun sounding phrase that’s like singing, “la la”. At the end of the song, “Tate” (TAH-tay) means Papa and “Mame” (MAW-may) means Mama.

Siamas’s playing a ukulele. Have you ever played ukulele?

Does this song sound like a happy song or a sad song? How can you tell?



Congolese Rumba Monkey Game By Siamas & Dallas

This song is based on a children’s song Siamas used to sing. Three children went into the jungle to play Monkey Game and had so much fun that they didn’t notice the sun going down. They stayed calm and found a cow path which led them home in time for dinner. The next day they’ve learned their lesson so they make it home before it gets dark.

Can you hear the Guitar?...the Drum?... the Toy Piano?...2 Wooden Sticks?

In the middle of the song, close your eyes as you listen to Siamas singing in Kikongo and imagine him singing it as a little boy.

Soukous Music Malembe by Siamas

“Malembe” (maw-LAY-mbay) is a Lingala word for “step-by-step” or “take your time”. In this song, Siamas encourages us not to worry. Let’s have fun and enjoy life! Malembe Malembe!

Which two instruments do you think are the most important in Soukous music?

Does the fun shouting/chanting at the beginning of the song inspire you to dance?





THE MONKEY GAME SONG

Siama singing, guitar, mbira / Dallas singing, toy piano / David Tullis drums

Guitar chords: D A

The middle section (sung in Kikongo) is a traditional children’s song. Dallas wrote the story in English so you can sing along.

“Yangalele” (yawn-gah-LAY-lay) means “happiness” in Kikongo.

The Lyrics

One day three children in the Bas Congo
went to play Monkey Game in the jungle.
Laughing, swinging, jumping all around
They didn’t notice when the sun went down. Tralalalala.
Didn’t notice when the sun went down.

Singin’ Monkey Game, Monkey Game. Do ya wanna play Monkey Game? (repeat)

The jungle is scary when tis dark and you’re a kid
But you got to keep your head together and that’s what they did.
They followed a trail that the cows had laid.
Got home to eat the dinner Mama made. Tralalalala.
Got home to eat the dinner Mama made.



Yangalele. Yangalele. Yangalele, Mama! Yangalele. Yangalele, Mama! (repeat) Monkey Game, Monkey Game. Do ya wanna play Monkey Game? (repeat)

Lumbu kimosi bana batatu, bele muyimbila nzebo. Bubele nzila yibavilakene.
Kuma kubua mpimpa, tralalalala. Buba kotele mu mampuya ma ngombe.
Mampuya ma ngombe o nitu yiyangalele mama.

Yangalele. Yangalele. Yangalele, Mama! (repeat) Monkey Game, Monkey Game. Do ya wanna play Monkey Game? (repeat)

The next day three children in the Bas Congo
Went to play Monkey Game in the jungle.
Laughing, swinging, jumping all around
They went home before the sun went down. Tralalalala.
They went home before the sun went down.

Singin’ Yangalele. Yangalele. Yangalele, Mama! (repeat) Monkey Game, Monkey Game. Do ya wanna play Monkey Game? (repeat)



Dallas with neighbor kids





WHAT TO DO DURING THE PERFORMANCE

Sing along! Clap your hands! Move to the music!
Have fun!

Use your imagination and pretend you're going to Africa.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Discussion

What did you learn about people from DR Congo?

How is life there similar to here?

What did you learn about Congolese music?

What was your favorite song? Why?

What was your favorite story?



Dallas and Siana having fun at the arcade

Did the music remind you of other music you've heard?

If I ask you to describe the show in one word, what would you say?

What is one thing you're inspired to do after experiencing the show?

Music-Makin' Games

Call-and-Response:

During, "Yele Yele" Dallas taught how to sing Call-and-Response. (She or Siana would sing a line and then everyone else sang it.) Practice Call-and-Response with your friends! The first person sings a line and everyone copies. Then it's the next person's turn to sing a line that everyone copies. Make your lines short and catchy so they're easy to copy. As everyone gets better at this game, try making the lines more challenging.

Nature Sounds:

The first people ever to create music were probably inspired by nature sounds. Sit with your friends in a circle and one-by-one, each of you make a nature sound. For example, the first person might make a sound like tree branches hitting each other (click-click, click-click). As he/she repeats that sound over and over, the next person adds another sound, like maybe waves on the shore (whoosh, whoosh). The next one could sound like a snake (ssss, ssss) or a frog (ribbit ribbit). While each person continues repeating one nature sound, others add their own sounds one-by-one. This is a fun way to create a song together. You can either leave it with just nature sounds or someone can sing or rap over it.





GLOSSARY OF NEW WORDS

Vowels

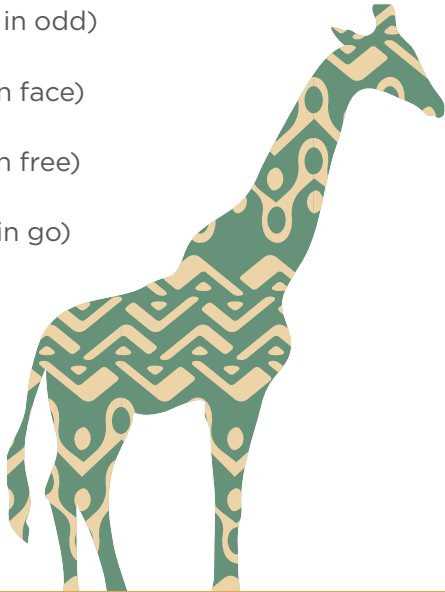
Vowels in Kikongo, Lingala & Swahili are enunciated as in Spanish or French:

A = ah (as in odd)

E = A (as in face)

I = ee (as in free)

O = O (as in go)



Words

Mbote (Kikongo) (mBO-tay) Hello!

Sangonini (Lingala) (sahn-go-NEE-nee) How are you?

Sangote (Lingala) (sahn-go-TAY) I'm doing great!

Yangalele (Kikongo) (yawn-gaw-LAY-lay) Happiness

Yimbi (Kikongo) (YEEM-bee) a Congolese hawk

Ko! (Kikongo) (KO) No!

Yele (Lingala) (YAY-lay) Used in singing, as in "la la"

Malembe (Lingala) (maw-LAY-mbay) Step-by-step or Take your time





LINKS TO CHECK OUT

Siama's Website: www.SiamaMusic.com

Video: [Special TV Episode about Siama's Life & Music](#)

Video: ["Yele Yele" on the Sky Ride at MN State Fair](#)

Video: [Kids' Library Program Teaser](#)

Video: ["Ko Yimbi Ko"](#)

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Siama's Music



The Land of Yangalele

Winner of Parents' Choice Parent Approved and Creative Child Preferred Choice awards. This is really unique, rootsy Congolese kids' CD that grownups love too! Sung mostly in English, it features traditional African instruments and fun, catchy original songs. The liner notes include lyrics with chords and fun quizzes.

"We dig it! A great addition to the family music mosaic! Outstanding rhythms and performances." - Joe and Justin of The Okee Dokee Brothers

"When we listen to Siama's 'Land of Yangalele,' we hear home, Mama Africa. This is very beautiful music that everyone can enjoy." - Ladysmith Black Mambazo



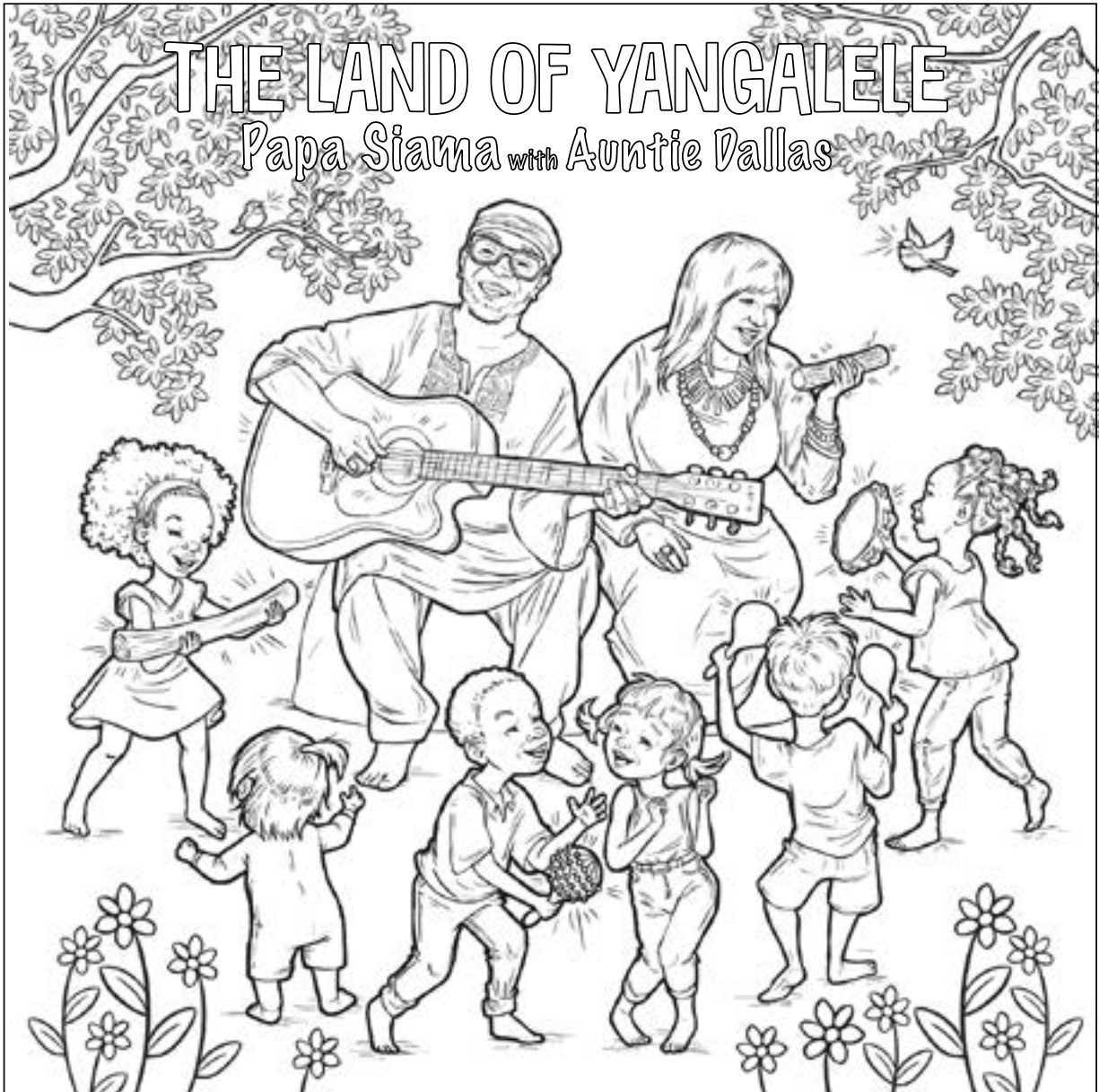
RIVERS - from the Congo to the Mississippi

Musicians of many genres and geographies flavor Siama's modern take on traditional Congolese music and soukous and together they create a lush, rhythmic soundscape of uplifting songs.

"Siama has found that elusive alchemy here. For all its bold collaborative forays, this album feels personal...humor, candor and confident musical playfulness..." - Banning Eyre for Afropop Worldwide

"...transforms his traditional Congolese dance rhythms into a dynamic, yet completely original sound that maintains the authentic flair that earned him his reputation over a long and prosperous career." - Hakeem Adams for Circumspecte





“The Land of Yangalele” available now!

Winner of a Parents' Choice Parent Approved award & a Creative Child Preferred Choice award!

*“We dig it! Great addition to the family music mosaic! Outstanding rhythms and performances.”
- The Okee Dokee Brothers*

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