

Written by



Mali's new music sensation, Fatoumata Diawara, who has been wooing critics and lighting up stages around the world with her radiant voice is set to make her Twin Cities debut.

Diawara, also known as Fatou, fuses elements of jazz and funk into an exquisitely, yet sensual folk-rock, inflecting it with the rhythms and melodies of Wassoulou, her ancestral song form. Diawara performs Friday, April 12, at 8 p.m. at The Cedar Cultural Center, 416 Cedar Ave, Minneapolis.

Likened to her mentor, Oumou Sangaré, Diawara has been hailed as the next great female African songwriter of significance.



Diawara was born to Malian parents in the Ivory Coast in 1982. As a child she became a member of her father's dance troupe and was a popular performer of the wildly flailing didadi dance. An energetic and headstrong girl, at the age of 12 Diawara's refusal to go to school prompted her parents to send her to live with, and be disciplined by, an aunt in Bamako, Mali. She was not to see her parents again for over a decade.

Diawara's aunt was an actress, and a few years after arriving, she found herself on a film set looking after her aunt's infant child. Her adolescent beauty captivated the film's director and she was given a one line part in the final scene of the film "Taafé Fangan." This led to her being given a lead role by the celebrated director Cheick Omar Sissoko in his 1999 film "La Genèse."

Written by

Offers for further acting roles poured in but Diawara's family wanted her to settle down and marry and forced her to announce on live Malian television that she was abandoning her career as an actress.



In 2002 Jean-Louis Courcoult, the director of the renowned French theatre company Royale de Luxe, traveled to Bamako to offer Diawara a part in his new production. An unmarried woman is considered a minor in Malian society so her family's permission was required, but they refused. After much soul searching, Diawara made the daring decision to run away and at Bamako airport she managed to board a plane for Paris, narrowly escaping police who had been alerted to her "kidnapping."



With Royale de Luxe, Fatou performed a variety of roles around the world including tours in

Written by

Vietnam, Mexico, and throughout Europe. During rehearsals and quiet moments she took to singing backstage for her own amusement. She was overheard by the director and was soon singing solos during the company's performances. Encouraged by the reception from audiences she began to sing in Parisian clubs and cafés during breaks from touring, which is how she met Cheikh Tidiane Seck, the celebrated Malian musician and producer who invited her to travel with him back to Mali to work on two projects as chorus vocalist.



Diawara made the decision to dedicate herself to music. She worked to complete an album's worth of songs and started recording demos for which she composed and arranged all the titles, as well as playing guitar, percussion, bass, and singing lead and harmony vocals. An introduction from Oumou Sangare resulted in a record deal with World Circuit and the recording of her debut project.

Diawara had collaborated with jazz great, Herbie Hancock and most recently, she contributed vocals to the song "Nothin' Can Save Ya" on Bobby Womack's new album *The Bravest Man in the Universe*.

Written by

Tickets to Fatoumata Diawara are \$30 (\$25 Walker members) and are available at www.walkerart.org/tickets or by calling (612) 375-7600.