

South African guitarist **Derek Gripper** released his ninth album, *One Night on Earth: Music from the Strings of Mali*, late in 2012. Recorded at an all-night session the album magically conjures anew a centuries-old ancient African musical heritage, interpreting kora compositions (21 string harp) on solo guitar, a feat which classical guitar legend John Williams said he thought was “absolutely impossible until I heard Derek Gripper do it.” When Kora maestro Toumani Diabate heard these recordings he asked his producer Lucy Duran to confirm that she had actually seen one person play this music on just one guitar. He immediately invited Derek to collaborate with him in Mali, an invitation which saw Derek performing at the Acoustik Festival Bamako in early 2016, the first international festival held in Mali since 2012.

The UK’s top world music publication, *Songlines*, called *One Night on Earth* “a staggering achievement,” and selected the recording as a Top of the World album in 2013. Derek’s “guitar has found the Kora-playing spirit, he captures the magic bound up in the way it is played”, says Williams, who invited Derek back a second time to collaborate in “The John Williams Series” at London’s Globe Theatre in June 2015 where the two musicians performed duets based on Diabate’s kora works.

*Libraries on Fire*, a new record of kora compositions has just been completed, exploring kora duets on solo guitar. The Kronos Quartet have also premiered one of Derek’s arrangements for string quartet, continuing Derek’s work to bring “*African guitar into the classical mainstream.*” (*Evening Standard*)

*“Five stars...Gripper has brilliantly transferred [the kora] repertoire onto a regular six string guitar. He sees [Toumani] Diabaté as the Segovia, or indeed John Williams, of the kora, championing it as a solo instrument. And Gripper brilliantly takes it back to the guitar. He’s opening a whole new repertoire of classical guitar music...bringing African guitar into the classical mainstream.” [Simon Broughton]*

*“Gripper has cracked it...his playing has a depthless beauty, which does full justice to the complexity of Toumani’s compositions. To do so without any hint of the music being dumbed down is a staggering achievement on solo guitar.” [Nigel Williamson, Songlines Magazine]*

*“More than a labour of love, Gripper has brought a new purity to the dream-like improvisatory nature of these compositions. My recording of the year, so far!” [Tim Panting, Classical Guitar Magazine]*

*“The result is astounding, not just for its technical brilliance, but its musicality. Gripper executes these pieces with the precision and attention to detail one might expect from a great classical musician...It’s hard to imagine a more impressive and passionate rendering of Malian music on classical guitar.” [Banning Eyre, Afropop Worldwide]*

*“A true synthesis and a great album.” [Ian Kearey, fRoots]*