

UNIVERSITY OF  
**CENTRAL MISSOURI.**  
SCHOOL OF  
VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS  
AN ALL-STEINWAY SCHOOL

**Guest Artist Recital: SK Kakraba**

Thursday, October 7, 2021

7:00 p.m.

Link to livestream on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/ucmmusic>



[SK Kakraba](#) is a virtuoso of the *gyl*, a master player and maker of this traditional xylophone that is the national instrument of the people of northern Ghana. Having been born into a family of gyl players, in an area of Ghana that is known for its many great musicians, SK formed a bond with the instrument at an early age. As a young boy, SK would often grab gyl beaters and try to copy the performances he was hearing. Under the traditional guidance of his family, SK developed his mastery of the instrument, as well as his knowledge of its rich musical repertoire.

SK's late uncle, Kakraba Lobi, was one of the first gyl players to tour, lecture, and record internationally. In 1997, Lobi arranged a position for SK as a performer and

instructor with the International Center for African Music and Dance at the University of Ghana, working under the renowned musicologist and composer/professor J.H. Kwabena Nketia. With his work at the university and his contributions towards building a resurgent interest in traditional music in the local scene, SK's reputation as an artist began to grow.

With a desire to share his culture, SK began touring internationally. Since 2000, SK has performed at numerous concerts and festivals across Africa, Europe, and North America. He has played shows with legendary musicians Lee 'Scratch' Perry, U-Roy, Idris Ackamoor, and the Pyramids; and with many other notable bands, including: Son Lux, Allah-Las, and Black Midi.

As a solo artist, SK has released four albums: "Gandayina: Xylophone Music of Ghana" (Pentatonic Press, 2002), "Kanbile: Solo And Ensemble Xylophone Music Of Ghana" (Pentatonic Press, 2014), "Yonye" (Sun Ark Records/Drag City, 2015), and "Songs Of Paapieye" (Awesome Tapes From Africa, 2015).

Critics and fans alike have hailed SK's releases and performances. In reviewing his song "Goon" from *Songs of Paapieye*, Pitchfork stated "Kakraba's polyrhythms are genius... There's a fluidity and flexibility of gesture here that's reminiscent of jazz, too, even though the gyil far predates that." The New York Times called his playing "...propulsive but never predictable." The LA Weekly profiled SK as "The man who might be the world's greatest xylophone player..." and described his music "...as hypnotic and otherworldly as you might expect — unfamiliar music, to Western ears, at its very best."

In 2012, SK moved to Los Angeles, and began to connect with local musicians to create new blends of traditional and modern music. The resulting collaborations have included performances and releases with artists working in a variety of genres, ranging from the experimental jazz of Dave Rempis, and Tim Daisy and Tony Buck (The Necks); the "space music" of Carlos Niño & Friends; and the synth pop of Empire of the Sun. SK also continues to pass along his knowledge and love of the gyil by performing in schools, giving workshops to American music teachers, and teaching seminars at the California Institute of the Arts. SK's upcoming projects include working with music educator Doug Goodkin on a book about gyil music adaptable to Orff instruments.

### **Program to be Announced**

SK's visit is funded by the:

