

Bi Furu by Oumou Sangaré

As one of the most influential African musicians, any of Oumou Sangaré's songs are bound to be ones of significant importance and meaning. Sometimes referred to as "The Songbird of Wassoulou," Sangaré is a Grammy Award-winning Malian Wassoulou musician whose songs mainly concern freedom of choice for women in love and marriage. She hails from a very musically rich area, considered "the cradle of the finest voices in the country" (Oumou). She is a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations but has said that she does not want to be a politician because "while you're an artist, you're free to say what you think; when you're a politician, you follow instructions from higher up" (Oumou). Where Sangaré is from, daughters will sometimes be sold to the highest bidder, and marriage is heavily based around money, both from parental interactions and interactions between spouses; she said that "even if two people love each other, the parents come in the middle and ask for money. That's how a marriage goes rotten" (Anglesey). Her song, "Bi Furu," which translates to "Modern Marriage," conveys the message that people should "honor the integrity of a relationship rather than the illusory security brought by money" (Anglesey). Sangaré is promoting the idea that marriage should be about love, and because two people want to make a happy future together. Her use of stringed, chordophone, instruments over a classic African-style beat makes for a beautiful contrast with her pleading voice, begging for change in how marriage is viewed and used in the Wassoulou region of Mali. This song is a prime example of the intertwining of politics into music and how music can be a paramount tool in an everchanging world.

Grace Williams