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PRESS RELEASE

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AKA Trio to release debut album 'JOY' on 24th May 2019

AKA *Trio* – Antonio Forcione (Italy), Seckou Keita (Senegal) and Adriano Adewale (Brazil) release their debut album *JOY* on 24th May 2019 on the bendigedig label. The trio will play selected dates throughout spring and summer – including Brighton Festival, Songlines Encounters Festival and Shrewsbury Folk Festival - before embarking on a major UK tour in November 2019.

Antonio Forcione, Seckou Keita and Adriano Adewale Itauna come from three different continents - Europe, South America and Africa. They grew up in three different landscapes, speaking three different languages, and were formed by three different cultures and musical traditions. All these differences have converged in *AKA Trio*, and the product is *Joy*, a beautiful musical trilogy fused between three musicians who are all virtuosos in their own right.

Italian guitarist-composer Antonio Forcione has been travelling the world for over two decades, releasing twenty albums and collaborating with many major artists along the way, including such names as Charlie Haden, Trilok Gurtu, Angélique Kidjo and the Bulgarian Voices, amongst many others. Seckou Keita from Senegal is one of the world's foremost kora players, involved in many international projects including his ground-breaking duo with Welsh harpist Catrin Finch, *Africa Express* with Damon Albarn and his Transparent Water project with Cuban pianist Omar Sosa. Brazilian percussionist and composer Adriano Adewale has collaborated with Bobby McFerrin, Joanna McGregor and Benjamin Taubkin and has composed music for orchestras and dance theatre.

Having played on and off together for the past 8 years, it was only in September 2018 that the opportunity finally arose to get into the studio and finally lay down the fruits of their musical friendship that have been growing together over that time.

The title track, *Joy*, co-written by the trio, is the flower of the musical union between Antonio, Adriano and Seckou. It came about spontaneously, growing wild out of jam sessions and idle times spent hanging out, chatting, cooking together, playing football. The song expresses the joy of companionship, of feeling secure in the musicianship and skill of the others, of putting aside the unavoidable troubles and anxieties of daily life, picking up an instrument and playing music with friends.

Kanou, written by Seckou, means 'love' in the Mandinka language, and this is a love song that Seckou wrote when he was on the road. It was a tough time in his life, on a personal level, and in the song he remembers

the very different character traits of the women he has loved - truly loved - and imagines what it would be like if he could put them all together into one perfect woman. But of course, that perfect woman doesn't exist, just as the perfect man doesn't exist. Everyone has faults, and virtues, and true love recognises those frailties, and offers human warmth and friendship despite them - even because of them.

Baracoa, written by Antonio, is named for a small town in the far east of Cuba where Antonio spent some time recently, sharing the simple joys of companionship and playfulness with the locals, just like he used to back in Italy when he was young. When he first arrived in Cuba, in 2015, it felt as if he'd returned to the place of his childhood - the children playing carefree in the sunlit streets, the old cars, the smell of petrol, the tarmac melting in the heat, they all brought back a flood of vivid memories and images.

Adriano wrote *Midnight Blooming* following the end of an unhappy relationship, not as a lament for lost love, but rather in gratitude for the relief of being able to love again, to shine, to feel good. He felt like his soul could bloom once more, and the feeling brought back memories of Brazil, when he used to walk back home late at night and the air was suffused with the scent of night blooming flowers, the ones Brazilians call *dama de noite* - the 'ladies of the night'. The smell instilled a wonderful feeling of being alive.

Track five on *Joy* is Antonio's *Il bambino e l'aquilone*, a celebration of the simple joys of childhood. When Antonio was a little boy, his little hand-made kite or aquilone was no toy; it was a wild bird, with wide-open wings that were ready to conquer the sky. For hours he would run, breathless, against the wind, holding the tangled line in his numbed fingers, following every dip and jolt of this wild animal with his eyes, as it soared effortlessly, disappearing above the clouds.

Adriano's track, *Saudade*, is about that profound longing that arises when something you love has been lost, or is far far away. The Portuguese call it *saudade*, and it's a feeling that ex-pats like Adriano know well - the feeling of missing the place you once called home, and the people, the smells, the sound, the food associated with that place. It's nostalgic, but not necessarily dark or painful. There's often a sweetness to it.

'We're living in a world where money is overrated, and where empathy and humanity are shamefully neglected', says Antonio of track seven, *Empathy*.

Uncle Solo is dedicated to Seckou's uncle, the great kora player Jali Solo Cissokho, younger brother of his mother Bintou. He was an inspiration when Seckou was a boy, a role model, a link to a wider musical world.

Track 9 - *The Beautiful Game* - there's really only one game it could be. And for Adriano, it's that game, especially the beautiful way in which it was played by Pelé and the other Brazilian stars in the 1960s and 70s, before it become more rigid and technical, that best expresses the way that the members of AKA Trio relate to each other, on and off stage. It makes perfect sense: a Brazilian, an Italian and a Senegalese, all now living in England, where football was invented, passing notes and melodies around, probing, testing; the percussion back in defence, the guitar and kora swapping the roles of midfield general and striker, all in a spirit of playfulness and joy, like kids out on that dusty piece of waste ground where dreams are born - that's the

beautiful game.

Choix de Joie is the simple melody Seckou wrote to help him find that space his own place of joy - his “choice of joy”. You don’t need anyone to tell you what makes you happy. You can decide for yourself. And you can simply choose that joy - the joy of being alive, the joy of being in this world.

JOY represents a wonderful journey of young street memories, playful times, childhood. In an ever-shrinking world, there’s an increasing number of people whose journey through life imposes at least one shift in identity, often many more, as they move from birth through adolescence to adulthood and from one country or culture to another. The question is; as people travel and migrate, as their identities slip and mutate, what constitutes the kind of solid ground on which communities can be built, joy and friendship can flourish, and music can be made? In many ways it’s the question of our times.

JOY releases on 24th May 2019 on the bendigedig label. Further information on *AKA Trio*, the album and tour dates can be found on their website www.aka-trio.com.

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Notes for editors:

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bendigedig is a label partnership between Theatr Mwldan and ARC Music Productions International Ltd – see www.bendigedig.org for further details.

AKA Trio are produced by Theatr Mwldan, Cardigan: www.mwldan.co.uk

TOUR DATES:

MAY 2019

30 Songlines Encounters Festival, Kings Place, LONDON

AUGUST 2019

26 Shrewsbury Folk Festival, SHREWSBURY

NOVEMBER 2019

- 09 De Nieuwe Kerk, DEN HAAG, NL
- 12 The Apex, BURY ST EDMUNDS
- 13 Lakeside Arts Centre, NOTTINGHAM
- 17 The Gulbenkian, CANTERBURY
- 20 Philharmonic, LIVERPOOL
- 21 Band On The Wall, MANCHESTER
- 22 Canolfan y Celfyddydau Taliesin Arts Centre SWANSEA
- 23 Galeri CAERNARFON
- 26 Theatr Mwldan, CARDIGAN
- 27 Canolfan y Celfyddydau Aberystwyth Arts Centre ABERYSTWYTH

TRACK LISTINGS:

- 1 Joy (Antonio Forcione / Seckou Keita / Adriano Adewale)
- 2 Kanou (Seckou Keita)
- 3 Baracoa (Antonio Forcione)
- 4 Midnight Blooming (Adriano Adewale)
- 5 Il bambino e l'aquilone (Antonio Forcione)
- 6 Saudade (Adriano Adewale)
- 7 Empathy (Antonio Forcione)
- 8 Uncle Solo (Seckou Keita)
- 9 The Beautiful Game (Adriano Adewale)
- 10 Choix de Joie (Seckou Keita)