

Press Release

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Prince Claus Fund for
Culture and Development

The Prince Claus Fund Announces Composers for the first Sahel Opera Workshop

An international jury has chosen the four composers who will attend the first preparatory Sahel Opera workshop. They are Gôo Ba (Senegal), Ze Manel (Gambia), Tunde Jegede (Mali) and Nawal Mlanao (Comoros). From 4 to 15 March, they will participate in the Sahel Opera project's first workshop, which will take place at L'École des Sables dance school in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal. The composers' presentations will be held on 14 and 15 March in the presence of the international jury. The jury will then make its final choice on 16 March. The Prince Claus Fund is the initiator of the Sahel Opera: a spectacular opera production that will involve composers, musicians and artists from the Sahel region.

The composers

The composers/musicians were asked to create a 15-minute composition as a preparation for the workshop. On this basis, the jury selected four composers: Gôo Ba (Senegal), Ze Manel (Guinee Bissau), Tunde Jegede (Nigeria) and Nawal Mlanao (Comoros). During the workshop, they will develop their compositions in collaboration with Wasis Diop (artistic director), Jean-Pierre Leurs (scenarist), Germaine Acogny (choréographe), Oumou Sy (costumes and decors), and dancers who have been recommended by the Prince Claus Fund.

International jury

The international jury was set up by the Fund. Its members consist of the Congolese musician and composer Ray Lema, the American theatre-maker Robert Wilson, the author and artistic director of the Netherlands Opera Pierre Audi, and Ama Ata Aidoo from Ghana. The chairman of the jury is Professor Kwabena Nketia, who is a Prince Claus laureate and the director of the International Centre of African Music and Dance in Accra, Ghana.

Cultural infrastructure – talent scouting

The Sahel Opera reinforces the cultural infrastructure and is generating income for organisations and artists throughout the Sahel region. In addition, the project deploys a policy of active talent scouting and stimulates the development of young artists. This original and unusual production provides young African musicians, dancers and designers with an opportunity to present themselves to an international audience. Moreover, the Sahel Opera contributes to a positive image of Africa.

The Prince Claus Fund is a platform for intercultural exchange. Working with individuals and organisations that are mainly located in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Fund organises activities and publications on contemporary themes in the field of culture and development. The Prince Claus Awards form part of this policy.

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Background

The idea for the Sahel Opera originally came from His Royal Highness Prince Claus of the Netherlands. The Fund is named after him and he was its honorary chairman between 1996 and 2002. Prince Claus envisaged an opera that would highlight the talents of African musicians and actors. The story will scrutinize the relation between Europe and Africa in a critical and humorous way. The Sahel Opera is an outstanding example of an activity that conveys the link between culture and development.

The National Postal Code Lottery is supporting the Sahel Opera with a donation of € 1,500,000.

The Prince Claus Fund has entrusted the production's co-ordination to Metissacana, which was set up in Senegal by the African stylist Oumou Sy.

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