

Press release  
Amsterdam 5 November 2009

## Premiere African tour Sahel Opera on 6 November

*Bintou Were, a Sahel Opera explores the differences between Africa and Europe but also shows their interconnection*

**On Friday 6 November the African tour of Bintou Were, a Sahel Opera will premiere in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. *Bintou Were, un Opera du Sahel* tells the story of a woman and a group of men who travel through the Sahel region to Europe. It illustrates the relationship between Africa and Europe in a critical and humorous manner. The opera, based on an idea of Prince Claus of the Netherlands, is a coproduction of the Prince Claus Fund, the republic of Mali and Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. After the premiere in Burkina Faso the opera will be touring to Mauritania, Senegal and Mali.**

The opera tells the story of a pregnant woman called Bintou Were, who travels with a group of men who are smuggled by a man called Diallo from the Sahel to Europe. Several men claim to be the father of the unborn child of Bintou Were, as they believe this will grant them asylum in Europe. Getting closer to the European border, the future of the unborn child is brought dramatically into question: the decision between Africa or Europe becomes the climactic turning point of the story! The libretto of the opera was written by Koulsy Lamko from Tsjaad and Wasis Diop from Senegal. All singers sing in their own local language. Djénéba Kone (Mali) is Bintou Were, the character of Diallo is played by Carlo D (Senegal). More than 40 artists from the Sahel region participate in the production.

Since the establishment of the Prince Claus Fund in 1996, Prince Claus (1926-2002) suggested the idea of an African opera. He pictured a production in which African musicians, singers, actors and dancers are given the spotlight. He also envisioned the opera to tell a different, more positive story about Africa and its relation to Europe. The world première of the Sahel opera took place in 2007, in a special built air theatre on the bank of the Niger river in Bamako (Mali). The opera has been performed in Amsterdam during the Holland Festival and in Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris.

### **Tour Schedule *Bintou Were, a Sahel Opera***

6 and 7 November: Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso  
13 and 15 November: Nouakchott, Mauretania  
20 and 21 November: Dakar, Senegal  
27 and 29 November: Bamako, Mali

---

The **Prince Claus Fund** actively seeks international cultural collaborations with partners of excellence in spaces of need. The Prince Claus Fund provides immediate cultural rescue as well as support to sustainable cultural processes. It takes initiatives to raise awareness on the importance of culture in everyday life and for development. The Fund works in the spirit of Prince Claus' belief that one cannot develop people, but people develop themselves.

The **Dutch National Postal Code Lottery** donated an amount of € 1.5 million to the Prince Claus Fund to realise the production of the Sahel Opera. The Prince Claus Fund is one of the beneficiaries of the National Postal Code Lottery. The African tour is made possible by the Sahel Opera Foundation, and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Contact: Prince Claus Fund

Sebas van der Sangen, [s.vandersangen@princeclausfund.nl](mailto:s.vandersangen@princeclausfund.nl) Tel. +31(0)20.3449160 Mob: +31(0)6.19638346

Images of *Bintou Were, a Sahel Opera* are available on [www.princeclausfund.org/press](http://www.princeclausfund.org/press). Videos of the Sahel Opera can be seen on [www.sahelopera.org](http://www.sahelopera.org).