

Learning by Ear –

Civil society and political commitment No. 7

Artists – Senegal AURA Hip Hop Project

Sounds : Mountaga Sarr

Texts : Yann Durand

Translation : Anne Thomas

1 Female off voice (Feature-Text + Outro)

2 Fictional characters (Intro+ Dialogue) :

- **Philomène (name can be changed)** : young woman who knows a lot of things, Alphonse's big sister

- **Alphonse (name can be changed)** : more naive young man who asks lots of questions, Philomène's little brother

3 Voices for voice-overs (reporters):

- **Anta Mbow** Woman (between 40 and 50)

- **Didier Awadi** Man (ca. 35)

- **Dj Doumar** Man (ca. 30)

Teaser LbE

INTRO :

Philomène :

Hello Alphonse and hello everybody.

Alphonse :

Hello Philomène.

Philomène :

Welcome to our Learning by Ear series devoted to civil society and participation.

Alphonse :

Today we are going to talk about artists who are politically active in society -- those who feel it's their duty to work towards a better world.

Philomène :

It's true that it would be a shame if artists don't make the most of their popularity -- they can reach so many people. And generally, because they are independent, they don't have to worry about their careers.

Alphonse :

Artists and athletes often stand up for the weakest in society and against social injustice -- especially musicians.

Philomène :

That's why we're going straight to Dakar in Senegal to meet a few rappers who are visiting a local children's center.

1. SFX : children singing

2. Clip: Didier Awadi (french)

"We've come today to see the children who are here and figure out what we can do. We're going to give them some Poto-Poto CDs that they can sell."

Reporter:

“We” means the Senegalese rapper Didier Awadi and other African musicians who are paying a visit to the Empire, a former cinema in Dakar, which has been transformed into a center for children. Children who could be those street kids in the fictive place that the rappers have created in their songs: the Poto-Poto Market

3. SFX: singing

Reporter:

Anta Mbow is the director of the children’s Empire.

4. Clip: Anta Mbow (french)

“Nearly all the children here have never been to school and today they are singing in French because you can sing without understanding, and then we explain. They are singing about their own life now. You heard that they often say “home”. They’re sick of it here and they want to go home. They don’t have anything, especially not love and they should not be on the streets.”

Reporter :

The children are 15 years old in average. The centre can house up to 150 children, providing them with the opportunity to take up leisure activities or receive vocational training. Anta Mbow how the centre tries to bring the the children forward in life.

5. Clip: Anta Mbow (french)

“There are some children who have registered with the school after having had some problems at school. There are some older children who are training for various professions. There are children who like sport and we support that but we encourage them to learn other skills, too, or at least they have to know how to communicate so we also have literacy courses. There’s an art and sculpture

studio where the children do a lot of painting and they like telling stories about themselves that way. There's also a pottery studio, an audiovisual unit where we trained up two young cameramen and one of them is training further with one of our partners."

Reporters :

Partners are important for this kind of project because the public authorities do not always support such projects. The Empire's partners include charitable organizations, private individuals and artists for instance:

6. SFX: singing (a member of AURA explains the song to the children)

Reporter:

Rap has a long history of social and political commitment. It came out of the American ghettos, speaking out against social injustice. This is the message AURA wants to transmit. AURA, which stands for United Artists for African Rap, brings together about fifteen African rappers from roughly ten countries. The selection criteria were simple, as Didier Awadi explains:

7. Clip: Didier Awadi (french)

"It was a question of affinities -- we looked for people in other countries who were already active and were sincere about their work. That's all."

Reporter:

AURA's first project is a concept album called "The extraordinary stories of the Poto-Poto children" -- a musical journey into the reality of Africa's cities.

8. Oton: Didier Awadi (french)

"It's about a few children of very different backgrounds, who hang about at a market. There are girls who have been prostitutes and children who have been

child soldiers, others who have been beaten up and others who were forced into marriage. They have all gone through a drama and they escape to Poto-Poto market. Basically we're trying to represent all the children that are seen on the streets of Africa -- to describe what they often go through so that anyone who hears the album will change his or her opinion about street children."

9. Music : « Bienvenue à Poto-Poto » (Welcome to Poto-Poto)

10. Clip: Didier Awadi (french)

"All the profits we reap from selling the album and our performances will go into concrete projects such as this Empire center for children. We've already made a donation to Burkina and everywhere we go we'll see children in need and give them money or CDs they can sell for their own purposes."

Reporter :

Many of the children of the Empire don't know what it means to work for themselves, for their own purposes. The director Anta Mbow doesn't stop telling them:

11. Clip: Anta Mbow (french)

"Life is not about being exploited the whole day long, begging on the street for the pleasure of one sick man. Half of them -- that's a lot of children -- are from certain bad Koran schools but there are some very good ones."

Reporter :

Child trafficking, sometimes disguised as something else, has brought a huge amount of teenagers from the sub-region to the cities. Many end up in the capital Dakar. They are as diverse as the members of the AURA collective, to which DJo Doumar from the Malian group "Tata Pound" belongs:

12. Clip: DJ Doumar (french)

“The future of a nation depends on its youth. We see lots of children in lots of places, in lots of African countries who are not aware of their rights. They live on the margins of society -- in very difficult conditions. I have called for government structures to make this matter a priority and to support centers such as these which give shelter to abandoned children.”

Reporter :

But the success of the center depends on funds. And director Anta Mbow is sure that there's nothing better than the active commitment of an artist to attract the attention of potential donors who might support the center with financial or material help, such as giving literacy lessons for example:

13. Clip: Anta Mbow (french)

“I believe in artists. I think they can transmit important messages and, since they might be listened to more than others, I think they provide a great means of communication -- they can transmit messages and say things that children will hear and understand -- maybe then they will lead a more normal life.”

14. SFX: Poto-Poto song

Reporter :

The pan-African element of the AURA project is a demanding logistical challenge. A musical performance of "The extraordinary stories of the Poto-Poto children" takes place in each country represented by the collective. The grand-scale tour requires a lot of management skills, says Didier:

15. Clip: Didier Awadi (french)

“Plan International supports us and the project is implemented by Accents Multiples -- a cultural mediation and engineering company.”

Reporter :

Didier Awadi is a producer and animator. He owns a studio and a label as well as sound and security companies. Basically, this co-founder of the first African Francophone rap group, Positive Black Soul, is an artist and a businessman at the same time. This is a common combination in the world of politically-committed hip hop. But beyond making money, he also wants to raise consciences. Anta Mbow, the director of the children's Empire, is delighted and thanks the AURA rappers for coming:

16. Oton: Anta Mbow (french)

“When people like you do concrete things, it's what we need. This here is concrete -- it really exists. It's not a film -- we're not cheating. I thank all of the AURA team for organizing this project and for existing. Do everything so that Africa looks like you!”

Music

2nd Part Dialogue

Philomène (enthusiastic):

Ah ! These musicians! I'm smitten!

Alphonse :

Yes, but remember they're not all defending a good cause!

Philomène :

Yes, OK, but just one really committed musician is enough to gather lots of others. Like Bob Geldof for example when he organized Live Aid in 1985.

Alphonse :

He wasn't the first though. The first person to organize a humanitarian concert was Georges Harrison from the Beatles. He took up an idea of Ravi Shankar's -- the Indian virtuoso -- and gathered stars in New York. They made millions of dollars for Bangladesh. But Live Aid had more impact, it's true.

Philomène :

That's normal because it was the biggest concert ever and got huge media attention. Imagine 16 hours of concerts in Europe and in the United States, bringing together 72,000 spectators in London, 90,000 in Philadelphia, not forgetting the 1.5 billion across the world who watched the television broadcast.

Alphonse :

I think that's when it became clear what impact rock and pop stars could have. Live Aid, which was organized to fight famine in Africa, inspired several more such events, which are now almost non-stop.

Philomène :

Don't exaggerate -- there aren't that many...

Alphonse (angry) :

Do you think I'm making it up? I *have* conducted some research you know! In 88, Amnesty International organized a world tour to promote the Declaration of Human Rights, in 98 Pavarotti, the Italian tenor and his friends held a concert for the victims of the war in Liberia, in 2001 there was a solidarity concert after the terrorist attacks in the USA, in 2003 there was a performance for HIV and AIDS sufferers and Nelson Mandela was the patron... There were hundreds of galas for the victims of the Asian tsunami...

Philomène (interrupting)

OK, OK, I get the picture and probably you've only mentioned the most important events...

Alphonse (still offended)

Exactly!

Philomène :

But you know Alphonse, sometimes I wonder if they really change the way people think. I mean money is made for the short-term needs of the victims or poor but in the end the fundamental problems remain.

Alphonse (appeased)

You're right and actually 20 years after Live Aid Bob Geldof embarked on another such event but he drew less attention this time -- today he and other artists are calling not for charity but for justice.

End

Outro

Reporter :

You've heard a Learning by Ear program on the subject of civil society and political commitment. Today we talked about artist who engage themselves for the society. To listen to the program again or to send us your feedback, go to

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www.dw-world.de/lbe. Thanks for being with us and don't forget to tune in again next time!