

## **Entrepreneurs in Africa – Successful and responsible**

### **Episode 6**

**Title: “Business secrets from an artist” – The Senegalese Artist**

**Ibrahima Mbaye**

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### **Characters / Narrators**

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>Intro/Outro</b>	x	x	<b>Unimportant</b>	
<b>Narrator</b>		x	<b>Unimportant</b>	
<b>Ibrahima Mbaye Sopey (clip)</b>		x	<b>about 40</b>	<b>French</b>
<b>Abdoulaye Magued Mouhamed Barry (clip)</b>		x	<b>About 12</b>	<b>French</b>
<b>Ousmane Ndiaye (clip)</b>		x	<b>About 25</b>	<b>French</b>
<b>Awa Mbaye (clip)</b>	x		<b>About 64</b>	<b>Wolof</b>
<b>Ndèye Fatou Mbaye (clip)</b>	x		<b>About 35</b>	<b>Wolof</b>

### **1. Intro:**

Hello and welcome to a new episode of our Learning by Ear series that presents successful but nevertheless socially responsible entrepreneurs in Africa. Today we are heading to Senegal in the Western part of the continent. We're going to discover the business secrets of a successful Senegalese stage director.

### **2. SFX: House of culture Douta Seck**

### **3. Narrator:**

It is Friday afternoon and we are in Medina, a district of the capital Dakar. Some actors are rehearsing in the house of culture. Ibrahima Mbaye Sopey is teaching them the basics of theatre. The showroom is overcrowded. The young people follow their master with enthusiasm and concentration. The scene they are practicing is written by Sopey and tells a story about ethnic and cultural diversity in Senegal.

### **4. SFX: More of rehearsal**

### **5. Narrator:**

Ibrahima Mbaye Sopey is an artist, an actor and a stage director. The Senegalese is 40 years old and his last, as well as artist name, is Sopey. In his mother tongue Wolof that means “the favourite”. After his secondary school graduation he attended the National School of Arts in 1994. Four years later, when he got his certificate, he joined two different theatre groups. In 2003, he decided to create his own theatre company named “F’Ame” which means “soul of a woman” in Wolof. With this name he wanted to raise the standing of women artists in his country:

## **6. O-Ton: Ibrahima Mbaye Sopey (fr.)**

“I had the feeling that Senegalese actresses are not well-known. It was necessary for me to show that they have a place in the world of theatre in Senegal. It was also an opportunity for me to show what I have learnt in the National School of Arts and discover others things in theatre. So, I created the company.”

## **7. Narrator:**

Today, eight years after the creation of F'ame, Ibrahima is proud of himself and the success of his enterprise:

## **8. O-Ton: Ibrahima Mbaye Sopey (fr.)**

“The conditions, in which the company was created, were quite difficult. I wanted to put into practice what I have inside me. I had a kind of thirst for artistic expression and for possibilities to express things from my heart. I also wanted to earn my bread and butter and give other people the chance to make a living.”

## **9. Narrator:**

But it was not easy to start a business, Sopey remembers. As in many other African countries, it is a big challenge to find financial resources. At the beginning, Sopey had only a starting capital of about 30 Euros. He invested this amount in the transport fees of the actors he worked with. That was the only refund they got at these times. When they practiced, they did not get any salary. But although it was hard to survive, Sopey didn't give up his ideals.

### **10. O-Ton: Ibrahima Mbaye Sopey (fr.)**

“Work is the only secret. In the National School of Arts, we have learnt how to be great actors. We were able to do many things, so we thought: ‘Why should we give up?’ For me there is nothing better than believing in oneself. Everyone goes his own way, but I, I want to stand out.”

### **11. Narrator:**

And indeed, Sopey went his own way. After some years of hard work his company finally made money. In 2003, he had 10 people working for him. Today he employs 20. His company makes profit through performances on stage, but also through some TV-novels and series, that Sopey writes.

### **12. Atmo (pupils in rehearsal)**

### **13. Narrator:**

A lot of the students admire Sopey and appreciate his professionalism. One of them is Abdoulaye Barry. He is 12 years old and has been rehearsing for the last two months with the stage director, to prepare for his college’s cultural day.

### **14. O-Ton: Abdoulaye Barry (fr.)**

“We are very happy to work with him. He is excellent and helps us with ideas. He is simply good.”

### **15. Narrator:**

His colleagues are also impressed by Sopey's enthusiasm. The man, who privately seems to be rather calm, becomes rigorous, tenacious and tireless when at work. Many describe him as demanding but he actually knows how to motivate his pupils and get them to learn.

### **16. Atmo (Rehearsal going on)**

### **17. Narrator:**

Sopey is successful and has spread his own style in the whole country. He is seen as a model for many young people who are interested in dramatic art. He is the first person in the country who adapted poetic texts on stage. Ousmane Ndiaye is one of his employees and remembers that he learnt a lot during the preparation of the play "The broken jug". It comes from a novel written by the German playwright Heinrich von Kleist more than 200 years ago. Sopey adapted it for his stage.

### **18. O-Ton: Ousmane Ndiaye (fr.)**

"I met this great actor two years ago during a festival. I knew he was the person to bring novelties. He made us understand that we can gain money with theatre and helped us to be professional today. As I worked with him on the play "The broken jug" I immediately understood that I should read much more about theatre. I must say, through Sopey I forged my personality and gained much more experience".

### **19. Narrator:**

Today, Sopey is a well-known personality in Senegal and he runs his theatre company successfully. But it was a long way to go, to become what he is today. At the beginning the old-established audience did not like his plays. He got a lot of critics, which put him off developing his business.

### **20. O-Ton: Ibrahima Mbaye Sopey (fr.)**

“We all know that not everything goes well all the time. The beginning was not easy because people don’t always welcome new actors.

Moreover, there is a social obstacle: You get no money in the period you do your rehearsal. But you are responsible for a family. You also have some friends and want to enjoy life. This obstacle is recurrent with us (artists). The family and friends begin to say: ‘You don’t have time for us anymore’.”

### **21. Narrator:**

But he always believed in his project and with his personal slogan:

“courage and perseverance” he succeeded in the end. In 2003, Sopey took part in a huge theatre festival and his theatre company won a prize. That brought him not only some money, but also a lot of publicity and respect. To reach that far, Sopey spent a lot of time and devoted his entire youth to his enterprise. That is why he did not have much time for family and friends. However, now, he realizes the importance of family and he proudly invites us to his home.

### **22. Atmo: Sound effects in the district**

**23. Narrator:**

The streets in an overcrowded district of Nimzat, which is about 15 kilometres away from Dakar, are interminable. Some children are playing football right in front of the women selling fruit and vegetables. Sopey also used to play football here when he was young, though he had to take on responsibilities very early. At the age of fifteen, his father died and he had to take care of his family.

**24. Atmo sound effects in the family. Sopey's mother and others members drinking tee and discussing.**

**25. Narrator:**

In his family's house, he is surrounded by his sisters, brothers and nephews. Of course Sopey's mother Awa Mbaye is there as well. She is one of his biggest fans today.

**26. O-Ton: Awa Mbaye (Wolof)**

“At the beginning I really didn't want him to be an actor. Today I don't regret it. He is a good son. He is taking very good care of the whole family”.

**27. Narrator:**

Sopey's little sister, Ndeye Fatou Mbaye, is also proud of her brother.

**28. O-Ton: Ndeye Fatou Mbaye (Wolof)**

“He is a brother but also a friend for me. And he really likes his job. His success doesn't surprise us. He knows how to conciliate job and family life, so we lack nothing at home.”

### **29. Narrator:**

Meanwhile, Sopey's friends, who could not understand him at the beginning, recognize his success and even support him. But it is difficult to combine economic interests and social commitment, says Sopey.

### **30. O-Ton: Ibrahima Mbaye Sopey (fr.)**

“There is one important thing: The economic obstacles make us develop ourselves. We will always be proud of it. The fact that I woke up every morning and didn't have anything to eat made me work hard. Today, things are getting better. We can participate in the development of our society and be helpful to our families and also be a good reference for young people. I am happy about that”.

### **31. Narrator:**

Sopey also played in well-known TV movies in Senegal. People are enjoying his actual series on Senegalese television. It relates the story of a typical Senegalese family which struggles to surmount the difficulties of everyday life. Moreover, he has a new project called “Pir' Art”. With this project he wants to fight piracy and illegal copy of art. A very important issue for Sopey, since art is his business.

### **32.Outro:**

You listened to a program about Ibrahima Mbaye “Sopey”, head and founder of the theatre group F'Ame based in Dakar, the capital of Senegal. The program was written by Babou Diallo. This report was part of our Learning-by-Ear-series on successful entrepreneurs in Africa. If you want to listen to this story again, or find out more about our Learning-by-Ear-programs, please have a look at our website at [www.dw.de/lbe](http://www.dw.de/lbe). Goodbye for now!