

THE IMPOSSIBLE MUSIC SESSIONS

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BEHIND BARS IN CAMEROON, BEHIND A MIC IN BROOKLYN

Lapiro de Mbanga joins by phone from jail as U.S. Afro-pop band performs his banned song

New York (25 October 2010) – Coming to the stage in Brooklyn: The Cameroonian singer Lapiro de Mbanga will appear live from prison via mobile phone during a concert and discussion forum organized in tribute to him and featuring a U.S. Afro-pop band performing the political song that landed Lapiro in jail.

The Boston-based Group Saloum, fronted by the world-renowned *griot* percussionist and singer Lamine Touré, will play their interpretation of “Constitution Constipée,” a song criticizing President Paul Biya that became an unofficial anthem of street protests in 2008. The imprisoned singer, whose case has been noted by the Secretary General of the United Nations, will join the event from his cell. Also speaking will be Maran Turner, Executive Director of Freedom Now, a Washington-based legal advocacy organization that is working towards Lapiro’s release; and Banning Eyre, senior editor of Afropop World.

The event will take place on Tuesday, 16 November 2010 at Littlefield performance + art space, 622 Degraw St., Brooklyn. Doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$7 in advance; \$10 at the door. The collaboration with Lapiro will be followed by a set of Lamine Touré and Group Saloum’s own infectious dance music in the Senegalese *mbalax* tradition.

Lapiro has challenged his conviction and 3-year sentence, which international observers consider invalid and unjust. As he awaits a Supreme Court date, Lapiro is confined to a cell with very poor conditions that he shares with 50 others. Recently he has suffered from severe bouts of typhoid fever and lumbago. Yet he remains defiant: “If instead of using guns you use music, you use the voice, you use the sound, then people who are against freedom will be shut down by your lyrics, by your sound, by your musical attitude.”

Touré commented that he was “immediately interested in getting involved as I feel that the project supports such an important and underrepresented cause.”

This event is part of The Impossible Music Sessions, which connects censored artists from around the world with artists in New York who learn and perform their music. The Sessions are supported by Freemuse: The World Forum on Music and Censorship and The New York Foundation for the Arts. Previous sessions have featured illegal rock from Iran and persecuted hip hop from Guinea Bissau. Learn more at www.impossiblemusic.org.

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Lapiro de Mbanga. *Photo by Jen Bell of Freemuse.*



Lamine Touré. *Photo via afropop.org.*