

African Musicians Bring your fundraising event to life!

Youssou N'Dour Perhaps the Very Best of Africa

Youssou N'Dour was born in Dakar in 1959 and began singing as a child performer at neighborhood gatherings in the tough Medina section of Dakar, Senegal, West Africa. He took formally to the stage at age 12 and by his mid-teens was singing regularly with the Star Band, the most successful group in Senegal at that time. In 1979, he formed his own ensemble, the Etoile de Dakar, which, by 1981, had evolved into The Super Etoile. The most famous band in Africa, The Super Etoile, guided by Youssou N'Dour has crafted and invented a thoroughly modern African pop style, one which has gone on to influence artists as diverse as [Peter Gabriel](#) and [Paul Simon](#).

Zimbabwean musicians

Oliver "Tuku" Mukudzi

Oliver Mtukudzi is the best-selling artist in his home country of Zimbabwe, Africa. Lovingly called "Tuku" for short. Tuku has been heavily influenced by *chimurenga*, the genre pioneered by Thomas Mapfumo that is inspired by the hypnotic rhythms of the mbira (thumb piano). However *chimurenga* is just one of many styles performed by Tuku, as his music also incorporates pop influences South African *mbaqanga*, the energetic Zimbabwean pop style *JIT*, or the traditional kateke drumming of his clan, the *Korekore*. While Tuku's music is undeniably contagious, it is his lyrics invariably deal with social and economic issues.

Thomas Mapfumo

Thomas Mapfumo is a Zimbabwean musician known as "The Lion of Zimbabwe" and "Mukanya" for his immense popularity and for the political influence he wields through his music, including his sharp criticism of the government of President Robert Mugabe. He both created and made popular Chimurenga (in Shona it means "struggle") music and his slow-moving style and distinctive voice is instantly recognizable to Zimbabweans.

He now lives in exile in the United States, although he occasionally returns to Zimbabwe, where his music is not played on state-controlled radio and TV. He tours internationally and still sings and speaks out about the problems of

Zimbabwe. His Chimurenga style of music influenced other Zimbabwean musicians, including the Bhundu Boys and Stella Chiweshe.

Alick Macheso

The late 90s have seen Alick Macheso emerge as one of the most popular contemporary Zimbabwean musicians. Born in 1968, Macheso spent his youth cutting his teeth in local bands. Macheso honed his bass-playing skills and distinctive [sungura](#) beat with bands such as the [Khiama Boys](#). Macheso decided to splinter from the [Khiama Boys](#) in the late 90s. Assembling an eight-member band with the help of [Bhundu Boy](#) Rise Kagona, Orchestra Mberikwazvo, Alick set out to carve his own niche in the Zim music scene. Although his first two albums weren't phenomenal successes, his third, *Simbaradzo*, proved to be a gold mine. *Simbaradzo* sold 350 000 copies, breaking Zimbabwean records for album sales. Additionally, the album shot Macheso to stardom throughout Zimbabwe and parts of Africa. His trademark bass-strumming technique, along with his flamboyant dancing, garnered attention from all corners of the music industry. His follow up to *Simbaradzo*, *Zvakanaka Zvakadaro*, was also a success, reportedly selling 100 000 copies in its first week alone.

BEST AFRICAN MUSIC OF 2008 - NPR radio recommendations

Kasai Allstars

Album: In the 7th Moon, the Chief Turned Into a Swimming Fish and Ate the Head of His Enemy.

This collective draws from members of five traditional ensembles in Congo's central Kasai region. The music has roots in the ancient rituals and celebrations of the bush, but it's also urban because these musicians came together in the Congolese capital, Kinshasa, and incorporates electric guitar and bass alongside metallic hand pianos, wooden xylophones, slit drums and other percussion instruments. The band's producers call the sound Congotronics. Some call it mesmerizing musical sorcery.

Chiwoniso

Album: Rebel Woman

Chiwoniso is one of the most powerful vocalists to emerge from Africa in recent years. Born to musical Zimbabwean parents in the U.S., she returned to Zimbabwe to make her career. Her second release, four years in the making, honors the sacred tradition of the *mbira* (a hand piano used in Shona religious ceremonies.) But it also marshals the confidence and nuance of jazz, pop and R&B -- styles Chiwoniso has absorbed during her bi-cultural journey.

Seun Kuti & Egypt 80

Album: Many Things

The youngest son of the late Nigerian legend Fela Kuti (founder of the funky,

expansive Afrobeat sound) does himself proud with this debut. Leading the elders in his father's old band with sprightly rambunctiousness, Seun Kuti hews closer to the classic Afrobeat groove than his more experimental older brother Femi, who also released an excellent new release (*Day by Day*) this year. With powerhouse bands and bold political rhetoric, the Kuti brothers remain the genre's standard-bearers, despite strong worldwide competition.

Seprewa Kasa

Album: Seprewa Kasa

The seprewa is a venerable, gut-stringed harp whose music is part of the DNA of the influential West African dance-band sound "highlife." Kari Banaman, a guitarist with the legendary highlife fusion band Osibisa, heard the seprewa played at a world-music festival in Switzerland in 2002. He went back to Ghana and joined forces with university instructors and seprewa aces Osei Korankye and Baffour Kyerematen, and the result is one of the freshest new sounds from Ghana in years, as well as a treasure of acoustic Afropop.

Toumani Diabate

Album: Mande Variations

Toumani Diabate is considered the greatest living master of the 21-string Mande bridge harp, the kora. Here, he returns to the solo format that launched him internationally in 1987, and he lives up to his star billing. These profoundly poised interpretations of Mande traditional repertoire cast a deep spell with understatement and subtlety. Honorable mention goes to his U.S.-based cousin, Mamadou Diabate, whose 2008 solo release *Douga Mansa* is explosive by comparison -- McCoy Tyner to Toumani's Bill Evans.

Orchestra Baobab

Album: Made in Dakar

This vintage Senegalese band has trafficked in a blend of salsa, West African traditional pop and psychedelia since the early '70s. Its second release since a 2001 reunion finds the veterans in top form. One highlight is a reprise of the 1972 hit "Nijaay," which touts fine clothes and perfume as secrets to a successful marriage, and includes a cameo by Senegalese superstar Youssou N'Dour.

Emmanuel Jal

Album: WARchild

African rappers have yet to make much headway internationally, but this survivor of Sudan's north-south civil war is well positioned to change that. Emmanuel Jal marshals a brutally frank account of his life as a child soldier and refugee with surprising gentleness. Rich, gospel-fused vocal layers and creative arranging by Jal's London-based Bahamian producer make for one of the most arresting and original African hip-hop releases to date.