

# Ethiopia's Foremost Jazz Musician gives Illustrated Talk in London

## PRESS RELEASE

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Jazz musician, Mulatu Astatke, a leading Ethiopian composer since the 1960s, gave a presentation to an audience of 500 at the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in London, on "Ethiopia's Contribution to World Music".



Mulatu covered a host of issues in connection with Ethiopia's history as the cradle of mankind, its unique alphabet, musical notation and the legendary composer and choreographer, Yared, father of the Ethiopian Zema or chant. Yared used modulated keys in church music before even Europeans did. He is a hero and an Ethiopian saint, according to the tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox church.



Mulatu also expounded on the significance of the eight Ethiopian musical signs which he said takes 15-20 years to study in the traditional schools. Winning recognition for these home-grown notations is among the aims he aspires to achieve, which would consolidate Ethiopia's contribution to world music.

Ethiopians, he argued, are scientists of sound, inspired by nature and their environment to develop and play an assortment of indigenous musical instruments including the Masinko, Kirar, the drum and prayer sticks, long before others came onto the scene.

He also shed light on what differentiates jazz from jazz fusion and the contribution of Ethiopians to the enhancement of music.

Dr Mulatu is a musician, composer, arranger and the founder of Ethio Jazz. Born in Jimma, Ethiopia, he studied at Lindisfarne College and Trinity College of Music in England and Berklee College of Music in Boston, USA. He is a doctor of music at Berklee and a fellow at Harvard. As a vibraphone, conga and percussion player, he has performed in Africa, Europe, Latin America, Australasia and Scandinavia. Most recently he played to 120,000 festival goers in Rio.

In opening remarks at the event, HE Berhanu Kebede, Ambassador of Ethiopia to the UK and the Scandinavian countries said Ethiopia offers visitors the opportunity to enjoy a wide range of tourism – natural, cultural and historical.

Ethiopia's stunning highlands and mountains, its lowlands and the breath-taking Rift Valley region, the diverse wild life and endemic birds and therapeutic hot-springs offer climbers and nature lovers the experience of a life time.



Home to all the great religions and a model of tolerance and mutual respect among the faithful, Ethiopia's celebrated historic route take tourists back centuries to marvel over church paintings in the monasteries of Lake Tana, the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, the edifice of Fasiledes in Gondar and the Axum obelisks. The Al-Negash Mosque, the Walled City of Harar and the Sof Omar caves also provide an exhilarating experience for visitors.

The birthplace of Ardi and Lucy, the ancient ancestors of man, Ethiopia, under the Growth and Transformation Plan, will ensure the sustainable development, promotion and conservation of its diverse and unique cultural heritage.

Our great country, the mosaic of nations and nationalities, is also a treasure house of traditional songs and dances reflecting the beliefs, lifestyles and history of ancient civilizations, the ambassador noted, highlighting Ethiopia's plan to be one of the ten top tourist destinations in Africa by 2020. Bound together by a common destiny, these nations and nationalities provide a fine example of the principle of unity in diversity, the Ambassador added.

Invited guests attended the traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony and watched award-winning *Dankira* perform traditional dances in a vivid range of costumes.

Guests were also able to view an exhibition of spectacular Hipstamatic photos taken by Lisa Bentinck on her recent visit to Ethiopia.

Present were an Ethiopian delegation in London to participate at the global World Travel Market exhibition where the beautifully designed Ethiopian stand is attracting a big crowd of visitors from both the UK and the rest of the world.

Ethiopian tour operators had the opportunity to link up with their British counterparts and the evening culminated in a reception given at the Embassy.



Guests were entertained by the Ethiopian World Laughter Master, Belachew Girma, who holds the Guinness world record for longest uninterrupted laughter. He has established Ethiopian Laughter Day and uses laughter as a tool for personal and community healing as well as the development of positive energy.

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