Hip-Hop from North Africa and the Middle East

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House
MAR 9 at 7:30pm
Approximate running time: 1hr and 40min

Amkoullel with Yacouba Sissoko
Deeb
Brahim Fribgane
El Général with Oussama Ben Amor
Shadia Mansour with DJ Johnny Juice
(of Public Enemy)

The concert will close with a finale on the theme of justice, human rights, and peace, with all the artists collaborating together.
AMKOULEL, a Malian rapper, took his stage name from the title of one of the novels of the greatest Malian writers, Amadou Hampâté Bâ, in order to pay tribute to all African cultures. He started getting serious about rap when, in his first experience on the radio at the age of 13, he was banned by the authorities. A year later he organized his first rap concert with scholarship money. He went to France to study law but changed course when he realized that he would rather be the voice of the voiceless onstage. Amkoullel has released three albums and has been honored at the Mali Hip-Hop Awards three times. In response to the radical Islamist rule in northern Mali, he created a collective called “Plus Jamais Ça” (never again) “to defend the democracy and the sovereignty” of his country.

DEEB is an Egyptian hip-hop artist and poet who first appeared on the scene in 2005 with the Egyptian hip-hop group Asfalt. Born in Cairo in 1984, Deeb left Asfalt in 2007 to found Wighit Nazar (which translates as “point of view”) with Mohamed Yasser. Their brand of Arab hip-hop took audiences by surprise with its positive yet sarcastic wordplay. Deeb has focused on his solo career since 2010. Cairofornia, his first solo album, is written in colloquial Arabic and addresses social, personal, and cultural concerns of everyday life in Egypt. Mic Check marks Deeb’s US debut.

BRAHIM FRIGBANE is a Moroccan oud player and percussionist based in New York City. He has performed with Dr. L. Subramaniam, Sami Yusuf, Hassan Hakmoun, Zakir Hussein, Steve Gorn, and Reggie Workman and has recorded with Harry Belafonte, Paula Cole, Club d’Elf, Jamsheid Sharifi, Leni Stern, DJ Logic, Malika Zarra, and Morphine.

EL GÉNÉRAL, Tunisian rap musician, is best known for his song “Rais Lebled,” released in 2010, which has been described as the “hymn” of the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution by protestors. He is known for his intensity and social conscience. His lyrics provoke listeners with strong words as he lays bare issues of political and social corruption while pressing for the rights, justice and dignity of his people. Two days after his second famous protest song, “Tunisia Our Country,” was released on YouTube and one week after the protests in Tunisia began, he was arrested by Tunisian police and imprisoned for three days. His forthcoming album La Voix du Peuple (The Voice of the People) has been given the support of the new Tunisian Ministry of Culture. He began rapping when he was 17. Mic Check is El Général’s US debut.
SHADIA MANSOUR, Palestinian, entered the musical arena during her teens at the forefront of public protests in London highlighting injustices against her people. She quickly established herself on the hip-hop scene after joining the first Arab crew from the Diaspora, ARAP, in 2000. Her political drive stems from her interest in speaking truth to power at political rallies from an early age using hip-hop as a “musical intifada” to express and globalization the voice of the struggle. She states, “Arabic hip-hop is not just a certain genre of music, it is the finger that points at everything and questions to instigate change. This is a culture of resistance. The only way it can be eradicated is if we refuse to exist.” Mansour has recorded with Johnny Juice of Public Enemy. Her single features M1 of Dead Prez and is titled “Al Kufeyyah Arabeyyah,” (The Kufeyyah is Arab).

OUSSAMA BEN AMOR started rapping at the age of 21 and is a member of El Général’s group. Mic Check is Oussama Ben Amor’s US debut.

DJ JOHNNY JUICE is an Emmy-nominated composer, producer, turntablist, engineer, MC, DJ, and community activist. Raised in the Bronx and transplanted to Long Island, he formed a crew with MC’s KBMC and Chill O Ski who became Charlie Brown and Busta Rhymes of Leaders of the New School. Juice won a DJ contest organized by Chuck D and Hank Shocklee, and became DJ and MC for The Kings of Pressure. He became the ghost scratcher and member of the Bomb Squad, and went on to scratch and add production to hip-hop albums including Public Enemy’s Yo! Bumrush the Show!, It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back, Slick Rick’s The Great Adventure of Slick Rick, and L.O.N.S.’ A Future Without a Past.

YACOUBA SISSOKO is a Malian traditional musician and griot known for his mastery of the stringed ngoni instrument and talking drum. He has performed with many of the greatest musicians of today and has toured internationally with master musicians ensemble AfroCubism.

ALBAN SARDZINSKI (lighting designer) Previous productions at BAM include: When Past & Future Collide (John Cale), Red Hot + Cuba, Dr. John: Insides Out, Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Red Hot + New Orleans, and Yoko Ono.

ZEYBA RAHMAN (curatorial consultant), creative director/producer of global culture, is a bridge building cultural ambassador working at the intersection of the arts and civil society. She conceived and provides curatorial leadership for Mic Check; is artistic director for the Arts Midwest-produced Caravanserai: A Place Where Cultures Meet; and director, Asia and North America, of Fes Festival of World Sacred Music, Morocco. Past projects include: creative consultant, public programs, Metropolitan Museum’s Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia and Later South Asia Galleries; chief curator, Alliance Française/French Institute’s World Nomads Morocco Festival; project director, planning phase, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation Global Cultural Connections and Children’s Museum of Manhattan’s Muslim Cultures; and senior advisor, Muslim Voices: Art & Ideas Festival. Twice honored by New York City for enriching the city’s cultural life, Rahman is the subject of two television profiles as a global cultural leader.
Q&A WITH ZEYBA RAHMAN, MIC CHECK CURATOR

Q: What is the role of hip-hop in the Middle East and North Africa? How has it evolved even in just a couple of years?

A: Hip-hop is a common medium for youth in societies around the world to express themselves. In the Middle East and North Africa, it is a very popular means for emcees to be social commentators, giving voice to burning social and political issues. As such, hip-hop culture and rap music has wide appeal across the region. Over the last couple of years, with so many Arab countries in the grip of a social-political tsunami, hip-hop has emerged as a prominent form of cultural resistance, an alternative to armed movement, and a strong voice for change.

Q: How do you see more traditional music fitting into this wave of new socially conscious artists, both of which will be onstage at BAM?

A: We humans are a storytelling species; we share stories constantly in so many different ways—by writing, singing, dancing, and acting them out to share with the world around us. Conscientious hip-hop emcees use their medium as storytellers and are social activists who draw attention to civic issues just as so many traditional artists do. They can be accompanied by accomplished musicians who build a rich soundscape to heighten the listener’s enjoyment of the message. Here, I’m thinking most especially of Africa’s ancient tradition of griot musicians. For Mic Check at BAM, live traditional musicians will accompany some emcees and also create musical links in between sets of each one.

Q: Are there musical trends you are watching emerge in that area now?

A: It’s fascinating to see the ways in which musicians are constantly experimenting with traditional and contemporary music from their countries and around the world. Often, we can hear some of those influences re-imagined and layered into their music in creative new ways.

AMKOLLEL

1/ S.O.S
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! We are in a state of emergency!
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! Everything must change!
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! We are in a state of emergency!
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! Everything must change!
The people rage, Their dreams are being killed, They no longer know in what to believe
Lies rise, Always the same thing, The truth is buried We would not be surprised If one day it all just explodes
The people rage, Their dreams are being killed, They no longer know in what to believe
If there is no hope, Always the same, Don’t be surprised, If one day it explodes,
Look at me, Look at my Maliba What are you doing? Why is it like that?
Everyone shuts up, Technical chameleons, New religion, Have millions
Weakest link, This is the law of retaliation, You have scruples, die! How cute
We have waited too long I’m tired of having an outstretched hand!
REFRAIN
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! We are in a state of emergency!
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! Everything must change!
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! We are in a state of emergency!
This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! Everything must change!
Foreigners kidnapped
No, no, never again!
Democracy on paper
No, no, never again!
Our politicians are a joke
No, no, never again!
Embezzled public funds
No, no, never again!
The poorest condemned
No, no, never again!
Religion used to manipulate
No, no, never again!
We all need dream
My people are starving!
We all need hope
My people cry!

2/ TEACHING, STUDIES
Since 90, the Malian school, slipped into crisis
Solutions proposed are ridiculous
Pupils and students that neglected
Here comes the time of reckoning,
Private schools, so well equipped,
Public education, neglected,
The poor have no choice,
[They’re] just following the instructions of others.
The country’s children need education,
The darkness of illiteracy is very dense
The country’s children need education,
The darkness of illiteracy is very dense
Students piled one upon another, crowded together,
Odors and perspiration mixing,
Teachers starving,
How can they receive proper educational training in these conditions?
Until now the country is on its knees
The darkness of illiteracy is terrible
We are in the dark
And the country’s leaders have neglected us
Develop your mind and your knowledge,
work,
That’s the only thing that you really possess,
even in the after life,
Nobody can steal it,
A place to teach should not to be confused with a place to do business,
Bribes rule everything when little brother gets caught cheating,
And little sister uses her body to pay if she gets caught cheating.
The nation's children need education
The nation's children need education
The nation's children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark
The nation's children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark
Study, study, study,
The density of illiteracy is very dark
Studies for knowledge
Studies for knowledge
Studies to thrive
Studies to progress
Study, otherwise one day you'll be sorry
Studies for knowledge
Studies to thrive
Studies in progress
Studies, otherwise one day you'll be sorry
Others are advancing,
We are going backwards
Others arguing,
What is Africa waiting for?
Others are advancing,
We are going backwards
Others arguing,
Nobody will wait for us
The nation's children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark
The nation's children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark
The nation's children need education
The density of illiteracy is very dark

3/ TOMORROW
Each one carries his own cross, his burden on this earth,
One only shouts out rage to the sky
What should I do,
What do I say?
Every day I pray
I pray
For Africa to get out of the darkness
I pray
For a better tomorrow
I pray
That the law of the powerful ceases
I pray
For the end of racism
I pray
For educational problems to be resolved in Mali
I pray
For Africa to come out of darkness
I pray
For a better future
I pray, I pray
Each one carries his own cross, his burden on this earth,
One only shouts out rage to the sky
What should I do,
What should I say?
Every day I pray
Poverty pushes the head of the family to steal from his country
The loss of hope drives the mother into prostitution
Poverty pushes children to flee the country
The loss of hope fills the streets with begging children
Poverty pushes the head of the family to steal from his country
The loss of hope makes the streets full of begging children
Each carries his cross, his burden on this earth,
One only shouts out rage to the sky
What should I do
What do I say?
Every day I pray
Only the work will take us out of this misery
Without sacrifice and without effort, things will only get worse

4/FARAFINA (AFRICA)
Africa, Africa
It is time
Africa
The time to work has arrived
Africa
Get up and out of your misery
Africa
Get up and walk like Sundiata
The hour of freedom has arrived
You don't have to beg for respect, but it is your right
In fact, this dependence is presuming the same thing
As slavery, which is already passé
Now I only need to immigrate
So many things that they propose to us,
that they show to us on TV
It's normal for young people to dream, and want to participate
The only thing they do not tell you is if you're black you just cannot,
No you cannot, if you come from Africa, eh!
Do you know what they say about us
We are the wretched of the earth
That we only have famine, war and desolation
That is why nobody respects us
Africa
The time to work has arrived
Africa
Get up and out of your misery
Africa
Get up and walk like Sundiata
The hour of freedom has arrived
Either it is contempt, or even worse, pity,
How would you respect those who are always needy,
Constantly stereotyped,
Thanks to the TV,
Lobotomized, self-denigrating,
The country's youth are lost,
dreaming of big bucks,
Shackled hand and foot, left to shine,
The country's youth are lost,
dreaming of big bucks,
Jamana deminsennoun Sinin Yé Yé!
Do you know what they say about us
We are the wretched of the earth
We only have famine, war and desolation
That is why we do not get respect
Africa
The time to work has arrived
Africa
Get up and out of your misery
Africa
Get up and walk like Sundiata
The hour of freedom has arrived
The media is perpetuating this propaganda
Only our misery and our failures are projected on screens
Our successes have been quietly forgotten
And the truth is often distorted
Do you know what they say about us
We are the wretched of the earth
That we have only famine, war and desolation
That is why we do not respect us
Africa
The time to work has arrived
Africa
Get up and out of your misery
Africa
Get up and walk like Sundiata
The hour of freedom has arrived
Africa
The time to work has arrived
Africa
The time to work has arrived
The hour of freedom has arrived
Do you know what they say about us
We are the wretched of the earth
That there is famine, war and desolation in us
That is why we do not respect us
Work!

5/COME DANCE
Come dance,
Dance, dance,
Come dance,
Dance, dance,
Come dance,
Dance, dance,
Come dance,
Dance, dance,
Come dance,
Dance, dance,

Everyone is side by side
Maintain the boundaries, pay attention
Don’t touch, na i don kè
Let’s go
Everybody can dance to the music,
Don’t be shy,
Don’t be embarrassed about how you look,
Fat, slim, tall, short,
It doesn’t matter, just party with me

Come dance,
Dance, dance,
Come dance,
Dance, dance,

The way she’s moving, dancing and shaking her body,
It will drive you crazy,
And you can’t help yourself from dancing too
The song makes your go crazy,
So shake your body to the music
I see how you dance,
You are the best dancer on the dance floor,
Everybody’s looking at you and realizes that you lead the party
Keep on dancing and don’t stop it until everybody goes crazy
Come dance,
Dance, dance

Come as you are
Shake what you have
Fat, come and shake it
Slim, come and shake it too
Don’t be embarrassed,
Show us what you’ve got,
Be proud of who you are
Be yourself and don’t care about what people think about you
I know you are beautiful,
You know you are beautiful
You are beautiful because you know it
So keep on shaking who you are

Come dance,
Dance, dance,
Come dance,
Dance, dance,

5/COME DANCE
Come dance,
Dance, dance,
Come dance,
Dance, dance,
Come dance,
Dance, dance,
Come dance,
Dance, dance,
I want to travel somewhere far and go on an adventure in a new country just like Ibn Battuta (Arab explorer) when he sailed his ship. They give me a weird look when they hear my heavy accent, which makes them want to know where I’m from. A stranger is easily identifiable and can be recognized at first glance.

You can tell he’s not from town when you spot him in the metro trying to read the signs, I have my map and rhyme book where I write all my observations and thoughts just like Anis Mansour (Egyptian writer). You’ll cross seas and travel all around the World but there isn’t a place better than home, Traveling and changing your environment and surroundings is a must as it gives you a birds’ eye view when you go back home similar to when a flying bird lands down to feed its chicks, The mind is a terrible thing to waste, which is why I dusted the spider webs off it and brushed the fear off my body, My time here is limited, I cannot stay quiet, The ink of my pen will cross borders as long as I’m alive

CHORUS:
I’m traveling like a migrating bird, Carrying a message to the World just like pigeons, I’m traveling free in the air with no chains, I know the way back home so, of course, I’m coming back home, I’m traveling, I’m traveling

The alarm clock went off reminding me that I have a meeting with the clouds, But I’m sleeping comfortably in bed and I don’t have the energy to get out from under the blanket, I have to continue my struggle, A hot shower and a double shot of espresso does the job, some people say ‘Cafe’ We say ‘Ahwa’ (Arabic for coffee), welcome, drive slow taxi driver and everything will be alright, They envy me for traveling around the world but don’t know the heavy feeling of loneliness, Being a stranger can get a toll on you especially when you miss your family, friends, food, I come back home to find my Mom preparing my favorite dish for me, The next day I join a protest to demand the freedom for my country, My country is like a butterfly that just spread its new wings, flashing off its colors in her garden, Swearing an oath never to go back to its sorrows

CHORUS:

Sitting in the airplane with people from very far away places, Some are going back home to check up on their ill mothers, others looking to spend a happy trip. The air hostess smiled innocently, which helped to ease the tense atmosphere, I put on my headphones and played music, Its weird how certain tunes remind you of special occasions in your life, a place you visited, an old joke or even an incident with a friend, I don’t buy into the old saying, “Birds of a feather flock together,” because it doesn’t solve the problem of a diverse society, we’re not one type of bird, we’re ducks, pigeons and swans, Enough with the superstitions, we’re living between two extremes, Aliya Mahdy (revolutionary woman blogger who stripped naked to make a point about freedom) strips down and this guy wants to cover statues (reference to extreme Islamists and their view on arts) The people out there looking for truth are sick of the chase, And when you open your eyes to the truth, one of their snipers pops it (referring to the incident where snipers were shooting at Tahrir protesters eyes in Mohamed Mahmoud clashes) I’m a citizen returning home and I feel betrayed, I love it when I see the arrivals sign in the airport, I know I’m home, I’ve carried so many bags you’d think I do weight training, My generation is persistent, since January 25 I’ve been a new person, I spread my wings and fly against the strongest winds

2) MY COUNTRY
I went to the land of Thebes and met up with its lovely people, Aswan is a favorite, I love Luxor and I’m not talking about the beer brand, I’m talking about the city with the beautiful temples, If you look at the map from the south, you’ll find Quena, decorated with its beautiful white houses, You’ll feel the generosity of Upper Egypt, the people there will get out of their way to help you out even if you’re a stranger, As I travelled down the Egypt Agricultural road, I bumped into a beautiful Minyan girl, People go to Port Said to eat seafood and buy new clothes for Eid (Islamic religious celebration and feast), Special thanks goes out to the people of Damietta for cooking the finest fool (Egyptian beans, Egypt’s most popular dish)

CHORUS:

Have you ever drank from the Nile and thought about singing a song to Her? I carry Her in my eyes and I feel her problems and sorrows, My country, my country, I give you my love and loyalty, My very first performance in Egypt was in 2005, I was joined by Meya Meya, Zeroboyz, MSE, Asfalt (underground Hip-Hop bands), Back then, I didn’t write my rhymes in Arabic until this one night in Assiut the same year I wrote my first verse in colloquial Arabic, I joined Asfalt in 2006, it was comprised of Yasser, Gad, Ibrahim and myself, We rocked shows everywhere, experienced the good and
I'm clever in this field and I'm happy doing what I love, I'm working on achieving a dream with a meaning, I can't see myself doing a 9-5 and sitting down on a desk, The normal evolution of things is for me to dedicate my life to music so that one day I don't look back and regret it, I don't want to chase net profit, I'm going to reach my goals without the help of a genie and a lamp, Since my birth I've been singing songs, I'm doing this for the records, don't forget about me History, It started as a personal thing and now its a strong movement in our community (referring to Hip-Hop), I'm not Nostradamus or a shrink but I always had a hope and confidence in my people, My imagination didn't betray me, which is why I'm positive,

CHORUS
On this occasion I'd like to thank everyone who supported me and motivated me to continue, attended one of my shows/open mic sessions or even came across my music by chance,

I'm not an amateur, I'm a musician like Sayed Mekkawy (famous Egyptian musician) Sayed Met'al (folkloric Egyptian musician) told us a lot of things but you weren't listening, You turned your eye on a lot of things, its as if your conscience was empty in the middle like a bridge, They're (government) playing with us like video games, My tongue is my horse (old Egyptian saying), I've tamed it to protect me, I've lived a quarter of a century, and I'm going to sing to the day God decides to take my soul, I demand the return of my country, I year and a half passed since Mubarak stepped down and still my people are not satisfied, Don't blame the revolution for the unfortunate events today, The previous regime (counter-revolution) was working a system to defeat our revolution, Remember the withdrawal of the security forces, slowing down of trials? Even an illiterate could process the information and understand what was going on, The Muslim Brotherhood must stop lying to the people, The media hasn't changed and it still deceiving people just like Susan Mubarak days, I'm out of words when I see the newly elected parliament members (majority represented by Islamic) putting their heads down in the ground like ostriches

CHORUS
Rise up, O Egyptian, No revolution can be terminated in a night and day, Bear with yourself a bit, Have endurance and tolerance, Don't fear the cycle of production, There should be a revolution against oneself, Tomorrow is better than the past

A transitional period, A commercial break, Tea and Cleopatra (Egyptian cigarettes brand), Yellow faces staying up at night, To follow the newscast, A penalty, The audience is waiting for the goal, Every day in newspapers we read news about a dog that has looted the country, Stop! return the gold, Weren't you in charge of the country's media? False statements, odd expressions, The hard part is over and history has been written, Don't think that the people is exhausted

They didn't care, Even if the earth were to open, Our revolution is a popular peaceful national revolution, We have demanded freedom, dignity and social justice, The people were controlled with an iron fist, Business contacts and personal interests, They treated us viciously, They appeared on satellite TV channels, And produced provocative statements, We won on February 11, A million-man joy, Ululate o Egypt, o Bahia (a name used to symbolize Egypt), We have achieved freedom, The revolution is not over yet, It has just begun, Looks like it's our turn now, And you're still in bed, C'mon get up! You'll brush your teeth later, C'mon get up! Move, your regime is screwing you, Rise up, O Egyptian, No revolution can end in a night and day, Bear with it a little, Have endurance and tolerance, Don't fear over the cycle of production, There should be a revolution against oneself, Tomorrow is better than the past

Corruption was prevalent in the country and stalk like arm pits, And the cops were being commanded to take and execute orders like Robocop, I'm using the Arabic language to express myself and remind the people of the discriminations we faced, Before the revolution, if you spoke up you would get whipped and thrown in jail, The people that carried this out are what we refer to as counter-revolutionaries (Felool is the Egyptian word), The current government is complacent and is not addressing the real issues, We still export our gas, Gaza is still under siege, harassment is still an everyday issue in our streets ask our Sisters, It turns out that we're the majority (the People) and you are the minority (Muslim Brotherhood), Before banning porn sites, tell us who the third party is (forces acting against the revolution were given this term), They asked me what is humanity? I told them it's a human being and his intentions

CHORUS
Promised a better life, because the one we're living today isn't rosy, Stand by me or else we die, Shout out loud, "No to the ruling of monkeys, this is the time of Lions" "No to the ruling of monkeys, this is the time of Lions"

Corruption was prevalent in the country and stalk like arm pits, And the cops were being commanded to take and execute orders like Robocop, I'm using the Arabic language to express myself and remind the people of the discriminations we faced, Before the revolution, if you spoke up you would get whipped and thrown in jail, The people that carried this out are what we refer to as counter-revolutionaries (Felool is the Egyptian word), The current government is complacent and is not addressing the real issues, We still export our gas, Gaza
1/ RAIS LEBLED/MR. PRESIDENT
Why are you worried?
Would you tell me something? Don’t be afraid!
Mr. President, today I am speaking in the name of all the people and myself who are suffering in 2011,
There are still people dying of hunger who want to work to survive,
But their voice was not heard,
Get yourself into the street and see,
People have become like animals,
Look at the police with batons, takatak, they don’t care,
Since there is no one telling them to stop,
Even the law of the Constitution,
Put it in water and drink it.
Every day I hear of invented process,
In spite of what the servants of the State know,
I see the snake that strikes women in headscarves,
You accept this for your daughter?
You know these are words that make you weep,
As a father does not want to hurt his children,
Then this is a message from one of your children,
Who is speaking of his suffering,
We are living like dogs,
Half of the people are living in filth,
And drank from a cup of suffering,
Mr. President, your people are dead,
Many people eat from garbage,
And you see what is happening in the country,
Misery everywhere and people who have not found a place to sleep,
I am speaking in name of the people who are suffering and were squashed underfoot,
Mr. President, you told me to speak without fear,
But I know that eventually I will get just slaps,
I see too much injustice and so I decided to send this message,
Even though the people told me that my end is death,
But, how long will the Tunisian live in dreams?
Where is the right of expression?
They are just words...
Tunis was defined the “green,” but there is only desert divided into two.
It is direct, forced, robbery that has dominated a country,
Without naming names everybody already knows who they are.
Much money was pledged for projects and infrastructure,
Schools, hospitals, buildings, houses,
But the sons of dogs have already fattened [on the money diverted from it],
They stole, robbed, kidnapped, and were unwilling to leave their positions,
I know that there are many thoughts in people’s hearts that aren’t expressed,
If there wasn’t this injustice, I would not be here to say these things.
Mr. President, your people are dead,
Many people eat from garbage,
And you see what is happening in the country,
Misery everywhere and people who have not found a place to sleep,
I am speaking in name of the people who are suffering and were squashed underfoot.

2/ ENA ERRAP/I AM RAP
I am RAP, who was confused,
They locked the doors in my face,
I live happy one day and the day after I suffer a lot,
I am RAP, who was oppressed,
Not like in the other countries where there is RESPECT,
Now, everybody knows that RAP is making a difference,
They create big trouble and sabotage me.
They said that my musical style is not compatible with our traditions, they said it is sinful,
But in fact it is THEM who are doing sinful things and they will continue until the end.
For them I am problematic,
I am the one who is a nuisance to them,
I am the one who denounces the SYSTEM’s injustices against my people,
Their only like arts and artists that serve them and their interest in this country,
That’s why they cancel all rap concerts,
I am not on stage because for them, I am outside the system,
I prefer to stay outside the system instead of prostrating to the dictators.

REFRAIN
I am RAP, who was confused,
They locked the doors in my face,
I live happy one day and the day after I suffer a lot,
I am RAP, who was oppressed,
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My people’s voice that was silenced [by the system] before,
The voice of the poor, the weak, the voice of the truth
The voice of the one who has no voice,
I solved some problems and created some too,
I won’t allow anybody to hurt us anymore or abuse our kindness again,
I am RAP that runs in the veins,
I am the RAP that runs in the brain
When night arrives, the secret police jump to start writing cases,
What eyes can see plainly,
Because they are developing weapons,
We have to go to war without getting paid,
We fight and we defend,
Let me be next to the people who want to fight [social justice]

REFRAIN
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
It’s been a long time since I have been fighting against conflict,
Against racism, against wars, against rotten mentality and misery
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
It’s been a long time since I have been fighting against conflict,
Against racism, against wars, against rotten mentality and misery
I am RAP, still moving forward,
My soul is still the same [fighting for justice],
I won’t abdicate,
Every military watchman is afraid,
My words are grenades,
I am BACK!
I am RAP, I am ready to start, always on the move,
Never stopping,
My fire will never turn off,
I’m RAP, rapping for the public against the political system’s shenanigans
I am helping you with my critiques,
Do you think you will change your ways?
I will never change,
My words are addressed to the “enlightened” people,
I am free and have been for a long time

REFRAIN (two times)
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country,
It’s been a long time since I have been fighting against conflict,
Against racism, against wars, against rotten mentality and misery
I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country, I am RAP, AKA the voice of the country, It’s been a long time since I have been fighting against conflict, Against racism, against wars, against rotten mentality and misery

General! I am RAP. Welcome to my world.

3/ WELCOME TO MY WORLD
Welcome! Just know that I am still hardcore, My voice is my weapon, my rap is strong, Wherever there is evil I am facing it, I am ready for life or death Don’t need to talk, the public knows my story, General of the heart, General of war, I am rapping for [the struggle for social justice], For the voice of truth, the voice of the oppressed. and the voice of the country, I dedicate this to the jealous who envy so intensely.

These dogs are standing, watching me as I fly high, Many were happy when the President threw me in jail, But I reappeared like a nightmare, My rap disturbs, it has a cause, it doesn’t serve the government or political parties, I am blacklisted by the secret service, My rap makes them intensely angry.

REFRAIN
Welcome to my world, Step with me and follow me, It’s me versus my enemy, You can never stop me

Welcome to my world, Step with me and follow me, It’s me versus my enemy, You can never stop me

All my life is a risk and danger, I am a soldier in every war, My road is dark and full of holes, I am here, As you already know from the beginning, my lyrics and my rap are that of a socially engaged artist, That has been my intention from the first day, Many people listened to me, listened to my art, while at the same time other MCs hate me, They cursed me thinking they are putting me down, We are living in a country where no one has the courage to speak the truth, Everyone is fake and can be corrupted, Except the one who has humanitarian values.

I cannot be bought, neither can my message or my voice, My voice is free and I won’t prostrate to the political games, I have credibility and, rap is a responsibility

Case after case, we try to show the truth, Because of oppression, my pen feels compelled to speak out on paper, We are still standing, Although, for years the water in the glass has been overflowing [with social pressures and troubles], My rap is advancing at an even greater speed.

I address my words to you the public, My greetings to you, Without my public I could never have been what I am, From the South to the North from the East to the West, Public, thanks to you I have reached my goal and realized what I want [to do], Thanks to God, he gave me new life, I am alive, I could have been dead and far away from you, With you, I move forward, With you, I live like a volcano, With you, lyrics live!

5/ DIRTY GAME
Looking for a BUZZ and fame, Rap in Tunisia sold its soul, That is why in Tunisia the rappers are just rapping rubbish, Following the policy of nonsense, [Excuses from policy makers like] I forgot to tell you that the ladder is broken, Come back tomorrow.

You are cursing, but thank God I am advancing, You insult, dreaming that I am being affected by it [forcing me to stay up] all night, Many words, many rumors about me, Looking down at you from a distance, And I am on top, The Boss is back! Go back, back to your place, Time to set everything in order, Tunisian rap is a jungle, Full of [predatory] animals, full of lions, tigers, eagles, crocodiles and dinosaurs, Everything is imitation, all are thieves and hypocrites, The public is aware of your games, That is why my fans love me, Because I am very sincere, With the help of God, My name and image won’t fall.

REFRAIN
Every day my head is held high General, I am a soldier, I am not just an MC, In the top ten list I am number one, always on the move, Welcome to my world.

Every day my head is held high General, I am a soldier, I am not just an MC, In the top ten list I am number one, always on the move, Welcome to my world.

We do not use the language of those using drugs as in some neighborhoods, In life you should respect yourself, You are speaking a language that has been passé since 2000, You were silent before, Where were you during Zinelabidine Ben Ali’s [the former Tunisian president overthrown by the Jasmine Revolution] time? In Tunisia what was sinful then is an honor today, Look at the Revolution, Everybody used it and drank from it like milk from a cow, While I am fighting, You and ones like you are singing about gooey love, I am well known and you are insulting me, As a result, you are still look like spit on a wall, You are talking behind my back, And at the same time you want to be featured in a collaboration with me, I cleaned up Tunisian rap and made it listenable, I am the one who gave it value and with me the flag is flying high, I am pulling you by your ears [I am carrying you], Like Messi [Spain’s star soccer player] is carrying FC Barcelona [Spain’s famous soccer team], I am like a thorn in your side, Rappers and government you’re still the same, And I am still here like the eagle and you [standing there like the owl]

REFRAIN
Every day my head is held high General, I am a soldier, I am not just an MC, In the top ten list I am number one, always on the move, Welcome to my world.

Every day my head is held high General, I am a soldier, I am not just an MC, In the top ten list I am number one, always
on the move,
Welcome to my world.

4/ WAKFEEN/STANDING UP
General, OK, OK,
Welcome to my world.

We are still standing up even though they’re talking badly about us.
We don’t care about them,
Each one has their own character,
You see a lot of jealousy, a lot of hate in hearts,
You don’t want to accept destiny,
We are still standing even when we were betrayed by friends,
I open my doors to them,
But at the end they betrayed me like the dogs that they are.
The people today are judged by the money they have,
Specially in Tunisia,
When people get rich, everyone kisses their hands,
Do a comparison between the one who falls down and the one is standing up,
The one who falls, they step on him,
And the one who is flying high, they stand in line to meet with him.
Sick hearts, full of poison,
Like vipers they eat [the weak sheep] with wolves and then cry to shepherd,
Like vampires they drink the blood of the hands that helped them,
Look to people with values, not to people that sold their souls,
General! Strong and successful but never an oppressor,
Many things were said,
I was young but now I am older.

REFRAIN
We are still standing until we die with all what they say about us,
We are still standing and as we are standing they are crying,
In their eyes you can see the jealousy,
Like it or not you are jealous.

We are still standing,
Like rocks of the pyramids,
Because we are standing, many of them cried as they are fake rappers.
Snow doesn’t melt during its season,
The cold is accustomed to cold.
Those who are accustomed to cheapness, are humiliated like faded flowers.

REFRAIN
We are still standing until we die with all what they say about us,
We are still standing and as we are standing they are crying,
In their eyes you can see the jealousy,
Like it or not you are jealous.

We are still standing,
Even though they tried to give us a bad reputation,
I am not disturbed by rumors,
People know my truth very well.
We are still standing,
Even the media are playing games and sabotaging us with the public.
They want to put me in a box,
They want to make fun of me and drive out the reality.
Don’t listen to them or follow them, we are not on the same subject.
They sell your secret to others, because they are disrespectful,
The bad mannered always remain on the bottom,
And will never see the light.
We are kind of lost and each talks badly about the other,
They don’t want us standing, they want to see us in darkness
Not everyone who knocks on your door wishes you well,
We are confused about what is happening,
People have sold their conscience.

My advice, don’t try it again, I won’t abdicate,
Nobody will stop us except for God, on whom we rely,
Don’t listen to what is said about us,
Follow your path
And let the dogs bark and run around.

REFRAIN
We are still standing until we die,
With all what they say about us,
We are still standing and as we are standing they are crying,
In their eyes you can see the jealousy,
Like it or not you are jealous.

We are still standing until we die,
With all what they say about us,
We are still standing and as we are standing they are crying,
In their eyes you can see the jealousy,
Like it or not you are jealous.

We are still standing,
You will never find a sky without stars,
In hard times we stand like people as they did on the first day,
We are still standing, as from the beginning and a lot were with us,
Those who put on masks, changed and lied [like chameleons],
Each one has his character.
SHADIA MANSOUR

1/ KOLHUM ENDHUM DABABAAT
Produced by: Sandhill; Lyrics: Shadia Mansour
Oh Gaza of blood, Oh Gaza of worry
We share your sorrow and shall fulfill your struggle
Palestine, oh land of lions, we shall return
Oh freedom fighters, with your faith,
You will defeat the Zionist, racist, cowardly mission
Oh righteous martyrs of Gaza
For too long, you have stood in the line of fire
Your souls, shall be our beacons
Your victories, written all over the walls
Long live, long live, long live, Palestine
And to the Arab leaders, who are still sleeping
Where are you?
Where are your voices that should be filled with outrage and fury at this situation?

REFRAIN
They all have tanks, but we have stones
They demolish our homes and kill our children
Oh Palestine the free, oh Gaza the brave Zionism shall be defeated

2/ KUFEEYEH ARABIYE/THE KUFEEYEH IS ARAB
Produced by: DJ Johnny Juice; Lyrics: Shadia Mansour
Good morning cousins
Come in and honor us with your presence
What would you like us to serve you, Arab blood or tears from our eyes?
I think that's how they hoped we would receive them
That's why they got tangled up when they tripped up on their own mistake
That's why we wore the kufeyyeh
The black and white one
Dogs of the past starting to wear it as a fashion statement
However they change it, whatever color they make it
The Kufeyyeh is Arab, and it stays Arab.
Our scarf, they want it
Our dignity, they want it
Our intellect, they want it
Everything ours...they want it
We will not be silent, will not allow it
It suits them to steal something that ain't theirs
They imitate our style
As if all this land, is not enough,
Know how to be human
Before you wear our scarf

REFRAIN
That's why we wore the kufeyyeh
Because it is our national symbol
That's why we wore the kufeyyeh
Because it is our original identity
Come on, raise your kufeyyehs
Raise them up for Bilad esh'sham [Greater Syria, that includes Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine]
The Kufeyyeh is Arab, and it stays Arab.
There is no other after the Arab people
Show me one region in the world that is more influential
The picture is clear, we are the origins of civilization
Our history, tradition and custom bears witness to our existence
That's why I wore the Palestinian dress
From, Haifa, Jenin, Jabal e'naar (Nablus) to Ramallah
Let me see the kufeyyeh (the red and white one)
Raise it up to the sky
I am...Shadiyat el Arab
Like an earthquake, I shake the ground
My words are war
Record!
I am...Shadia Mansour
And this scarf is my I.D.
From the day I was born, the people have been my responsibility
Look, I was raised, between the East and West
Between two languages
Between the rich and the poor
However, I am like the kufeyyeh
However you wear me, wherever you leave me
I stay true to my origin...Palestinian.

3/ THE LANGUAGE OF PEACE
Produced by: Lethal Skillz; Lyrics: Shadia Mansour
Beware of the language of peace,
It's all gibberish when its just words with no action
The people are sick and tired of broken promises.
I've heard enough of this language of peace,
Of hearing the same slogans over and over,
Getting bored of the same old story...
Beware of the familiar faces,
Of the sketchy smiles,
Of the scripts we all know too well
One minute you’re considered a terrorist
And the next minute you could be considered
A partner of peace or a statesman...
Peace seems to be hurting us, instead of saving us,
Is anyone hearing us?
How many times should we allow our dignities to be exploited?
How long should we allow this silence to go on for?
More than 60 years and we’re still waiting for peace,
As long as peace remains in progress,
The people will continue to pay the price

REFRAIN
Since ’67, meetings and assemblies
And the people suffer from this language of peace
One example of code switching is a form who come from a similar background. more relaxed fashion or in a vernacular language or dialect is known as code more colloquial, fluid, or so-called “street” even the word Verlan itself is a reworking of the French word “l’envers”, which means to reverse.

Over the course of a few decades, Verlan has spread from the suburban housing projects of France’s poorest immigrants, most of whom come from France’s former colonies in Africa (e.g. Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Mali), The Antilles and North Africa), to advertising, films and TV and most of all France’s hip-hop and rap music scene. With the rise of French rappers such as NTM, Soon E MC, Passi, IAM, and MC Solaar Verlan became the language of hip-hop. Rappers use Verlan to keep outsiders at bay as well as a sly way to poke at fun at France’s obsession with the purity of its language as an indication of what it means to be a “real” French citizen. Verlan is a way for 1st and second generation immigrants as well as the poor and disenfranchised to reinvent themselves within the context of their adopted culture and claim a language of their own. Verlan is just another example of how language and social politics can intersect. By writing in colloquial Arabic the Egyptian rapper Deeb is pushing back against formal Arabic. By taking on the vocabulary of the streets Deeb is forming an alliance with his audience, many of whom might not be as educated as those more fortunate. Language is a way to form an alliance.

Culture.

When you think about hip-hop culture or rap music do you ever consider how it might have changed the way you see other people? Is it possible that through rap music you’ve become more open to new thoughts, religions, lifestyles, and culture? Has hip-hop helped in any way to expand your view of the world?

Hip-hop culture and rap music ranks as one of America’s biggest cultural exports and its influence can be heard and seen everywhere. There are dozens of countries that have their own homegrown hip-hop communities and rap scenes. But it is American hip-hop and rap that has helped shape and define youth culture on a global scale. If you attend a rap show in Germany, Italy, South Africa, or Brazil you will hear fans, many of who don’t speak English, singing along with the songs and wearing clothes (e.g. baggy pants, fitted caps, or certain brands of sneakers) that are often associated with hip-hop. Some of those fans might even adopt lingo and body language that they’ve seen in American rap videos. But is there a point where imitation turns into mimicry? Is it possible to remove portions of a culture out of its original context? And should you?

Shadia Monsour’s single “Kofeyye Arabeyye” (The Kofiya is Arab) addresses identity, and what it means to claim ownership. A Kofiya is the traditional black and white scarf that is worn by many Arabs. But there are many people, especially in the United States, who do not know that the Kofiya is more than just cool fashion. The crux of Monsour’s song is to point out that when the Kofiya, is taken out of context, you negate its significance.

“The Kufeyyeh is Arab, and it stays Arab. Our scarf, they want it Our dignity, they want it Our intellect, they want it Everything ours...they want it We will not be silent, will not allow it .It suits them to steal something that ain’t theirs They imitate our style As if all this land, is not enough, Know how to be human Before you wear our scarf

“I am...Shadia Mansour And this scarf is my I.D. From the day I was born, the people have been my responsibility Look, I was raised, between the East and West Between two languages Between the rich and the poor However, I am like the kufeyyeh however you wear me, wherever you leave me I stay true to my origin.”

Hip-hop and rap music has grown to be so ubiquitous and deeply embedded into much of the mainstream that a debate over proprietary rights might well be moot. So, has hip-hop culture been co-opted and if so, then by whom? And does it even matter or affect how you feel about the music?

Politics

The wave of uprisings known as the Arab Spring began in the North African country
of Tunisia on December 18, 2010. The Arab Spring consisted of prolonged acts of civil disobedience and resistance in campaigns that involving strikes, demonstrations, rallies and marches and the use of social media. The impetus for the Arab Spring came from many issues but key among them was government corruption, human rights violations, rampant unemployment, hunger, and the refusal of many young people to bow down to the powers that be.

After fierce confrontations the President of Tunisia was toppled in January 2011. That action kicked off a domino effect where, in quick succession the leaders, of Yemen, Libya, and Egypt were also disposed. Released in 2010 El General's "Rais Lebled" (Head of State) became the unofficial anthem of the Jasmine Revolution, called that because the national flower of Tunisia is the jasmine. An artist and political prisoner, El General's music and You Tube videos helped galvanize the young people both in Tunisia and across the Middle East.

"Mr. President, today I am speaking of myself and all of the people who are suffering in 2011. There are still people who are dying of hunger who want work to survive. Get off into the street and see, People have become like animals. See the police with their batons".

During the Arab Spring Deeb also emerged as a voice of the people. In an interview for the web magazine Taste Culture the former journalist took note of the unique role that rap music played helping organize people throughout Arab speaking nations. "Arabs have a similar history so the culture of hip-hop unites us. Rap has become a language for resistance and against cultural, ethnic, or social discrimination, and corruption. This is in the spirit of its roots that started with African-Americans using rap as a vehicle to talk about racism, human rights, and equality. If you look at all the countries where the revolutions took place, there was rap."

Likewise Shadia Monsour has positioned herself as a spokesperson. Her songs take on the politically charged and decades long war between Israel and Palestine. Because Monsour’s mission is to represent for her people outsiders might look at her lyrics as provocative and even inflammatory. In “Kolhum Endhum Dababaat “ Monsour raps

"Oh Gaza of blood, Oh Gaza of worry We share your sorrow and shall fulfill your struggle Palestine, oh land of lions, we shall return Oh freedom fighters, with your faith, You will defeat the Zionist, racist, cowardly mission Oh righteous martyrs of Gaza For too long, you have stood in the line of fire…

"They all have tanks, but we have stones they demolish our homes and kill our children. Oh Palestine the free, oh Gaza the brave Zionism shall be defeated". Whether you agree not Monsour's lyrics show how powerful rap can be.

For close to two years the West African nation of Mali has been embroiled in conflict. Currently Islamic fundamentalists, who have enacted strict Sharia Law, are controlling the country. Thousands of people have been killed and many more displaced with the situation growing so dire that earlier this year France sent troops in to help its former colony. Mali is an impoverished nation but one with a deep musical history. Some well-known Malian musicians include Salif Keita, Amadou & Mariam, Ali Farka Toure, Omumou Sangare, and Tourmani Diabete. Sadly under Sharia Law the playing of any music not deemed as sacred can be banned.

Amkoullel’s raps address the turmoil in his homeland. On “S.O.S." he calls out for his people to rise up.

"This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! We are in a state of emergency! This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! Everything must change! This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! We are in a state of emergency! This is an S.O.S, an S.O.S! Everything must change!"

Other topics that Amkoullel speaks to are self-hatred and how outside forces, including the media, have contributed to the oppression of his people. In "Farakina" (Africa) he declares: “You don’t have to beg for respect, but it is your right. In fact, this dependence is presuming the same thing. As slavery, which is already passé. Now I just need to immigrate. So many things that they proposed to us, that they show to us on TV. It’s normal for young people to dream, and want to participate.

The only thing they do not tell you is if you’re black you just cannot, No you cannot, if you come from Africa, eh! Do you know what they say about us. We are the wretched of the earth. That we only have famine, war and desolation. That is why nobody respects us. Thanks to the TV, Lobotomized, self-denigrating, The country’s youth are lost, Dreaming of big bucks, Shackled hand and foot, left to shine, The country’s youth are lost, Dreaming of big bucks, Jamana demin-sennoun Sinin Yé Yé! Do you know what they say about us. We are the wretched of the earth. We only have famine, war and desolation. That is why we do not get respect. Africa the time to work has arrived.”

Shadia Monsour, Deeb, Amkoullel, and El General do hip-hop culture and rap music proud. They have their own style, their own swagger and each have something to tell us that relates not only to their own country but also to the world at large. We hope you will be edutained.

CCR-6-12 writing (1-5)
Speaking and Listening (1-3)
CCR 9-10 Reading Standards (1-3) 11-12 (4)
About BAM Education & Humanities

BAM Education is dedicated to bringing the most vibrant, exciting artists and their creations to student audiences. The department presents performances and screenings of theater, dance, music, opera, and film in a variety of programs. In addition to the work on stage, programs take place both in school and at BAM that give context for the performances, and include workshops with artists and BAM staff members, study guides, and classes in art forms that young people may never have had access to before. These programs include Shakespeare Teaches, AfricanDanceBeat, AfricanMusicBeat, Dancing into the Future, Young Critics, Young Film Critics, Brooklyn Reads, Arts & Justice, and our Screening programs, as well as topically diverse professional development workshops for teachers and administrators.

BAM Education also serves family audiences with BAMfamily concerts, the BAMfamily Book Brunch, and the annual BAMkids Film Festival. In addition, BAM Education collaborates with the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation to provide an arts and humanities curriculum to students who perform on stage in BAM’s DanceAfrica program.

Humanities at BAM

BAM presents a variety of programs to promote creative thinking and ongoing learning. The Artist Talk series, in conjunction with mainstage programming, enriches audiences’ experience during the Next Wave Festival and the Winter/Spring Season. The Iconic Artist Talk series, launched as part of BAM’s 150th anniversary celebrations, features iconic artists and companies examining the evolution of their work at BAM over the years through on-screen projections of original footage and images from the BAM Hamm Archives.

In September 2012, BAM launched On Truth (and Lies), a series hosted by philosopher Simon Critchley that explores the ambiguity of reality with prominent artists and thinkers, as a co-presentation with the Onassis Cultural Center NY.

Humanities at BAM also include year-round literary programs: Unbound, a new fall series presented in partnership with Greenlight Bookstore that celebrates contemporary books and authors from across the literary spectrum, and the ongoing Eat, Drink & Be Literary series in partnership with the National Book Awards, in the spring.

The department also hosts master classes, including the Backstage Seminar, a series of workshops on the process of theater-making with BAM’s production staff and guest artists.

About the writer:

Amy Linden is a noted music and cultural critic, writer and educator. She is a proud citizen of the hip-hop nation.

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