

HARVARD UNIVERSITY • DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

MUSIC BUILDING
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138, USA
Tel: 617-495-2791 • Fax: 617-496-8081

October 15, 2007

Mahdi Omar
51 Coleman Street
Dorchester, MA 02125

Dear Mahdi Omar:

I write to extend an invitation for you to participate in a conference on Cultural Creativity in the Ethiopian America Diaspora to be held on April 13-14, 2008, at Harvard University.

The conference, which is being co-sponsored by the Committee on African Studies, the W.E.B. DuBois Institute, the Office for the Arts, and the Music Department, will begin on Sunday evening, April 13, at 6 pm. It will explore the subject of cultural creativity and innovation in the Ethiopian diaspora and is aimed at an academic and community audience largely unfamiliar with Ethiopia and its American diaspora. We will have participants who are active in Ethiopian studies across the disciplines as well as figures prominent in domains Ethiopian diaspora literature, art, publishing, and communications. The conference will begin with a dual keynote address on Sunday evening, April 13. On Monday, sessions will explore Ethiopian diaspora communication networks, literary and artistic production, and recent millennial celebrations. The conference will conclude with a public concert featuring Ethiopian composer Mulatu Astatke's recent compositions. (See attached draft program and list of participants)

We will, of course, cover any local transportation or parking costs and invite you to meals during the conference. The conference is being administered by Ms. Lidet Tilahun, who will be the contact person for arrangements and who will take care of travel arrangements early in 2008.

We can offer you an honorarium of \$500.00 for your participation in the conference. As we discussed on the phone, we anticipate that you will participate in a panel on communication networks in the Ethiopian diaspora. We ask that you prepare comments of no longer than fifteen minutes in length about Ethiopian here in the United States, based on your experience; please raise any major issues surrounding Ethiopian television and its move abroad in the last thirty years. After the initial presentations, we will invite you and your colleagues on the panel to participate in a general discussion. We hope that this will be an opportunity to expose a diverse group of conference attendees to developments and issues in Ethiopian diaspora life.

Draft Schedule

The conference will begin at 6 pm on Sunday, April 13 with dinner followed by keynote presentations and conclude with a concert on Monday evening, April 14.

Sunday Evening Keynote: Unto the Second Generation: Dual Perspectives on the Ethiopian Diaspora

Keynote speech/dialogue by Dr. Getatchew Haile and Rebecca Haile

Session Moderators: Kay Kaufman Shelemay and Steven Kaplan

8:00-10:00 (Tsai Auditorium)

Monday Morning

Session #1: Diaspora Links: Networks for Communication among Ethiopian Americans

Elias Wondimu, Mahdi Omar, Nancy Hafkin

Chair and Respondent: Emmanuel Akyeampong

9-10:30 (All Monday sessions at Barker Center, Thompson Room)

MAHDI

10:30-11:00 Break (refreshments)

Monday Morning Session #2: Discussion and Reading by Dinaw Mengestu from his novel

The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears

Session Moderator: Abiola Irele

11:00-12:00

[Lunch for Conference Speakers]

Monday Afternoon Session #1: The Visual Arts and Performance in Ethiopian Diaspora Life

Achamyelch Debela,, Marilyn Heldman, Leah Niederstadt

Chair and Respondent: Ingrid Monson

1:30-3:00

Break (refreshments)

3:00-3:30

Monday Afternoon Session #2: 2000 E.C., Dawn of the Ethiopian Diaspora

Speakers: Jan Abbink, Solomon Addis Getahun, Kay Kaufman Shelemay

Chair and Respondent: James McCann

3:30-5:00

Monday Afternoon, Summary Discussion: What Does the Ethiopian Case Study Teach Us About New African Communities in the United States?

Donald Levine, Steven Kaplan, Terrence Lyons

Chair and Respondent: Jacob Olupona

5:00-5:45

[6:00 Dinner for Conference Speakers]

Monday Night Concert: Works of Mulatu Astatke, performed by Mulatu Astatke, the Either/ Orchestra, and Additional Musicians

8:00 (Sanders Theatre)