



# INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM

In tribute to Alpha Blondy



**28**  
**29**  
**30** **SEPTEMBER**  
**2023**  
Félix Houphouët-Boigny  
University in Abidjan

**Theme**  
**"ALPHA BLONDY, FROM YESTERDAY TO TOMORROW: A REGGAE COMMITTED TO THE REBIRTH OF AFRICA"**

**INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM  
IN HOMAGE TO ALPHA BLONDY**

28, 29 and 30 September 2023

Félix Houphouët-Boigny University of Abidjan

Theme :

**ALPHA BLONDY, FROM YESTERDAY TO TOMORROW:  
A REGGAE COMMITTED TO THE REBIRTH OF AFRICA**

Deadline : 15 April 2023

**CALL FOR COMMUNICATION**

*Argument*

**Context and justification**

Reggae was born in Jamaica in the late 1960s and then quickly spread to Africa on a soil that seemed naturally fertile. Music of revendication and protest (B. Blum, 2000) born in a Jamaica in the mist of socio-political turmoil, this music has integrated well into an "undeniably unstable postcolonial Africa in search of socio-cultural landmarks" (B. Koné, 2018), dominated by "debt, structural adjustment, mass unemployment, widespread corruption and prevalent crime, plunder and even predatory wars" (A. Mbembé, 2013: 36). Fifty years after its advent on this continent, reggae occupies a prominent place there in terms of modern popular music for commercial distribution (L. Aubert, 2005) and its inclusion, since 2018, as a UNESCO World Heritage Site is undeniably, a proof of its vitality and dynamism throughout the world.

Indeed, many musicians on all continents identify themselves to it and even act as torchbearers in their respective countries, even on the international scene. However, if the first compositions of the African continent in terms of reggae (the South African Aurélia "Aura" Lewis, 1978; the Cameroonian Manu Dibango, 1979; the Senegalese Wasis Diop, 1979) were able to perfectly reproduce the standard formula of this music (throbbing bass and marking the downbeat, offbeat rhythmic guitar, drums accentuating the end of the 4th bar, etc. ), none of them truly reaches the populations as is the case in Jamaica. It took the arrival, at the beginning of the 1980s, of a young man in his thirties, with a scruffy style made up of overalls or "cropped trousers" Jeans, with bushy hair, to shake up the solidly established musico-social order in the peaceful Côte d'Ivoire of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny. This young man's name is Alpha Blondy.

Koné Seydou alias Alpha Blondy discovers reggae in 1977 in New York, during a Burning Spear concert in Central Park. Thenceforth, the one we affectionately called Bouah or Bafitini, also known as Johnny or Elvis, at this time a Rock and Roll fan, became a reggae enthusiast because he felt through this musical genre, the possibility of passing on a message. Back home, he got his first chance with a TV show hosted by his friend Roger Fulgence Kassy. Since this date of December 11, 1981 (exactly 7 months to the day after the death of Bob Marley), the stars, mainly the sun, seem to have turned in his favor.

In his 40-year career, he has produced 20 albums and over 200 songs. Alpha Blondy's strength lies in his message: direct, sung in African languages (dioula, baoulé, bété, wolof, ashanti), endowed with "this pedagogical, moral and civic virtue of the African song...made up of proverbs that distance its author from banality by giving a certain respectability to his words" (Y. Konaté, 1987: 151). Adored by all, men and women, youngster and old, wealthy and poor people, Alpha Blondy crosses generations and like a wine improves with age. Throughout his musical career, three themes have strongly inspired the artist. They are: God, reggae and politics. God's place is omnipresent through albums such as *Jah Glory* (1982), *Jerusalem* (1986), *The prophets* (1989), *God* (1993), *Elohim* (1999), *Jah victory* (2007), *Eternity* (2022). Reggae has made him a world legend; as for politics, other songs like *Jah Houphouët* (1985), *Politiki* (1986), *Jah Houphouët nous parle* (1987), *Yitzhak Rabin*, *Armée française* (1998), *France a fric* (2013), *Pompier Pyromane* (2022) launch the political debate and reinforce the misunderstood character of the artist..

This symposium aims to visit the rich musical career of Alpha Blondy through a critical analysis of his works. It thus intends to pay tribute to the one who opened the paths of reggae in Africa.

To do this, 5 lines of communication are chosen:

## **Lines of research**

### **1° Musical, musicological and visual approach to the work of Alpha Blondy**

- *Discographic works by Alpha Blondy*: listing, classification, safeguarding and patrimonialization
- *Transcriptions and musical analyzes of the works of Alpha Blondy*: scores and tripartitions
- *Aesthetics and plastic creation*: album covers, clothing styles (hairstyles, clothing looks, fashion), architecture, painting and sculpture of the man and his work.

### **2° Scenic and cinematographic approach to the work of Alpha Blondy**

- *Stage coverage*: stage decor, festivals, the Festa, the public.
- *Cinema and popular culture*: filmography, documentaries, music videos.
- *Alpha Blondy and the mass media*: print media, Broadcasting and television, Radio Alpha Blondy FM, interviews and speeches.

### **3° Literary and philosophical approach to the work of Alpha Blondy**

- *Aesthetics of the work of Alpha Blondy*: analysis of the musical discourse of Alpha Blondy, stylistic analysis, ethical and philosophical issues of Alpha Blondy's reggae
- *Linguistic and poetic significance of Alpha Blondy's musical texts*: phonetic transcriptions, expressions of musical language (neologisms, images, prosodies, humor and proverbs, ...).

### **4° Alpha Blondy and modern society**

- *Reggae and identity*: Koné Seydou vs Alpha Blondy.
- *Alpha Blondy's reggae and social themes*: school, health, justice, peace, love, gender issues, discrimination against vulnerable people, ecology.
- *Symbols in Alpha reggae*: sun, 6-pointed star.

- *Alpha Blondy and politics*: the political significance of Alpha Blondy's reggae, the political positions taken by the artist Alpha Blondy.
- *Spirituality and religions in Alpha Blondy's reggae*: Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Rastafarianism.
- *Societal tributes and recognitions*: Unesco, Ivorian State, city of Grand-Bassam, etc.
- *Perception of Alpha Blondy's reggae in French-speaking, English-speaking African countries and around the world*.
- *Alpha Blondy and social networks*: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.
- *Reggae, postcolonialism and postmodernism*.

#### **5° Projection into the future.**

- *The legacy of Alpha Blondy*
- *Alpha Blondy from yesterday to tomorrow: a reggae for eternity?*
- *Reggae facing the challenge of the future.*
- *Other*

#### **Terms of submission**

Communicators have the possibility of registering their work in one of the lines of research listed above, of developing one of the aspects in French or in English. They are invited to submit a brief abstract (followed by the French version) of a maximum of 300 words including the problem, the methodology used and the results. Abstracts must be written in Word format, Font Times New Roman, Size 12 and line spacing 1. They will be accompanied by a maximum of five (05) keywords. Authors are requested to attach a biobibliographic notice (5 lines maximum). Abstracts should fit on one page and include the following information: Title, surname and first name(s) of the author(s), function, home institution, email address, theme (specify axis).

#### **Mode of submission:**

Contributions must be simultaneously submitted to the following addresses:

[colloqueinterAlphaBlondy2023@gmail.com](mailto:colloqueinterAlphaBlondy2023@gmail.com) et [bassirimakone@gmail.com](mailto:bassirimakone@gmail.com)

The subject of the email must be: "*Summary - Alpha Blondy International Colloquium 2023*" or "*Complete article - Alpha Blondy International Colloquium 2023*".

#### **Important dates :**

Deadline for sending abstracts: **April 15, 2023**

Date of notification of acceptance of abstracts : April 30, 2023

Date and place of the conference: **September 28, 29 and 30, 2023 at Félix Houphouët-Boigny University of Abidjan**

Deadline for sending complete texts: November 30, 2023

Return of instruction of articles: February 29, 2024

Return of final texts (polished and corrected): March 30, 2024

Publication of the collective work: June 2024

NB: *The conference languages are French and English.*

## Terms of participation

- Students/doctoral students: 39 Euros
- Doctors: 53 Euros
- Teachers/researchers: 77 Euros
- Individuals/private: 106 Euros
- International organizations: 152 Euros

The participation fees entitle participants to the conference kits, coffee breaks, lunches, the closing show and the publication of the collective work.

Participants are responsible for international transportation and local accommodation. The organizers will be responsible for finding hotels and residences at negotiated rates. Local transportation and catering are the responsibility of the colloquium organizers.

Participation fees are receivable by *Moneygram* or *Western Union* for participants outside Côte d'Ivoire (to Kassoum KOUROUMA) and by *Orange Money*, *Moov Money*, *MTN Money*, or *Wave* for national participants at the following numbers: (+225) 07 07 12 24 07/ 01 01 22 42 87/ 05 46 54 24 44 no later than **August 05, 2023**.

Confirm payment by SMS message or screenshot.

NB: Participation in the conference, for any accepted communication, is conditioned by the actual payment of registration fees. In case of withdrawal, the authors of the papers are asked to inform the conference officials as soon as possible to adjust the programme.

## Publication

The selected articles will be subject to collective publication. The publication will be done by a publishing house to be identified by the scientific committee. The drafting protocol for the collective work will be communicated later.

**Scientific committee:** President: Prof. **Yacouba KONATE** (Emeritus Professor)

**Steering committee :** Président: Dr. **KONE Bassirima** (Assistant Professor, UFHB)

## Discography:

The entire Alpha Blondy discography

- *Jah Glory* (1982, Syllart)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtO89-iyjVo>

- *Rasta Poué* (1983, Syllart)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2E03xXRjp0>

- *Cocody Rock* (1984, Pathé-Marconi EMI)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IggPbHzYHiQ>

- *Apartheid system is Nazism* (1985, Pathé-Marconi EMI)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWIsMtookGU>
- *Jérusalem* (1986, Pathé-Marconi EMI)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmbBcL6brE4>
- *Revolution* (1987, VP Records)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryYoNNX4t-c>
- *The prophets* (1989, Capitol Records)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLsh9ZYQTAM&list=RDOLsh9ZYQTAM&index=1>
- *SOS guerre Tribale* (1990, Pathé-Marconi EMI)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FV8IURXDO0>
- *Masada* (1992, Pathé-Marconi EMI)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZECfz0ciHc>
- *Dieu* (1993, VP Records)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiwyaEtkAg>
- *Grand-Bassam Zion Rock* (1996, VP Records)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUA5FUhb5K0>
- *Yitzhak Rabin* (1998, VP Records)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ya1lyAEVFE>
- *Elohim* (1999, VP Records)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOcmMuiNgRo>
- *Merci* (2002, Shanachie Records)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQ9rCR26mqc>
- *Jah Victory* (2007, Mediacom)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9oLPYyz6OA>
- *Vision* (2011, Wagram Music)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZ3MZ-x9x8>
- *Mystic Power* (2013, Wagram Music)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjCxWCqIXnM>
- *Positive Energy* (2015, VP Records)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaFAkLPZ0kQ>

- *Human Race* (2018, Wagram Music)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8kmrzhfXqo&list=RDOLsh9ZYQTAM&index=4>

- *Eternity* (2022, Alphalliance)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tq7HGxey2xg&t=12s>

## Filmography

- Sidiki BAKABA, 1988, *Les guérisseurs*, Fiction of 89 minutes.
- Antoinette DELAFIN and Dramane CISSÉ, 2010, *Alpha Blondy : un combat pour la liberté*, 90-minute documentary film.

## Bibliography

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- ARNAUD Gérard et LECOMTE Henri, 2006, *Musiques de toutes les Afriques*, Domont, Fayard.
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- KOFFI Tiburce et KIPRE Alex, 2021, *Alpha Blondy et la galaxie reggae ivoirienne*, Abidjan, Editions Eburnie, Tome 1.
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- KONE Bassirima, 2018, "Le proverbe dans la discographie d'Alpha Blondy: une contribution à la valorisation de l'Afrique postcoloniale", *L'Afrique postcoloniale dans le reggae africain*, KOFFI B. Dieudonnée (dir.), Sarrebruck, EUE, pp.14-36.
- MARTIN Deni-Constant, 1982, *Aux sources du Reggae: Musique, société et politique en Jamaïque*, Roquevaire, Paris, Parenthèses.
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