

Upcoming Release from Legendary Percussionist Babatunde Olatunji

Written by Robert ID4171

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Bay Area-based independent label MansMark Africa is proud to announce a very special upcoming release featuring the final studio work of legendary world music icon Babatunde Olatunji.

In 2000, Baba began recording his final studio project, initially titled "Safari to Musical Africa," on the MansMark Africa label. The exuberance and joyfulness he infused into these recordings shines through in every aspect of the finished tracks, leaving little room for doubt that this project was to be his crowning effort. Sadly, his untimely passing in 2003 made it clear that the then-unfinished album would in fact be Babatunde Olatunji's posthumous fond farewell. Upon completing his dear friend's final legacy, MansMark CEO Ayo Ajisebutu became inspired to rename the album "Spirit of Musical Africa", in reference and reverence to a cultural and musical icon whose spirit will forever resonate within the rhythmic beat of the African drums.

Millions of saddened hearts around the world can now rejoice that Baba's untimely death did not silence his unique sound and uplifting messages, as MansMark Africa prepares to release the long-anticipated album "Spirit of Musical Africa."

"Spirit of Musical Africa" will surely magnify the work of the African drum maestro based on the album's global appeal, with tremendous mainstream crossover potential. The upcoming album is very unique from Baba's other recordings as it weaves various musical influences with traditional sounds. The soul-moving album features the Senegales super star Youssou N'Dour, Miles Davis' performances, Sikiru Adepoku, Airto Morera., and Rasaki Aladokun.

"Spirit of Musical Africa" is set for release in summer 2008. Singles from the album will be released digitally on April 6 and 7 to mark Babatunde Olatunji's birthday on April 7. On April 6 MansMark will give away one of Baba's new songs for free on www.mansmark.com.

Babatunde introduced the world to African music. He used drums like Martin Luther King, Jr. used words -as a means to move people in positive ways. Baba's distinct sound captivated audiences across the globe, opening millions of hearts to his vision of a global community and enrichment through music. Through this final project with MansMark Africa, his message and his philosophy will not be forgotten. MansMark Africa's President, Prince Ayo, with whom Baba shared a common dream of uniting humanity through the international language of music, is calling out to like-minded interested parties to help manifest Babatunde Olatunji's final message

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of peace, unity and musical enlightenment.

A portion from proceeds from the album sales will be used to fund causes that Babatunde Olatunji worked on.

About Babatunde Olatunji

Virtuoso drummer, bandleader and world music pioneer Babatunde Olatunji released the first of several albums with Columbia Records in 1959 and became an immediate global sensation. That first record, "Drums of Passion" eventually sold over five million copies, and won him millions of new fans, including a young Carlos Santana, who re-recorded Babatunde's version of "Jin-Go- Lo-Ba," in 1969 as "Jingo", making it one of his band's signature hits.

At the height of his popularity in the 1960's, Babatunde (or "Baba", to his legions of adoring fans), had recorded six albums for Columbia Records, made appearances on the Ed Sullivan Show and Johnny Carson's Tonight Show, and traveled the country with the likes of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. He eventually opened the Olatunji Center for African Culture in Harlem, with the help of jazz musician John Coltrane, and focused his energies over the next several years on music education and social activism.

Babatunde returned to mainstream musical prominence in the mid-1980s, starting a long and fruitful collaboration with drummer Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead, with whom he produced two critically acclaimed albums for Rykodisc, *Drums of Passion: The Invocation* (1988) and *Drums of Passion: The Beat* (1989), featuring contributions by Hart and Carlos Santana. Baba's popularity surged in the 1990s, following his involvement with the Grammy award-winning Planet Drum project, the multicultural world-beat percussion ensemble he co- founded with Mickey Hart. He went on to record and tour with his own group, Drums of Passion, playing to sold-out audiences at world-class venues like Carnegie Hall, and Madison Square Garden, among others. His most recent solo release, *Love Drum Talk*, garnered him a 1998 Grammy nomination for Best World Music Album.

Babatunde's music has always resonated with younger generations of artists, keeping him perpetually relevant and in demand, leading to his musical contribution to projects as diverse as the Broadway and film productions of "Raisin In The Sun," the Spike Lee film "She's Gotta Have

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It," and the posthumous collaboration with legendary hip hop and rap icon Tupac Shakur (2Pac) entitled "Wake Me Up When I'm Free," included on the hip hop icon's 2001 spoken word album, *The Rose That Grew From Concrete*.

This enduring appeal led Sony Music in 2002 to reissue Babatunde's original Columbia Records catalog on compact disc.

About Prince Ayo

Prince Ayo, also known as Ayo Ajisebutu is a native of Nigeria. Prince Ayo entered the Nigerian music scene with his first album, "Love Candidate," in 1983. The album was released on his label MansMark. Ayo was born into Cherubim and Seraphim church. His father was a traveling prophet. The church and his musical environment set the stage for Prince Ayo's music career. While working on his vision as a recording artist Ayo was promoting small venues concerts around Lagos Nigeria. He financed the recording of his album from income he generated from his graphic designing and printing business.

In 1986 Prince Ayo moved to the United States to expand his music business. He released his second album "Party Zone" in 1991 and "Put On A Smiling Face" in 1996 on MansMark Records. Ayo is personally involved in all facets of the music industry, including recording, publishing, artist development, marketing and promotions. Prince Ayo and his Oakland, California based recording company are on a mission to bring World Music to a mainstream fan base.

Prince Ayo organized several rallies to protest the killing of Nigerian human rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa. He also played a significant role with other Bay Area human rights activists in the campaign that returned Nigeria to a democratic society. His activities included producing and hosting a clandestine weekly radio program for Voice of Free Nigeria (VoFN). The Free Nigeria Movement, a global grassroots effort organized to liberate the Nigerian people from the former oppressive military junta, established voice of Free Nigeria. Prince Ayo was a co-founder and board member of the Free Nigeria Movement.

About MansMark

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MansMark Africa the recording label is globalizing native African music. The Company is blending tradition music with global rhythms to uplift humanity.

MansMark Africa, a division of MansMark Entertainment, Inc. is based in Oakland California. The Company signed the legendary Nigerian drummer, Babatunde Olatunji, in 2000 to an exclusive recording agreement. Our goal is to enhance the lives of our artists with the income generated from their work.

MansMark was originally established in Nigeria in 1979 as MansMark Communication.