

Tuesday, July 29, 2008

Volume 8, Number 367

Published On May 13, 2007

[About Us](#)[Fortune Forum](#)[Contribute](#)[Advertise](#)[Classified Ads](#)[Contact Us](#)[Guest Book](#)**FORTUNE LATEST NEWS: Al-Amoudi Grants \$20m to Clint-**

Fortune
News
News In Brief
Agenda
Editor's Note
Opinion
Commentary
View Point
My Perspective
Life Matters
View from Arada
Restaurant Review
Business Opportunities
Cartoons/Comic Stripes
Gossip
Archive

## Bridge to Understanding



Mohammed Awol, *menzuma* performer, and Anthony Brown, American baritone, delivered diverse performances at the Italian Cultural Institute on Thursday, May 10, 2007. The event, sponsored by the United States (US) Embassy Public Affairs Section, featured two singers of distinct cultural traditions each possessing a faith based foundation.

The performance began as Mohammed Awol performed the first of his two part presentation solo. Clad in a traditional white robe, *Jebebiya*, Mohammed's soothing voice set the mood for the first segment concerned with social issues ranging from peace in the family, groups and at the national level to agricultural activities. At times profound, while occasionally eliciting laughter from the audience for comical metaphors, Mohammed's stage presence brought life to the image rich songs as a fixed stare in his face was punctuated with connective glances to the 100 plus audience.

Mohammed was accompanied by nine similarly dressed men for the second segment of the *menzuma* performance that dealt with religious topics. The harmonious chanting of the eight standing men and simple but effective drumming of the seated man with the *debe*, added a spiritual aura to the vocals. Invoking remembrance of Allah and praising Prophet Mohammed, the performance was flawlessly executed and left the audience with a peaceful mood.

*Menzuma* is part of the Sufi tradition in Ethiopia. Mohammed Awol, a well-known performer in the country, who graduated from Al-Azhar College in Cairo, has produced 38 cassettes since 1983 and is fluent in Arabic. In the past he has performed until sunrise in Ethiopia and Sudan, but the audience on Thursday night received just a taste of such marathon outings. Mufti Hajji Omar Adris, chairman of the Council of Islamic Affairs, helped to organise the event.

After a five minute stage change revealing a grand piano, Anthony Brown hit the stage donning a tuxedo. Mr Brown was accompanied by Brian Wilson on piano and performed 15 songs from the African-American spirituals and traditional American genres. His booming deep voice did not require a microphone, letting the well-designed wooden stage with good acoustics at the Institute send his voice reverberating through the audience.

**Featuring pieces from such famous American composers as Hall Johnson, HT Burliegh and Margret Bonds, amongst others, the songs dealt with a diverse array of issues from biblical tales or the transcendence of nature to family relations. The pace of the performance was well varied, with some of the performances being delivered in an upbeat jazzy fashion while the more sombre songs received an adequately calm treatment.**

The performance concluded with a piece composed by Mr Brown and Alia Gonzales, "Each Other's Light", featured on the artist's recently debuted album. A song of reflection of the spirit emanating

from people of all races, it brought an uplifting closure.

**After each song, Yoseph Shieraw delivered a summary of the themes in Amharic in line with the spirit of the event as a culturally inclusive event.**

Anthony Brown performs a variety of genres including show tunes, opera arias, folk ballads and spirituals. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he now resides in Kansas where he is Artist in Residence at Hesston College and is part of the Sociology and History Department.

In 1995 he recorded his first album of African American spirituals and has since toured Bosnia, sponsored by the US State Department. Part of Brown's inspiration came from his work as a psychotherapist at the University of Washington in Seattle in the early 1990's where he recognised that "efficiency and information overload are now centre stage while our hearts long for reflection, authentic human relationships and transcendence."

**The event opened with remarks from three personnel from the Embassy's Cultural and Public Affairs offices. Anthony Fisher, Public Affairs Officer, said the concert was intended to be a "bridge to understanding" the diversity and at the same time commonalities between various faiths.**

---

By **BRIAN BURRELL**  
**SPECIAL TO FORTUNE**

---

[Back to Addis Fortune News](#)

The page cannot be found

---

[ARCHIVES](#) | [SITE MAP](#) | [ABOUT FORTUNE](#) | [FEEDBACK](#)  
[CLASSIFIED ADS](#) | [ADVERTISE](#) | [CONTACT US](#)  
[CONTRIBUTE ONLINE](#) | [GUEST BOOK](#) | [FORTUNE ONLINE FORUM](#) | [WEB LINKS](#)

---