

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 23, 2010

- WHAT:** Lionel Loueke Trio Perform at Bowker
WHEN: Thursday, October 7 at 7:30 PM
WHERE: Bowker Auditorium
University of Massachusetts Amherst
TICKETS: Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go online to <http://www.umasstix.com/>
IMAGES: To download images relating to this press release please go online to <http://www.fineartscenter.com/centerwide/pressRoom/>

Guitarist Lionel Loueke Brings Jazz, African Sounds to UMass' Bowker Auditorium

Lionel Loueke (Lee-oh-nel LWECK-ay) brings a groovy, worldly sound that enriches the harmonies and melodies of jazz with West African music to the Fine Arts Center's Bowker Auditorium at 7:30 PM on Thursday, October 7th. The performance is part of the Center's Billy Taylor Jazz residency. Guitarist, vocalist, composer and bandleader Loueke is joined by his long-time collaborators, bassist Massimo Biolcati and drummer Ferenc Nemeth, onstage.

Played in unison with his tongue-click percussion, scat-singing and other vocal improvisations, Loueke's highly syncopated, fresh approach to jazz guitar that *JazzTimes* has called "smartly formed, deftly executed and ear-friendly" has caught the ears of jazz stalwarts including Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and Terence Blanchard – all of whom have served as mentors to Loueke as well as collaborators in performance and in the studio. Named "Up & Coming Musician of the Year" in 2008 by the Jazz Journalists Association, Loueke opened for Hancock at Carnegie Hall the same year with his trio; the performance was hailed by the *New York Times* as full of "serpentine grooves" and of "engrossing intricacy and ambition."

Loueke's musical journey began in hardship, evolved through tri-continental travel and tutelage under musical mainstays and ultimately earned him a spot on the roster of the most iconic jazz record label in the world. Hailing from Benin, Loueke became enamored with Afro-Pop and the traditional music of Benin as well as other West African countries – and ultimately jazz. Loueke was a late bloomer who didn't

approach the six-string until he was 17 years old when his brother, who played in an Afro-Pop band, let him try his hand on his instrument and discovered he possessed natural ability.

After a failed stint at the National Institute of Art in the Ivory Coast, Loueke got his first professional gig when he commandeered the guitar from a band on break in a local club and started playing. Loueke's education continued at Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he first met Biolcati and Nemeth; the trio developed an immediate rapport, fueled by illuminating jam sessions as well as internationalism: Biolcati is of Italian descent, but grew up in Sweden, while Nemeth was born and raised in Hungary.

Following his education at Berklee, Loueke was accepted to the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz in Los Angeles, where he began his relationship with Hancock, Shorter and Blanchard. "I flipped," says Hancock, recalling the moment he first heard Loueke's audition tape. "I'd never heard any guitar player play anything close to what I was hearing from him."

After successful gigs with Blanchard and Hancock, and recording three albums to date, Loueke's newest album, *Mwaliko* was released in 2010 on Blue Note Records, a label with a storied past and vast catalog of 70 years of music that is praised by fans and critics alike. *Mwaliko*, meaning "invitation" in Swahili, invites listeners to explore a new realm of possibilities for jazz. Perhaps this is why *Downbeat* has asserted that Loueke is "a new Afro-jazz star who will clearly be with us for a long time."

Tickets for Lionel Loueke are \$25 and \$15; Five College/GCC/STCC and youth 17 and under are \$10. Tickets are available from the Fine Arts Center Box Office at 545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS, or on the Fine Arts Center ticket website at <http://www.umasstix.com/>. This performance is sponsored by UnityFirst Online and WEIB 106.3FM. For more information about the Lionel Loueke including video, audio and interviews visit fineartscenter.com.

PHOTOS

Hi-res photos available for download:

<http://www.umass.edu/fac/centerwide/pressRoom/index.html>

PRESS PASSES

Limited press passes are available. Please contact Shawn Farley at 413-545-4159 or sfarley@admin.umass.edu

ABOUT THE FAC

The Fine Arts Center, located on the UMass Amherst campus, is a presenter of music, dance, theater and the visual arts, bringing hundreds of outstanding and provocative artists to the Pioneer Valley for over 35 years.