



AN OPERA OF THE WORLD

A film by Manthia Diawara

Year: 2017

Format: Video

Running Time: 70 min

Produced by Maumaus / Lumiar Cité, with core funding from the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, ZDF/3sat, Portuguese Ministry of Culture/Directorate-General for Arts and documenta 14.

Production countries: Portugal, USA, Mali

Director: Manthia Diawara

Producer: Jürgen Bock

Editor: Kenan Akkawi

Film title in other languages:

Eine Oper der Welt

Μια Όπερα του Κόσμου (Mia Opera tou Kosμου)

Un Opéra du Monde

Uma Ópera do Mundo

REVIEWS

*“Manthia Diawara's film *An Opera of the World* (2017), based on the African opera *Bintou Were*, mines the Malian filmmaker's own migration experience against the backdrop of recent tragedies on the Mediterranean Sea. Diawara's film features contemporary philosophers and employs footage of refugees in exodus, probing cinema's power to bear witness.”*

National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

“Wandering the shores of Lesbos, Diawara poses questions in the face of the sea, its myths, and media footage of mass migration... A Sahel Opera becomes a world opera, tragic in its tradition of the genre, but far from a dead end. Might we consider it moving in search of a better death?”

Monika Szewczyk, Documenta 14

SYNOPSIS

Short Synopsis:

Manthia Diawara's film is based on the African opera *Bintou Were*, a *Sahel Opera*, which recounts an eternal migration drama. The *Bintou Were* opera, filmed on location in Bamako, in 2007, serves as a mirror for Diawara to build an aesthetic and reflexive story, through song and dance, about the current and yet timeless drama of migration between North and South, and the ongoing refugee crises. The film ponders on the realities of cultural encounters through the concepts of métissage and hybridity. The success and limits of fusing African and European perspectives are tested by interlacing performances from the *Bintou Were* opera, past and present archival footage of migrations, classic European arias, and interviews with European and African intellectuals, artists and social activists – including Alexander Kluge, Fatou Diome, Nicole Lapierre and Richard Sennett.

Long synopsis:

What happens when artistic cultures migrate and meet? How do migrants navigate between tradition and assimilation?

The centerpiece of Manthia Diawara's *An Opera of the World* is a staging of Wasis Diop's *Bintou Were*, *A Sahel Opera*, filmed on location in Bamako, Mali in 2007– a pioneering work telling the story of migration from West Africa to Europe by combining traditional Malian music with the structure of the Western operatic art form.

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MANTHIA DIAWARA

Manthia Diawara was born in Mali, West Africa. He is a Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature and Film at New York University. Diawara was educated in Guinea- Conakry, Bamako (Mali) and Paris (France), before migrating to the United States to pursue his studies. Manthia Diawara is a prolific writer and filmmaker. His essays on art, cinema and politics have appeared in The New Times Magazine, LA Times, Libération, Mediapart, and Artforum. He is the author of two acclaimed memoirs: *In Search of Africa* (Harvard University Press, 2000) and "We Won't Budge: An African in the World" (Basic Books, 2008). He has published several books on African and African American cinema. Diawara's notable films include *An Opera of the World* (2017), *Negritude: A Dialogue between Soyinka and Senghor* (2016), *Édouard Glissant, One World in Relation* (2010), *Maison Tropicale* (2008) and *Rouch In Reverse* (1995).

PROMOTIONAL STILLS

All stills and photographs: © Manthia Diawara / Courtesy Maumaus | Lumiar Cité
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/zg95dik1y5x8aso/AAA3iMAFzH4iaUaZ1UpQGEOpa?dl=0>

Portrait Manthia Diawara.tif
Filmmaker and writer Manthia Diawara

An Opera of the World 1.tif
An Opera of the World, interview with filmmaker and writer Alexander Kluge, Munich, 2016

An Opera of the World 2.tif

An Opera of the World, Manthia Diawara in discussion with filmmaker and writer Alexander Kluge, Munich, 2016

An Opera of the World 3.tif

An Opera of the World, sociologist Nicole Lapierre, Paris, 2016

An Opera of the World 4.tif

An Opera of the World, a scene from 'Bintou Were, a Sahel Opera', Bamako, 2007

An Opera of the World 5.tif

An Opera of the World, Manthia Diawara on the island of Lesbos, 2016

An Opera of the World 6.tif

An Opera of the World, interview with sociologist Richard Sennett, Munich, 2016

An Opera of the World 7.tif

An Opera of the World, a scene from 'Bintou Were, a Sahel Opera', Bamako, 2007

An Opera of the World 8.tif

An Opera of the World, interview with writer Fatou Diome, Strasbourg, 2016

An Opera of the World 9.tif

An Opera of the World, Manthia Diawara, Strasbourg, 2016

An Opera of the World 10.tif

An Opera of the World, off-stage rehearsal of 'Bintou Were, a Sahel Opera', Bamako, 2007

An Opera of the World 11.tif

An Opera of the World, Manthia Diawara on the island of Lesbos, 2016

Screenings

World Premiere, Documenta 14, Kassel, Germany, 2017

<https://www.documenta14.de/en/calendar/16520/an-opera-of-the-world>

<https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/1940/manthia-diawara>

ICA-Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 2017

<https://archive.ica.art/whats-on/manthia-diawaras-opera-world-responses-and-discussion>

Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2017

<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/resource/cGrkkoa/rnAEEeb>

Serpentine Galleries, London, 2017

<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/exhibitions-events/guests-ghosts-hosts>

Flaherty NYC, 2017

<http://flahertyseminar.org/opera-the-world/>

Festival International du Film d'Amiens, 2017

<http://www.fifam.fr/film/an-opera-of-the-world/>

Focus on French Cinema Series, Greenwich, CT, 2018

<http://focusonfrenchcinema.com/calbum/an-opera-of-the-world/>

Institute of the Arts and Sciences, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2018

http://arts.ucsc.edu/news_events/film-screening-opera-world-manthia-diawara

Films at the Schomburg, Harlem, 2018

<https://www.africanfilmny.org/event/an-opera-of-the-world-films-at-the-schomburg/>

Institute of African American Affairs, New York University, 2018

<https://nyuiaaa.org/event-items/an-opera-of-the-world-a-film-by-manthia-diawara/>

Serralves Park and Museum, Porto, Portugal, 2018

<https://www.serralves.pt/en/activities/an-opera-of-the-world/>

The Block Museum, Chicago, 2019

<https://planitpurple.northwestern.edu/event/544463>

National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 2019

<https://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/calendar/film/pdfs/2019/winter.pdf>

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