

**PRESS RELEASE****8 April 2025**

**TALKING DRUMS: NIGERIA** lautten compagney BERLIN feat. Aralola Olamuyiwa & Band  
2–3 Mai 2025, 7 pm, Hall 2, Tickets: 16/ 8 Euro

## **Musical Belongings V: lautten compagney BERLIN meets Talking Drums from Nigeria**

**In the fifth edition of Musical Belongings, the lautten compagney BERLIN and Aralola Olamuyiwa a.k.a. ARA Queen of Drums celebrate the art of percussion – in all its facets. Together with a percussion ensemble, they unfold the soundscapes of the Yoruba in Nigeria and intertwine them with compositions by Charles Ignatius Sancho from the 18th century. A hybrid sound that surprises – and at the same time feels harmonious, as Early Music and West African traditions share many musical techniques. Singer Julienne Mbodjé enriches this interplay. Literary impulses inspired by the songs and storytelling of the Talking Drum tradition are contributed by Logan February, Poet-in-Residence at the Humboldt Forum.**

The lautten compagney BERLIN explores the possibilities of music beyond the colonial canon with their project TALKING DRUMS: NIGERIA. The project critically examines the unchallenged perpetuation of broad labels like “African music.” At the heart of the project are two musical traditions: the music of the Yoruba people in Nigeria, with its highly developed percussion culture, and the compositions of Charles Ignatius Sancho, who in the late 18th century became the first Black composer to perform in London and exercise the right to vote in Britain.

Among the musicians who keep the rich heritage of the TALKING DRUMS alive is Aralola Olamuyiwa, also known as Ara, celebrated as the “Queen of the Talking Drums.” Recognized as the first Nigerian woman to gain worldwide recognition in the male-dominated world of percussion, she also serves as a cultural ambassador for the Ooni of Ife and the Yoruba culture. Ara is not only a drummer but also a singer and entertainer. She will be joined in Berlin by a three-member percussion ensemble featuring the Bata, Omele, and Dundun drums.

The so-called “talking drums” of West African cultures were traditionally tools of daily communication, often functioning as message drums capable of mimicking the pitch patterns of tonal languages. Today, the drums are more ritually integrated, holding significant religious and ceremonial roles.

The German singer Julienne Mbodjé lends depth to the hybrid composition through her own musical contribution, drawing from a wide repertoire of both classical and contemporary music traditions. The contemporary interpretation and queer reading of Yoruba mythology play a major role in the literary work of Logan February. Born in 1999 in Anambra, Nigeria, this poet and essayist will reflect on songs and stories from the talking drum tradition, exploring their linguistic character through their texts and reflections.

### **Contributors**

Lola Olamuyiwa aka ARA Queen of Drums

Julienne Mbodjé – Singer

Neyo Omele – Omele Drums

Sesan – Talking Drums

Gbade – Drums

Logan February – Poet, essayist, singer, songwriter

Wolfgang Katschner – Music Director

Christian Filips – Music Dramaturgy

The lauten compagney cultivates musical traditions as an important part of its programme spectrum with great repertoire works. Wolfgang Katschner and his ensemble are not only curious about music, but also about new ways of presenting it in concert. The lauten compagney has found its own individual platform for experimentation with the :lounge format, among others. Here it demonstrates that early music and contemporary music can indeed be combined. In the :lounge, live sampling and sounds enrich the timbres of the baroque instruments and offer space for surprising

improvisations. When old works are inspired by new ideas in this way, musical boundaries disappear.

**Programme and Tickets:** [humboldtforum.org/en/lauttencompagney](https://humboldtforum.org/en/lauttencompagney)

**Press Images:** [humboldtforum.org/en/press](https://humboldtforum.org/en/press)

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## **PRESS CONTACTS**

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