

**Neil van der Linden**

Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Music and Rituals of the Minority Communities  
of African Descent around the Indian Ocean**

I would like to give a presentation with talk and image on the diaspora of music and rituals originating from East-Africa across Indian Ocean.

Around the Indian Ocean there were numerous nations and empires that absorbed communities originating from East-Africa. They migrated through trade relations, pilgrimage, fishery, employment as mercenaries and unfortunately for a considerable part through slavery. They brought with them music and rituals. This culture was integrated in the dominating cultures of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. Pockets of such culture, with a wide diversity among them but at the same time with a common 'Africanness', are now shattered throughout the Indian Ocean and its branches the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Bay of Bengal. Due to their position in their respective societies, they remain often obscure, inside their current nation as well internationally, including in the motherlands. Meanwhile, partly due to their marginalised positions, they had to but also were able to preserve large swaths of culture from their motherland, music as well as rituals that rely on music. The original elements derived from Africa are not a monoculture and show a wide diversity, but there were also many uniting elements, in languages (in Zar-culture elements of Swahili persist), music instruments such as the tambura-lyre and the manjoul-rattle, pentatonics and rhythm, and spiritual practices around mythical elements from East-Africa. The music contains tools to enable the practitioners to emancipate from their marginalised position while preserving their identities. An example can be taken from how a comparable culture of music and ritual originating from sub-Saharan Africa in Morocco, Gnaoua, has turned into a cultural and even economical asset.

My thesis will connect dots between such cultures, showing specific singular as well as common elements. I have a collection of photographs and videos illustrating the various cultures.

**Bio**

**Neil van der Linden** curates music, theatre, and visual arts projects related to the South-West Asia and North-Africa. In the course of years, he noticed the presence and cultures of many communities of sub-Saharan East-African origin and their culture in the 'SWENA' region and how their roots are sometimes clear, sometimes ignored, and assembles facts in order to sketch a grander picture of 'The African Indian Ocean'. He works as an independent in international arts research and coordination of cultural exchanges with and inside the Islamic world.