

## The African Music Institute: Pan African Music School in Libreville, Gabon



The African Music Institute (<http://www.africanmusic-institute.org/>) will focus on contemporary popular music, traditional African music, and African dance for 300 students, and create a path for students to eventually study at Berklee College of Music (a nonprofit, coeducational institution of higher learning accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges) in Boston, Massachusetts. The first class will enter in September of 2017.

“We are supporting the creation of a new school for contemporary music in Africa, one that will be a source of students who will come to Berklee to enrich not only their experiences, but those of our students, as well,” said Berklee College of Music president Roger H. Brown. “Our mission statement acknowledges the unique role of the African cultural diaspora in the major musical styles underlying our curriculum, including jazz, blues, R&B, rock, gospel, Latin, and hip-hop. With this new school and more students coming to Boston from Africa, we’ll have a direct line right to the source.”

Plans for the school include a state-of-the-art recording studio for student projects and collaborations with international visiting artists, study and rehearsal spaces, an auditorium and concert hall, a museum documenting the history of West African music, and a dance studio.

The AMI will join Berklee's International Network (BIN) of 19 partner institutions in 18 countries that identify and prepare students with extraordinary musicianship and musical ideas for Berklee. Students at the AMI may study the first two years of the Berklee curriculum in Libreville, and then transfer to Boston with all of their earned credits. This makes a college degree more affordable for African students, and helps Berklee attract more African musicians.

The relationship between Berklee and Gabon began with Berklee alumnus Frederik Gassita, one of the country's most prominent musicians, who has long dreamed of providing a Berklee-style education in African for local musicians. Gassita was among the MOU's signees, who also included Pacôme Moubélet Boubeya, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Gabon, and Larry Simpson, Berklee's senior vice president for academic affairs/ provost.

The Berklee College of Music (established in 1945) is the largest independent college of contemporary music in the world, known for the study of jazz and modern American music; as of 2016 alumni have been awarded a total of 266 Grammy Awards.