

Tulane University lures Senegalese band for rare New Orleans performance

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The Njum Waalo Band featuring Demma Dia of Senegal and New Orleans banjo virtuoso Don Vappie will perform a free concert from 6:30-8 p.m., April 25, at the Historic New Orleans Collection as part of the closing ceremony for the International Colloquium on Saint-Louis, Senegal - New Orleans: Two Mirror Cities (17th - 21st Centuries).

The colloquium, scheduled from April 22-25, is public conference celebrating the shared histories, cultural traditions and geographical ties between Louisiana and Senegal. The event is organized by Tulane University history professor Emily Clark, along with colleagues from the Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal, and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris.

The closing concert, which is also open to the public, will take place in the Williams Research Center courtyard, located at 533 Royal Street in the French Quarter.

The Njum Waalo Band is a five-member xalem group including a griot (praise singer) that preserves traditional music rarely heard outside of villages of the Senegal River Valley. The xalem is an instrument believed to be one of the principal ancestors of the American banjo. Clark says the band has never performed outside of Senegal.

"Getting the Njum Waalo Band to come to this side of the Atlantic is a coup and precipitated an invitation from the Congo Square African Marketplace at the Jazz & Heritage Festival to make them and Tulane's exploration of New Orleans' connections to Senegal the focus of their pavilion at the festival," Clark says.

For more information about the concert and colloquium, visit [here](#).