Mamadou Diawara will interrogate the story of American Blues and its putative African roots through the music of the late Malian “Bluesman” Ali Farka Touré, whose impressive discography and two Grammy Awards have made him an icon in American circles. He will discuss the trajectory of oral music in Africa and the struggle it must now carry on against the written word in the cultural context that first generated it. Over time, music has passed from the status of a continuous oral process, executed and appreciated at each performance, to the status of a fixed object, appropriated by an individual called an author performing a work subject to copyright law. From Emmanuel Kant to Michel Foucault, musicologists, philosophers, historians and anthropologists have written about the historicity of musical concepts and the historical character of music itself. The work is thus the product of a gradual adoption process that spans several centuries, from about the middle of the 16th through the 18th. If this is the case in European musical tradition, which saw the birth of these notions, then what about concepts imposed on other musical traditions around the world in colonial and postcolonial contexts?

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