

The Voice of the Slave

Ghana's Theater and its Focus on the Atlantic Slave Trade

School for International Training

College Semester Abroad

Ghana: Arts and Culture

Spring 1997

Lisa Montgomery Perry

Advisor: Yaw Asare

Artistic Director, National Theatre Players

Abstract:

I chose the topic 'Ghana's Theater and Its Focus on the Atlantic Slave Trade' because I was very interested in how I perceived Ghanaians to address this part of their history. I found the topic to be considered taboo and was surprised by the lack of knowledge many people had of the subject. I then became interested to find what factors went into creating a drama on the slave trade and if and how it would be received if the subject was addressed in artistic manner thought theater was an efficient way to educate on the subject because it included both emotion and fact in its portrayal of history. I believe these are both necessary for a complete understanding of this sensitive issue.

I studied four different dramas and sought their playwrights, directors, actors, stage managers and audience members to interview. Through certain techniques of field research, I was able to find how and why the theater pieces were created, what role the director, actor, and audience member had in each production, their methods and motivations, and how it was, as a tense and silent issue, received by the local Ghanaian public.

I found that most of the authors wrote on the Atlantic slave trade because they had a desire to express how they viewed the issue and its history; the directors wanted to help their audience confront the issue using a comprehensible and entertaining medium, and the actors' involvement and attitude was usually characterized by their knowledge of the subject. This idea of 'reaction depending on knowledge' was also consistent when I examined audience response.

Steps are slowly being taken to educate Ghanaians on this poignant chapter in history by means of the stage. A long road, however, still separates the present and the coming to terms with the past, but some very creative and motivated Ghanaians are helping the issue. They have used their skills and intellect to enable their people, through Theater, to hear the lost voices of their ancestors who were involved in the Atlantic slave trade.

Acknowledgments:

This project would never have been possible without the many people who took time out of their busy schedules to help me, talk with me, and allow me to understand. I must begin with a warm thanks to all those whom I was able to interview and work with during my ISP.

Yaw Asare, my project Advisor, thank you for helping me organize my ideas and find strategies to execute them. Although our meetings were few and brief, knowing you were always there to help me was more than enough.

I would also like to thank The Ghanaian Dance Ensemble, especially Nii Yartey and Susie Owusu, who made me feel more than welcome and despite their busy schedules, found time for me.

To the University of Cape Coast, namely John, I am eternally grateful for allowing me time on your computers.

If it wasn't for Chuck Hutchinson and William Osei at MUSIA, only God knows where I would be living or typing this paper. For this, there are no words.

Susan Bowdich, thank you for, not only putting up with me and giving me back the hard time I only deserved, but for helping me keep my head on my shoulders, my spirits high, and sharing with me where I could get those strip dancing lessons.* You are an amazing woman!

And Yemi, thank you for making sure I stayed on the right path, not to mention kept moving on it. I would have to say I always reflected back on 'Yemi stories' of previous ISP hardships; this is when I would remember that all was not lost...yet.

To my family in Accra, Milly & Jeffery. I now have the brother and sister I always wished for. You have been wonderful to me. How can I thank you? I will miss you like only a crazy woman can, but I will never say good-bye only 'Yebehyia'.

And finally, to the amazing SIT friends who took this wild and crazy ride with me. I thank you. You were in many ways my support system and family. In times of frustration and sadness, you made me laugh and remember where I was and what was important. I love you all.

*Just kidding

Table of Contents

Abstract..... i

Acknowledgments..... ii

Methodology..... 1

Introduction..... 6

MUSU THE SAGA OF THE SLAVES..... 9-1 5

 I. The History..... 9

 II. The Director..... 10

 III. The Actor..... 1 2

 IV. The Response 13

THE SLAVES 16-20

 I. The History and Author 16

 II. The Director and the Actor 17

 III. The Response 18

THE TRUTH 21-24

 I. The History and the Author..... 21

 II. The Director and The Actor 23

 III. The Response..... 24

THE SLAVES OF WEST AFRICA..... 25-30

 I. The History..... 25

 II. The Director..... 27

 III. The Actor..... 27

 IV. The Response..... 29

Conclusion..... 31

Endnotes..... 33

References..... 35

Informants..... 36

Appendix..... 37

Methodology:

Shortly after I began my project, I came to a brief conclusion that I had picked the wrong subject to research. My first inquiries as to where I could find plays that addressed or mentioned the Atlantic slave trade were met with questions as to *why* I was focusing my study on that. When I was in Cape Coast it was this void of attention I thought the issue was addressed with in Ghana, that made me want to study slavery in the first place. I failed to foresee, however, that this lack of desire to discuss the slave trade might create a problem in receiving cooperation and information concerning my topic.

These first stages of my Independent Study Project (ISP) were possibly the most difficult, academically as well as emotionally. Because of these initial responses to researching, I was very disheartened. At times I felt as if it wasn't my place, as a white American, to let this ghost out of a closet that so many Ghanaians wanted locked away; that it wasn't my cross to bare. I felt, by inquiring, that I was, in a way, bringing up bad memories and opening old wounds. I often had to remind myself what I believed in and why I chose this particularly sensitive and taboo topic to begin with.

Once I found some names of people who studied the slave trade or had written about it, I was soon surrounded by people who were willing to support my cause and agreed with me on many issues. This affirmation helped my confidence and sent me on my way to find out how theater has tackled the issue.

Meetings with my advisor, Yaw Asare, were always helpful. Asare asked me to consider issues I hadn't thought of and helped me understand certain things about his culture I, otherwise, couldn't.

With names came more names. The more people I spoke with the more references I received. I would have to say almost all of my informants were discovered by word of mouth and asking questions. After some organizing and

narrowing down I established that had five or six possible dramatic productions to focus in on. I also felt that there were sufficient informants and references from each piece to help me get a firm grip on the information I needed. After some time, these were further narrowed down to the present four.

Because my project was primarily based around the thoughts and actions of people, most of my information was received through formal and informal interviews (thence all the Endnotes), and participant and non-participant observations. Once I figured out what specifics I had to know in order to construct a solid report on theater and its focus on the slave trade, I formed a series of questions around these issues. This helped my interviews flow more easily and productively. Many times I would ask if I could record the conversation 'so I wouldn't have to waste their time trying to scribble down notes.' Fortunately, this was always met with acceptance. I would then go home and transcribe the conversation, making sure that I hadn't forgotten to ask anything.

Many of my informal interviews began as mere conversations which had no initial intention of becoming an interview. However, under the informality of the situation, I came across some very frank and interesting information I found relevant to my project. From these moments, I would rush to my binder, try to remember, and note all the points I had found pertinent.

I was usually in the audience when I found myself a participant observer. It was a perfect situation for me to go unnoticed, as all those who surrounded me had no knowledge of my academic motives and were in the same boat as I. At the same time, while watching and focusing my attention on the actors, I was a non-participant observer.

As an audience member I could also conduct some very informal interviews. I occasionally would turn to the person sitting next to me, and ask them a few

casual questions like what they thought of the performance, and had they ever seen a show on the slave trade, etc.

My time was spent primarily in Accra and Cape Coast with a few days in Ho and Aflao. The first leg of my ISP was spent touring the Volta Region with the National Dance Ensemble. This was smooth sailing. They were all quite wonderful with me and made my job fairly easy, as I was suck in a bus, happily, with most of my informants.

When I returned to Accra, however, I found that those I needed to speak with weren't so readily available. I tried to get in touch with everyone I could find who had anything to do with the production of one of the plays I had chosen to focus in on: playwrights, actors, directors, stage managers, audience members etc. Some people I could never find, or I had 'just missed, but if I waited,,,,' and others failed to met their appointments. Thanks to 'Yemi stories' none of this surprised me, however, I would be lying if I said it didn't frustrate me.

I kept pushing forward though, and was pretty persistent. Once a few of those informants were finally reached and/or available they were very willing to help me. To reach Dr. Mohammed Abdallah, for example, I 'just happened' to go for a bike ride in his residential area and knocked on his door to schedule an appointment. Once I had interviewed all those I needed to in Accra, minus one or two, I traveled to Cape Coast where I could find a few more informants and see another show. I was able to meet my informants relatively easily in Cape Coast, as it tends to be a little less hectic than Accra. I had been in contact with Kohain Haleri with One Africa Productions to try to organize a ceremony, but it never worked out. Instead, I went straight to the theater group he used and hired them to perform the piece for me. This worked out fine, as they were really the part of the ceremony I was most interested in. Researching this performance concluded my field work. .

I organized my data and information into sections based on how I wanted to format my paper: a.) The History of the piece: When and where it has been performed, who was involved, and what exactly it consists of.

b.) The Author or Creator: Why the piece was written, what the motivating factors to its creation were, and what information it was based on.

c.) The Director: Why the choice was made to direct the piece, how the actors were handled, and what obstacles were confronted.

d.) The Actor: How the actor initially felt about doing the piece, what methods were used in performing, and the effects the piece had on the individual. and e.) The Response (audience and/or media): How the piece was received and why.

I tried to find information on all of these entities but as two of the pieces, "The Truth" and "The Slaves," were no longer being performed, I had to rely on second hand information as to audience response and how exactly the show was performed. I was also unable to get in contact with actors of these shows. At one time I was assured newspaper reviews and a video copy of each of the performances, but, in my last week, it fell through. In spite of the fact that I exhausted many people in the process of locating these particular references, looking back, I see that I should have searched for back up material. Although I received pretty detailed answers to many of my questions, I feel that these sections are amongst the weaker parts of my paper for obvious reasons.

Soon enough the time came to further organize my data and hit the keyboard. In terms of finding a computer, I had been blessed. Through my living arrangements at the MUSIA Guest House I found that there was a computer at the MUSIA office which was available after work hours. During the day I would type at the University of Cape Coast and in the evening I would go into town and the night watchman I would let me into the MUSIA office. Fortunately, I began typing my ISP

a week before it's due date. Even towards the end I felt a little pressed for time; If I had started any later I would have been in 'asemkese.

Finally, having a chance to step away from my project and look back and reflect, I found there were many things I could have considered and done differently. I often wonder if picking four dramatic pieces was too many, and if I should have focused on two or three. This would have allowed me to delve a little deeper into each one and would have also enabled me to be a bit more reflective on certain issues. Perhaps I fit into the category of 'Yemi stories: too much to do, too little time.'

Another strategy I could have used, which would have solidified my project more, was to have back up information, references, and informants. Trying to crosscheck much of my information was difficult, as most of it was data based on personal feeling and opinions. Other issues, however, could have been examined more thoroughly,.....if I only had more time.

The findings of my project, I believe, have only begun to touch on the 'ways', 'hows' and 'whys' theater focuses on the slave trade and how it is received by the people of Ghana. Much of what I gathered would need to be studied further psychologically and historically, to be completely understood. I do believe, however, a personal hunger for the comprehension of certain issues has been satiated by the conducting of this project, and for that, I am content.

*"I remember sometime in the twilight past
sage said almost to himself
Let the people remember;
Let not their memory wilt
At their doorsteps at night
Like a flower plucked
For the delight of an absent lover;
Let remembrance be a guide and
A constant partner
In their lives day and night,
For remembrance shall make them whole."*

*-Kwesi Brew
Remembrance*

Introduction

In 1441 AD The Portuguese took ten West African slaves from Rio de Oro and brought them to Portugal. From then until well into the nineteenth century perhaps fifty million men, women, and children were captured, bought, or kidnapped from Africa by European slave traders. Although some native Africans cooperated in the execution of the Atlantic slave trade, the white European held no small part in the affair. The slaves were brought to the Americas and West Indies primarily to labor in mines and on plantations. Not only were these unfortunate souls ripped from their families and mother land, they were abominably treated throughout their capture, their voyage over the 'middle passage' (Atlantic Ocean), and even upon and after their arrival into the foreign land.¹

As I have learned, history has many sides. This is just one of them. There are many different viewpoints as to how and why the Atlantic slave trade occurred, but one fact which, I believe, is readily agreed upon, is that it's actuality was a horrific and appalling happening. It's enormous ramifications on those in Africa, as well as in the Diaspora, are still seen today.

Coming from America I had a sense as to how the Atlantic slave trade was dealt with in the US among both white and those of African decent. I did not know, however, how the issue was dealt with where it had had the largest impact: Africa. On my college semester abroad to Ghana, a primary country involved in the Atlantic slave trade, I soon was given a chance to look through the other side of the spectrum.

In late March of this year, with the School of international Training, I saw, for the first time, the physical remnants of this harrowing past in Cape Coast and Elmina. My group tours of the Elmina and Cape Coast castles turned out to be rather sobering and thought provoking events. Walking through the slave castles sent me round in a

whirlwind a sadness and guilt, but the emotion I remember having the hardest time dealing with was confusion. I was confused as to how anything so atrocious could have ever been allowed to happen and I was also confused by the open arms the Ghanaians received white people back into their country with. The former of these concerns I think can never be answered, but I believed there had to be an explanation: for the latter.

Although I was answered with many responses, the one which interested me the most was the realization that a even an abstemious knowledge of the happenings during the Atlantic slave trade was uncommon. I found that it wasn't taught very: extensively in schools, if at all, and that through time, talk of it was looked down upon; it had become a sort of 'taboo.'

Through various means it came to my knowledge that there were a few dramatic pieces which focused on the Atlantic slave trade. As a theater major in college, I immediately became interested in how these pieces were conceived, constructed, and executed and if they were, in any way, used as a source of education. I also aimed to explore the dimensions of if and how the topic was received in a culture which, I thought, saw the issue better off forgotten.

I had originally intended to focus on Ghanaian plays, however most Ghanaian theater always includes music and dance, therefore the pieces I researched were more: 'dance- dramas.'

My constant motivating force during my research was a personal belief that the knowledge of this particular past was too great of a tragedy and had too much of an impact on Africa and it's people to let lie under the carpet. Horrific events have occurred in world history, but if they are forgotten, the chance that they re-occur is kindled, and this would be even more of a tragedy. But during the hardest times I even had to remind myself that I believed this.

*"There is a Journey we all must take Into our Past in order to
come to terms with our future :*

*No matter how far away we try to hide away from ourselves we will have to come back
home and find out where and how and why we have lost the light In our eyes, how we and
why we have become eternal orphans living on crumbs and leftovers. We are the dog who
caught the game, but now must sit under the table cracking our hopes over bones, over
droppings from our master's hands.*

*...And those who took away our Voice
They are now surprised
they couldn't take away our Song
They couldn't take away our Dance. "*

-Kofi Anyidoho

The Dance

Poetry narrated during the production of

"Musu: the Saga of the Slaves"

“MUSU” : THE SAGA OF THE SLAVES

"Musu: The Saga of the Slaves" is the current project of the National Dance Ensemble. It is a two hour dance-drama, set in two acts, relaying the incidents which occurred during the period of Danish involvement in the Atlantic slave trade from about 1672 to the 1800's. It was produced with financial support from the Danish government and the Danish Development Agency of Ghana (DANIDA). "Musu" was primarily written and directed by F. Nii Yartey, artistic director of the Ghanaian Dance Ensemble, and co-choreographed with Monty Thompson of the Caribbean Dance Co. who is based in the US Virgin Islands. "Musu" also includes music by Nana Danso Abeam and poetic lines by Kofi Anyidoho.

Although it was only for four days, I was honored to be able to tour the Volta Region with the National Dance Ensemble. During my short duration of the trip performances were held in Ho and Aflao. On the road or between rehearsals I was able to conduct formal and informal interviews. These interviews proved to be vital, as they were a main source of information on "Musu." Other references include clippings and reviews from media such as newspapers and magazines.

History:

When Nii Yartey met Olaf Hansen, the co-coordinating director of 'Images of Africa', in 1993 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the idea of "Musu" was conceived. Both men immediately became friends and decided to join creative Ghanaian and Dutch forces together to create a piece. When they searched for a historical commonality to base the piece on, they had little choice but to focus on the infamous Atlantic slave trade. After formal meetings between Olaf, Yartey, Korkor Amarteiflu of the National Theater of Ghana, and Irene Odetei of the Institute of African Studies at Legon, "Musu" took its first steps towards reality

The trade route the Dutch were involved with concerned the shipping of guns from Denmark to Ghana (formerly known as the Gold Coast), slaves from Ghana to the West Indies (Virgin Islands), and completing the triangle, sugar and rum from the West Indies to Denmark. In order to make this project complete, a decision was made that they must also include Caribbean forces. Monty Thompson, director of the Caribbean Dance Ensemble, was contacted and the artistic triangle was completed. During the next few months Thompson visited Ghana to meet the ensemble and co-choreograph moves. Yartey also traveled to the Virgin Islands in the same vein. Although both the Ghanaian and Caribbean ensembles were working on the same piece they would, however, rehearse separately in their own residing country. It was only until early June, in Denmark, that the two companies were finally united. They had just two weeks to rehearse together before their presentation at 'Images of Africa '96', a world cultural festival in Copenhagen, on June 19. Both troops then toured Denmark for almost three weeks. "Musu" had previously premiered without its counterpart in Accra on Friday May 31 at the National Theater in Ghana. Although "Musu" has been found to "attack the senses," it was a huge success at both its premier in Accra and its various performances in Denmark.² The Ghanaian Dance Ensemble is currently on a nationwide tour of Ghana with the piece and will be so until May 7th of this year.

The Director:

F. Nii Yartey is the current artistic director of the National Dance Ensemble of Ghana and has been since 1976. His current project "Musu: The Saga of the Slaves" is unlike any other project he has ever taken on.³ This dance-drama opens up painful topics dead in most history books. 'Musu', which means 'abominable act' or 'taboo' in the Ga and Akan. languages was the perfect word to title this piece with. Yartey is the

first to admit that 'the slave trade is not something you talk about in Ghana. It is not taught in the schools; you could say there is a sort of collective denial.'⁴ Yartey believes it is his responsibility as an artist, to his people, to take such a taboo and somewhat controversial subject, and present in a light which can be understood and acknowledged.⁵

It was not only this particular attitude of the subject that many Ghanaians seem to have, which interested and motivated Yartey to do "Musu," it was also the repercussions of slavery he sees in today's West Africa. During a formal interview Yartey explained to me how he sees slavery today: " I believe the legacy of slavery is still going on mentally in our every day life...Slavery and colonialism have shaped our perceptions as to what is good, what constitutes beauty. It has shaped our very existence, but people are not aware of this... Something must have gone wrong, but we haven't corrected it."⁶

During a press conference on 22 May 1996 at the National Theater, Yartey said, "We have done it for nationalists and pan-Africans like Kwame Nkrumah and J.B. Danquah, and even for colonial governor Guggisburg. We should do it for the betrayed African as he suffered the pangs of the slave plantations which formed the economical backbone of Europe and America today."

While pitching this idea, as well preparing and rehearsing for it, Yartey had many factors to take into consideration. Yartey says "handling a topic so big, so touchy, and so spiritually loaded," which had never been treated the way Yartey and his peers were to do, was his greatest obstacle.⁷ He also had the weight of a responsibility to DANIDA, to his fellow Ghanaians, and the future reputation of The Ghanaian Dance Ensemble, upon him. From the beginning, however, Yartey was aware of his undertakings. "I knew reactions could have been either way because

you're reminding the people it actually happened."⁸ He was, however, firm in his beliefs, and was fueled with a passion to educate on this subject using the medium he knew best: theater.

Throughout the process the group was, for the most part, supported on the grounds of the reputation Yartey and his dance company already had established, and also on the mere fact that "people were curious to see what [they] would come up with."⁹

Because he believes "history is based on account interpretation, and the rendering of accounts is often done in selfish ways," Yartey didn't take any short cuts in researching for "Musu." He wanted it to be as close to the facts as he could possibly get. He hired researchers from the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, did personal research on literature, and consulted Danish history books and archives. The final result he says, "portrays the atrocities of both sides of the situation- that both white and black played a part in slavery... "Musu" is a mirror for all of us to look at ourselves."¹⁰

The Actor:

When Nii Yartey first proposed the idea of "Musu" to his performers a few of them weren't quite sure as to why he had picked this particular topic.¹¹ This was soon to change however. Because of the trusting relationship between Yartey and his company, it isn't a surprise few questions were asked, all faith was installed, and the rehearsal process began.

Yartey's first step with his actors was education. Dancer Ernest Obeng confessed to me that he hardly knew anything about slavery before this project began.¹² So Yartey began with telling them what he knew and had learned of history.

means such as school, but after lectures with history professors, the viewing of certain films, and a group trip to Cape Coast castle a common history was agreed upon. The company was now able to understand the importance and meaning of their new project, "Musu: The Saga of the Slaves."¹³

Yartey also encouraged his company members to gather information from home. When dancer Abukari Meiregah Salifu looked to his family for information, he received a very interesting response: " I asked them about slavery and they looked at me, sighed, and said 'hummm.' In our culture that means a lot."¹⁴ Late in Act I Salifu, among others, is chained and forced on colonial ships. He says this scene, at times, is difficult because he becomes engulfed in the horror of the moment. "The chains are real metal," he says, "The whip is real leather. It's all real to me."¹⁵ The scene becomes his temporary reality and for a moment he has a small taste of the pain his ancestors endured. Salifu also recognizes his people don't like to address conflict, but he asks, "If we don't talk about it, how can we change it?" He concludes that "having a show gets people to talk about it and that is good."¹⁶

The Response:

In Ho, 12 April 1997, I saw "Musu: The Saga of the Slaves" for the first time, and I was amazed at the reaction it received. The turn-out was wonderful; it was a full house, with audience members from all ages and all walks of life. But it wasn't the size of the audience or its diversity which intrigued me, it was their laughter. It was in the first act when the native Africans were being chained, beaten and whipped, in the second act when a female slave was being raped, and in the closing of the show when the slaves rebel with a mass suicide, coinciding with my tears, I heard this laughter, and of course I couldn't understand it. I watched the performance one other time, two days later, to

find the Aflao audience reacting in the same manner. This time I paid close attention to who exactly was laughing. I found that it was mostly those ages 8 to 25. Those older, such as the man sitting beside me in Aflao, found the topic more serious. From time to time I could hear him sigh or feel him shake his head in disbelief; even during the intermission he turned to me and said, "Oh, what a pity it all was." The youngest ones, ages 4 to 7, I believe, didn't quite know what was going on or how to react.

During an interview with Salifu, I asked him why he thought there was this laughter, for example, during the rape scene. He explained to me that much of the audience looks at the action instead of into it. They don't look into the depths or the meaning of the rape scene, rather they just see it as a sexual act in public. He went on to explain that if a sexual act is taken from behind closed doors in this culture, even if it does hold a violent nature such as rape, it becomes a taboo show and people become interested. He concluded that "sex is out from its usual hidden context and in the open, and they find that funny."¹⁷

Yartey attributes the reaction to discomfort and ignorance. He says, "It is because many of them don't know what else to do in the discomfort. They know something isn't right, but they don't register that it is a horrible truth in history."¹⁸ During the performance in Aflao I overheard Yartey explaining the story-line step by step to a girl in her teens. I doubt she would have understood it otherwise.

Media response, however, has been very attentive to the intensity of the subject. The Weekly Spectator said, "Watching the exerts was like being a living witness to some of the atrocities of the slave trade. The dancers enacted the dance-drama in a way that could make you smell the sweat, blood, and tears of the slaves"¹⁹ In a late article the newspaper said, "'Musu' left the audience sighing in disbelief...Certain people reacted by complaining about the use of Danish flags, the Nazi marching, and

the linking of these two together. For these people, a bitter taste was left in their mouths."²⁰ The Daily Graphic reported, "Two hours into 'Musu' leaves you drained after the pathos, the teeth-gnashing, fist-clenching, and the swearing."²¹

"...The men who raided our village one night were not white men. It was a full moonlight and all the tribe gathered under the bamboo tree to dance. ...then suddenly a woman screamed- one loud scream! ..The village burnt down! men and women were in chains. Old men and old women were killed. And the raiders, my brother, they were black men. Black like you and me." –

Mohammed ben Abdallah

The Slaves

THE SLAVES:

"The Slaves" was written in a single night in 1972 by Dr. Mohammed ben Abdallah. It has achieved much credit in Ghana, as well as internationally. In the same year as its creation "The Slaves" became the first non-American play to win the Randolph Edmund's Award of the National Association for Speech and Dramatic Arts. The one-act play's action takes place in an Elmina castle dungeon during the early stages of the Atlantic slave trade. "The Slaves" holds a very interesting view on history. Many of the play's characters decide it is not only the colonialists, but also the "black men who collaborate with Europeans slave drivers, whom are responsible for the horror they find themselves in. It is one of the first plays to present both sides of the issue and, in a sense, tries to balance the records."²²

"The Slaves" premiered at the Legon Drama Studio and since then has toured the nation with Abdallah and the Legon Road Theater. It has also been directed by various members of the Ghana's University community, including Abdallah himself, and is very popular among African American colleges in the US.

Unfortunately, I was not able to watch a performance of "The Slaves," but was able to speak with the playwright, a student director, and a stage manager who both worked on the piece on different occasions. All of my information about "The Slaves" was derived from these interviews.

The History and the Author:

In the late 1960's and early 70's there was a great influx of African Americans to Ghana.²³ During a formal interview Abdallah recalled being a student at this time at the Univ. of Ghana, Legon. He remembers paying special attention to the interaction between the Ghanaian and American students because he found it to be very superficial. He felt this was based on "a sort of psychological denial of the past on both

parts. The African-American denies the African role in slavery in order to enhance his image as the beautiful African... and the Ghanaian barely ever touches upon the issue and its effects on the present situation, their country and Negroes around the world."²⁴

His interest in the subject was further kindled by a visit to the Cape Coast castle with the African-Americans. He found many of them had a tendency to confront the issue with anger, which was far different than the Ghanaian approach. He saw another example of this in a New York production of "The Slave Ship" written and directed by African American, LeRoi Jones. He felt the piece to be very angry and it frustrated him because he saw it as such an opportunity to educate instead of infuriate. The difference in interpretations and reactions pushed Abdallah to do his own research on the issue.²⁵ Abdallah also felt, as an artist, he had "a role to play to help this] people look at important issues."²⁶ So, after a certain amount of study he felt confident enough to put pen to pad and in a single night created nine characters and set them in the bowels of Elmina Castle.

The Director and the Actor.

Many people have had the opportunity to direct "The Slaves." John K. Djisenu, presently a lecturer in the Dept. of Theater Arts at The University of Ghana, was a stage manager when he attended the University. He worked with Abibigroma, the residing theater troupe, on a series of productions of "The Slaves" which Abdallah directed in the Drama Studio. In a formal interview with Djisenu, he recalled that when Abdallah began rehearsing "The Slaves," the group was not too excited about the subject matter of the play. Djisenu believes they "didn't want to dissipate their energy on past events" as they were usually more inclined to do pieces which dealt with current issues. They also thought the issue had taken on due attention." What he remembers they were interested in, however, was that this particular play included music, dance and

dialogue, which in its form was novel at the time. It was this newness and experimentation of "The Slaves" which, in the end, attracted them.²⁷ Abdallah remembers that occasionally the actors would debate, discuss, and argue about the credibility of Abdallah's history, but in the end, he says, 'they all came around.'²⁸ Maurice Ocquaye, a student at the Univ. of Ghana, Legon, directed "The Slaves" as a final year project in November of 1996 also at the Drama Studio. He was first introduced to the text in a class taught by Dr. Abdallah. Ocquaye liked the exposition of the piece so he went straight to the library, read it, and then sought permission to direct it.²⁹

During a formal interview with him, Ocquaye said he didn't remember being taught about the slave trade in school; his knowledge on the topic was limited to the movie "Sankofa" and stories from his great-grandmother. The Slave trade issue had been bothering him for quite some time so when he read "The Slaves." he finally gained a feeling for what his ancestors went through. This was followed by the desire to share this feeling with others through the stage. He also was motivated by both the opinion that his "people don't know enough about their past," and the belief that because "the past determines the future, [the Atlantic slave trade] therefore, has a lasting impact on all of Africa."³⁰

Throughout the rehearsal process Ocquaye did his own research on the subject and always felt confident with Abdallah's interpretation of history. His actors never had a desire to confront the text either. Ocquaye believes this might be because they were too excited to be doing the piece, as his direction of "The Slaves" was in the first round of student directed pieces, so they didn't want to create conflict.³¹

The Response:

When "The Slaves," then directed by an African-American professor,

premiered at Legon, Abdallah recalls the amount of controversy it received, "The first performance had to be closed; only a select group of people were allowed. It was sort of a test, to see if it was 'worthy'."³²

A campaign against the production was conducted by some drama students. Abdallah believes it was instigated by certain faculty members on the basis that they believed the play used 'obscene language' and required the actors to appear 'indecently.' "How then," Abdallah asks, "do you depict slavery?"³³

When Abdallah finally directed the piece himself at Legon, he was so interested in audience response, that when the performance was over he had an audience-actor discussion held. Djisenu recalls that the play was "definitely received with mixed feelings." He believes much the audience came with the mind set that they were going to see the perpetrators and the victims, and for these people the play was "quite surprising." Although some had heard this side of the story before, it was also new to many others.³⁴ The reactions to Abdallah's text and the performance of it were both positive and negative.

Djisenu attended the actor- audience discussions and shared with me what he remembered. He said that some members of the audience strongly believed that they weren't being given the all the facts, that the playwright wasn't addressing the role of the white man or accrediting him with the initiation of the external slave trade.³⁵ In a review of the performance a certain history professor claimed that the production "showed that the playwright had a tenuous grasp on history."³⁶ In response, when Abdallah directed the show again a short time afterward, he opened with a short improvisational skit. The skit was about a playwright who is put on trial by other professors to see if his play is 'worthy.' If he is found guilty for writing a unworthy play

the curtain would not open, if innocent, the show would begin. In the end, the curtain opened.

Another opinion was that the playwright was being very diplomatic in sharing the blame of the external slave trade and that his portrayal of history was "sugarcoated." Still others saw it as the truth and believed that, for the first time, they had a representation of a balanced view.³⁷

When Ocquaye directed "The Slaves", he recalls only a positive reaction...well there was that one woman who wouldn't stop crying and had to be escorted out... He also proudly remembers his fellow students approaching him after the performance claiming that the show helped them understand more about the slave trade and their ancestors.

*"...Then came the last request
'Nana, sell to us some of your people'
-That's an abomination!
-We refused!
-We protested!
Our blood Is thicker than gold.
Believe them not when they say
We sold our kith and kin
That's a white lie designed to paint
Us darker than our skin
What I tell you is the truth."*

**-Efo Kodjo Mawugbe
The Truth**

THE TRUTH

"The Truth" began as a poem which was written in 1989 by Efo Kodjo Mawugbe. In that same year it was given life and turned into a performance set in Cape Coast Castle. It was directed by Albert Jackson-Davis and performed only twice by various members of the Cape Coast community. The modest amount of original performances was primarily due to lack of funding. Since then it has been reconstructed, re-titled, and is now occasionally performed by the Twerampon Traditionals theater troupe based in Cape Coast.

I was unable to see the original two productions of "The Truth" as they were performed in 1989. However, I was able to speak with the creator, Mawugbe, and director, Jackson- Davis, and through the kindness of these men I was able to see the show through pictures and a step-by-step rundown of how it was constructed and performed.

The History and the Author:

During a formal interview with Efo Kodjo Mawugbe on 22 May 1997, I was told the history of how "The Truth" was conceived. Mawugbe explained that he first became interested in the slave trade issue when he was attending Kumasi's UST. In it's library he found a series of books on African-American studies which was published in the US. In these books he came across information about Africa and it's people he had previously only heard bits and pieces of.

When Mawugbe lived in Cape Coast this pursuing interest would often lead him to the rooftops over looking the Atlantic ocean, wondering what it was like when his forefathers first saw white sails on the horizon. Although his knowledge of the topic was primarily derived from "books which were scanty, stories from forefathers and ancestors,

and visits to the castle," it was during one of these pensive moments Mawugbe sat down on the Cape Coast castle wall and wrote "The Truth" in one afternoon.

After visiting the Soviet Union in 1987 he was very impressed with how the Soviets maintained their historical sites and found it wonderful that, although the buildings were no longer working in their original manner they were, nonetheless, still full of life in the same vein. With this in the back of his mind, Mawugbe decided his poem could be brought to life by an inaction, and placed in the castle which would, in turn, make the site historically functional. He brought the idea up with Jackson- Davis, a respected friend and director, and they both decided to work together in order to bring the idea to fruition. During a formal interview Jackson-Davis explained to me that he was easily persuaded to do the project because the subject matter was something which hit home for him. "Look at my last name," he says, "I bare a slave name: it's not something I'm proud of but I'm not going to change it. I keep it because it reminds me of a history I never want to forget."³⁸

In terms of the text, comparatively, "The Truth" sheds a different light on history. Mawugbe's poem is written from the perspective that the native Africans protested to the selling of their own people. With it's lines:

"Then came the last request
'Nana, sell us some of your people'
We refused!
Believe them not when they say
We sold our kith and kin

to me, the poem sets a tone relieving the natives of responsibility in the Atlantic slave trade. Although the poem was written almost 10 years ago Mawugbe still stands by his opinion. In a formal interview he expressed "that [his] people were not selling each other." He does admit, however, that some thieves, witches, and other criminals were traded away as punishment.³⁹ On the issue, Jackson-Davis said the poem is "just

another version of history" and believes slavery occurred with and without the cooperation of West Africans.⁴⁰

With "The Truth" Mawugbe and Jackson-Davis hoped to force the audience members to deal with their past, which might, in turn, help them recognize other forms of existing slavery. Mawugbe says, "If the chains are on the outside you need an outsider to unlock you, but when they are in your mind, it becomes your responsibility to gain the knowledge of how those chains got there and how to set yourself free."⁴¹ The Director and the Actor

Albert Jackson-Davis, currently the Deputy Director of the Center for National Culture in Cape Coast, directed "The Truth." He also acted in it and played the part of 'Narrator.' During an interview I had with him, he recalls that throughout the duration of rehearsals many frustrations arose. He remembers working with some actors whom he felt were "just having fun." Mawugbe was in charge of addressing the troupe members on this issue, and would occasionally sit them down and discuss the need and importance of a serious attitude in order to make the project work. These meetings usually had a positive effect. Those actors whom were considered already educated on the subject were those who Jackson-Davis distributed the larger roles to.⁴²

Although the performance is long over some of the principle frustrations are still presently remembered. Mawugbe's frustration is directed at his own educated people "who know the truth, but will not share it, who know the harm it has done, but will not take any steps to rectify it."⁴³ Jackson-Davis expressed that he is still frustrated with the fact that it always takes international sponsorship and forces for the issue to be addressed and that there is only so much he can do to help the issue while he waits for this funding to come around.⁴⁴ One of the performances was held in honor of a visiting Canadian Governor, the other for, American celebrity, Jermain Jackson.

The Response:

Mawugbe and Jackson- Davis both recall the response as very rewarding. The castle was full of a diverse audience on both occasions, and the performances were met with appreciation.⁴⁵ When I explained the response of other audiences I had encountered on my studies, Jackson-Davis admitted that there was occasionally laughter and says that "it was painful and a bit disturbing" but other positive responses out weighed this.⁴⁶

Mawugbe says he's sure the audience enjoyed the shows, but what he remembers is the reaction of one particular person. At the end of the performance Efoa Sutherland, a renown playwright, threw her arms around him and whispered in his ear, "You've done it, and it was a good job." Mawugbe says if nobody came and this was the only response he received, it was more than enough for him.⁴⁷

Although Mawugbe was content with the production at the time, looking back he says there are many things he would change. He believes he was driven with an exuberance that wanted his audience "to feel the pain and horror and leave the castle weeping." "But then," he asks "what happens. They go home and wish they never came or they forget about it." Mawugbe believes " if the subject can be addressed in a more dispassionate way, the audience will be able to deal with it and then recognize the impact history has had on West Africa. When the emotions are enflamed one will loose sight of the facts, and it will backfire."⁴⁸

Jackson- Davis believes it was a success in it's original form, and is looking forward to the opportunity to do direct it again; the next time it goes up he hopes it will have been initiated by Ghanaian forces instead of international.

*"...They say...they said they built the big houses
to keep the slave.
What is a slave, Nana?
Shut up! It is not good that a child should
ask such big questions.
A slave is one who is bought and sold.
You frighten me, child. You must be a witch.
...No one talks of these things anymore!
All good men and women try to forget;
They have forgotten!"*

-Ama Ata Aidoo

Anowa: The Big House at Oguaa

Phase 111

THE SLAVES OF WEST AFRICA

"The Slaves of West Africa" is a forty-five minute dance-drama on the Atlantic Slave Trade. It is presently performed by Twerampon Traditionals, a group affiliated with the Ciltad/ Agoro Project based in Cape Coast. The piece was originally performed independently but when One Africa Productions, an organization which runs pilgrimages to Ghana for those from the African Diaspora, saw the piece they wanted it to be incorporated into their existing ceremonies. Now the piece is primarily performed in conjunction with One Africa's ceremonies.

I had originally wanted to be apart of a ceremony conducted by One Africa Productions which would include the dance-drama, but because of miss-connections and time this didn't happen. Instead, I went straight to the group and hired them to perform the piece for me in the court yard of Cape Coast's Town Hall. During the event I was able, through participant observation, to examine audience response and following the event I was able to interview the Director, Ockyerema Pra and three of his actors. The

History:

As Jackson-Davis was taking me step by step through the events of "The Truth" as well as showing me the pictures, I began to feel as if I actually had seen the play in some way. A lot of what he was describing to me sounded familiar; the pictures also seemed to be a different version of something I had seen before. It was only when, however, he gave me the text of "The Truth" and I read the lines:

"Danger approaches from the sea

Into hiding all must go"

that I remembered where I had heard them before. Five days earlier they had been said by a Twerampon actor during the performance of "The Slaves of West Africa." I

told Jackson-Davis that I had just seen a dance-drama which seemed to follow the same series of action and dialogue as "The Truth" he had described to me. He explained to me that Okyerema Pra and other members of the group were once his students and had participated in "The Truth." Since then Pra has "stolen" the piece and claimed it as his own creation.⁴⁹

During a formal interview, on 1 May 1997, the day after the performance of "The Slaves of West Africa," I asked Pra how the piece was conceived. He said it began when African Americans started coming to visit the castles and were curious as to how their forefathers were taken from West Africa. He looked at this as an artistic and economical opportunity so, he says, he decided to create a dramatic piece about the slave trade because he was sure to have a serious and interested audience who could watch the events of history instead of trying to imagine them on tours of empty dungeons. He never mentioned Mawugbe, Jackson- Davis, or the performances of "The Truth."

Presently the piece runs about forty-five minutes and is basically set into three parts. Part one includes the arrival of Colonial ships to the coast and the African natives' reaction. Part two tells of the colonials intoxicating the natives in order to seize, chain and drive them onto the boats. Part three is primarily a series of dances which are to represent the abolition of the slave trade and the independence of Ghana. Although I have to agree with Jackson Davis that the idea of "The Slaves of West Africa" must have been derived from "The Truth," my opinion is based on his word and seeing only one of them and hearing about the other. From what I've gathered, however, "The Slaves Of West Africa" seems to be a slightly modified and abridged version of "The Truth."

The Director:

Twerampon Traditionals, directed and lead by Okyerema Pra, was the first Cape Coast based group to affiliate with the Ciltad/Agoro Project. The group usually does work which revolves around this project but occasionally they are hired by other people or organizations. This is the usually the case when "The Slaves of West Africa" is performed.

Pra said when he first told his troupe that he was going to add a piece about the external slave trade to their list of works, nobody rejected the idea or asked any questions. It took him two weeks to create, but they have now been performing it now for almost five years.⁵⁰

Pra further explained to me that he based the events of the piece on stories he heard thirty years ago from his father, who heard them from his eighty-year-old great-grandfather. Pra said he created "The Slaves of West Africa" not only because "it is important for African Americans to know how their forefathers were sent away" but also because he believes "the salve trade is a chapter in history which should never die [that] it should be there always"⁵¹ I believe, however, this attitude hasn't drifted over to his actors.

The Actor

Twerampon Traditionals is an estimated 30member group ranging from ages 10 to 35. Some actors are permanent and others drift in and our according to their schedules. In this piece, all available actors are given a part, large or small. Although I found the conduct of the actors very frustrating it lead to some very interesting realizations

The whole atmosphere of the production was very casual. For example. Act One opens with the African natives living and dancing in peace on stage. This action is broken by the sounds of drum beats and the call: "Danger approaches from the sea. Into hiding all must go." The actors run off stage left as two colonialists, identified so by jeans and white t-shirts, enter stage right. However, for a moment I decided they had gone 'into hiding' forever. The actors didn't return until Pra had to leave his drum, go backstage, and signal their entrance. The drama continued after about a 4 minute delay.

Another moment which caught me by surprise was the mood of Act Two which consists mainly of the entrapment and driving of the slaves. The lack of concentration and seriousness was very noticeable. As the 'slaves' were being 'whipped' I noticed a few smiles and chuckles from them. It is probable they were instigated by the initial laughs of the 'slave drivers' and other members of the audience.

I'm sure there are many factors which made this performance, in my opinion, very nonchalant and unprofessional. It could be a combination of the facts that it was only one young student who booked the group, not a formal organization, the fact that this was decided upon just three days before the performance, and that fact that my expectations might of been too high. I deducted that if One Africa Productions was using them regularly, their performance would be serious and professional. After interviewing the actors, however I was able to add another element to my explanation for the casual and lighthearted atmosphere which resulted in my disappointment.

When I began the interview, I was speaking with two boys about the age of fifteen, Bernard Hayford and Kwamina Mensa. Both actors agreed that they didn't remember being taught about the slave trade in school and that the only contact they've had with the subject has been through the dance-drama. When I asked them

how they felt about doing a play about Atlantic slave trade, Mensa, after a period of silence, smiled and said, "It is very nice." When I asked, then, what the slave trade meant to them, they replied with silence. In fear they couldn't understand me because of language barriers, I asked Pra to be my translator, yet even when he asked the question it was met to with silence and looks of uncertainty.⁵² The rest of the interview was question after question which only received similar responses. One of the most interesting answers I received was in response to my question "Why do you think it's important to remember the events of the slave trade?" Hayford couldn't answer but Mensa said, "because our forefathers learned many new and important skills in the Americas."⁵³

Towards the end of the interview another actor, Kow Badu, in his late twenties, entered the conversation (if one could call it that). I was then able to ask him some of the same questions, but his answers were quite different then those of the other actors. He was more inclined to be able to answer my questions and his responses were more passionate. For example, he expressed that it is important for him to remember the slave trade because it helps him remember his ancestors. But, he says, he still doesn't understand why it all happened.⁵⁴ I told him that I, too, often wonder the same thing.

The Response:

I was a little nervous about the audience as I knew of no one that was coming, I knew there was no publicity involved, and I had arranged the showing of the dance-drama only days before. My concern was further kindled by the fact that audience response was a primary focus of my study. But Pra assured me the gates would be left open, and when people heard the drums and realized it was free, they would wander

in. He was right. Five minutes into the show there was a Ghanaian audience of maybe sixty children and forty adults.

As I mentioned before the atmosphere of the actors was very light hearted and casual; the attitude of the audience also followed in this manner. In Act Two an older woman and her son are shot and killed by the colonialists. This was received with laughter. Whenever a slave was whipped or hit, this was also received with laughter. At one point I turned to a seven-year-old girl next to me, who probably never stopped smiling, and asked her what was so funny? She replied that the actors were 'playing' and 'fooling' and it made her laugh.⁵⁵ I have always believed the audience and the actor work together and feed off of one another. Although sometimes this is not the case, I feel I can attribute some of the audience response as a reaction to the feeling the actors exuded and vice versa.

When I asked Pra about the light-nature of his actors and the audience response, he admitted that this might be because some of his actors didn't fully understand the meaning of the slave trade; he feels it is mainly the younger ones he has the problems with. He then asked me to remember that the older of the three actors could answer my questions more easily than the younger ones could. Pra believes this attitude will change once he receives sponsorship so he can take them "to a retreat, talk to them and work with them seriously."⁵⁶ He proceeded to ask me if I could sponsor him;

*"Peace is born, Love and Joy.
For if the happenings of the past
Could be unraveled by the mind of man we would all be God.
...Now we are free
Being sons and daughters of God;
Free people with one destiny.
...And none so bold,
None so daring- and none dares,
To make slaves of us again!"*

-Kwesi Brew
The Return of the Native

Conclusion

The Atlantic slave trade is over. Thank God. The chains have rusted, the castles' dungeons have been turned into museums and gift shops, and the European slave drivers are long since dead. The memory and legacy of this horrific event, however, must never follow this course of diminishment.

Even against a force of people who would rather forget the issue, there are those who will not let that happen. I was able to meet a few these individuals during my Independent Study Project. They are Ghanaians who, through their field, have tried to make 'the voice of the slave' heard.

Theater is one of the realms in which this has been accomplished. Plays have been written and performed which relay the incidents of the Atlantic slave trade. Of course, information on this past can be found in history books and archives, even in tourist brochures on Ghana or mounted on museum walls, but this information is only two dimensional. Theater adds a third dimension and brings life to history.

With the works of certain artists the Atlantic slave trade has been heeded, and its memory, revitalized. These people- playwrights, poets, and directors- have conceived slave dramas. They all were motivated, not only by a desire to fulfill their own need for understanding, but also by the will to help others understand. They see the impact this past has had on their people and country, and they recognize the elements of its ramification.

These artists are at the beginning of a long road, however. They are up against years of silence and, in the words of Nii Yartey, "a sort of collective denial."⁵⁷ In many cases I found slavery rarely spoken about and was continuously informed that it is barely even taught in schools. I discovered, through interviews and observing audience response, that it was the elders who would recognize the issue more freely and with a

greater comprehension of its significance. I also found that the precision and capacity for understanding was shaped by previous knowledge of the subject. This brought me to a sorrowful conclusion. It was mainly members of the youth of Ghana, the next generation, who approached the issue ignorantly or with a careless nature.

This discernment taught me a new meaning of the importance of education. Events in history, as grim or embarrassing as some might be, must be confronted. The past is too influential on the course of the future to ignore. I, also, am not under the impression that theater and its focus on the slave trade is, in its entirety, a sufficient means of historical exposure. History has its place in our everyday lives. Its purpose, though, seems to be acknowledged and successful; this brings me to an optimistic conclusion.

Yes, slavery is over and will hopefully never be allowed to exist again, but, I believe, a part of Ghana and its people are still in chains. Many are restricted by insufficient lore. I do also recognize, however, that that these chains are found in all countries; lack of knowledge is a phenomenon all over the world, we all suffer from it. But this simply presses my point. Only with the knowledge of our history can we find the reasons for our present condition. When we see where and why we stand the way we do, we can choose the way to move forward. I found that Ghana's theater and its focus on the Atlantic slave trade has, in many ways, given the sails on this voyage, wind.

-
- ¹ Basil, B. The African slave trade (1961)
- ² Yartey, N. Informal Interview 13 April (1997)
- ³ 3 Yartey, N: informal interview 13 April (1997).
- ⁴ The Berlinske Tiende, Culture: Children of the Slaves, 17 June 1996
- ⁵ Yartey, N. Formal Interview 15 April 1997
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid
- ⁸ Ibid
- ⁹ Ibid
- ¹⁰ Ibid
- ¹¹ Obeng, Ernest: Formal Interview 15 April 1997
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Yartey, N. Formal Interview 15 April 1997
- ¹⁴ Salifu, Abukari Meiregah Formal Interview 15 April 1997
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Yartey, N.: Formal Interview 15 April 1996 :
- ¹⁹ The Weekly Spectator 3 June 1996
- ²⁰ The Weekly Spectator 13 July 1996
- ²¹ The Daily Graphic 3 June 1996
- ²² Djisenu, J. Formal Interview 6 May 1997
- ²³ Abdallah, M. Formal Interview 21 April 1997
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Djisenu, J. Formal Interview 6 May 1997
- ²⁸ Abdallah, M. Formal Interview 21 April 1997
- ²⁹ Ocquaye M.: Formal Interview 23 April 1997
- ³⁰ Ibid
- ³¹ Ibid
- ³² Abdallah, M. Formal Interview 21 April 1997
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Djisenu, J. Formal Interview 6 May 1997
- ³⁵ Djisenu, J. Formal Interview 6 May 1997
- ³⁶ Abdallah, M. Formal Interview 21 April 1997
- ³⁷ Djisenu, J Formal Interview 6 May 1997

-
- 38 Jackson-Davis, A. Formal interview 6 May 1997
39 Mawugbe, E. Formal Interview 22 April 1997
40 Jackson-Davis, A. Formal Interview 6 May 1997
41 Mawugbe, E. Formal Interview 22 April 1997
42 Jackson-Davis, A. Formal Interview 6 May 1997
43 Mawugbe, E. Formal Interview 22 April 1997
44 Jackson-Davis, A. Formal Interview 6 May 1997
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Mawugbe, E. Formal Interview 22 April 1997
48 Ibid.
49 Jackson-Davis, A. Formal Interview 6 May 1997
50 Pra, O. Formal Interview 1 May 1997
51 Ibid
52 Mensa, K. & Hayford, B. Formal Interview I May 1997
53 Mensa, K. Formal Interview I May 1997
54 Badu, K. Formal Interview I May 1997
55 Unknown girl Informal Interview 30 April 1997
56 Pra, O. Formal Interview I May 1997
57 57 The Berlinske Tiende, Culture: Children of the Slaves, 17 June 1996

References:

Abdallah, Mohammed ben (1989) The fall of Kumbi and other plays Accra New Town: Woeli Publishing Services

Aidoo, Ama Ata (1965) The dilemma of a ghost Accra: Sedco Publishing Limited Aidoo, Ama Ata (1970) Anowa Accra: Sedco Publishing Limited

Anyidoho, K. (1996) The dance. -personal photocopy unpublished.

Behn, A.(1977) Oroonoko: the royal slave. Tema: Publishing Division of the Ghana Publishing Corporation.

Berlingske Tidente. The children of the Slaves. 17 June 1996 (reporter unknown).

Brew, K. (1995) Return of no return and other poems. Accra: Afram Publications (Ghana) Ltd.

Daily Graphic. Erect monument to slavery. 24 May 1996 p.8 (Graphic reporter).

Davidson, B. (1961) The African slave trade. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

Mawugbe, E. K. (1989) The truth .-personal photocopy unpublished.

Onwubiko, KBC. (1967) History of West Africa. Onitsha, Nigeria: Africana- Fep Publishers Limited.

Perbi, A. (1992) The Institute of African Studies: Research Review The relationship between the domestic slave trade and the external slave trade in pre-colonial Ghana. pp. 64-72 Legon: School of communication Studies Press, Univ. of Ghana.

Visual Ghana Series (1988) Ghana in pictures. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Co.

Weekly Spectator. 'Musu'... at National Theatre next friday. 25 May 1996 p. 6 (reporter unknown).

Weekly spectator. Images of Africa '96: 'Musu' wins again. 13 July 1996 p.6 (reporter unknown).

Informants:

Abdallah, Dr. Mohammed ben. Playwright and lecturer at School for performing Arts, Legon. Formal Interview: 21 April 1997

Asare, Yaw. Personal advisor and Artistic Director, National Theater Players Accra. Various discussions throughout ISP period

Attoh, Rashid. Member of the National Dance Ensemble, Accra. Informal Interview: 13 April 1997

Badu, Kow. Member of Twerammpoon Traditionals, Cape Coast. Formal Interview: 1 May 1997

Djisenu, John K. Lecturer, University of Ghana, Accra. Formal Interview: 6 May 1997

Hayford, Bernard. Member of Twerammpoon Traditionals, Cape Coast. Formal Interview: 1 May 1997

Jackson Davis, Albert. Deputy Director, Center for National Culture, Cape Coast. Formal Interview: 6 May 1997

Mawugbe, Efo Kodjo. Director of Programs & International Relations, Accra. Formal Interview: 22 April 1997

Mensa, Kwamina. Member of Twerammpoon Traditionals, Cape Coast. Formal Interview: 1 May 1997

Ocquaye, Maurice. Final year student at Univ. of Ghana, Legon. Formal interview: 24 April 1997

Prah, Okyereme. Director of Twerammpoon Traditionals, Cape Coast. Formal Interview: 1 May 1997

Salifu, Abukari Meiregah. Member of National Dance Ensemble, Accra. Formal Interview: 15 April 1997

Unknown girl. Audience member, Cape Coast: Informal Interview: 1 May 1997

Yartey, F. Nii. Director of National Dance Ensemble, Accra. Informal Interview: 14 April 1997. Formal interview: 15 April 1997

"MUSU" KAYAK TOURS

1100 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036

THE NATIONAL DANISH EMBASSY
and the
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SLAVERY

THE NATIONAL DANISH COMPANY
also

THE NATIONAL DANISH COMPANY
also



BY ROBERT HARRIS

THE NATIONAL DANISH COMPANY
also

PREVIOUS

THE NATIONAL DANISH COMPANY
also

THE NATIONAL DANISH COMPANY

THE ROYAL DANISH EMBASSY
and the
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SLAVERY
presents

THE NATIONAL DANISH COMPANY
also

"MUSU"
Sound of the Slave



In a National-Wide Tour
ADMISSION - FREE

THE NATIONAL DANISH COMPANY
also

**THE NATIONAL DANCE COMPANY
OF GHANA**

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below. For a list of all annual programs, a complete program list, and a list of all dance titles, please write to the address below. For a list of all dance titles, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

POLLY

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

"MUSU" - A Ballet in 2 Acts.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

For a complete list of dance titles, a film or tape, or a copy of the program, please write to the address below.

The Dance by
Kofi Anyidoho
Part I

The Auditorium Lights go down faintly.

"Husago" is read over the P.A. system accompanied by the drums.

Husago:

Husago Husago

HusagoHusagoHusago

Husago Husago

HusagoHusagoHusago

HusagoKinDinHusago

Husago Husago

MisegoMisegoMisego

MisegoGonGonMisego

Misego Misego

HusagoHusagoHusago

HusagoKinDinHusago

Come with us across the birth of Time

Hold your foot against the breeze &

Slide your sole along the memory Line.

Misego Misego

HusagoHusagoHusago

HusagoKinDinHusago

Come with us to the old Garden

Where seeds of Time were nursed to Life.

Husago Husago

MisegoMisegoMisego

MisegoGonGonMisego

And Time was born on Laps of Sound

And Time was troubled with Loneliness

But Silence came and put Time to Shame

Husago Husago

MisegoMisegoMisego

MisegoGonGonMisego

And Time rose in rebellion against Sound

And Clash of Time & Sound became Thunder

Husago Husago

MisegoMisegoMisego

Misego Gon GonMisego

Anger rose in rebellion against Silence
But Patience came and put Anger to Shame
Husago Husago
MisegoMisegoMisego
MisegoGonGonMisego

And Patience became a burden upon Time
Till Thunder made his Peace with Silence.

Husago Husago
MisegoMisegoMisego
MisegoGonGonMisego

But Silence became such boredom to Time & Sound And Time & Sound pushed &
pulled each other's Pulse Again they pulled & pushed & hit & beat Till Order came and
put them both to Shame.

And the union of Time	& Sound	& Silence
Gave birth to Rhythm	& Rhythm	
Gave birth to Dance	& Rhythm	
Gave birth to Pleasure	& Rhythm	
Gave birth to Life	& Rhythm	
Gave birth to Death	& Rhythm	
Gave birth to Dance	& Dance	

Became Journeys into Time:
Husago Husago
MisegoMisegoMisego
MisegoGonGonMisego

MisegoGoGonGoGonMisego

Wierd Sound Effect. Spot Lights pick Poet as he enters from the back of the Auditorium. Begins the Song [Miawoe Do Asi Agu Dzi], followed by "Prelude" as Poet moves through Auditorium towards Stage.

Prelude:

We are Dancer and The Dance.

Time before Memory. Memory beyond Time.

We harvest tears from laughter's eyes.

We even sow some joy in sorrow's deepest soul.

We are Dancer and The Dance.

In the space between the Drums & Us You'll feel unfold The endless saga of
AncestralTime.

Song continues until Poet mounts Stage. Then follows "There is a Journey...":

There is a Journey we all must make into our Past in order to come to terms with our Future. For Five Hundred Years and more, we have journeyed into various spaces of the world. And everywhere we go we must confront dimensions of ourselves we did not know were there. There is something of our-story, something of our mystery, carved into every tombstone in all the graveyards of the world, something of our history enshrined in every monument and in every anthem ever erected in honour of the spirit of endurance. Back home here in Africa, we perform our Resurrection Dance in the company of hyenas pretending to be royal ancestors.

Some tell us our salvation lies in a repudiation of our history of pain and of endless fragmentation. But we must wander through history into myth and memory, seeking lost landmarks in a geography of scars and of tormented remembrances. It cannot must not be that the rest of the world came upon us picked us up used us to clean up their mess dropped us off into trash and moved on into a new era of celebrative arrogance, somehow hopeful that we shall forever remain lost among shadows of our own doubts.

Poet withdraws back stage. Curtin opens to reveal statuettes - in mist. A brief pause. Then Poet re-enters for the final piece - "Somehow we must recall...":

Somehow we must recall that we are a people who once rode the dawn with civilization's light still glowing through our mind. A people once enslaved, they say, are too often too willing to be a people self-enslaved. But always we must recall the fate of those who fought to the death of the last warrior, fought to the death of the final hope.

Part II

2nd Ball Room Scene

So they wiped them out?
Drowned their screams
Burned their nerves and bones
And scattered their ashes
Across the intimidating splendour
Of this young history of lies.

The Asante and the Azande, the Madingo and the Bakongo, the Basuto and the Dagaba, a people who once built civilizations of rare glory are now but doubtful memories on the faded pages of world history.

For Five Hundred Years, we've journeyed from Africa through Virgin Islands into Santo Domingo, from Havana in Cuba to Savanna in Georgia, from Voudou Shores of Haiti to Montago Bay in Jamaica, from Ghana to Guyana, from the Shanty-Towns in Johannesburg to the Favelas in Rio de Janeiro, from Bukom to Harlem to Brixton to Hamburg to Moscow to Kyoto and all we find are a dispossessed and battered people still kneeling in a sea of blood, lying deep in the path of hurricanes.

Dancers lying down Up Stage - faint lights on them

No matter how far away we try to hide away from ourselves, we will have to come back home and find out where and how and why we lost the light in our eyes, how and why we have become eternal orphans living on crumbs and leftovers. We are the dog who caught the game, but must now sit under the table, cracking our hopes over bones over droppings from the master's hands.

Dancers begin to rise and walk Down Stage.

In spite of all that pain, we can say without a doubt that as a people, we do hold the world record for survival against the most unreasonable odds. Yes, we hold the most spectacular survival record. But we must hasten to remind ourselves that just to survive simply to survive merely to survive is not & can never be enough.

And so still we stand so tall among the cannonades
We smell of mists and of powdered memories.

*And those who took away our Voice
They are now surprised
They couldn't take away our Song.
They couldn't take away our Dance.*



St. Croix Air



THE ONLY U.S. AIRLINE SERVING ST. CROIX ISLANDS
 ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Reliving The Slave Trade In Dance

LEISURE

By Peter L. de-Jordan

The dance is a powerful medium for expressing the pain and suffering of the past. In the heart of the Caribbean, a group of dancers has taken the story of the slave trade and brought it to life through their movements. The dance is a powerful medium for expressing the pain and suffering of the past. In the heart of the Caribbean, a group of dancers has taken the story of the slave trade and brought it to life through their movements.

The dance is a powerful medium for expressing the pain and suffering of the past. In the heart of the Caribbean, a group of dancers has taken the story of the slave trade and brought it to life through their movements. The dance is a powerful medium for expressing the pain and suffering of the past. In the heart of the Caribbean, a group of dancers has taken the story of the slave trade and brought it to life through their movements.

The dance is a powerful medium for expressing the pain and suffering of the past. In the heart of the Caribbean, a group of dancers has taken the story of the slave trade and brought it to life through their movements. The dance is a powerful medium for expressing the pain and suffering of the past. In the heart of the Caribbean, a group of dancers has taken the story of the slave trade and brought it to life through their movements.