

EVALUATION report

Heritage Lottery Funded Project:

The Ablution of Slavery (YH-06-00910).

(Sameboat Project Ltd)



Simon Persighetti, September 2007

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The voyage that carried Africans into slavery across the Atlantic Ocean was called the 'Middle Passage'. Having arrived at the African coast captains were anxious to make their stay as short as possible to avoid disease and mutiny. Slaves were taken from the holding forts, shackled together in pairs with leg-irons and carried to the ships in dugout canoes. Once aboard they were branded with a red-hot iron, like cattle, to show who owned them and their clothes removed.

Slaves were housed in the ship's hold like any other cargo. The men were kept in chains while women and children were allowed to go free. Slaves lay on specially built shelves with about 0.5 metres of vertical space, the men still fettered in pairs. As long as they were in the hold slaves had to remain lying flat on their backs. Once the available spaces were filled the captains would set sail. www.bristolandslavery.4t.com



This image originally appeared on a leaflet published by the Plymouth Abolitionist committee in 1788. (Appendix 1.) This disturbing illustration of the slave ship *Brookes* with 454 Africans crammed aboard evoked the description of people being “packed like sardines” or “like spoons in a drawer”. It clearly showed how these captured humans were considered to be mere objects of exchange to be treated as cargo. The image was adapted in London and distributed nationwide, bringing widespread support for the abolitionist movement. The “spoon” became an icon of the Same Boat Project poetically combining the symbol of the human as object, the oar and the utensil of a feast.

How can we commemorate a heritage of conflict and exploitation that has been central in the making our modern world? Where do we stand with our ancestors' sufferings and cruelties? Should we apportion blame? Should we apologise? Are we all in the same boat? Where is your tribal memory? The sea. The sea has locked them up. www.sameboatproject.com

PROLOGUE

At its very simplest a recognition of the South-West of England's' past involvement in the slave trade was marked in Exeter on 25th March 2007 with a ceremony on the Cathedral Green. The Lord Mayor of Exeter, Councilor Norman Shiel, hosted the inclusive ceremony for local communities and individuals, at midday. Here the names of those individuals who appear on local and parish records as having been owned as slaves were read out in remembrance. Unlike the names of those who have fallen in war, this was a naming as a form of revelation, truth telling and perhaps apology. As Ayo Scott, a member of the Same Boat crew called out those names and the sound of those syllables bounced off the stone walls of the ancient cathedral, it was as if for one moment, the world stood still and the voices of those lost and exploited men, women and children had been freed into the sunlight of that morning. Councilor Shiel, said: "We can't turn back the hands of time but it is vitally important that we never forget this part of history and ensure that nothing remotely close to the transatlantic slave trade ever happens again." In the shadow of the cathedral the gathering heard something of the Church of England's' own involvement in the slave trade, to the extent that at the time of the abolition the Bishop of Exeter and three colleagues were paid nearly £13,000 in compensation for 665 slaves. (Appendix 2.) The aims of the Same Boat project to "enable diverse communities to explore their shared heritage of the Slave Trade" , would be fulfilled through countless hours of discussions, meetings and active devising and making towards the gathering together of lively cross cultural forms to commemorate the Atlantic Slave Trade and to celebrate its abolition. This small gesture through a naming ceremony would be amplified through the recognition of place, public participation and artistic endeavour underscored by the sound of the sea and a boat moored on the dockside.

The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was passed by the British Parliament on 25 March 1807. This law included a fine of £100 for every slave found aboard a British ship - at that time the fine was so high it probably would have put the ship owner out of business. Slavery was then wiped out slowly - with slaves first being freed but signed up to work in "an apprenticeship" for their masters for five years. By 1838 all slaves in the British Empire were formally set free. Slaves didn't get any money for all the work they had done, but slave owners were given money for the loss of the slaves! One example was the Bishop of Exeter who gave up 665 slaves so got £12,700 (around £750,000 today).
www.news.bbc.co.uk

The imagining of the actual journey across Mami Wata became an experiential reality...hence bringing with it that sense of liberation that our ancestors COULD be laid to rest by honouring them and bringing our gifts of remembrance to them.
Ursula Monn



The Ablution of Slavery: A Play, an event or a Ritual ?

I have been able to follow the virtual, the mainland and the quayside aspects of this *Sameboat* project, ***The Ablution of Slavery*** from the outset. I have followed the work and the discourses around it with a mixture of fascination and trepidation in the knowledge that this project is part of an unfathomable historical legacy and a chain link into the contemporary. Before responding to the ethical, political or social aspects of this practical and aesthetic response to the 2007 bicentennial of the abolition of the slave trade, I intend taking a cool, critical stance. By this I mean to comment objectively upon this multi-stranded project from the perspective of professional contextual arts practice. This hopefully will be useful in forming an overview of the modes of operation rather than an initial focus on what might be termed a *worthy* thematic. *Welfare State* an arts organisation that became synonymous with community arts from the 1960's through to the 21st Century can perhaps be referenced immediately in that the project being evaluated certainly mirrors some of the participative and spectacular dynamics of such erstwhile *Engineers of the Imagination*. Through its work, such a company inspired and generated thousands of mass and minor projects and initiatives that have at their core a desire to use the arts as a means of understanding the stories we are living in. *The Same Boat* project certainly seems to mirror such a precept. It is work that helps me to reflect upon and motivate my own practice as an artist. The invitation to evaluate the work leads me to examine my own perspective as an artist and provides a vehicle to interrogate the manifestos and motivations of this organisation that seeks through its work to find some kind of redemption from the unfinished business of the African Diaspora.

I worked as an art and drama teacher for 4 years (1987-91) in the landlocked African State of Zambia and it was there that I first became involved in what has been termed 'site-specific' performance work. On my first visit to that Nation in 1984, I met Dickson Mwansa who was teaching drama at Lusaka University. He told me about a theatre company called Chikwakwa, an outreach group formed in 1969 from the university campus experimenting with the uses of theatre in rural development issues. Mwansa writes:

Drama is a familiar and effective form of teaching that has been widely used in Zambian society. In traditional society, it is used for teaching the young coming of age how to live in the world. In modern times, it is strongly integrated in various forms of development work. (Mwansa, 2003 unpaginated)

'Chikwakwa' roughly translates as 'grass cutter' or 'machete', because the first task the performers completed on arrival at a particular location was to scythe a circle into the high savannah grass to create a performance arena. The cut grass was then used to create a thatched shelter to protect the actors from the heat of the sun and to be used as a base for meetings and devising a play which related directly to issues raised by local inhabitants. More recently (Residency: February to May 1994) a performance project called *Litooma* attempted to revive the original grassroots concept by holding workshops on the first Chikwakwa site. The Litooma director Thomas Riccio described the place as:

...less a theatre and more an outdoor amphitheatre in ruin. Located about 15 km from the (Lusaka) city center next to a housing area and cornfields, the stage house was a converted tobacco drying building on what was a former tobacco farm. Established during the late 1960s by a group of activist students that viewed theatre as a vehicle for social change and cultural identity. (Riccio 1993, unpaginated)

The adopted arenas of *Same Boat* provide such an example of locations that not only act as the backdrops to the playing out of a story but are intrinsically part of the story being told. Thus their production of the play, *Mami Wata and the Black Atlantic* presented on the docksides where slavery had its marketplaces may create a cultural imprint upon the memory of the players, the audience and the physical place of the event.

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that gray vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History.

From *The Sea is History* by Derek Walcott



July 2007 (Photo. Persighetti)

At the time that I interviewed Mwansa in 1984, there was considerable tension brewing in the established theatre buildings of Zambia particularly as the theatres also operated as social clubs dominated at the time by mainly European expatriates. Stemming from the colonial (Northern Rhodesia) period the transition towards independence-inspired *Zambianisation* appeared to be taking far too long. The lack of evidence of any actively creative, cultural exchange was shockingly evident. Under these conditions the site of theatre was obviously highly contested and I can remember being naively outraged when I saw the Lowenthal Theatre building in Ndola on the Copperbelt of Zambia decorated with a wrought iron image of William Shakespeare! Dickson Mwansa commented wryly on this as simply being part of the legacy of colonialism and a rusting symbol of a (by-then) declining expatriate enclave mentality.

...The European tradition of drama in the theatre clubs is one based on the use of expensive and complicated stage settings, lighting systems, furniture and costumes. The Travelling Theatre can neither afford nor has room to carry such equipment. We use simple stage settings, in school halls, or outside in village squares, with sunlight or tilly lamp for lighting...

(Mwansa 1977, unpaginated)

The action of creating a theatre out of the landscape and then of creating work which relates directly to the landscape and its people can provide influence and inspiration in many societal contexts. The intrinsic drive of theatre work intertwined with task, need and the concerns of everyday life were certainly ideas shared by community artists in Britain during the 1970's. Now, in this production of *Mami Water* such aspects of the everyday and the meshing of the imagined and the factual can best be illustrated in a show where the narrative of the tragic voyages of slavery are underscored by the visible presence of a boat named *Redemption Song*. At the end of each show the audience are led to the waters edge and are invited to write messages of *ablution* onto the sail cloth of this boat destined to retrace the sea route of the Atlantic Slave Triangle in what they describe as a *redemptive performance ritual*. In community theatre:

The stories that form the basis for its scripts come straight out of life and are presented unapologetically, sometimes literally on a street corner, by the very people who live them. (van Erven 2001, 5)

It was the Chikwakwa act of grass cutting before any of the artifice, commonly connected to the aesthetics of theatre making, which leads me to further consider the impact of site and heritage upon the perceptions of an audience. It is as if the marking out of a functional or historical site with the sounds, actions and props of a play seem to generate a binary between fact and fiction or the real and the imagined. This marking out of space to perform suggests a clearing in the forest or metaphorically a clearing in the minds or perceptions of its audience. The illogical logic of ritual perhaps allows the human to resolve issues, explore ideas and make creative leaps that might normally seem impossible. To this extent there is an element of anthropological evocation attached to such work because *Mami Wata and the Black Atlantic* seems to promote a sense of communion formerly generated through rituals now commonly referred to as *pre-theatre forms* or the first 'age' of theatre (Brody 1969, 19) There are obviously clear echoes of this kind of clearing of space in other examples of ceremonies and ritual theatre even with the appearance of the *Presenter* (clearing the play space) in the opening sequence of English Mumming Plays.

Since there is no theater building to house this dramatic event, its stage must be created anew with every performance ... the action is set apart from the spectators yet made accessible to all of them by the drawing of the circle. ... How this is accomplished may vary from play to play. In some it may be done by the performers all entering at once and walking around in a circle while they sing or while the Presenter gives his first speech ... In other cases it may be the Presenter who walks around, declaiming a prologue that calls for "room" and setting the boundaries of the action as he walks. (Brody 1969, 17)

During the second half of the Twentieth Century, the community theatre movement in Britain was instrumental in attempting to mark social, political and economic changes by encouraging specific inhabitants of localities to re-examine their own histories and traditions. It might be a matter of conjecture, but in the case of the community play it may be that the actual play is **not** 'the thing' but the gatherings, conflicts and celebrations that surround it are. John Fox described the early community collaborations of Welfare State as ... research '... into nascent ritual (using theatre) as part of a way of life rather than a repeated dramatic production where theatre is an end in itself.' (Coult & Kershaw 1999, 29) The Same Boat productions in Plymouth, Bristol and Exeter Canal Basin fulfilled this aspect of theatre on a continuum through the generation of a palpable sense of event-hood. Through the kinds of behind the scenes meetings, gatherings, workshops and presentations that make one wonder where an art work begins or ends, the project enters the life and experience of its participants in a profound way. In this instance the play not only commemorates the countless deaths of the Middle Passage, it reminds us that these slaves not only lost their freedom but lost their land to such an extent that they did not, even in death, have the opportunity to be returned to their own ancestral grounds. The ignominious sea burials therefore lead us to consider the impact of Mami Wata, the water spirit recognised throughout African Cultures under different names and guises though often in the form of half woman, half fish- the mermaid of marine mythology. It is not for me as a white European to fully explain the profound impact of the Mami Wata effigy appearance on our shores at this time but because she has come to symbolise the embodiment of, or link to the missing souls of the slave trade, she became central to the theme of redemption and reconciliation. Such a psychological and spiritual aspect of the anniversary was perhaps overlooked by those politicians who felt it unnecessary to apologise for the unfinished business of the missing despite living in a land that still profits by its past. Here the fluidity of the meaning of *heritage* reminds us that monuments cannot always communicate in a way that living, breathing, dancing, crying and singing humans can do. (Appendix 3.)



Bristol Performance, Mami Wata and the Black Atlantic, July 2007 (Photo. Persighetti)

In my opinion, the project invited me on a journey into the past, that I may not have taken or at least not have taken in such a way: It took me into the pain of the past in a way that was "digestible" because it was embedded in the human expression of joy (the wedding) and a real sense of resolution (in Marcia agreeing to her husband's journey) that was hope-giving and brought a sense of redemption and transformation of the past, for the sake of a more aware and human future.

Ursula Monn, a participant in the project, went on to speak of the way that the collaboration between the chorus (people from the community, like herself) with the central cast and organisers was very satisfying:

I had a sense of being a creative link between the cast and the audience; and also, in the process, being more involved in the thinking about and experiencing of the themes that were raised in the show, and my own emotional responses to those themes. I loved the use of song and words in a rhythmical way to illustrate responses that may well represent responses in this current day to the whole issue....thereby inviting the audience to see the show through different filters of perception which is a good way of engaging them in a process of re-evaluating their own response to the Slave Trade, and maybe bringing the "inner debate" about the wrong of the past into a more up to date and fruitful dimension. In terms of my own involvement, it was a great inspiration to work with such committed and visionary artists, and learn from them.

At each site the performance had a different impact and took on different levels of significance so that there was a marked contrast for example between the Plymouth show and the evening performance in Bristol (July 6) with a local chorus drawn from schools, community colleges and the community from all over the city. The Lloyds Amphitheatre on the docks opposite the Arnolfini Gallery provided a magnificent readymade granite platform complete with lighthouse, cranes and church spires. This resonant space evoked something of the subtext of history and heritage before the performance even began. On Plymouth Barbican, a critical observer noted that there were too many speeches and long stretches of narrative for the play to work "on the street" whilst the co-writer Martin Hubbard countered that the work should not be received or perceived as a piece of street theatre. This issue of the work as ritual is foregrounded when he says,

For a ritual to work it has to be in the place where it happened and the place where the Atlantic Slave trade happened was at sea and that's why we have to trace that route.

From my vantage point I saw that in the Bristol production there was such a feeling of encountering a shared experience between performers and audience that for me the work fell between the two stools of ritual and theatre. This reading is supported by a contributor to the evaluation who usefully observed that:

I felt more thought was needed of the audience. The play was not really suited to street theatre; it was too long and complex for that. I think that the cast were so involved in the ritual of the process that, that took precedence over the watcher. That is important but the watcher also needs to be equally valued if the work is to be felt internally.

In the end the efficacy of an actual ritual in the form of a permission or blessing to go on an actual voyage of the *song of redemption* overcame some of the logistical or aesthetic problematic of sited or street theatre. However, something of the sense of a mismatch between form and content is expressed in this response from a participant:

Personally I would have loved to see more use of the masks, and the community chorus, in movement to go with the songs and words...it could have added extra colour and depth to the show and anchored the words in a powerful way. This I think would have required more time than we had available ...I could have also seen the community chorus being in and amongst the audience and then going back to being between audience and cast quite a bit, rather than being mostly positioned in the latter place throughout the show. Again I think this would have added extra life and power....in fact it would have been great to have some of the actors move into the audience too, or appear from behind the audience.

In this lucid and constructive critique there is definitely recognition of the work as a vehicle for a kind of social activism where the actual play as a fiction has the potential to generate or enhance real and everyday communication between people in public arenas. Given the outdoor site/situations of the work it is obvious that a more sustained period of rehearsals and by all accounts, more hospitable weather could have enhanced the project outcomes. Ideally a stronger representation from each city (Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth) would equally have widened participation and audience numbers. For example, although the facility of the Theatre Royal space was excellent, rehearsals at the Barbican Theatre so close to the outdoor Plymouth site might have connected the process, the product and the community in a more cohesive manner. (July 21st Plymouth Show, Mayflower Steps, Barbican)

This calls to mind the contribution made to the project via the inspirational input of the organisation, **Moveable Feast**, an alliance of arts amateurs with a track record that includes work with children, teachers, artists and cultural groups. Appropriately they have even run workshops in the past with creation myths and storytelling at the core of their practice. (Appendix 4.) I have edited a number of observations supplied to me by Tony Gee of Moveable Feast:

What in your opinion were the most positive or memorable aspects of the project?

The best thing about the project was unequivocally - the people. From the first meeting with Osi and Dave Oddie (Appendix 6.), through to the wonderful workshop participants, the cast and the performance - the *communitas*, collected knowledge, kindred spirits and profound feelings for the subject were a constant source of beautiful surprises, inspirational creativity and above all warm empathetic, if transient, friendships. The quality of community involvement was fantastic. The overcoming of obstacles that arose again and again at each stage was legendary.

The motivation for the whole event was so heart felt and shared that it was an irresistible centrifugal force. There were lots of admirable personal qualities that went into the mix: Osi's (Dr Osita Okagbue Appendix 5.) direction was excellent, Martin's commitment and authenticity was compelling, Ayo's (Ayodele Scott Appendix 6.) enthusiasm and charisma was stirring and both his and Coral's physicality and energy in performance were a fulcrum for the strong writing provided by Martin. One of the strongest features of Martin's writing was the way it was forged in response to developments in the whole creative process. I also thought that we, *Moveable Feast*, did an excellent job sometimes in adverse situations.

The whole thing was over ambitious and all the better for it. Same Boat displayed a shipload of collective creative mettle in the face of the unforeseen because of a will to make an expressive, meaningful gesture to acknowledge an act of great inhumanity,

What aspects of the project might have needed further development or attention?

The production probably needed more time and resources. Sometimes the ambition overreached itself. The Albany Centre, a community venue in Bristol used for workshops and making was a difficult place with poor facilities. This underlines for me a sense that the community aspect of the project needed more consideration and a different sort of organising.

What do you think the legacy of the project might be ?

New horizons and awareness for the participants. The project provided an addition to a groundswell of conscious expression about racial oppression by and in Britain. New working relationships and collaborations that have the potential to generate further work along similar lines. A strong and transformative memory for those who created it, those who participated and those who watched.

The issue of audience/performer relationships reminded me of the early Same Boat launch events including a gathering on the River Dart in Totnes where the boat itself was the focal point of the work and was used as the platform to introduce people to the concept of the project. Here was that same kind of communication falling awkwardly and in some ways refreshingly between seriously considered structure and arguably informal celebration. Perhaps a small episode that sums up the sometimes tentative quality of the over-all project was in noticing the contrast between an enthusiastically participating public and chance spectators passing by who were provided with little clue about the significance of the event. Martin Hubbard writes:

The play sought as its central argument to acknowledge the Middle Passage of the Atlantic Slave Triangle as the birth canal of the African Diaspora, to honour the mothers who birthed and to celebrate the child which is the Diaspora. This shifting of the emphasis from blame and apology to acknowledgement and history was a major achievement of the project.

When I enquired of the video documenter, Madonna Momoh, about what she perceived as aspects of the project that might have needed further development or attention, she observed that the play itself needed a little more explanation with “more research needed about Mami Wata and her spirit”. Of course this aspect about explanation passed me by to a certain extent because I had been privileged to witness and be informed about the project and its ethos from its inception. On reflection it may well be that the project could have benefited from a more sophisticated platform for disseminating the key concepts via a more informative website and more evidence of participative discourse around the issues of the project. This might have given the public more of an insight into the social, political and spiritual dimensions of the work. One could perhaps imagine a story book or more celebratory and detailed programme to accompany the public events. Having said this, the high quality film made in record of this project may well provide such a legacy to be used and have impact over a longer period than the ephemeral aspect of live performance. The film by Madonna Momoh (blackmadonnafilms) is currently available on the worldwide web and I note that it has already been viewed 120 times on the *black madonna films* my space site and has had 43 hits on YouTube. It has highly professional production values and is successful in that it gives useful background information about the history of the slave trade as well as taking the viewer from Greenwich Observatory in London through to behind-the-scenes workshops and discussions leading to the production of the play in the South-West of England.

<http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&VideoID=15741973>

The documentary is available for distribution on DVD but the project is also well represented on You Tube with currently 6 short films as well as the documentary charting aspects of the work. At the time of the evaluation:

sameboatproject cross culture conversations 40 days had been viewed 256 times.

Sameboatproject Appeal 1 had been viewed 200 times.

Cross cultural sea shanty had been viewed 200 times.

Cross cultural conversations at sea had been viewed 131 times.

Sameboat across the English Channel had been viewed 81 times.

Mamiwataatsail had been viewed 36 times.

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=sameboatproject&search=Search



July 2007 (Photo. Persighetti)



A White Goddess and an African Woman on a former Bank building near the Corn Exchange, Bristol (Photo. Persighetti 2007)

In conclusion:

I think the effect on many of those who were directly involved who knew and understood its conception, hopes and desire to do something of real meaning was immense on a very personal level. This was true of the members of the cast, those of us who did the making workshops and the local participating members of the public. That aspect of the project was very extraordinary.

This unique and ambitious project has not ended in that its reverberations will hopefully continue in the memories, memorials and locations of **The Ablution of Slavery**. The proposed sea voyage remains a possibility though at the time of writing certain funding conditions as well as weather conditions are holding that casting away in abeyance. Madonna Momoh says:

I think the legacy would only be completed and reached if Ayo and Martin make the journey around the slave triangle. That would give immense weight to the project and respect.

However, Martin Hubbard and Ayodele Scott have discussed a new ending to the play currently being developed for a conference about “Human Cargo”. This new version suggests another kind of voyage that rather than looking back at the Atlantic route starts to examine the contemporary versions of slavery prevalent here and across the world. (Appendix 7.) Another participant and artist, Maggie Squire contributed to the evaluation by saying:

...I don't think it matters if it happens as a journey in the way it set out to... I think the idea was sufficiently strong that it ...achieved, what it set out to do... it gave voice to acknowledging those who died on the seas in the slave boats and allowed participants to feel they were honouring the neglected past.

At the start of the year, Culture Minister David Lammy gave a keynote speech at the Conference: 'Slavery: Unfinished Business' on Saturday, 19 May 2007 at the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation. He said:

But how do we move on? How do we reframe the legacy of slavery and this period of our history, and reverse a trend of alienation, fear, and despair that is affecting our young in ever greater numbers? How can we use this year of discourse and debate, creative endeavour and commemoration to build a platform on which future generations capitalise?

I see the answers to these pressing questions in three parts:

First, we must tackle the inequality, discrimination and racism that still lives with us today, levelled particularly at people of ethnic minority living in the UK.

Second, we must strive to do more to combat poverty and inequality across the globe, particularly in Africa, which is home to the 23 poorest countries in the world.

And third, we must make every effort to eliminate modern day slavery in whatever form it takes, and wherever it rears its ugly head.

<http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/da/55675>

These human and heartfelt statements and demands rather than party-political dictates, echo the Same Boat enquiry that asked at the outset:

How can we commemorate a heritage of conflict and exploitation that has been central in the making our modern world? Where do we stand with our ancestors' sufferings and cruelties? Should we apportion blame? Should we apologise? Are we all in the same boat? Where is your tribal memory? The sea. The sea has locked them up. www.sameboatproject.com

The project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund was awarded a grant of £38,000 for ***The Ablution of Slavery*** 2007 project. It successfully led to the creation of a series of professionally led cross-cultural workshops and resulting performances to commemorate the bicentenary of the Parliamentary abolition of trans-Atlantic slavery in 1807. These events took place in the South-West harbours of Plymouth, Exeter and Bristol during Summer 2007, using the West African cultural ritual of Sankofa to explore that shared heritage of conflict and the historical roots of the Slave Trade. I have written this evaluation in a manner that I hope evokes and comments objectively upon the aims, aspirations and outcomes of this *ablution*. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped me articulate an overview of the project. Meanwhile Mami Wata is still undergoing sea trials as she drifts in and out with the tides and in the dreams of all who were touched by this project.

Simon Persighetti, 2007

(Lecturer in Theatre, Dartington College of Arts, and a core member of Wrights & Sites and tEXt Festivals.)

APPENDIX to the EVALUATION

Heritage Lottery Funded Project:

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(Sameboat Project Ltd)



Bristol Performance, Mami Wata and the Black Atlantic, July 2007 (Photo. Persighetti)

(Appendix 1.)

In 1788, the Plymouth committee published a leaflet that included a harrowing image of the slave ship *Brookes* with 454 Africans crammed aboard. The image was adapted in London and distributed nationwide, bringing widespread support for the abolitionist movement.



The original Plymouth *Brookes* leaflet. Photo: BRO

(Appendix 2.)

. Church of England apologises for part in slave trade

-08/02/06

The Church of England has voted to do what British Prime Minister Tony Blair has refused to do, and apologise to the descendents of victims of the slave trade.

During an emotional meeting of the Church's 'parliament' in London, Rev Blessant explained the involvement of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in the slave trade.

The organisation owned the Codrington Plantation in Barbados, where slaves had the word "society" branded on their backs with a red-hot iron, he said.

He added that when the emancipation of slaves took place in 1833, compensation was paid not to the slaves but to their owners. ...

...He said: "We were directly responsible for what happened. In the sense of inheriting our history, we can say we owned slaves, we branded slaves, that is why I believe we must actually recognise our history and offer an apology."

The synod passed a motion acknowledging the "dehumanising and shameful" consequences of slavery. It comes ahead of commemorations of the 200th anniversary of the Slave Trade Act of 1807, which will be marked next year.

http://www.eklesia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article_06028slave.shtml

(Appendix 3.)

Mami Wata

by Misty L. Bastian

Mami Wata is a water-spirit, sometimes described as a mermaid figure, who can be found throughout the western coastal regions and into central Africa. Mami Wata is described as having long dark hair, very fair skin and compelling eyes. Although she may appear to her devotees (in dreams and visions) as a beautiful mermaid, complete with tail, she is also said to walk the streets of modern African cities in the guise of a gorgeous but elusive woman. She is interested in all things contemporary: some of her favorite offerings include sweet, imported perfumes, sunglasses and Coca-Cola. Nonetheless, the spirit appears to be related to other water spirits (known in Igbo, a language of southeastern Nigeria, as *ndi mmili*) who have a much longer history on the continent. Mami Wata's colors are red and white. Those she afflicts with visions and temptations, and who experience her as an obsession or an illness, may wear the red of sickness and dangerous heat. Others who have a more positive orientation towards the spirit may show their blessings by wearing white. Most devotees wear a combination of red and white clothing. Mami Wata is also said to have a number of avatars on earth--mortal women who have the same look as the deity and who act as her "daughters." Mami Wata may give wealth to her devotees, her "daughters" or to her (male) spouses, but she is never known to give fertility. Some Igbo stories suggest that the fish under the waters are her children, and that she uses them as firewood.

Mami Wata is sometimes seen as a metaphor for modern African conditions -- having the knowledge of global wealth and the desire for large-scale consumption, but lacking the actual wealth or access to the world's wealth that would enable Africans to participate in that system. A number of Africanist art historians have written about Mami Wata, notably Henry Drewal, as have anthropologists like myself. She is the subject of local poetry, song, paintings, carvings and now film.

http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/mami_wata.html october2007



Moveable Feast (who agreed to co-ordinate and design the workshops and exhibition)

The vital element on all our events is that they are participatory workshops and journeys of discovery absolutely specific to who, when and where - designed anew for each space/time and group.

Creative renewal and Professional Development events for Workshop/ Participatory Artists

These events are gatherings of artists who often work in isolation but have many areas of shared ideas and practice to have time out of the economic necessity of 'the next gig' to experiment, explore and share together. It is about developing practice through practice. These events are typically residential and can be for up to 50 artists but we also run mini-feasts over a day. We provide packs with support materials and articles and in the past we have worked with many themes including making The Museum of the Art of Workshop in three days with 35 artists. These events create new ways to work, fresh ideas, validation for artists, work opportunities, new collaborations, exciting documentation and are bursting with artistic mirth and mayhem.

Training Courses for Emerging Practitioners

We have designed several courses for artists who intend to ply their trade in the participatory arts field. These courses work on development in three areas: leadership skills, the work (content and form) and group process. These are hands-on courses that start from each participant looking at their own motivation and take them through the whole process to running workshops for each other and then 'trial' workshops in an organization.

Imaginative Development Events for Teachers

These whole day events called 'The origins of learning - a creation myth' are an opportunity to play, engage with a range of art forms, learn new skills but most essentially to find expression for that vital spark at the heart of teaching and learning - creativity. This is an opportunity for teachers, regardless of subject or age group, to look at, play with and reflect upon ways to deliver in imaginative forms.

Creativity for Therapists

At the heart of an arts workshop is the entwining of creative and group process. The strength and awareness of one half of this circle magnifies and enhances the other half of the circle. This is an opportunity for a group of therapists to work with a group of artists to increase their creative vocabulary in ways that informs both their individual and group practices. <http://www.themoveablefeast.co.uk/services/options.htm>

(Appendix 5.)

Dr Osita Okagbue (Director of *Mami Wata and the Black Atlantic*)

Dr Osita Okagbue of Goldsmiths College, previously at the University of Plymouth and a specialist in African and Caribbean Theatre, has agreed to direct the workshops and performances.

Dr Osita Okagbue holds a BA, MA and PhD in Drama and Theatre from the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and the University of Leeds respectively. He has taught African Theatre, Cross Cultural Studies in Performance, Performance Theory & Practice at the universities of Nigeria at Nsukka and Plymouth at Exmouth. At Goldsmiths he teaches African Theatre History, Postcolonial Theatre, Culture and Performance, Analytic Vocabularies, and Processes of Theatre-Making. He is the founding President of the African Theatre Association (AfTA) and founding Editor of *African Performance Review (APR)*. He is also an Associate Editor for Routledge's *Theatres of the World Series*, as well as being Editorial Adviser for *Enyo: Journal of African Theatre and Drama* and *Platform* (an e-journal) He is a Trustee/Artistic Director for *Imule Theatre Company*, Crediton, Devon.

<http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/drama/staff/o-okagbue.php>

(Appendix 6.)

Ayodele Scott (Co-writer, Performer and Crew member of *Same Boat*)

Ayo Scott is a professional West African dancer and drummer, experienced in high quality performance and inspirational teaching. Originating from Sierra Leone, he now resides in Devon and tours nationally and internationally both as an individual artist, and with the company he co-founded, Kabudu, which specialises in performing both traditional and contemporary works. He also celebrates the musical culture of West Africa with the renowned group Baka Beyond.

Ayo runs regular dance and drumming workshops, summer and winter schools in Devon, that attract participants from both near and far.

David Oddie (Consultant in development of the play)

David Oddie is an experienced theatre in education practitioner and drama teacher who is currently Senior Lecturer in Drama at The College of St Mark and St John (Marjon), Plymouth. He was founder of Rent a Role at the Barbican Theatre, Plymouth, a TIE company managing a theatre building. From 1996 David established the Barefoot Project, Plymouth's Art Education Agency, wrote a Drama BA programme for Marjon and set up the ARROW (Art: a Resource for Reconciliation Over the World) programme, described by Archbishop Desmond Tutu as "exciting, especially as it is so apt for our time."

(Appendix 7.)

Forced labour affects millions of people around the world. It can be found in every region, in almost all countries and in every kind of economy, according to the UN. It is defined as work which is exacted under the menace of a penalty and undertaken involuntarily. Forced labour can be imposed by the state or private agents and takes different forms, including debt bondage, chattel slavery and prison labour. A growing proportion of forced labourers are victims of human trafficking.

Europe

Trafficking appears to be the main route into forced labour in Europe. While much of the attention has been focused on victims of sexual exploitation, there is growing evidence that many are being trafficked for forced labour in agriculture, domestic service, construction work and sweatshops. Victims of forced labour in Europe come mainly from Asia, former Soviet republics, Eastern Europe and Africa.

BBC NEWS bbc.co.uk

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