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97-32

1997

# National Black Theatre Festival



Jimoh Buraimoh, Artist

## Overview

### International Colloquia: The Black Family On Stage

August 5 - 8, 1997

Adam's Mark - East Tower  
Ballroom B



**The North Carolina Black Repertory Company  
and  
Winston-Salem State University**

**1997 National Black Theatre Festival  
International Colloquia: The Black Family On Stage**

*La famille noire en scène;  
La familia negra de l'enscenario*

**August 5 - 8, 1997**

**Organizers:**

**Larry Leon Hamlin**  
Producer & Artistic Director  
NBTF & NCBRC

**Olasope O. Oyelaran**  
Coordinator of International Programs  
Winston-Salem State University

*Supported by a grant from the North Carolina Humanities Council, a state-based program of The National Endowment for the Humanities. The North Carolina Black Repertory Company is funded in part by the Arts Council of Winston-Salem & Forsyth County and the North Carolina Arts Council Theatre Arts Program.*



# *1997 National Black Theatre Festival*

## International Colloquia: The Black Family On Stage

**August 5- 8, 1997**  
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### Symposium Schedule

Symposium I	Symposium 2	Symposium 3	Symposium IV
<p>Tuesday, August 5<sup>th</sup> 1:30 PM - 4:15 PM</p> <p>Host: <b>Dr. Alvin J. Schexnider</b></p> <p><b>Yvonne Brewster</b>, Chair</p> <p>Keynote Address: <b>August Wilson</b></p> <p><i>Discussions:</i> The Black Family: A framework for evaluative representation. <b>Carol Williams</b>, Speaker</p> <p>Emasculating agencies and the survival of the Black family: Metaphysical strategies in the dramas of Wole Soyinka and August Wilson. <b>Femi Euba</b>, Speaker</p> <p>A Conservative encounter with Africa: Privileging the family dynamic in Trevor Rhone's <i>Old Story Time</i>. <b>Kwame Dawes</b>, Speaker</p>	<p>Wednesday, August 6<sup>th</sup> 10 AM - 12:30 PM</p> <p><b>Ed Bullins</b>, Chair</p> <p><i>Discussions:</i> Freedom as the prodigal sibling-patriarch in Ina-Césaire, Adrian Kennedy, and Eleo Pamare. <b>Ntozake Shange</b>, Speaker</p> <p>The image of the African family in the works Ki-Yi Panafrique theatre company. <b>Were Were Liking</b>, Speaker</p> <p>Yoruba mythology as a model for interpreting <i>Joe Turner's Come and Gone</i>. <b>Nefertiti Burton</b>, Speaker</p> <p>Roles and icons: The first Black Cuban theatre company. <b>Pedro Perez Sarduy</b>, Speaker</p>	<p>Thursday, August 7<sup>th</sup> 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM</p> <p><b>Dr. Elwanda Ingram</b>, Chair</p> <p><i>Discussions:</i> The Black family as core characterization in Bullins' canon. <b>Ed Bullins</b>, Speaker</p> <p>The Black family and the role of the theatre in the New South Africa: a positive factor. <b>Thembi Mtshali</b>, Speaker</p> <p>The Black family on the Brazilian stage: from ritual to theatre. <b>Zeca Ligiero</b>, Speaker</p> <p>Femi Osofisan: Revisionary notes on familial relations. <b>Tejumola Olaniyan</b>, Speaker</p>	<p>Friday, August 8<sup>th</sup> 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM</p> <p><b>Ntozake Shange</b>, Chair</p> <p><i>Discussions:</i> William Richardson's <i>The Chip Woman's Fortune</i>. <b>Nilgun Anadolu Okur</b>, Speaker</p> <p>"Little chilyun... little rosebuds." Rescuing our precious children in twentieth century theatre. <b>Jeryl Prescott</b>, Speaker</p> <p>Identity and Displacement - the South African experience. <b>Fatima Dike</b>, Speaker</p> <p>The unitive notion of life-world: Africana family values and identity in selected plays of Wole Soyinka and August Wilson.</p>



## Acknowledgments

The essence of the African American and African traditional family nurturing can be described as "labor of love." "Love" in this sense does not count the cost of service. The input of many individuals and groups which has made the **1997 National Black Theatre Festival International Colloquia** possible falls into this category of service of inestimable value. The list is too long for this short reckoning.

The cost of the 1997 International Colloquium is again underwritten by the North Carolina Black Repertory Company. This year, however, it is with great pleasure that we acknowledge the strategically supportive grant (#97-32) by the North Carolina Humanities Council which enabled us to extend the scope of participation in the 1997 Colloquium from the point of view of the humanistic disciplines, nationalities and cultures. The North Carolina Humanities Council is a state based program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The surprise support by Quest, the African American Support Group for Sara Lee Direct, provides the much needed additional funds for participants to appreciate among ourselves the challenge of the image of *The Black Family On Stage* in all societies to which that image has become signally attributive. Quest's gesture will certainly turn the eyes of other groups to how to deploy collective resources for optimal effect in pursuit of institutional missions.

The contribution by the Winston-Salem State University Honors Program affirms the emerging awareness of the North Carolina Black Repertory Company as a unique resource not just for training in theatre arts, but also for inculcating cross-cultural awareness in students who will pass through the institution.

Jimoh Buraimoh is acknowledged on every reproduction of the colloquium art work representing *The Black Family On Stage*. The visual impact his work provides cannot be over rated. We do owe Claire Nanton a debt of gratitude not only for the final result of the reproduction of the art work, but also for her entire multifaceted and tireless contribution behind the scenes to put the colloquium planning on course when the rest of us faltered.

Finally, to all of the employees and academic and administrative units of WSSU, and staff of the NCBRC who entertained the organizers' importunate demands while smiling, we say "thank you" for making the 1997 International Colloquium a thing to be proud.



## 1997 National Black Theatre Festival International Colloquium Organizing Committee & Facilitators

**Larry Leon Hamlin** is the founder, producer and artistic director of the national Black Theatre Festival, one of the most historic and culturally significant events in the history of Black theatre and American theatre. He is also the founder, executive and artistic director of the North Carolina Black Repertory Company, the first professional Black theatre resident to the State of North Carolina. Mr. Hamlin received his theatrical training at Brown University under the direction of the late George Houston Bass as a member of Rites and Reason Theatre Company. He received his business education at Johnson & Wales University. Hamlin is a professional actor, director, and playwright. His acting experience includes stage, film and television. He has written four full-length plays and has directed over 120 productions.

**Alvin J. Schexnider**, chancellor of Winston-Salem State University, is a political scientist and widely published scholar of government and politics. A Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, Dr. Schexnider has an extensive record of public service in North Carolina and Virginia. Dr. Schexnider received his undergraduate degree from Grambling State University, and M.A. and Ph.D. at Northwestern University where he held Woodrow Wilson and Ford Foundation fellowships. He is married and is the father of two children.

**Olasope Oyelaran**, co-founder and former chair of the Department of African Languages and Literatures at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, currently teaches in the Department of English and Foreign Languages at Winston-Salem State University and coordinates the

institution's international programs. He is a widely published linguist and scholar of the Yoruba folk tradition in West Africa and in the Diaspora. He is a polyglot, at home in Yoruba, English and French, with scholarly and practical access to three other languages. Oyelaran received his AB in the Classics at Haverford College, Ph.D. in Linguistics (African and Romance languages) at Stanford University, and Diploma in French Applied Linguistics in Paris.

**Yvonne Brewster**, born in Kingston, Jamaica, is a director, educator, and theatre administrator. She has been the chief executive officer and artistic director for the Talawa Theatre Company, drama officer of the Arts Council of England, administrative director of the Jamaican Government Festival Commission. Ms. Brewster received the Woman of Achievement Award (1992) from the Arts Council of Great Britain; BAFTA for Shakespeare Shorts (1997); and the Royal Television Society Award in 1997 for *Romeo and Juliet* (BBC). She is a 1993 recipient of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, an honor which only a very distinguished few ever achieve. Ms. Brewster has directed over 100 plays for the stage in and from various parts of the world over the past three and a half decades. Other directing credits include Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* for BBC Radio 4 and *Shakespeare Shorts* for BBC Education TV. In the film industry, she was production manager for *The Harder They Come*, and production assistant for *My Father Son Son Johnson* and *The Fight Against Slavery*, both for BBC TV. Ms. Brewster is the editor of *Black Plays: Three* and *Black Plays: Two*.



**Dr. Elwanda D. Ingram** is a professor of English at Winston-Salem State University. She teaches courses in African American Literature and Culture, Public Speaking, and Children's Literature. She holds degrees in English from Morgan State University (B.A.), University of Illinois (M.A.), and University of Oregon (Ph.D.). Her special area of interest is African American Literature. Dr. Ingram has lectured widely to church, community, and school groups on topics pertaining to African American Women's Literature and African American Literature and Culture.

**Dr. Linda Kerr Norflett** is the former chair of the national award winning North Carolina Central University Department of Theatre (1975-1995). She is currently the

Director of General Studies, Critical Foundations in Arts and Sciences, and Professor of Theatre at NCCU. She earned the Ph.D. from New York University, M.A. from UNC at Chapel Hill and B.A. from NCCU. A nationally recognized theatre scholar, director, and administrator, Dr. Norflett has received numerous honors for her achievements. She served as Education Coordinator for the 1989, 1991, and 1995 National Black Theatre Festivals, and as the Conference Coordinator, 1989 and 1991, for Black Theatre Network Annual Conferences. At the 1995 NBTF, she founded The Network of Artists for God Conscious Theatre. She is currently enrolled at the Duke University Divinity School and recently became a licensed minister.



## August Wilson United States

### *Keynote Speaker*

**August Wilson** continues to make waves in the theater world. Wilson, "a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, the playwright whose latest Broadway hit, *Seven Guitars*, enters on the murder of a musician has set himself the task of recreating the black experience in each decade of the 20th century. His emotional touchstone is the blues." Wilson's first play, *Ma Rainey* directed by Lloyd Richards in 1984, was his first Broadway play. His next play, *Fences*, starring James Earl Jones, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1987. He resides in Seattle, Washington, where he worked on his second Pulitzer winner, 1990's the *Piano Player*, which is about divisions in a black family. He is currently working on a play set in 1984. He is quoted as saying: "I'm trying to look at what caused the breakdown in the black family to the point where kids started shooting one another."



**Ed Bullins**  
United States  
*The Black Family as Core Characterization  
in Bullins' Canon*

**Abstract:** In Ed Bullins' recent play, *Boy x Man* (1995), the unseen character Jack, is cousin to the protagonist Ernie, and also protagonist of an earlier play, *Clara's Ole Man* (1965). *Boy x Man* is the seventh play of Bullins' *Twentieth Century Cycle of Plays*: *In the Wine Time* (1968), *In New England Winter* (1971), *Duplex* (1970), *The Fabulous Miss Marie* (1971), *Home Boy* (1971), *Daddy* (1977) and of course, *Boy x Man*. All of the plays are bound together through family-blood, extended-relations and associations. However, the familial characterizations impact on a number of works outside of the cycle plays in the Bullins Canon. Namely, in *The Corner* (1968), *Goin'a Buffalo* (1969), *It Has No Choice* (1966), *Michael* (1978), *Pig Pen* (1970), *Snickers* (1985), *A Son, Come Home* (1968), *Steve & Velma* (1978) and *The Taking of Miss Janie* (1975).

In this paper, the role of the Black Family will be traced through an expanding theatrical and literary milieu of more than three decades.

**Bio-Notes:**

Ed Bullins is one of America's foremost playwrights of the twentieth century. After a quarter century of a phenomenally enriching career, strengthening and recreating the American qua (the African American artistic tradition as teacher, playwright and artist) throughout the United States, dominating the New York theatre scene between 1968 and 1982, he was named Professor of Theatre at Northeastern University in 1995. He also serves currently as Acting Director of the institution's prestigious Center for the Arts. Ed Bullins' play *The Taking of Miss Janie* received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best American Play of the 1974-75 season. Three of his plays, *In New England Winter*, *The Fabulous Miss Marie*, and *The Taking of Miss Janie* have each also received an OBIE award (off-Broadway Playwriting Excellence). His *Twentieth Century Cycle of Plays* of which *Boy x Man* (1995) is the seventh promises a glorious laurel to his singular creative sensitivity. Samuel Hay's recently released *Ed Bullins: A Literary Biography* (Wayne State University Press, 1997) remarks, among Ed Bullins' contributions to American theatre, "the creation of a new method of writing which Bullins called 'films for the stage,' motion-filled, improvisational-like snapshots of urban American life and culture." Not surprisingly, Ed Bullins is also a well received novelist, poet and essayist.



**Nefertiti Burton**

United States

*Yoruba Mythology as a Model for  
Interpreting  
Joe Turner's Come and Gone?*

**Abstract:** In each of his plays, and in conversations about his work, August Wilson makes it clear that he sees African Americans as inextricably linked to their African ancestors, not only by blood, but also by culture. Although, on the surface, his work is structured like the traditional well-formed play, he incorporates in all his dramas an African modality-the interplay of the spiritual with the material world. The theme of renewal and regeneration of African Americans by means of reconnecting with African spirituality runs deeply through *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. A close look at its parallels with a specific set of West African religious traditions, those of the Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria, suggests an interpretation of the play on a truly mythic scale.

**Bio-Notes:**

Nefertiti Burton is a theatre artist and educator who has directed for resident, educational and community theater, and for independent film. She currently teaches stage directing at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. In 1996, she directed an Audelco winning production of Carolyne Cole Montgomery's *In a Clean House* at the Theatre Row Theatre in New York. Other credits include *Unfinished Women Cry in No-Man's Land While a Bird Dies in a Gilded Cage* (UNC at Charlotte), *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Hospice*; and *Like Them That Dream*. Ms. Burton holds an M.F.A. in directing from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and studied film as a community fellow at MIT.

**Dame Dandara (Ana Coelho)**

Brazil

*Two-Part Samba Workshop  
Samba: Afro-Brazilian Core  
Performing Art  
The Samba Workshops*

No one who comes to the 1997 National Black Theatre Festival should miss Dandara's two-part Samba Workshop. The workshops will explore samba movement behavior bringing out the theatricality of its traditional African Brazilian characters, such as the street hustler, the baiana, the pin up dancer, and the samba master. On the first day, the dance steps will be taught to the participants together with historic and geographic notions, which will help them to assimilate the cultural meanings of the movements practiced in class. The second day, the movements learned will be used in skits that will portray the groups' visions of the dramas perceived from the samba world

None of the two samba sessions will conflict with any of the sessions of the Colloquium.

**Bio-Notes:**

Dandara is an African-Brazilian performer and writer born in Rio de Janeiro. She is based in Rio. The Forestry Theater of Rio de Janeiro which she founded in 1988 won the recognition award of Rio's City Chamber. Always concerned with researching and preserving African-Brazilian cultural traditions, she has since developed the Samba-Drama Project with her partner Zeca Ligiéro. She lived in New York 1993-1995, during which time she performed at the 1994 Lincoln Center Out Doors Festival, the SOB's, The Symphony Space and The Nuyorican Poets Cafe. She gave a sold out concert at the Washington Church in January 1995, and served as artist in residence with



**Dame Dandara - continued**

the Harvestworks, Inc. to produce her *Urban Forestry Carnival, A Samba Synthesis*. The village named her "Sultra Samba Stylist" and was hailed by *The New Times* critic Jon Pareles. She will present two Samba workshops ancillary to the Colloquium at the 1997 NBTF and illustrations of the African-Brazilian theatre.

Dandara's participation in this Colloquium has been facilitated by The Embassy of Brazil, Washington, DC.

**Kwame Dawes**

Jamaica

**A Conservative Encounter With  
Africa:**

**Privileging the family dynamic in  
Trevor Rhone's *Old Story Time*:  
The Caribbean**

**Abstract:** Trevor Rhone's Jamaicaness is fundamentally one in which his sense of the temporal, the contemporary dominates and takes precedence over a sense of history that embraces Africa. His seminal play *Old Story Time* bears this out through a peculiar paradigm that establishes a hierarchy of thematic ideas that is dominated by the notion of family-the ties of family. It is family and not a sense of blackness or a sense of Africanness that helps a family to overcome the virulence of racism and political piracy. It is family, the overcoming of family fissures and the celebration of familial love that ultimately solves the problems in the world of the characters. History offers information, but history does not bring the kind of self awareness that will ultimately lead to change. Where in Dennis Scott's *An Echo in the Bone*, history is the defining force, the *raison d'être* of the drama and the dynamic that brings meaning and clarity to the present, in Rhone's work, history is preempted by the notions of family.

Thus the play becomes less a drama about race, per se, but a drama about the family and the strength of family, and the manner in which family ties can help to overcome any problems that may exist.

**Bio-Notes:**

Kwame Dawes was born in Ghana but grew up in Jamaica. He taught English at the University of South Carolina at Sumter where he also served as chair of the Division of Arts and Letters. He currently teaches English at the University of South Carolina at Columbia. Kwame is a storyteller, actor, poet, and musician and literary critic. He is widely published and has performed throughout the Caribbean, Europe and both the United States and Canada, including a recent appearance in August Wilson's *A Piano Lesson* staged at the Sumter Little theatre. His plays have been staged in Jamaica, Antigua, and Canada, while his radio plays have been broadcast on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio. Dawes has published five collections of poetry: *Progeny of Air* (1994, Winner of the Forward Poetry prize for Best First Collection, United Kingdom), *Resisting The Anomie* (1995), *Prophets* (1995), *Jack Jacobus* (1996), and *Requiem* (1996). The last is a suite of poems inspired by the illustrations of African American artist Tom Feelings in his landmark book *The Middle Passage: White Ships/Black Cargo*. In 1987, Dawes was made an Honorary Fellow of the University of Iowa's writing program. In 1997, he was appointed as an Associate Fellow of the University of Warwick.



**Fatima Dike**  
**South Africa**  
*Identity and Displacement*

**Abstract:** *The First South African* by Fatima Dike (1979) deals largely with the identity and displacement of an individual in the context of the policies of South Africa under the apartheid regime. It explores the identity crisis imposed on the non-white population of South Africa, particularly the Colored and the Black communities. In the play, "Freda Nomjana" has an affair with a white man and falls pregnant. Austin Nomjana meets and marries Fred right then and she bears him a blond, blue-eyed son who passes for White under the apartheid laws of south Africa. Because the boy is the child of a black mother and a white father, he is classified as a Colored under the race classification act. The same boy grows up in a black township, is baptized, initiated and circumcised in the tradition of his black parents. Here, then, is a man who is White phenotypically, colored because of race classification, and Black at heart. What is this man? Who is this man?

**Bio-Notes:**

Fatima Dike is considered "one of the best-known playwrights in South Africa. She is the author of *The Sacrifice of the Kreli*; *The First South African*; *The Crafty Tortoise* and *Glasshouse*, about cultural displacement. Dike is also an actress and poet and has won many awards for her work. She has been named an Honorary Fellow in Writing by the University of Iowa, and honored by the Chicago Black Arts Celebration. She is based in South Africa, and comes to this Colloquium with the generous assistance of The Embassy of South Africa in Washington, DC.

**Femi Euba**  
**Nigeria/LSU**  
*Emasculating agencies and the survival of the Black family: Metaphysical strategies in Soyinka and Wilson Drama.*

**Abstract:** For the Black in Africa and in the New World, perhaps colonialism and slavery are the two most critical historical experiences that have had and continue to exert a profound impact on cultural development. Each of them has had as objectives the reduction of its subjects to mindless subservience, with a crippling effect on the psyche and on culture.

Both experiences have been sustained by a dehumanizing socio-political order which denies the presence of the Black. Yet Black dramatists have in various ways given expression to their impact on the individual as well as on the family by making a case for the need to come to terms with it and reconstruct both self and culture affirmatively within it. I wish to take the family as a microcosm of society, and explore its treatment as regards the impact of colonialism and slavery in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. I propose a comparative examination of the ritualization of slavery and colonialism by the playwrights. More significantly, I attempt a critical evaluation of the metaphysical approaches which both dramatists offer as survival strategy for the disenfranchised Black family and, by implication, the Black culture.



**Femi Euba - continued**

**Bio-Notes:**

Playwright, director and scholar, Femi Euba teaches at Louisiana State University (LSU) as he has done in universities in Africa and elsewhere in the United States of America. He is the author of *Archetypes, Imprecators and Victims of Fate: Origins and Developments of Satire in Black Drama* (Westport, 1989), the award-winning play *The Gulf* (Longman, 1991) and several other studies in scholarly journals. His directing credits include Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (1995); Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1993); Glissant's *Monsieur Toussaint* (1990); Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1987); and Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1985).

**Jose Ligiéro Coelho (Zeca)**

**Brazil**

***The Black family on Brazilian stage:  
from ritual to theater***

**Abstract:** The Brazilian Black family has been portrayed differently in rituals and the theater. In the rituals of religions such as Candomblé, Macumba, and sometimes, Umbanda, the African heritage is much more perceived - strong ethical concerns and high moral standards are perpetuated through the African mythologies derived from ethnic groups such as the Yoruba, Fon or Bakongo. In ritual performances, the family is important not only in the organization and the maintenance of the tradition but in the internal relationships between worshippers, audience and the African deities and ancestors honored. On the other hand, Brazilian "orthodox" theater has portrayed the Black family in terms of stereotypes forged during the Brazilian colonial times by an imported Portuguese and French theater in which blacks are portrayed as uneducated slaves, perverted, and without any sense of family values. The best example of this theatrical tradition is the play *O Demônio*

*Familiar* (1858), by José de Alencar, which depicts a "devil" slave who brings the master's household all sorts of misunderstanding.

**Bio-Notes:**

Zeca Ligiéro, Brazilian, artist, director and scholar, specializes in Afro-Brazilian culture. He is based in Rio de Janeiro. Founder of the Graduate Theater Department of the University of Rio de Janeiro and of which he was chairperson 1990-92. His publications include *Teatro e Comunidade, Uma Experiencia* (Theater and Community, an Experiment, 1983), *Teatro Infantil de Zeca Ligiéro* (Zeca's Theater for Children), 1986, and *Iniciacao ao Candomblé* (Initiation to Candomblés), 1992. Ligiéro is also the author of the authoritative and seminal essay *Candomblé Is Religion-life-art, in Divine Inspiration* by Phyllis Galembo (University of New Mexico Press, 1993). He has successfully teamed up with the singer, performer and writer, Dandara, to develop the Samba Project in Rio de Janeiro and, since 1991, in New York. Zeca wrote the script and is directing the Musical *Elegy Crossings* with the choreographer Martin Zabgo from the Ivory Coast and Iris Rosa from Indianapolis for the Madame Walker Theater Center in Indianapolis. The performance will premiere in October, 1997. Zeca and Dandara's participation in this Colloquium has been facilitated by The Embassy of Brazil, Washington, DC.



## Thembi Mtshali

### South Africa

#### *The family and the role of the theater in the new South Africa: A positive factor*

**Abstract:** South Africa is in a state of "dramatic" transition from a divided society to a "united" nation in which race no longer serves as a symbol of superiority. The theatre has taken a very important place among instruments of transformation in the struggle for the new order. I will draw from my own personal experiences as a singer, actor, writer and collaborator with persons with whom I have shared triumphs and setbacks in order to discuss the treatment of the black family by the performing arts in the evolutionary experience of society in South Africa.

#### **Bio-Notes:**

Thembi Mtshali, a multi-talented artist, is one South Africa's most celebrated artists: playwright, actress, choreographer, vocalist, comedienne, and television personality. Ms. Mtshali enjoyed a long term collaboration with the renowned South African singer Miriam Makeba with whom she has performed all over the world, including the historic 1991 tour with Dizzy Gillespie. In her own right she earned Nelson Mandela's gratitude at his liberation in 1990 as one of the very few who put art in the service of liberation. Ms. Mtshali's credits are too numerous to enumerate. She starred in May, this year, in the South African musical *Marabi* in African Odyssey at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. Having starred in the long running *Ipi Tombi* (Broadway, 1976), *Once on This Island*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *The Crucible* and *Prophet in Black Sky*, she joined Johannesburg's renowned Market Theatre in 1986, and co-wrote and starred in *Its Eden and Other Places*, *Women of Africa*, and *Have You Seen Zandile?* In 1988 her leading role in

*Mapansula*, Best Film Award winner at the Cannes Film Festival, earned her a nomination as Best Actress at the Vita Awards in South Africa. As one of South Africa's top television artists, Mtshali starred in the long-running sitcom *It's Good, It's Nice*, and guest artist in *African Skies* aired internationally.

Ms. Mtshali comes to the Colloquium courtesy of the Embassy of South Africa, Washington, DC

## Nilgun Anadolu Okur

### Turkey/Univ. of Pennsylvania

#### *William Richardson's The Chip Woman's Fortune*

**Abstract:** Considered one of the best "folk plays" in African American theatre tradition, Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune* was published in 1923. It centers around the Green family's daily struggle for a better living. It manifests the connectedness and caring for one another, the wisdom and providence that emanated from its oldest member, Aunt Nancy, a folk figure, whose lifelong savings eventually provide relief not only for her son but for the Greens as well. Aunt Nancy represents the traditional mother of the African culture, the Black woman with extraordinary strength, loyalty, adoration, patience, commitment and love. Richardson seems to propose that the world can best be set right when people receive their initial nourishment from the family which connects them to the community, the society and the rest of world. Shared generosity and love is the vital ingredient. *The Chip Woman's Fortune* reads as a testimony to the continued strength and survival of the Black family.



*Nilgun Okur - continued*

**Bio-Notes:**

Nilgun Okur teaches African American Drama, literature and history in the Department of African American Studies, Temple University where she is also affiliated with American Studies and Women Studies programs. Two times recipient of Fulbright Awards for teaching and research abroad, she is a founding editor of the International Journal of Black Drama based at Temple University. Nilgun Okur's scholarship embraces the Afrocentric theory and its application without prejudice to her interest in women's rights, Islamic literature and Ottoman History. She is the author of Contemporary African American Theater in addition to numerous studies in scholarly journals.

**Tejumola Olaniyan**

Nigeria/University of Virginia

*Femi Osofisan: Revisionary notes on  
familial relations*

**Abstract:** Femi Osofisan is the leading Nigerian dramatist of the generation immediately following Wole Soyinka, the Nobel laureate. In terms of prolificity and experimental attitude to received forms and theatrical traditions, Osofisan is the third leading dramatist in Africa after Soyinka and Athol Fugard. However, with regard to radical ideological attitude and a passionate commitment to the plight of the lowly and the down trodden, Osofisan is believed to be second to none on the African continent. As part of his radical project, Osofisan revisits repeatedly in his drama the Nigerian family as it is affected by the fortunes and misfortunes of class location, as well as deep-seated cultural changes. It is the purpose of this paper to critically examine the representation of the Nigerian family in selected plays of Osofisan, most especially *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*.

**Bio-Notes:**

Tejumola Olaniyan teaches African, African American and Caribbean literatures and theory at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. He has published widely on Black drama, and is the author of *Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance: the Invention of Cultural Identities in African, African American and Caribbean Dramas* (Oxford University Press, 1995). His works, each on Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott (Caribbean) and Femi Osofisan (Nigerian), should appear any time now.

**Jeryl J. Prescott**

United States/Wake Forest University

*"Little chilyun ... little rosebuds:"*

*Rescuing our precious children in  
twentieth-century theatre*

**Abstract:** This analysis of five domestic dramas delineates the evolution of the Black family's strategies of cultural survival in a hostile America that potentially robs African American children of their innocence, their dreams, and their future. Tragically stranded in a racist environment and abandoned by an enigmatic God, the families in Angelina Weld Grimke's *Rachel* (1916), Langston Hughes' *Mulatto* (1935), Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), George C. Wolfe's *The Last Mama-on-the-Couch* play in the *Colored Museum* (1986), and August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* (1987) suffer emotional and physical wounds that threaten to destroy the lives of the children who inherit the stories of their ancestors' oppression. While Grimke's, Hughes', and Wolfe's characters resort to genocide, patricide, and suicide, Hansberry's and Wilson's characters reject these extreme remedies and propose a healing rather than a destructive method of self-definition, self-consciousness, and self-awareness so that the children may live.



*Jeryl Prescott - continued*

**Bio-Notes:**

Jeryl Prescott teaches as visiting scholar in the Department of English at Wake Forest University where she also serves as an Assistant Dean of the College. A scholar actor with credits with Montage Productions, the North Carolina Black Repertory Company, and the Little Theatre of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Jeryl Prescott's publications and other scholarly activities focus on early American, African American and women's literature.

**Pedro Perez Sarduy**

**Cuba**

*Roles and icons: The first Black Cuban theatre company*

**Abstract:** The end of this millennium throws into question the fictional configuration of nation-states, raising issues of ethnic identity and culture in contested terrain. In Cuban history, the 35 years of revolution included, the race question has been extraordinarily contested, and is integrally linked to the fashioning of a national identity in the context of the divide between the island resident Cuba and the émigré Cuba or Cuba abroad.

This presentation, will focus on two Cuban women, Ms. Elvira Cervera and her disciple, Ms. Flor Amalia-Lugo, whose lives and works have significant bearings on these issues. The impact of the first entirely Cuban musical play *Where is God?* by playwright and actor Flor Amalia-Lugo will be discussed first.. She has also founded her own theatre company significantly named "Teatro Negro Cubano," again the first Black theatre company in Cuba. The second part of of the presentation offers a tribute to Elvira Cervera, now in her seventies, retired after a long career mainly in radio and television. She now devotes all her energies to establishing *Todo en Sepia*, her theatre

scheme of "creolization," a Caribbean key concept which connotes the development of a distinctive culture out of the prolonged encounter of two or more cultures in the case of Cuba, between those who arrived from Africa and those from Spain. *Todo en Sepia* sets as its objective "to break the apartheid that prevents the black actors from taking on roles that are not stereotypes."

**Bio-Notes:**

Pedro Sarduy is an Afro-Cuban poet, writer, journalist and broadcaster resident in London. He is the author of *Surrealidad* (Havana, 1967), and *Cumbite and Other Poems* (Havana, 1987, and New York, 1990) and *Afro-Cuban Voices: On Race, Representation and Identity in 1990's Cuba*-based on interviews on interviews with Afro Cubans living in the island (forthcoming, Ocean Press, 1997); co-editor of *Afro-Cuba: Anthology of Cuban Writing or Race, Politics and Culture* (Melbourne/London, 1993); co-author of the introduction to the anthology *No Longer Invisible/Afro-Latin Americans Today* (London, 1995). Pedro has received several literary awards. He will serve as the Rockefeller Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, 1997-98, the latest in a long list of distinguished appointments which include appointments as Rockefeller Visiting Scholar at the University of Florida at Gainesville (1993) and Writer in Residence, Columbia University, New York (1989).



## Ropo Sekoni

Nigeria/Lincoln, PA.

*The unitive notion of life-world:  
Africana family values and Africana  
identity in selected plays of Wole  
Soyinka and August Wilson*

**Abstract:** This paper examines the reinforcement of African and African American cultural identity in the representation of African extended family and its African American variants in August Wilson's *Fences* and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* and Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* and *The Swamp Dwellers*. The opposition between the feminism of complementary and the feminism of competition is discussed in reference to the distinction between the woman as wife and mother in Wilson's *Fences* and Soyinka's *The Lion*. Furthermore, the paper shows the authors' attempt in *Joe Turner* and *The Swamp Dwellers* to reflect efforts by Africans and African Americans to sustain the tradition of extended-family solidarity in the post-industrial contexts of the twentieth century in which they find themselves. The paper concludes that while the two playwrights expose the problems of survival in a changing world, they create family environments and responses that promote the qualities of Africana family values and Africana identity.

### Bio-Notes:

Ropo Sekoni, a semiotician, teaches Comparative Literature at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, where he also serves as Director of the Center for African Studies. He is the author of *Yoruba Folk Poetics: A Socio-Semiotic Study of Trickster Tales* (Greenwood Press, Westport, 1995) and numerous scholarly studies in highly regarded journals in Africa, Europe, and the United States of America.

## Ntozake Shange

United States

*Freedom as the prodigal sibling-  
patriarch: Ina-Cesaire, Adrian  
Kennedy, and Eleo Pamare*

**Abstract:** This presentation examines freedom as the prodigal sibling-patriarch in Ina-Cesaire's *Fire's Daughters*, Adrian Kennedy's *A Movie Star Has to Be Black or White*, and Eleo Pamare's choreographic exploration *A Horse Named Dancer*.

### Bio-Notes:

One of America's shining stars, Ntozake Shange is an icon of the African American culture which she internalized from her youth and has valorized in her artistic works. Having forded the testy waters of the turbulent sixties in the Bay Area, Northern California, she took New York by storm in 1976 with her innovative, widely acclaimed choreo-poem *For Colored Girls, Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf*. *For Colored Girls* received an OBIE, and was nominated for Tony, Grammy, and Emmy awards. It became a best-seller and won critical acclaim in a television version for PBS. Ms. Shange's next work, *Three Pieces*-three extraordinary plays-*Spell #7, A Photograph; Lovers in Motion*, and *boogie woogie landscapes* integrates poetry, dance and music and evokes powerful images of Black life in America today in all its exuberance and beauty. She further distinguished herself as a poet in her works *Natural Disasters and other Festive Occasions, Nappy Edges, A Daughter's Geography, Ridin the Moon in Texas, The Love Space Demands: A Continuing Saga*, and *I Live in Music*. Her first novel *Sassafras, Cypress and Indigo* was followed by a second, *Betsey Brown*, adapted for the



*Ntozake Shange - continued*

stage with a successful run at the prestigious McCarter Theater in Princeton, New Jersey. Her third novel *Liliane: Resurrection of the Daughter* firmly established her as a major African American woman writer.

**Were Were Liking**

**Côte d'Ivoire**

*The image of the African family in the works of Panafrican Theatre Company*  
**Ki-Yi**

**Abstract:** This paper presents the African family in its various manifestations as they have appeared in our repertoires of performances over the last fifteen years: *Nso Ngond* (1982), *L'amour cent vies* (*Hundred lives of love*, 1984), *Singue Mura* (1990), *La queue du diable* (*The tail of the devil*, 1996), *L'enfant Mbénè* (*Baby Mbénè*, 1997). The presentation depicts in context the extreme African family type as a primordial institution of socialization and acculturation, at one end, and as a parasitic social unit, at the other end. We see between these two extremes several gradations of family types, products of social and historical conditions.

**Bio-Notes:**

Madame Were Were Liking was brought up steeped in the indigenous mysteries of the Bassa people of the Central region of the Cameroon. She is Bassa herself. Primarily an autodidacte, she is a creative genius. As a painter, she has held numerous solo exhibitions in several countries in Africa and all over Europe. As an author, she has 17 published works: fiction, poetry, plays, essay and art books. She was a 1979-85 resident research scholar at the University of Abidjan; founder of Pan African Theatre and Group Ki-Yi dedicated to revalorization and revival of African Arts and cultures. She is the director and producer of twenty plays which have enjoyed successful international tours.

Were Were Liking has been honored by France with the title Chevalier des Arts et Lettres françaises and by Côte d'Ivoire, Officier des Arts et Culture de la Côte d'Ivoire. Winner of numerous international Grand Prix.

**Carol Wilson Williams**

**United States**

*African Family as the Context for*  
**Drama**

**Abstract:** Despite its dispersion and variation, the African Family demonstrates generic functions and cultural continuity. Weaving together family theory, empirical research, literature and contemporary experience, this presentation will provide a perspective for understanding the Black family as both the context and the crucible from which Black drama in its many expressions emerges.

**Bio-Notes:**

Carol Wilson Williams is Associate Commissioner for the Children's Bureau, United States Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC. She is a social work specialist, scholar and policy maker. Dr. Williams has served on the faculties of UCLA, University of Southern California and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In spite of her very demanding role as Associate Commissioner, she continues to teach and write on the family, culture and social policy.







