MAD MEN AND SPECIALISTS

October 9 - 19, 2008
Arthur Miller Theatre
Dept. of Theatre & Drama
Madmen and Specialists

by Wole Soyinka

Setting:
Somewhere in a war torn country

There will be one intermission.

Madmen and Specialists is presented by special arrangement with Susan Steiger, agent for Mr. Soyinka, New York City, New York.

Latecomers will be seated at a suitable break or scene change. As a courtesy to others, please set pagers to silent mode. Cellular phones and electronic watch alarms should be turned off so that will not interrupt the performance. Photography and videotaping of any kind are not permitted due to copyright restrictions. Flash photography endangers performers by causing momentary blindness.
CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

Aafaa .............................................................................................................. Corey Dorris
Cripple............................................................................................................ Joseph Moses
Goyi.................................................................................................................. Seth Moore
Blindman......................................................................................................... Joseph Walker
Si Bero ............................................................................................................. Kelli Rasmus
Iya Mate......................................................................................................... Meredith Stepien
Iya Agba ....................................................................................................... Laura Lapidus
Dr. Bero......................................................................................................... Dylan Saunders
Priest ............................................................................................................... Jonathan Christopher
The Old Man.................................................................................................. Mckean Scheu

DIRECTOR’S NOTES

Somebody asked me recently why I chose to direct Wole Soyinka’s Madmen and Specialists. I quickly responded by “why not?” Wole Soyinka deserves to be produced at the University of Michigan because of the classicism of his craft. Yes! Classicism. And humanism too. Very often African plays are perceived like works presenting the exotic face of African life. So, my friend had thought that this play was no different from that perception. He was convinced, without having read the script, that it portrayed the wild side of African “mad-people” with ritualistic healing ceremonies full of songs and dances, and other wild behaviors. “That’s what African theatre is all about,” he added forgetting the likes of Athol Fuggard, Bernard Dadié, Sony Labou Tansi, Ama Ata Aidoo, and many more whose works expose the contemporaneity of social and political crises in Africa.

Wole Soyinka is a classic. His efforts to theorize and aestheticize, rather humanize, the notions of Yoruba divinities and their confrontation with the living world can be compared to Euripides’. He matches the weaknesses of humans with the traditionally known foibles of the gods. He clearly places any misfortune on the individual’s lack of responsibility and bad choices, and not a result of mistreatment of humans in the hands of the gods. Like this Greek tragedian, Soyinka sees the individual as responsible for all the calamities provoked by selfishness and stupidity. Dictatorial regimes in Africa are similar to any other dictatorial in the world. Wars in Africa have the same devastating consequences on humanity as anywhere in the world.

The challenge in directing a play by any African playwright in a Euro-American environment consists in making the right choices between exoticism and classicism, between local and universal. I chose to direct Madmen and Specialists because of its classicism and universality. A challenge this group of actors embraced with joy and enthusiasm.

— Mbala Nkanga
About the Playwright

Wole Soyinka (Playwright) was born on July 13, 1934, at Abeokuta, near Ibadan in western Nigeria. After preparatory university studies in 1954 at Government College in Ibadan, he continued at the University of Leeds, where, later, in 1973, he took his doctorate. In 1960, he was awarded a Rockefeller bursary and returned to Nigeria to study African drama. At the same time, he taught drama and literature at various universities in Ibadan, Lagos, and Ife. In 1960, he founded the theatre group, “The 1960 Masks” and in 1964, the “Orisun Theatre Company”, in which he has produced his own plays and took part as actor. During the civil war in Nigeria, Soyinka appealed in an article for cease-fire. For this he was arrested in 1967, accused of conspiring with the Biafra rebels, and was held as a political prisoner for 22 months until 1969.

As dramatist, Soyinka links with traditional popular African theatre with its combination of dance, music, and action. He bases his writing on the mythology of his own tribe — the Yoruba — with Ogun, the god of iron and war, at the centre. He wrote his first plays during his time in London, The Swamp Dwellers and The Lion and the Jewel (a light comedy), which were published in 1963. Later, satirical comedies are The Trial of Brother Jero (publ. 1963) with its sequel, Jero’s Metamorphosis (publ. 1973), A Dance of the Forests (publ.1963), Kongi’s Harvest (publ. 1967) and Madmen and Specialists (publ. 1971). Among Soyinka’s serious philosophic plays are The Strong Breed (publ. 1963), The Road (1965) and Death and the King’s Horseman (publ. 1975). In The Bacchae of Euripides (1973), he has rewritten the Bacchae for the African stage and in Opera Wonyosi (publ. 1981), bases himself on John Gay’s Beggar’s Opera and Brecht’s The Threepenny Opera. Soyinka’s latest dramatic works are A Play of Giants (1984) and Requiem for a Futurologist (1985), From Zia, with Love (1992), The Beatification of Area Boy (1995), and King Baabu (publ. 2002).

Soyinka also wrote novels — The Interpreters (1965) and Season of Anomy (1973) — and several volumes of poetry. The latter include Idanre, and Other Poems (1967) and Poems from Prison (1969; republished as A Shuttle in the Crypt, 1972), published together as Early Poems (1998); Mandela’s Earth and Other Poems (1988); and Samarkand and Other Markets I Have Known (2002). The Man Died (1972) is his prose account of his arrest and 22-month imprisonment. Critical works include Myth, Literature, and the African World (1976), Art, Dialogue, and Outrage (1988), The Open Sore of a Continent (1996), and The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness (1999).


**ABOUT THE CAST**

**JONATHAN CHRISTOPHER** *(Priest)* junior, BFA Perf./senior BM Vocal Perf., Winchester, MA/Bermuda  
**COREY DORRIS** *(Aafaa)* junior, BFA Perf./senior, BA African American Studies, Ypsilanti, MI  
**LAURA LAPIDUS** *(Iya Aaga)* junior, BFA Perf., Winnetka, IL  
**SETH MOORE** *(Goyi)* senior, BFA Perf., Larchmont, NY  
**JOSEPH MOSES** *(Cripple)* senior, BFA Perf., Troy, MI  
**KELLI RASMUS** *(Si Bero)* junior, BFA Perf., Houston, TX  
**DYLAN SAUNDERS** *(Dr. Bero)* senior, BFA Perf./BA English, Mill Valley, CA  
**MCKEAN SCHEU** *(The Old Man)* junior, BFA Perf., Lawton, MI  
**MEREDITH STEPIEN** *(Iya Mate)* senior, BFA Perf., Pinckney, MI  
**JOSEPH WALKER** *(Blindman)* senior, BFA Perf., Cambridge, MA

The performers in this production are undergraduate students in the School of Music, Theatre & Dance. The designers are faculty in the Department of Theatre & Drama and guests. Scenery, costumes, properties, sound, and lighting were realized by the students and staff of University Productions, the producing unit of the School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**


**MARY COLE** *(Lighting Designer)* is the lighting designer and technical director for the Dept. of Dance and Ann Arbor Dance Works. UM: Over 200 concerts with the Dept. of Dance including Stravinsky Revisited, Rituals and Reveries, and Dance to the Music. Regional Theatre: Plowshares Theatre Company: award winning productions of Pretty Fire and The Bluest Eyes; Performance Network: 9 Parts of Desire, award winning productions of Exits & Entrances, Dirty Blond and Take Me Out; numerous dance concerts with many of the local dance companies. Other: BS from EMU, master’s work at UM.

**JESSICA HAHN** *(Costume Design)* Assoc. Professor, Dept. of Theatre & Drama. UM: You Never Can Tell, J.B., Playing for Time, The Pajama Game, The Burial at Thebes, The Boys from Syracuse, City of Angels, The Rover, An Arthur Miller Celebration and Guys and Dolls. Regional Theatre: Goodman Theatre; Lyric Opera Center; Northlight Theatre; Court Theatre; Roundabout Theatre, N.Y.; Minneapolis Children’s Theatre Co.; former resident designer: Hubbard St. Dance Co., National Jewish Theatre. Awards: Seven
About the Artists

nominations and three Joseph Jefferson Awards (including one for You Never Can Tell at Court Theatre), Charles MacArthur Award. Other: Member, USAA.

Andrés Holder (Stage Manager), a native of Panama, is a junior BFA candidate in the Dept. of Theatre & Drama studying lighting design and stage management. UM: Stravinsky Revisited (1st ASM), Our Lady of 121st Street (1st ASM), The Who's Tommy (ASM); Basement Arts: Adventures In Mating (SM), Sunday Morning (SM). Regional Theatre: Catch, Cinci Fringe Festival (SM), Don Giovanni, Arbor Opera Theatre (LD).

Justin N. Lang (Scenic Designer) is a senior BFA candidate in the Dept. of Theatre & Drama studying scenic and lighting design. UM: Lighting designer: You Never Can Tell, Two by Fassbinder; asst. lighting design: You Can’t Take It with You; asst. scenic design: The Who’s Tommy. MUSKET: Assassins. Basement Arts: A Few Good Men, Reefer Madness, M Butterfly.

Mbala Nkanga (Director) is an Associate Professor in the Dept. of Theatre & Drama. UM: Jean Genet’s The Balcony, Eugene Ionesco’s Exit the King, Oyamo’s adaptation of the epic of Liyanja. International Theatre: Bernard Dadié’s Béatrice du Congo; Soyinka’s A Dance of the Forests; Réné Kalisky’s Aida Vaincue; Diur Ntumb’s Zaina, which he brought to the stage and screen for Concours Théâtral Interafricain with Radio France-Internationale. Awards: Fulbright scholar, Northwestern University’s Gwendolyn Carter Award. Other: PhD, Northwestern Univ.; MA, Indiana Univ.; BA, Institut National des Arts.

Ai Yumiba (Musician) began her musical career at the age of three. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Japan, a masters degree in Music Education from Murray State University, and another masters degree in Music Education as Professional Development from Oakland University. Yumiba has been teaching music both privately and in group sessions, she currently teaches at TMU Music Studio, Himawari Pre-School, and Piano preparatory division at Oakland University. She recently presented at the ISME 2008, which took place in Italy.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Olamide and Joseph Schlenke.

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