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# DID KWEKU ANANSE EVER HAVE A DAUGHTER?

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CULTURAL NEWS

Saturday, July 14, 2007

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DID KWEKU ANANSE EVER HAVE A DAUGHTER?

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Matters arising:

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Backstage News with Efo Kodjo Mawugbe

In my maiden article last week I made a factual error that was brought to my attention by a very good respectable concerned theatre arts practitioner in the person of Evans Nii Oma Hunter. I had stated in my piece that the first person to direct J.B. Danquah's play "The Third Woman" in Ghana was the late Allen W. W. Tamakloe, I have learnt and added to my store of knowledge, that it was rather the late George Andoh Wilson who first directed it at the then Ridge Park, now Efu Sutherland Children's Park.

As our elders say, "Knowledge is like the baobab tree one mind can not encircle it". Thank you, Nii Oma Hunter for the correction. As for the other issues you raised, I think they are purely matters of differences in points of view, yours and mine.

Now let's turn attention to the matters of the moment: THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA. The backstage of the National theatre is boiling with activities as if it were the bowels of an anthill. I was first attracted by the smoke, which led to the fire in the hearth. Above the fire was a large size akwadaa-gyae-su, manufactured from some aluminium roofing sheets, a leftover from the recent Chinese renovation exercise carried on at the theatre I believe. Around the fire sat actors and actresses playing all manner of roles carrying out such assigned duties as would ensure that whatever it was that was brewing on the fire came out excellent.

A brief chat with Sandy Arkhurst, the Master Brewer, revealed that the group of actors were preparing a love potion for Anansewa in accordance with an age old, well-tested and Standards Board "approved" recipe supplied by Efu Sutherland as stated in THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA.

By the way who is Anansewa? I am told she is a member of Ananse's family and a sister to Brilliant Ntikumah, Big stomach-Furodowhedowhe, Tiny legged-Nnakronwhea and Big Headed-Tikenenkene.

This is news to most students of folklore because throughout folk history Kweku Ananse's family has always consisted Okonore Yaa, the four boys and Ananse himself. There has never been a mention of a daughter in that family. Could it be that Anansewa is Ananse's biological daughter by another woman from a previous marriage that Okonore Yaa isn't aware of? Or could it be that Okonore Yaa had a daughter before getting married to Kweku Ananse? Is Ananse a polygamist? These and many more are the questions that keep going through my mind as I keep watching Efu Sutherland's Marriage of Anansewa being rehearsed at the National Theatre by Abibigromma (NT) as part of the Ghana @ 50 monthly celebration of Ghanaian theatre classics.

I share the view expressed in certain quarters that a non-inclusion of "The Marriage of Anansewa" in the Ghana @ 50 selections would have amounted to an unpardonable aberration that posterity would never forgive this generation.

A jubilee celebration of our freedom from colonialism and the full expression of our cultural identity as a people, would not be complete without a toast to our folklore, hence, I believe, the need to recognize Ananse and Anansegoro.

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Who then is Ananse that we must of necessity celebrate him among our theatre classics?

Efua Sutherland in her foreword to the play published by Sedco Publishing Ltd. Has tried to answer it thus; "Ananse appears to represent a kind of Everyman, artistically exaggerated and distorted to serve society as a medium for self-examination" she goes further to state Ananse has "a penetrating awareness of the nature and psychology of human beings and animals" Above all, he is also made "to mirror in his behaviour fundamental human passions, ambitions and follies as revealed in contemporary situations".

So much for Ananse. What of his daughter Anansewa? Why did Efua Sutherland decide not to use any of Ananse's four sons, but chose their hitherto unknown daughter called Anansewa?

These are some of the questions Sandy Arkhurst and his crop of young and ambitious actors drawn from the School of Performing Arts and National Theatre- Abibigromma would be attempting to answer at the National Theatre next week. Featuring in the production are Delong as the ubiquitous Ananse whilst Vera Boney and Abena Takyi share the role of Anansewa. Also featuring are Agnes Dapaah, Agartha Ofori, Joseph Quao, Jesse Offei Dzifa Sogbe and many up and coming actors and actresses.

From the little I saw of their rehearsals I wish to urge parents to bring their children to watch the full performance at the National Theatre where a paternity test would be conducted by Sandy Arkhurst to determine whether Anansewa is indeed a biological child or step daughter of Ananse. Don't miss it.

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