

GuyFolkFest.org

Celebrating Our Cultural Heritage

Festival of Performing Arts 2007

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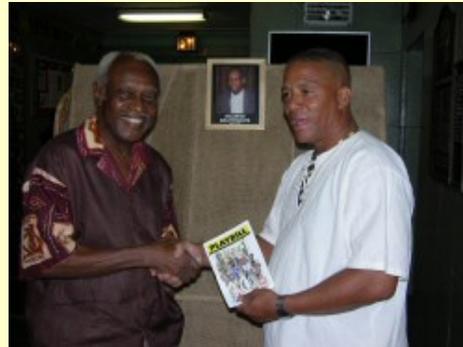
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The Guyana Folk Festival 2007 Festival of Performing Arts "FREEDOM TRAIL"

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THE FEMALE SLAVES DISCUSS THE REVOLT, FROM LEFT ROSE OCTOBER-EDUN (HAJA) JULIET EMANUEL (MOTHER OF ZOISA) AND VERNA WALCOTT-WHITE (ZEWDY). PHOTO: TANGERINE CLARKE

ON STAGE ARE ATTA (WINSTON YARD), RON BOBB-SEMPLE (AKKARA), CYRIL BROWNE (CUFFY) AND HILTON HEMERDING (ACCABRE) AS THEY PLAN A REVOLT ON THE CANJE RIVER BANK IN FREEDOM TRAIL PHOTO: TANGERINE CLARKE



The cast of Standpipe and Mayor of Susanburg



President Malcolm Hall chats with a patron after the shows

A GUYANA DRAMATIC CORE PRODUCTION

FRANCIS QUAMINA FARRIER BRINGS 1763 SLAVE REBELLION IN

GUYANA TO LIFE IN RIVETING "FREEDOM TRAIL" PRODUCTION

by *Tangerine Clarke*

The audience was riveted by a stellar cast of actors who brought to life the history of slavery - the 1763 Slave Rebellion in Guyana, in *Freedom Trail* by Francis Quamina Farrier. This playwright brilliantly captured the fortitude of the slaves back then in their quest for freedom, to acknowledge the 200th year of the abolition of slavery, and to open the Guyana Folk Festival Performing Arts Festival last Saturday.

The scene was set on a slave plantation on the banks of the Canje River in rural Berbice, where Cuffy (Cyril Brown) a vociferous house slave was chosen as governor to plan an insurrection. But during his struggle for freedom from the slave master, he also had to face a rebellious fellow slave named Atta (Winston Yard) who was intent on leading his own battle.

Zoisa (George Dahari) and Baube (Cleveland John) were powerful in their portrayal of the young couple born into slavery, and whose child also became a slave after the uprising.

In a commanding performance, Ron Bobb-Semple, no stranger to the stage, was resonant in his role as Akkara, as he asked in song, "where is the freedom I long for, this freedom burns inside me, the longing that I must be free" The African drumming in the background and the singing and dancing of cast members were reminiscent of the enslaved Africans who sought comfort in these art forms during their determination to be free.

Dramatist, Francis Quamina Farrier, explained that this play traces the history of Guyana where enslaved Africans, created the opportunity to strike the first blow for freedom".

Noting that the play is relative today, Farrier said "we hear the young people singing Bobb Marley's song that says 'rid yourself of mental slavery', so you have the physical, and the mental freedom, and in this case, it is a bit of both, because the enslaved Africans wanted the physical, to build on their mental freedom they had already established".

"So whether they came from Africa, or they were born in the new world, they already had this idea of freedom, which was the cry that is still relative today".

He said writing *Freedom Trail* necessitated quite a lot of research, pointing out that the letter that was dictated to Carbon (Bonny Tsoi-A-Ho) by Cuffy in the play, was the exact text that was written back in 1763.

Freedom isn't free you always have to work for freedom because if you let up for one moment, one would find one's self being re-enslaved. And this year, as we commemorate the end of the slave in African captive, we must reflect, on why this play is appropriate, he added.

As the director of *Freedom Trail*, Maurice Braithwaite brought a wealth of knowledge to the stage, having played Cuffy at theatre Guild Playhouse in Guyana in 1983.

"I thought this was the perfect time to introduce the play to the New York stage, so I invited Francis to extend his writing to create roles for women who were critical to the slave rebellion.

I enjoyed directing this play especially at this time, since it is a part of the history of Guyana that kids do not learn in school. Adding, "that is why we encourage parents to bring out their children to see *Freedom Trail*" says MoBraf as he is fondly known.

The remaining cast must be applauded for their exceptional performances that were executed with rumination befitting the characters. They are Austin Thompson, as (Goussari, Cannon rose Kearns, as (Miss George), Claud Leandro as (Rose October-Edun as (Haja), Verna Walcott-White, as (Zewdy), Juliet Emanuel, as (Mother of Zoisa), and Hilton Hemerding as (Accabre). Malcolm Hall performed the spirited beating of the drums.

The young cast members included; Shannice as (Bintu) Shanika as (Hawa), and Roshaeana as (child).

Performances**SATURDAY AUGUST 4, 2007****SUNDAY, AUGUST 5, 2007****SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 2007****SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 2007**

(SATURDAYS - 7.00 p.m; SUNDAYS - 6.00 P.M.)

ADULTS - \$20.00 YOUTH - \$10.00

**MEYER LEVIN PERFORMING ARTS SCHOOL,
RALPH AVENUE, BROOKLYN, NY**

In 1763, in the Dutch colony of Berbice, on the Atlantic Coast of South America, Cuffy, an enslaved African, organised the greatest slave revolt of that era, to fight for freedom and to establish an orderly African country outside of Africa.

This is the setting for the play **FREEDOM TRAIL**, written by prize-winning Guyanese playwright, Francis Quamina Farrier, who also wrote Guyana's first ever Radio Soap Operas; *The Tides of Susanburg*, and *The Girl from Susanburg*.

Directed by veteran actor Maurice Braithwaite, who played the villain Mentore in the Susanburg series, **FREEDOM TRAIL** will feature some of the most talented actors, dancers and drummers in the tri-state area. A production which will be a fine example of edutainment - a positive combination of education and entertainment, suitable not only for Guyanese, but our Caribbean/American friends.

This production is in commemoration of the bicentennial of the abolition of the trade in African captives.

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