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Editorial

Obituary: Professor John Conteh-Morgan - (July 31 1948 - March 3 2008)

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It has just come to our notice the death on March 3, 2008 of our dear colleague and friend, Professor John Conteh-Morgan, of the Department of African-American and African Studies and Department of French and Italian at Ohio State University. For all those who knew him or have read his many scholarly works on African drama and theatre, they will agree that with John's death, the discipline of African theatre and studies has lost one its shining and kind lights. Professor Conteh-Morgan's contributions, especially his untiring effort to bridge the colonially inherited division between Anglophone and Francophone drama and theatre scholarship and practices, will sorely be missed. But his memory and contribution to African and African Diaspora scholarship will live on in books such as the forthcoming *The Original Explosion that Created Worlds: Essays on the Art and Writings of Werewere Liking* co-edited with Irène Assiba d'Almeida (Amsterdam and Atlanta): Rodopi; *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment* by Louis Sala-Molins which he translated and wrote an Introduction to (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); *African Drama and Performance*, co-edited with Tejumola Olaniyan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); *The Struggle for Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Culture, and Democracy in Africa* (translated by him and a Preface by Anthony Kwame Appiah (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002); *The Postcolonial Condition of African Literature* (co-edited with Dan Gover and Jane Bryce (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2002); *Theatre and Drama in Francophone Africa: A Critical Introduction* (London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, Second edition, Cambridge University Press, 2007). As well as his books, John wrote numerous articles on African and African Diasporic literature, theatre and performance. Professor Conteh-Morgan was the editor of *Research in African Literatures*, Associate Editor *African Theatre*, as well being a contributing editor to the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*

(2003). He has held fellowships at the University of Leeds (Commonwealth Fellowship) and the W.E.B Du Bois Fellowship at Harvard University.

It was at Leeds in 1987-8 academic year that I met John and his lovely family when I was studying for a doctorate under Professor Martin Banham; it was Martin who introduced us to each other. However, what I remember most of that year he spent in Leeds was his performance of the role of the Priest in Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* at the Workshop Theatre which was directed by Bartlett Sher, who at was doing the Leeds MA African Theatre. The cast for the production included myself as Old Man (Eman's Father), Maishe Maponya (the South African playwright) who played Eman; Professor Ciarunji Chesaina (formerly Kenyan Ambassador to South Africa who was studying for her doctorate as well) was Omae; Professor Chimay Anumba (a Nigerian friend and housemate of mine who was also a doctorate student in Computer Aided Design in the Engineering Faculty) played the priest's assistant; and William Addo (Ghanaian actor and theatre director for stage and television who was also doing the African Theatre Masters) played Ifada (the Idiot). Thus, John's immersion and love for African Theatre was not just theoretical, for him, it was also a practical love affair as was shown by his understated but accomplished performance of his character.

Ever kind and considerate, I had desperately contacted John by email in June last year for help with finding someone to contribute an essay on African-American Theatre for a Diaspora volume of African Theatre which I am currently guest-editing, and he immediately came back to me with 'Oh, I'll write one for you. When do you want it?'. Unfortunately, he was not able to send me this essay before news of his passing reached me. He will surely be missed by the whole of African, African-American and African-Caribbean theatre community. In recognition of John's immense contribution to the study of African and African Diaspora literature, theatre and performance studies this volume of African Performance Review is dedicated to his memory.