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K.W. DEXTER LYNDERSAY: AN OBITUARY TRIBUTE

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K.W. Dexter Lyndersay, a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, was born on April 15, 1932 and he died on December 18, 2006, living vitally to the ripe age of seventy-four. He had his primary school education at Tranquillity Boy's Intermediate and his secondary school education at Queen's Royal College, both in Trinidad. Mr. Lyndersay graduated from the Kenneth Sawyer Goodman School of Drama at the Art Institute of Chicago with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in 1964, and he obtained the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) at the Yale School of Drama, Yale University, U.S.A., in 1965. His MFA thesis was entitled "A Creative Arts Centre for Trinidad and Tobago." In addition to his BFA and MFA degrees, he also enrolled for the Certificate programme in Television at the Institute of Music, Dance and Theatre in Brussels, Belgium, in 1970. Dexter Lyndersay was an academic editor for the Caribbean Entry to 'The Americas' volume of Don Rubin's World Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Theatre, a 1995 publication of the International Theatre Institute (I.T.I.). He also served as Copy Editor for Dr Rhoda Reddock's edited book, The Creolization of Minorities in the Caribbean, a work published by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), University of the West Indies, Trinidad, in 1995.

Essentially a technical theatre director and theatre technologist, he used his initial training as a theatre technician intelligently and he broadened his vision to embrace the fields of playwriting/play adaptation, directing and acting (which he always enjoyed, although he did not have much time for it, since he was constantly called upon to render his assistance in the crucial areas of production). Among his playwriting/play adapting and directorial credits are: "Mr. Three," adapted at Ibadan in 1971 from a novel of the same title by William Butler, "After One Time _ _ _ A Trinidad Wedding," which he wrote to celebrate his marriage to Danielle Moquette (later Dani Lyndersay) in Ibadan in 1972, "Mai Idris Alauma - 16th. Century African Warrior-King," which he wrote using available historical sources and directed in Kano and Maiduguri in Nigeria

in 1973, Shaihu Umar (one of the highlights of his writing/production career) was adapted, with Umaru Ladan, from a novel of the same title by the former Nigerian Prime Minister, Head of State, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The Hausa language version of the adaptation was written by Umar Ladan who edited it for the Northern Nigerian Publishing Company, Zaria, Nigeria in 1974; the English version with Production Notes was largely written and edited by Dexter Lyndersay for Longman, London in 1975. It is a matter of significance that the Longman Shaihu Umar was a set-text for the West African School Certificate (WASC) Literature – in – English syllabus for 1988/89/90. Other plays adapted or written by Dexter Lyndersay are “Kolera Kolej,” adapted by Femi Osofisan and Dexter Lyndersay from the former’s novel of the same title, and staged at Ibadan in 1975, at Calabar in 1978 and in Trinidad in 1988; The Successor, written in collaboration with Okon Ekanem and Imaikop S. Orok and staged at Calabar in 1976; “Astray in the Mountain,” an original Christmas play for children written by Dexter Lyndersay and staged at Uyo in 1983.

The following full-length children’s plays were written in collaboration with his wife, Dani Lyndersay: “Space Trek,” written and staged at Ibadan in 1969, “The Wizard of Oz,” adapted from Frank Baum, and staged at Ibadan in 1970, “The Hobbit,” adapted from J.R. Tolkein and staged at Ibadan in 1971; “Ruwan Bagaja (The Water of Cure),” adapted from Alhaji Abubakar Imam’s work and staged in Kano in 1972, “Adamu and his Beautiful Wife,” with school children writers, music composers, a musical adapted from Adamu da Kyakyawar Amayar Tasa, a Hausa folktale, staged in Hausa in Kano in 1974, and staged in English, based on a translation by Abdulkarim Mohammed Abdullahi, in Calabar in 1979. Dexter Lyndersay was co-playwright/director with Dani Lyndersay and members of Rebirth House in the production of “Blocks,” a one-act play on Drug/Alcohol Demand Reduction, to launch Government Substance Abuse Prevention Week in Trinidad and Tobago in 1991.

Apart from his work in the combined fields of playwriting/play adaptation and production, he was also director of a good number of full-length plays and one-act plays. These include his stage adaptation of C.L.R. James’s The Black Jacobins, which had its world premiere at the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre in 1967, Aar? Akogun, a Nigerian adaptation of William of Shakespeare’s Macbeth, which he jointly adapted with the Nigerian playwright, Wale Ogunyemi, with whom he co-directed the adaptation for the University of Ibadan in 1968; The Blacks by Jean Genet which he single-handedly directed for the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre stage in 1975. The following year he directed the premiere production of Samson O. Amali’s Onugbo M’loko, which he revised and re-staged as a dance drama at the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre. At the University of Calabar in 1977 he directed Bertolt Brecht’s A Man’s a Man, which he revised for its African premiere production, substituting the Army for the Liberation of the Peoples of Africa (ALPA) for the Army of

the British Empire. In 1981 he directed once again an adaptation of William Shakespeare's Macbeth, with which he was particularly creative in the roles of the three Witches and Hecate which he built from the local lore of the Efik, the Ibibio and the Annang of South-Eastern Nigeria. In September 1985 he directed Agbo Sikuade's "Egun Lapampa," which was produced by CORNUCOPIA in collaboration with the Nigerian Federal Department of Culture/Archives at the National Arts Theatre in Lagos, Nigeria.

Among the one-act plays which Dexter Lyndersay gave deft direction are the following: Lindsay Eseoghene Barrett's And After This We Heard of Fire, Cecily Waite – Smith's Africa Slingshot, Stanley French's Ballad of a Man and a Dog, Errol Hill's Dance Bongo, Freddie Kissoon's Zingay, Neville Labastide's One for the Road, Tewfik al – Hakim's Not a Thing out of Place, Ogonna Agu's "House of Death," Kole Omotoso's "The Golden Curse," which was revised and published as The Curse, Edward Albee's The American Dream and Ed Bullins' A Son Come Home. He compiled two sets of excerpts for staged dramatic readings; in 1976, "The Literature of Black America," consisting of excerpts from the genres of drama, poetry and prose, was specially prepared by Lyndersay for the African American History Week and staged at USIA Lagos and Ibadan. In 1982 he did a compilation of multi-ethnic poetry from Africa, America and the Caribbean which he staged in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada and which he entitled "Black: From Womb to Tomb." A modified version of this compilation was staged at the University of Cross River State (now University of Uyo) in 1985. He spent the larger part of his adult life as technical director and all-round theatre teacher, scholar and theatre trainer in Nigeria, and in particular in four Nigerian Universities, viz., the University of Ibadan (1966-1972, 1974-1976), Ahmadu Bello University (at its Kano Centre for Nigerian Cultural Studies base) (1972-1974), University of Calabar, whose Department of Theatre Arts he founded and led (1976-1982) and the University of Cross River State, now University of Uyo (1982-1983).

In addition to his creative writings, Dexter Lyndersay also took time off to do some purely academic writing. He wrote "Look to the Ladies-African Witches as Shakespeare's Weird Sisters (Macbeth): Two Versions of Shakespeare's play, one with witches according to Yorubaland, Southwest Nigeria, the other with witches according to Calabar, Southeast Nigeria." This was published in On-Stage Studies, Journal of the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, University of Colorado, No. 7, Fall 1983. In 1984 Dexter Lyndersay wrote another academic article based on his directorial work, "Performing Jean Genet's The Blacks in Nigeria (Directing the African Premiere)." This was commissioned and accepted by Recherche Pédagogie et Culture, Audecam, Paris, France. His 1985 article, "Text and Sub-text-I: Ogonna Agu's House of Death was accepted for publication by KIABARA, Journal of the Humanities, University of Port Harcourt. Another essay entitled "A Contradiction within a Paradox: Problems in Preparing a Revision of Bertolt Brecht's A Man's a Man in the Context of an

African Liberation Army” was published in 1988 in Comparative Literature and Foreign Languages in Africa, a Festschrift for William Feuser edited by ‘Tunde Okanlawon of the University of Port Harcourt. In 1992 he wrote another article, “Aspects of Performance Environments in Nigeria,” which was commissioned and accepted for Modern African Drama and Theatre jointly edited by James Amankulor and Carl R. Mueller. In 1997 his essay, “Theatre Architecture in Nigeria” was commissioned and accepted for the Nigeria Entry in Don Rubin’s World Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Theatre – Africa, a work in a series sponsored by the International Theatre Institute (I.T.I.).

In the 1990s and in the early years of the 2000 decade Dexter Lyndersay lived and worked in the West Indies and was based in Trinidad/Tobago where he was Director of the National Theatre for some years. In the last eighteen years of his life he was very active in the educational drama and theatre movement of the West Indies and he helped in the formulation of theatre-in-education syllabuses. He was also active in the Theatre-in-Education (TIE) schools performances. Among his productions in this sector a few may be mentioned: Wole Soyinka’s The Swamp Dwellers which he staged in 1992, Trevor Rhone’s Old story Time, which he produced in 1991, A Brighter Sun” which he adapted from Samuel Selvon’s novel and staged in 1997, “The Day the World Almost Came to an End,” adapted from Crayton’s short story and staged in 1998, “Bella Makes Life,” an adaptation of Lorna Goodison’s short story, staged in 1998, “Green Days by the River,” adapted from Michael Anthony’s novel and staged in 2005, Henry V by William Shakespeare staged in 1992, Poems from Collections: “Facing the Sea,” staged in 1992/93, and “Sunsong Tide Rising,” staged in 1998/99.

Lyndersay was undoubtedly an all-round man of the theatre and a connoisseur of the arts. He acted in a good number of productions – as Tajomaru, the Bandit in F. & M. Kanin’s Rashomon staged at the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre in 1969, Eddie, the Butler in Slawimir Mrozek’s Tango, also at the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre in 1970, Aweri Eleven in the film version of Wole Soyinka’s Kongi’s Harvest directed by the famous African American actor and director, Ossie Davis and Wole Soyinka and produced by Calpenny (Nigeria) Films.

Dexter Lyndersay was at different times a voice to be reckoned with in media arts. He was co-creator, director and host, with Dani Lyndersay, of Children’s Theatre Time, a weekly half – hour series totalling twenty-six episodes for Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in 1971/72 and a set of thirteen episodes for Radio – Television Kaduna (RTK) in 1973. As radio host, Lyndersay was creator/comperer for NOW YOU HAS-JAZZ, first Trinidad & Tobago Jazz programme for Radio Trinidad as far back as in 1956, over five decades ago, He was also radio host and Creator/ Comperer of DEXTER’S DECK, a Jazz programme prepared for and broadcast on Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNBS), Ibadan, Nigeria in 1966. As Freelance BBC Radio Interviewer, Lyndersay compered TODAY, with Jack

de Mannio and CARIBBEAN MAGAZINE in London in 1966 and 1967. Lyndersay was also Creator/Host in 1972/73 of a Radio Playwriting Demonstration Course, 20 programmes in English, and, with Umaru Ladan as Host, 6 programmes in Hausa. This course, which spread over two quarters of the 1972/73 academic session, was specially prepared for Ahmadu Bello University (Zaria) Educational Extension Services, even though the A.B.U Performing Arts programme was then domiciled in Kano.

Dexter Lyndersay was, among his other attributes, a serious-minded and careful photographer as far back as the 1950s and 1960s and he produced Jazz, Folk, Choral and Calypso Record Jacket Covers and Liner Notes. From 1962 to 1965 Lyndersay was Theatre Photographer for the Art Institute of Chicago (1962-64) and for Yale University (1964-65). Regarding the latter, Lyndersay produced the Yale University Drama School Brochure Cover Photograph based on the school façade.

Among his other achievements Lyndersay was often appointed as Judge for artistic and cultural competitions and festivals, only a few of which will be mentioned here. In 1991 he was Chief Judge for a playwriting competition, sponsored by T&T National Petroleum Marketing Company, for the National Drama Association of Trinidad and Tobago (NDATT). Also in 1991 he was one of the Judges for Playwriting and Short Story competitions for Trinidad & Tobago Unified Teacher's Association (TTUTA). In 1995 he was one of the Judges for T&T Best Village Finals in the Concert Category in Trinidad. Also in 1965 he was Chief Judge in Barbados for the T&T Secondary School Drama Festival. In 2004 (to cite a more recent example), Lyndersay was Overseas Judge for the Speech and Drama Finals of the National Independence Festival of Creative Arts (NIFCA) sponsored by the Barbados National Cultural Foundation.

Dexter Lyndersay, Arts Director of Theatre Arts, a professorial position with emphasis on creativity and artistic output, was Consultant for several Theatre Architecture/ Lighting Layout Projects on behalf of the client in each case: for the Creative Arts Centre in Jamaica (Architect Hendrickse), University of the West Indies, Mona in 1965, two theatres, one of which was proscenium and the other, arena (in a reserved portion of lobby space; for Trinidad, he was Consultant for Naparima Bowl I (Architect Barcant) in 1965 and in 1989 for Naparima Bowl II, Outdoor and Indoor Theatres – back – to – back: he was Stage Lighting Layout Designer and Architectural Consultant. In 1990 for the National Festival Centre, for Uriah Butler H/way, Lyndersay did a Design & Planning Brief for the National Architects' Competition – 3 Theatres (Music, Drama & Steelband) with Works Department Architects and Consultants, led by Architect Ken Dublin. In 1992 he was Director of Venues and Infrastructure for the famous festival, Carifesta V, and in 1999 was Theatre Architecture/Lighting Layout Consultant for the Performing Arts Theatre, Dr. Joao Havelange Centre of Excellence.

In Nigeria, where Dexter Lyndersay's contributions have been most notable and where he spent twenty years (1966-1985) of his mature career years, he was Consultant at different times to seven University Theatres and four State Theatres: viz., the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre, where he re-organized the Stage Lighting Layout in 1966, the Western State (later Oyo State) Cultural Centre, where the present writer, as Chairman of the Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture, invited Lyndersay and other experts in theatre architecture, theatre technology and theatre design to advise, in a Consultancy capacity, during the 1977-1983 period; Abdullahi Bayero University, Kano (B.U.K.), where Lyndersay gave consultancy advice to Kano State architects and made an input in the erection of two theatres – indoor and outdoor (back – to – back)-in 1974; University of Lagos, Lagos State, where he served as Consultant to Architect Griffin & Interplan Associates in Lagos, Nigeria and Rome, Italy in 1973. Two theatres emerged from this collaboration: a 2,000-seat theatre and a 510-seat theatre.

For the Borno State Ministry of Culture Zoo Outdoor Theatre, Lyndersay was a Consultant to the Works Architect (Office & Site) in 1973. Also in the same year he was a Consultant to the North-Western (now Sokoto) State Ministry of Culture and he was a Consultant to the Works Architect (Office & Site), and they built a 2,000 – seat theatre for the State.

For the University of Calabar, which was his main base during his years of pioneer Headship of its Department of Theatre Arts, he was Consultant to Architect Asuquo for its 2,000 – seat theatre from the Drawing Board. Lyndersay was Audience Seating and Stage Lighting Layout Designer for the conversion of three University spaces into theatre venues, such as,

The Assembly Hall (while the Main Theatre was being built),

The Theatre Arts Department Courtyard which was converted to a 'Black-Box' Theatre,

The Outdoor Garden Theatre on the grass near the Theatre Arts Department Building.

Lyndersay was Designer (including custom adaptations from extant drawings) and Construction Supervisor for portable, demountable, modular wooden stages and bleachers & sets of graded, collapsible platforms to facilitate travelling theatre activity. For Lagos State University, Badagry, Lyndersay prepared drawings for the reorganization of existing theatre spaces; he did a design (with basic sketches) for a 'black box' theatre with its administration spaces. He designed a four-year Theatre Arts Curriculum with a Stage Lighting Course Description.

With the initial success at Ibadan in the 1966-1972 period and the follow-up successes at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria at its performing arts base in Kano (1972-1974), he made an impact on the technical theatre, scenery and lighting design and execution in several university theatres and state theatres in Nigeria. In sum, he was technical director and/or

scenery/lighting designer and executant for over 250 stage productions in several Nigerian towns and cities during a total of twenty-one academic years (1966-1987). During this period Dexter Lyndersay established himself not only as a trained and gifted theatre technician/technologist/designer, but also as an educator and administrator at the University of Ibadan, Ahmadu Bello University (Kano Campus), University of Calabar and University of Cross River State (now University of Uyo), and he developed and taught a variety of courses including Theatre Arts Theory/ Practice, Technical Theatre (Stage Lighting and Scenery Construction), Theatre Forms, Directing/Writing for Stage/Radio/Television/Film, Stage Management, Theatre Architecture, Functional Design, Theatre/Studio Administration, and Introduction to Drama Criticism. Lyndersay was the Acting Director of the School of Drama (now Department of Theatre Arts), University of Ibadan from 1967 to 1969; he was a Senior Research Fellow Drama at the Centre for Nigerian Cultural Studies, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Kano from 1972 to 1974. He returned to the University of Ibadan as Senior Arts Fellow for two academic sessions, teaching a variety of courses and serving as Project Director for the reorganized University of Ibadan semi-professional Performing Arts Company, the Unibadan Masques (1974-1976). He was invited by the Vice-Chancellor, University of Calabar, Professor E.A. Ayandele, in 1976 to serve as Arts Director and founding Head for a new Department of Theatre Arts, a position which he occupied from 1976 to 1982. He continued to serve as Arts Director at Calabar until he moved over to the University of Cross River State (now University of Uyo) to do more pioneer work. At Calabar, Lyndersay was not only the Head of the Department of Theatre Arts; he was also the Artistic Director of the Calabar University Theatre (CUT), which he founded and developed, hiring dancers, musicians, drummers and a seven – piece modern musical band to augment regular student actors and dancers. CUT had the honour of staging two Command Performances for Nigerian Heads of State.

It may at this juncture be necessary to point out that Dexter Lyndersay's artistic career did not begin in Nigeria. He had, as a young man, made some impact on the artistic and cultural life of Trinidad during the 1950s and 1960s. For example, he was Dancer/Stage Manager/Property Master for Beryl McBurnie's Little Carib Theatre from 1953 to 1961. He was Art Director for Liner Notes and Photographs, RCA Record Jackets from 1958 to 1961, and in 1961 he was RCA Artists Celebrity Concert Director for Managing Director Leslie Lucky-Samaroo. From 1958 to 1961 he was Weekly Columnist in the field of Jazz/Popular Music for The Nation under the Editorship of the famous C.L.R. James. For a period of eleven years, from 1950 to 1961, he was a Civil Servant in the Ministry of Education and Culture, his last duty post being in the Culture Division. Among other duties he was "Theme Concert" Director at Queen's Hall for Conference Delegates. In 1965 he served briefly as Technical Theatre Tutor for the

University of the West Indies Extra-Mural Unit (now known as School of Continuing Studies).

Since his return to his native home in Trinidad in 1988 he held a variety of leadership and pioneering posts. From 1988 to 1991 he was Director of Culture in the Division of Culture, Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Creative Arts. One of his main achievements during his tenure was a major re-organization of Best Village in 1989. From 1991 to 1992 he was Project Designer/Director of Youth Crossroads, a people – oriented programme (POP) using drama techniques for problem – solving for 12 – 18 year-olds, after an attempted *coup d' état* in 1990. In 1992 he served as Drama Techniques Workshop Leader for YTEPP Tutors' Training Course.

All through his richly endowed and successful career Dexter Lyndersay was indeed an official cultural representative for Trinidad and Tobago at home and abroad. In the United Kingdom during the Commonwealth Arts Festival in London/ Croydon / Glasgow in 1965, he was Stage Manager/Technical Director for the Trinidad and Tobago entry which was Man Better Man by the late Trinidadian playwright/academic, Errol Hill.

In Senegal, West Africa, Lyndersay was very active at the First World Festival 'des Arts Negres' in 1966. He was Technical Director and Lighting Designer to the Nigeria contingent for Wole Soyinka's Kongi's Harvest and for Geoffrey Axworthy/Demas Nwoko's production of a stage adaptation of Nkem Nwankwo's novel, Danda, which was made into a dance – drama, and I.K. Dairo's Highlife Band. For the same World Festival of Black Arts Lyndersay was appointed Artistic Director for the Trinidad and Tobago contingent by His Excellency Reginald Dumas, then Trinidad & Tobago Ambassador to Ethiopia, and he superintended Rudolph Charles' West Indian Tobacco Desperadoes Steelband, Julia Edwards' Dance Troupe, The Mighty Terror (translations into French by Ambassador Dumas), and Calypso band with Charles at the piano, George Goddard, then president, Pan Trinbago, John Cupid, MP David Pitt.

Also at the 1966 Dakar World Festival Lyndersay was appointed Stage Lighting Designer, through USA and UK Ambassadors' requests, for Duke Ellington and his Orchestra (USA) and for two UK plays: Wind Versus Polygamy by Obi Egbuna of Nigeria and The Voyage by Horace James of Trinidad and Tobago – all at the Daniel Sorano Theatre in Dakar. The Duke of Ellington Orchestra also gave a performance at the 12, 000 – seat Stadium in Dakar.

In 1977 for the Second World Festival of Black and African Arts and Culture (FESTAC ' 77) which took place in Lagos, Dexter Lyndersay was appointed, from his University of Calabar base, through the Trinidad and Tobago High Commission, Artistic Director of the Trinidad and Tobago contingent consisting of the Catelli All Stars Steelband, the Morne Diable Best Village Folk Performers, The Mighty Sparrow with Trinidad Troubadours, Sidney Hill and the Government Film Unit, Mr. John Cupid,

M.P. David Pitt – the performers on stage, together, at the 5,000-seat (fully sold out) National Arts Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos on “TRINIDAD & TOBAGO NIGHT.” Trinidad All Stars and Mighty Sparrow gave separate performances at FESTAC ‘FRINGE’ in the University of Lagos 2,000-seat Auditorium.

In April 1990 in West Germany (Lingen) Dexter Lyndersay was leader of a Culture – Ministry – approved production of Children’s Theatre of Trinidad and Tobago, a BWIA – sponsored Private Entry to the First World Children’s Theatre Festival.

Consistent with his aesthetic tastes and artistic leanings Dexter Lyndersay’s hobbies up till his transition were the appreciation of Jazz/Calypso, Folk and Classical Music, Reading, Prose Writing and Photography.

Dexter Lyndersay was married to Australian/Dutch born Danielle Moquette (now Dr. Dani Lyndersay) who is herself a theatre scholar, artist, designer, educator, theatre trainer and performer. The marriage is blessed with two children, Adam Lyndersay and Sean Lyndersay.

May our colleague’s soul rest in perfect peace.