

That Young Scholar!

Martin Banham

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Dear Dapo,

Welcome to the ranks of septuagenarians – albeit several years after me! Your colleagues, in their various messages, remember and celebrate so many aspects of your life and times, and obviously the wonderful Scoundrel Suberu is often fondly recalled! I remember that, of course, but perhaps I'm one of the few who will also recall – with huge delight – your performance as the Company manager in our University of Ibadan Travelling Theatre production of *A (sic) Taming of the Shrew* – our version of Shakespeare's comedy, directed, of course, by our great friend, the late Geoffrey Axworthy. The opening 'joke' that you played on the audience was to come on stage and apologise for the non-arrival of the actors due to a (entirely plausible!) breakdown on the road. This provoked cries of disappointment from the audience. However, you told them, you had the scripts and a hamper of costumes, so if any of the audience would care to volunteer to come up on stage and play the parts that would be fine! Some indeed volunteered and came up on stage, before the *real* actors, planted already in the audience, 'volunteered' themselves boisterously: the audience fell apart with laughter at having been tricked, and the show got off to a splendid start! And not to forget your appearance at the end of the play as 'The Widow' – so small a part that we pretended we had forgotten to cast it, and you saved the day and the play by throwing a shawl over your head and playing the part!

Fond memories! Geoffrey and I owed so much to you and your fellow students in welcoming us to Ibadan and helping us to find our feet in the rich world of Nigerian performance and culture. I have watched the growth of Theatre Arts at Ibadan over many years with great pride, and know what a considerable contribution you made to it as scholar, director

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and supremely – teacher. I shall open a very good bottle of wine on your birthday and drink your health!

Martin