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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Yvonne Brewster went to the UK to study drama in the mid-1950s at the Rose Bruford College – where she was the UK's first Black woman drama student – and at the Royal Academy of Music, where she received a distinction in Drama and Mime, and was a pupil of Marcel Marceau. She returned to Jamaica to teach Drama and in 1965 she also jointly founded (with Trevor Rhone) The Barn in Kingston, Jamaica's first professional theatre company.

Upon her return to England she worked extensively in radio, television, and directing for Stage Productions. She has worked on many films, among them *The Harder They Come*, *Smile Orange* and *The Marijuana Affair*, and for BBC TV *The Fight Against Slavery* and *My Father Sun Sun Johnson*. Between 1982 and 1984, she was Drama Officer at the Arts Council of Great Britain. Revered as one of Britain's best established and most respected black theatre directors, Yvonne was until February 2003 Artistic Director of the country's leading black theatre company, Talawa, which she established in 1985 together with Mona Hammond, Inigo Espegel and Carmen Munroe.

She was awarded an Order of the British Empire for Services to the Arts in 1993, and in 2001 she was granted an honorary Doctorate from the Open University. In 2005, the University of London's Central School of Speech and Drama conferred an honorary fellowship on Brewster in acknowledgment of her involvement in the development of British theatre.

In 2004 she published *The Undertaker's Daughter: The Colourful Life of a Theatre Director* (Arcadia Books). She has also edited five collections of plays, including Barry Reckord's *For the Reckord* (Oberon Books, 2010) and *Mixed Company: Three Early Jamaican Plays*, published by Oberon Books in 2012.

OTHER BOOKS ON CARIBBEAN THEATRE

Olivier Stephens

Visions and Voices

ISBN: 9781845231736; pp. 436; pub. 2013; price £19.99.

In the 1970s and 1980s Olivier Stephenson was very actively engaged in Caribbean theatre in New York. There he met a number of Caribbean playwrights, either already living there or making visits. He was looking for plays, they for theatres and performers. Out of this connection came this hugely important and unrepeatable collection of fourteen interviews with most of the founding figures of contemporary Anglophone Caribbean theatre. As the preface by Kwame Dawes indicates, the period of the interviews, from the mid 1970s into the 1980s, was a crucial one for the Caribbean theatre, as its most productive and revolutionary period, and a time when it was already taking on the variety of forms and locations that still characterise it today.

Besides talking about their own influences, experiences, goals and aesthetic visions, each playwright contributes to a collective picture of Caribbean theatre being defined by its spaces – diasporic or regional, proscenium or open air; the nature of its audiences – a heated debate about the possibilities for a commercial theatre that has the work of Trevor Rhone at its heart – and the playwright's relationship to inherited theatre traditions and to specifically Caribbean cultural resources. Reflective, analytical, visionary, opinionated – these are lively interviews, not least because Olivier Stephenson asked each of the playwrights for their views on their peers – views sometimes given with acerbic frankness.

This collection should, of course, have been published many years ago, and the subsequent deaths of eight of the interviewees make it something of a memorial, but the interviews themselves read as freshly as when they were recorded. With extensive annotations and end notes, and insightful introductions by Kwame Dawes and Olivier Stephenson, this is an essential book for anyone interested in contemporary Caribbean theatre and its history.

Interviews: Derek Walcott, Errol Hill, Errol John, Michael Abbensetts, Trevor Rhone, Alwyn Bully, Roderick Walcott, Edgar White, Slade Hopkinson, Lennox Brown, Carmen Tipling, Dennis Scott, Stafford Ashani Harrison, Mustapha Matura .

Patricia Cumper

Inner Yardie: Three Plays

ISBN: 9781845232320; pp. 196; pub. 2014; price £9.99

Patricia Cumper writes that the motivation for each of the plays in this collection was anger. *The Rapist*, which ran for six months in Jamaica, does indeed involve a rapist who insinuates himself into the trust of the main character, but the fury inside the play is as much concerned with the repressive dynamics of a respectable middle-class family as it is to do with a specific act of misogynist violence. With lines that challenge the audience to laughter, and then to question why they are laughing, this is a powerful piece of theatre about gender and class.

The impetus to take on Romeo and Juliet in *Benny's Song* was no less to do with fury – with the political violence destroying the lives of so many young people in Jamaica in the 1980s. In the nation-language of the streets, *Benny's Song* adapts the narrative of star-crossed love to the tragic mix of ideology, communalism, criminality and the tempting erotics of violence in the ghettos of Kingston.

The Key Game is set in a rundown psychiatric hospital in Jamaica that the government is demolishing to make way for some profitable real estate. The three remaining inmates and their nurse, Norman, are in a state of panic about their imminent release. But this is not really a play about care in the community. What Dappo, Gonzalez, Shakespeare and Norman (characters that Samuel Beckett might have been pleased to own) must confront are issues of a far more existential kind.

With introductory essays by the author and Kwame Dawes, these plays confirm Patricia Cumper as one of the most original and challenging of Caribbean and Black British playwrights.