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Don Kinch Play

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ASSOCIATE ARTISTS

Actors

Marie-Elizabeth Broady
Maureen Hawkins
Don Kinch
Phillip Massiah
Cassie McFarlane
John Myrie
Joseph Mydell
Antony Phillips
Jimmy Rose
Caron Rose
Clarinda Salandy
Sadie Smith
Carolyn William
Hazel Williams

Staunch Poets & Players wishes to
thank the Greater London Council
for making this production
possible.

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25 All Saints Road,
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01-229 2844

Directors

Don Kinch
Frank Swarres McField
Joseph Mydell

Designers

Julien Merritt
Clarinda Salandy
Cornelia Brookes

Music

Ronnie Matadi
Neville Wright

Administration

don Kinch

Publicity

RB & RB Graphics . Communications

Friends

Diane Abbott
Rauf Addu
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Cornelia Brookes
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SPONSORS

The arts play a vital role in the lives of the Afro-Caribbean community but they need support from that community, if they are to develop and mirror that community. Through a policy of enlightened self interest, your business cannot only help the arts – but benefit yourself. Staunch Poets and Players is aiming to offer your business positive commercial benefits.

The SPP has developed a large, socially broader and geographically wider audience than most fringe or black theatre groups. It's policy of aggressive merchandising means that your company's name will be seen by a great many people. Through your link with SPP your company will be clearly seen to be involved with a Black based community enterprise of proven quality and social standing.

The SPP will acknowledge, fully and publicly, all support: an acknowledgement which will enhance your image with customers, employees and professionals and community contacts.

Though presently without an established Venue, the SPP can provide opportunities for entertaining associates, clients and staff.

Your support can be given in various ways and at different levels of involvement and cost:

Through Sponsorship of productions, touring, special events, education or special programmes;

Through becoming a Staunch Patron;

Through joining the Staunch Community Ticket Scheme;

Through becoming a Corporate Member of the SPP.

Putting on even one act plays is expensive, for not only do the performers have to be catered for, but the musicians, designers, technical staff and other ancillary workers. SPP try to recover as much as possible, but sadly not all is recoverable. Therefore additional sources of income are necessary to bridge the ever widening gap between SPP's costs and revenues.

In spite of supplementary grants from established bodies, SPP as a consequence of that community based work performing anywhere, and anytime are unable to receive grants which some groups take for granted. Consequently we have to be innovative and still retain our community roots, but through an expansion of commercial activities remain solvent.

We believe your business needs our business—we certainly need yours.

Sponsorship of the arts is now increasing more rapidly than any other form of commercial sponsorship and a properly planned sponsorship commitment to the Staunch Poets and Players could play an important part in the overall marketing or public affairs programme of your company too.

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If you would like to know more about the possibility of sponsoring an SPP production or any new SPP activity, please contact Ruffo Bravette. Sponsorship Staunch, c/o RB & RB Graphics . Communications, Manor House, 58 Clapham Common Northside, London SW4 9RZ. Telephone (01-223 8977/8).

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A SHORT HISTORY

The Staunch Poets and Players have established themselves as one of the more innovative and committed groups of performers in the U.K. Its audiences since its inception have diversified significantly both in numbers and culture.

The company is formed around a core of associate artists—actors, poets, musicians, writers, directors—who, by working together over long periods with shared ideas, aim to achieve a distinctive style. In essence the aim is to create a vehicle that informs Black and White people within both historical or contemporary settings. Also to train a company, every member of which would be an essential part of a homogenous whole, dedicated to producing and promoting through the effective usage of drama, poetry and music, the foundations from which a whole generation of conscious performers would evolve.

The history of Staunch Poets and Players begins in 1979; when Don Kinch and a group of black community players and poets namely Jimmy Rose, Maureen Hawkins and Frederick Williams discussed the general paucity of material detailing the black experience in contemporary or historical contexts both in relation to the UK and the world. From the discussion came action, a multi-disciplined programme called "Reflections".

As the title suggested the programme utilised poetry, dance, music and drama to present a kaleidoscope of the black experience past, present and future. "Reflections" has subsequently become a stock piece which the company adds and subtracts from as the situation dictates.

Within the ambit of the discussions that set up SPP was the feeling that the Black historical figures were summarily dismissed and as such there was little chance of young people knowing of the significant part Black people have played in history.

It was therefore logical that SPP's next production 'Prophet without honour' in 1980 was based on a black person; Marcus Garvey a luminary in the evolution of black people.

The SPP received critical attention, and consequently developed the confidence to devise a full length production. 'In Transit' was conceived by

author Don Kinch as an epic piece portraying the triangular journey that black people have made in their history. Using music, dance and drama to augment certain points of departure, arrival and lifestyle, 'In Transit' was a potted history of the elements that form the black experience.

Substantially more people came to see 'In Transit' as a consequence of its preview on television. It confounded many regional sponsors who unfortunately had reneged on previous commitments. Lois Rodgers of The Times wrote of SPP "The lucid and the articulate are not the preserve of the white classes."

"The essential elements of co-operation and voluntary donation of time and effort are attracted to quality not good causes. And the Players believe and persuade."

"In Transit" saw another significant development, the director of the production was American Joe Mydell, his experience in the musical form speeded the organic development of the company.

After the epic 'In Transit' a few studies on the black experience in Britain. Two plays 'Coming up for air' and 'Compound images' by Don Kinch explored the involvement of Blacks in contemporary Britain.

The company's confidence has developed with each performance, to a point where the company felt secure enough to take on another playwrights work Frank McFields 'Downside Up' an exploration of the elements in the past that haunt a family and the conflicts created by the situation. Very much a piece that explored language and imagery. All roads leading seemingly to the current production again a Don Kinch piece entitled 'The Balm Yard'.

By co-operation and with a planned series of objectives SPP have undertaken to perform in many different venues from theatres to churches; community halls to classrooms; an expansion of activity that might eventually be consolidated with a permanent venue.

PATRONS

Staunch Poets and Players are hoping to set up a trust fund, its purpose being to support the work of the Staunch Poets and Players and eventually the acquisition and upkeep of a theatre. It is envisaged that donations would be acknowledged if desired by the placing of names on seats or wall plaques.

It is also envisaged that Patrons will be eligible to participate in various Staunch Poets and Players schemes e.g. special advertising space in theatre programmes, from time to time special Patrons events will be organised with opportunities to meet members of the company and touring groups.

Patrons play a vital part in the existence of any civilised community. It is not an exaggeration to say that Patrons keep alive and encourage many to appreciate the arts and as a consequence make every day living just a little bit more interesting.

For further information on how you, individually your company, association or group can become contact Ruffo Bravette, c/o Manor House, 58 Clapham Common Northside, London SW4 9RZ. Telephone 01-223 8977/8.

INFORMATION

Mailing List

For £2.75 a year you can join the SPP's mailing list as an Associate Member.

You receive:

1. Regular advance booking information
2. Exclusive priority booking information for all performances.
3. Full information on the company's activities in the SPP Newsheet.

Why not join now? You will find application forms in the theatre foyer. If you have any difficulty in obtaining one, please ask the theatre staff. For details of other special memberships – overseas, and Student Group memberships for all educational organisations – please contact:

Mailing List Organiser, C/o RB & RB Graphics. Communications. Manor House, 58 Clapham Common Northside, London SW4 9RZ. Telephone (01-223 8977/8).



The Balm Yard of the title is a place of healing and a regeneration of rites and rituals. Within the confines of the Balm Yard there is no time, the rites and incantations going back to a pre Caribbean history. A history based in West Africa where different peoples got on with their lives in a fashion wrought about by their own natural evolution.

A history of the black peoples of the Caribbean, is one of oppression and enforced divisions. What has brought many together is a belief in both spirits and demons mixed with a deep fundamental Christianity.

The Balm Yard explores the effects on a group of people, of a history steeped in secret religious rites, rituals and moral codes and its conflict with modern society. A microcosmic view of a Caribbean dilemma. Just as Caribbean life at all levels is laden with portent, so the play is structured around an omen

Tradition is symbolised by Hilda who is the translator of the rites and rituals, it is she that carries the oral tradition of Caribbean history. It is she that is the medium between the spirit world and the living world. She is also the medium between past and future.

Counterpointing her is the Prime Minister, with an abundance of human frailties, but on whom rests the lives and destiny of a nation. Striving to attain modern facilities but still subject to his historical past.

The black and white of the two main protagonists is given wider perspective by the greys of Samson who represents the average man with his simplistic homespun philosophy. Edna wants to reach

out to a brave new future, but like most people needs a security blanket which the past offers. Hers is the conflict of many Caribbean people when they look to emigrating.

In Daisy we perceive a virgin people ready for all that is to come, sophisticated enough to utilise the past and accept the new, but with a spirit unencumbered by lesser issues.

Batoulla represents the last vestiges of a time past, a man from the hills, a fundamentalist. Driven by the moralities of the earth, pragmatic with an inbred stubbornness that though it pays homage to the elements, tries to conquer and thus live with his environment.

Obvious stereotypes, yet people have got basic traits that are shared, be they in Europe or the Caribbean most of everyday life follows a pattern for ordinary people, when ordinary people are placed in extraordinary situations they act in extraordinary ways. . . . thence the theme of the Balm Yard.

WITCHCRAFT OBEAH

Walking through the Caribbean bush at night the smells of the cooking pots mingling with the close atmosphere, the incessant chirrups of the crickets, an occasional yelp from a dog too close to the cooking pot. Vegetation making strange patterns against the moonlit sky. It is an atmosphere in which anything could happen. You are on the edge of wonder.

In front of you, that tiny hut with its palm thatch and the open fire in front of it, could be the home of an Obeahman. . . .

The blacks who came to the Caribbeans as slaves were forced to give up their traditional ways of life. Few things were retained and kept beyond the control of the slave masters. One thing retained was a belief in witchcraft.

In 1787 a parliamentary committee drew up a report concerning the state of the West Indies. Among other matters it reported on was the existence of witchcraft. This question was asked: "Whether Negroes called Obeahmen, or under any other denomination, practicing witchcraft, exist in the islands?" "Are the instances of death and disease produced by these arts or means frequent?"

The answer to the question was as follows: "As far as we are able to decide from our own experience and information when we lived on the island, and from concurrent testimony of all the Negroes we have ever conversed with on the subject.

The professors of Obi are, and always were, natives of Africa, and none other, and they have brought the science with them

from thence to Jamaica, where it is so universally practiced that we believe there are few of the larger estates possessing native Africans, which has not one or more of them. The oldest and most crafty are those who usually attract the greatest devotion and confidence, those whose hoary heads, and with something peculiarly harsh and diabolic in their aspect, together with some skill in plants of the medicinal and poisonous species, have qualified them for successful imposition upon the weak and credulous. The Negroes in general whether Africans or creoles, revere, consult, and abhor them, to these oracles they resort and with the most implicit faith, upon all occasions, whether for the cure of disorders, the obtaining of revenge for injuries and insults, the conciliating of favour, the discovery and punishment of the thief or the adulterer, and the prediction of future events. . . ."

Witchcraft or Obeah was accepted as a reality in the eighteenth century, it was ascribed as a purely black phenomena. It was difficult for whites in the eighteenth century to come into active proximity, the slave and master relationship being as it was. Also as all blacks were deemed to look alike an Obeahman would to a slave master have nothing which distinguished him from another black on a plantation.

With a greater assimilation of Christianity the development and social mobility that took place with emancipation meant that the influence of the Obeahman to certain black people slowly diminished.

Migration from the country to

urban areas loosened the influence. Yet throughout people are unwilling to talk openly about Obeah, through fear of the Obeahman, and through fear of criminal prosecution, leading to a possible conviction and in some islands to a penalty of two years hard labour.

In contemporary Caribbean society Obeah or under some of its other names is alive and well. In some areas it is notoriously more active than others. It is fairly impossible to go anywhere in the islands without finding some sort of reference or allusion to it.

It's historical roots are not chronicled in the standard sense, as with most black history and folklore it is chronicled in the oral tradition. Obeah was imported by slaves from West Africa. It, like the black led churches in the U.K. of the late fifties and early sixties, acted as a focus.

Obeah's survival was very much to do with its verbal transference of information as the spoken word could not be detected. Folklore has it that Obeah was used extensively in the slave rebellions that happened in the Caribbeans. Post emancipation, the art had taken such root that it did not need the West African injection to propagate itself. It was established in the fabric of the societies. As a consequence of emancipation, blacks could congregate without fear, and christian worship was encouraged. It is from this time that Christian influences permeated Obeah

Contemporary Obeahmen whilst preserving belief in African spirits, extend their field to include modern Western astro-

1981-1986

THE BALM YARD

Mother Hilda..... CASSIE McFARLANE
Edna..... MAUREEN HAWKINS
Samson..... JOHN ROSE
Prime Minister..... LEROI MITCHELL
Batoula..... JOHN MYRIE
Daisy, The Girl, The Vision CARON ROSE

Spirits..... CLARINDA SALANDY
..... HAZEL WILLIAMS
..... CAROLYN WILLIAMS

Musicians..... RONNIE MATADIE
..... COSMO

Directed by DON KINCH
Designed by CLARINDA SALANDY
Lighting by CHARMAINE RAISON
Dances arranged by HAZEL WILLIAMS
Stage Manager CHARMAINE RAISON



POCOMANIA

Christianity is nominally the religious base of most Caribbean countries. That is to say Christianity, as expressed in the form of churches, is the official religion of the people. The majority of the more orthodox religious bodies found in Britain have adherents in the islands. There are also religious groups which appear to have had their origin in the United States but have been moulded into a Caribbean pattern. Jamaica more than any other of the Caribbean countries has embraced the latter type. Such bodies, for example as the Zoroastrain, Washfoot Brethren, Philpot Tabernacle, Connectional Absolute Truth, Last Message of God. It can be said that Jamaica exhibits a healthy variety in its forms of Christianity.

The relative strength of the more orthodox religious groups is indicated by their churches and parishioners. Of the more unorthodox groups, each constitutes a comparatively small following. Of Jamaica's specifically native cult groups Pocomania is the most powerful and active. Very much a covert form of practice, its roots going back to the days of slavery. Jamaica during the period of slavery from 1655-1834 was a dual society of masters and slaves. The masters were devotees of Christianity. Slaves were deprived of any form of African religious activity as it was likely to encourage and foment rebellion, and christian religion was deemed undesirable as it would encourage slaves to feel equal to their masters. That dilutions of both African and Christian religions took place was evident. Christianity was

seeped into slavery as an invisible manacle: a christian slave being a good slave.

Emancipation in 1834 marked also the freedom to profess any type of religion, which was marked by the immense size of congregations and an epidemic of church building. Soon though religious fervour over leapt the bounds of orthodoxy. Though native churches kept a good deal of the orthodoxy of the parent body, if incorporated a degree of physical enthusiasm, evinced in dancing, overexuberent singing, and clapping, which was not tolerated in the former body.

It is from this tradition that such cult groups as Pocomania arose. Though it would be wrong to assume that Pocomania is solely the result of a more vigorous, uninhibited type of Christianity. It is the assimilation and interpretation of many cultural stimuli mixed into a heady concoction.

West African slaves from a variety of tribal groupings brought to the Caribbeans were unable to perpetuate former native social structures. They had to accept their new imposed social order. One of the West African elements that did survive, because of its essentially secret nature was witchcraft.

In Jamaica the form of witchcraft was called Obeah. It can be regarded as of an essentially evil nature and corresponds roughly to European Black Magic. It was counteracted by a form of benevolent magic practiced called Myalism.

In the conditions of slavery Obeah performed a necessary function, it acted as a binding force. It was the only slave possession beyond the power and knowledge of the white slave owner.

With emancipation and religious freedom Myalism took a decline. Its place and function was taken over by native led churches, which specialised in a variety of forms of revivalism.

Pocomania's greatest strength is in Kingston, capital of Jamaica, where its rites and ceremonies are extremely elaborate. There being a less complicated ritual in the rural areas. There will be a leader who is the centre of the group. It will be the leaders function to organise meetings and conduct services. The leader usually has two acolytes of the opposite sex to help with the proceedings. Meetings take place three or four times a week in the evenings and twice on Sundays: morning and evening.

On service nights the proceedings are got under way by using drums an hour before to herald meetings. Soon after the drums start the congregation begins to drift into the meeting house. With little exception the congregation is working class. Unlike other church congregations in Jamaica, the greater part of the people are dressed in everyday clothes.

With the approach of the service hour the people break into a hymn, to the drum accompaniment. During which the leader enters usually clad in white with a white turban followed by an entourage. There follows readings from the bible after which the group extemporise prayers. A steady excitement is built up wherein the leader reads and is accompanied with vocal encouragement by the audience. A hymn is sung: as there are no hymn books, the leader speaks each line before it is sung. At the end of the hymn the collection is taken up.

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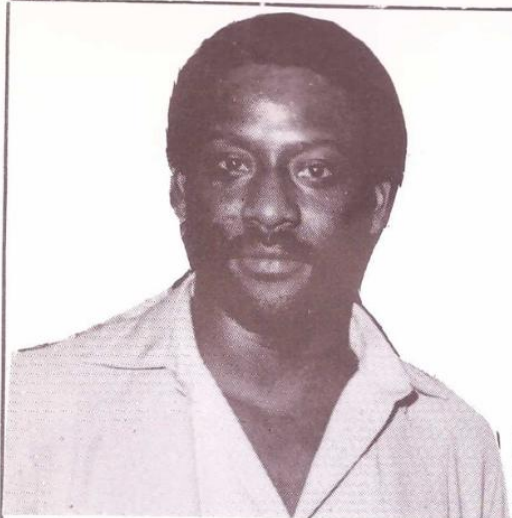
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Don Kinch

Since its inception in 1979, the Staunch Poets and Players have played an integral part in the life of Don Kinch. He has been their principal playwright and director, at sometimes the guiding light. Somehow Don manages to write for the SPP, attend the interminable fund raising meetings, join arts committees, audition new players, talk in schools, listen to aspiring playwrights, organise the administrative back-up of the SPP at the same time as publishing and editing a monthly periodical called Staunch.

Don is very quick to point out that SPP is not a one man organisation but that circumstances convey that impression. Regarding the content of SPP material, he expounded on the lack of any positive imagery on matters relating to Blacks and their experiences, the way the establishment assiduously avoids any history of black people but consolidates a colonial and post colonial view of black people. His feelings on this issue go back to his formative education in Britain, and later experiences as a teacher, where he observed the paucity of positive material and its insidious effect on the psyche of black and white children. It explains his passionate belief and his need to write about black history, the development of a black culture and the identity that is borne from a troubled past. The epic struggles made by peoples both currently and of

times gone by. Such is Don's feeling on the issue of black culture that he hopes to research further the development of rituals and their effect on today.

When quizzed as to what makes SPP unique as a group, Don reflected, that from the onset, it was accepted that there was a black culture, that this dictated the material and to some extent the way it should be presented. Unlike other troupes SPP tries to deal with the epic elements, rituals and folklore as opposed to domestic, kitchen sink material. In his reflections Kinch felt the objectives of SPP were more that of informing and educating, than purely entertaining. The true skill was to marry the three main elements.

Ideologically SPP and Don Kinch have policies on projects they will or won't take on, implicitly SPP see themselves as remaining a black based company as their material and the issues they deal with are ostensibly borne of black experiences.

To capture the spirit and feel of the black experience is not something that can be conveyed by just drama, sometimes a feeling can be got across by a poem, sometimes a dance, a piece of music, as such SPP are multi-disciplined with the objective of getting its messages across.

A central theme permeates all the productions to date – the black experience and the role of rituals. As the vein is a rich one with many facets it is a source that will constantly be plumbed.

Don has been asked about his levels of activity many times, how can he take on so many full time

occupations. Editor and publisher of Staunch magazine and SPP writer, director/performer and then do them well? Whilst not avoiding the issue he stresses the point that some of the SPP material and activity emanates from Staunch magazine, and some of the ideas and eventual Staunch material comes from the activities of SPP. The escalation of activities in both camps has called for a complete re-appraisal of the work load. New people have started to take over the SPP administrative functions. By evolution SPP will become a vehicle for other playwrights and Staunch magazine will probably be edited by the burgeoning crop of young people. The ethos of both entities are firmly established.

So what of Don Kinch? Looking wistfully into his constantly ravaged packet of cigarettes he intimates a future of writing plays, novels, poems. A great urge to research Black theatre, its development in both a British and international perspective.

When asked about his latest offering 'The Balm Yard' he smiles and lights up another cigarette. Looking at peace with himself he expounds at length on the imagery and language of Michael Thelwells book 'The harder they come' explaining how it expanded his understanding of various Caribbean rituals particularly the fascinating rituals of the Nine night. Just the thing for Staunch Poets and Players.

Again his phone rings, another Player? or Writer? he just lights another cigarette.

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London's ethnic diversity is an asset. Yet, held back by racial disadvantage, the ethnic minorities are prevented from realising their full potential or playing their part as equals in society. It is currently a fact of life – but one the GLC will help to eradicate.

It has established the Ethnic Minorities Committee as a major committee of the Council supported by an Ethnic Minorities Unit.

Together their job is to:

- 1** Develop positive policies and programmes to tackle racial disadvantage:
 - as an employer, by developing equal opportunity programmes;
 - as a provider of services, such as housing, jobs, training and recreation, by ensuring equality of access for ethnic minorities;
 - as a grant-aiding authority, by supporting ethnic minority, self-help initiatives, and projects designed to counter racism;
 - as an influential institution, by campaigning for central and local government to respond with policies and proposals to meet the needs of ethnic minorities and to repeal all racist legislation.
- 2** Establish effective consultations with ethnic minority communities by:
 - encouraging active participation in the proceedings of the Ethnic Minority Committee;
 - convening London-wide consultative conferences;
 - establishing working or advisory groups on specific topics;
 - circulating regular information to ethnic minority groups;
 - encouraging written submissions.

If you want to know more about the work of the GLC's Ethnic Minorities Committee write to: Ethnic Minorities Unit, Room 34-5a, The County Hall, London, SE1 7PB.

MAUREEN HAWKINS/EDNA

Is a founder member of Staunch. She has performed in all the company's productions, she has also appeared in numerous productions with other companies. She was featured in the B.B.C. Documentary on "In Transit". She also gives classes and workshops for schools and community groups.

**CASSIE MCFARLANE/
MOTHER HILDA**

Studied at RADA, has subsequently had extensive repertory experience:

"Kennedy's Children" at York Theatre Royal, "Mid summer Nights Dream" at the Leeds Playhouse, "Smile Orange" at the Tricycle. Television credits include Daisy in the BBC2 production "Daisy", Holly James in the "Goodbye Darling" series, Iris in the Jonathan Miller's production of "Anthony and Cleopatra". To date her film credits include only the critically acclaimed "Burning and Illusion". She is now branching out into Direction with young writer Michael McMillan.

**LEROY MITCHELL/
PRIME MINISTER**

Started acting with L'Overture Theatre Trust, appearing in productions including, 'The Tempest' and 'Antigone'. He has also performed in other theatre companies productions of Thrillers, Jobbers, and In Transit.

He is a household face in West Africa where he appears on the television in numerous commercials.

JOHN MYRIE/BATOULA

Has been a member of Staunch since 1980. Previous productions include 'Reflections', 'In Transit' and 'Down Side UP'. He also gives classes in schools and youth clubs.

**CARON ROSE/DAISY/
THE GIRL/THE VISION**

Has been a member of Staunch for four years and is still only fifteen years old. She has appeared in the productions of 'In Transit', 'Reflections' and 'Prophet Without Honour'. She is a student at Aylestone Community High School and is now studying to take her 'O' Levels.

JIMMY ROSE/SAMSON

Is a founder member of Staunch. He has appeared in all of Staunch's productions. He has worked with other companies, as well as numerous plays for International Television.

CLARINDA SALANDY/SPIRIT

Is a final year BA Hons in Theatre Design at the Wimbledon School of Art and Design. She was assistant designer on the show 'No Weapons For Mourning' with Impact Theatre Co. She was co designer for the ballet 'Sun Dance, Moon Tears' at the Guildford School of Dance. She has also designed costumes for the Notting Hill Carnival.

CAROLYN WILLIAM/SPIRIT

Studied fashion and textile design at Ealing College. She joined Staunch in 1982 and has appeared in two productions of 'Reflections' and 'Compound Images'. She has also worked with other theatre companies. Her last performance was in an updated version of 'Alice In Wonderland' with Harmony Theatre Group.

HAZEL WILLIAMS/SPIRIT

Studied at the London School Of Contemporary Dance, later joined Mass Movers Dance Group. She works with Rosmund Schreeves where she dances and choreographs. She has been a member of Staunch since 1980, performing as well as giving classes and workshops in schools, youth centres and adult education.

DON KINCH/DIRECTOR

Studied and taught Drama and Sociology at two London Comprehensives for five years. He is a founder member of the theatre group, and current Editor of Staunch Magazine. He is co-writer of the company's productions of 'Reflections' and 'Prophet Without Honour' and writer of the plays 'In Transit', 'Coming Up For Air' and 'Compound Images'. He has worked as a teacher/journalist in Africa and has contributed numerous articles, short stories and poems to Britains black newspapers and periodicals.

**CHARMAINE RAISON/
STAGE DIRECTOR/LIGHTING**

Was born in Trinidad and studied Drama and Psychology at Middlesex Polytechnic. She has worked as stage manager and lighting technician for Images Theatre Company, The Factory and The Wayne Pritchett Mime Theatre. She is currently engaged in post graduate studies.

● CORRECTION.

**JIMMY
NOT
JOHN**

In the credits which appear on page 11, it states that the part of Sampson is played by John Rose. This should read JIMMY ROSE.



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logy and Christian theology – almost hedging their bets.

Its persistence can be explained in the following way: the majority of the Caribbean peoples live in poverty. Consequently any force which seems to obviate the ills of life is welcome. An attitude shared by the poor peoples of the world, and agrarian communities throughout the world.

Obviously for people with some wealth or position, contact with Obeah is difficult; there always being the fear that the reason for contact is to inform the police or discredit the practitioners.

Obeah's prime ally is the spirit, and the spirits most commonly referred to by the Obeahman are spirits of the dead, they are

invariably malevolent. Known in Jamaica as duppies. Belief in such spirits is common all over the Caribbean. As their power is almost entirely evil, people go in dread of them. Though the devil has the same power, the duppy is far more feared. It is argued, there is only one devil but there are thousands of duppies to concern themselves with human affairs.

These ghost demons have homes in bamboo thickets or the roots of cotton wood trees, coming out only at midnight or midday. Creating chaos and terrifying people by their appearance, causing people to kill or injure themselves, or by playing a variety of tricks, as associated with European elves, fairies, lep-

rechauns, and poltergeists.

Why even in modern sophisticated times do people believe and turn to Obeah? It should be borne in mind that slavery is officially no longer, but in the Caribbean there is still poverty. This means that the poor have no vision of hope. Obeah offers an opportunity for overcoming life's degradations, offering solace even a chance of success. Spirits, duppies and Obeah are more real to certain elements of the Caribbean population than the people they hear about in the news.



After this the members are invited to testify. Individuals will approach the front table, face the congregation and proceed to berate themselves, acknowledging that Jesus is their saviour. In essence this part is cathartic for all concerned both sinner and congregation. The leader or shepherd follows the testifying with a sermon, which is couched in simple but fiery terms and concerned with the evils of sin and life. The congregation participates by groaning and shouting, at the appropriate moments, after near hysteria the service ends with more hymns and prayers.

Mass hysteria has often described the mental and physical state in which the group gets itself. This state is termed 'getting the spirit'. To the people involved pocomania often represents an almost lyrical, elevated feeling which is not present in daily life. To the poverty stricken peasant or urban worker the few hours of a meeting make for the feeling as if one is part of a powerful, spiritual world where

man's material state does not matter.

Pocomania by its need for a focal person brings out the local leaders. They have to take hold of their flock and guide them.

What the peasant or urban worker believes is based on fundamentalist Protestantism overlaid with a belief in spirits – origins vying for position? Pocomania offers fragments of African cults allied with Caribbean ebullience added to which is the christian element.

Orthodox Christianity, Pocomania, and Obeah are channels through which the populations can give vent to the frustrations implicit in the social structure of the society.

The expression varies in intensity depending on social class. The upper and middle classes are content to accept with the offerings of the orthodox churches. But the lower class places great emphasis on its adherence to Obeah and Pocomania. For a mass of this class

There are other functions. The reliance on the power of the spirits and the dead acts as a binding force on the lower placed members of the society, which in effect is the bulk of the people. Contact with the spirit world also increases the individuals sense of importance, reassures and allows for a transcending of the bonds of poverty and social division.

In Pocomania and Obeah the world of the Old Testament comes to life, and the Jamaican can feel an identification with those immense, powerful figures from a shadowy past. The poverty stricken peasant ceases to be just that and moves into a world where spells and incantations can produce desirable physical events.

the latter practices perform a twofold function in that they offset the frustrations of the society by the invocation of supernatural powers.

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