

## KEY AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND ASIAN PRODUCTIONS FROM 1975

by *Dr Alda Terracciano*

The selection of plays listed below, sourced from the Theatre Museum core collections, represent a preliminary phase in the assessment of historical documents and resources relating to black British theatre held by the Museum. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to offer an overview of the various directions undertaken by black theatre artists in the UK.

Those requiring the material listed below should be aware that records of London productions can be accessed at the Theatre Museum's Study Room in Covent Garden, whilst records of plays produced elsewhere are held at the Museum's stores at Blythe House, Olympia. Documents may be held in a range of contexts including production files, company files, or special collections e.g. Temba Theatre Company or Alfred Fagon collections (see Material Relating to Black Performance section above). Reviews of most productions can also be found in *Theatre Record* (formerly *London Theatre Record*). As a rule, the first British production of each play has been listed, except in cases where particularly relevant revivals have been produced or where the Museum holds no material on the first production. We would be grateful for feedback on this research.

All plays listed below feature African, Caribbean, African-American and Asian personnel whose names are given in **bold**.

P = Photos (\*= THM copyright), T = prints, R= Portraits, B = Playbills, S = Published Scripts, G = Programmes, Y = Publicity, D = Design, M = Model, V = Video, A = reviews, MS = manuscript or promptbook, PR = Press Release, BF = Biographical File

NB = See note under Special Collections in Collections Summary for information on Royal Court and Tricycle Theatre archives.

While every effort has been made to check accuracy, we apologise for any inadvertent errors: please direct corrections about personnel etc. to: Susan Croft at [s.croft@vam.ac.uk](mailto:s.croft@vam.ac.uk) and Dr Alda Terracciano at [alda@futurehistories.org.uk](mailto:alda@futurehistories.org.uk)



*Fourteen Songs Two Weddings and Funeral* adapted by Suda Bhuchar and Kristine Langdon-Smith, Tamasha Theatre Company, 2001.

Photograph by *Graham Brandon*

Production	Author/s	Opening date	Theatre	Director / Producer where relevant	Summary mentioning key black personnel	Material in THM Collections	Notes
Black Explosion	Collection of ideas, writing and improvisations by various authors	1975	The Round house	The Black Theatre of Brixton Company	Among the artists involved <b>Jamal Ali, Gloria Cameron, Alex Pascall and Norman Beaton</b>	G, A, Y	A one week programme of theatre, music, mime and poetry including Black Theatre of Brixton, Ebony Steel Band and Wall Theatre Company
Rum an' Coca-Cola	<b>Mustapha Matura</b>	1976	Royal Court Theatre	Donald Howarth	Designer Jocelyn Herbert. With <b>Norman Beaton</b> and <b>Trevor Thomas</b>	S, G, A, Y, prompt script NB	
Lament for Rastafari	<b>Edgar White</b>	1977	Keskidee Centre	<b>Rufus Collins</b>	Designer <b>Errol Lloyd</b> . Cast included <b>T-Bone Wilson, Joan Ann Maynard, Imruh Caesar and Yvonne Gidden</b>	Y, S	British première of black American play dealing with the spiritual and physical journey of a West Indian family from Commonwealth to England to America
Gloo Joo	Michael Hastings	1978	Hampstead Theatre	Michael Rudman	Designer Poppy Mitchell. Cast included <b>Oscar James</b> and <b>Akosua Busia</b>	MS, G, A, Y, P	A farce about colour prejudice, which raised controversy within the black community. The play won the Evening Standard Best Comedy Award and was adapted for the screen in 1979. It was later revived at the New End and Criterion Theatre (1983)
Alterations	<b>Michael Abben-setts</b>	1978	New End Theatre	Peter Stevenson	Designer Vivienne Cartwright. Cast included <b>Don Warrington</b> and <b>Trevor Butler</b>	G, A, BF on author	Revival in 1986 at the Theatre Royal Stratford East
Sus	Barrie Keefe	1979	Royal Court Theatre Upstairs	Ann Michell	Designer Inigo Espejel. Cast included <b>Christopher Driscoll</b>	G, A, S NB	Produced by Soho Poly, the play dealt with the introduction of the SUS laws. Revived in 2000 at the Theatre Royal Stratford East

Throne in an Autumn Room	<b>Lennox Brown</b>	1979	Keskidee Centre	<b>Rufus Collins</b>	Designer <b>Henry Muttoo</b> . Cast included <b>Yvonne Gidden, Anton Phillips</b> and <b>Lloyd Anderson</b>	Y, A	
for colored girls who have considered suicide /when the rainbow is enuf	<b>Ntozake Shange</b>	1979	Royalty Theatre	Avery J Brookers	Designer Ming Cha Lee, choreographer Paula Moss. Cast included <b>Ruthanna Graves</b> and <b>Denise Marcia</b>	S, G, Y, A, V of different production	English premiere of Shange's groundbreaking choreopoem presented by an all American cast
Scrape off the Black	<b>Tunde Ikoli</b>	1980	Riverside Studios	Peter Gill	Designer Alison Gill. Cast included <b>Brian Bovell</b> and <b>Okon Jones</b>	S, G, A, P, (1983) MS	Presented as part of <i>Plays Umbrella</i> in association with Drum Arts Centre. Revived in 1983 at Arts Theatre and later at Theatre Royal Stratford East
Borderline	<b>Hanif Kureishi</b>	1981	Royal Court	Max Stafford-Clark	Designer Peter Hartwell. Cast included <b>Vincent Ebrahim, Nizwar Karanj</b> and <b>Rita Wolf</b>	S, Y, A NB	A Joint Stock Theatre Company and Royal Court co-production. The play was performed in London after a short tour
Measure for Measure	William Shakespeare	1981	Royal National Theatre	Michael Rudman	Designer Eileen Diss. Cast included <b>Stefan Kalipa, Norman Beaton, Bertice Reading, Frank Singuineau, Oscar James</b> and <b>Yvette Harris</b>	G, A, P, S	Set in a mythical Caribbean island short after the Second World War, the play was performed by an all black cast
Where There is Darkness	<b>Caryl Phillips</b>	1982	Lyric Studio	Peter James	Designer Liz Da Costa. Cast included <b>Rudolph Walker, Allister Bain</b> and <b>Yvonne Gidden</b>	G, A, S	Second play by the author of <i>Strange Fruit</i>

Two Can Play	<b>Trevor Rhone</b>	1983	Arts Theatre	<b>Anton Phillips</b>	With <b>Allister Bain</b> and <b>Corinne Skinner-Carter</b>	G, A, Y, S NB	Presented as part of the first Black Theatre Season 1983, the production played at the Tricycle in 1984. It was revived at the Theatre Royal Stratford East in 1984
Smile Orange	<b>Trevor Rhone</b>	1983	Tricycle Theatre	<b>Rufus Collins</b>	Designer <b>Paddy Kamara</b> . Cast included <b>Malcolm Frederick, Anton Phillips, T-Bone Wilson</b> and <b>Sylvester Williams</b>	G, A, S NB	First produced in London in 1972, the play was adapted for the screen in 1975 (Knuts Productions Ltd) winning the Cook International Film Festival and the Virgin Islands Festival awards
Hedda in India	Henrik Ibsen	1983	Upstream Theatre Club	<b>Madhav Sharma</b>	Designer Peter Ling. Cast included <b>Raad Rawi, Zohra Sehgal</b> and <b>Josephine Welcome</b>	P, Y, A	Set in newly independent India the play was produced by Actors Unlimited
Playboy of the West Indies	<b>Mustapha Matura</b>	1984	Oxford Playhouse	Nicholas Kent	Designer Adrienne Lobel. Cast included <b>Joan Ann Maynard, Jason Rose, Frank Singuineau, Rudolph Walker, Jim Findley</b> and <b>Mona Hammond</b>	S, P, G, A NB	Matura's version of J. M. Synge's <i>The Playboy of the Western World</i> was produced by Oxford Playhouse Company and adapted for the screen in 1985 by BBC Television
Money to Live	<b>Jaqueline Rudet</b>	1984	Royal Court Theatre Upstairs	<b>Gordon Case</b>	Designer Janis Hart. Cast included <b>Judith Jacob</b> and <b>Vivienne Rochester</b>	PR, A, S NB	First Black Theatre Co-operative production of a play written by a black woman
Basin	<b>Jaqueline Rudet</b>	1985	Royal Court Theatre Upstairs	<b>Paulette Randall</b>	Designer Vanessa Clegg. Cast included <b>Dona Croll, Susan Harper-Browne</b> and <b>Beverly Hills</b>	S, G, A NB	A world première produced by Theatre Royal in association with Temba Theatre Company

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A Raisin in the Sun	<b>Lorraine Hansberry</b>	1985	Tricycle Theatre	<b>Yvonne Brewster</b>	Designer Andrea Montag Cast included <b>Carmen Munroe, Jaqueline de Peza</b> and <b>Ella Wilder</b>	S, G, A, Y Poster NB	Black Theatre Co-operative revival of the African American classic
Lonely Cowboy	<b>Alfred Fagon</b>	1985	Tricycle Theatre	Nicolas Kent	Designer Sarah-Jane McClelland. Cast included <b>Jim Findley Trevor Butler</b> and <b>Sylvester Williams</b>	S, A, G, MS, Poster NB	World Première of Fagon's Brixton Café Western
The Little Clay Cart	<b>Shudraka</b>	1986	Arts Theatre	<b>Jatinder Verma</b>	Designer Ann Hubbard, choreographer <b>Shobana Jeyasingh</b> Cast included <b>Naushaba Khan, Ayub Khan Din</b> and <b>Nizwar Karanj</b>	G, A	First adapted by Tara Arts in 1984, the play was presented as part of the Black Theatre Season 1986
The Black Jacobins	<b>CLR James</b>	1986	Riverside Studios	<b>Yvonne Brewster</b>	Designer Andrea Montag, choreographer Thomas Pinnock. Cast included <b>Norman Beaton, Trevor Laird, Mona Hammond</b> and <b>Brian Bovell</b>	G	Talawa Theatre Company revival of James' play on the San Domingo slave revolt. First performed in London in 1936
The Amen Corner	<b>James Baldwin</b>	1987	Tricycle Theatre	<b>Anton Phillips</b>	Designer Marsha Roddy Cast included <b>Carmen Munroe, Corinne Skinner Carter, Sylvester Williams</b> and <b>Al Matthews</b>	Y, A, G, S, Poster NB	Produced by Carib Theatre Company
Black Heroes in the Hall of Fame	Musical by <b>Flip Fraser</b> and <b>J. D. Douglas</b>	1987	Astoria Theatre	Music Director <b>Ken Kendricks</b>	Choreographer <b>Clive Johnson</b> Cast included <b>Eugene Paul, Deridee Williams, Rudl Boyce, Prince Lincoln of Royal Rasses</b> and <b>James Fraser</b>	G, A	A choreodrama black musical in seven acts rounding up centuries of black heroes and heroines, which toured the USA and was later revived in 1992 at the Hackney Empire
The Cripple	<b>Ruth Harris</b>	1987	Dalston Children Centre	<b>Ruth Harris</b>	With <b>t. m. Murphy</b>	G, A	Produced by the Theatre of Black Women the play focused on the true story of a Jamaican born woman with cerebral palsy and continued in a six months sell-out tour
Slipping into Darkness	<b>Jamal Ali</b>	1988	Gate Theatre	<b>Malcolm Frederick</b>	Designer Zara Conway. With <b>Calvin Simpson</b>	Y, A	Black Theatre Co-operative production
Mass Carib	<b>Felix Cross</b>	1989	Manchester Opera House	Teddy Kiendl	Designer <b>Paddy Kamara</b> , choreographer Sheila Barnett Cast included <b>Ray Shell</b>	G	Originally presented at the Albany Empire in 1987 this touring production opened at the Towngate, Basildon
Mother Poem	<b>Eddie Kamau Braithwaite</b>	1989	Drill Hall	<b>Alby James</b>	Designer <b>Vonnie Roudette</b> , choreographer "H" Patten Cast included <b>Josette Bushell-Mingo</b>	Y, G, A, MS	A choreopoem adaptation of Braithwaite's poetry first performed by the author in London in 1981
Blood Wedding	Federico Garcia Lorca	1989	Half Moon Theatre	Jonathan Martin	Designers Ashley Martin Davies and Nikki Gillibrand, choreographer <b>Shobana Jeyasingh</b> Cast included <b>Okon Jones</b> and <b>Mona Hammond</b>	G, A	Asian Theatre Co-operative and Half Moon Theatre co-production
The Gods Are Not To Blame	<b>Ola Rotimi</b>	1989	Riverside Studios	<b>Yvonne Brewster</b>	Designer Ellen Cairns Choreographer <b>Badejo Peter</b> Cast included <b>Jeffrey Kissoon</b>	G, Y, A, S	A Yoruba adaptation of Oedipus the King co-produced by Talawa Theatre Company and Everyman Theatre Liverpool. First presented by Aklowa Dance Group and Drum Company at London Greenwood in 1978
The Government Inspector	<b>Nikolai Gogol</b>	1989	Tara Arts Centre	<b>Anuradha Kapoor</b>	Designer Magdalen Bubalcala. Cast included <b>Yogesh Bhatt, Ravinder Gilland Nizwar Kahanj</b>	G, A, Y, S (of earlier translations)	An adaptation by Jatinder Verma set in India
Untouchable	Adaptation by <b>Kristine Landon-Smith</b> and <b>Sudha Bhuchar</b>	1989	Riverside Studios	<b>Kristine Landon-Smith</b>	Designer Sue Mayes. Music by <b>Baluji Shrivastav</b> Cast included <b>Dhirendra</b> and <b>Sudha Bhuchar</b>	G, Y, A	From the original of Mulk Raj Anand. First production by Tamasha Theatre Company. Originally performed in Delhi with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> year students of the National School of Drama
Fences	<b>August Wilson</b>	1990	Garrick Theatre	<b>Alby James</b>	Designer Ellen Cairns. Cast included <b>Yaphet Kotto</b>	G, A, Y, S	Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award, the play explored the late 1950s black America
Glory	<b>Felix Cross</b>	1990	Lyric Theatre Hammer-smith	<b>Earl Warner</b>	Designer <b>Vonnie Roudette</b> , choreographer <b>Greta Mendez</b> Cast included <b>Oscar James, Adjoa Andoh</b> and <b>Chris Tummings</b>	A, Y, MS	First prize London Weekend Television Plays on Stage competition, London 1988. This world première was co-produced by Derby Playhouse and Temba Theatre Company
Ragamuffin	<b>V. Amani Naphtali</b>	1990	Bloomsbury Theatre	<b>V. Amani Naphtali</b>	Designer Trevor Canning, choreographers <b>Armando Pekeno, Patsy Ricketts</b> and <b>Pamela E. Moragh</b> Cast included <b>Tony Hippolyte</b> and <b>June Campbell</b>	A, G	Inspired by CLR James' <i>The Black Jacobins</i> , the play linked contemporary events (the Broadwater Farm uprising in Tottenham, North London) to the San Domingo revolution
Tartuffe	Moliere	1990	Royal National Theatre	<b>Jatinder Verma</b>	Designer Magdalen Bubalcala. Cast included <b>Bhasker, Nizwar Karanj, Ayub Khan Din, Yogesh Bhatt</b> and <b>Shelley King</b>	G, A, Y, S (of earlier translations)	For the first time the Royal National Theatre invited an Asian director settled in Britain to direct a play with an all Asian cast

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Five Guys Named Moe	<b>Clarke Peters</b>	1990	Theatre Royal Stratford East	Director and choreographer <b>Charles Augin</b>	Cast included <b>Kenny Andrew, Omar Okai</b> and <b>Clarke Peters</b>	G, A, V	A musical revue in tribute to the song writer and saxophonist Louis Jordan (1908-75)
Eden	<b>Steve Carter</b>	1990	Riverside Studios	<b>Alby James</b>	Designer <b>Clary Salandy</b> Cast included <b>Burt Caesar, Alibe Parsons, Angela Wynter, Freddy Brooks</b> and <b>Sylvester Williams</b>	A, S	Presented as part of the Black Theatre Season 1990. First performed at the Keskids Centre in 1978
Mothers	<b>Black Mime Theatre</b>	1991	Touring	<b>Denise Wong</b>	Cast included <b>Sky Hunt, Cindy Afflick, Paula Graham</b>	P, A, Y, V	Black Mime Women Troupe
Black Poppies	Documentary compiled from interviews with past and present members of the British Armed Forces	1991	Theatre Royal Stratford East	John Burgess	Designer Alison Chitty. Cast including <b>Michael Buffong, David Harewood</b> and <b>Sylvester Williams</b>	G, Y, A	Adapted for the screen in a BBC drama directed by Andre Molyneux in 1994
The Coup	<b>Mustapha Matura</b>	1991	Royal National Theatre (RNT)	Roger Michell	Designer William Dudley. Cast included <b>Oscar James, Norman Beaton, T-Bone Wilson, Gordon Case</b> and <b>Stefan Kalipha</b>	G, A, S	First commissioned work by a Caribbean writer to be seen in a main house theatre at the RNT
Pecong	<b>Steve Carter</b>	1991	Tricycle Theatre	<b>Paulette Randall</b>	Designer Kendra Ulyart. Cast included <b>Jenny Jules</b>	A, Y, G, Poster NB	An adaptation of Euripides' Medea.

Armed and Dangerous	<b>The Posse</b>	1992	Theatre Royal Stratford East	<b>The Posse</b>	Designer Zara Conway. An ensemble including <b>Brian Bovell, Michael Buffong, Robbie Gee, Roger Griffiths, Gary McDonald, Eddie Nestor, Victor Romero Evans</b> and <b>Sylvester Williams</b>	PR, A	First production by The Posse ensemble
Moti Roti Putti Chunni	<b>Keith Khan</b>	1993	Theatre Royal Stratford East	<b>Keith Khan and Ali Zaidi</b>	Screenplay by Diane Esguerra. Choreographer <b>Monisha Patil-Bharadwaj</b> Cast included <b>Nitish Bharadwaj, Mamta Kaash</b> and <b>Jamila Massey</b>	G, Y, A	The play was presented at the LIFT Festival 1993. It recreated a Bollywood film on stage and was co-produced by Moti Roti Theatre Company and Theatre Royal Stratford East.
King Lear	William Shakespeare	1994	Cochrane Theatre	<b>Yvonne Brewster</b>	Designer Ellen Cairns. Cast included <b>Ben Thomas, Mona Hammond</b> and <b>Diane Parish</b>	G, A, Y, P, V	Talawa Theatre Company Production. Design by Ellen Cairns. Choreography by Greta Mendez. With Ben Thomas as Lear and Mona Hammond as The Fool. Open at the NIA Centre in Manchester, 24 Feb.
Death Catches The Hunter	<b>Biyi Bandele</b>	1995	Battersea Arts Centre	Polly Irvin	Cast included <b>Chad Shepherd, Akim Mogaji, Adjoa Andoh</b> . Designer: Anouk Emanuel	V (ext.), S	A Wild Iris Theatre Company Production following a reading by Black Theatre Forum
Dirty Reality 2	<b>Black Mime Theatre</b>	1995	Touring	<b>Denise Wong</b>	Cast included <b>Mojisola Adebayo, Marva Alexander, Ekundayo, Stuart Pampellone, Lise Stuart</b>	G, A, Y, V, P	Black Mime Theatre Company show about (inter racial) relationships and origins

East is East	<b>Ayub Khan-Din</b>	1997	Theatre Royal Stratford East	<b>Kristine Landon-Smith</b>	Designer Sue Mayes. Cast included <b>Nasser Memarzia</b> and <b>Zita Sattar</b>	S, G, Y, V (also DVD of feature film)	The play was produced by Tamasha Theatre Company and first performed at the Crucible Studio Theatre, Sheffield then continuing in a tour. Later adapted for screen
Iced	<b>Ray Shell</b>	1998	Tricycle Theatre	<b>Felix Cross</b>	Designer Carla Eve Amie. Cast included <b>Tyrone Huggins, Cecilia Noble</b> and <b>Gordon Case</b>	G, A, prompt script NB	Black Theatre Co-operative and Nottingham Playhouse production
Oroonoko	Adaptation by <b>Biyi Bandele</b>	1999	The Other Place, Stratford Upon Avon	Gregory Doran	Designer Niki Turner. Cast included <b>Nicholas Monu</b> see Video section	S, G, A, V	Based on a novel by Aphra Behn. A Royal Shakespeare Company production
Ramayana	Version by Peter Oswald	2001	Royal National Theatre	<b>Indhu Rubasingham</b>	Designer Ultz. Cast included <b>Ayesha Dharker, Gerald Kyd, Guy Rhys</b> and <b>Vincent Ebrahim</b>	P*, G, Y, A	A Birmingham Repertory Theatre Production
The Waiting Room	<b>Tanika Gupta</b>	2000	Royal National Theatre	<b>Indhu Rubasingham</b>	Designer Ruari Murchison. Cast included <b>Shabana Azmi</b>	G, A, S	A praised intercultural piece mixing conventions of naturalistic European drama and stylized Asian melodrama, presented as part of Springboards Season of new plays developed at the RNT Studio.

Note: A major source on this period is Roland Ree's *Fringe First: Pioneers of Fringe Theatre* (Oberon, 1992). For other sources see References & Notes at the end of other sections in this publication. A further list is given on [www.susan.croft.btinternet.co.uk](http://www.susan.croft.btinternet.co.uk)