

PROGRAM NOTE

"HOLDING TALKS"

THE PLAY

Described by the author himself as a "crazy member of my family of 'normal' plays", Holding Talks had its U.S. premiere in 1986, at U.C.L.A., and was recently produced at Wesleyan University, Connecticut.

THE GENRE...

Absurdist drama may be comic in its depiction of man out of harmony with his world. But it oversteps comedy by its preference for situations of the bizarre, the nightmarish, or the dreamlike, in projecting its impressions of reality unchecked by logic or commonsense. Its staple theme is man intent on making sense out of existence, on controlling his situation, but ending up confused, helpless, and even resigned to just drifting along. So much exertion. Nothing much changes. Life goes on. Often, the futility arises from encounters with equally desperate obstacles -- man-made obstacles.

In this play, much is said, but nothing really gets done because there is always one rule, one procedure, one excuse or other, to cite as reason why what needs to really get done, does not get really done. The situation is that of man in bondage to the ceremonials of talk, procedure, officialdom, red-tapism, legalism, et cetera, even where the proper action towards solving a given problem may be clear to all, anyway.

Centuries ago, perhaps feeling stifled by mankind's passion for set modalities, someone had cried out: "Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2.27). In today's language, that translates into: "Rules were made for man, not man for the rules." Much hasn't changed, Really.

THE AUTHOR/DIRECTOR

One of Africa's leading playwrights and directors, Ola Rotimi received his first degree at Boston University (where he was a classmate of now Hollywood actress Faye Dunaway), and a graduate degree in playwriting and dramatic literature from Yale. He has seven published plays, including an international award-winning tragedy, The Gods are not to Blame, which was staged in London, last year. Head of the Theatre Department of his home University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Ola has served as Visiting Professor to other universities in Africa, West Germany, Italy and Sicily. He was Fulbright Professor of African Literature at DePauw last semester, and holds the same position in Wabash this semester.

DIRECTOR'S READINGS OF "HOROSCOPE" OF CAST AND CREW

- To lead actor - MAN..... Immerse yourself in the business of talk. No emotions, it's business. You're "man", the obstacle. Where your temper rises, it should be to help you resist any distraction to your self-fulfillment in talking.
- To BARBER & BEGGARS..... You're "man", the resigned. You've long adjusted to just "drifting along" - coping with problems, if you can, as they come. Today, again you mean to simply carry on with your routines for survival. If you make it, fine; if you don't, well...
- To APPRENTICE BARBER..... You're "man", the victim - forever trying to understand, to act on, happenings around you. The more you try, the more you may get confused. But, not to worry, keep on trying...
- To POLICEWOMAN & PRESSMEN.... Feel nothing, sense nothing. Simply plunge into routine, professional business.
- To SET DESIGNER..... For set, give us claustrophobia - to reflect a world choking from too much talk and less positive action.
- To COSTUMER..... I can 'hear' the colors and texture of your costumes "arguing" with, and among the wearers. That's it, let them argue.
- Generally, to all the ACTORS. Looks like you'd need to act the serious light; the light serious

APPRECIATION

Might I, here, express gratitude for the spirit of comradeship which I've shared, in my brief stay at Wabash, with the students and, in particular, the faculty and staff of the Department of Theatre Arts: Jim Fisher, Dwight Watson, Marge Jackson ("the patient one"), Laura Connors, Rob Hartz ("Iwin" - the stage-design demon).

Too bad I lack both the vision and confidence of a MacArthur to say to you all: Ngo pada wa! My home language for: "I shall return!"

Ola R.
(a Visiting Theatre Colleague)