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*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **The Literary Corner: Eldred Jones on Chinua Achebe (side b)**

Extracted on Mar-28-2024 04:49:54

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European form. Before the 60's you had what was called traditional drama, a kind of folk drama.

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And even though Shiyenka wrote in the 60's,

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the excerpt you heard from the trials of the mighty Gerald depict Gerald praying in a folk dialect

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and the dialect is a major characteristic of folk drama.

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Most folk drama is not written and um I think Shiyenka does something unusual in the trials of the mighty Gerald.

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But on the other hand, after the 60's two forms of drama appeared,

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popular drama of- aimed at the masses of uneducated people

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and literary drama geared for the educated audience.

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Both popular and literary drama are usually written, but more specifically literary drama is written.

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Sometimes popular drama is not written.

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Since African English drama was so late in getting off the ground, so to say,

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and since drama, the more Classical or European form is so complex to write,

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you really do not have an abundance of African English playwrights.

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I mention the Classical or European concept of drama

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because if the African English play right was not writing in this vein,

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it was often very difficult for the writer to get the play published.

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And if the play was not published, then the critics couldn't evaluate it.

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And if the critics could not evaluate the play,

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then it was almost impossible for the writer to get any kind of recognition at all.

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And thus, as a result of these circumstances,

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only a few outstanding African English playwrights have appeared.

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The most- foremost African English playwright without a doubt is Wollay Shiyenka of Nigeria

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and you heard the short excerpt from his play the trial of the mighty Gerald.

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Now now I won't dwell too heavily on Shiyenka's work

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because you'll hear a great deal about him in the next literary corner program.

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But, I do want familiarize you with another Nigerian playwright, John Pepper Clark.



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