

# DANCE

... we cud do that too!  
... but we die when we  
shy from the centre...

LAST week I met the Chief of a group on whom I had occasion to make comments recently. It was clear that those comments — my right and opinion — did not meet with his approval or liking for they seem to have made his talking to me difficult. He keeps his head down low, and makes hardly audible sounds as a response.

Anyhow I saw him making ready plans for another performance for his show and I asked if he was going on the road with it. His remark will set the pace for my observation today. 'Yes', he mumbled, 'the show must go on, nothing can stop it'.

We in Trinidad and Tobago (forgive me, Tobago) are known to take things very, very easy. In most ways we 'live' day to day. We 'live' here without courting the seasons with our God-given imagination; we grin without challenging laws, we abide: we have an illusion that this country is ours, and we can do what we please; we go so far to promote that our hands are strong and in them our destiny is ours and well secured.

In the place of honest confrontation we may take a little chance, once it does not border risk; we are incapable of serious analysis and criticism, we love mamaguy.

Our character is a mask behind a mask. We could not brave ourselves into the light of ourselves, that will require of us too much courage. Courage to stand-up, unblinking in the light of ourselves, the true self.

The ARTS often depict for us what we are, in terms that draw meaning from where we were in times that are old enough to be grouped in tradition and, in projecting into our present reality translations or visions of our future.

## UPLIFTMENT

Very often, even though it is the masses by their will or lack of it who determine the quality of vision, it is usually a very small and scattered number of people who are endowed with abilities to transform it into a language that will prove itself in the common upliftment of all.

In either case, however, be you preacher or audience, leader or follower, player or spectator, a manifestation of truth in our individual role will put us in accord with our finest 'self', and the music we hear will lift our spirits into a dance that is free...

Again, I insist that the leader, the artist is generally closer centre than others. Through him, that divine mission of that people takes shape, demanding more and more the perfection of each gesture his particular talent prefers. If he is singer he must sing. If he is dancer he must dance.

## • LEROY CLARKE

that is an awe that will totally diminish us if we do not break with it.

I am not racist, I do not preach separatism as an end. But I do value the strength of inherent character—my centre. Character that is central in root. My rage should be seen as the voice of one who when he sings, if he be mango tree, he bears mangoes, not Pear-Apple-Grape — (Mango) — Orange-Banana-Strawberry.

There are those who betray that trust with their squeally vexations of their imprisoned spirits. Their attitude is 'the show will go on'... 'That which should be an act that will engage us in a demonstration of seriousness, a ritual of sacrifices to achieve the highest distinction in discipline and self-awareness, to them is a fanciful and fashionable exhibition to support their little ambitions.

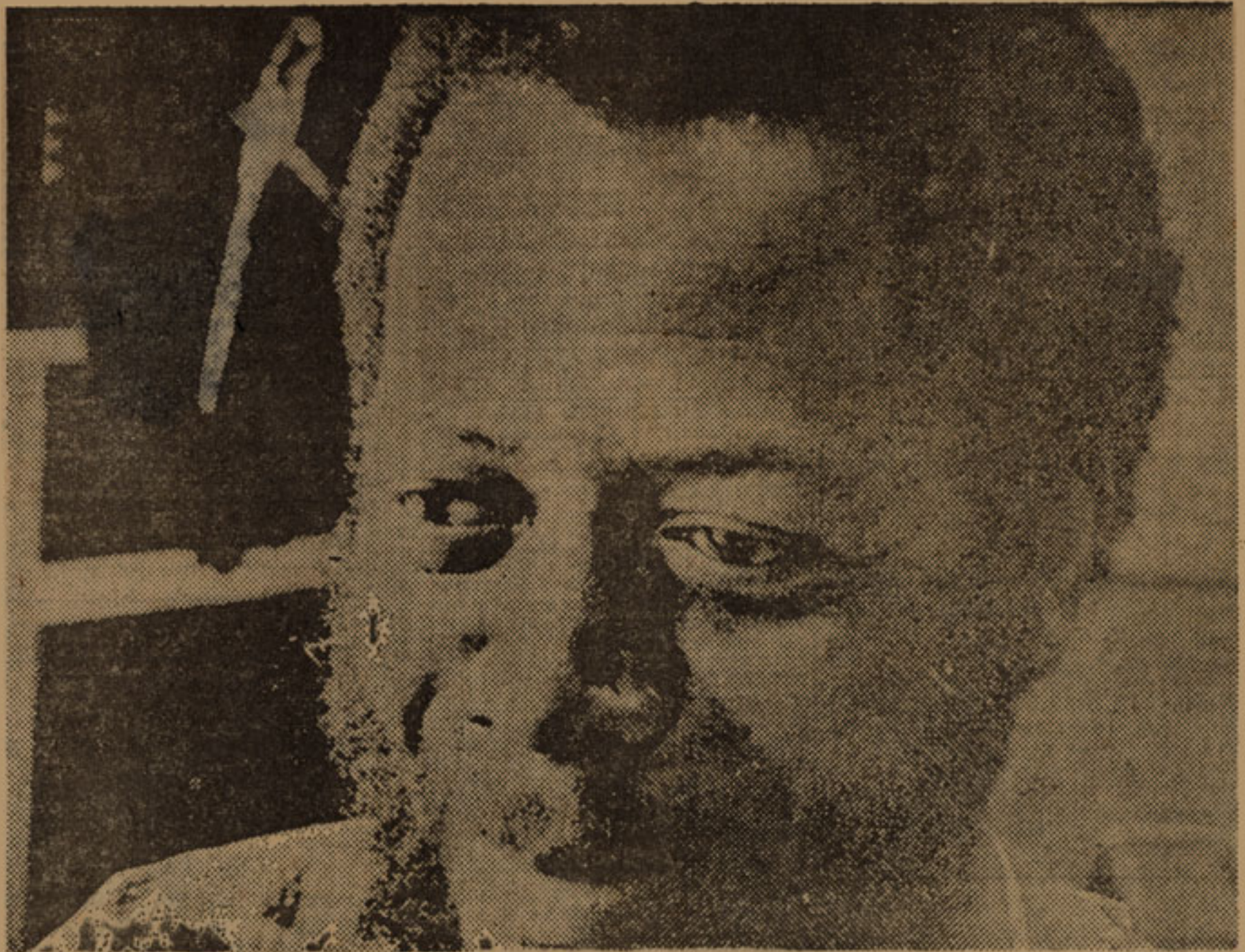
But, please think of our youths, who are new and dew-blessed. What terrible light will rape them, will consume their tender belief in God!

## FESTAC '77

The average African in Nigeria or any other African who went to Festac '77, believes that we are the people who beat pans with sticks and sing calypsoes and wine down the place. On the other hand, we believe that the average African is a savage who wears elaborate head-pieces and forever dancing naked to thousands of drums all over the dark continent.

In two weeks I have witnessed too many shows... called cultural. Dance Theatre, Repertory Company, the best of Better Village etc... the shows go on, nothing or no one wants to stop them and their foolishness. Few seem to agree that at most they take up most valuable time and keep a certain class of people very occupied laughing at themselves. These energies should be better used-up in vying for the highest trophy of the land, and, of course, trips and a car etc... etc! But that's another five articles.

The Humming Birds said hello to Festac '77 in costumes and with movement that lacked the enthusiasm at least of joo-vay. A few days later Repertory Dance Theatre in their farewell, they are going to the Lagos



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International Exhibition breathes a sighing Africa Africa... in costumes that have lost their weight and intent with too many rehearsals, and because the dancers as the few people, people gathered to see them at Queen's Hall are unfortunately too far removed from any but the tourist-like level of African consciousness. I trust that the group will not dance that there, for some Africans may be more serious about that Mother than we can imagine.

That farewell party was a mess. Hosts and guests dishing out one ambiguity after another on an audience, that is ours, and as yet will not accept the responsibility to demand truth. But then... and we did let Keens Douglas get away with his very damp humour. Please, Mr. Douglas, things are really bad enough.

## MEANINGFUL

But thank God for conscience. The hosts could not escape what haunts our deepest memory and which cries out in spite of the charade. We were to see them 'try something' in tribute to one of our most meaningful musicians today. But this did not spark enough to satisfy the expectations and I was not impressed by their testimony or respect.

Certainly if Mr. Astor Johnson really respects Andre Tanker his Theatre is not convinced. Reverence is more electric. Another item, SCHOOLDAYS, which, if it were really internalised, would have been sad and humorous and bright, all that lend to serious comedy.

drums, guitar, voices, bells and gongs: Andre Tanker brings them together with his compositions as if he were a magician. His music rises up before us against terrible odds and acoustics, like a temple in the mist of our morning and we are invited to enter and be consoled by a Truth.

The followers say: Master, few see what you see. That Master replies; that is not true.



In a way, he is Priest if he were a Catholic, Hougan if he were a voodoo, or Prime Minister if he were Head of Government. He answers to no-one and to all, as is in centre are the east, the west, the north and the south; all roads, all rivers flow from him, all converge in him. He is chosen, that choice is his altar. It is from here we are led into redemption, or policed into domination.

## WEARY APPLAUSE

In a country such as ours, a country that houses the mutilated members of numerous races. A country of every shipwreck there is. For the negro, who is the only group without papers and without any real encouragement to rediscover and recover himself, things are hardest. His role has become the one to support everybody else, generally by imitation of every and any other rhythm-form-rhythm outside of his own pulse centre. History maintains that he will always be a slave. His spirit is spilled over, washed thin, his dance lacks the essential style and grace that was his.

But, it is utterly amazing that we have survived at all, that we are left with any semblance of our 'self'! Enough to win our own weary applause and that of those who are more confident in their history.

Be it Christmas or Easter, Independence or Republic—the same carnival; be it urbanisation, industrialisation, communism, socialism, fashion show to fashion show — in our bewilderment we appear foolishly belligerent . . . our dance is a scramble between Bongo and ballet, between calypso and the classics; while the former dies in us for the need of earnest devotions, the latter will be our constant allusion and mystery. An allotment