

Liberian Ambassador Accredited to U.S. H.E. Jeremiah Sulunteh Graces the 42nd Gala of Professor Gbaba as Playwright with His Presence on the Green Carpet!



Saturday, January 9, 2016 was an evening of pomp and pageantry and a “Liberian Cultural Night” at the Bowie Center for the Performing Arts! Also, it was the very first time in western history that the celebration of such magnitude was not being held on a “Red Carpet” but a “Green Carpet” during the 42nd Gala of Professor Joe Gbaba as playwright, theatre director, actor, and producer. In addition, the ceremony was also in observance of the 39th Anniversary of the founding of Dehkontee Artists Theatre at the University of Liberia. In this light, the Embassy of the Republic of Liberia in Washinton, D.C. attached significance to the ceremony particularly as Liberia is now gradually emerging from the dust of war to regain its international status as the oldest African republic.

Thus, no better guest was there to grace the auspicious formal procedure that drew crowds from all races, different age groups and persuasions than the Liberian Ambassador accredited near Washington, D.C., His Excellency Jeremiah Sulunteh and his charming wife. Interestingly, as well, the envoy was accompanied by some of his Embassy Staff including the Deputy Chief of Mission Honorable Jeff Dowana and Mr. Delaney. He and his entourage had come with good tidings from the government and people of Liberia to express their best wishes and to render support to his former Cuttington University Professor Dr. Joe Gbaba who helped to academically nurture the young diplomat that has now become one of the most favorite Liberian envoys in the diaspora. Also, a cardinal reason for Jerry’s likableness is because he is very humble and is a man of his word: when he makes a promise; he keeps it!

A week before the grand occasion Ambassador Sulunteh confirmed that given the significance of the ceremonial he would definitely find some time off his very busy schedule to attend Dehkontee Artists Theatre’s 39th Anniversary to celebrate Liberian history and culture in the theatre and watch a play written, directed, and produced by a veteran Liberian American playwright and theatre icon at a prestigious performing arts center in the State of Maryland—

namely the Bowie Center for the Performing Arts—where quite a number of American celebrities have performed before. Besides, Ambassador Sulunteh freely intermingled and willingly took photographs with members of the cast on the Green Carpet. Further, he warmly greeted other Liberians and foreign nationals that attended the glamorously verdant occasion. Accordingly, he personified and depicted the true spirit of a seasoned diplomat and patriotic representative of the Republic of Liberia to the United States of America and Canada, respectively.



Dehkontee Artists Theatre put up a brilliant performance with a rendition of a Liberian/African fireside fable “The Frogs and Black Snake in Frogsville” written, directed and produced by Dr. Joe Gbaba. He also acted in the production as Spring Frog and demonstrated his versatility to the fullest extent possible. The play was family friendly and appropriate for kids and their families, so many parents took their children to watch “The Frogs and Black Snake” as a New Year’s treat for their kids! Of course Ambassador Sulunteh and Madam Sulunteh spent some joyous moments with the kids on the green carpet with ease and compassion.



A scene from Joe Gbaba’s “The Frogs and Black Snake in Frogsville” at the Bowie Center for the Performing Arts.

Also present were community and organizational leaders like Arthur Doe, Secretary-General of the Union of Liberian Association in the Americas (ULAA), Anthony Urey, President of the United Tchian Association in the Americas (UTAA), as well as maternal uncles and aunt of the Dr. Gbaba including James Glaywulu, Smith Mooney, and Princess Edith Wriध्येe Waleekendeh, Dr. Gbaba’s God daughter, Dr. Anbec Deshield, among others.



The kids were fascinated by the bright, colorful costumes of the actors and actresses and so too were their parents, especially when “Chay-chay-poly Chicken” (Rita Pierre) spread her chicken wings and did a few dance stunts for the crowd on the green carpet. Also, another character from the play that made the night was Black Snake played by Daniel Kevin Moore, Jr. Everybody wanted to take a photo with Black Snake on the Green Carpet because he depicted his role very well as a vicious, cunning serpent that lured the frogs into electing him Chief of Frogsville. Subsequently, he subjected the frogs to inhumane treatment and insecurity and finally drove the frogs out of their own village and renamed it “Black Snakeville”!



Oh yes, the evening was filled with fun and laughter. One of the funny moments was when the President of UTAA, Mr. Anthony Urey challenged Black Snake to pose with him as a

“strong man” on the Green Carpet”! That was so funny that everyone laughed their hearts out! The children loved it, too!



Black Snake (Daniel Kevin Moore, Jr.) and Anthony Urey both play the “superman” challenge stunt on the Green Carpet as the crowd on the Green Carpet hilariously look on!

Ambassador Sulunteh also took some time to meet some of the cast members and officers personally, including other Liberians present who requested a brief audience and chat with him. He was so sociable that everyone felt at home in the theatre and a spirit of comradery and brotherhood and sisterhood contagiously ignited once again among a people not too long ago whose national reputation had been marred by unnecessary bloodshed for nearly over two decades. Here, it is important to note the healing quality of arts and culture and the performing arts in the process of conflict resolution. This is basically due to man’s universal enjoyment of imitation. As a result, people generally tend to forget their worries and misfortunes at times when they are being entertained, especially by a genre of amusement that has a moral lesson attached to it. Thus, the healing quality of culture demonstrated itself in the jolly good mood that those who attended the DATI production of “The Frogs and Black Snake in Frogsville” experienced and exhibited. Hence, it was all so good to be true; and, it is amazing what culture can do for a nation and its people when it is cherished and promoted to the fullest extent possible as an instrument of peace and reconciliation!

More Photos from the Green Carpet!



DATI's President James Krischen Wah, Sr. greets H.E. Jeremiah Sulunteh at the Bowie Center for the Performing Arts.



H.E. Jeremiah Sulunteh greets Mr. Alexander Pierre, son of former Chief Justice of Liberia, James A.A. Pierre at the DATI 39th Anniversary. Looking on the immediate right of Ambassador Sulunteh is DATI's Grand Patron Manjah Ansumana Kanneh.



Dr. Gbaba dressed in his Spring Frog costume poses on the Green Carpet with family and community leaders: (L-R: Isaac Sobah, Jr, DATI's Patrons Club Chair Lady Mrs. Comfort Shilue-Sobah, ULAA Secretary-General Arthur Doe, Dr. Gbaba's sister Mrs. Amanda Sobah-Yah, UTAA Prexy Anthony Urey, and niece Ida Betty Yah.



Black Snake (Daniel Kevin Moore, Jr.) had the night jumping! Everyone wanted a photo shot with the vicious Black Snake! Above Rebecca Vleyee takes her turn with Black Snake on the Green Carpet!



Even the kids lit up when Black Snake took them on!

Building Bridges and Broken Relationships through the Visual and Performing Arts!

Throughout the history of mankind, it has been repeatedly proven that a nation that lacks vision shall desperately perish. Consequently, part of that vision or foresight stems from the culture of a nation and its people. In other words, a “vision” originates from the people’s way of life, their concept about life, and appreciation of the others around them. Against this backdrop, culture provides an enabling condition under which man is able to assess who he actually is, from whence he has come, where he presently stands, in order to determine where or which path to tread in the future. Additionally, culture is the complete embodiment of a people and it is reflected not only in their belief systems but also in the clothes they wear, the shelters under which they sleep, the foods they eat, and ultimately their interactions with one another.

Hence, this begs the following questions: “Do Liberians really know who they are?” Are Liberians aware of their congenial familial relationships as brothers and sisters, or as compatriots—people from the same country?” “If not, then how can Liberians attain and maintain the cordial relationships and sustainable peace and tranquility they need in order to put their lives back together again, and thus move forward?”

For us at Dehkontee Artists Theatre, we believe we have a suitable answer to these rhetorical questions because we have been working very hard for the past thirty-nine years to help Liberians (and all Africans inclusive) to collectively solve their national puzzle—to join

together the dismantled pieces that reflect the oneness of Liberians as a people from the same mother's womb and same navel string.

In this light, Dehkontee Artists Theatre has been endeavoring to help solve Liberia's national puzzle through the promotion and preservation of Liberia's rich cultural heritage and history with scanty family resources and personal funds from its founder with much success during a 39-year span! However, this individual or family effort to promote the heritage of a nation and its people must be supplemented by the good will of the citizens whose history and culture is being preserved and promoted nationally and internationally. Consequently, this may empower Liberians to maintain their oneness of purpose and unity. Furthermore, by adoring and celebrating their diverse cultural and historical backgrounds and differences as a mosaic of Africa's and the Black Race's crème de crème, it would engender national consciousness and the inner desire of all Liberians to take great pride in who they are as citizens of Africa's oldest republic.



Spring Frog (Dr. Joe Gbaba) poses on the Green Carpet with: (L-R) Rebecca Vleyee, DATI Board of Directors Member Honorable Juliana Koffa-Dixon (lady in red) along with Baby Toad (Princess Ariminta Gbaba), Dr. Gbaba's aunt Princess Edith Wrighyee-Wallekendeh. Mrs. Juliana Koffa-Dixon is the daughter of Dr. Gbaba's kindergarten teacher Mrs. Margaret karpeh-Koffa.



Guess who came on the Green Carpet to celebrate! Dr. Gbaba's brother Joe Cole and nephew Jaeden Cole who was celebrating his Birthday on Saturday, January 9th! Of course the agile and fascinating Zebra and Narrator (Alie Kamara) was on the Green Carpet to light up the crowd. He was a dazzling sight to see and listen to during the show; and the audience loved his narrative skills, too!



Of course Mother Toad (Annette Sanders) deserved a bouquet of flowers after such a wonderful performance! Not only did she act in the show but she also helped to design the scenery and the Green Carpet event as Scenic Designer of Dehkontee Artists Theatre. Indeed, Toad the Wise One (Prince Julian Gbaba, oldest son of the Gbaba children) played the lead role in "The Frogs and Black Snake in Frogsville" and demonstrated his artistic and acting skills to the fullest extent possible. His performance was off the hook!



Dr. Gbaba Posing with: (L-R): God Daughter Dr. Anbec Deshield, Baby Toad (Princess Ariminta Gbaba), Winged Angel (Lars Tomo McCritty), Mrs. Agnes Yohn and Sis Earlene Wordsworth DeShield



L-R: Granddaughter McKenzy Gbaba and her dad Toad the Wise One (Prince Julian Gbaba) and Mother Toad, with Dr. Anbec DeShield and Sis Earlene DeShield chat on the other end of the Green Carpet.



McKenzy and her dad Prince Julian Gbaba (Toad the Wise One), Mother Toad (Annette Landers), Mrs. Earlene DeShield, Ms. Linda Onohwosa, Princess Ariminta Gbaba (Baby Toad) and Mrs. Agnes Barclay-Yohn on the Green Carpet.



Even Edward Heart drove from the “City of Brotherly Love” to share his love with Dr. Gbaba and members of the cast of “The Frogs and Black Snake in Frogsville”, and so too did Dr. Gbaba’s onetime Cuttington University student Gertrude Gablason and her friend (standing in the back of Ed Heart). Baby Toad is holding granddaughter Jade while Dr. Gbaba holds grandson Arden. The evening was actually a night for children and their families!



Look who took over the Green Carpet! “Chay-chay-poly Chicken”, Ezax Smith, Bull Frog (Prince Jacques Gbaba, Joseph Wallekendeh, Baby Toad, Princess Edith Wrihyee-Wallekendeh, and Mother Toad!

Promoting a Culture of Peace and Tolerance in Post Conflict Society Through the Arts

No doubt and to say the least, the role of educators, politicians, the youths, and entertainers in finding lasting solutions to political problems in society cannot be overly emphasized. It requires the resolute minds and hearts of all concerned citizens to galvanize support from every nook and cranny of society in order to restore rule of law, law and order and execute the laws of the land to the fullest extent possible. Therefore, this herculean task cannot be singly achieved by Dehkontee Artists without the assistance of the patriotic citizens of Liberia and foreign nationals alike. Against this backdrop, DATI needs your support (financial, material, and moral) in order to achieve its goal of educating and entertaining the citizens of the world through the performing and visual arts. For this reason, DATI formally launched its peace, civic education and conflict resolution campaign to unite Liberians in the diaspora with those on the continent of Africa. Therefore, your humble contribution (financial, material supports) will go a long way in helping DATI achieve its goals and objectives of promoting peace and reconciliation among Liberians at home and abroad.

Please Donate to a Worthy Cause

For those wishing to learn more about the work we do and how to contribute toward a nice cultural program, please log on to: www.dehkonteeartiststheatreinc.com. Also, we would like to receive feedbacks from you and request your active engagement so we may all implement a culture of patience and oneness as a universal family. For, peace is not just the absence of war;

but rather, it is a state of mind that seeks to provide a suitable milieu through which citizens can attain sustainable peace and enjoy their basic human rights and freedoms without the use of force or intimidation!

Published by the Public Relations Bureau of Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI)

12 January, 2016

***Photography by Harrison “BlackBaby” Jiedueh, Videographer of Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI)