

WOLE SOYINKA

Born on July 13, 1934 and educated in Ibadan, Nigeria, and Leeds, England, where he obtained an Honours degree in Literature, Wole Soyinka has held Fellowship and Professorial positions in Theatre and Comparative Literature at the Universities of Ibadan, Lagos and Ife (Nigeria), Legon (Ghana), Sheffield and Cambridge (England), Yale, Cornell, Harvard, Emory (U.S.A.). He frequently lectures as Visiting Professor/Distinguished Scholar in other American, European and African universities.

Essentially a playwright, Wole Soyinka is also active as essayist, poet, novelist and theatre director. He writes mainly in English, but his works are distinguished by their exploration of “the African world view, and are steeped in Yoruba mythology, imagery and dramatic idioms”.

From 1967 to 1969, he was imprisoned during the Nigerian Civil War, most of it in solitary confinement; from this experience emerged *The Man Died*. A very different prose work, *Ake*, his childhood biography, has been acclaimed a classic, as has also been his tragic drama, *Death and the King's Horseman*. Other plays, nearly all produced within and outside Nigeria, include *The Strong Breed*, *The Lion and the Jewel*, *A Dance of the Forest*, *The Road*, *A Play of Giants*, and *Beatification of Area Boy*. His adaptation of Euripedes' classic, *The Bacchae*, was performed by the English National Theatre as *The Bacchae of Euripides*. Other adaptations include Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera*, re-titled *Opera Wonyosi*.

Wole Soyinka's poems are collected under the titles: *Idanre and Other Poems*; *A Shuttle in the Crypt*; *Ogun Abibiman*; and *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems*. Essay collections are titled: *Myth, Literature, and the African World*; *Art, Dialogue, and Outrage*; *Continuity and Amnesia*; *The Open Sore of a Continent*; and *The Burden of Memory and the Muse of Forgiveness*.

Among his artistic recognitions, Wole Soyinka has received the Enrico Mattei Award for the Humanities, the Leopold Sedar Senghor Award for the Arts, the Benson Medal of the Royal Society for Literature, the Premio Grinzane Cavour, The Premio Litterario Internazionale Mondello, Italy, the UNESCO Medal for the Arts, and the Nobel Prize for Literature, '86.