

ANGIE AMRA ANDERSON BA (HONS) - BIOGRAPHY

Producer, Musician, Choreographer, Percussionist, Actor, Tutor, Lecturer, African Arts Consultant

Angie Amra Anderson has contributed to the research and development of African/Caribbean arts since 1972. Her feeling for the African and Caribbean performing arts sector springs directly from her own practical experience and commitment to the development of this sector. In 1976, she co-founded the award-winning **EKOME NATIONAL DANCE COMPANY**, England's pioneering African Performing arts group that took England and Europe by storm for over a decade. As Principal female dancer for Ekome, she was actively involved in all aspects of production, marketing, outreach, coordination of educational programmes and artistic development. In 1982, **EKOME** began a unique collaboration with Peter Gabriel (lead singer of the rock group GENESIS) and recorded a World Music track entitled 'Rhythm of the Heat' and helped launch the world-renowned festival WOMAD (World of Music and Dance), performing alongside Peter Gabriel and the Drummers of Burundi. The company received many accolades including **a royal invitation by Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace**, in recognition for their contribution to cultural cohesion and the significant development of Black Dance in the UK. In addition, from the heart of the African arts world, they received the **BLACK DANCE DEVELOPMENT AWARD** for outstanding contribution to African arts in Great Britain. In 1982, EKOME helped to establish the first BA African Music Course at Dartington College (as African drumming is an integral form in African Performing Arts) and received the Community Development Award, enabling 48 workers to gain new positions in the field of African arts. In 1983 and 1984, 80,000 people voted Ekome the winner of the **TIME OUT & CITY LIMITS Award** for Best Dance Company, leaving Ballet Rambert in 2nd place and London School of Contemporary Dance in 3rd place.

Angie then established **ADINKRA DANCE/DRAMA COMPANY**, merging traditional African/Caribbean dance-drama with more contemporary genres and led the company as Artistic Director for five years. She consolidated this with extensive research and formal tuition at renowned international institutions, including the **Institute of African Studies, Legon, Ghana, W. Africa; The Jamaica School of Dance, JA, West Indies; The National Folkloric School in Havana, Cuba;** and most recently attended the **Institute of African Studies at Obafemi Awolowo, University of Ile-Ife, Nigeria, West Africa.** ADINKRA's seminal production 'Metamorphosis' was highly acclaimed and toured SW England for three years.

Her interest in acting was first seen when she performed at the Albany Theatre in London, in Ntosake Shange's Play 'For Coloured Girls Who Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Wasn't Enough'. Other acting credits include the lead of 'Becky' in **Act Theatre Company** production 'Brashana' and Ritual Theatre's production of 'AKOGUN', a Nigerian adaptation of William Shakespeare's Macbeth, where she played 'AJAYI – Lady Macbeth'. With **SAKOBA Productions**, Britain's Premiere dance/drama group, she performed principal roles in its productions of **ADANILORO, NEMESIS, ABIKU – A CHILD OF TIME**, the latter went on to receive the **DIGITAL DANCE AWARD** in 1992.

As music is an integral part of traditional African and Caribbean arts, her inclination towards music grew simultaneously. She acquired the ability to play 'percussion-based instruments' and 'master drum', a traditional form of drum language. She is known to innumerable records of students as a very charismatic teacher and has created a very stimulating way of communicating this rich and diverse art form. As a musician, she has worked with many artists, not only **Peter Gabriel**, but also highlights stage performances with the Afro-rock group – **Osibisa, Musical Youth, Pattie Boulaye, Franco from Zaire**, and the infamous **Fela Kuti** to name a few. As an Actor/composer/musician she was contracted to co-produce the music/vocals on the film '**Rwendo – The Journey**', directed by Farai Sevenzo for the **National Film & TV School in Beaconsfield**, which later went on to receive a **BAFTA award**. Her TV and Film appearances include, **Melvin Bragg's – 'The South Bank Show'**, '**The Old Grey Whistle Test**', '**A Sailor's Return**', '**Highway**', '**The Pattie Boulaye Show**', '**Rwendo – The Journey**', '**Bacchanal**', '**Ebony**' and recently recorded a program for BBC Education entitled '**Music Makers**'. She also plays percussion for many groups including UK's hip-hop rap artist '**AKALA**'. Recent broadcasts include '**The Hits**', **MTV** and **Channel 4's 'The Nokia Green Room'**

As an Actor/choreographer for **UK Arts International/Creative Origin's** hit musical production '**Ragamuffin**', her roles included choreographer/actor/percussionist/master drummer, touring major theatres nationally at venues such as **Theatre Royal Stratford East, London, Contact Theatre in Manchester** and **the Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds**.

As an ambassador for African arts and commissioned by **IPA (International Performing Artists)** she has toured Sweden 20 times, presenting a program of performances and educational projects in schools, colleges, universities and theatres in Scandinavia for over a decade. She has been a Course Leader for Kensington & Chelsea African Music program, a full time Lecturer for **East 15 Acting School**, a Visiting Arts World Performance Lecturer, a freelance artist and Founder/Director of **AMRA Productions**. Her production, '**Routes & Rhythm**, brought together a diverse range of artists, including Janet Kay, Victor Romeo Evans, Johnny Amobi, Claudio Kron du Brazil and the three times Grammy award winning musical director Dr Gary Hines from **The Sounds of Blackness**.

Angie has toured diverse venues from The Royal Albert Hall to the main stage at Glastonbury Festival in the UK and has presented performances in Africa, Caribbean, Europe and Scandinavia. Angie Amra Anderson was also a nominee for **2015 Best Promoter of Culture Award** from the True Heritage Awards and from the Inspirational Awards UK, she was the recipient of **Inspirational Woman Award for 2016**.

In 2015, 'AmRa – the Heartist' launched her new spiritual transformative work, '**Amra's Affirmation Drumming & Dance**', a combination of positive affirmations, chanting, movement and drumming, a holistic approach that to date has been a rewarding experience for all. The same year, Angie launched **Amra & The Yeye Drummers** – an all-female African drumming group, annually leading the main procession for Africa Day at Trafalgar Square, London.

In 2019, she began her new research and development project entitled '**I Ba Se - I Pay Homage**'- honouring African and Caribbean heroes and sheroes. As a percussionist, she contributed to the new album entitled '**New Dawn**' for the legendary Afro-rock group **Osibisa** released April 2021. Later the

same year, **Jools Holland Boisdale Music Awards** presented Osibisa an award – ‘**The Band of The Century**’

With **Kuumba Nia Arts**, the latest production ‘**SOLD - The Mary Prince Story**’ has received national acclaim. Debuting at the Old Fire Station in Oxford, it was handpicked by Oxford Playhouse to represent a select group of diverse productions to tour the Edinburgh Festival in July/Aug 2019. The production received 5-star reviews and to date 5 awards including ‘Best Ensemble Music Review’ from Edinburgh and in Feb 2022, ‘The Offies’ (Best Off West End productions). In March 2022, the production successfully toured Bermuda, the birthplace of Mary Prince and Chicago in July 2022.

Most recently, for contribution to the development of African performing arts in the UK, she received the Bristol Rise Award for ‘Outstanding Contribution to the Community 2022’ on behalf of Ekome National Dance Company. At WOMAD 2022, Amra performed with Osibisa at the 40th year celebration of the WOMAD festival and was introduced by Peter Gabriel of Genesis as the only performer to have performed at the 1st festival in 1982 and continues to date. Amra also features on two tracks on the WOMAD festival 40th celebration album including the collaboration with Peter Gabriel’s hit track entitled ‘Biko’.

Through workshops, residencies, performances, lectures, seminars, as well as festivals, Amra has maintained a high standard of activities and she is a ‘thought leader’ in her chosen art form. Her love for African Production styles will continue to emphasise the strength, dignity, pride and virtuosity inherent in the various forms of African arts both classical and contemporary.