

# Arts and Africa

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ARTS AND AFRICA

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ANNC. AND SIG. TUNE

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

Welcome to Arts and Africa. This is Alex Tetteh-Lartey with a report from Mozambique.

SIG. TUNE:

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

Let's start with a song called "25th June 1962" sung by the Choir of Popular Forces for the liberation of Mozambique.

MUSIC: "25th June 1962"

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

25 is a highly significant number in the history of Mozambique because the 25th June 1962 was the date of the founding of the ruling party Frelimo to fight against the Portuguese colonists. And it was on the 25th June 1975 that Mozambique finally became independent from Portugal,

Well, as you probably know, Frelimo has just held its third party congress in the Mozambique capital, Maputo. Julian Marshall was at the Congress - the first full scale congress to be held inside Mozambique - and while in Maputo he talked to Portuguese filmmaker Jose Celso Correa about his new film "25". He asked him first why he had chosen the title "25".

JOSE CELSO CORREA:

Well 25 is the key date of the Mozambique revolution. It's the beginning of Frelimo, the foundation of Frelimo. It's the beginning of the arms struggle, 25th September 1964, and there is the fall of Portuguese fascism, mainly because of the fight here in Africa against colonialism, 25th April. Then there is 25th June, the date of independence and there are many many other 25's in the story of this country which are important and I think 25th May is the day of Africa. But it is the key date for Mozambique.

JULIAN MARSHALL:

What sort of audience did you have in mind ? A Mozambique audience or an African audience ?

JOSE CELSO CORREA:

Really, in the beginning an African audience, a revolutionary audience because the first image of this film is a blackboard with the word "revolution". Africa is beginning to learn of revolution and I think all the world is very ignorant in the matter of revolution. Everybody must learn about revolution. We learnt a lot when making this film and we had the intention to make a film for a new culture, a culture that is just beginning, a popular culture. We don't want to make a kind of militant conventional intellectual film for left intellectuals of Europe. We tried to make a very emotional film, a kind of Woodstock in the sense of very popular, a very hard film about revolution and about the new culture that is just beginning. Then we use in the film everything that we have about this culture. We use music, posters, the way of speaking, the poems. Everything that we can find about this culture and it's a musical with a lot of humour, a lot of colour because we show a victory.

JULIAN MARSHALL:

When I saw the film was divided into 2 parts really, separated by an interval. The first part was much more like a commercial, the second part was more like a documentary. Was that your intention. The first part was very slick, it had lots of cinematic changes, a lot of music, a lot of voice overs and yet the 2nd part was just straight documentary about the independence celebrations. Was that your intention ?

JOSE CELSO CERREA:

No, because I think it's like fruit salad. Everything enters, in the pop culture. You have moments of documentary, of music, of laughter, of everything because it is like a kind of mural of the story of the fight of these people and the culture of these people.

JULIAN MARSHALL:

Is this the first work of the Mozambique National Film Institute, is this their first product ?

JOSE CELSO CERREA:

No, it is the second one. The first is a film about the one year of independence, it's a black and white film, but this is the first colour film.

JULIAN MARSHALL:

And are you and your co-director going to continue working with the Mozambique Film Institute ?

JOSE CELSO CERREA:

Yes, for this year we intend to stay here and we intend to make a film about the contradictions, the problems, it will be a film in the opposite sense of the first film. The first film was a

celebration, it was more emotional, the second film is more rational and we intend to show people speaking about the difficulties. People of all social classes, the bad moments. We intend to create several situations to film life through the negative character of Sikonyot (phon). We have some very good Mozambican actors.

JULIAN MARSHALL:

Where do you see the Mozambique Film Industry, if that's the right way to describe it, in the general African context? Do you feel as if it has a role or do you feel that it is going to be a pace-setter?

JOSE CELSO CERREA:

Yes, because of the very clear political line of Frelimo. I think it is possible to build a very strong cinema because the only cinema that has grown in Africa is the neo-colonialist cinema and I think Mozambique has the other possibility, to build a real revolutionary cinema that interests not only Africa, not only Mozambique but all the world. Because these people in general, never saw cinema. We make some sessions of films .....

JULIAN MARSHALL:

..... in peoples homes ...

JOSE CELSO CERREA:

Yes, then there is a very beautiful reaction because they sing together, they learn to read and they read the titles together and their relationship is very different from the intellectual relationship of the conventional cinema. In Africa, the movie is different because it is a collective celebration, it's like a melange of cinema and theatre. It's very alive, the session.

MUSIC: "25th June 1962 sung by the Choir of the Popular Forces for the liberation of Mozambique.

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

Film maker Jose Celso Correa talking in Maputo to Julian Marshall about his new film "25".

Well Julian is back and is in the studio with me now. Well Julian, what is the cultural scene like in Mozambique?

JULIAN MARSHALL:

Well, I think Frelimo's first priority is obviously to try and develop the country socially and economically, but I think that there is an awareness on their part that culture can perhaps play a part in this development, development of a sense of a new identity to the people. While I was there I attended what was described as a gala evening. This took place during the course of the 3rd Congress and at this gala evening there were various dance troupes and singing troupes gathered together from all over Mozambique. Some of them were merely doing their

traditional dancers from their areas but others were also singing songs that had been specially composed for the third congress and these songs had a very strong political message and I understand that one of the troupes there had actually gone to Festac in Nigeria, one of the Mozambique troupes and also a Mozambique singing troupe and they had sung songs at Festac which again had this very strong revolutionary message.

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

Do they use film and television as a means of instruction ?

JULIAN MARSHALL:

No, there is no television but there is radio and they do have educational programmes on the radio and this is combined with a campaign. I suppose the best word in English would be the translation of the Portuguese, Alpha beta-isation and this is an adult literacy campaign that is going on all the time in factories and also in the countryside in order to promote literacy amongst the people. I think another way perhaps that they try and get through to the ordinary people is with the use of wall paintings which you see a lot of, both in the capital Maputo and also in the other cities in Mozambique like Beira. The characters dressed as peasants, workers or soldiers are painted in extremely vivid colours, carrying flags, the various tools of their trade, and underneath or above the picture is a strong political slogan again carrying a message so that even if the people don't understand the wording, the message contained in the painting gets through very strongly.

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

How about Films ?

JULIAN MARSHALL:

Well films, I think Frelimo are extremely keen to develop a Mozambican film industry and they do now have this Mozambique National Film Institute and it has attracted from all over the world, this particular film institute, both resident and visiting producers and directors, from countries like Brazil, from Portugal and while I was there the French director, Jean Luc Godard was having a look around Mozambique, talking of the possibility of making a film about the country. But they would like to see what they describe as a peoples cinema and perhaps seeing small screens being erected in the villages by a mobile unit and films with a distinctly political and perhaps propogandist message being made and shown at these small cinemas around this country.

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

Well, thank you very much Julian.

MUSIC: Mozambique music from Festac.

ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY:

That was singing by the troupe sent to Festac by Mozambique

which Julian just talked about.

And that brings us to the end of this weeks programme.  
This is Alex Tetteh-Lartey saying goodbye and hoping you'll  
join me again next week for more "Arts and Africa".

MUSIC: "Take Me to the Mardi Gras" by the Bob James Trio  
Composed by Paul Simon.

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