

**National Drama Association of Trinidad and Tobago
Extraordinary General Meeting held on May 20, 2018**



Chairman Opening Remarks

Good Morning Mr Damien Richardson, Cultural Officer III at the Ministry of Community Development Culture and the Arts, Trustees Mr. Nigel Scott and Dr. Helmer Hilwig, Honourable Members and Observers. On behalf of the National Drama Association of Trinidad and Tobago Executive Committee 2017- 2019, it is my honour, pleasure and privilege to welcome you to this Extraordinary General Meeting.

Thank you for making the arrangements to spend this Sunday morning with us. We appreciate that you have recognized that NDATT is a **collective** movement of theatre practitioners where your voice, vote and active participation matters in how the Association is governed. So I thank you again for answering our call, and in doing so, taking up your responsibility as members of the National Drama Association. Thank you.

As Item 2 under "Special Business"; Introduction of new members of the Executive Committee will be covered in my address, Under EGM Standing Order 4b, I move to change the order of the Agenda for this meeting. Who seconds this motion? All in favour? All Against. Any abstentions?

Motion Passed.

It has been just over 9 months since you, our members, came together and elected a new executive to continue the work which began with the Caretaker Committee, to revitalize the NDATT and re-establish the association as a formidable and influential player in promoting all aspects of drama in Trinidad and Tobago, the purpose for it was founded by James Lee Wah in 1980.

On July 23rd 2017, you elected Wendell Etienne (president), Myself as Vice President, Safa Niamat-Ali as Secretary, Ria Carrera-Toney as Assistant Secretary, Theresa Awai as Treasurer, Paula Lindo as Public Relations Officer, Anderson La Barrie as Education Officer, and Rubadiri Victor as Resource Development Officer.

In offering ourselves for service, and even more so at our first Executive Committee meeting, we understood that significant work has to be put into establishing a new foundation; updating existing or creating new processes and procedures within which the NDATT would function during our term, but also lay the groundwork for future holders of office.

We undertook all of this while also making the decision to function within the parameters of the Association's standing constitution which we inherited, setting a precedent of respect for due process, the rule of law, and the voice of our membership.

It goes without saying that an organization is only as strong as the foundation upon which it is built. During the years within which the association lay dormant, the theatre landscape changed significantly and a lot of the foundations which once grounded the organization, were no longer applicable in this 21st century, so essentially, there were many areas where we had to begin anew.

It is a difficult task to reviving an organization which lay dormant for over the past six or seven years, and we the Executive valiantly began the mammoth task to bring the procedures and organization in line with current practices. It has been an extreme challenge, but at the same time, rewarding work. On one hand we learned about the necessary procedures and government policies required of us,

and began putting systems in place to comply with these, which also ensures that the next Executive to follow us will have some level of continuity. On the other hand, we are conscious that the membership expects us to deliver on programmes that will benefit them.

I want to share the words of Dr. Wilkinson who in reference to our current situation noted “The Executive now finds itself working overtime simply to maintain the organization and keep the membership hopeful that a new day is truly here. Each position on the Executive is at this time a full-time job that is being done by a committed, part-time person.”

This demand, coupled with other emerging commitments in the personal and/or professional lives of some of our elected team members, resulted in their inability to continue their work with us in an official capacity. So what began as an executive committee of 8 in 2017, was essentially halved by 2018.

Earlier this year, we said goodbye to our elected Treasurer, Education Officer and Resource Development Officer. We appreciate the time that we shared together and are grateful for the contributions they made while they were members of our executive committee. Thank you.

Now if I mentioned that the work of the NDATT was a full time job with 8 persons on the Executive, can you imagine what the workload was like after we said farewell to our former committee members? It was with this in mind that a strategic decision was made to activate Section VII (a) of the Constitution which states " The Executive Committee shall have the power to fill any vacancies occurring on its membership, from the membership of the Association, and any member so appointed shall continue until the next BGM.

With this in mind, we appointed:

- Mr. Dese Simon, perhaps best known for his work with DC Shell Theatre, and with experience in financial management, as our new Treasurer.
- Mr. Edwin Erminy, an incredible set designer and assistant professor in scenic design at UTT Academy for the Performing Arts as our new Education Officer
- Ms. Lorraine Nero; a member of Tobago Drama Guild, but also a Special Collections librarian at UWI St. Augustine’s Alma Jordan Library as our Tobago representative, ensuring that our sister isle always has a seat at the table in the National Drama Association of Trinidad **and** Tobago

You’ll be hearing more from these persons as the day progresses, and I encourage you to speak with them, get to know them when you see them, but for now, please let us welcome them with a round of applause.

Ria Carrera-Toney, who was initially elected as the Assistant Secretary, having been contributing documents, systems and services towards Resource Development since the onset of our election and having been acting as Resource Development Officer since the office was vacated, has accepted the offer to continue doing so in an official capacity. She has resigned her position as Assistant Secretary and been officially appointed as the new Resource Development Officer.

Our elders, some of whom prefer to be referred to as ‘yongians’, the persons who comprised the caretaker committee that revitalized NDATT, have also been enlisted in a ‘Council of Elders’ capacity. Dr. Efebo Wilkinson and Dr. Helmer Hilwig have made a commitment to sit in on our meetings, to lend their experience and wisdom to our discussions as well.

Together, this new incarnation of the 2017- 2019 Executive team, is continuing to do the work which started almost 40 years ago with James Lee Wah; to ensure that the National Drama Association is at the forefront, blazing the trail, developing all aspects of Drama in Trinidad and Tobago.

As a collective, I emphasize that each member of the Association is important and we need your help to make the work lighter! We welcome your ideas, we want you to volunteer for committees, we want your energies, your creativity and active participation in the execution of our projects and the development of a theatre industry that will serve us all. NDATT is a collective movement of theatre practitioners. NDATT is not only the executive who holds the office, we are all NDATT. We want your assistance in building the Association so that we can proudly proclaim that "I am NDATT"

I now turn you over to our Secretary who will give you a more detailed update on our projects and activities.