

EMANCIPATION DAY

(The Story of Coloured Edwardian Family)

By Sara Clifford

A play with songs from British Music Hall and the Black American tradition

Commissioned by Maya Productions from research by Delmozene Morris-Ley

Producer/dramaturg – Christopher Preston Director – Amani Naphali

Co-producer Delmozene Morris-Ley



It is 1903 and the hit Negro musical *In Dahomey* has arrived from America to the Shaftsbury Theatre, London. A highly talented cast are lead by the famous comedian, Bert Williams and conducted by composer Will Marion Cook. Bert and his company tell the story of their one time compatriot, Dr. George Rice and his journey to middle class suburban South London where on Christmas eve 1915 he and his family excitedly awaiting the arrival of his sister Dr. Harriet Rice, from the war fields of Europe. They have not met since George left America 46 years ago to study medicine in Edinburgh.



George Rice (centre) with students of the Royal Edinburgh Infirmary

Sara Clifford has produced a Brechtian script, weaving fact and fiction together. Using flashback, the *In Dahomey* characters reveal and comment on the action. Songs from *In Dahomey*, Spirituals and Music Hall are used to underline and tell the story.

BACKGROUND

The story of the Rice Family from Sutton was discovered in the local library archives by Delmozene Morris and following further research we resolved to tell their story on the stage. In 2002 we spent a week improvising and exploring themes with Director Amani Naphthali and a group of actors. Amani is well known for his monumental “Ragamuffin” and his technique of fusing of cultures from the past and present. He has a vast knowledge of Black History and is dedicated to passing this on to the next generation. By 2003 we had a first draft that incorporated the music and we were able to present this work at The Soho Theatre and at Theatre Royal Stratford East as rehearsed readings.

FUTURE

We are currently looking for a venue for this production

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