THE CHAMPION SPORTSMAN

BY AZUBUIKE ERINUGHA

Α

German-Nigerian Co-Production

Producer: Azubuike Erinugha

Anja Fiedler

David Reuter

In cooperation with

InterArte and the Braunschweig University of Art

Index

1.	The Film – Logline	3
2.	The Project	3
3.	What is Nollywood?	4
4.	Why a German-Nigerian Nollywood Film Production?	4
5.	Producers Note and Social Impact	6
6.	What is InterArte?	7
7.	Synopsis of the Film The Champion Sportsman	8
8.	Concept and Visual Realization	9
9.	Score Music	11
10.	Distribution	12
11.	Screenings	12
12.	The Crew	13
13.	Cast	16
14.	Azubuike Erinugha	17
15.	Most Recent Film Works	18
16	Contact	19

The Film - Logline

Okoro Ajuonuma – a rather untypical migrant from Nigeria – comes to Germany with someone else's passport. While having no idea, who he actually is supposed to be, Okoro's own quest to make quick money clashes with realities of culture shock, language troubles, lifestyle differences and other economic, social and political misadventures ...

The comedy reveals the typical clichés of Europe in Africa, which cause immigrants to arrive in their desired country unprepared to all these obstacles. And it questions the typical European attitudes towards Africa, which are causing lots of these obstacles and many others.

The Project

The Champion Sportsman is a Nollywood movie realized in a very special and unusual Nigerian-German co-production. It is a unique initiative of the Nigerian writer, producer and film director Azubuike Erinugha and the German artists network InterArte and will be realized in some parts in cooperation with the Braunschweig University of Art. It will be shot mainly in Berlin, only partly in Enugu and Lagos.

The aim of the project is to approach and reflect the complexities of migration in a way, which confronts clichés and offers divergent perspectives on the issue. The focus is split, on high-pitched African expectations of a life in Europe and on the humiliating European politics against African migrants as well.



for more information, please stay tuned...

What is Nollywood?

The cinema of Nigeria is known as *Nollywood*, which derived from Hollywood, like Bollywood.. In just 13 years, *Nollywood* has grown from nothing into the third largest film industry of the world, releasing some 100 "home videos" every month. That has pushed foreign media off the shelves in most of Africa and is now marketed all over the world.

Nollywood-film productions, shot mostly in just a few days and with low budgets, are known for a special way of storytelling and simple production values. Being widely independent from the conventions and conditions of Western mainstream film production as well as from those of the international arthouse and festival cinema, Nollywood films are focussed on topics current and of interest for an African mass audience, this way achieving relevance and accessibility for a growing number of people in Africa and the African diaspora.

For their catchy approach to audience-oriented stories, their self-sufficient independency from the gravitational centres of international film production and their intriguing involvement in the making-of of a whole new cinema, *Nollywood* films are gaining more and more interest amongst new audiences outside of Africa and its diaspora. Especially their do-it-yourself production attitude is even linking them with a long tradition of artists' films in Europe and the United States e.g., in spite of their completely different sujets and production contexts.

Why a German-Nigerian Nollywood Film Production?

Being of existential necessity for a huge and growing number of people, migration is a global reality, which also people in Africa and Europe have to face, though in very different ways and with differently existential meaning. While on the African continent severe conflicts as well as economically difficult situations often were giving cause for migration on a bigger scale, Europe has developed and militarized its border politics in the previous years in fast steps. Rapidly it has been extending its border zones also over the African continent, increasingly threatening human rights and international laws and conventions. The brutal effects on migrants coming from the African continent, who are especially confronted with these politics, are obvious and also gained a certain coverage by the media. But to deal with the underlying correlations and also the European responsibilities for these happenings on a broader basis, beyond spectacular occasions and stereotypical views, is still widely necessary in Europe.

For those migrants, who have been lucky to arrive in the desired country, their new life can grow into a long term trap, offering no way out. Besides work restrictions and many other unexpected difficulties in their "guest country", for them it also often becomes a big problem to communicate this new reality to their families. As a majority of migrants

is leaving home not for their own personal benefit and career, but to help and support their families at home, the expectations of their relatives left behind and their own wish to meet these expectations can create a difficult situation, leaving both sides trapped in a circle of demanding and confirming a reality which doesn't exist..

Being familiar with this dilemma, also through many fellow Nigerians, writer and director Azubuike Erinugha decided to pick up this problem as central topic for a film addressed to a big *Nollywood* audience, in order to bridge, by artistic means, the gap in communicating these experiences of migrants. Coming from his own experience with film in Nigeria, he has chosen a comedy format and a Nigerian comedy star to reach an audience of relevant size. But dealing with the situation of Nigerian migrants in Germany the film idea itself needed to be challenged by the local realities and perspectives in this country.

The Berlin artists network InterArte (s. below) has been engaged in the topic of migration and the historical and actual relations between Africa and Europe, for many years. In 2005, it has realized a festival with film and lecture program on these and related topics and an artists caravan to West Africa, searching for contact and personal exchange with local artists and musicians, also visting the migrant camp C.E.T.I. in Ceuta on their way. In 2006, a documention of the journey and its artistical outcomes followed, in two exhibitions and a catalogue. Since 2007 this work is continued within a forum for thematic discussions and artistic collaborations, Azubuike Erinugha's film idea becoming one of them.

After Erinugha's introduction of his idea to the forum, a group shaped up as a crew of local artists with their own ideas, film experiences and perspectives on the topics dealt with in the film, to work on the idea and all the other aspects of the film in close collaboration of director and crew. This way, contrasting experiences, points of view, thematical accentuations and artistic approaches have been integrated into a common concept for a highly hybrid format. The basic point of departure has been that Erinugha's initial idea to critically reflect expectations amongst Nigerian migrants needed to be confronted and completed with an extensive criticism of the "frame work" caused by a whole set of European attitudes and politics.

The film project *The Champion Sportsman* will not only offer diverse perspectives on migration, but also combine different styles and ways of filmmaking for this purpose. The comedy conventions and the production style of *Nollywood* films, both aiming at a mass audience, will meet an artistic approach to film, which is shaped by Experimental Video, Performance Art and Docu Fiction e.g. and usually aiming at the rather small audiences interested in artistic experiments or thematic information. **Thus both artistic formats will be challenged to be entertaining and inspiring for very diverse audiences in Nigeria and Europe.** Still the film will be addressing both of the audiences with a specific set of messages in a specific cinematographic language.

We consider film to be an effective vehicle to convey relevant information while breaking some of the common clichés of Europe in Africa. Such clichés can be seen as an important cause for migrants to leave their countries with false hopes and aspirations. Since *Nollywood* films are available in even the most remote areas of the African continent and seen also by African Diaspora in Europe and North America, we are therefore convinced that our message will reach the desired African audiences.

We also consider film to be an appropriately multi-perspective medium to critically review the European role in this whole subject. By means of a convincing artistic performance within a challenging cinematographic experiment, given a growing interest in *Nollywood* cinema and due to the rapidly growing actuality of the issues shown and discussed in the film, this "review" should reach the desired audiences in Europe as well.

Producers Note and Social Impact

The film *The Champion Sportsman* is aiming at a sophisticated discussion of the complex topic of migration in an accessible format.

The three plots of the film - the champion, the Nigerians in the hangout and the German artists - will allow the filmmakers to look at this subject from different angles and to reveal and integrate diverse perspectives on it.

Scenes and dialogues as well as the actual art works and performances within the film will be mutually reflecting and commenting each other, including elements of parody and self-irony. Scene structure and film editing will be used as means of a pointed thematic discourse and an accentuated cinematographic rhythm alike. This way the issue of migration will be presented in an unusual mode of musical and thoughtful montage, which should offer "easy access to uneasy insights".

The film will be touching the following aspects:

- the European border politics and its contra-productive effects
- the extension of the external border of the EU into the interior of Africa and Europe
- the illegalization of migration and contradictive European signals and practices towards irregular migrants
- personal strategies like intercultural marriage and possible prospects
- the work situation for asylum seekers and other migrants in Germany
- the freedom of movement and travel, double standards in the international performance of this basic human right and the "Residenz-pflicht" as specific German atrocity in this regard
- racism in Germany (also in regard of the situation of Black Germans)
- Europe as one major cause of the exodus of African people
- Europe as an important historical and current source of wrong beliefs about Europe

What is InterArte?

The Artists Network InterArte has been founded in the year 2000 in Berlin. But as a growing group of collaborating artists it already had developed within a series of projects since 1996.

The work of InterArte is focused on an ever-changing integration of different artistic genres and formats in order to create unique, vivid and complex artistic situations, which are also linked with the given local realities. Therefore InterArte is looking for site-specific answers to changing places, interiors as well as outdoor areas and public spaces, which are providing contact zones with non-artistic contexts. The projects of InterArte are realized in specific collaborations with different public and private institutions and partners. The network is searching for and promoting a further local and international connection of artists and interested non-artists. InterArte presentations are often featuring individual works of the group members, but as part of a common concept and within in a collective context. The created situations are usually inter-active and participatory.

Besides site-specific works in Berlin, the local base of the network, a lot of the InterArte projects have been conceived and realized in international cooperation and included travels to Switzerland, Russia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, Morocco, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Benin and Nigeria e.g., with presentations in these countries a well as in Berlin and other German cities. Partly, also return visits of the resp. partners to Berlin have been realized.

Projects: El paseo de Buster Keaton (1998), eine Art Parade (1998), violett - wass kan dinsky? (1999), the festivals emballage (2000) and emballage.2 (2005), Künstlerbahnhof Westend (2001), Essmaschine (2003), Fassadenrepublik (2004), the artists caravan nawarak lelmal to West Africa and beyond (2005), regular artistic contributions to the Berlin Carnival of Cultures (2001-08), and many others.

A common feature of most of these projects is the inclusion of film or video into the live setting, often as counterpart to the performance or as installative work. Besides the common projects, many of the artists of the network have their own personal film background, stretching from the production of documentary films to the work with experimental video and super8 for performances and installations to the production of music clips and VJing.

Synopsis of the Film The Champion Sportsman

After his fiancée decides to marry a rich African who lives in Europe, the Nigerian Okoro Ajuonuma knows what he has to do. He sells his shop and all his belongings to buy a false passport. But after arriving in Berlin/Germany, he realizes that it is not as easy to settle down in Europe as he had imagined and believed. Apart from daily disappointments, Okoro is faced with severe language, money and racism issues. Dreaming of gaining huge money easily, he realizes that not even a minimum wage job is there for him.

Polly, Kaja and Odogwu have already been living in this immigrant dilemma for years. They share their experiences and thoughts throughout the film while a group of German artists deal with the topic by preparing a film about migration. Not only by coincidence a widening net of relations between both of these groups and Okoro is developing.

To his family at home Okoro gives the impression of living in an apartment fully furnished including electronics and telephone. But in fact, he is living inside a telephone booth! At the same time he is trying to learn every survival method in reach from other immigrants he has met in Berlin. He is challenged with some typical situations most African immigrants in Germany are going through. He tries his best to adjust but the pressure to send money home keeps mounting. This and other realities are driving Okoro from one trouble to the next till he gets arrested and processed for deportation!

But instead of being deported, a twist of hope shines upon him! Okoro is suddenly welcomed like a star! How could Okoro know that the passport he bought in Nigeria had been stolen from a real sports champion? And that the same passport equally contains a valid sports visa for a media hyped championship event? Yet, a new slight problem is around the corner: Okoro is overweight and unathletic as a donkey!

Does Okoro have a choice? How is he going to bear the shame awaiting him back home as a total failure? Will Okoro finally discover the fastest way of making his millions in Europe or just go back home broke to face the ridicules and suffer untold stigmatisation from his own people he has lied to?

Okoro might be left in suspense, while the artists are trying to cast Okafor for their film ...

This is a subtle comedy that, with a grim sense of humour, is showing and parodying the obstacles an African immigrant in Germany has to face.

Concept and Visual Realization

In *The Champion Sportsman* a serious topic is meeting with comedy, and the conditions of Nollywood film production are meeting with European Art Film and Performance Art. This quite unique constellation offers a whole set of challenges.

In order to achieve an entertaining as well as informative film, two serious under plots will be included into the Nollywood style comedy of the main plot to deal extensively with the issue of migration and with the realities in Berlin, in a semi-documentary style. A group of Nigerian migrants in Berlin and a group of Berlin artists will be the film personnel to discuss and reflect different experiences with and perspectives on migration in complementary manners.

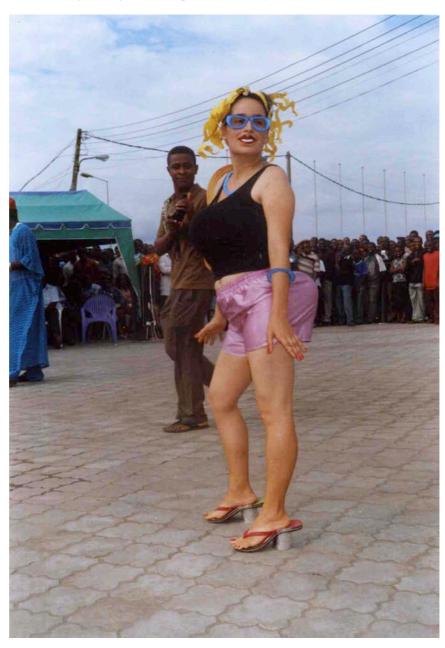
To allow furthermore a rather unusual and also playful look at those realities, which are providing the equally unusual conditions for the making of this film, the comedy story will meet with the actual film set and cast. This way, the level of its production will be lapsing into the fiction of the film.

While the Berlin part of the film will be realized with laities, rather performing than acting, the Nigerian part will be done with professional actors of *Nollywood* cinema.

The main character in the film is expected to be played by John Ikechukwu Okafor a.k.a. Mr. Ibu - famous Nigerian comedy actor and guarantee for a wide interest in and possible success of the film in Nigeria.

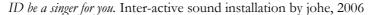
In order to perform the very special cinematographic experiment outlined by this concept with the positive results of artistic achievement and convincing discussion, the film makers, besides their own contributions, are preparing the cooperation with universities and art schools as well as looking for the support of passionate people in the worlds of film and the other artistic genres and sports.

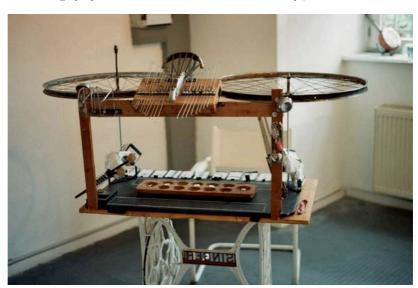
sisi eko in Lagos/Nigeria 2007, performance by Sarah Braun



Score Music

For the production of the soundtrack a series of cooperations is planned with Nigerian and German musicians living in Berlin. The soundtrack is also planned to feature songs by a group of musicians in Ghana. The original score for the film will be written by the Berlin sound artist johe. It will consist of songs and of instrumental tracks. Migration and related topics will be reflected in the song texts as well as in the materials, objects, media and sound systems, which will be used to build a set of instruments in order to realize this soundtrack. The production process of the music will partly appear in one of the two side stories of the film.





Distribution

Nigeria/Aftica: The film will be released in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa by SkyBoy Entertainment Limited in the typical Nigerian way by DVD and VCD discs, sold in Nigerian shops and market stalls. A guarantee for a successful distribution also in the cinema screenings is our main character - the Nigerian filmstar - John Okafor and the known director Azubuike Erinugha.

Initial 50,000 copies will be sold at the price of two dollars each. This will make them affordable for most Nigerians and Africans.

Germany/Europe: The distribution in Germany and other European countries will be founded on very well coordinated niche marketing screening the film on Festivals and in locations besides mainstream cinema, focusing on the following target groups: Nigerians and other African migrants living in Europe, European Nollywood fans, people, institutions, NGOs and groups, giving attention to migration, cineasts, art intitutions, universities. The VOICE Refugee Forum, Jena and ADKV e.V. Erfurt have already indicated interests in distribution.

Canada and USA: Towncrier International Inc. will distribute on cinema in major cities in Canada and the United States. This will be be followed by DVD and VCD sales.

UK: The Nollywood Factory, a UK entertainment distribution company has also indicated interest in cinema release in over ten cinemas running for months. TNF will also coordinate sales of DVD and VCD discs in the UK.

Screenings

Following locations and institutions have shown already interest in screening *The Champion Sportsman*:

- Werkstatt der Kulturen (Berlin, Germany)
- Arthouse KULE (Berlin, Germany)
- Nigeria House (Berlin, Germany)
- Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin, Germany; angefragt)
- Thomas Aslan (UdK Berlin, Germany)
- HAU (Berlin, Germany; angefragt)
- The Nollywood Factory, TNF (UK)
- Towncrier International Inc. (Canada)
- Skyboy Entertainment (Lagos, Nigeria)
- The VOICE Refugee Forum (Jena, Germany)
- ADKV e.V. (Erfurt, Germany)

THE CREW

AZUBUIKE ERINUGHA

NIGIRIAN PRODUCER, WRITER & FILM DIRECTOR

Erinugha majored in screen production with Bachelor's degrees in both English Language and Literary Studies. He has variously worked as screenwriter, line producer, production manager, executive producer, producer and director in major Nollywood productions. His full length feature film, *The Plumber*, has been awarded best movie of the month, April 2004. He stars in his current work, *The Asylum*, which he wrote, produced and co-directed. Erinugha is married and lives in Germany where he currently is teaching.



DAVID REUTER

GERMAN PRODUCER, PERFORMER AND CO-DIRECTOR

David Reuter works as intermedia & performance artist and is professor for Art in Action, Performance and Drama at the Braunschweig University of Art. He is the initiator of several international projects, festivals and exhibitions in different countries and was one of the organizers and artists of the caravan *nawarak lelmal* to West Africa in 2005. He is member of the artists network InterArte, Choroso and Kulturkontakte e.V.



ANJA FIEDLER

PRODUCER, PRODUCTION MANAGER & ACTOR

Anja Fiedler works as production manager and assistant director for over 10 years for international documentary and feature film productions and as project coordinator for cultural & art projects. She worked for films as *The pianist* by R. Polanski, *Rhythm is it!* by Th. Grube or *Die Kurische Nehrung* by Volker Koepp. She joined the InterArte Network in 1997 and traveled in 2005 the art caravan *nawarak lelmal* to West Africa. She is member of InterArte, self e.G. and executive Vice president of Kulturkontakte e.V.



PIOTR ROSOLOWSKI

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Piotr Rosolowski studied film and television cinematography at the Krzyszytof Kieslowski Department of Radio and Television, University of Silesia and received his BA in2002. In 2004 was a scholarship holder for one year in the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne for independent studies on full length documentary film project. He was DoP of films like *Three for the Taking (2006), 7x Moscow (2005), The Goat Walker (2004).*

JÖRG HEUER (JOHE)

CO-WRITER, SCORE COMPOSER AND PERFORMER

Being educated as pipe organ builder and art teacher, Jörg Heuer works as intermedia artist with special focus on live cinema and sound art. Since 1996 he is conceiving and realizing art and theatre projects, which are often based on his work as performance teacher at the Universities of Art in Berlin and Braunschweig and performed in an international context, e.g. during the artists' caravan *nawarak lelmal* to West Africa in 2005.



He is member of the arthouse KuLe, the artists network InterArte, the social art project Cargotopia and the Ikuku Cultural Group.

SARAH BRAUN

CONTINUITY & PERFORMER

Sarah Braun is a performance artist. Her short solo pieces are based on a comical appearance and body language. She says if people laugh, they can better digest the serious message. Her main interests are clichés and stereotypes of the society she lives in. In 2006/07 she lived for 8 month in Lagos/ Nigeria with a DAAD artist-grant together with her husband Okechukwu Elosi. From her everyday life experiences she developed sisi eko, a solo piece which she performed at public places in Lagos. Sisi eko will appear in the film and thus melt the border between performance art and film acting. She degreed 2004 from the Braunschweig University of Art, where she studied performance & video with Marina Abramovic.



OKEY ELOSI

SKRIPT CONSULTANT & PERFORMER

Okey Elosi, before a businessman at Alaba International Market in Lagos/Nigeria, is now based in Berlin/Germany. He discovered art through his wife Sarah Braun and started to perform in different art projects. His everyday life experiences in Nigeria and Germany and his personal migration background are an important contribution to the film.



ELISE GRATON

LOCATION MANAGER & CASTING

Elise Graton studied Cultural Journalism at the Universität der Künste Berlin, besides editing & film dramaturgy. She has a special passion and talent for finding unusual locations and strong characters. She works for different german and francophone medias (ZEIT-Online, Kulturaustausch, lepetitjournal.com/berlin) with a focus on literature, theater, comics and unconventional/international art projects.



In 1999, she took part in an exchange between

students of the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and the Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts of Abidjan. Through this journey to Ivory Coast, her interest for actual cultural, political and economic relationships between Africa and Europe has raised more and more.

She is member of the arthouse KuLe.

JOHN A. DURUMBA

ACTOR & ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

John A. Durumba graduated in Tourism Management in Berlin, Germany where he also resides. He has been the Cultural Leader of Igbo Cultural Group, Berlin. He is the current project coordinator of *The Ikuku Project*, leader of the Ikuku Cultural Group and the creator of *The Hidden Passport* which is the first program of the Ikuku series of projects.



ADRIAN MUNDT

SET MEDIC & ACTOR

Adrain Mundt went to medical school in Berlin, Lausanne, Boston, Camebridge and Santiago de Chile. Currently he is medical doctor at the Charité, Universitätsmedizin Berlin, residency in psychiatry and psychotherapy at the Charité, Universitätsmedizin Berlin. He has published as author and co-author in scientific journals and as an art critic. He took part in the art-caravan nawarak lelmal to West Africa.



CAST

JOHN IKECHUKWU OKAFOR, a.k.a. MR. IBU

MAIN CHARACTER

John Okafor is unquestionably one of Nigeria's most talented comic characters. Okafor in recent times is best known for his humourous acting which is often characterised by stupidity, hilarious imbecility and a sharp disconnection from reality. In 1994, ABS (the Anambra State Broadcasting Service) got him involved in some productions that gained him national and international recognitions. From then on, John Okafor has become one of the well known names in *Nollywood*.



His works include Don't Cry for Me, Banana Girls, Uncle Wayward and School Boy. Others are V. Boot, Dr. Thomas, Corner-Corner, Allegation 1 - 3, Okemmiri, Bullet, Pay the Price, Killers on the Run 1 & 2, Mr. Ibu 1 & 2, Mr. Ibu in London 1 & 2, Nine Wives, Police Recruit, Dear Mama, Store Keeper and Bafana-Bafana 1& 2.

The role of Okoro Ajuonuma is tailor-made by Erinugha for John Okafor.



AZUBUIKE ERINUGHA

WRITER, PRODUCER AND FILM DIRECTOR

Azubuike Erinugha uses topical social, economic, human developmental and political issues to create themes that evoke logical reasoning from viewers. Such thought provoking works are known for their positive social effects by passing every message across with trade mark humour and realistic comedy.

Erinugha majored in screen production with Bachelor's degrees in both English Language and Literary Studies. He was also trained in transmission management in Harris Communication Center, Montreal Canada. With further trainings in advertising and project management, he holds a marketing management certificate from Concordia University, Montreal Canada.

His work experience includes participations in private transmission programmes and productions in Nigeria. He has variously worked as screenwriter, line producer, production manager, executive producer, producer and director in major *Nollywood* productions. His full length feature film, *The Plumber*, has been awarded best movie of the month, April 2004. He stars in his current work, *The Asylum*, which he wrote, produced and co-directed.

Erinugha is married and lives in Germany where he currently is teaching.





THE PLUMBER (98 mins DVD Colour)

A modern day evangelist uses religion to manipulate the innocent and the helpless for financial gains. Using real situations and current episodes as story telling tools, the escapades of an ordinary plumber who becomes an emergency pastor and a miracle maker is captured .

Dion Gold Film Productions - Lagos, 2003.



THE ASYLUM (108 mins HDV Colour)
Towncrier International – Montreal, 2007.

An unemployed young man leaves home in search of a job only to find himself near naked in the streets. As if this is not enough he is forced into a government facility where mentally unstable citizens are treated for various aspects of undiagnosed madness. A political comedy ridiculing the elite ruling classes in most African states. A parable of human resources caged while mediocrity is celebrated and rewarded.

ORAL PERFORMANCE



The MULTIPLE ONE

The SPRINGBOARD to Learning entry in the 2006 edition of INTERKULTURELLE WOCHE in Erfurt, Germany: The Multiple One - a Multicultural Oral Performance with Leistungskurs Englisch, Ludwig-

Erhard-Schule, Erfurt on 28.9. 2006, 19.00 Uhr, in der Barfüßerschule. Aula.

Written, produced and directed by Azubuike Erinugha.

PUBLISHED WORK







A periscopic view of a society where questions are answered with Madness and madness answered with questions. A satirical voice raised against greed, corruption and the many follies of insane leaders.

Poems are arranged in cantos within the long orchestra.

White Cock Press - Lagos, 2004

CONTACT:

Anja Fiedler Habersaathstr. 39 10115 Berlin Tel. 030-440 460 57 fiedler.anja@web.de