

Featured Speakers

Dr. Austin Okigbo, an assistant professor of ethnomusicology at the University of Colorado Boulder, holds a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology and African Studies from Indiana University, and a Master of Music from Westminster Choir College, where he specialized in sacred music and music education. His research focuses on music in African, African American, and African diaspora religious experiences, Black World music and resistance movements, and music and public health and the global politics of AIDS. Prior to joining CU-Boulder, he taught at Williams College and Harvard University in Massachusetts, as well as at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

Art and National Development: The Nigerian Experience in Perspective

This year marks 50 years since the declaration of secession of Biafra from Nigeria. Following the end of the Civil War in January 1970, several national policy statements were put forward by then Yakubu Gowon's and Murtala Mohamed's Administrations, that were aimed at forging stronger unity and national development. Central in those statements is the need to promote national culture, identity, and mutual understanding for development via cultural exchange and education. The statements would be echoed in the 1999 constitution and the 2004 National Policy on Education (NPE). The question is, how have the arts participated in these policies and the agenda of national unity and development? Drawing from insight gained from the rebasing of the GDP in 2014, and the revelation of the arts and the entertainment industry as the second most viable sector after agriculture, constituting about 1.4% of over \$400bn GDP, this paper makes the case for national development that reflects a balance between economic growth and sociocultural education. It suggests ways in which this identified viable sector might comprise an important tool in Nigeria's quest for national identity, unity, and sustainable development.

Okey Ndibe is the author of the novels, Foreign Gods, Inc. and Arrows of Rain as well as a memoir, Never Look an American in the Eye: Flying Turtles, Colonial Ghosts, and the Making of a Nigerian American. He earned MFA and PhD degrees from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and has taught at Brown University in Providence, RI, Trinity College in Hartford, CT, Simon's Rock College in Great Barrington, MA, and the University of Lagos (as a Fulbright scholar). He was the 2015 Shearing Fellow of the Black Mountain Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where he began work on a novel titled Native Tongues. His writing has appeared in numerous publications including the New York Times, The Guardian (UK), BBC online, Financial Times, and La Repubblica (Italy). He will be the 2017-2018 Viebranz Professor of Fiction at St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY.

My talk will focus on new thematic currents in some novels and other work by Nigerian writers. I will show how some of the emergent talent in Nigerian literature departs from, or continues, the styles and concerns developed by such 'pioneering' Nigerian writers as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clarke, Buchi Emecheta, Christopher Okigbo and Flora Nwapa. My presentation will also speculate on the challenges and opportunities for younger writers in Nigeria.

Josh Arinze, a graduate of the University of Lagos, Nigeria, is a distinguished writer/editor, fundraising professional, and project manager. His career began in journalism, leading to a wide-ranging interest in news and current events. He has more than 15 years of experience in US non-profit operations and 10 years of journalism experience in Nigeria and the US. He has written numerous news reports/articles and op-ed pieces in newspapers and news magazines, including "Moral Anguish: Richard Nixon and the Challenge of Biafra," "Poverty is No Excuse for Terrorism: Making Sense of Nigeria's Boko Haram Menace," "A Disaster Foretold: Nigeria's Boko Haram Crisis," and "Why Nigeria Drives Me Crazy."

Ever since the creation in 1914 of what we now know as Nigeria, one of the country's toughest challenges has been how to build a cohesive nation out of its substantial ethnic and religious diversity. Nigerians have struggled with this issue since long before British colonial rule ended in 1960, and even more so since. Disagreements over this have been consistently vehement and, many times, have even turned violent. This discussion will address such questions as: What do current events and the political climate portend for Nigeria's future? What -- and how much -- impact does the ongoing Boko Haram problem in northern Nigeria have on this question? What does the persistent gap in educational attainment between the southern and northern parts of Nigeria mean for the country's future? Can Nigeria reasonably be expected to hold together in its current form over, for instance, the next 20 years?

Akeem Ayanniyi comes from a highly respected family of drummers and drum makers going back nine generations. He makes West African drums that are played for ceremonial and religious functions. These instruments are handmade with local materials, carved from mahogany or teak, topped with cowhide and laced with rope strings. The shape creates the style and sound of the drum. The pitch can be changed by squeezing the drum's strings, and the artistry is in the adjustment of the strings. Akeem and his family reside in Santa Fe, NM, but Akeem travels widely to teach drumming. He spent the month of March 2017 in Nigeria visiting friends and family near Oshogbo.

Gasali Adeyemo creates fabric and clothing using batik designs and the traditional Yoruba adire technique. He uses broom stalks, chicken feathers, and cassava paste to make each piece. He specializes in the use of indigo dyes because of their importance to his people, and each textile has traditional Yoruba designs. Gasali and his family live in Santa Fe, NM. Both he and Akeem Ayanniyi give workshops throughout the US and are popular vendors at the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market, which is held each July in Santa Fe.

Victoria Scott, an art history graduate from Smith College, lived in Lagos from 1970-1980. She speaks of Oshogbo art as representative of a grassroots contemporary renaissance which began in Oshogbo in western Nigeria in the early 1960's. This decade was a prime time for artists in Nigeria. The Civil War had not yet begun, the oil boom was on, and the original Oshogbo artists enjoyed a

time of intense creativity. Victoria researched Yoruba art and concluded before visiting the country that Nigerian culture had been profoundly changed by colonialism and modernization. She wanted to know how the art expressed the new realities. Victoria got to know the Oshogbo artists quite well and collected their work. Victoria now lives in Santa Fe, NM.