

A Conversation with Prof. Donald Muldrow Griffith

by Iris Praefke

The festival occurs this year for the 23rd time. How did it begin?

Prof. Donald Muldrow Griffith: The Black International Cinema Berlin began as part of the Black Cultural Festival in Berlin, produced for the first time in Europe by Fountainhead® Tanz Theatre in 1986. The Black Cultural Festival, which occurred from March 3rd-23rd, comprised artistic performances, exhibitions, seminars, publications and films. It was presented at the Theatermanufaktur, Hochschule der Künste and the Cinema Arsenal in Welsersstraße, which was under the very appreciated direction of Erika and Ulrich Gregor. Further support was received from Dr. Christian Grote (Sender Freies Berlin), Renate Semler (Amerika Haus), Dr. Ntongela Masilela, South Africa, Uazuvara Ewald Katjivena, Namibia, and the Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst. Fountainhead® Tanz Theatre also cooperated with the Polish Film School in Lodz and invited filmmakers from Poland to film a documentary regarding the 3-week festival. The film "A Man Without Limits" was developed. The film's post production was conducted in Poland and required several years to complete, due to the difficulties in communication and transportation between Poland and Berlin, prior to the demise of the Berlin Wall. "A Man Without Limits" was subsequently awarded "Best Film of 1988" by the Polish Commission of Film Art.

One of your mottoes is: "Yes, I can...!" by Sammy Davis Jr. How did it come about that you are working with mottoes?

Prof. Donald Muldrow Griffith: Mottoes are a means to communicate with a varied and wide audience on an intellectual, emotional and cultural/political basis. The mottoes are a concise and direct means of stating the philosophical position of Fountainhead® Tanz Theatre and its cooperative organizations. We have had many persons in varied lands express their gratitude for the solace and support the various mottoes have provided, over many years.

Why did you decide to leave America?

Prof. Donald Muldrow Griffith: Leaving America was brought about by an opportunity provided by Theater des Westens and a growing desire to seek a means to develop our ideas in another cultural environment.

You often speak about *intercultural* instead of *multicultural*. How is this to be understood?

Prof. Donald Muldrow Griffith: We distinguish between multi and intercultural thusly – The multicultural position may be characterized by a tolerance of a group of people in an area within a given space/country, with little attempt at communication.

Intercultural describes the active attempt to communicate with said group of people, thereby attempting to establish a basis for cooperation between any given group or between the numerical dominant population and its citizens from those groups belonging to the numerical minorities.

Mottoes:

"I may not make it if I try, but I damn sure won't if I don't..." – *Oscar Brown Jr.*

"Mankind will either find a way or make one." – *C.P. Snow*

"Whatever you do..., be cool!" – *Joseph Louis Turner*

"Yes, I can...!" – *Sammy Davis Jr.*

"Yes, We can...!" – *Barack Obama*

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