



## Call for Papers

In July 1900, Trinidadian law student, Henry Sylvester Williams organised the first Pan-African Conference in London during which pre-eminent African-American scholar, W.E.B. Du Bois, made his now famous statement “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the colour line”. This was followed by other Pan-African Congresses initiated by Du Bois in 1919 (Paris), 1921 (London and Brussels), 1923 (London and Lisbon) and 1927 (New York). Towards the end of Second World War the African-American singer and actor, Paul Robeson, joined two West Indians, Amy Jacques Garvey and Harold Moody, to successfully proposition Du Bois on the importance of convening a post-War Pan-African Congress. The post-War Pan-African Congress was consequently held in Manchester in 1945. The Manchester Congress marked a gradual shift of emphasis in the Pan-African movement from the Diaspora to the continent, notably with Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta taking up prominent leadership positions within it. It could be argued that the 1945 Congress laid the foundation for independence movements as, respectively, Nkrumah and Kenyatta went on to lead Ghana (1957) and Kenya (1963) to independence from British rule. With this, began a decisive shift in emphasis as the Pan-African movement turned largely to concerns on the African continent. Nonetheless, Pan-Africanism continued to resonate in the African diaspora under different guises, and in different practices. For instance, the Black Arts Movement, and its forerunner, Black Power Movement, influenced the creation of theatre groups, performances, music and other forms of artistic expressions that festered in London in the 1960s; and Afrocentrism arose to challenge Eurocentric approaches. Yet, the main ideals of Pan-Africanism became largely confined to the pursuit of political independence on the African continent.

During his keynote address at last year’s AfTA conference in Barbados, the Vice-Chancellor of The University of the West Indies, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles contended that Pan-

Africanism has not been effective in unifying African peoples on the continent with those in the diaspora, and challenged delegates to consider how its ideals may be re-articulated through the notion of Global Africa. In response, the 2018 AfTA International Conference sets out to open up discussions on how Africanist scholars, practitioners and theatre companies perform the notion of a Global African identity. Debates will take off from the premise that, as a concept, Global Africa places all African peoples both on the continent and in the diaspora on equal cultural and political footings, from which their common interests can be viewed and addressed. In 'Global Africa: The Emergence and Evolution of an Idea' (2005) Michael West defines it as "the idea that Africans and people of African descent worldwide share common historical experiences, notably slavery, colonialism, and racial oppression and that they should, therefore, unite on the basis of these commonalities to effect their mutual liberation." We 'perform' different ideas and identities in theatre and in everyday life. The 2018 conference will interrogate this idea and ask, how is Global Africa performed in the cultural, social and political arena today? Papers, performances and presentations that explore or engage with the performance of a Global African identity either on the continent or elsewhere in the diaspora are particularly encouraged.

Sub-themes:

- Performing African unity in the Diaspora
- Performing African unity on the Continent
- Performing historical and cultural fragmentations of Africa
- Exploring counterpoints and divergences in the performance of identity
- Articulating and performing change
- Performing globalism
- Global Africa in knowledge production and consumption
- Performing Africa in the cultural, social and political arena

Researchers, scholars and practitioners interested in African theatre and performance are invited to submit abstracts for paper or proposals for performances/ readings of 250 words (including a 150-word biography) to the Events Administrator: [afta2018@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:afta2018@canterbury.ac.uk)

**Abstract/ Proposal submission deadline: 28 February 2018.**