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I WILL NOT BE DETERRED — GHANABA

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MAX Roach's testimonial about my Drums Music, written in Massachusetts, and published in Ghana in the "Daily Graphic", Friday, August 30, 1974 was so nourishing that I have read it a few times over in my quiet hours and it is only meet that I should thank him for it.

It was a singing letter.

It was a letter written by a music authority which had a finality about it. You could almost hear the writer say "there! I have said it, and what have you got to say about it?" The letter was like an anthem, and it showed the man's command of the subject on which he wrote.

It has made a few Ghanaians proud of my Art. And I am not talking about European-Africans and the Afro-Breed set, who delight to burn me and my Art, and, without knowing it, betray their sewerage minds. Those clowns who dress in bell-bottom trousers, platform shoes, and tight-fitting shirts, opened from the neck to the navel, and have nothing serious going on inside their skulls. Those who think it would be better for me to be a poor man's James Brown before they would appreciate and hurrah my Art.

I will be damned if I make a fool of myself for them, in this day and age, when the cultural heritage of Africa, should be proclaimed by all BLACK peoples in Africa, America and Asia. I will be damned if I make a fool of myself to please these empty-headed pretenders.

A few years ago, another clean and healthy appraisal of my Art was prepared by the world-famous Israeli Dramatist, Deborah Bertonoff, as a Parapsychology Paper for UNESCO, which showed a sharp insight into my Art and my own Personality. It made a deep impression on me, because the writer was NOT an African, and had written her article purely on the evidence gotten from my Art.

Only last year, Henry Ofori, the well-known Ghanaian journalist, also wrote a highly perceptive analysis of my work, when he named me Ghana's Man Of The Year, in the Ghanaian magazine, "Pleisure".

His views were so clear, and concise, and so well supported by facts and figures that I wept when I read it. I wept, because I weep easy, when I see someone make a real try to go into what makes me tick, and what diverse forces drive me to pursue my course. It's beautiful not to be flattered.

I will not be deterred by ignorant mud-slingers, who know nothing about African culture, and spew forth their ignorant, negative, views about my Art. After all when I die, I will take away with me what I brought into this world. What I will leave behind could be torn to shreds and spat upon by some, and others will say "he was truly a great Artiste".

I will not be here to care one way or another. I will not be here to care whether Radio Ghana plays my music, or whether I appear on Ghana television. I will not be here to be bothered if a monument is raised in the City centre for me, or if my countrymen would embrace my Art and hold it up to the world as theirs. But in my lifetime, it is my unceasing determination to make use of the Gift which the gods of Africa have bestowed on me, and to defend my Art when my efforts are negated by shallow minds.

TRIBUTE

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Max Roach is the greatest drummer that the world of Afro-American music has produced. He is a combination of all the past great drummers that this music has produced. He is the Muhammad Ali of the jazz drums. Don't take my word for it. You ask any American, be he Black, White, Yellow, or Pink! Every drummer lays his drumsticks down when Max plays.

It was his torrid drumming which inspired the immortal Charlie Parker's spiralling alto sax, and Duke Ellington's puckish piano-playing, and Charlie Mingus' thunderous bass, and Miles Davis' shining trumpet. After Max Roach, there had to be another drummer, in the field of Afro-American music, and when this drummer could not be produced in America, the gods of Africa chosed me to take the baton from him. It's no silly talk. It's a fact. Drummers like Max Roach and me, only appear once in a life-time. Other drummers will come after us as the evolution continues, but by golly, it will take some time.

This is the man who started his career playing in Night Clubs and low dives, and who today has been appointed a Professor of Percussion at the University of Massachussetts. You can see that in his life-time, he has also wrought.

If this man compares me to Marcus Garvey and Hank Aaron and George Washington Carver, surely it is enough to reduce me to tears all over again. More so, because he had been torn away from his African Heritage through so many generations. It takes a prophet to proclaim another prophet.

Thank you so much Maxwell Lemuel Roach, for all those nice warm things you said about my Art.

I believe the gods of the Black Race have brought us together for a specific purpose and no man can tear us assunder.

Our Mission is drums!

We! will! play! them! or! die!!!

Ghanaba,
Achimota.