# WHEATLEY

8-9-05
Victory Gardens Production

Director's Version with
Part assignments

A Play

by Lonnie Carter

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Four Actors play all –

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

PHILLIS WHEATLEY (1753-1784), the first African-American writer to be published - 1773.

CHORUS (all singer-actors, actor-singers join in)

SUSANNAH WHEATLEY, adoptive mother of Phillis; in fact, the person who, along with her husband, JOHN, bought PHILLIS as a slave when the girl was about six years old.

SAMSON OSEE POWER FROCK, the free black man whom PHILLIS would marry

COUNTESS SELENA, the British woman who provided the means for PHILLIS' trip to London

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, the historical personage

TIME - The time is two-fold -

1. 1760-1784 in Boston and London and Bath

2. The present

SPACE - The Mind Is a Terrible Place to Waste - SO, DON'T

**[THE RAP]**
[*Voice-Over as Audience is being Seated*]

I see a granary filled not with grain

But Rwandan women shot through the brain

Raped and pillaged, every village destroyed

Ten-year-old soldiers, Kalishnikov Boys

Cuban cigars hang from their lips

AK - 47's they shoot from the hips

Our children hacked, their limbs machete moosh

As doped-up rebels crawl back to the bush

Guerrillas - government - say, where's the joy?

Colonial legacy, freedom's a toy

Rat-a-tat-tat through Sierra Leone

The streets of Freetown are charnels of bone

But does the West in its infinite grace

Send in its forces and save one black face

Don't shoot `til you see the whites of their stars

The Hutus and Tutsis are not Kosovars

The whole of Africa drum-speaks its rage

The whole of Africa must come of age

Lamentations - African style

Humiliations abound - pile upon pile

‘Our groans are many and we are sick at heart

‘At this we weep, our eyes run with tears

‘They have broken our teeth with gravel

‘Pressed our faces in the dust’

They would have us scrape, bow and grovel

Rub our wounds with rust

At this we weep, our blood fills the years.

Jubilation - will we ever rejoice

If they break all our drums

Will we ever give voice
to our

Lamentations - African style

From Mozambique with its floodplains submerged

To the Cote d’Ivoire where the Syndrome has surged

The Republic – HAH! - of the R S A

Black on Black marching marching marching

[*marching to Pree - tor - ee - ay*

*Liber - ee - ay, Monro - vee -ay*

*Kinsha - see - ay, Zair - ee - ay*

*Bot - swanee - ay, Bia - free - ay*

*Yes, we are marching to Pree - tor - ee - ay*

*Pree - tor - ee - ay today*]

The whole of Africa drum-speaks this rage

The whole of Africa must come of age

Apartheid, Capetown, once home of Gandhi

Soweto, Jo'burg, Sharpesville and Man – Dee – la

Robbens Island, Beloved Country, Cry Free

Power to the People from the A N C

Harare sinks, Zimbabwe's on the verge

Mugabe, Kabila must take the purge

Kadafi, Lockerbie, who recalls that

The Colonel at the Hague, still oil fat.

The whole of Africa drum-speaks this rage

The whole of Africa must come of age

Ken Saro-Wiwa's been hanged, hear our dirge

Nigeria's been Shelled, spilling its crude

Mining black gold as multinationals merge

The dark Belgian Chocolate Congo's imbued `

With Savimbi's stink - now he's dead - and Unita's divide

The bastards can run but they cannot hide

Don't step on the mines, KABOOM go your legs

These kids sure do sing and dance on their pegs

The whole of Africa drum-speaks this rage

The whole of Africa must come of age

And in the Sudan the Lost Boys are swimming

from hippos who'd chop them in halves

And the Lost Girls are racing from slavers

who'd flop them for laughs

Boys Lost are crossing the Gilo foot bridges

Girls Lost below dangling from crocodiles' ridges

While in Darfur,  Wild Western Sudan

The Janjaweed ride and strike down with swords

infants for having the pluck to cry out in pain

Backed by Khartoum who sign peace treaties

while Janjaweed thugs continue insane

The whole of Africa drum-speaks this rage

The whole of Africa must come of age

And where is the West, U.S. and U.N.?

Colin and Kofi, the Amos 'n Andy of

'Help-is-on-the-Way', well isn't that dandy

We shook from our necks the colonial yokes

Of masters Dutch and French and Portuguese

And now must we laugh at black tyrants' jokes?

Like an old dog scratching Idi Amin's fleas?

When beaten by whites or beaten by blacks

Is the pain from the first then sweet from the Brother

Dear Gods we cry out before we die out

Heed the Zulu

Cry Uhuru!

Stop the violence

Break the silence

Beat the drum so loud it insists

Whoever oppresses the free man resists

The whole of Africa drum-speaks its rage

The whole of Africa must come of age

Dear Gods-

-we cry out before we die out

Beat the drum so loud it insists

Whoever oppresses the free man resists

**PROLOGUE.**

In Darkness.

The Voice of PHILLIS WHEATLEY

PHILLIS (V.O.)

"`Twas mercy brought me from my pagan land

Taught my benighted soul to understand

That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:

Once I redemption neither sought nor knew

Some view our sable race with scornful eye

'Their color is a diabolic dye.'

Remember, Christians; Negroes black as Cain

May be refined and join th' angelic train."

**[TRANSITION]**

JUBILEE CHORUS (Todd)

‘Twas 1760 in Boston, Mass

and the slaves were all in the South, Yass?

You got another think coming, but just a one

Let’s stroll down from Beacon Hill to Boston Harbor

and your slave-buyin’ work will soon be done

You thought you had to go to Ole Virginny

to get you some strong black flesh

to do the work you neither want to nor know how to do?

Well, we here gwine give you the skinny

We’re your Jubilee Chorus, we’ll be with you throughout

We’ll explicate and expostulate

We’ll re-relate, proclaim and exclaim

And now and again you will hear us shout—

ALL
THE STORY OF PHILLIS WHEATLEY

**[INTRODUCTION OF SUSANNAH]**

Member of CHORUS
But look here, here's a woman, once and future slave-owner

wants not a rental, wants not a loaner

She needs to OWN,

bit of a loner, white by birth

not needing someone to work the earth

has not a field, a farm or plantation

just an ample garden in back of a house rather grand

with lots of rooms that need a hand

mopping and slopping without cessation

obsessive one might call her

compulsive in an era before such words

Member of CHORUS (*becoming Susannah Wheatley*)
Susannah Wheatley by name, down at the harbor looking for some dark help

And who does she spot and want without shame

the lil' girl who'd become Phillis

not at all just a whelp

[10 page sample excerpt ends here.]