



AFRICAN ODYSSEYS

Ama: An African Voyage of Discovery

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Directors: Kwesi Owusu, Nii Kwate Owoo

©: Efiri Tete Films

For: Channel Four

Producers: Kwesi Owusu, Nii Kwate Owoo

Production Manager: Antonella Ibba

Production Managers (Ghana): Nii Laryea Horley, Albert Bediako

Production Accountant: Nigel Wood

Production Secretary: Charles Acquah

Production Assistant: Rebecca Loak

Assistant Director: Ingrid Lewis

Continuity: Cathy Doubleday, Nicky Cooney

Written by: Kwesi Owusu

Cinematography: Jonathan Collinson, Roy Cornwall

Computer Animation: Chris Prior, Jeanne Verdoux

Editor: Justin Krish

Assistant Editor: Marie Peacock

Art Directors: Ruhi Chaudry, Nigel Ashby,

Keith Khan

Costume Designer: Farouk Abdillah

Wardrobe Supervisor: Leslie Gilda

Make-up: Anna Cobley, Tammy Harewood,

Ruth Khan

Music: Kwesi Owusu, Vico Mensah

Additional Filmscore by: Nana Danso Abiam

Music Performed by: Ray Allen, Pauline Oduru,

Billie Richardson, Lucky Mpawenda, Simi Zeko,

Lindell Lewis

Additional Music Performed by:

Pan African Orchestra Ghana

Sound Recordists: John Anderton, Jason Russell

Sound Recordist (Ghana): Samuel Quainoo

Dubbing Mixer: Peter Smith

Sound Editor: Jacky Garstin

Cast:

Thomas Baptiste (*Babs*)

Anima Misa (*Corni*)

Roger Griffiths (*Joe*)

Nii Oma Hunter (*UK*)

Joy Elias-Rilwan (*Araba*)

Georgina Ackerman (*Ama*)

Gary Marius (*Paul*)

Verona Marshall (*Joyce*)

Eddie Tagoe (*brother Josh*)

Alexandra Duah (*sister Mabel*)

Malcolm Fredericks (*George*)

Okon Jones (*boss*)

Pauline Bailey (*Arlene*)

Pitika Ntuli (*Zuluman*)

John Deery (*Dave*)

Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble, Ellen Miller,

Winston Grant, Brother Niyi, Pan African Orchestra

Ghana (*performers*)

Alistair McGowan (*voice-over*)

Ghana-UK 1991©

94 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

+ intro by His Excellency Papa Owusu-Ankomah, Ghana's High Commissioner and Q&A with actor Georgina Ackerman and director Kwesi Owusu hosted by film lecturer, Imruh Bakari

On its first release, *Ama: An African Voyage of Discovery* received a British television screening on Monday 31 August 1992. A masterstroke of scheduling, as this particular Monday also marked the last day of the iconic Notting Hill carnival, bringing the long weekend of the bank holiday event to a close. With wide critical acclaim, the film also had a brief cinema release in the UK, and successful screenings in Ghana and at international film festivals.

Just over three decades later, a re-versioned 'director's cut' has now been released, with a premiere screening at the New York African Film Festival on Friday 26 May 2023. With the central theme of a Ghanaian family in London being forced to confront their sense of longing for home, the film triumphs because of its timeless message. The drama unfolds around Ama (Georgina Ackerman), a 12-year-old London girl, who is taken on a day trip to an English countryside lake.

Across the years of his migrant life in London, Ama's father, Kwame (Thomas Baptiste), had developed an attachment to the chosen spot. Now retired, he and his family are on another visit. Babs, as his wife Corni (Anima Misa) calls him, is in a reflective mood, whilst she wishes that the surrounding tranquillity would endure beyond the moment.

The younger children wander off, and Ama more so, as she takes her own path into an enchanted clearing in the woods populated with African artefacts, images and sounds. It is here that she finds a leather pouch containing what she later realises is a computer floppy disc. As the family returns to their London home, this pouch and its contents will bring a special meaning to Ama's presence in the family. This is a family struggling to maintain an impression of middle-class life. Preoccupied with keeping up appearances, and Kwame's ailing condition, Corni has to take up an office-cleaning job.

On one shift, Ama accompanies her mother and discovers in the office items that suggest what is in the mysterious pouch she carries around her neck. It is a floppy disc which works when she inserts it into one of the office computers. Prompted and following its instructions, the disc reveals data and information which empowers Ama, in her innocence, as a kind of ancestral messenger. As the drama unfolds, admonitions and information find release through Ama. This is occurring as the family's ancestral secrets try to force their way into the open. This does not help her father's condition, as he stubbornly resists advice and invitations to return to Ghana.

The idea of home is at the core of the story. Very present in the lives of Ama's father and mother, is a sense of loss and longing. So too, are the ways in which, in the wider community, home is created and invoked through cultural practices, rituals of performance, and social gatherings. Particularly evident in the soundtrack is the way in which the styles and lyricism, from Aladura spirituality to Kpanlogo, Reggae and Hip-Hop, bring alive timeless myths and memories.

Following the death of her father, Ama's journey takes her on a path, seemingly beyond the reach of her family, towards reconnecting with her ancestral lineage. Symbolically, strange appearances and disappearances eventually lead Ama's mother, Corni, and aunt, Sister Mabel (Alexandra Duah), into the arena of the carnival. In masquerade costume, and searching for Ama, Corni moves along with the carnival band as if intoxicated with a mixture of joy and loss.

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AFRICAN ODYSSEYS

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Sat 18 Nov 14:00

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The contemporary significance of *Ama: An African Voyage of Discovery* is that it depicts the ordinary ways in which a migrant family struggles with the inner and outer experiences of daily life and generational anxieties. The conflicts that permeate, remain very much alive as new waves of diaspora continue to be produced by ongoing global migrations.

Imruh Bakari, 4 June 2023

Georgina Ackerman is a British born actress of South African heritage. Her acting career work spanned over 15 years, performing in Britain and internationally in film, television, radio and theatre. Currently, Georgina is a life success coach and a boutique psychotherapist. She offers her specialised services to high achievers who face meaninglessness, isolation and lack of purpose in their lives, especially those triggered by stressful events and life transitions. Georgina dedicates her time to helping to instil in her clients extraordinary self-belief and unrelenting confidence in their abilities so they can live life with more passion creativity and purpose.

Kwesi Owusu PhD is a writer and filmmaker, and a communications specialist. He is considered one of Ghana's leading filmmakers and a key figure in Black British writing and film culture. Owusu co-founded the influential pan-African arts collective, African Dawn and worked with Ngugi Wa Thiongo on his pathbreaking 1984 stage production *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*.

Owusu's film credits include *Ama: An African Voyage of Discovery* (1991), *OUAGA, African Cinema Now* (1985), *Love in a Cold Climate* (1986), *Water Is Life* (2003), *The Lights Have Gone Out Again* (2009), *Singing for Freedom* (2010), *Environmental Health Stories* (2013). He has directed and produced over 350 documentaries specially for the global online media.

Owusu's books include; *The Struggle for Black Arts in Britain* (Comedia / Routledge 1986), *Storms of the Heart, An Anthology of Black Arts And Culture*, (Camden Press, 1988), *Behind the Masquerade. The Story of Notting Hill Carnival* (Arts Media Group, 1988) and *Black British Culture and Society, A Text Reader* (Routledge, 1999).

During the 1990s, Owusu was part of a consortium called Black Triangle that bought the Electric Cinema on London's Portobello Road and turned it into a Black and independent cinema house, with partners representing other branches of the Black British media, including Voice Communications Group and Choice FM network of radio stations.

Owusu was head of the Africa Initiative of the effective Jubilee 2000 working with mass organisations and celebrity campaigners such as Bono of U2, Youssou N'Dour and Muhammad Ali in a campaign for debt cancellation for the poorest countries. In 2003, he opened Ghana's leading multimedia production house Creative Storm, launching into production of a range of works including High Vibes Music Festival and staging concerts for John Legend, Courtney Pine, Seun Kuti, Salif Keita and others. Since 2022, Owusu has hosted *the African Dawn podcast*, covering 'untold stories' and writing film scripts.

Imruh Bakari is a filmmaker and writer who has since the 1960s, lived and worked in the UK and a number of African countries in the areas of film production and film studies, culture and the creative industries. He currently lectures in Film Studies at the University of Winchester. His published work includes *African Experiences of Cinema* (BFI, 1996), co-edited with Mbye Cham, and various articles on African and Caribbean cinema and film culture; and the poetry collections *Without Passport or Apology* (Smokestack Books, 2017) and *The Madman in this House* (Smokestack Books, 2021). Among his film productions is *Blue Notes and Exiled Voices* (1991).