



Chandiru Mawa, the ikon of the Ugandan theater, has passed away.

She came to Austria for the first time in 1994 together with Alex Mukulu, the Ugandan dramatist/playwriter, who presented „Wounds of Africa“ in the Viennese „Theater des Augenblicks“. Chandiru was already at that time the female star of the theater company. A power woman, born on the 15th of June 1970 in West Nile in Northern Uganda.

Chandiru was not only the soul and driving power at the back of the stage – but also the charismatic performer on the stage. „Wounds of Africa“ was a tremendous success, each performance being sold out.

Here Chandiru met her first husband, Dr. Otto Straub, and she decided to stay in Austria. They married but in 1997, she lost her husband through a tragic avalanche accident. She then considered to return to Uganda. However, shortly thereafter, she became engaged as a choreographer for a musical in Graz in view of her already very good reputation.

Here a close friendship with the producer Klaus Pieber developed, which deepened into a close relationship throughout the years. Soon she brought her sister Charity to Austria, to have a piece of her home country close by. Here Charity fell in love with Tassilo Lang, they married and got two children.

Chandiru danced in various formations and received an engagement at the opera house in Graz. She was also lecturing at the University of Sports in Vienna and took an active part in the Dance Festival in Graz. Several wonderful dancing plays were established through her close cooperation with the international star Bob Curtis, who also became her friend. Chandiru sang, beat the drums and made music throughout the Austrian music scene and she taught dancing in Italy, Greece and Germany. Everybody loved her joy of living and her warm heartiness. Klaus composed two dance-comedy plays for her, which dealt with racist prejudices. A musical followed, which Chandiru developed with dancers from Uganda. She appeared on television and in films and at the same time, she was always a most appreciated teacher of African dancing.

Her energy made her open her own dancing school in the 7th district of Vienna. There she developed a very successful 3-year dance performance education together with international dancing teachers. This dancing school influenced her life for years and in

addition, she was blessed with four children, Ben 16, Coco 14, Yoki 9 and ZaZu 7 years of age. Their father is Klaus Pieber, her life companion.

In 2004, the Ndere Centre in Ntinda close to Kampala was opened. Chandiru flew with her Austrian dancing students to Kampala in order to participate in the opening thereof. The Ndere Centre is the largest cultural cooperation between Uganda and Austria. With her dancing group she created a dance performance, which shook up the audience. It made them jump from their seats and moved them to tears. It was a critical play which points out Europe is not the paradise that many Ugandans perceive as this. It reveals disturbing pictures and it is one of the most intense dance performances that I have ever experienced.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting took place in Kampala, Uganda in 2007, which was also visited by Queen Elisabeth of England. Alex Mukulu produced a play reflecting the Ugandan history and it was Chandiru, who directed the whole choreography for the theater group. With her incredible energy and her creative ideas, she made this play into a raving success. Her power, discipline and energy was so catching and she was the grand example for the young dancers. This theater play was so exciting and fascinating that even the Queen was visibly moved.

Especially impressive to us have been her performances with her children at our independence day celebrations.

Chandiru was the superstar within the Ugandan dancing theater. Austria had become her second home country, both when it concerned art and family. Her heart was beating for both countries. Her intention was to continue using her potential both here and there. Unfortunately, this should not come through.

Our thoughts are with Chandiru Mawa, this Pearl of Uganda, who has so strongly influenced the Austrian theater and music scene.

We mourn this inspiring and merry woman, artist, friend and mother.

Dr. Michael Stadler
in cooperation with Linda Zednicek and Klaus Pieber

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