

Marassa and Midnight

a play by Holly Adams

loosely based on "Marassa and Midnight" by Morna Stuart

Characters:

Ogoun	Milord, plantation owner
Marassa	The Overseer
Midnight	The Marquis
Mama Doctor	The Attendant to the Marquis
Christophe	Tir Nan Og
The Great One	The Old Apothecary
Maroons	Poor whites
Enslaved blacks	Rich whites

Please note that while Marassa, Midnight, and Mama Doctor at the very least should be played by Black actors, the director should consider having the various ensembles be very racially and ethnically mixed.

At Rise:

(What follows is a suggested stage plan, based on the original company's need for an inexpensive, mobile set.)

(There is a braced 12' ladder DSL. This is the mountain of Ogoun, King's Mountain. There is a psyche or white/light blue sheet across the stage US. A light mounted DSL of the 12' ladder shines to produce a tall mountain shadow on the light-colored backdrop. This is also King Mountain. The mango tree should be CS or USC--an important part of the set, the premiere set designer wove an image/outline into wire mesh fencing that was attached to the stage on one end, and suspended from the ceiling on the other. It created a terrific space division and augmented the atmosphere of fences, barricades, and war. Two 6' ladders DS on either side of the stage form the mountains of Dove and Diamond. Each is mounted on a low dolly along with a 3' cube. The cube becomes the place from which Marassa leaps as well as Tir Nan Og's bed for Marassa. The players, dressed in black, become the places as the director chooses.

As lights dim, rhythmic drumming and a rich choral sound swell briefly to fill the darkness (for example, something like "Kingdoms" from Sounds of Blackness' African Medley). During the music, warm lights begin to rise and Ogoun enters through the audience, engaging the spirits of the ancestors, progeny, people present, and the gods with sounds and whole-body gestures.

As music finishes, Ogoun hails the audience.)

Ogoun: Ho! You people there! I am Ogoun, of the Dahomey, the Yoruba and the Aja! Ogoun also of South America, the United States, and of here in the Carribean. Ogoun the Feraille! These, these high places are my domain. Here in "the land of high places", Haiti, these two smaller mountains are Dove and Diamond. They are marassa--that means "twin" in our language. And above them rises King Mountain. From these mountains I watch and move among my people . . . and you, too. My fire and soul are in all metals, and my heart beats in

the drums; welcome to Haiti!

(Drumming begins, and the cast streams onto the stage wearing bright colors, dancing and singing and full of joie de vivre. During the course of this number, the bright outer garments fall off piece by piece, revealing drab and torn/mended clothing. By the end, all are drab and looking upstage. As Ogoun continues, they slowly collect their tools, move into the plantation, and begin gestures/mime of laboring).

Ogoun: But we are not yet Haiti. This is still San Domingo, where all labor is slave labor, and the plantations bring riches to French noblemen. *(A woman begins to sing a haunting mournful lullaby. Others join in, and then Ogoun continues, the song under his words)* This where two young orphan girls, black as midnight and with wings on their feet, have been brought to grow and work in the fields of coffee. *(The girls come forward.)* They are twins; Marassa and Midnight! *(They dance, free and always together, moving in mirror-like fashion, even when they cannot see each other. They do some near the others and some up in the 'mountains which bring them to the mango tree. Their dance is with and yet against the song of mourning. Midnight is the fierce one, the leader.)*

Ogoun: Wah! *(Everything stops).* One day the strong hot day brings another ship of white rich men. One of them, a marquis, needs a foot boy. *(Enter the marquis. The rest is also acted out as Ogoun speaks.)* Wah! This one is too old, this other too young! Too tall, too wild *(continues in improv, clowning a bit).* . . there are no proper 10 year old boys here. So the master makes a boy . . .out of the gentle Marassa. Midnight begs to be taken too, but the marquis will have none of that wild child. And the marquis takes Marassa over the ocean to the cold winter streets of Paris, France. Midnight cannot bear it, and escapes the plantation to journey to the port and stow away on the marquis' ship. So begins our story!! *(He claps his hands together and crosses to the tallest ladder ((King's Mountain)). The working slaves begin to speak as they continue to work.)*

#1: (singing) Won't you go down ol' Hannah, well, well, well, don't you rise no more, don't you rise no more . . .

#2 (woman): Hey, you tell that sun "Stay down" for me, too! Before, it was bad, but I could still get up when she did, with enough strength to praise the day. Now, bah! My hungry, tired old self don't want to get up at all.

#3 (woman): I hear that. Some days, I just want to lay me down and be done with it. Course you **know** this is all the fault of that sorry Negro, Midnight! Goin off and running away like that, just to catch her twin. Humph! We all had it pretty good before she went off and did that fool thing!

#4 (man): I will say, I miss my sugar cane. I wonder if the master will ever let us do some trading again.

2: Bad as things were, he did let us do that. What I miss, though, even more than trading with the black folks from the other plantations, is the visiting privileges.

#3: I miss the slower pace and the bigger food rations! Do you know, I never once caught a lashing in all my days until she left? Now, you can't turn around 'thout the whip biting,

sometimes for no reason at all. May the gods, the Orisha, turn their faces away when Midnight calls out to them! (*spits*)

#4: Don't you worry, they'll catch her. Where can she go on an island where no path leads up the Great Mountain? Not even the Maroons, the Escaped Ones can go on **that** mountain! Master will brand her, you know he will. She deserve it.

#3: What's more, when she comes back, I'll whip her myself!

(Murmurs of assent.)

#1: She is just a child . . .

#3: Child? Bah! She is a demon, a walking curse!

Overseer: (coming over) If you have the strength to talk so, peut-etre I should have master cut your food rations more! Cochons! *He cracks his whip, and the others return to working, quickly and silently with low grumbling as he leaves.*

(The players in black open billowy blue fabric SR. Marassa climbs onto the SR platform. It is moved very slowly.)

Ogoun: At long last, Midnight arrives little Paris.
She makes her way to port and finds the dock of the Marquis' boat!

(Midnight races on stage and climbs on SL platform. She looks out over the sea.)

Midnight (*calling out*): Marassa!

(Marassa does not move. They stand like that, Marassa's boat moving very slowly, Midnight stock still, for a long moment.)

(Marassa begins to sing the haunting lullaby. Midnight joins in, perhaps part way through the song, perhaps beginning after Marassa like an echo. At the end of the piece, we hear the voices of the marquis).

Marquis: Make him come to me! Vite!

Attendant: Viens-ici, boy! Hurry up!

(Marassa exits. Midnight suddenly looks around her, like she just figured out she was in trouble.)