

WHY THE DOCTORATE OF ARTS DEGREE?

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We inherited the concept of education and higher learning from Europe that began in Italy in or around the 13th century. These institutions focused on degrees of scholars, bachelors, and masters. Along with this came the origin of colleges, conferring of academic degrees, academic dress and department colors. These proceedings were carried over from Italy to other countries of Europe and eventually to the United States. The three principle degrees were, bachelors, masters, and doctorates. The doctorate program was essentially divided into the doctorate of philosophy and the doctorate of education, and was essentially teaching degrees. These degrees were awarded in the fields of math, English, law, literature and science.

Over the course of years more areas of educational concentration became new courses in the curriculum of colleges. Naturally candidates in these new subject areas wanted to earn masters and doctoral degrees in their discipline. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, *African dance* was mandated into the curriculum of schools across the nation. This was probably the most prominent course that Blacks desired, as it was a reflection of the culture that was lost during the middle passage. Naturally people who had expertise in this area wanted to earn a doctoral degree in this field. But sadly the field of doctoral studies had **NOT** kept abreast with the increase in new course offering in academia. I too was desirous of earning a doctoral degree in the field and had the most to offer as a candidate for the doctoral degree because I had superior knowledge that would advance the field.

The president of Clark University Wallace Atwood proposed the doctorate of arts degree in a meeting of the Association of American Universities. In 1967 Carnegie Mellon University started to offer the D.A. degree in Mathematics, English, History and the Fine Arts. The principles for the D.A. degree were firmly established by the Committee on

Graduate Studies of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in conjunction with the Council of Graduate Schools of the U.S.

The primary difference between the *doctor of arts* and the *doctor of philosophy degree* is the doctor of *arts program is centered on the advanced study of a specific discipline; increasing expertise in a specified area;* through *new learning theories; curriculum design, as opposed to research.* The doctorate of arts still requires written testing or documentation. This is particularly favorable for new courses within the curriculum particularly those oral traditions that are in dire need of a comprehensive program for their transition into written documents. For example percussion music cannot be written with the western system of musical notation, and written words cannot define dance movements with a clarity that all will understand.

The art degree also differs from the education degree in its disciplinary focus. *The doctorate of Arts degree grants scholars in a given specialty the highest level of professional development. This degree signifies that the awarded is a professional and is capable of expanding existing horizon of knowledge and perception within a given field.* Most definitely my work, the creation of the Greenotation system has given African music the scientific basis it formerly lacked; providing perpetuity to the percussion music of Africa. My work also enables comprehensive thesis and dissertations to be written in this area of concentration.

In my experiences in graduate school, I found the doctorate of arts program more desirable in scope and viability particularly for African music and dance. I reiterate the doctorate of Arts degree was designed to award people in a given specialty the highest level of professional development in the arts. This degree signifies that the awarded is a professional and is capable of expanding existing horizons of knowledge and perception within a given field. It is my understanding that the Doctorate of Arts Degree was originally developed to train candidates to be college teachers.

As a pioneer in the field and the first person to teach African music and dance in Brooklyn College in 1969, I too was desirous of earning a doctoral degree in the field of African music and dance. Unfortunately the doctorate of arts degree was not available during my tenure as a graduate student. I strongly believe that the doctorate of arts program is most suitable for the issuance of a doctoral degree in African music and dance. But I also believe that the doctoral of arts program needs specific tailoring to accommodate the oral tradition of African music and dance with written systems of notation namely **Greenotation** for music and **Labanotation** for dance. We also need to establish a school dedicated to the teaching of traditional music/dance of Africa. Such a program has already been approved by the African Union for use throughout all schools colleges and universities of Africa. The project was also approved and supported to have an academy for the teaching of traditional African music and dance in Dakar, Senegal, but a tardy response from Senegal canceled the program.

Today programs in African music and dance are offered on a limited basis in colleges and universities in the states, but they are not well structured because they do not have a way to demonstrate and share learning as they lack written documentation, and comprehensive thesis and dissertations cannot be written. This is a pity as said programs have been in existence for more than half a century particularly on the UCLA campuses.

It is my fervent hope that colleges and universities will stop paying lip-service to African music and dance and include it in their curriculum as viable courses complete with written documentation.