

AMERICAN ACADEMY
IN ROME

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NOBEL LAUREATE DEREK WALCOTT
PRESENTS
WORLD PREMIERE READING OF HIS NEW PLAY
MOON-CHILD (TI JEAN IN CONCERT) AT THE
AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME ON 4 APRIL 2011



Derek Walcott photograph courtesy of Lia Chang

"Derek Walcott has moved with gradually deepening confidence to found his own poetic domain, independent of the tradition he inherited yet not altogether orphaned from it...The Walcott line is still sponsored by Shakespeare and the Bible, happy to surprise by fine excess. It can be incantatory and self-entrancing...It can be athletic and demotic...It can compel us with the almost hydraulic drag of its words." -- Seamus Heaney

Rome – The American Academy in Rome is pleased to announce that Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott, the Academy's second annual William B. Hart Poet-in-Residence, will present a world premiere reading of his new play entitled *Moon-Child (Ti Jean in Concert)*, on Monday 4 April 2011 at 9pm at the Academy's Villa Aurelia. An internationally-renowned

poet and playwright, Derek Walcott will lead the performance, together with actors Wendell Manwarren, Giovanna Bozzolo, Dean Atta and composer Ronald Hinkson. The April 4 event will be free of charge and open to the public.

Karl Kirchwey, the American Academy in Rome Andrew Heiskell Arts Director, stated: "*We are delighted to be presenting the world premiere reading of Derek Walcott's most recent play Moon-Child (Ti Jean in Concert) at the American Academy in Rome. As the first poet, and indeed the first writer, to hold the Andrew Heiskell Arts Director position at the Academy, my commitment is to curating world-class public events in literature to complement those already in place in music, the visual arts and the humanities. The Academy has a very distinguished history of nourishing literary talent. Among the writers who have lived and worked here are poets such as Jorie Graham, Anthony Hecht, Mark Strand and Richard Wilbur; fiction writers Junot Diaz, Ralph Ellison, Nadine Gordimer, Oscar Hijuelos and William Styron; and nonfiction writers such as Frank McCourt and Azar Nafisi. The William B. Hart residency in poetry makes it possible for us to extend this history, with the presence of Nobel Laureate poet and playwright Derek Walcott at the Academy this spring.*"

Building on his 1958 play *Ti-Jean and His Brothers*, first presented at the Little Carib Theatre in Port of Spain, Trinidad, Derek Walcott's new play *Moon-Child (Ti Jean in Concert)* will be performed by Walcott, Trinidad actor Wendell Manwarren, Italian actor Giovanna Bozzolo, and London-based actor Dean Atta. The play also features a sound-score by composer Ronald Hinkson and projected images of artwork by Walcott and by his son Peter Walcott, also an artist. Written in rhymed verse, *Moon-Child* is a lyric parable, telling a story as old as that of every fairy tale that begins with three brothers who leave home to seek their fortune. In this case, however, it is the notion of home itself that is threatened, as the natural paradise of the island of St. Lucia, once blighted by colonialism and its legacy, is threatened by "a second slavery" in the form of real estate land-grabs for touristic exploitation.

Walcott's deep love of the natural features of his native island-- the cocoa-pods, the blue kingfisher, the burning flowers of the *immortelle*, the mountains called *Pitons*-- is woven up with Caribbean myth and ritual to make a verse drama of visionary intensity, one including the figure of the Planter as Satan in a Miltonic drama ("paradise was lost").

Derek Walcott

Derek Walcott was born in St. Lucia (West Indies) and has lived there for most of his life, with frequent travel and teaching abroad, including in the United States (where he taught at Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts until 2007). In addition to being the author of twenty-two books of poetry, Walcott is also a theater director and playwright, and founded the Trinidad Theater Workshop in 1959 and the Boston Playwrights' Theatre in 1981. He has written many plays, and also wrote the lyrics for Paul Simon's musical *The Cape Man*. He is an accomplished painter, and his work has illustrated books of his poetry including the volume *Tiepolo's Hound*. Walcott received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992. Earlier this year, he received the T.S. Eliot prize for his 2010 collection *White Egrets*.

The book for which Walcott is most widely known is *Omeros*, a retelling of Homer's *Odyssey* that takes place in the Caribbean, Africa, North America and the United Kingdom, with references to ancient Greece and its mythology. Walcott has maintained a strong connection with the island of his birth. His poems are almost always situated in a world that seems to

move across oceans and between countries. He is a truly international poet, both in his life and in his writing.

During his residency, Derek Walcott has also participated in *A Tribute to Joseph Brodsky*, a reading and conversation in honor of his friend Russian Nobel Laureate Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996), RAAR'81, which took place at the American Academy in Rome on 17 & 18 March 2011.

This event is made possible by the Maria Cox and New Initiatives for Don Fund.

Event: Derek Walcott, *Moon-Child (Ti Jean in Concert)* - A World Premiere Reading
Date & Time: Monday 4 April at 9pm
Location: Rome - Villa Aurelia, Largo di Porta San Pancrazio, 1

For more information please visit: www.aarome.org

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The American Academy in Rome

Established in 1894 and chartered by an Act of Congress in 1905, the American Academy in Rome is a leading center for independent studies and advanced research in the arts and humanities. Situated on the Janiculum, the highest hill within the walls of Rome, the Academy today remains a private institution supported by gifts from individuals, foundations, corporations, and the memberships of colleges, universities, and arts and cultural organizations as well as by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Each year, through a national competition, the Rome Prize is awarded to approximately thirty individuals working in ancient, medieval, Renaissance and early modern, or modern Italian studies, and architecture, landscape architecture, design, historic preservation and conservation, literature, musical composition, or visual art. The application deadline is November 1st. The Academy community also includes a select group of Residents, distinguished artists and scholars invited by the Director, as well as Affiliated Fellows, and Visiting Artists and Scholars.