

Written by Ernest Kanjo

Thursday, 19 March 2009 17:46 - Last Updated Thursday, 19 March 2009 18:03

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- Peace Offering was my debut
- I've made up countless artists, including Nollywood stars
- I'm a good actor too
- I started dancing way back in primary school
- My paintings attract attention worldwide
- I've produced a music album
- I sponsor festivals
- CFI is a great idea
- I watch Cameroonian movies with great appetite, play football
- A bowl of fufu and njama njama, you're my friend

**{ xtypo\_rounded\_left2}{xtypo\_dropcap}** I **{/xtypo\_dropcap}** was fascinated the first time I watched NOTA Stars, a group of North West folklore artists perform in their 1999 hit album, "Heritage". The group comprised Ateh Bazore (now broadcaster at the National Station), Ngalim Andreas (Bui Division), Lemmy Moise (Donga Mantung Division), Rick Nguti (Mezam Division)

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and Bobgala Didier (Mezam Division). "Heritage" was a cocktail of their various hit tracks. I liked the songs. However, I was particularly amazed by the choreography, which was an excellence piece of the art of dancing. It was staged by two dancers. One of them was a talented young girl whom I've never met, even as I write. The other, a young skilful boy, grabbed my attention as soon as I settled to watch the clips. "I think I admire his performance," I told myself. He held me spellbound in Bobgala's "Nahsala", as he blended njang with soukouss and then rolled from left to right in pure ewesé fashion. He was great! Some years later, while watching the same video with a friend, I was told that the thrilling dancer was Bobo Leennox, a Bamenda-based multi-talented artist. It is when my friend mentioned make-up that I recalled I had come across a picture on which Leennox was making up Nollywood's Zack Orji, who had come to Buea to shoot and direct Agbor Gilbert's Before the Sunrise. "Ah, looks like this guy has something great in him," I said.

Months Later....

I'm at a Yaounde Hotel where actors and actresses, cast for My Successor, the 52-episode serial produced for CRTV had come for last minute drilling. They are many of them, including crew members. As I walk down the staircase, I spot a gentleman I'm convinced I've seen somewhere. "Aha, this is the guy I've been longing to meet," I tell myself. "Bobo Leennox, I've finally met you," I greet excitedly. Leennox shakes hands with me, but is still in a short trance probably because he doesn't know this new friend is. "I'm Ernest Kanjo," "Oh boy, I've heard much about you," Leennox says. And adds: "I'm glad to meet you." He assures me he's going to be around for quite some. "Since I'll be the make-up artist for the project." "That'll be fine, we'll have time to talk and perhaps arrange for an EWEK chat," I reply. The following days were quite exciting, together with Leennox. We met virtually every day on location. If Leennox, a humorist, was not driving us mad with laughter on tedious shooting days, his special make-up effects caused us to applaud endlessly. I kept telling folks on location that Leennox was a great dancer. Then one day, I called them around a laptop in which I slotted a video of NOTA Stars. Leennox himself was taken aback. He had not watched the video for quite some time. "That's my little surprise for you anyway," I told him. He also had a surprise for me. "I studied at CPC Bali," he told me one sunny Wednesday afternoon on a Nsimeyong location. "So we are BOBANS," I was glad to tell him I also went to Bali. We planned this interview during the last days on the My Successor location. Apart from being a dancer, humorist and make-up artist, Bobo Leennox is also a fine and graphic artist, actor, music producer and promoter of culture. Imagine how great our entertainment industry would be if Lenny Leennox, Onny Leennox and Hanny Leennox grow up to be as skilful as their dad. Leennox, married, loves them dearly. I interviewed him while he was making up Tita Ernestine, lead actress in My Successor. Leennox's story would definitely inspire you. { /xtypo\_rounded\_left2 }

Excerpts:

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Ernest Kanjo (EK): Could you explain your background?

Bobo Leennox (BL): I was born in Mankon, Bamenda in 1978. I'm the third child in a family of seven, from Aghem, Wum, Menchum Division of the North West Region. Before going to CPC Bali, I did primary education at Presbyterian School, PS Ntamulungn Bamenda. I have done a course in Fine Arts, Painting, Engraving and Stamp Carving. I'm a registered artist and profession in this field since November 2008.

LEENNOX AND MAKE-UP

EK: For how long have you been a make-up artist?

BL: Since 2003.

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EK: What inspired you into make-up?

BL: I was invited to assist Mathew Hyacinths a Nigerian make-up artist who came to Cameroon in 2003 for the Peace Offering project. After that project, it happened on me that I could make it in the art. Mathew also encouraged me to take up a course in make-up. I decided to get on broad. Since then, I've been doing online research and reading books on make-up. I also belong to a UK and a USA forum for make-up artists where we train ourselves and exchange experiences.

EK: How did you acquire the equipment you have?

BL: The Nigerian colleague left behind some equipment. I also have a friend in the U.S who has been sending me equipment.

EK: Which are the movies for which you did make-up?

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BL: I've done make-up for several movies. Let me name a few: Peace Offering, Wendy, Before the Sunrise, and Vengeance, To Kill a Killer, Ghost Son and My Successor.

EK: What has been the feedback from producers?

BL: Constant invitation to do make-up for movie projects is a clear indication that my work is appreciated. All producers I've worked with have expressed satisfaction.

EK: How does that make you feel?

BL: Honoured and satisfied. It is self-gratifying and motivating. I thank God for that.

EK: What are the problems you face as a make-up artist?

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BL: The lack of adequate working tools. Material is scares and expensive. Also, we do not have many female make-up artists whereas it is their domain.

EK: Are you training some girls to join you?

BL: Yes, of course. I run the Community Youth Art Centre, COYAC, based in Bamenda where I train young make-up artists including one girl.

## LEENNOX AND ACTING

EK: You also act...

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BL: I've been acting since primary school. I performed in the school Drama and Bible clubs. I hit the movie road as an actor in 2003, where I featured in the first ever Cameroon-Nigeria joint production, Peace Offering.

EK: You have featured in several other movies...

BL: Vengeance, To Kill a Killer, Before the Sunrise, 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment, etc.

EK: What is your strength as an actor?

BL: Ask the audience...hahahahaha!

EK: What is your relationship with other actors?

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BL: Excitingly cordial!

EK: Who's your model actor?

BL: Collywood's Chinepoh Cosson, Nollywood's Kanayo-O-Kanayo and Hollywood's Morgan Freeman. They're great actors.

LEENNOX AND THE DANCE

EK: Tell me about you and the dance



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BL: I started dancing way back in primary school. While in secondary school, I did playbacks on stage during social events.

EK: What accounts for your skilfulness in dancing?

BL: Passion and training. While in the neighbourhood, we trained in a group known as Bobo Leennox Group. I later belonged to Group Magique and then Les Deux Ivoiriens. We trained ourselves as makossa, soukous, and raga muffin and folklore dancers. This attracted musicians who did not hesitate to come for us. I did choreography for popular North West artistes such as John Minang, Ni Ken, Ankias Vallyman, Fusi Makom and the NOTA Stars.

EK: Do you earn from dancing?

BL: I'm paid for it.

LEENNOX AND FINE ARTS

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EK: For how long have you been a fine artist?

BL: Since 1989 while I was in primary school. I was a celebrated cartoon boy at the time, so I could easily get into fine arts.

EK: Have you had any formal training as a fine artist?

BL: I've trained in Centres such as Busy Man Arts, Shimmu Arts and BioArts Centre.

EK: What do you do concretely as a fine artist?

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BL: Portraits, cartoons, graphic designs, stamps, T-shirt designing, traditional decoration, etc.

EK: Which has been your best piece of work?

BL: I did a painting that was exhibited in the University of Friburg in Germany in 2005. I always remember it.

EK: How has the experience as a fine artist been?

BL: Wonderful! It's been profitable as well. My works have been ferried out of the country and foreigners love them.

LEENNOX THE PROMOTER OF CULTURE

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EK: I hear you sponsor cultural events?

BL: I organise cultural events for youths. I sponsor festivals for school clubs and award talented up-and-coming artists. One of such festivals is the Bamenda Youth Festival of Arts and Culture.

EK: What has been your motivation?

BL: The desire to see talents explored.

LEENNOX THE MUSIC PRODUCER

EK: You also produce music...

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BL: Yes, it's something I'm gradually getting into. I've been a producer for two years now. . I've produced Xcel, a young talented singer whose single is presently in the market.

LEENNOX AND CFI

EK: What do you make of the CFI initiative?

BL: It's a great development in the Cameroonian film industry. I'm glad we've been able to come together, identify our problems and are forging ahead.

EK: Make-up Artists' Guild...

BL: We'll create the guild soon. It's going to be a great one, I can assure you.

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## FACT FILE

EK: What is your height?

BL: 1.82 metres.

EK: What is your best traditional dish?

BL: Fufu corn and njama njama.

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EK: Your best colour...

BL: Blue.

EK: Your best Cameroonian towns...

BL: Yaounde and Douala.

EK: Your hobbies...

BL: Watching Cameroonian movies and football.

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EK: Associations....

BL: I belong to Africa Consortium, International Federation of Art Council and Cultural Agency, IFACCA, Copyright Corporation for Audio-Visual Productions and Photography, SCAAP, Copyright Corporation for Plastic and Graphic Arts, SCAAP, Creative Hands of the Grass field, CREHAGRAF and union of North West Artists and Musicians, UNOMWEM.

EK: It was wonderful talking with you Leennox, thanks for accepting EWEK.

BL: The pleasure was mind. Next time!

**{xty po\_warning}**NB: From 28 June to 1 July 2009, Leennox will take part in the 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Arts and Cultural Management (AIMAC 2009), co-hosted by the Meadows School of the Arts and Cox School of Business, SMU, in Dallas, Texas, USA.  
**{/xty po\_warning}**



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