

ANANSI AND HIS CHILDREN

CHARACTERS:

The play requires seven actors. At least one must be male and one must be female.

As scripted, *Anansi* calls for 3 men (including a boy), 3 women (including a girl) and one of either gender. However, neither the gender breakdown of the cast nor the ages matter.

The suggested doubling is:

MAN 1 - Fish, Game Skinner

MAN 2 - Anansi

WOMAN 1 - Aso, River Drinker

WOMAN 2 - Road Builder

BOY - Stone Thrower

GIRL - See Trouble

EITHER - Cushion

The Setting: A bare stage or as much suggestion of the locale as the director chooses.

The Time: Now and then

NOTE: The Kwanzaa Song may be downloaded at:
<http://www.folktales.net/Kwanza1.html>

AT RISE: *The Kwanzaa Song* is heard. As it finishes, there are the SOUNDS of DRUMMING and a WOODEN FLUTE and the ENSEMBLE appears. SOUND continues as the Kwanzaa greetings begin.

Habari Gani. EITHER

Nzuri Kwanzaa, Nguzo Saba. BOY

Habari Gani. GIRL

Nzuri Kwanzaa, Nguzo Saba. MAN 2

Habari Gani. WOMAN 1

Nzuri Kwanzaa, Nguzo Saba. MAN 1

The music of Africa. WOMAN 2

Drums. MAN 1

A flute. WOMAN 2

(MUSIC segues into African-inspired American jazz and continues under.)

The music of America -- derived from African roots. MAN 1

(Under the following, the ENSEMBLE continues to greet each other with *Nzuri Kwanzaa, Nguzo Saba.*)

WOMAN 2
Habari Gani; Nzuri Kwanzaa, Nguzo Saba. Those are the traditional greeting and response that are exchanged among Kwanzaa celebrants.

MAN 1

Habari Gani. "What is the news?"

WOMAN 2

Nzuri Kwanzaa, Nguzo Saba. "Good Kwanzaa, the seven guiding principles."

MAN 2, GIRL

Habari Gani.

WOMAN 1, BOY

Nzuri Kwanzaa, Nguzo Saba.

EITHER

(To audience)

Try it with us: *Habari Gani.*

(Prompt audience response)

ALL

Nzuri Kwanzaa, Nguzo Saba.

(Repeat process to involve audience with
EITHER leading.)

EITHER

Good Kwanzaa, the seven guiding principles.

WOMAN 1

Like the music, the American holiday Kwanzaa is rooted in the culture and traditions of Africa.

GIRL

Kwanzaa isn't a religious holiday.

MAN 1

The word "*Kwanza*," in Swahili ending with a single "a," means "first fruits of harvest."

EITHER

The double-"a" ending was added when the holiday was created, in 1966, as a celebration of the cultural heritage of Black America.

BOY

Kwanzaa lasts several days -- seven, to be exact -- and it's marked by the use of the Kinara --

WOMAN 2

a candleholder

GIRL

That holds seven candles.

MAN 2

Seven candles -- for the seven days of Kwanzaa.

WOMAN 1

Seven candles -- for the seven principles of Kwanzaa, the *Nguzo Saba*.

MAN 1

Unity.

GIRL

Self-determination.

WOMAN 2

Collective Work and Responsibility.

MAN 2

Cooperative Economics.

WOMAN 1

Purpose.

BOY

Creativity.

EITHER

And Faith.

ALL

Nguzo Saba.

MAN 1

Because Kwanzaa is a new celebration, there aren't many stories about its traditions, yet.

WOMAN 1

But -- there are many African folk-tales that demonstrate its seven guiding principles.

GIRL

And today, we're going to tell one that shows Unity.

MAN 1

It's about a central figure in African folklore, named: Anansi.

ANANSI

(LIGHTS UP on ANANSI.)

And my six children.

CUSHION

Nzuri Kwanzaa! My name is Cushion -- an unusual name, isn't it? You see, Anansi is my father, and one day, he came rushing out of our tent to announce ...

(SOUND OF A BABY CRYING.)

ANANSI

I have a child! I have a child!

MAN 1

You have a child? So? You already have five children, Anansi.

WOMAN 1

And what names you and Aso have given them!

ANANSI

We *haven't* named them; they brought their own names with them!

MAN 1

Indeed. I was at the birth of the first. She came out and -- do you think she cried? -- no! She announced: My name is See Trouble.

WOMAN 1

And the second: Road Builder,

ANANSI

Then River Drinker, and Stone Thrower and - Cushion.

WOMAN 1

Cushion! Of all things!

ANANSI

Perhaps their names *are* odd, but they seem to have special talents that no one else possesses. See Trouble can look anywhere there is trouble and see it. Stone Thrower can hurl a rock a hundred yards and drive a nail into a board with it.

WOMAN 1

(Sardonically)

And Cushion? Does [s/he] serve as a pillow for your feet when they are tired?