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*Dramatic Publishing*

# WHY MOSQUITOES BUZZ

COMEDY BY JEREMY KISLING



# WHY MOSQUITOES BUZZ

*Comedy. By Jeremy Kisling. Adapted from the folktale. Cast: 1 to 3m., 1 to 4w., 2 to 4 either gender.* It all starts late one day. Nwanko and his wife are out gathering palm nuts to use for their evening meal. The nuts they find are high in a tree, and Nwanko must climb the tree to try to reach them. Along comes Mosquito to ask what the man is doing. When he shoos the mosquito away, the palm nuts fall, causing Nwanko's machete to fall toward his wife, Aja, who must jump to safety. Aja lands on Python's tail, startling the snake, who runs to hide in Rabbit's hole. These events set off a chain reaction of panic in the forest that ends when Monkey shatters Hen's eggs. Hen and Rooster are so sad that Rooster forgets to wake the sun. After several days of darkness, the animals get anxious and call upon Lion, their king, to solve the sun's disappearance. The animals blame one another for the darkness until Python reveals the humans' involvement. Mosquito retreats to hide in a nearby tree. When it is determined she is to blame, she cannot speak for fear of Agbara, the great god of all. Agbara strips Mosquito of her voice until she receives forgiveness from all living creatures. "Since you refuse to speak, you will only be able to buzz." Satisfied, Rooster lifts his head and calls the sun. To this day, almost all earthly creatures find her buzzing annoying and try to eradicate the pesky mosquito. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: WH3.*

*Photo: Courtesy of Lexington Children's Theatre, Lexington, Ky., featuring (clockwise from top) Ijahnni, Kim Watson Brooks, Ashley Hammond and Derrick Phillips.  
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By

JEREMY KISLING



**Dramatic Publishing Company**

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*Why Mosquitoes Buzz* was developed and premiered by Lexington Children's Theatre in January 2004. Adapted by Jeremy Kisling. Based on the original Nigerian folktale.

Cast:

Agbara, Rabbit and Aja..... Kim Watson Brooks  
Python, Rooster and Hen ..... Ashley Hammond  
Lion, Cheetah and Hwanko..... Iajahnni  
Mosquito and Monkey ..... Derrick Phillips

Production:

Director ..... Vivian Snipes  
Scenic Design..... Eric Morris  
Costume & Puppetry Design ..... Kirsten Aurelius  
Production Stage Manager ..... Heather N. Branham  
Technical Director ..... Dawn Alex  
Scenic Artists ..... Gary Miller, Woodrow Monin  
Master Electrician ..... Jason Penckofer  
Costume First Hand ..... Helen Woltering  
Costume & Puppet Construction ..... Marilyn Cook,  
Ashley Hammond,  
Tiffanie Short, Kevin Thacker

# Why Mosquitoes Buzz

## CHARACTERS

AGBARA  
MOSQUITO  
LION  
ROOSTER  
MONKEY  
RABBIT  
PYTHON  
AJA  
NWANKO  
HEN

## GLOSSARY OF AFRICAN WORDS

AGBARA: Yoruba for “power”  
JAMBO: Swahili for “hello”  
HONGERA: Swahili for “congratulations”  
KARIBU: Swahili for “welcome”  
KWAHERI YA KUONANA: Swahili for “goodbye till we  
see each other”  
SAFARI NEEMA: Swahili for “have a safe trip”



## Why Mosquitoes Buzz

*AT RISE: The stage has two trees: one for MONKEY and the other is the Palm Nut Tree. The Palm Nut Tree can be climbed and stood upon, and AGBARA often shares the story from a perch in this tree. There may be a drop to help establish an African jungle. Currently a moon resides in the sky.*

*The play opens with AGBARA and the rest of the cast drumming, a Dance and Call for the village to hear a tale. After a few moments, AGBARA emerges. The drum pattern changes as he tempts the audience into repeating his rhythms.*

CAST MEMBERS. Come! Come to the center of the village. Listen to a remarkable tale. Hear a story of the smallest of creatures.

*(AGBARA then builds the audience in volume, signals for all to stop and starts to chant. Cast members overlap, intertwine and repeat.)*

AGBARA. Come and hear ...

CAST MEMBER #1. Come and hear ...

CAST MEMBER #2. Come and hear ...

CAST MEMBER #3. Come and hear ...

*(CAST MEMBERS #1, 2 and 3 continue humming and drumming under AGBARA's words.)*

ALL. *Why Mosquitoes Buzz.*

AGBARA. *Jambo.* Welcome my friends. It pleases me greatly that you join me here—at the village story circle—for a story shared may impart many rewards. My name is

Agbara, keeper of earthly creatures. I have two eyes—one the moon and one the sun. The sun watches over places of light and the moon over places of dark. I oversee all creatures in the world: those who walk on two legs and those who walk on four, from the tallest to the shortest, from the largest to the smallest.

*(MOSQUITO buzzes through to look over the crowd, sees AGBARA and quickly goes to hide. AGBARA sees MOSQUITO and smiles.)*

AGBARA (*cont'd*). My story takes flight while the moon soared high above the earth, surrounded by the night sky. It tells of a time when the sun did not rise—all because of the tiniest of creatures.

*(MOSQUITO flies through and smiles at the audience. LION's roars are heard approaching during the following. AGBARA's sentence should appear uninterrupted.)*

AGBARA (*cont'd*). This particular creature upset the whole forest ...

*(Roar.)*

AGBARA (*cont'd*). And, even to this day ...

*(Roar.)*

AGBARA (*cont'd*). This insect is spurned by all others.

*(AGBARA begins the LION drum pattern as LION enters looking for ROOSTER.)*

LION. Roo, roo, Rooster! Rooster, where are you? It is time to raise the sun.

*(LION sees MONKEY asleep in the tree.)*

LION *(cont'd)*. Monkey ... *(No response.)* Monkey ... *(No response.)* MONKEY! *(Drumming stops.)*

*(LION pulls on MONKEY's tail. He falls from the tree, startled. LION's following lines should be continuous—it's MONKEY's job to insert the interjections.)*

MONKEY. Who, what, when, where, yes, no, maybe!

LION. Monkey!

MONKEY. Who?

LION. *You* are the forest watchman!

MONKEY. What?

LION. You are not to sleep on duty!

MONKEY. When? *(Drumming resumes.)*

LION. Trouble arrives when you are least aware.

MONKEY. Trouble?! WHERE?

LION. Have you seen Rooster?

MONKEY. Yes ... No ... Ah, maybe.

LION. It is his job to raise the sun, and he has not done so.

MONKEY. Ah ... Who?

LION. Rooster! Climb the tree and tell me what you see.

MONKEY *(climbs the tree and looks over the forest)*. The moon is out, so even the night has eyes. The elephants are taking a bath in the river, some of the larger predators are on the prowl, the antelopes are headed toward the water and ooo, ooo, it looks like rain ...

LION. Do you see Rooster?

MONKEY *(struggles to see ROOSTER)*. Uuh, Rooster ... Yes, no ... Well ... Maybe.

*(ROOSTER enters; he is tired, but happy. ROOSTER's manipulator wears a hat rimmed with tall savannah grass in which mother HEN rests/hides with her three eggs. At times during the conversation with LION, ROOSTER reaches up and pulls back the grass to reveal HEN.)*

ROOSTER. Koko, koko, koko. Koko, koko, koko.

LION. Ah, there you are, Rooster. You have not done your morning work. Call the sun so day can come.

ROOSTER *(hoarsely)*. Koko ro. Oko o.

LION. What is wrong with your crow?

ROOSTER. Hen and I have been up all night. Hen finally laid three eggs.

*(ROOSTER pulls back the grass to reveal HEN.)*

LION. Ahhh, life is the best gift.

ROOSTER. I was so happy that I wore out my voice cheering. Please, Lion, help me call the sun so day can come.

LION. Let us crow together.

*(ROOSTER lets go of the grass, and HEN is once again hidden. LION and ROOSTER crow. AGBARA begins to raise the sun, but their crow is not enough.)*

ROOSTER. We must be louder ...

*(They crow again. MONKEY falls from the tree.)*

MONKEY. Who, what, when, where, yes, no, maybe.

LION. Monkey, asleep again!

ROOSTER. Please wake and assist us in calling the sun.

MONKEY. But that's your job.

LION. Rooster has strained his voice.

ROOSTER. Hen laid three eggs during the night!

LION. The proud Baba lost his voice in celebration.

ROOSTER. Crow with us so that we may call the sun and day can come.

MONKEY. Really? Really! I've always wanted to do this!

*(ROOSTER, LION and MONKEY crow, and the sun rises. Animals of the forest begin to move, and the routine of morning begins.)*

LION. Ah, Africa in the morning—all is alive and active.

*(Morning ritual: This sequence consists of a dance of the actors and animals. The actors should both manipulate the puppets but also physically incorporate the animals' movements, as well. The action should start with each animal waking, stretching and preparing for the day. Next, the sequence moves into interaction between the various creatures. Mutual friends greet each other, like animals interact affectionately, enemies circle or avoid each other and, eventually, the forest settles into a routine. When LION sees that all is as it should be, he continues.)*

LION (*cont'd*). Rooster, you may return to your nest. Be sure to rest your voice for tomorrow's call—for the bounty of life is indebted to the sun's warm rays. *Hongera*, on your new family. Congratulations to our newest mother, Hen.

ROOSTER (*as he exits*). Koko, koko, koko. Koko, koko, koko.

LION (*addresses MONKEY*). Monkey.

MONKEY. Who, what?

LION. You are the forest watchman. See to it that you fulfill your responsibility to the forest. Stay alert!

MONKEY. No problem. Stay alert. On the lookout ... Watchman of the forest, that's me. I'm looking out ... Alert I am staying ...

*(RABBIT enters. It is clear she is a nervous sort.)*

RABBIT *(as she enters)*. Kip-kirk, kip-kirk, kip-kirk.

MONKEY. Who is there?

RABBIT. Oooh, you scared me. I thought you might be a predator.

MONKEY. Not me, I am the one who looks for danger.

RABBIT. You have been on the lookout?

MONKEY *(proud he has)*. YES!

RABBIT. What's the news? What's the buzz? Seen any danger? What's happening in the forest?

MONKEY. Well, the world is walking around! The elephants have finished their morning bath. Cheetah is still searching for food ... Lion's pride is resting under a tree near the savannah. Ooh, the sun is up, and Hen has laid three eggs!

RABBIT. Three!

MONKEY. What are you doing this morning?

RABBIT. I was out foraging for food. Gotta have your vegetables. Now, I'm off to my burrow. There are too many vicious animals out and about. *Kwa heri ya kuonana! (Good-bye till we see each other!)*

MONKEY. *Safari neema! (Have a safe trip!)*

RABBIT *(as she exits)*. Kip-kirk, kip-kirk ...

MONKEY. Ahh ... time to sleep.

*(MONKEY looks around, sees nothing and climbs the tree. He rests on a branch, which happens to be PYTHON. The following lines should overlap.)*

PYTHON. Ssshhhhhiiss ... Ssshhhhhissss ... ssshhhhhiiss

MONKEY. Who, what, when, where?

PYTHON. Stupid creature!

MONKEY. Yeeouw!

PYTHON. I am not a branch on which to sleep.

MONKEY. Python! When did you? How did you ...

PYTHON. Stand back and let me pass.

MONKEY. I did not see you there. No problem.

PYTHON. Sssshhhhiiss ... Sssshhhhiiss ... Sssshhhhiiss

*(MOSQUITO flies through, laughing at PYTHON's absurdity.)*

MOSQUITO. Look out, coming through!

*(MOSQUITO enters from the other side and hides behind MONKEY. MOSQUITO taps MONKEY on the shoulder and disappears behind the tree.)*

MONKEY. Who? What? Where?

*(MOSQUITO re-enters from the opposite side and taps MONKEY again. She hides laughing. MONKEY hears laughter and tries to capture her.)*

MOSQUITO. Too slow, foolish Monkey.

MONKEY. One who fools others will soon be a lonely fool.

*(MOSQUITO flies away but calls back over her shoulder.)*

MOSQUITO. Oh yeah, well ... Only a fool gives advice to a log in the road. Stinky Monkey!

MONKEY. Pesky Mosquito! *(Climbs the tree.)* Ooh ... must ... stay ... awake ... *(Snoring.)*

*(We hear drumming announcing the humans. AJA and NWANKO enter to the rhythm of the drum. AJA is tired and grouchy.)*

AJA. Wait! Wait! Stop! My feet hurt. Tell me again why we are going this way.

NWANKO. It is a faster path to home.

AJA. Faster? It has been more difficult with all this brush.

NWANKO. The moon may move slowly, but it does cross the town.

AJA. Only a fool and water go the way they are diverted. We are supposed to be out gathering fruits and nuts, but we have seen none.

NWANKO. Many animals use this path—surely it has food along the way ... somewhere.

AJA. Now, we are forced to have fu-fu again. I am tired of yams. I want something different. Why could we not have stayed on the main road?

NWANKO. The only food along the road must be purchased, and we have nothing to offer in exchange. We must find our own.

*(NWANKO trips. The drumming stops.)*

AJA. You are lost. You do not know where you are going. You do not know of food along this path. *(Sits.)*

NWANKO. I take this path often, *(Looks around.)* but I do not recognize this tree.

AJA. Now, we are lost, hungry and tired. Wisdom comes after you eat the mushroom, when it is too late to discover its poison.

NWANKO *(sees palm nuts)*. Look. Look there! Palm nuts! Big and ripe and red from the sun. I told you there was food. We can make palm butter to add to our fu-fu and bread. Do you think me so foolish now?

AJA. Yes, those nuts are too high. How are we to reach them? You are not a monkey.



NWANKO. I will climb the tree.

AJA. You? You are old and clumsy and cannot even keep your balance. I should be the one to climb the tree.

NWANKO. I shall. I've found the palm nuts. The god that gave the child a wild yam must give him fire in which to roast it. Agbara has shown me these nuts; I will not fall from the tree.

AJA. Go ahead and try, but do not ask my help when you fail.

*(NWANKO tries to climb the tree, but he keeps losing his grasp. He looks to AJA for help, but she is obviously not interested in helping him since he is so stubborn.)*

NWANKO. I cannot do it alone.

AJA *(sarcastically)*. You do not need my help. Climb the tree and harvest the nuts, mighty Nwanko.

NWANKO *(admitting defeat)*. I cannot do it alone. Please, Aja, help me.

AJA. You must not be stubborn like the mule. I will help you, but remember that I did.

*(AJA helps NWANKO climb the tree. He still cannot reach the palm nuts.)*

NWANKO. I am as high as I can go, and I still cannot reach the nuts.

AJA. Try leaning. Only the patient person eats ripe fruit.

*(NWANKO does so. The tree sways. NWANKO leans opposite direction to keep the tree from breaking. The tree sways in the opposite direction. This repeated action results in NWANKO falling.)*

NWANKO. Ouch. I bruised my elbow. Give me the machete. I will use it to reach the palm nuts.

*(NWANKO again climbs the tree with AJA's help. Once he is up, AJA hands him the machete, and NWANKO begins trying to harvest the palm nuts. He takes large sweeping swings, but the palm nuts are still hard to retrieve. The tree starts to sway, and NWANKO is determined to hit the nuts.)*

MOSQUITO *(while entering)*. Around a flowering tree one will find many insects.

*(MOSQUITO buzzes around the tree and takes in the events. MOSQUITO flies around NWANKO, who starts to shoo her with his hand.)*

MOSQUITO. What are you doing?

NWANKO. What is that?

MOSQUITO. Mosquito! *(Flies to the other side of NWANKO.)* Can I help you?

NWANKO. Go away!

AJA & MOSQUITO. Go away?

AJA. I thought you needed my help.

MOSQUITO. You look like you need help.

NWANKO. I do not need your help.

AJA & MOSQUITO. You do not need my help?

NWANKO. Now leave!

AJA & MOSQUITO. Leave!?

AJA. Who is the one helping you climb the tree?

NWANKO. Aaugh! You are a pest!

AJA & MOSQUITO. A pest?

MOSQUITO. I am mosquito!

AJA. Why do you call me a pest?

*(NWANKO continues to swat and flap at MOSQUITO. This causes him to waver greatly on the tree.)*