

# Why We Sing

By Derrick Ashong



Photo: A. Koshnam

Aspirations - and of sharing them with others in a form they too might embrace.

One of the most memorable aspects of my youth was my mom singing constantly to my sister and I. She sang hymns, she sang lullabies, she sang songs to make you stop crying and songs to make you smile. The one I remember most is one called "Yenera Asasene," a song from the Akan culture of Ghana which translates to "this is our land." The chorus declares:

*Whether this land will succeed,  
Whether this land will fail  
The life of the people will show...*

I speak my mother's language with the skill of a sleeping 4-year-old, but I remember that song in my bones.

In a world beset with so many problems we are becoming increasingly aware that no community, no society, no nation can make it alone. It would be too simple for me to say that music will "save the world." I do believe, however, that the arts in general and music in particular represent the most powerful means of communication known to humankind, and if we as humans do not learn to more effectively speak to one another, we may not long have a world left to quibble over.

Artistry is and always has been about interpreting the world around us, and sharing that interpretation with others so that they too might see life through new eyes. In the season of giving, a part of me wishes we might all receive the gift of sharing.

It's like I was taught once in a song, "This is our land."

The future of that land lies squarely in our hands. I sing so that I will always remember this. My hope is that when you hear me, you will remember too.

Happy holidays,

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