Words’ Worth
The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by Jeannette Allée

Today’s poet is Jared Angira

Jared Angira is a graduate of the University of Nairobi, Kenya and the London School of Economics. He has published seven volumes of poetry including Cascades, Tides of Time and Lament of the Silent and Other Poems. One of his books was featured in the Heinemann Publishers’ African Series and his poetry has been widely published in literary magazines in both English and Swahili. He is the former CEO of Menta Consultants, has worked for the Kenya Ports Authority, the Agricultural Finance Corporation, and is past chairman of the Kenya Organization of Writers Association.

Soft Poesy
by Jared Angira

I’ll not ask for anything more
   Not a high price for the time
Not a favour in your manger
   Not a gift for a special day.
I’ll not ask for anything great
   Which the journalists will pursue
And the banners display
   Nothing that the strong shall demand
And the bugles announce
   Not even that which can be auctioned
To the highest bidder.
   I’ll only ask for that which
Cannot be given at gunpoint
   Nor at the highest bid
Not even Herod’s promise
   For the millstone wheel revolves
Dancing the tango
   Wishing to transform it all
While the matadors fight it out
In the bull ring
Yet all I ask for
   Does not go at the Stock Exchange.

**Letters**
by Jared Angira

You have written me
       Six letters
I saw in them knots
       To be untied
First, was merely
       “yours”....
I liked that
       Though I never owned you
In any case
       We’d danced the tango
Not that
       We possessed each other
Then you wrote,
       “yours very truly”
But how true were you
       When in the night
You trailed in my farm
       And uprooted the seedling?
I saw less hypocrisy
       In your third letter
When you said
       “your beloved”
You were not the first
       To misuse words
And I knew you belied
       All the flash from the hills
But when you signed
       “yours faithfully”
I got concerned

       For when we danced
The Cuban marimba
       entwining each other
There was no gesture
       of faith
Indeed I say you raise
       your arm
To cast that vote
of no confidence
against me.
And you keep varying
your tactics
May be
It’s business
“yours sincerely”
When you sincerely knew
we had no dialogue
Nor sincerity.
And when
in your final letter
You ended
“yours affectionately”
I knew
the anachrony
For it is you
who was to effect
my crucifixion.

-- end --