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EDUCATION FOR HIS SUCCESS

NII AKWEI ADOTEYE RETURNS TO CAMPUS TO PERFORM AT FERGUSON CENTER

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | April 8, 2023*Read time: about 5 min*

At the core of Nii Akwei Adoteye's musical soul lies a love song to Christopher Newport University.

Adoteye, '08 [music performance and jazz studies](#), recently returned to CNU to play in the Kelly Rossum Modern Big Band Show. Coming back to campus, he said, always makes his heart sing. Being a Captain is a huge part of his identity, and a large contributor to the lyrics that guide his life.

"It is a singular joy coming back to CNU. Some of my best memories of my young adulthood are at CNU," he said. "I am also always very happy to come back and see the ways in which the school has grown since I've been here."

Adoteye began playing instruments at the age of four, beginning with a simple recorder and working his way up to the saxophone in the fourth grade. As he grew up, he honed his musical talent and kept his eye on the prize. His love of music became a main focus on his life. He had a strong sense that it was his life calling.

His musical passion intersected with Christopher Newport when he was in high school. He was at The Virginia Music Educators Association State Conference and heard the sounds of an amazing band resonating from the stage.

"The band before us was the Christopher Newport Jazz Band. I was there as a high school senior. I heard Larry Hart, the screaming demon, just blowing away the lead line. I heard the powerhouse sound coming out of the band," said Adoteye, who is 37 and grew up in Northern Virginia. "I didn't know then, but found out later, it was

CNU. My band director said, ‘remember that band you were gushing over?’ It was CNU.”

That musical memory lingered in his mind, and when it came time to choose a college, Adoteye knew he either wanted to major in pre-law or music. On a visit to Christopher Newport with a friend his senior year, Adoteye was enamored by the campus and all of the possibilities it held for either of his intended majors. At the time, there was a law firm in the building that is now CNU North, and the [Ferguson Center for the Arts](#) was being constructed. The campus, he remembered, shined brightly with possibility for either of the career paths he opted to follow.

Nii Akwei Returns to CNU



“I knew no matter which major I chose at CNU, either way it was going to be awesome,” he said. When it came down to it, I knew I would be good at CNU, and I’d figure it out there.”

One of the most alluring features for Adoteye at Christopher Newport was the promise of the Ferguson Center for the Arts.

“I knew it was going to be a big venue, and I knew that because of that, there would be a lot of exposure to national and international musical performances that would benefit my music education. That kind of facility coupled with the great faculty it had, was a big draw for me,” he said. “I knew that even if the school at that time wasn’t known just yet for its young music program, it was just a matter of time. Music reputation is built with achievement. There was so much opportunity for achievement and enrichment at that school.”

Adoteye ultimately chose Christopher Newport, and to this day, he sings its praises as loudly as possible. His years at CNU left an indelible mark on him that resonates with happiness, fond memories and appreciation of the education he received. As a college student, Adoteye spent a huge amount of time at the Ferguson Center and on the field with the Marching Captains, the marching band which he helped form and of which he became the first drum major. The Marching Captains remains near and dear to his heart, as he met his wife, Katie, on the first day of sign in during the Marching Captains’ inaugural year.

In fact, when he comes back and hears the Marching Captains perform what is known as an APT (Awesome Play Tune) to celebrate what is happening on the field, he still smiles proudly.

“I came up with that idea,” he said. “And to think I did that and it’s still happening makes me happy.”

Christopher Newport is the place where Adoteye, an accomplished saxophonist and jazz musician, discovered his talents, his voice and his ability to achieve. It was a place he could be himself, enrich his talents and discover an avenue to his dreams. Christopher Newport became his theoretical stage, the place where he could find his true calling and learn the skills needed to bolster his mission of being able to successfully live a life built on the foundation of music.

“My musical knowledge and understanding was nothing to be trifled with,” he said of the knowledge he acquired at CNU. “It was that kind of school. It is a world-class music education.”

Beyond music, he developed interpersonal skills to deal with others and also strategies to help him personally find success in his studies.

“There are so many pivotal moments in which I discovered the ways in which I could have an impact on my peers and professors by exhibiting a habit of quiet diligence and confident achievement,” he said.

As Adoteye flourished at Christopher Newport, he realized he had what it took to succeed in the music world. After graduating, he decided to get his master’s degree from University of Miami. His adoration of CNU and all it offered him followed him south. He is a proud graduate and takes great pride in the strides CNU has made over the years. One of the highlights for him was the access he had to the state-of-the-art Ferguson Center. As a musician,

he has played at a wide array of venues. And what he has found over the years is that virtually none of them compares acoustically to Ferguson. . “Even when they were building it, Dr. Reimer was telling us, ‘You guys don’t know how good you have it. This is one of the best halls in the world.’ It’s absolutely true.”

When Adoteye returned to play in Rossum’s show, he once again experienced how phenomenally the Ferguson Center conveys sound.

“I love, love, love playing in shows at Ferguson Center,” he said. “Ferguson Center is the best sounding venue I have ever had the pleasure of playing in, period.

“It is so excellent to play there. I still feel very fortunate that I got the opportunity to cut my teeth in that hall because I really have a good ear for what good sound should be by playing and listening to so many concerts in that hall,” he said.

In the years since he has graduated, he has started a business in Montgomery County, Md., called 11th Hour Music that provides music lessons to adults and children, some in person and some virtually. Adoteye came up with the name after finding old compositions from his time at CNU and seeing he had written copyright 2005, 11th Hour Music, at the bottom.

“The name just struck a chord,” he said.

The person he became at CNU still is present as he navigates the world as a business owner. He utilizes the skills he developed on campus on a regular basis, and he prides himself on exuding all of the traits that define a Captain for Life.

“It’s still something I hold up as an example,” he said. “The way I was able to operate in the music department was an example of my best self. Eleventh Hour Music is inspired by that way in which we were able to really have a varied and fulfilling musical life. I knew if I could do this outside of the college experience, there would be something special about being able to bring a lot of joy to people’s lives.”

Adoteye conducts his business in a way that is rooted in the foundation of values and life lessons he learned at Christopher Newport. In addition to the “first-class musical education” he received at CNU, his college years taught him to appreciate deadlines and that success lies in reliability. The tune that accompanies his life is one that resonates with optimism, dedication and focus.

“One of the lessons I learned was the importance of excellence,” he said. “Success is not magic. Yes, there is a talent you are born with. But there are skills you develop and a diligence to deploy those skills and use them to the benefit of yourself and others. Most of it is you have to show up on time and you have to show up consistently. You’ve got to give it your best all the time. You need to have a good understanding of the task in front of you and accomplish that task to the satisfaction of the person who has called you to accomplish that task.”

Adoyeye's next performance is at the [Keystone Korner Jazz Club](#) in Baltimore, Maryland on Wednesday, May 17.
