AFRICAN THEATRE:

STUDIES IN THEORY AND CRITICISM



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CONTENTS

Title Page.....i
Copyright Page.....ii
Foreword.....iii
Acknowledgements.....iv
Notes on Contributors.....vi
Contents.....x

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION.....1

SECTION B: THEORY, CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES OF DRAMA

2. Re-defining Theory, Concept and Principles of African Drama and Theatre
   Ziky O. Kofoworola.....62

3. Fundamental Approach to Dramatic Theory and Criticism
   Martin Okyere Owusu 77

4. Issues in Genresical Theory and Criticism in Drama
   Uche-Chinemere Nwaozuzu..... 93

5. Plot as an Invaluable Accoutrement of Dramaturgy
   John Adebayo Afolabi.....111

6. Terms for Comedy
   Lawrence Olanrele Bamidele.....126

7. Diction, Thought, Theme, Dramaturgy and Dramatic Performance
   'Bode Ojoniyi.....135

8. Perspectives of Plot in Dramatic Construction
   Oludolapo Ojediran.....146

9. The Importance of Language Communication in Dramatic Performance
   Kayode Gboyega Kofoworola 156

10. Ananse as a Paradigm of Identity in Ghanaian Drama
    Victor Kwabena Yankah 164

11. The Significance and Nature of Character and Characterisation in Drama
Ziky O. Kofoworola 173

12. Reassessing Performance as a Regulatory Tool in the Twenty-First Century Africa: A Study of Two Plays
Abdullahi Salih Abubakar 184

SECTION C: DIRECTORIAL AND ACTING PLATFORMS: TRANSFORMING INTANGIBLE TEXTS TO DRAMATIC REALITY ON STAGE

13. Directing Principles: (Re)Conceived and (Re)Considered
Effiong Johnson.....195

14. Socio-Cultural and Historical Realities of Acting in the Nigerian Performing Arts
AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye 216

15. The Significance of Directing in the Process of the Production of a Dramatic Play
Emmanuel Emasealu 228

16. Quintessence in the New Creative Interpretation of Mohammed Ben-Abdallah's 'Step Aside' Approach to Play Directing
Tayo Simeon Arinde 237

17. The Art of Acting: The Necessity of Training for Technique
Sola Fosudo 254

18. The Theatrical Elements of Drama
Yemi Atanda 266

19. Ola Rotimi's Directorial Style
Babafemi Babatope 275

SECTION D: DANCE THEATRE: MOVEMENTS TRANSFORMED INTO CREATIVE COMMUNICATION ARTS

20. The Nigerian Concept of the Dance Art
Chris Ugolo 286

21. The Use of Dance in Dramatic Plays
Josephine Ebiuwa Abbe 293

22. Dance in Communication Art
Mnena Abuku 301

23. Music and Dance in the Performance of a Dramatic Text
Cyrus Damisa Suru 308

24. Theory, Concept and Principle of Performance in Dance Theatre
Peter Adeiza Bello 318

25. Kehinde Olalusi's "Counter Mission"and the Controversy Drama and Dance Theatre
Felix A. Akinsipe 328

SECTION E: OPERATIC PERFORMANCES: THE PHENOMENON OF STRUCTURED SOUNDS, RHYTHMS AND MELODIC CREATIVITY

26. Music as a Vital Theory in the Dramaturgy of a Play Production
Solomon O. Ikibe 337

27. The Theory of Music in the Dramaturgy of a Play Production
Taiye Shola Adeola 346

28. The Interrelationship between Voice, Instruments and Movements in Dadakuada Music among the Ilorin people of Nigeria
Jeleel O.Ojuade 354

29. Style and Structure in Apala Music: A Comparative Musical Analysis of Haruna and Musiliu Ishola's Works
Damilola Mayowa Babarinde 364

SECTION F: TECHNICAL THEATRE DESIGN

30. Three Designers in Search of Theatrical Expressions: Set Design Concepts and Experimentations in the Cinema Hall 2 of the National Theatre of Nigeria
Ernest Agoba 379

31. Technical Theatre and Human Resources in Dramatic Production: An Appraisal of Students' Crew Efforts in "Unosilimela"
Adesina Adegbite 392

32. Directorial Reflections on Rasheed Gbadamosi Play
Solomon Ejeke Odiri 405

SECTION G: AESTHETICS DESIGNS AND EDUCATION

33. Evolutionary Trends of Make-Up Art in Western Theatre: Reflections on African theatre
Shadiat Olapeju Shuaib 414

34. Aesthetics Analysis of Masquerade Costume in Relation to its Significant and Functions in Popular Entertainment
Oyenike O. Eseagwu 422

35. Concepts and Principles of Paralinguistic Aesthetics of Costume and Make-Up in Two Nigerian Stage Performances
AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye, Toyin Beatrice Bade-Afuye, and Abdullahi Lawal 435

SECTION H: MANAGEMENT ENTERPRISE

36. Theories and Concepts of Management in Theatre Administration
Segun Oyeleke Oyewo 450

37. Sustaining Music Business in a Depressed Economy
Stephen Olusoji 462

38. A Study of Cultural Entrepreneurship Approaches of Terra Kulture
Taiwo Afolabi 468

39. Promotion, Development, and Preservation of Arts and Culture in Oyo State, Nigeria
Segun Oyeleke Oyewo 483

SECTION I: FROM STAGE TO SCREEN THEATRE: VIDEO, FILM, CINEMATOGRAPHY AND OTHER VALUABLES

40. A Juxtaposition of the Political, Economic and Social Elements of Ghallywood, Nollywood and Hollywood Films
Samuel Anyetei Nai 497

41. Video Film Audience and their Symbiotic Influence on Filmmaking in Africa: Reflections on group Viewership of Four Nigerian Videofilms
Gloria C. Ernest-Samuel 514

42. Acting Styles in Yoruba Video Films: An Appraisal of Kola
Lawal Hameed Olutoba 526

43. The History and Importance of Drama to the Society
Samuel Agyeman-Weittey.....537

SECTION J: INTERVIEWS

44. Scientific and Artistic Coherence in Play Performance: An Interview with Sumbo Marinho
Sunday Enessi Ododo.....544

45. Moving Wor(l)ds: An Interview with Tess Onwueme
Becky Becker 554

46. Interview with Ama Ata Aidoo
Tiziana Morosetti 576

INDEX.....588

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Concepts and Principles of Paralinguistic Aesthetics of Costume and Make-Up in Two Nigerian Stage Performances

AbdulRasheed A. Adeoye, Toyin Beatrice Bade-Afuye, and **Abdullahi Lawal**

Introduction

No matter the socio-cultural and historical perspectives, contexts and dimensions, the paralinguistic aesthetics of costume and make-up are inevitable transformational aids in the theatre. From the classical theatre of Greece and that of Rome to the present age, costume and make-up are central to play production. In fact, costume and make-up rose to eminence in the 19th century when accuracy came into it (Bade-Afuye, 2016, p.292). Costume and make-up designs are important in the theatre because of their aesthetic appeals which can be likened to the importance of human clothing on daily basis. Bade-Afuye (2016, p.292) further maintains that costume and make-up are "imaginative decorations of the body and face that have helped locate dramatic action, identify and reinforce character". Before this, Musa (2003, p.49) has maintained that costume, make-up and props "help to project and distort the image and appearance of characters... that further give life and meaning to performers as they interpret and impersonate other characters in performances". Shuaib (2002, pp.48-49) also buttresses that

> Costumes and make-up practices within Nigerian theatre are done alongside with the development of Nigerian theatre practice because there is no way we can trace the history of costume and make up without taking adequate cognisance of the context within which they were and are still used. Costume and make-up emerged concurrently with ... indigenous actors, dancers and musicians on the Nigerian theatre scene. In this regards, costume and make-up can be assumed to be as old as Nigerian theatre.

Costume and make-up play significant roles of interpreting the message presented before an audience in the theatre through the enhancement of artistic spectacles. Without it, admittedly, serious play production cannot see the light of the day. In fact, costume and make-up are two different arts that have become symbiotically one. This is because the former relies on the latter. So, they are seen as two departments in one because they complement each other and consequently add to the message of theatrical productions. There are many roles that costume and make-up play in theatrical practices which necessitate its special position as a major aspect of technical theatre. Utoh-Ezeajugh (2015, p.10) in *Costume and*

Make-up Design in Theatre and Film Productions: The Reality of Make-Believe maintains that costumes can be seen as

> the items of clothing, accessories and ornamentation worn by the actor or actress for the purpose of defining character and establishing the circumstances of the character's existence; by situating him/her in time and space. It also refers to the artistic design of clothes and accessories appropriated or described in a play. Costumes may serve to portray a character's age, gender, profession, social class, personality, and race; as well as give information about the historical period/era, geographical location and time of the day, and even the season or weather of a particular play.

From the foregoing, we can, therefore, decipher that costuming as an art in the theatre plays many roles and serves many functions, all in the process of enhancing theatrical productions. We can also say unequivocally that without the art of costuming, play production is relatively impossible. Consequently, Utoh-Ezeajugh (2015, p.8) opines that:

> It is a given (sic) that the art of mimesis or role play cannot be complete without the art of costume and make-up; except of course in the opinion of scholars like Peter Brook and Gerzy Grotowski who would want us to concur with their claims that the actor's body is a sufficient tool for role interpretation without any form of modification or embellishment.

This may be acceptable in their acting experiments and even at that, what Grotowski condemned is the excessive use of costume and make-up. Brook on his own got fascinated with the bridges and perspectives which the metaphor of the fluid space offers in relation to Play Directing. But in the reality of human existence, what we wear as human beings contribute or tell a lot about who we are; what we say; and what becomes of us, among others. In the reality of life, costuming (a layman's interpretation of wearing of clothes) is a must for all. This is because it represents the identity of the costumed. Even insane persons do not go naked often. Their costumes quickly and obviously say the state of their mind. In essence, costume art cannot be down-played because of its importance in human existence. Make-up, on the hand, is an enhancer of costumes. Buchman (1989, p.12) argues also that make-up is:

> The vital link between the artist and the audience ... This final tool, when properly used, allows the performer to utilize his face to project his role to the audience. Without this skill, all other aspects of his training are badly undermined.

Within critical rethinking, make-up is also important as costume. Although, costume art enjoys more attention than make-up but the two are symbiotically related because they complement dramatic action. One cannot say he has done well after costuming a young actor playing an old character without taking adequate cognizance of his make-up which can actually enhance attire that befits the status of an old character. Thus, make-up art is also significant. This is the technical elements that comes to play in the two play performances under study in this essay. The two performances; E.O. Kofoworola's *Queen Ghasengeh* and Bode Osanyin's *Ogedengbe* are produced in the Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Recent Conversations on the Aesthetics of Costume and Make-up

Bade-Afuye's (2016) essay appraises costume design in a carnival performance and focuses on how Oyo State Contingent explored costume and make-up art efficiently and effectively in the Abuja Carnival of 2010. She attributes the success in the design to the technical know-how of the troupe which must be imbibed by a would-be costume and make-up artist for efficiency. She concludes by saying that proper attention and emerging trends in costume and make-up art should be employed for such artistic efficiency.

Asigbo's (2013) work with the title, "Transmutation in Masquerade Costumes and Performances: An Examination of Abuja Carnival 2010" is another attempt that looks at the exploration of costumes in the Abuja Carnival of 2010. It has a little relation with Bade-Afuye's work reviewed above but the variation is that Asigbo's focus is on transforming ritualistic masquerade performances to social entertainment through costume design. He also assesses the colour combination of the masquerades' costumes in Abuja Carnival performances and the technique used by various masquerade performances in "building the costume since designers, most times, try as much as possible to make their designs functional" (Asigbo, 2013, p. 13).

Inegbe and Markson (2014, pp.67-84) in their essay, "Aesthetics Discourse in the Costume of Ekpe Masquerade of the Efik People of Cross River State" argue that all cultures all over the world with their institutions are different from one another. In culture, according to them, lies aesthetics. They appraise aesthetics in the costumes of Ekpe masquerade of the Efik people of Nigeria in Cross Rivers State. Their argument is that costume of Ekpe masquerade is full of aesthetics. This is in line with our view in this study, maintaining that costume and make-up are elements of aesthetics. Inegbe and Markson (2014, p.72) posit that:

> Beauty possesses depth and insight and it is functional. It goes beyond the physical appearance. Therefore, a person who possesses good manner may be considered good and beautiful in character even if his or her facial appearance reveals contrary. The above

analogy points to what we might consider as the aesthetic experience.

Akpan and Jacob's work entitled, "Costume and Make-up of *Eka-Uman* Ceremony in Ibibio Cultural Life" looks at *Eka-Uman* cultural ceremony of life. It traces the festival from its historical origin and also presents the festival as a dramatic piece that processes plot, character, diction, song, dance and instruments, audience, stage and costume and make-up (Akpan and Jacob, 2013, p.88). They explain each of these items one after the other. They maintain that costumes in *Eka-Uman* festival "speaks volume to visitors and other spectators in that they are immediately linked with the *Eka-Uman*" (2013, p.93). They also add that make-up in *Eka-Uman* festival is made from *Okukin* (A kind of dye), *IduotNdom* (Camwood), *Ndom* (White chalk), Aran (Palm oil) and *Utoison* (A kind of dye)... (Akpan and Jacob, 2013, p.93).They also explain the cultural, social and religious significance of costume and make-up in *Uka-Uman* cultural life. They submit very critically that:

> Costume and make-up help to express individuality through unique aesthetics. Since the *Eka-Uman* in Ndon-Ebom cultural life is a model of a female deity which is believed to control important natural forces, it is an obligation for them to uphold the culture and not to let it die especially in the area of costume and make-up... The customs in Ibiobio land demand that before a young girl is recognised as a mature woman, she must pass through a period of confinement ... The *Eka-Uman* festival being ritualistic enables the initiates to become identified with the mythical beings they represent through their costume and make-up. (Akpan and Jacob, 2013, pp.97-98)

Utoh-Ezeajugh's work, "Promoting Minority Cultures through Costume and Make-up: Sam Ukala's *Break a Boil* in Production" focuses on the use of culture and make-up to promote, present and preserve minority cultures of Ika ethnic group of Delta State, Nigeria. She argues that costume and make-up are instruments of cultural promotion through Ukala's *Break a Boil*'s production. Utoh-Ezeajugh (2010, p.136) maintains that "Sam Ukala's *Break a Boil* is a political metaphor for the Nigerian society, which exposes the fate of "watchdogs" in autocratic societies".

In all the essays that we have been reviewed above, none of them has the same scope with what we set out to do. In addition, all of them are on festival performances whether modernised or traditional except Utoh-Ezeajugh's work which is on dramatic production of Sam Ukala's *Break of Boil*and the play is not among our selected productions. In our own case, we are examining E.O.Kofoworola's*Queen Ghasengeh*and Bode Osayin's *Ogedengbe's*

performances.We also see costume and make-up as indivisible arts that complement one another as against the position of Utoh-Ezeajugh (2010, p.136) and in consonance with that of Akpan and Jacob (2013, p. 88). These are the gaps that our work will fill, which make the present work different.

Theoretical Framework

This work employs Functionalism and Aesthetics in the assessment of the exploration of costumes and make-up designs in the two selected stage plays. Functionalism is a social science based theory that seeks to see to the functionality of every integral part of the society. *Microsoft Encyclopaedia* maintains that Functionalism is "Every social custom and institution ... seen as having a function in ensuring that society works efficiently". On the other hand, Aesthetics is a philosophical thought that probes beauty and meaning that is attached to things both tangible and intangible. To this end, Khali Gibran (1975) defines aesthetics as:

> The thing called beauty or the pleasant is intangible. Its emblem or traces could never be found in the object perceived neither in the properties that make the whole but in the hearts of the perceivers which is now reflected in a form of judgement and reactions. Beauty is a light in the doldrums of beings (Cited in Kofoworola, 2015, p.131).

Kofoworola (2015) maintains that aesthetics as perception has a relationship with feeling. He is of the view that aesthetics, going by its literal meaning, which is perception (*aesthetikos*) or feeling (*aisthesis*) cannot be neglected if one is in search of what aesthetics really means or connotes. He, therefore, opines that:

> Perception as we know is concerned with the ability to acquire an insight in something, an object or a subject. That ability is not dependent mainly on the physical manifestation of the eyes-sight, the reflection that is transmitted into the eyes, the sense of sight. Perceptions are reflected into the inner eyes; they belong to the sense or the mind, and are capable of generating some feelings (Kofoworola, 2015, p.130).

Aesthetics does not only provide the feelings above, it also establishes beauty. Consequently, we are not only concerned about the aesthetics derived from costumes and make-up designs used in the dramatic productions, we are also bothered about the functionality of costumes and make-up designs in the two selected productions. Certainly, costume and make-up can go a long way to contribute to the meanings theatrical productions intend to project.

Costume and Make-up Arts in the Two Selected Performances

In the traditional African performance or theatre, the art of costuming was held in high esteem. Costumes were special attires that were worn for specific occasions by certain individuals in the society. Aside the significant messages costumes pass across to the people, they also demonstrate great measures in the aesthetic worldview of a people. Based on the foregoing, assessing such an important aspect of the theatre as explored and demonstrated in the selected productions of African / Nigerian plays is important as we set to do in this academic engagement. Our focus is to look at concepts and principles that guided costuming in the productions of *Queen Ghasengeh* (2005) by E.O. Kofoworola and *Ogedengbe* by Bode Osanyin.

Odule (2013, p.340) resolves that "Costumes in the theatre must be aesthetically pleasing to the audience. Its beauty must arrest the attention of the audience in order to communicate fast information based on the aim of the portrayed action". Therefore, costume design in the theatre must play the role of life-wire of a production. It is only when costume design is taken in this magnitude that costuming can actually complement actor's and actress' roles appropriately. The success of any theatre production lies in the art of costume and make-up. An artistic director needs a competent costumier or make-up artist that can project his or her work well through costume and make-up arts. An artistic director may have created captivating pictures, moving speeches and endearing movements in a theatrical production but without the support of a competent costumier to costume the production, all his or her efforts may go unappreciated if appropriate costumes are not put in place. However, the costumier or make-up artist should not jettison the suggestions or costume concepts or principles of the artistic director for the production. Doing this will amount to embarking on a dangerous artistic journey riddled with self-pride and ego. Certainly, the artistic director is the leader of the production and all members of the crew should respect him or her. He or she should also respect the crew without sacrificing his or her artistic desire.

Costume is believed to have more significance in theatrical productions because it is the aspect of a stage production that helps establish the situation of the play and to give special spectacles and effects. Every play production has its own artistic concept and ideology. Therefore, a costume designer must engage himself or herself in a thorough research before costuming a theatrical production. The following principles are expected to be followed by a costume designer in order for him or her to do justice to theatrical performances:

i. a costumier must analyse the script thoroughly;
ii. a costumier must do a thorough research about the geographical location of the play;
iii. a costumier must know who the characters represent in their social, political, economic and religious perspectives;

costume and make-up designer should imbibe. Kofoworola's*Queen Ghasengeh* is an epic play that presents the feminine and masculine warriors to us.

Ogedengbe (2000) by Bode Osanyin is an important play as well. Osanyin uses the play to tell his own side of the story of Kiriji war (Ekiti Parapo) against Ibadan warriors. Emphasis is more on Ilesha warriors that he presents in the play, hence, the eponymous nature of the play. The play presents the tragedies that ravaged Yoruba land during the war, most especially, Ijesha axis. Maybe, this accounts for Ogedengbe's refusal to accept peaceful intervention of the Colonial Authorities which lead to his ban from Ijesha land. Azeezat Farinloye costumed the performance with a great deal of sizzling and creative make-up. Again, the lead author of this paper, Adeoye supervise the project and this time, he insists on the place of costume and make-up in history and the need to thematise each scene for the development of the play's exposition, conflict, climax and resolution.

Theatrical production requires many artistic departments for it to see the light of the day. These departments include directing, costume and make-up, props, lighting and set, choreography, publicity and marketing, among others. All these units must come together to make a productive performance, concluding in the process, the collective nature of the arts of the theatre.

Similarly, in Kofoworola's *Queen Ghasengeh* which also has African setting and background (to be precise, Ghana) attempts were made to see that the required costumes that could represent the Ghanaian people were sought for. We then realised that a sort of fabrics called, *Kente* which is an Ankara fabric of beautiful laced with several colours that demonstrate wealth is imbedded in their mode of dressing and their accessories were explored in costuming the play. The accessories were used to compliment the costumes which indicate that they were indeed from Ghana.

Queen Ghasengeh by Kofoworola revolves around two African Empires. King Ghasengeh represents the Ghasengambi Empire that believes in the power of sword while King Bateyaga (Ghasengeh's in-law) represents the Bateyazinga Empire that believes in the power of word. Queen Ghasengeh, who by virtue of birth and marriage, belongs to the two Empires. The Bateyazinga and Ghasengambi make all efforts to restore peace to the land of Ghasengambians. So, concepts of the word and the sword invariably were explored in costuming the play.

Interestingly, the crisis of the play begins to build-up when Queen Ghasengeh gives birth to a baby boy but connives with the mid- wife, KamataYakamata to lie about the gender of the baby as a girl. King Ghasengeh is further infuriated about the gender of the baby. Thus, Queen Ghasengeh decides to elope with the child (Bateyazinga). Queen Ghasengeh's son is, however,left to grow up in Bateyazinga. The baby is schooled in matriarchy as against the patriarchy obtains in Ghasengambi. Queen Ghasengeh attempts to eradicate the violent tradition of Ghasengambians. Finally, after Ghasenghasen has been brought

up in a non- violent way, he is taken back to his father land to become king and his father abdicates the throne for him to restore peace to Ghasengambi.

What gave *Queen Ghasengeh* the artistic colouration it enjoyed in 2009 were the costume and make-up designs. It is obvious that the play addresses the topical issue of power struggle. The subject would not have been successfully told if the adequate and necessary costumes were not put in place to project the intention of the playwright. So, costume consequently enhanced the message of the production.

E.O. Kofoworola's *Queen Ghasengeh*is more of a theatre of literature rather than that of performance. This is because of many wordy expressions therein. This does not deny the fact that it has potentials for the stage. Although this became possible in the hands of competent director with the complementary efforts of costume and make-up artists who ensured that the intention of the director was actualised.

In the production of *Queen Ghasengeh*, the movements of the warriors were obviously and technically enhanced by the costumes the actors put on. It would have been strange and misinforming if they wore servant's costumes and moved like warriors. This is what costume designers must adequately take note of. Actors and actresses must not contradict themselves through ineffectual costume design.

Queen Ghasengeh'sproduction demonstrates different classes in the society despite the period of the play. The costumes provided for the warriors in the play production do not only show their status as warriors; they also motivate the actualisation of their characters. The costumes designed also demonstrate to the audience that the warriors belong to the upper class of the society.

Costumes play many roles in *Ogedengbe*'s production. In fact, they were pointers to the positions and roles of certain characters in the production. In *Ogedengbe*'s production just like we have it in *Queen Ghasengeh*'sproduction, costume design helps to single out characters and place them to where they belong in the society. Not only that, it also shows or enhances dramatic actions that are carried out in the production.

At the beginning of the production, Ogedengbe was held tight to be sacrificed to the gods as a captive of the war. Before the anticipated action in the scene, we were already told of what would likely occur through the various costumes put up by the actors in that scene. Ogedengbe was costumed in a way that informed the audience that this was a sacrifice for the gods, although their action of attempting to execute him failed as Ijesha warriors rescued him.

In addition, when Ijesha warriors came for Ogedengbe's rescue, he was given a befitting costume as a warrior. This means that costume was used to denote class differentiation and categorisation. We could see and observe that immediately Ogedengbe was costumed with warrior's attires his actions became different. This is a point to justify the position that costume enhances human actions. It is true that

costume and make-up designer should imbibe. Kofoworola's*Queen Ghasengeh* is an epic play that presents the feminine and masculine warriors to us.

Ogedengbe (2000) by Bode Osanyin is an important play as well. Osanyin uses the play to tell his own side of the story of Kiriji war (Ekiti Parapo) against Ibadan warriors. Emphasis is more on Ilesha warriors that he presents in the play, hence, the eponymous nature of the play. The play presents the tragedies that ravaged Yoruba land during the war, most especially, Ijesha axis. Maybe, this accounts for Ogedengbe's refusal to accept peaceful intervention of the Colonial Authorities which lead to his ban from Ijesha land. Azeezat Farinloye costumed the performance with a great deal of sizzling and creative make-up. Again, the lead author of this paper, Adeoye supervise the project and this time, he insists on the place of costume and make-up in history and the need to thematise each scene for the development of the play's exposition, conflict, climax and resolution.

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Queen Ghasengeh'sproduction demonstrates different classes in the society despite the period of the play. The costumes provided for the warriors in the play production do not only show their status as warriors; they also motivate the actualisation of their characters. The costumes designed also demonstrate to the audience that the warriors belong to the upper class of the society.

Costumes play many roles in *Ogedengbe*'s production. In fact, they were pointers to the positions and roles of certain characters in the production. In *Ogedengbe*'s production just like we have it in *Queen Ghasengeh*'sproduction, costume design helps to single out characters and place them to where they belong in the society. Not only that, it also shows or enhances dramatic actions that are carried out in the production.

At the beginning of the production, Ogedengbe was held tight to be sacrificed to the gods as a captive of the war. Before the anticipated action in the scene, we were already told of what would likely occur through the various costumes put up by the actors in that scene. Ogedengbe was costumed in a way that informed the audience that this was a sacrifice for the gods, although their action of attempting to execute him failed as Ijesha warriors rescued him.

In addition, when Ijesha warriors came for Ogedengbe's rescue, he was given a befitting costume as a warrior. This means that costume was used to denote class differentiation and categorisation. We could see and observe that immediately Ogedengbe was costumed with warrior's attires his actions became different. This is a point to justify the position that costume enhances human actions. It is true that

human actions are different when he costumes for two different occasions. For example, his actions cannot be the same when he dresses for a marriage ceremony and also for a courtesy call on his friend. He would be too weary of his movements, actions and speeches while he is in costumes and make-up meant for marriage ceremony while he would be casual in his actions and activities in the latter. This is an illustration of the reality of human existence. This obviously came to play at the point Ogedengbe got another costume meant for his position as generalissimo and for another occasion of war. The costume designer of the production noted this and explored it in order to actualise the message and the artistic aesthetics.

Even when Ogedengbe was not at the war front, his costumes at home do specified in clear terms that he was an aristocrate. He wore *ofi* which is usually known with the people of the upper class as at the time of the story in the play. Ijesha's king also featured in royal attires that made the audience to come to term with his royalty. These are few functions that costume design is meant to achieve in a production and a competent costume designer should take adequate note of. The exploration of costume and make-up arts would definitely enhance the success of a play production greatly if these factors are considered. This is because audience would not be misinformed through contradictory and controversial costume and make-up designs.

Costume art was also used in the production of *Ogedengbe* to show the status of lower class of the society. We could see that various servants and assistants in the production wore batik (*Adire*) which was commonly used by that class as at the time of the real history of the play. King's servants wore it. Ogedengbe's servants too wore the same costume to show their status in the society. Consequently, costumes and make-up in the two productions have shown and demonstrated the following: period, gender, individual status, class, action enhancer and message emphasising strategy, among others. Costume design can even do more than these, depending on how, when and why they are being used and explored in a play production. Kindly note that we have several pictures as illustrations under our Appendices. These are meant to to show the omnibus power of costume as visual and spectacle activators in theatricality.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to look at certain concepts and principles that guide costume and make-up designers so as to work effectively and efficiently in theatrical productions. It considered the concepts and principles of costume and make-up designs as constituents of theory on costume and make-up. The paper interrogated costume and make-up designs in the productions of E.O. Kofoworola's *Queen Ghashengeh* and Bode Osayin's *Ogedengbe*, assessing the technical expertise used in the productions of the plays to present our arguments of how, why and when to costume and make-up characters for successful theatrical

performance. Consequently, the chapter enunciated contributions and roles of costume and make-up designers in the two performances. It also encouraged would-be costume and make-up designers to do the needful for them to actualise the artistic requirements of costume and make-up arts. The paper recommends, therefore, that the essence of costume and make-up designs in the theatre are significant which make the two arts relatively impossible to do away with in the theatre business. Given consideration to or accepting our prototype concepts and principles of costume and make-up we hope, will also aid the use of the two indispensable paralinguistic aesthetics in the performance articulation.

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