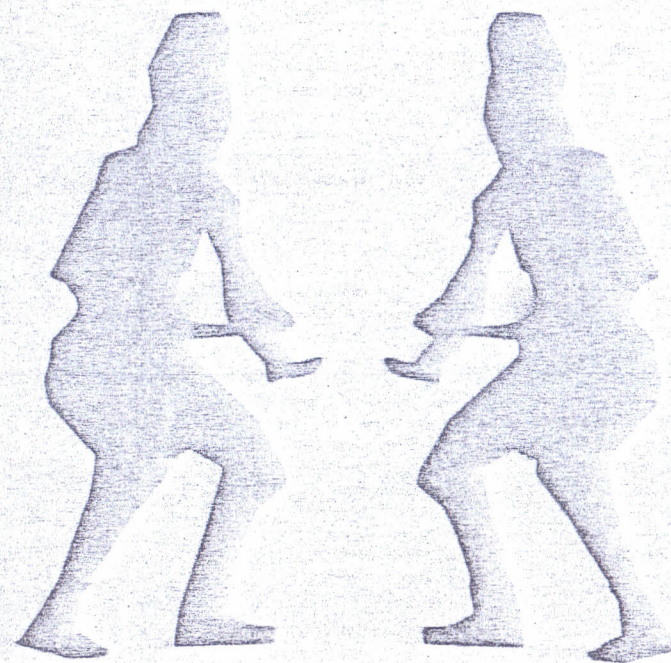


DANCE DISCOURSE AND SCRIPTS FOR THE STAGE

VOLUME 1



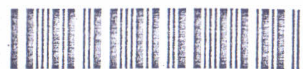
Dance Discourse and Scripts for the Stage came into being because of the need to expand the scope of the former publication, *Dance Scripts for the Stage* to include discourse on dance and dance performances so as to appropriately capture the essence of the book.

Dance Discourse and Scripts for the Stage therefore accommodates the publication of librettos, as well as, discourses, critiques, pedagogical notes, reviews and interviews on dance scripts and performances. It is published by the Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

This volume therefore contains the combination of the published works under *Dance Scripts for the Stage* volumes one and two.

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DANCE DISCOURSE AND SCRIPTS FOR THE STAGE



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Felix A. Akinsipe

Contents

Dedication -----	iii
Introduction -----	iv
Foreword to <i>Dance Scripts for the Stage</i> Volume One---	v
Foreword to <i>Dance Scripts for the Stage</i> Volume Two---	viii
Notes on Contributors -----	x
 Part One: Dance Discourse	 1
Chapter One: The Dance Libretto	
-Kehinde Adedamola Olalusi	2
Chapter Two: The Librettist and his Art	
-Felix A. Akinsipe	8
Chapter Three: Dance and Music Librettos Compared	
-Taiwo Adedamola Olalusi	16
Chapter Four: From Page to Stage: A Choreographic	
Analysis of Felix A. Akinsipe's	
<i>Struggling to Die</i> -Kene Igweonu	24
Chapter Five: Dancing out a Nation's State of Pity and	
Amusement: Kelani's Retelling of	
Ogunde's <i>Yoruba Ronu</i> -Tunde Onikoyi	38
Chapter Six: Colour Synchronisation in Stage Designs:	
The Dance Production of Victor	
Eze's "The Wailing Grave" as	
Example -Olapeju Shadiat Shuaib	58
Part Two: Dance Librettos	72
Chapter Seven: Tussle -Peter Adeiza Bello	73
Chapter Eight: The Cooking Pot -Ifure Ufford-Azobor	78
Chapter Nine: Onwunmaya	
-Temitope Adedokun-Richards	85
Chapter Ten: Counter Mission	
-Kehinde Adedamola Olalusi	91
Chapter Eleven: Tribal Marks -'Tosin Tume	97
Chapter Twelve: Alatako -Felix Damilola Emoruwa	104
Chapter Thirteen: Subsidy -Yeside Lawal Dosumu	110
Chapter Fourteen: Joromi -Steve James	116

Chapter Fifteen: The festival of the gods	121
-Mariam Asabe Iyeh	
Chapter Sixteen: Iyalode Efunsetan -Felix A. Akinsipe	130
Chapter Seventeen: Better Days Ahead -Chris Ugolo	138
Chapter Eighteen: Knotted... <i>From Adam to Adam</i>	
-Rudolf Kansese	143
Chapter Nineteen: A Harvest of Dance	
-Ifure Ufford-Azobor	151
Chapter Twenty: The Seed -Bose Tsevende	161
Chapter Twenty One: Sound of Love -Peter Adeiza Bello	163
Chapter Twenty Two: The Masquerade -Josephine Abbe	169
Chapter Twenty Three: Inspired	
-Oluwatoyin Y. Olokodana James	172
Chapter Twenty Four: Mojogbayi -'Tosin Tume	180
Chapter Twenty Five: Inyo (The Rain)	
-Damisa Cyrus Suru	190
Chapter Twenty Six: Our Possession -Dodo Lumumba	194
Chapter Twenty Seven: Mankind -Hairat Bukola Yusuf	197
Chapter Twenty Eight: All for War? -Kehinde Adedamola	200
Olalusi	
Chapter Twenty Nine: Shackled of Love	207
 Part Three: Reviews and Interviews	 211
Chapter Thirty: Dance Training and Practice in the	
Performing Arts Theatre, University	
of Ilorin: An Interview with	
Felix A. Akinsipe	
-Kehinde Adedamola Olalusi	212

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CHAPTER THREE:

DANCE AND MUSIC LIBRETTOS COMPARED

TAIWO ADEBUSOLA OLALUSI

Abstract

The existing relationship between music and dance is a very cordial one, and a symbiotic representation of an active force of collaboration. In the theatre, these two are like two sides of a coin, which can hardly be separated. Usually, the impulse to dance creativity is through the influence of music, while the appreciation of a good music, is accompanied by dance. This paper examines the similarities between music and dance librettos, taking a look at the convergences and divergences.

Introduction

In the Arts, music and dance represent a significant force of attraction, and has no doubt been the major source and means of entertainment in Nigeria. The duo exists as a body, where one can hardly do without the other. In the Nigerian entertainment scene, the value of a good music is usually complemented with wonderful choreographies which further promotes and publicizes it in the music videos. The different dance competitions and talent hunt shows have also exhibited the close relationship between music and dance, with each of these shows relying significantly on the use of music to project their dances.

In the total theatre concept, theories have established the need in the fraternization of music and dance and even in their dramatic shape i.e., LIBRETTOS which is the focus of this paper, they exist as individual forms, but significantly rely on each other to function well. No wonder Lo-Bamijoko (2007, p. 173) refers to the relationship between them as "A marriage of Convenience." Their connectivity is one of the surviving force of the arts in the entertainment industry, and even in the theatre, and the success of

most, if not all forms of entertainment and theatrical performances may not be achieved without the involvement of the duo.

Music Libretto

A music libretto is usually called an opera, or rather the stage presentation of a music libretto is called an opera. The word libretto originated from an Italian word called "little book." A music libretto is a combination of the storyline, set into words, and the music composition which actually signifies the operatic element. A music libretto is a creative and carefully written storyline, with the intention of presenting it in an operatic form. It is a two in one task, where the author may be the writer of the story, and also be the composer of the music, or where the author simply writes the story and employs a music composer to compose the songs. A music libretto is just like a drama script at its documented stage and the difference between the two is only established through the performance.

A well written music libretto is one which equal consideration is given to both its dramatic aspect and the music itself. In essence, it is a blend of these two areas which authenticates it as a music libretto. Over the years, music librettos have not been either written or completed, due to the arduous task of writing the storyline, breaking it into scenes and lines for each characters and composing every bit of these lines. While there are evidences to show the existence of some music librettos in Nigeria, its scarcity is still very much prevalent. Thompson (2002, p 30) explains that

Writing a music libretto is a challenging task, it is a two in one volitional hurdle that must be subdued. The challenge it poses is often enormous especially when given a time frame. Even the adaptation of a dramatic story poses similar challenges. As such, writing a music libretto should be approached with utmost seriousness, interest and dedication.

The above statement sheds more light on why the earliest form of music libretto was usually written by a playwright, while a music composer is employed to compose the songs. In the present day parlance, the author of a music libretto has two challenging task

- Writing a script capable of effective presentation
- Composing the characters lines into music

The above task is what makes the process of writing a music libretto challenging. because while a drama script and even a dance libretto may be written within a particular time frame, it takes double of that time or even more to write a music libretto. It is probably the only aspect of the arts where two forms are expected within one script.

Components of a Music Libretto

One of the major components a music libretto should possess is a good storyline capable of adequate dramatic presentation. This is important because of the possibility of focusing more on the musical aspect, thus neglecting some salient dramatic moments. A music libretto is a combination of drama and music and the information contained in such libretto should reflect the dramatic and musical nature. A good plot structure is also necessary in order to divulge the necessary message to the audience. Linear plot may best be suitable especially for a music libretto where two forms go hand in hand.

Good lyrical compositions are also very important in order to give the libretto a rich musical taste. If music is the medium of communication, then justice has to be done in ensuring that the compositions are good, pleasing and enjoyable to the audience. This will go a long way in improving their understanding of the performance. Variations in musical styles are also necessary in order to avoid a stereotyped musical form or style, thereby given a broad musical feeling to the audience.

Dance Libretto

A dance libretto is a written document of the story line of a dance piece, whose performance results into a dance theatre. It is usually written in movement with a well sequenced plot structure, and clarity in the dissemination of certain information. On paper, a dance libretto seems the easiest to write, but on the contrary, it is one of the most difficult to present on stage. Of all the arts, its technicality also stems from this nature. The famous proverb/adage that says "action speaks louder than the voice" may actually be true, but given the task of writing and producing a dance libretto, such actions need to be carefully and properly arranged to convey the expected message.

As mentioned earlier, writing a dance libretto is much more on the convenient side, especially when we take a look at its volume but the mental and psychological stress is evident. The process of writing a dance libretto is done in a unique way where there has to be a consistent framework and a mental picture of certain movements, patterns and choreographic possibilities which can best suit the aim and purpose of the libretto. Another unique feature of a dance libretto is that the shorter the storyline, probably the longer the performance. The non verbal nature of dance is such which allows for several varied movements and choreography for the shortest of dramatic sentences.

The body of the dancer is able to speak and express a situation in several ways within the instruction in the libretto. Emphasizing the usage of the body, Olomu (2007, p. 27) informs that:

In dance the only instrument used is the body itself: the dancer is at the same time the creator and the bearer of the dance activity. The texture of dance is the movement of the dancer, and no other media are necessary to reveal expression, symbolism and eventually poetry, non-verbally.

The above statement speaks volume about the task embedded in the dance libretto and the performance of a dance libretto.

Component of a Dance Libretto

One of the most important features a dance libretto should have is clarity in the message it wishes to pass across. This is very important because the only medium of communication in non-verbal and the visual perception and understanding of the message by the audience needs to be considered. If clarity of message is to be achieved, a straight forward storyline, which possesses quality conflict and resolution, is a good option. The clumsier the story of the libretto, the difficult it is to understand its message.

A good plot structure should also be considered in the libretto, as this will help in the ordering of movements in conveying certain messages. A linear plot structure may suffice here, as it gives room for a dance theatre to rise from the introduction (beginning) through to the conflict (middle) and then to the resolution (end). Other plot structures may be used, but the dissemination of the messages in a dance libretto should be a consideration.

The use of music and songs is one aspect which is almost impossible to ignore in the production of a dance libretto, this is because of the close relationship between music and dance. The use of music and songs often times reduces and makes the work of a choreographer easier. That is why it is almost certain to see musical instructions in most dance librettos.

Kenrick (2003) describes the following as elements of a libretto. They are

- Keep the storyline clear and easy to follow
- Create characters that are easy to relate to without resorting to stereotype
- Create situations that call characters into songs

- Move in and out of songs as smoothly as possible
- Handover much of the plot and character development to the songs and choreography
- Make the audience care at all times

Music and Dance Libretto Compared

Music and dance represents a force in the art and their close relationship is very obvious in several performances. However, there are certain qualities which differentiate them especially in their libretto form. A music libretto involves two aspects i.e. writing the story and developing lines of each character, and composing these lines into music, while a dance libretto involves the writing of a storyline and breaking it into movements. The documentation of a dance libretto is usually not voluminous not more than 10 pages at most, but that of music libretto is usually voluminous because of the individual lines, and the composition of the music. The performance of a music libretto is verbal through the medium of singing, and the performance of a dance libretto is strictly non verbal through the extensive use of the body. The dance librettos are broken into movements, while the music librettos are into scenes. A music libretto involves two forms i.e. writing the script and composing the songs while a dance libretto simply involves writing the script in visualized form.

The major similarity between the two is in the word 'LIBRETTO' which is used to address their written work. While the word libretto which means "little book" may have started with a musical book, it was later also used to describe a written document in dance. Another similarity is in the technicality of their presentation. The technicality in writing a music libretto is in its dual form, while the technicality in writing a dance libretto is in its non-verbal form.

The unity existing between the two forms of art over the years is responsible for their names of reference i.e. music and dance librettos. The significant differences lie in their medium of

communication, where one is verbal, through the use of music and songs, and the other non verbal through the use of the body.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have taken an outlook on what music and dance librettos look like in terms of their contents and context, we have also enumerated some components of these librettos, and given a brief comparism of the two librettos. It is observed that the writing and production of both librettos presents an uphill task to the librettists in the area of music and dance. It is hoped that this paper will gear up librettists into writing more music and dance librettos, and complete the ones at hand.

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CHAPTER FOUR:

FROM PAGE TO THE STAGE: A CHOREOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF FELIX A. AKINSIPE'S STRUGGLING TO DIE

KENE IGWEONU

The juxtaposition of various artistic genres, ranging from the performative to the non-performative, to create an aesthetic whole is not novel in indigenous African society. This is evident in the artistic fusion of dance, mime, poetry, costume, sculpture, and other performative and visual arts in performance, and is a clear reference to the total theatre concept. However, postcolonial developments in contemporary African societies have fostered a new and compelling understanding of performance, which has led to a separation into three distinctive and often independent performative arts of dance, drama and music.

The situation then arose where dance which is considered to embody the idea of performance in indigenous African society lost its autochthonous articulacy in contemporary African performance, a point which is well noted in a 2001 co-authored paper with Sunday Ododo. At the heart of this 2001 paper is the understanding that, "even though, formal drama is considered younger than dance and music, drama often tries to force dance and music as artistic appendages to its own artistic expressions" (Ododo and Igweonu, 2001 p. 51). However, the paper goes on to argue that dance experiments and productions at the University of Ilorin are specifically geared towards re/asserting the position of contemporary African dance as a distinct artistic genre that has potentials, not just for spectacle, but as a perfect tool for didactics as is the case with performance in indigenous African society.