

BREAKING THE BARRIER OF IMPRECISION IN PLAY MAKING IN BAYO ODUNEYE'S 'DRAFT INTERCHANGE' DIRECTORIAL APPROACH

ARINDE, Tayo Simeon
Department of the Performing Arts
University of Ilorin

startee11@yahoo.com, rindetay@unilorin.edu.ng

08033594845

Abstract

The art of play directing, which in the recent time has been revered as an effective tool in play production processes, prior to now, has suffered academic research inattention when compared to other theatrical approaches. Ever since this neglect was noticed, some committed researchers have relentlessly taken up the challenge to move the art into the next level by inventing ingenious directing styles to aid playmaking process. This paper therefore, examines 'Draft Interchange', which is one of Bayo Oduneye's ingenious contributions to play making process. We employ a case study, interview and analysis of some of Oduneye's practical directing works as it methodological approach. Consequent, our findings reveal that the art of play directing and nifty directing approaches, such as Oduneye's "Draft Interchange", enhances precision in movement, time management and the achievement of an aesthetically rewarding play performance. Resulting from this, we, unequivocally, commend Bayo Oduneye's model for fulfilling play productions.

Key words: styles, play, directing, Draft Interchange

Introduction

Play directing as an art in the theatre and the play director, prior to 1900 were accorded less artistic and research attention, it was almost said they were inexistent. Emasealu (2010:15) observes this with regard to the place of directing in the Nigerian theatre when he states that: "Recorded research effort has been rather scanty in the area of directing in Nigerian theatre, be it in the traditional festival theatre, popular travelling theatre, community theatre or the literary theatre of English expression". Musa (2007:5) submission that "play directing has largely been ignored" is another attestation to the fact that little or no attention has been paid to the art of play directing. In the same vein, on whether or not due recognition was accorded the status of the director in the theatre, Cole and Chinoy (1963:3) states categorically that: "less than a hundred years ago, the director was an only ideal projected by disgruntled critics of the chaotic Victorian theatre. We did not even have a name for the term 'director'..."

Stemming from the above, we hold a strong but contrary view to the views expressed above. We state in affirmation that the two concepts have been in existence since the inception of the theatre; however, they may not be so addressed. This fact is corroborated in *vtheatre.net* (2011:1) that "directing in some form has always existed in the theatre" as well as the submission of Wilson and Goldfarb (2000:5) who confirm that "as far back as 5th century, Didaskalos directed the Greek plays". This information seems

sufficient to lay to rest all the insinuations that directing and the title director never existed in the theatre.

Be that as it may, in this work, we advance the fact that the concept; directing and the person of a director have ever since the theatre started been in existence. We confirm this in the works of Edwin and Goldfarb who claim that theatre started from Africa around 4th BC citing one I-Kher-nafet of Egypt, who was said to be the first personality to put up a play; an Egyptian king-god Osiris in Abydos around 1887-1849 BC. In the same vein, the *Columbia Encyclopaedia* (2004:1-3) attests to the long existence of the art of directing and the status of a director when it states that: "directing in some form has always existed in the theatre. In ancient Greece, playwrights trained their chorus and actors, and medieval religious plays had either individual or group directors."

In respect of the existence of the art of directing and the status of the director in the African theatre, Adedeji (1981:224) educates us with respect to the art of directing and the status of a director in the traditional African theatre practice. He avers that the art manifests in the African theatre practice through the "Alarinjo travelling theatre" performances and identifies the leadership structure of the group to be Esa Ogbin. In his historical submission he states that Esa Ogbin, after the demise of Ologbin Ologbojo, the erstwhile palace entertainment officer, became the head, "in consequence (Esa Ogbin) becomes the progenitor of all those who have taken to the profession of masque-dramaturgy." This submission is corroborated in Akinwale (2000) and Musa (2002).

Having resolved the contention regarding the existence of the art of directing and status of director in the African theatre, we consider it apt to examine directing works of a few African directors, who have contributed to the growth of play directing in Africa. Specifically, we beam our searchlight on the directing works of Bayo Oduneye, a versatile Nigerian director, whose ingenious directing style has brought aesthetic finesse into play making process and play performances. We shall specifically examine his 'Draft interchange' blocking style and other approaches, such as script selection preference, auditioning and casting style and many other style that he employs in his play making processes.

Clarification of Concept

Since this work examines the directing style of Bayo Oduneye, we consider it apt to explain the concept; style within the context of this work. Benedetti (1976:12) defines style as "a quality which results from a characteristic mode of expression or method of presentation." Akinwale (2000:116) again expands on Benedetti's earlier definition by describing style as "the method employed by the director in harnessing all the elements of the theatre, to achieve a meaningful communication with the audience". For the purpose of this study, we see style as a way of doing things that is unique to an individual or a trademark for which somebody is known and identified with.

Conceptual issues in Play Directing, Director and directing styles

The art of play directing, directing styles and the director got into the theatre practice in the Fourth Century, earlier than 1900 claimed by some researchers, such as Taylor (1996), Emasealu (2010:13) In affirming the claim, Taylor (1996:1) submits that,

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"director arrived very late in the day. They are new born child in the lifetime of the theatre" while Emasealu states that "The place of the director was not pronounced in the ancient Greek theatre". At the stage that Taylor describes the director as a newborn was perhaps in the late nineteenth century when the art became officially recognised as a tool for play making.

In the same vein, some African theatre scholars such as Nwoko (1981), Gbilekaa (2000) to mention just a few also held the same position with regard to the position of director and directing in the African theatre. However, many theatre scholars have since debunked this claim as a piece of historical distortion, thereby making it convenient for us to advance the position that the director and the art of play directing exists in the theatre as far back as the 5th century. This is on the premise that the Didaskalos direct the Greek plays. Brockett (1999:24) states that during the early Greek theatre, the director was referred to as *Didaskalos*, which literarily means "teacher". In the *Wikipedia Dictionary* (2011), further evidence is provided buttressing that the playwright-director is also called *Didaskalos*. This it quoted in its reference to Aeschylus as one of the playwright-director acting in his plays. It informs that as the *didaskalos* "he would also train the Chorus, sometime compose the music and supervise every aspect of production." This unarguably places on the Didaskalos the directorship status in the Greek theatre.

In another development, Wilson and Goldfarb (2000:5) earlier in their contribution identify one "I-Kher-nafet", an Egyptian as the first theatre personality, who in the 4th century enacted a play on the Egyptian king-god Osiris in Abydos, which from all intents and purposes places on a soft ground that I-Kher-nafet was the first Stage Director in African theatre history. At this juncture, we consider it apt to elucidate on the concept; directing and to also educate us on who a director is in the theatre.

Directing as an art of the theatre has been variously described and defined. Hodge (1971:1) describes directing as the "art of leading dramatic performances...art of coordinating the element of the theatre...art of communication", He also sees the art as a sensitive craft". Wole Soyinka, cited in Musa (2007:214) sees play directing as "a complex business". In this study, we are adopting the definition in the *Free On Line Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia* (2008:1), which describes directing as "art of coordinating and controlling all elements in the staging of a play". Therefore, directing is the art of harnessing all elements of the theatre with a view to achieving an artistic entity.

On the other hand, a director in the theatre is that important personality whose role and duties cannot be over-emphasised. Indeed, Wilson and Goldfarb (1991:34), buttress this that; "in the modern theatre, the director is indispensable." Brockett (1996:449) also describes the director as "the person with primary responsibility for interpreting a script, rehearsing the actors and coordinating all elements of a production." For the purpose of this study, we adopt the definition of Wilson and Goldfarb (2000:525) who describe the director as "the person who is responsible for the overall unity of a production, coordinating the efforts of the contributing artists...in charge of rehearsals and supervises the actors in the preparation of their parts."

From the 4th BC and particularly the 1900 when the art of directing became an official register for playmaking in the theatre and the director is refer to as "god". Brook

(1968:36), many directing styles both Western and African alike have evolved. It is germane to highlight a few of them and the milieu during which they evolved.

Theatre practice of the English people during the late Middle age era, which preceded the modern theatre era witnessed the era when theatre director was referred to as 'actor-manager' with the like of David Garrick and Colley Gibbes dominating the catchphrase. As Managers and actors, they direct their plays.

The beginning of modern theatre, which started around 1875-1915 gave rise to many eclectic developmental phenomena in theatre practice and particularly in the art of play directing. Gardner (2010:1) in her posting on *Guardian Theatre Blog* corroborates that "technologies have transformed our everyday lives and they have become a crucial part of the way theatre is made and our theatre going lives too." The quest made the art of play directing and the status of a director to assumed a more elegant, authoritative and dynamic posture. Brown (1995) in his work; *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, cited in *Wikipedia* (2011) says that the period when the art of play directing and the status of a director became recognised in the theatre is around eighteen Century, (1874-1900) when "management of large numbers of extras and complex stagecraft matters necessitated an individual to take on the role of overall coordinator".

Postmodernism in play directing lifts the art in terms of invention of new directing styles, which Musa (2007:41) in his Ph.D. Thesis referred to as "Directing Theories, Approaches and Style in the Theatre". We shall not dissipate much energy re-explaining the theories, because Musa's work under reference has dwelled quite extensively on them. It is under this premise that we reiterate that it is during the postmodern theatre era that the art of play directing assumed a wider and dynamic spectrum.

Biography of Bayo Adisa Oduneye

Bayo Adisa Oduneye was born in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria on 4th November, 1936. He had his early education in Nigeria before moving to Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) in London, where he obtained his Diploma in Stage Management in June, 1964. Later, he was at Carnegie-Mellon University Pittsburgh, P.A. United State of America where he obtained his Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) in May, 1972. Prior to obtaining his Masters in Fine Arts in 1972, he was offered employment at the University of Ibadan's School of Drama from September 1964 to 1969. Thereafter, he worked in the following places: Lecturer, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh P.A. USA (1970-1971); Lecturer, Chatham College, Pittsburgh, USA (1971), Lecturer, Xavier University, New Orleans, USA (1971), Artistic Director, Free Southern Theatre(F.S.T.) and New Orleans, USA (1971-1972).

He also worked as a Lecturer/ Senior Art Fellow, and later the Artistic Director at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan (1972-2001), Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Lagos (1987) and the Artistic Director, P.E.C. Repertory Theatre, Lagos in 1987 and later float his own theatre arts outfit named Diamond Production, which he led from September 1987 to August 1991. He was later appointed as the Artistic Director, National Troupe of Nigeria between September, 1991 and September, 2000. He served his post retirement at the Department of Performing Arts, Olabisi Onabanjo University (2007 -2009). He was also Chairman, Nigerian Film Corporation, August

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(1982-1983); Chairman, Eight-member Review Panel on Government owned Film and Theatre Institutions (September 1984 –January 1985) and Chairman, Planning Committee, National Summit on Culture-Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism (27th October, 1999). He also served as the Artistic Director, National Troupe of Nigeria (October, 1991), Leader/Artistic Director, National Troupe of Nigerian's delegation to MIN-ON JAPAN (April to May, 1992), Leader/Artistic Director, National Troupe of Nigerian's delegation to North Korea (April, 1993) and Leader/ Artistic Director, National Troupe of Nigerian's delegation to Seoul, South Korea (September, 1994). He was the Leader/Artistic Director, National Troupe of Nigerian delegation to North Korea's "Spring Festival of Culture" (April, 1995). He was also a Resource Person to the Culture and Tourism Group Vision 2010 Committee (August, 1997) to mention just a few. He has to his credits some local, national and international awards and distinctions.

So far, Oduneye has directed well over 60 stage plays. Some of which include: *Ameh Oboni the Great*, *Langbodo*, *Hopes of the Living Dead*, *The Marriage of Anansewa*, *Atahiru Trails of Oba Ovonramwen*, *The King must Dance Naked*, *The Silent Gods Things Fall Apart*, *John Brigg's Paradise*, *The Spirit of Lagos*, *Coloured Museum*, to mention just a few.

Draft Interchange, Oduneye's method in achieving precision in play directing

The ingenuity that Oduneye displays in playmaking process endeared us to embark on an examination of his directing style. We single out his blocking style, which we called "Draft Interchange". This is borne out the fact that the style has brought precision to play making process. Aside from examining this approach, we shall also highlight some of his directorial styles, such as his play selection, audition and casting styles, his rehearsal style, approach to dress and technical rehearsal, blocking styles, directorial issues at his performance nights and the styles he employs in handling his casts and crew members.

Oduneye blocking styles, using "Draft Interchange" caught our attention because of its uniqueness. This style, daCosta Adeyemo, Oduneye's age-long stage manager, Hussaini Shuaibu his Personal Assistant at the National Theatre and Grace Adinku, a make-up designer, costumier and an actress shed light on. Although they all opined that the style is akin to pre-blocking style but they extol the fact that Oduneye does his own with a difference, which manifests in the way he assigns movements to his actors by plotting the placement of his characters and their movements on the pages of his script using stone for illustrations. Later he moves the stones as the draft dice is moved around, on the draft board in a draft game. It is at this point that decide to describe the method as; "*Draft Interchange*". We arrived at this description, after examining the game of draft. We noted that the game of draft is usually played on a flat surface, made of wood or other materials. Players place the board on a table or on their laps and move the dices around on it. The stage of performance being a flat surface is likened to a draft board while we equate dices with actors to whom movements are assigned in the process of alternation imagination, creative inventiveness and illumination of the mise-en-scene by actors who

Out of share curiosity to affirm the information we had gathered, we enquired from Oduneye with regard to his blocking method and other steps that he takes before he assigns movements to his actors. He submits to us pointedly that he pre-blocks as we have observed but he runs the movements of his characters in his mind. His submission is reproduced below:

I will just say I am one of the old ones, because I pre-block. I am one of those directors, when I get a play to direct, I read, may be more than fifty times. I take notes; do my research to look at whatever I do not know about the play. When that was done, I now sit down with my script and block everything down... when I give my blockings, when you looked at it and you find it not implementable, you will be allowed to suggest to me what you think is best for you then we will agree (Oduneye, 2009, an interview).

It was interesting to note that when Oduneye directed a play, *Hopes of the Living Dead* by Ola Rotimi, a 145 page script at the University of Ibadan in (2002), he rehearsed it and made perfect for performance within three weeks. This was as a result of his Draft Interchange style, which promotes precision and timeliness during rehearsal process.

When Oduneye blocks his plays, he pays special attention to entries and exits in the play. In addition, he will not allow his stage to suffer imbalance. He is also a meticulous director when it comes to paying attention to some details, such as planes, levels and body positions of his actors on stage. We found these details featuring prominently when he directed Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru*. For instance, in the play, at the Emir in Council scene, Oduneye placed Attahiru in Up Stage (US) position while his chiefs were aesthetically placed occupying different plane, level and different body positions as illustrated in the pictures in figures (a) and (b) below:



(a)



(b)

Actors' placement in *Attahiru*: Attahiru and his chiefs in Emir in Council's Scene on different planes and levels in the play. The director demonstrates the attention he pays to level, plane and body positions.

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A close study of the plane positions above shows three levels – the Attahiru in the uppermost of US, the next two chiefs at both Stage Right (SR) and Stage Left (SL) above are on another plane while the next sets were on another plane and levels. Apart from Attahiru who gives Full Front, all the other chiefs give three quarter body positions. The aesthetic of these planes, levels and body positions was to achieve clarity. The placement of Attahiru at US shows the height of his authority.

We observe Oduneye's blocking style and note that he blocks his plays right from the time he commences reading his script. This reveals that Oduneye scribbles his blockings and thereafter dictates it to his actors at rehearsals scene-by-scene, segment-by-segment or at times the whole play, having prepared it from home. We also note that he insists that when he gives his blockings his actors does not alter them. Unequivocally, Oduneye is a director who pre-blocks

No doubt, the Oduneye Draft Interchange style of blocking actors exerts precision. However, our observation after a critical appraisal presents the style as an authoritarian approach, which sort of alienates actors from the republic of the director. It does not give actors room to contribute to his production process especially when blocking his plays. Having examined his Blocking styles we also consider his other directorial approach as follow:

Script selection in the play production process is the foundation and one of the most important steps that a good director must prioritise when commencing directorial assignments. The importance of this exercise is noted by Nelms (1958), Kernodle and Kernodle (1996), Prince and Jackson (1997), Hauser and Reich (2003) and a host of other theatre scholars. For example, Frerer (1996:4) emphasises that script selection is "the first and one of the most important tasks of the director." The director's choice of scripts, we must emphasise, has far-reaching effects on his artistic reputation, sensitivity, creativity and success.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the acceptability or otherwise of the play a director selects must be with the intent to meet the yearning of his targeted audience in all ramifications. This, therefore, means that script selection is often predicated upon a number of factors. Factors that ranges from environmental to political and from socio-economic to personal consideration. No director who wants to succeed in his directorial assignment will undermine the socio-political, economic and the religious environment that surround his project area. Aside the above-enumerated factors, the play director must also consider the genre of the play he is selecting. By genre, we mean the form, style or subject matter in which, an artistic work is categorised. Paradoxically, we have seen a situation too in which a director selects a play script based on his affinity as observed by Wilson (2007:150) who says, "Frequently, the director chooses the script to be produced. Generally, it is a play to which the director is attracted or for which he or she feels a special affinity." This in itself is ideological, and therefore, the commitment that a director intends to bring to his theatre is a matter of choice.

The above underscores the fact that a director has very wide range of reasons for his choice of play script. In the event that the play is a commissioned one, the sponsor or the producer dictates the script he wants for performance. Because script selection is the foundation of play directing, we found out how Oduneye treats the issue of script selection and the methods he uses in selecting his scripts during his directing career.

Oduneye attaches a lot of importance to his play selections. He even regards it as the first basic task that any director, who wants to succeed, should prioritise when embarking on any directorial assignment. Oduneye's script selection preference is the 'avant-garde' tradition. According to him, he takes delight in experimenting with "plays that cannot be classified under any theatre genre; plays that do not make sense to anybody" (Oduneye, 2009, an interview). Wilson (2007:-27) states that avant-garde is a French term that literally means "advance guard" in a military formation. It has come to stand for an intellectual, literary, or artistic movement in any age that breaks tradition and appears to be ahead of its time. Avant-garde are works that are usually experimental and unorthodox." Holman and Harmon (1986:44) define avant-garde as "striking (and usually self conscious) innovations in Style, Form and subject matter". In *Wikipedia* (2009) retrieved from <http://en.wiki.org/wiki/avant-garde>, Avant-garde is defined as "people/or works that are experimental or innovative, particularly with respect to the art". Indeed, Oduneye justifies his choice of avant-garde plays by insisting, "I like to direct plays that makes no meaning to anybody". This gives credence to his assiduity and his creative inventiveness. Dapo Adelugba, in a paper he presented on Oduneye in Ibadan in 2003, he testifies to Oduneye's passion for avant-garde plays. He confirms that Oduneye has creatively infected his students with the phobia. To confirm this, he recalls that Oduneye's "passion for short avant-garde plays has infected his students all through the years" (Adelugba, 2003:5).

DaCosta Adeyemo submits that aside from the avant-garde plays, which are Oduneye's first preference, he also has high consideration for African plays, especially those with large casts. In this direction, we observed that he has directed quite a number of such contemporary African plays within the dramatic genre of tragedy, satire and some of them comic plays. Such plays include *Langbodo* by Wale Ogunyemi, *Death and the Kings Horseman* (1975) by Wole Soyinka, *Ijaiye* (1970) by Wale Ogunyemi, and Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*. Others include: *Attahiru* (1999) by Ahmed Yerima, *Divorce* (a domestic drama) (1977) by Wale Ogunyemi, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* adapted for the stage by Effiong Bassey, and *Ameh Oboni The Great* to mention but a few.

Casting according to *Encarta English Dictionaries* (2009) [DVD] is a "selection process for performers". Usually, the process is better achieved when audition, which is a strategy employed in the theatre to practically test the suitability of actors'. This method Oduneye employs. We note that in casting, Oduneye's method detests private audition; rather, he prefers open audition. To do this he prepares an audition form, which he titled "Audition sheet", which usually contains detailed information about would-be casts. When Oduneye is not satisfied with the quality of the actors that attended his audition or he orders for a call-back.

More importantly, Oduneye treats audition and casting as two processes in one. Hence he submits to us during one of our interview session in 2009 that: "Casting to me is the major thing. I am not looking for the best actors to act; it has to do with your character and your personality. Because I belief I can get you once I know that your personality can take you through the character. It takes me a long time to do my casting".

Drawing from the submission above, we note that Oduneye does not cast based on whom he knows but gives preference to the best actor who performed at his audition.

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We also note that he does not cast based on any special stage direction of playwright concept, such as requesting for a particular size, stature, body description. His reason, which we agreed is rooted in the fact that demographic and biological factors should not be a major determinant for casting in a profession that thrives essentially on creativity. To buttress this, we recall that he cast Ahmed Yerima, the playwright of *Attahiru*, after he was taken through rigorous open audition process only after he was convinced that he met his requirement when he directed the play in 1999. He also demonstrated this when he directed Fred Agbeyegbe's *The King Must Dance Naked* in 1993 at the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos. In an Art Review column, the "Artsville", in the *Day Times* of February 7, 1993 the columnist, Toyin Akinosho, notes that "the artistic director, Bayo Oduneye explored fresh grounds by looking out for the best human resources in Nigerian Theatre..." (Akinosho, 1993:13).

Rehearsal is one of the crucial aspects of play directing. Our observation at Bayo Oduneye's rehearsals reveals that he categorised his rehearsals into three different levels. The three different levels we described as activities 'before', 'during' and 'after' the production. His coordinating styles at each of these levels differ from the other.

Oduneye's style before he commences his rehearsals is that a very good stage manager must be present. In essence, he requires the service of a good stage manager. This in our understanding will enable him achieve better coordination, proper arrangement of man and material resources that relates to the play he is rehearsing. Some of those materials include movable and immovable properties. Ostensibly, his disposition and quest for a good stage manager confirms Ionazzi's (1992:9) description of stage managers as "a confidant, counsellor and confessor".

We also observe that as part of his preparation for his daily rehearsals, he always insists that his actors compulsorily observe some minutes of serious and rigorous warm-up exercises, which are instructional. He corroborates this when he states that; "at the beginning of my rehearsal, actors must exercise voice and body. This is because actors will use their bodies and voices and if those tools are not ready, there is nothing that can be successfully done" (Oduneye 2009, an interview). His point, which we agree with, is that, exercises enhance actor's alertness and agility.

Oduneye devotes his first and second days at rehearsal to reading and discussing his production script and style with his casts and crew members. Some of the actors who have experienced him, who include; Ayo Akinwale, Dzifa Glikpoe (a Ghanaian actress) confirm this at different fora of our interaction with them. Invariably, he does this to ensure that his actors get familiar with the script while his discussion session affords him the opportunity to benefit from comments, contributions and questions that any of his actors may want to ask concerning any area in the play script.

Oduneye devices many other methods that makes him a unique play director. For instance, he brings his designers to the fore after he must have finished or almost completing his blockings. It is paradoxical that he does let his designers at the beginning of his directorial process. When we interviewed him in 2009, his reasons he succinctly advances below:

As soon as I complete my blockings, my designers are introduced to me; (that is) costume designer, set

designer, light director and other crew members. We will sit down and I will tell them my concept of the play, I will ask them to go and interpret the play the way they see it. I will tell them if there is anything new, they should add it. Then we would come back to discuss, compare notes and agree. However, I insist on what I wanted.

His reasons may not be connected with the fact that, the designers would normally have had enough feel of what the play is all about after watching his rehearsals for some time.

Psychology is an important factor play directing so also is trait. We observe a particular trait in Oduneye, he is temperamental. Notwithstanding that daCosta Adeyemo and Grace Adinku confirmed our observation, Oduneye was quick to agree that he is a temperamental director as he submits below:

I throw anything at anybody who wants to toy with my blockings, not because you are not doing things correctly...once we have agreed on the movement, when you looked at it if you find it not implementable by you and you give me what you think is the best for you and we have agreed. If you deviate from that one, I get angry and I throw anything at anybody (Oduneye, 2009, an interview).

Different directors have different approaches to measuring the level of the comprehension of their casts; Oduneye's run-through process is unique. He runs through his plays scene by scene. This approach enables him to cross-check that his actors are on track. He says: "I run through my plays practically every day. I run scene by scene. He declares that for you to ensure continuity you must run-through the play in parts or wholly" (Oduneye, 2009, an interview).

One unique approach that distinguishes African directors from Western directors is the total theatricality that they put into their play production. Bayo Oduneye as an African play director in spite of his flair for avant-garde plays employs total theatre aesthetics in his play productions. We confirm this when he directed Ahmed Yerima's *Ameh Oboni, the Great* (2005) on 2nd December, 2005, he introduced and used dances and songs at the appropriate places in the play. Two of the instances in the play when he used dances and songs were: after the installation of Ukagidi as the head of Dekina district (p.24) where young men and women of Igala, in ecstasy obviously demonstrating their in the song: "Ekailiugbede" in chorus form, which literally means: we are happy to witness a day of joy like this. The second instance is when Oduneye displays his total theatre idiosyncrasy in the same play after the death of Ameh Oboni, the Attah of Igala. The male who carries his body sang a dirge song in a call and response mode thus:

Call: "Eje ilewwola o".

Translation: The king has joined his ancestors"

Response: Eje ne Eje newwolaooo
Translation: The king, the king has joined his ancestors ooo.

his creativity, which Oduneye demonstrated confirms his total theatre man. Even though the playwright in the stage direction in the play on (p.63) that “(as the dirge is sung, slowly and finally lights fade)”, no specific mention is made of the particular song to be sang. The use of songs in plays usually is to lock-up the audience and for establishing a robust aesthetic connection between the playwright and the audience.

Oduneye has grown over the years; from the 1980s to 2010, when he finally bowed out of public service, shows constantly in his play productions that the best way to capture the hearts of theatre patrons is to encourage the use of local dialect during production. In this wise, Oduneye as a director is sensitive to dialects. Again in Oluwole Odejinrin's *Ameh Oboni the Great* (2005), which he directed and performed on 2nd March, 2005 at the National Theatre, he cast a character called Ogbe and made him to speak Igala dialect. This is in spite of the fact that the English translation of the play was provided by the playwright. The line goes thus:

“OGBE: Gaabai’du, Ogbaikolo otoloto oliko ma bu’n ki
aro tulaka tulaka”.

Meaning,

“the Fig tree that does not bud before it bears fruit, wake
up” (p.15).

Oduneye's dress and technical night rehearsal climaxes the work of a play director. His disposition is a radical departure from the conventional norm where the dress and technical rehearsals should normally take place a day to the public performance. Oduneye's dress and technical rehearsals span over three days. He defends his position when we interact with him in 2009:

I like my technical rehearsals at nights and at least for three continuous days to my performances. Within these three days, I dedicate one night to my friends. It is a night I called the “friends’ night”. Friends’ night is a mini performance night, a night when the show is premiered.

The ‘friends’ night’ according to him affords him the opportunity to harvest suggestions, criticisms and criticisms from his friends (amongst who are theatre makers, critics and journalists) before the play is performed.

This may sound absurd, but it is the fact, Oduneye avoids the theatre on the day of performance of his directed plays. He recall with nostalgia that:

I never like watching my plays. If I sit in the Auditorium and I see my actors doing what was not correct, I can

stop them. I can throw anything at them from wherever I stay. So, for this reason, I stay away from the theatre. At best I stay outside. I do not watch my plays. I have never done it (Oduneye, 2009, an interview).

Although, this attitude does not sound logical to us, because play directors who do not like to watch their directed plays when performed are not doing the theatre any good, neither are they doing themselves any good. Apart from the fact that their absence can erode actors' confidence, director who do not watch their plays in performance often do not benefit from comments and criticisms; positive or negative that the audience offers extemporaneously.

The level of man's interaction with his environment speaks volume of the personality trait of that individual. Notwithstanding that Oduneye at work is temperamental, his personality is warming. We found out a lot about Oduneye's person. All comments points to the fact that he is an amiable personality. His social disposition, particularly the one that concerns the issue of the welfare posture or his relationship with his artists describes him as a welfarist and a father figure. He was said to exert positive change in the National Troupes. Comments from some of the National Theatre staff who worked with him during his stint at the theatre especially the duo of daCosta Adeyemo and Hussaini Shuaibu bore eloquent testimony to his behavioural disposition and charismatic qualities. They say Oduneye is not a selfish director who wouldn't mind whether his casts and crew lived well or not rather, he believes and pursue the ideology that theatre artists should live well, paid well and treated with respect and dignity.

This he reflected when he expresses his disappointment at the way theatre artistes and practitioners are treated in Nigeria and Ghana. He bemoans the way Nigerian directors in particular are treated when it comes to the issue of remuneration. He condemns in totality the payment of pittance for services rendered by Nigerian play directors. That is the reason why he enlists government and non-governmental intervention in the theatre affairs in Nigeria. He recalled the roles played by the National Investment Bank (NIB) in the past and solicited for more of such intervention.

Conclusion

Having examined Oduneye's directorial works, we found that his draft interchange directorial style is a catalyst for achieving precision in play directing process. It is the mother of all his approaches, because it is the style that infects other styles. We found it as the cord of discipline that excites other directing styles to attain precision in time management, working within an assigned duty limit and aesthetics pleasure, which the society needs.

It is a style that we need in all our endeavours considering the fact that it is only in obedience that the Nigeria system can move forward. We therefore encourage other theatre scholars to strive to come up with ingenious directing styles for the sustainability of our theatre.

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