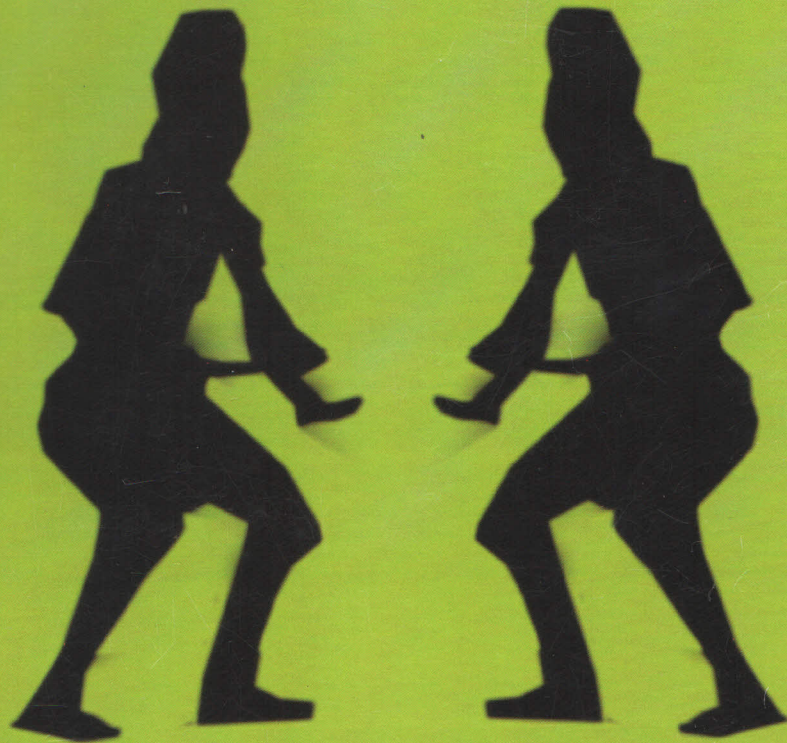


# **DANCE DISCOURSE AND SCRIPTS FOR THE STAGE**

**VOLUME 1**



Edited by  
**Felix A. Akinsipe**

***DANCE DISCOURSE***  
***AND SCRIPTS FOR THE STAGE VOLUME 1***

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## **Dedicated to:**

The leg that dances,  
The hand that dances,  
The spirit that dances,  
The soul that dances  
The body that demonstrates the dances

and

Those who have danced before,  
Those who are still dancing,  
Those that will still dance,  
Those that teach the dance,  
Those watching the dances.



## Introduction

**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** will therefore accommodate 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.

My deep gratitude therefore goes to all the contributors to the two volumes. I do also appreciate the efforts and contributions of my soundless editorial team for a job well done.

To all my students over the years, our interactions, limitations and experiences have no doubts led to the emergence of this work. So, do appreciate you. To my wife and children who have accepted and turned my sometime absent mindedness at home to a joke and have always been a supportive pillar at home and in the art world, I say thank you.

To all readers and performers of any of the script in this volume you are highly appreciated.

Of course, to the Supreme Artist I will forever remain thankful.

Felix A. Akinsipe  
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Ilorin – Nigeria.  
December, 2016.

## **FOREWORD TO DANCE SCRIPTS FOR THE STAGE VOLUME ONE**

Indeed, the theatre has three sweet, symbolic and sensational daughters. The image of the three prosperous daughters have been laundered by writers, dramatists and scholars such as Aristotle, Euripides, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, William Shakespeare, Arthur Miller, Bertolt Brecht and others in the saturated Western theatre whose acknowledged legacy lies on uncommon creativity. In the Nigerian postcolonial theatre, the three progressive daughters have been christened by Emeritus Professor Femi Osofisan as drum, song and dance in *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest* (1993). Among the trio, dance has the trusted crown of honour because of its paradoxes and multidimensional complexities of flexibility to rigidity, seriousness to ribaldry, femininity to masculinity, grace to grief, absurdity to logicity, supplication to demonisation and joy to sadness in the celebration of the culture in man, and the man in culture.

Dance, like the sea octopus with sprawling tentacles is the language of a constant universal art. Dance is not a hypothesis crafted in the mask of guessing. It is the reality of human existence. For dance, in its entertaining power, reflective energy, cultural revisionism or didactic essence - celebrates people's culture. In Africa, dance is the life-wire and the undying living art in the total theatre aesthetics.

Therefore, no rhetoric and no exaggeration, this is a critical time for victory. The creative victory or miracle of the moment is the Felix A. Akinsipe's edited work, *Dance Scripts for the Stage*. Structurally, this work is divided into three parts. Part One which is sub-titled "Introduction to Dance Libretto" has three chapters that offer suggestions to an aspiring librettist and examine basic fundamentals in the craft of writing a libretto. A comparative addition to Part One is the study of dance and music librettos used to hone the inseparability of dance and music in the performing arts. The three chapters in Part One of this work are crafted within

the scholarly lens of Felix A. Akinsipe and the Olalusi twins (Taiwo and Kehinde).

Part Two defines the essence of Dance Scripts for the Stage. It has ten rich arrays of dance librettos which are written with great enthusiasm by the eggheads in the Nigerian dance scholarship. They are Mariam Asabe Iyeh, Felix D. Emoruwa, Steve James, Ifure Ufford-Azobor, Yeside Lawal Dosunmu, Peter Bello Adeiza, Adedokun Richard and Kehinde A. Olalusi. One fascinating muse that runs across the entire ten librettos is the economy of words. The words of most of the librettos are clear without losing the taste of metaphors. They convey meanings without unnecessary intellectual jargons. The words chosen are eclectic and didactic as most of the librettos (scripts for the stage) will entice practitioners to select them for performances.

Another common trend in the librettos is the celebration of African culture and its place in the postcolonial era. Here, the place of African gods, the diviner's ageless value, ritual and ritualism, royalty and traditional institutions, and other icons within the African material and immaterial cultures are deconstructed to advance the changing plot structure of the human race. Though the librettists wrote separately and individually, their thematic concerns are almost the same. Essentially, they celebrate local, national, international, and intercultural ethos and ethics. The librettos indeed bring to the fore, message of hope in our age of hopelessness. They preach love, where none exist and insist, very dialectical as well, that our unity, as a nation is non-negotiable.

The Part Three of this work is the adaptation of Akinwumi Isola's Efunsetan Aniwura - the Iyalode of Ibadan which the gifted Editor, Felix A. Akinsipe called Iyalode Efunsetan. Well, adapting stage plays for dance performances has always been the pattern before and this is because of the dearth of dance librettos. However, this adaptation which is in Five Sequences and Sixteen Movements reminds us of the fact that we should document stage plays that have been adapted into dance performances for posterity. This is also a way of "moving back by moving forward". This takes a

different look at the tyranny and inhumanity of man to man Efunsetan, the Iyalode of Ibadan was known for during the reign of Aare Latoosa as documented by Akinwumi Isola. The libretto is also a manifesto for feminine de-feminisation.

As an artistic director who has experimented with various dance forms and styles daring to even extend to the creativity embedded in the trado-modern dance concept, I have a confession to make. I bear witness to the fact that I will not embark on any production until I have in my team, a competent and creative choreographer. My uncommon love for dance and its real practitioners has also made me to be a hunter, hunting for dance steps and forms and a budding choreographer who has worked with some of our celebrated directors in the Nigerian theatre.

In my humble estimation, the best way to promote dance within its endless cultural boundaries is through the documentation of major landmarks or researches in dance. The librettos in this collection have broken the barrier that inadequate dance scripts for the stage have posed to African theatre practice.

Beyond being a primitive art, the art of pagans, seductive sexual attention catcher and other derogatory remarks about dance, Dance Scripts for the Stage has once again brought to the fore, the irreducible power of dance in the African total theatre aesthetics. Also, this creative work is the manifestation of the success involved in collaboration. The Editor and the Librettists should be commended for this great achievement.

This creative work is hereby recommended for lovers of arts in general and dance practitioners in particular. As you help to spread the gospel of this work, please note that the day is still young, don't wait: move your hands, twist your waist, move your legs and turn your neck - it is time for dance.

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Nigeria.

## **FOREWORD TO DANCE SCRIPTS FOR THE STAGE VOLUME TWO**

Dance as an academic discipline is relatively young in Nigeria compared to Music or Drama. If dance has always been a part of the culture; if people dance as part of ordinary life experiences; what then is there to study? When the University of Ilorin hired its first Dance lecturer to develop the program in 1984, it made the university a pioneering institution as the University of Ibadan was in Theatre and Music. That pioneering role, notwithstanding, however, many in the Faculty of Arts viewed such a move with a “tongue-in-cheek” amusement. Some challenged the instructor’s authority as a serious scholar. It took two academic years of intense student development in Dance Ethnography, Choreography, Human Anatomy and Kinesiology, Modern Dance Techniques, Movement Improvisation and Musical Theatre to warm some of her colleagues up to the notion that Dance could actually exist side by side with Music and Drama as a performing art discipline in academia.

I remember the first Dance concert shown over a three-day period at the University of Ilorin. That move made believers out of some of the skeptics. Some faculty members began to ask serious questions about how it was possible that the same dance movement could be counted out in sequences of beats, as in musical notes, with choreographic notations for repeated movement to music or silence while telling a story or making a social or political statement. Many saw how costumes could become an extension of the human body in motion. It took a dance sequence on location, choreographed for television to see the many facets of the art of dance as an artistic expression using the human body and movement techniques beyond the village norm.

Today, all across Nigerian universities and other parts of Africa, Dance scholars have emerged with serious research and creative backgrounds. At the helm are talented professors who, themselves,



were the pioneering students of Dance in the 1980s. They have organized themselves into choreographers, producers of scored dance drama and librettos and researchers. This is their second volume of a powerful body of works titled “Dance Scripts for the Stage”

This volume begins with the critique of a libretto of Felix Akinsipe by another scholar. You will then be taken through the memory lane as Tunde Onikoyi explores a comparative study of Ogunde's stage drama of the early 1960s and Kelani's retelling of “Yoruba Ronu” on film. You will develop a taste for colour synchronisation in stage design for dance just as it exists in music and drama. You will have a palatable menu of ten creative works of dance Librettos, examine two adaptations of popular Yoruba stories set to music by contemporary musical artists and take a window seat as Kehinde Olalusi interviews Felix Akinsipe about the Dance curriculum at the University of Ilorin.

I feel very privileged to be asked to write this forward and I applaud the great works submitted for this publication by these talented scholars of Dance and Theatre.

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# Contents

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

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

**CHAPTER SIX:**  
**COLOUR SYNCRONISATION IN STAGE**  
**DESIGNS: THE DANCE PRODUCTION OF**  
**VICTOR EZE'S “WAILING GRAVE” AS**  
**EXAMPLE**

SHUAIB SHADIAT OLAPEJU

**Introduction**

Beyond rhetoric, the unique phenomenon known as colour is the most exciting element of design that can only be perceived visually. Interestingly, colour is not new to us, although we seldom explore its intricate nature because we are all acquainted with it. This is because we see colour everyday in nature as in leaves, fruits, flowers, animals, earth and so on. Therefore, it is generally considered to be a natural aural entity. Over the years, scientists and artists have studied and designed numerous variations, definitions and design applications of this concept since 1616 when Sir Isaac Newton, the great scientist, first developed the first circular diagram of colours from nature as perceived in rainbow colours called spectrum. After which different researches on the validity of one format over another continues to provoke and generate debates in various fora of scholarly engagements such as the Sciences and the Arts.

In the scientific parlance however, colour is considered to be characteristics of light by which an individual is made to be aware of objects or light sources through the receptor of the eye described in terms of dominant wavelength, luminance and purity. American Heritage English Dictionary, (2011 p. 118) from this definition, it can be deduced that man's perception of colour is a function of how light is refracted, reflected and absorbed by various objects. Adegbite, (2002 p. 106) further states that “the extent to which coloured object appears to our eyes, is determined by the amount of light available at a particular time for the brain to

interpretatively process the mixing of the colours.” Hence, the common denominators for the definition of colour by the eyes of man can be referred to as the light, the object, and the brain because the visual perception of colour is derived from them.

Aside the scientific understanding of colour, the knowledge of colour is equally very imperative in the field of Arts, especially for the visual artist, be it in the theatre or among other allied artistic endeavours. To substantiate this observation, Gillette (1992, p. 89) surmises that “colour when carefully applied is easily the most noticeable of all design elements and is arguably the most dominant”. Colour is a powerful communication tool employed by designers and artists to signal action, influence mood, cause physiological reactions and create aesthetic effect. Thus, designer like costume and make-up artist, props manager and lighting designer harnessed and used it in the expression of their arts.

As an expressive and communicative art, the theory of colour is therefore extremely useful to designers and artists in depicting and conveying pertinent messages encoded in their works to the viewers or audience. These messages could however be coded or directly transmitted depending on the cultural background or the religious and political beliefs of the society where it is utilized. To this extent, in theatrical domain, colour has become the most relevant unifying force that bind all the arts of theatre together via reflecting the theme of the performance and facilitating dramatic actions through the coordination and projection of the aesthetic and psychological values of a production. This is because the wholesomeness of a performance can only be realized when colour is creatively and artistically complemented in all the artistic and technical elements of a production. The artistic apparatus here is the directorial and acting components of a performance while the technical appendages are costume, make-up, lighting, scenery and properties.

### **The Principle of Colour Synchronisation in Design**

Unequivocally, the understanding of the basics of colour theory principle is the benchmark for ensuring a synchronized colour combination in any artistic design concept particularly stage design. There are some colours that naturally appear so good together when combined; while some other colours when blended look so painful to the eyes that one needs to click away before the eye is strained. The idea of synchronisation is defined in Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, (2008, p. 1267) as “the arrangement of events to indicate unison or co-existence”. Therefore, for effective colour synthesis, the understanding of the basics of colour theory is essential in achieving harmonious whole in overall design outlook of any work of art. To this end, a designer or artist needs to consider the theory of colour wheels to create colour harmony in any design concept or stagecraft.

### **Properties of Colour**

According to Okunola, (2010, p. 37) colour has three distinct properties: “hue, value and saturation”. To understand colour one must understand how these three properties relate to one another. Without a specific set of terms to describe the various properties of colour, almost all discussion on it would quickly degenerate into rather meaningless comparisons, in this wise, the terms this study adopt are as follows:

### **HUE**

The traditional name of a specific wavelength of light is referred to as a hue. It can also be regarded as the name of a distinct colour of a spectrum. Another description for it is “spectral colour”. All colours of the spectrum are hues. There are only limited hue names: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, magenta and cyan. It is important to note here, that hues can be mixed to create other hues, therefore, complementing, Gillette's (2000 p. 81) observation that “Hue is the quality that differentiates one colour from another, such as blue from green or red from yellow”.



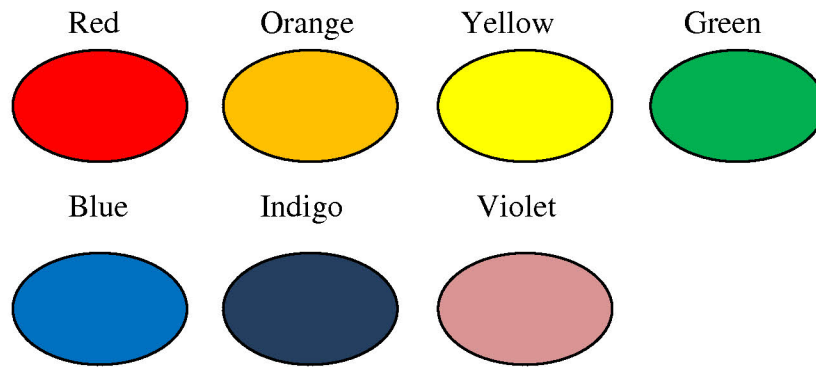


Figure 1: Shows the seven colours of the spectrum (Rainbow)

### **Value**

Value is concerned with the light and dark properties of colour, in other words, the lightest or darkness of a colour. It is equally significant to state that all colours exhibit these properties. The hues have a natural value where they look the purest. Some colours, like yellow, are naturally light, while, some like violet are darker in shades as a result of the intensity of light present in them. When light is at its fullest, colour becomes bright, when at its least, colour becomes dim.

Ogumur (2009 p. 15) opines that “all hues can be made in all values”. Adding white to any pigment will make any pigment lighter. Adding black will make most pigments darker, it can even cause yellow colour to shift in hue to green. Value can exist without hue. These are referred to as neutral colours. Black, White, and Grey are values without colour. Since these values are used extensively in art, it is important to understand their relationship to one another. This is because they are useful in tinting and blending other colours in their environment to achieve a harmonious whole.

## Saturation

Saturation is the purity of colour concerned with the intensity, or the brightness and dullness of colour. A saturated colour is high in intensity it is very rich and bright. A colour that is dull is considered to be unsaturated or low in intensity. For example in the blue family, royal blue is a highly saturated colour, while steel blue looks muddier and less pure because it has gray undertones which diminishes its brightness.

## Colour Terminologies

These are various categories of colours that are obtainable on the colour wheel such as the following:

**Colour Triads:** The most basic colour triads is the three primary colours which are Red, yellow and blue, while others are secondary as seen in green, violet, orange.

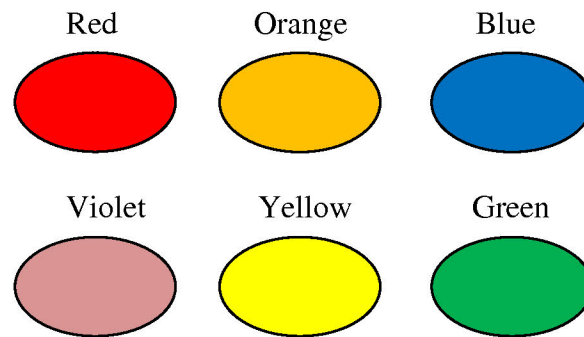


Figure 2: Primary and Secondary Colours

**Analogous or Harmonious Colours:** These are colours that are closely related on the colour wheel because they share a basic colour. These colours sit next to each other on the colour wheel, for example, green, Yellow-green and yellow, or red, red-orange, and orange and so on. Designers are advised to play with the hues and saturation of analogous colour to create a harmonious colour scheme when initiating their design idea.

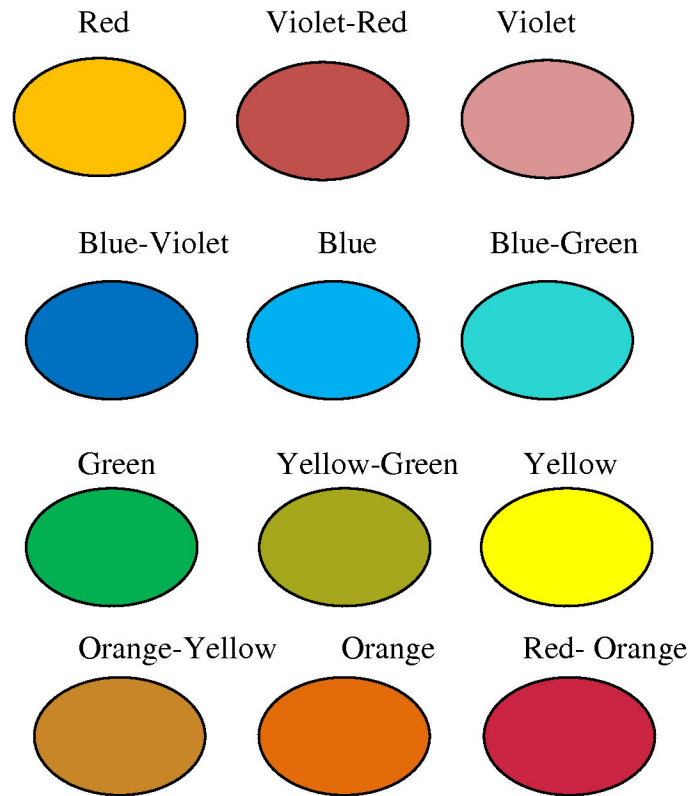


Figure 3: Shows Analogous colours

### **Complimentary Colours**

These are colours that are opposite one another on the colour wheel. By using colours that are opposite one another, one can create the colour that has high contrast as well as brighter and more vivid look. Some contrasting colours are: red and green, blue and orange, yellow and purple among others.

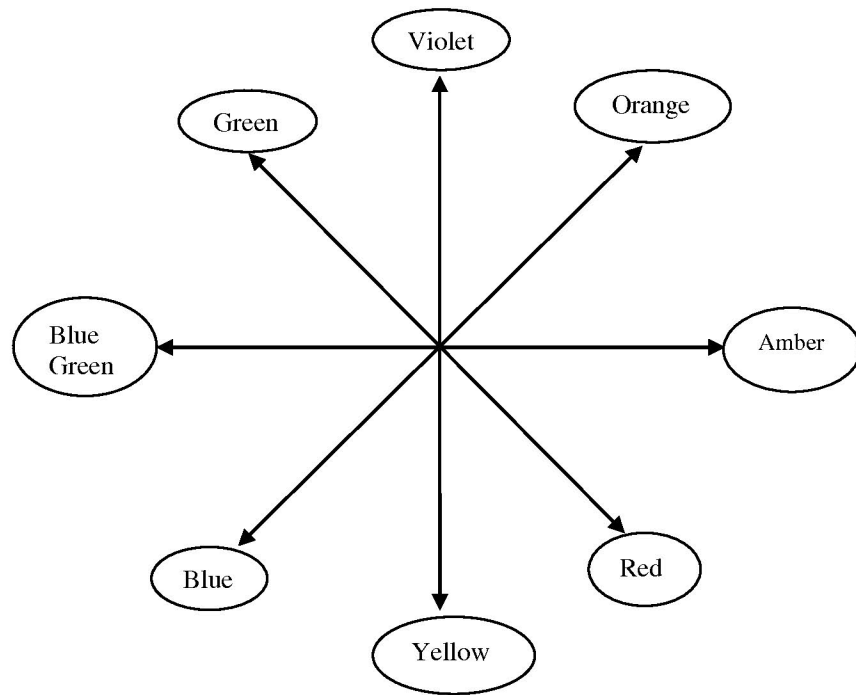


Figure 4: Complementary Colours

The above diagram shows the arrangement of some complementary colours that were discussed earlier on the colour wheel.

**Basic Golden Rules for Colour Synchronisation in Stage Design:**

Douglas, (2010 p. 1) espoused that professional designers and artists are quite cognisant of the rules that guide the design of colour pallets in stage technology, not only from aesthetic point of view but also from an attention-guiding salient stand point. Since visualisation is not only concerned with providing a pleasing

image, but, also has a mission of helping the viewers to gain quiet and accurate insight into the visualised objects. Our aim is therefore to combine colour scheme to other stage craft. Therefore, the following golden rules among others should be consciously considered in theatre design by designers in order to achieve an aesthetically and artistically pleasing performance to the audience.

**Rule 1:** When vivid colours stand out they guide attention to a particular feature (bright, saturated colours)

**Rule 2:** An excessive amount of vivid colours (bright, saturated colours) are perceived as unpleasant and overwhelming. They are best used in between duller backgrounds.

**Rule 3:** Conspicuous background separate works best, but, if the foreground colour is bright and highly saturated, then the background must be de-saturated.

**Rule 4:** Colours can be better distinguished, if they differ simultaneously in hue saturation and lightness from one another.

**Rule 5:** Colour separation is poorer for small objects, therefore, hue, saturation and lightness must decrease.

**Rule 6:** Complementary colours are opposite colours located in the opposite side on the colour wheel and have the highest chromatic contrast; When combine together, riotous colours may affect one another.

**Rule 7:** Some hues appear inherently more saturated than others, for example, yellow has the least number of perceived saturated steps. For hues on both sides of yellow the saturated increase linearly.



**Rule 8:** Warm colours red, orange, yellow excite emotions and grab attention. Cool colours such as green and violet create openness and distance.

**Rule 9:** Objects of similar hue are perceived as group, while objects of different hues are pictured in different groupings.

**Rule 10:** Neutral colours such as black, grey and white are often used as background for other brighter accent colours (red, orange, blue, etc.) except when deployed to create specific effect in a design.

From the foregoing golden rules, it is glaring that the knowledge of the workings of colour synchronisation is very essential for stage designers in order to creatively articulate and communicate design concepts that appropriately convey the thematic preoccupation of a production to their viewers or audience. Since colour reveals a lot about stagecraft which invariably determines how the audience perceive, understand, and respond to the various messages inherent in a performance. So in a design layout or process, it is advisable for theatre designers when implementing their design ideas to wisely combine their colours with consideration to any of the highlighted categories above, apart from other relevant colour models not mentioned under this categorisation, so as not to distort and destroy the focus and overall outlook of the theatre production they are involved with.

### **Synopsis of the Libretto**

The libretto, “The Wailing Grave” by Victor Eze centres on Umogu community in the South-East of Nigeria, where a King's irrational decision leads to the doom of the community, When he enters into an agreement with the Chief Priest of the land to marry the chief priest's daughter for his son, after the priest uses his supernatural power to release the community from the bondage of their enemies during a war expedition. But, along the line, the agreement of the union between the Chief Priest's daughter and the

king's son was breached and consequentially, the chief priest daughter losses her life. The Chief priest then decides to seek vengeance at all cost by eliminating the royal family, but as fate will have it, the blood of the innocent ones cry out for vengeance against the Chief Priest and peace is restored to the land.

### **Analysis of Colour Synchronisation in Victor Eze's "The Wailing Grave" Production**

"The Wailing Grave" is a dance theatre produced by the 2010/2011 final year students of the Performing Arts Department, University of Ilorin at the departmental theatre on the 15th of April 2011, in partial fulfilment of their Bachelor of Arts degree in Performing Arts. In the highlighted production, the synchronisation of colours was well established in all the elements of visual design from the beginning of dance to the end. This was visible in the scenery, costume, lighting, properties and make-up designs of the dance theatre, where imaginative colour scheme was deployed to create the cinematic flow that entrenched the success of the production. In the scenic design for example, colour was employed to bring to life the tragic undertone of the dance via deep-toned colours that had their qualities in brown and grey in order to establish the mood of seriousness, warmth and intimacy that was synonymous with the palace and shrine scenes of the dance.

Apart from that, the creative synthesis of colours on the scenic design also demarcated the stage space and created an enabling acting environment for the dancers to operate freely without any inhibition to their movements in the projection of their roles. Also, on the up-stage of the scenic platform - a blend of toned-yellow or whitish yellow with interactive black and white (neutral colours), totemic symbols were integrated into the scenery drawings to portray the period, cultural identity, and religious ideals of Ibo people from Eastern part of Nigeria; the geographical location where the dance theatre is set.

The costume design on the other hand, was realistic in nature, colours from primary and secondary colour schemes made up of red, orange, green, blue, and purple were predominantly

incorporated into the colour composition to create a contrastive effect against the dominant brownish set design, so as to allow the costume colours to stand out and not absorbed by the colour of the set. Beyond the set consideration, colour was also used in the dance through costume to distinguish dancers' characterization and communicate the inherent messages encoded in the dance theatre to the audience.

Starting from the tableau, the significance of colour as important tool of mood, aesthetic and artistic communication was visibly seen in the characters' costumes found in various dyes of colour spectrum. From the opening scene, colour was used in costumes as status marker through tonal qualities to delineate the principal characters from others, for instance, the king and the prince were dressed in expensive purple and wine flowered printed georgette materials with beads to match to connote their royal ancestry and showcase their opulence status, which reflected a stark contrast against the red costume of the chief priest (antagonist) and other colours of the costumes worn by other men in the play who belong to the lower economic class.

The synchronisation of colour was also accentuated through the brilliant hue quality of the dancers' costumes to create psychological effect on the audience and set the harmonious mood and energy for the actions of the dancers. This was reflective in the white gown worn by the ghost of the late Princess (Adanma) against the startling dark grey colour of the scenic design of the burial ground that indicated the notion of the metaphysical world and the intricacies therein to the spectators. Similarly, the love scene also showcased the blending of analogous and complementary colours as reflected in the blue and orange georgette materials worn by the Prince (Ibe) and his lover (Nnena) in their romantic escapades. Ibe as the major character of the dance theatre was conspicuously costumed in orange Ibo georgette wrapper tied from his waist to the knee with some red coral beads to denote his passion for love, while that of Nnena (his lover) was conceived in blue flowered georgette with red coral

beads adornment on her head to portray the mood of love, friendship, sincerity and partnership.

Lighting design in the play also made use of colour as primary device to create psychological keys in support of the emotional content of the various scenes. Complementary colours of Roselux gels were selected to modulate saturation for afternoon and night scenes because they were appropriately designed for such scenes. But in the ghost scene, where special effect is necessary, full saturation from white gel of vertical strip light and blue Fresnel spot light on both sides of the stage were used to enhance the full-spectrum of strongly coloured palette of costumes, make-up and scenery in order to create the resurrection effect necessary for the ghost scene. And for the sorrowful scenes, red gel from the follow spot was employed with solemn sound effect to highlight and create the mood of sadness and melancholy whenever death occurred in the dance.

Properties and make-up in the dance were also creatively harnessed through the juxtaposition of line, colour, and finish. The properties in the play were conceived in hand fans, stools, cutlasses, brooms, guns and horse-whisks found in shades of grey, brown, black and cream to connote the period of the play and complement the costume, set and light in the progression of the plot structure of the dance theatre to the audience. While the make-up on the other hand, was mostly amplified in white local chalk and black Uli concentric designs on the bodies of the dancers with red adornments to create colour contrast that enhanced the characterization of dancers and set the right mood for the dance.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Attempts have been made in this study to critically examine how colour could be successfully synchronized through elements of colour like costume, make-up, properties, and light in Victor Eze's "The Wailing Grave", so as to project colour as an important element of design and a cogent force of mood and aesthetic

creation in the theatre. It is however, worthy of note that although the principle of colours are applicable in practical use of colour. The theoretical mixing of colour may differ greatly from the practical realization of colour, if conscious attention is not paid to the preliminary miniature experimentation of colour combination, before the actual production by the designers. This is because there is bound to be disparity between theoretical principles and the practical result, the end result of mixing paints, dyes, fabric, or light may be somehow different from the results projected by theory because of the impurities and contaminants found in stage, paints, dyes, lamps and colour media.

It is therefore advisable for theatre designers to always carefully plan their craft ahead of production date to eradicate the mentioned inadequacies. For instance, costume designers should always use samples of costume fabrics as pre-test for the coordination of colours in scenery, costumes, properties and light. A lighting designer can also experiment with colour with the aid of a small-lighting fixture and a common dimmer board, in order to determine the intensity of the light before hand, since colour is rarely used in full intensity on stage (Richardson, 1996 p. 14).

In the same vein, a make-up artist can properly develop make-up for a production, through the technique of equipping the dressing room or make-up studio with colour fixtures that will be dominant on stage either through Fresnel spotlight or any kind of high intensity lamp so that the effect of colour on make-up can be seen in advance mention a few. But beyond the preliminary planning already mentioned, it is important to emphasize that consensus agreement on colour scheme must be conscientiously reached by all stage designers during any.

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