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THE DIRECTOR AND THE UTILIZATION OF TECHNICAL AIDS IN THE NIGERIAN THEATRE

By

Rasheed Abiodun Musa

1.0 Introduction: The Inevitability of Technical Aids in Theatrical Performances

Since Charles Darwin's classical evolution theory, subsequent historians and anthropologists have seen man as a constantly growing and dynamically changing creature. Man creates his own society and creates together with it, various institutions that help him to build, engineer and promote the culture and cultural idiosyncrasies of his society. In Africa, the people use theatre to celebrate various social and spiritual events: birth, marriage, burial, ritual and so on. Africans also see the theatre not only as instrument of entertainment and education but as a way of reviewing the totality of their lives through the presentation (in different theatrical forms), present and past historical events.

A critique-review-historification of the African theatre practice will show clearly that African theatre's survival and development is partly due to the commitment of her artistes and the frequent change in her theatrical forms and contents. As composite, technical theatre through technical aids complimentarily makes the African theatre thicks.

Interestingly, therefore, the play director cannot afford to be an uninterested participant in the icons of theatre technicalities because technical aids spice up the overall aesthetics of theatrical performances in the theatre. As available, created and improvised resources in the theatre, technical aids' motif and metaphors cannot be over-emphasized. Understanding the theatrical essence of technical aids in the performance process by all the theatre workers is, nonetheless, crucial to the growth and development of the theatre.

This article will, therefore, examine the utilization of technical aids in the Nigerian theatre by generation of Nigerian Directors. Their attitudes and approaches, their endless search, creative innovation, imagination and smart improvisation will also be reviewed with a view to

projecting into the future by offering suggestions on how to improve on the theatre director's utilization of technical aids in the Nigerian theatre.

2.0 Literature Review

Terminologically, words such as, 'paralinguistic aesthetics', 'extra aesthetics', technical elements' and so on have been used to describe and represent 'Technical Aids' in the theatre profession. In fact, Ododo (2000: 42) sees technical aids as those theatre elements which are often "used in theatrical presentation to enhance their meanings and stage values. These are seen in terms of stage scenography, properties, music and sound effects, costume and make-up", having conceived the term in 1988.

Many theatre scholars, directors and designers have also written extensively on the types, shape and uses of technical aids in theatrical performances while some simply experimented with technical aids and allow the theatre critics and the audience to judge. Mention must, however, be made here of Adolphe Appia, a Swiss whose "artistic unity" led to two great works; *Music and Stage Setting* (1899) and *The Work of Living Art* (1921). Barranger (1995:274) while commenting on Appia's obsession with the power of lighting in the theatre says that Appia

> disliked the contradiction in the three-dimensional actor performing before painted two-dimensional scenery, and he advocated the replacement of flat settings with steps, ramps, and platforms. He thought the role of lighting was to fuse all visual elements into a unified whole.

Gordon Craig through his work; *The Art of the Theatre* (1905) also celebrates the essence of the technical aids in the theatre. He sees them as an independent art

> that welded action, words, line, colour, and rhythm into an artistic whole created by the single, autonomous artist. Many of his ideas on simplified décor, three-dimensional settings, moving scenery, and directional lighting prevailed in the new stagecraft that emerged after world war I (Barranger, 1995:274).

Agbo Folarin, Domba Asomba, Duro Oni, S.E. Ododo, Musa Dauda Enna, Biodun Abe and so on have also contributed significantly to the growth and development of theatre most especially, technical theatre in the Nigerian theatre. Duro Oni's article, "Lighting Design and the Development of Modern Stage Lighting Practice in Nigeria" evaluates the role of modern lighting technology in the Nigerian theatre and concludes that "we must begin a process of re-orientation for the performing arts. There are graduates of theatre arts from Nigerian universities specializing in technical theatre who are not even familiar with basic drafting methods and techniques" (Oni, 1999:49). This

scenario is the same with theatre directing graduates.

Ododo (1988) perhaps set the pace for the optimum understanding of technical aids in theatrical performances through his M.A. Thesis, "Technical Aids as an Integral Part of Play Production". Although he uses Femi Osofisan's performances and plays as the canon of his thesis nonetheless, his intellectual discourse on, and practical application of technical aids in the Nigerian theatre through some stage productions at the University of Ilorin must be commended. His informing article, "The Technical Involvement of the Playwright, the Director and the Actor in the Play Production Process: Pedagogical Notes" also reviews the fundamentals of technical involvement and aids in theatrical performances.

Our major concern in the above article is Ododo's reflective comment on the importance of technical aids as reasoned by some selected seasoned play directors such as; David Garrick, Duke of Sax-Meiningen, Artuad, Stanislavsky, Nemivovitch Danchenko, Harold Clurman, David Belasco, Richard Schechner, Griffiths and Dapo Adelugba. Ododo concludes in the article that

> the whole process of play production needs careful planning in order to neatly accommodate the artistic ideas of all involved. However, the technical demands of stage performances cannot be wished away because they affect the work of stage professionals one way or the other. This is why there is a need for greater understanding of the functions and usage of technical facilities available to any theatre outfit... (Ododo 1999:61).

If the above article written by Ododo looks at the multidimensional link between the playwright, the director and the actor in their choice and use of technical aids, another article of his; "Technical Aids in Yoruba Popular Travelling Theatre Practices" examines the roles of technical aids in the Yoruba popular travelling theatre practice and reviews its uses by Late Hubert Ogunde, Kola Ogunmola, Moses Olaiya, Oyin Adejobi, Lere Paimo, Jimoh Aliu and so on. He, however, concludes that, "the technical heritage of theatre needs to be further investigated with a view to harnessing its technology into modern models with a unique Nigerian identity" (Ododo, 2000:51).

We, therefore, accept Asomba's (2000:x) technical reflection on the utility of technical aids in performances. He says that; "scenery, costumes, make-ups, sound and stage lighting are all indispensable embellishments that complement and aid an actor in his efforts in articulating and communicating the idea of a drama to an audience. In

essence, their role is supportive in nature." Apart from the willingness of technical theatre experts in the formation, design and use of technical aids, most theatre directors all over the world are also in support of the use of technical aids in performances.

In the Nigerian theatre also, notable Nigerian directors accept the importance of technical aids as rational aesthetics and transformational aids in performance articulation. One interesting aspect of the directorial works of most Nigerian directors is that they all see the importance of technical aids as vessels of attractions in performance making.

Traditional directors also coordinate the technical demands of theatrical activities of Bornu Puppet show, Kwagh-hir theatre, Èyò, Ogun and Sango festivals of the Yoruba, Mbom-Ama and Ekpe festivals of Eastern Nigeria, the Ekuechi and Echene festivals of the Ebira and so on.

So, from the Late Hubert Ogunde, E.K. Ogunmola and Duro Ladipo to Moses Olaiya who used varieties of costumes to project his unlimited comedies and the creative intellectual directors in the academia and professional theatre such as Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Dapo Adelugba, Zulu Sofola, Olu Obafemi, Ziky Kofoworola, Bayo Oduneye, Ahmed Yerima, Ayo Akinwale, Felix Okolo, Chuck Mike, Sam Ukala, Inih Ebong and so on, the "indispensability of technical aids in play production" has been clearly accepted.

While Dapo Adelugba in *Dapo Adelugba on Theatre Practice in Nigeria* is of the strong opinion that

> we must insist on ...having all our theatre institutions technologically up-to-date in the equipment used so that we can even begin to use the language of the modern 21st century dialogue. The practice of theatre has changed and unless we fine-tune ourselves to the new language which is influenced by developments in technology, we cannot participate in the world culture... (Dasylva, 2003:231).

Osofisan (2001:84) on the other hand speaks of "paralinguistic elements, such as music and song, costumes and make-up, masking and spectacle all of which free the play from any surviving textual constraints" to confirm the functionality of technical aids in theatre practice.

3.0 Trends in the Utilization of Technical Aids in the Nigerian Theatre by Nigerian Theatre Directors

The Nigerian Traditional Theatre Directors

From Ologbin Ologbogbo, Esa Ogbin to Olugbere Agan and so on who were leaders, managers and directors in the widely celebrated

Alarinjo Travelling Theatre of the Yoruba for example, indigenous technical aids have been extensively made use of by them to project and promote their theatrical presentations. In the beginning, the Alarinjo Travelling theatre performers usually perform in the open space because their performance venue depends on the status of the promoters. In fact, they can perform at:

> The palace quadrangle or inner courtyard or the piazza in front of the palace... the *Ode* in front of the gabled frontage of the compound... No raised platform was necessary for any of these performances. An open space was all that was needed. A circle was always formed by the spectators as they assembled round the open space (arena) to watch show. (Adedeji and Ekwuasi, 1998: 150).

The troupe leaders or traditional directors of the Alarinjo travelling theatre have little or no control on the choice of performance venue because the arena staging method is overtly African and this is also culture based.

The arena auditoriums were also graded into 'stands'. We therefore have royal, promoter and orchestra 'stands'. In fact, "the orchestra stand was placed very close to the 'booth' (dressing-room) of the actors, sometimes not too far away from the promoter's stand. The actor's 'booth' was normally an improvised rig-up that could give shelter and privacy" (Adedeji and Ekwuasi, 1998:150).

Ologbin Ologbojo, the founder of the Alarinjo 'Masque-dramaturgy' theatre form which metamorphosised into the popular Yoruba travelling theatre set the ball rolling in the use of extra aesthetic materials in theatrical presentations. For example,

> Ologbin Ologbojo got Olojowon, the master carver, to carve a wooden face mask and Alaran Ori, the costumier, to build a set of costumes, with these Olugbere Agan careered as a costumed actor and a strolling player. Ologbojo handled the improvisations while Akunyungba, the palace rhapsodists, provided choral chants (Adedeji, 1981:224).

Interestingly, Ologbojo "founded his own troupe, instructed a carver to carve for him, engaged the service of a costumier and personally 'handled the improvisations'. All these functions are basically those of a theatre director who must coordinate all theatrical activities" (Musa, 2002:58). This is clearly a case of directorial concept provision through discussion as strongly supported even in the conventional theatre where job specialization is sacrosanct.

In the Tiv Kwagh-hir theatre, the leadership position of the Tor Kwagh-hir (the Chief artist) cannot be over-emphasized. This is because

the responsibility of coordination lies on him. Like the leaders of the Alarinjo travelling theatre troupes, the Tor Kwagh-hir prides himself as the old member of the Kwagh-hir theatre. Unlike the Alarinjo theatre however, "the technical means of illustrating the story, the mechanisms of the puppet performance and the masquerades demand all the ingenuity and craftsmanship of the production crew" (Enem, 1981:250).

The Kwagh-hir theatre has grown from the 'narrative form' to the 'presentational form' and Gbilekaa (2000:34) has also argued that:

> Be it is puppetry item, an animal masquerade or a straight comedy, all members of the group would sit together and argue out how best to dramatize such a show. It is a purely democratic exercise... Being a communal art, the Kwagh-hir is not the product of a single individual but of the community.

Whereas the Ologbin Ologbojo and other ancient Alarinjo travelling theatre troupe leaders/directors, have greater control on their troupes and the aesthetic qualities of their performances (they can only be checked and controlled by Egungun cult if they misbehaved. The Tor Kwagh-hir stands as coordinator in the Tiv Kwagh-hir theatre and the use of technical aids also revolves around a director who controls (Alarinjo theatre) and a partial director who coordinates (Kwagh-hir theatre). The power of control of the Alarinjo director can be likened to that of the Dogodogoma in the Bornu Puppet show which was 'originated in Bornu by one Mai Gambo'.

Whether it is Ebu, in Mbom Ama Festival or Epheboi, the leader of the Choric group in the Ekpe dance drama of the Igbo people, the traditional directors in the numerous Igbo traditional festivals have demonstrated greater sense of job specialization in the utilization of technical aids in the Igbo traditional performances. Like the master carver or the Alaran ori in the formative years of the Alarinjo theatre, the traditional carver in the Igbo numerous masquerading performances,

> has found a strong source of patronage in masquerading, has contributed towards the accentuation of these qualities. The masks he produces are such that they are essentially communicative and symbolic..., for his intention is not to present but to communicate. His efforts have resulted in distortions, strange compositions and unexpected symmetry as he introduces and accentuates some feature of an animal or thing endowed with these qualities... (Nzewi, 1981:135).

Traditional theatre, whether through ritual/religious performances or secular/non-religious performances, whose concept, Nzewi (1979:16) says is informed by three factors which includes "Inspiration, Representation, and Utility or Subject Matter, Form and Purpose" has

made its directors to minimally made use of technical aids in various performances. The burden of cultural heritage has partly led to this choice. However, this observation is not to take away the genuine improvisation and culture of borrowing in the traditional directors' use of props, costumes, make-up, sound effects and even music which colonialism thrusts on them.

The Nigerian Popular Theatre Directors

Borrowing heavily from the traditional theatre heritage and inventing same with the overtly conventional Western theatrical aesthetics, the Nigerian popular theatre directors through skills and dexterity have intelligently made creative use of technical aids in the Nigerian theatre.

The popular theatre tradition in Nigeria is an actor-manager-directors' theatre and various troupe leaders stand out as actor-manager-directors. Actor-manager-directors such as, Isola Ogunsola, Funmilayo Ranko, Moses Olaiya, Kola Ogunmola, Lere Paimo, Oyin Adejobi, Akin Ogungbe and so on have various theatre troupes and culture of 'dominance' became the order of the day. This is because,

> apart from being legal owner and artistic impresario of a troupe, the average troupe leader is very often a partriach within the group, with many, if not all leading actresses being his wives. Among the older troupes, many of the actors and actresses are the sons and daughters (and relatives) of the founder-leader (Jeyifo: 1984:87).

The "paterfamiliases" as a theatre managerial style has thus led to serious "role differentiation and internal division of labour within the Travelling Theatre troupe". Unfortunately, this family dimension in the travelling theatre management and organization has invariably "intersect with the technical dimensions of skill and inevitable complementary of functions within a producing troupe" (Jeyifo, 1984:89).

Clark (1979 and 1981), Enem (1981), Gidley (1981), Beier (1981), Adedeji (1981), Ogunbiyi (1981), Jeyifo (1984), Obafemi (1996) and recently, Ododo (2000: 44-48) have all examined, through major studies and performance reviews, the use of technical aids by the Nigerian popular theatre directors.

Whether Sango's fire, Gbonka's medicinal objects which "originates from his ability to unravel the mysterious power of the spirits in *Igbin* (snail), *Alabaun* (tortoise) and *Esinsin* (housefly) in relation to other objects like (sword) and *Ponpo* (cudgel)" (Obafemi 1996:24),

Timi's arrow of fire all in Duro Ladipo's *Oba Koso* and even the stage folkloric and performance miracles in most of Ogunde's plays, the directors in the Nigerian popular theatre tradition (in spite of disagreement from some scholars) have made use of technical aids which were often dictated by the director's directorial approach, directorial interpretation and concept. This is because their performances shift and alternate between the traditional drama and the Western theatrical aesthetics.

The Nigerian Literary Theatre Directors

The Westernization and Christianization of sizeable people of Nigeria through Europeans colonialism cannot be over-emphasized in the phenomenological understanding of the development of literary theatre in Nigeria. In fact, the Church, as observed by Gbilekaa (1997:2) set the pace for the promotion and success of the literary drama in Nigeria.

Second also, is the construction of structures (auditorium/Hall) in schools and churches that served multi-purpose functions. In fact, the "Public Hall which finally came to be known as the Glover Hall, sited at the Old Customs Warehouse on the Marina as a memorial in honour of Sir John Hawley Glover, a most revered and respected administrator of Lagos, took over fifteen years to build and was officially opened in 1899" (Adedeji, 1979:28).

Apart from the widely celebrated works of the Western dramatists who set the pace for the literary theatre tradition in Nigeria in the early 60s such as; Geoffrey Axworthy, Martin Banham, Bill Brown, Mary Caswell, Mary Lou Fredericke, Bob Moulthrop, Tom Herbert, Peggy Harper and so on, the arrival of Wole Soyinka to Nigeria in 1959 and the formation of the 1960 *Masks* for the production of J.P. Clark's *Song of a Goat,* and young producers and playwrights like Adelugba, Mac Akpoyoware, Frank Aig-Imoukhuede, Yetunde Esan, and many more started to grow out of the new dawn (Yerima, 2005: 38-39). Lagos, Nsukka, Ife, Zaria and Ibadan in particular, therefore, served as the rallying points for the emancipation and domestication of the literary theatre especially in the late 50s and early 60s in Nigeria.

In terms of technical aids' utilization by the Nigerian literary theatre directors, four or five basic groups of directors have emerged. These are:

(a) The playwright directors
(b) The artistic directors
(c) The designer-directors
(d) The choreographer-directors and
(e) The student directors.

For obvious reasons (Nobel Award, international figure, radical activism and so on) it is important to start from the playwright-director, Wole Soyinka.

Through his ritual theatre, crafted in his tragedies, and his affection with the Western theatre proscenium stage, Wole Soyinka, "a hard taskmaster, a very capable and effective stage director. When he directs a play, he works hard at it" (Johnson, 1987:17) has abundantly celebrated the essence of "the spatial phenomenon", the dialectics of "transition", of "cyclic", of "ritual", of "man-cosmos" relation and accepted also, "the advancement of technology and the evolution some would prefer to call it counter-revolution of technical sensibility" (Soyinka, 1976:40) in performances. Wole Soyinka, through the Arts Theatre, University of Ibadan, the Unife Guerrilla Theatre Unit, the 1960 Masks, Orisun Theatre, University of Leeds and so on, has worked with seasoned performers, theatre critics, directors and designers. Technical aids in Soyinka's theatre are mostly 'left in the hands of the professionals' after Soyinka must have discussed the directorial concept with them. This position has been given credence to by Ogunba (1975), Heywood (1976), Etherton (1982), Maduakor (1991), Okome (2004) and Jeyifo (2004). Though, quite difficult to please, Soyinka's frequent intervention with his designers' works on theatre technicalities were aimed at perfection in stage productions.

Late Ola Rotimi, another Nigerian playwright-director in an interview with Dapo Adelugba summed up his directorial ideology and style as

> the cruciality of actor-coaching... preoccupation with theatre-in-the round. Style of production, which undeniably has bearing on traditional form of play production. It is a contrast to the proscenium legacy of the British colonial culture... secondly, I shy away from intermissions... Intermissions are unusual style, which rejects curtain calls, full stop (Rotimi in Uwatt, 2002: 48-65).

Soyinka frequent intervention is a child's play if it has to be compared with Ola Rotimi's total control of theatrical activities during the play production process at Ife, Port-Harcourt, through Rotimi's ACT and Ori

Olokun Theatre. Like Richard Wagner, Rotimi's sense of participation and total involvement in the designing and utilization of technical aids process cannot be over-emphasized. This "consummate director" has employed very successfully, and in most of his tragedies, the "mastery of stage-craft-through the utilization of indigenous theatrical elements to project a tragic-vision of life-is uniquely manifest in a drama that is more performance-oriented than literary (Obafemi and Yerima, 2004:86).

Through his 'aesthetics of poverty' or 'malleable theatre' which Awodiya (1995:219) says "is a dramaturgy that uses all the known elements of Yoruba or African play-making processes. The dramaturgy has a hybrid brilliance, grafting different of comedy, realism, compressionism, absurdism, epic and traditional African theatres, and making them his own", Femi Osofisan is also a remarkable and profound playwright-director of the left, whose plays are by nature, director's choice because of their simple aesthetics. The technical theatre in the plays of Osofisan demands from the director, "a considerable management and usage of materials within the scarce resources available to him". It has been observed frankly that Osofisan will

> deliberately go for symbolic rather that realistic or naturalistic setting. For example, *Once Upon Four Robbers* was done with only a riser and a stake, 2 empty drums and that was all. *Oriki of a Grasshopper* took place in the dilapidated office of a University Lecturer... As for costumes, everyone brings his own costumes..Make-up was also minimal since the characters are usually cast to play a role relative to their age... (Akinwale, 2000:19-20).

Playwright-directors such as Olu Obafemi, Akanji Nasiru, Ahmed Yerima, Sam Ukala, Kalu Uka, Iyorwuese Hagher and many more also rove between Soyinka, Rotimi and Osofisan in their choice and use of technical theatre aids in play production.

Dapo Adelugba has also granted series of interviews (Ododo 1988, Musa 2000 and Dasylva 2003) to express himself and his theatre on the inevitability of technical aids in the play production process. He reflects that, "I am concerned therefore with the technical realization. I am concerned with an overall sense of design not only in terms of stage scenography but even movements" (Ododo, 1988:289). While reacting to his theatrical direction in (1998), of Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, he told the researcher that the director of a good play must be "someone interpreting a play in its visual, verbal and kinetic metaphors to the audience" (Musa, 2000:144) to underscore the importance of technical aids in the theatre.

Designer directors (Demas Nwoko, Sumbo Marinho, Duro Oni, Musa Dauda Enna, Sunday Ododo, Abiodun Abe, Charles Nwadigwe, Reuben Embu, Laide Nasir and many more) are, however, at a composite advantage for having in themselves, the artistic and the theatre technical potentials. They most often engaged in technical aids design and construction while projecting the artistic vision of their performances. Choreographer-directors (Chris Ugolo, Bakare Ojo Rasaki, Chuks Okoye, Arnold Udoka and so on) however, sought a redefinition of the literary theatre tradition through excellent dance movements while also engaging in technical aids construction and design. Finally, the student-directors in the numerous Creative/Performing/Theatre/Dramatic Arts Departments across the Niger are also developing remarkable interest in make-up, properties, scenography and lighting to promote the Nigerian/Western theatre tradition, the literary theatre.

The Nigerian Home Video Directors

After many trials and errors, the Nigerian Home Video directors have made the country proud through their dexterous use of costume, make-up, props, scenography, sound and special effects which have assisted them in producing good films and made them to win awards locally and internationally.

To some extent, there is job specialization in the production process in the Nigerian Home Video Industry. Movie directors in the Nigerian indigenous languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) and their counterparts in the literary drama therefore act as supervisors and advisers on the theatre's use of technical aids. Some, like Tunde Kelani, Chico Ejiro (Mr. Prolific), Fred Amata, Teco Benson, Lancelot Imasuen, Andy Amenechi, Don Pedro Obaseki and so on who make the Nigerian Nollywood thick are however creatively gifted and are involved in other productive arts of the theatre such as, costumes, music and sound effects, make-up and so on other than their original role of video directors.

Interestingly, wives and families of most of these Noolywood directors and producers are also involved and are engaged in the home-video technicalities. The Amatas, Ejiros, Obasekis, Bensons, Imasuens, and so on dot the production crew for creative engagements in the use of costume, make-up, props and so on.

4.0 Suggestions and Observations on the Utilization of Technical Aids by the Nigerian Directors

The Stage

To the artistic director, the stage is the place of artistic conception. Performance venue guides him in the crucial and all-important play selection, picturization and blockings, crowd control and management and the assessment and control of sightlines. For example, some plays cannot be well staged in the proscenium stage. In fact, some theatre scholars such as, Ejeke (1999), Oga (1999) and Uwatt (2002) have consistently argued and suggested that most of Ola Rotimi plays are better produced on the theatre-in-the round stage whereas Wole Soyinka's plays can be well suited for the proscenium stage. Femi Osofisan and Olu Obafemi's plays are written in such away that they can be performed in any 'created or found space' and this statement does not presuppose that technical facilities or aids should be jettisoned while attempting to direct the Osofisan and Obafemi's plays.

It is, therefore, important that a director intending to direct a play should readily assess the facilities and the types of the stage he wants to use for his production. For example, the director should ask if the stage is acoustically sound proof? Will the stage swallow the performers from the audience? Can the floor of the stage inflict wound on the performers? Can fast rhythm dance take place on the stage? Are the planks of the stage not being eaten up by terminates?

This intention of wanting to know and finding out the technical potentials of the performance space or stage by the director is crucial and it is a major decision in practical directing where directors are enjoined to see things for themselves before major directorial decisions are taken.

Scenographic Model

Scenographic models have no immediate but future use. This is because scenographic models, like house plans set the pace for future structures of the stage. However, in his fruitful efforts at arriving at suitable set for play productions, the play director must understand the importance of models in set constructions. He also conceives the structures of the stage (hut, house, prison yard, gallows, upstairs, palace and so on) and allow the set designer to give him the model.

At first, the ground plan will be drawn and interpreted with keys. Later, the perspective drawing and the then the scenographic model

Generally, "model gives a true indication of the space relationships of scenery and actors and is, therefore, of interest to the director when planning and staging" (Parker and Wolf, 1990:85). Certain aspect of the model can be altered or adjusted after it has been designed to take care of the director's impressions. At this level, the scene designer and the artistic director are working collaboratively towards the same goal and all suggestions made by any of the two party should be taken seriously. After the ratification of the scenographic model by the artistic director then, the technical business of set construction can begin.

Set Construction

At the level of set construction, the artistic director must be physically present to monitor, advice and supervise things by himself. As an important technical aid, the set must be well constructed and the concern of the director should includes:

1. A certification that the set will not obstruct his performer's movements on stage.
2. An assurance that the set is well constructed and firmly rooted on the stage surface. Will it collapse if performers accidentally push themselves into it during crowd, war and fighting scenes? Are 'returns' well placed to conceal the backstage or behind the scenes happenings? Are the wings, doors and windows enough or too much?
3. A confirmation that nails and other dangerous objects are well tucked in and not left on the stage to inflict wound on the performers.
4. An assurance that 'obstructive and distracting' sightlines are avoided in set construction with the hope of achieving clearer picturization and audience visibility.
5. A general assessment of the set to ensures that it conforms with the production style that the director has in mind. Impressionism or realism? Naturalism or symbolism?

All these and many more necessarily make the work of the director an important one as he strives to employ the overall aesthetics that the set can offer him in his theatrical directions.

Lighting

Light, in whatever forms (sun, moon, stars, day time and created ones through instruments) has in itself, the complete symbol of visibility. As an aesthetic contrast to darkness, light illuminates and radiates all human expressions. In the theatre, however, the importance of lighting

cannot be over-emphasized. It has been argued that, "of all the components that make up a stage construction, the two most active vital are the *actor* and *light*. The power of light to animate form makes it a forceful design statement in a stage composition" (Parker and Wolf, 1990:29).

The director is not a lighting technician but he must have a firm technical knowledge about lighting. Lighting is central to performance reflections and the play director must update his knowledge with the trends in lighting evolution. Local lighting as well as modern lighting methodology should also be part of his quest. He must know the functions of all lanterns and lighting equipment. In fact, he should know simple electrical law of connection, wiring and must be able to sketch or draw the flood pattern and prepare the lighting cue sheet. Also, he must be able to operate the dimmer board.

Apart from general illumination, lighting is also used to establish locale and create "visibility selective focus, modeling and mood" (Micheal, 1997: 228-9). While the play director may not necessarily be the one to light a performance, his advisory role through his understanding of lighting scheme, modes and patterns will add to the overall success of his performances. He must test his versatility during lighting rehearsal or technical night.

Colour

Colour disharmony should be avoided in the theatre. And when there is disharmony in the choice of, and use of colour in the theatre we know that the expected artistic beauty of production will be marred. Colour specifically, "modifies form. As an element of design it is a powerful stimulus that can change the dimension of form, reverse the direction of line, alter the interval between forms, and generate optical motion" (Parker and Wolf, 1990:39). It is, therefore, expected that the director should not only know what each colour represents but to also understand selective combination of colours.

During the theoretical framework in the directing process, the director of a play determines the genre of the play such as tragedy, comedy, satire, melodrama, tragi-comedy and so on. These genres have different colours that go with them. For example, a play whose genre is tragedy inevitably imposes on the director, the choice and use of dull, red, brown, and black colours in painting, costuming, make-up, lighting and even in props' selection. Likewise, comedy triumphs on brighter colours such as blue, cream, white, yellow and so on. The director must know that

a good combination of colour will aids his directorial interpretation and as such, he must make proper use of the opportunity that colour provides for him in the theatre for a good theatrical production.

Costume

Hugh Morrison, while reviewing performance presentation strongly supports the motion that actor's presentation and appearance should be considered along with the director's interpretation. He warns that, "appearance matters to the actor, and the director overlooks that at his peril... we can dispense with a theatre building or scenery, but we can't do without the excitement of the actor's appearance" (Morrison, 1984:77). Apart from role interpretation which can be internalized through acting, costume serves as actor's "exterior reflection" and as "an integral part of production design, ...the director must pay the most careful attention to it" (Hodge, 1971:251).

The play director must not totally leave the choice of costumes to his costumier alone. He must guide the costumier to make good choice in costume selection. The director must know and understand the functions and types of costumes most appropriate for his productions. The director must bear in mind that the "look of the character immediately plants an idea in the audience mind" (Morrison, 1984:74). The director should avoid 'overdressing and underdressing' of characters in play productions. He should also observe the costume models thoroughly before he allows the costumier to purchase, borrow or design them.

Make-up and Props

Make-up and props are inevitable technical aids in the theatre. They help to project and distort the image and appearance of characters. They are also transformational aids that further give life and meaning to performers as they interpret and impersonate other characters in performances. Etherton (1982:14) also observes that make-up is the; "means by which an actor emphasizes or changes his or her facial features in order to look more like the audience's conception of the character which he or she is playing, e.g. whitening hair to look older; painting lips to look voluptuous". While Hodge (1971:258) accepts only two options as the significant functions of make-up. To him make-up is "to make an assisting statement of an actor's characterization and to counter balance the effects of stage lighting".

Properties are created or improvised objects (small or big) which can be placed on the set, worn by actors and used generally to dignity the actors and the stage in the theatre designer's attempt to allow the audience

to identify with characters on stage vis-à-vis the distinguishing roles they are playing from other characters.

Properties come in various types and functions differently. Properties are also culture and period based because as we have traditional properties, we also have contemporary/modern properties and it is important to state that the use of properties and make-up are the director's option at creating 'distinctive appearance' through 'distinctive mannerisms'.

While utilizing make-up in the theatre, the director should strive for moderate application of make-up. Make-up must not be over-exaggerated except in comedies. Directors must therefore discuss with his make-up artist on the types of make-up necessary for his actors while hoping that they will project his characters. Make-up should also be considered along the line of colour, costumes and lighting because it is

> the director jobs to harmonize make-up on a technical level with costume and lighting, the usual procedure as for the director, in consultation with the costume and lighting designers, to design for each character a facial mask-what he looks like-so that this problem is considered systematically (Hodge, 1971:259).

At the level of design, the director must review the make-up chart with a view to correcting observable errors before the proper application of make-up will begin.

On the use of properties, the artistic director must ensure that:

(1) Properties that are not going to be used are not placed on stage, hence they become distractions.
(2) Properties either worn or placed on stage are not in anyway hampering of affecting actors' movement on stage.
(3) Properties and their choice conform to the genre and the production style of the play.
(4) Properties synchronize harmoniously with costumes.
(5) Properties are not too big or too small to have raised audience dissatisfaction and that
(6) Properties are distinctively used to create differences in social, religious, moral, political and cultural status.

Finally, properties and their uses should be taken seriously and this also goes for stage make-up because "good stage make-up is the result of a director's specific seeing, for many possible effects are lost by young directors who look at make-up as a general tool instead of a specific one " (Hodge, 1971:261).

Music, Sound and Special Effects

The director must have a good knowledge of acoustics and electronics in the theatre enterprise. He must be able to answer the following questions: will reverberation affects actors' speech? Or is the performing stage well roofed to ensure that the audience finally gets quality speech production from the actors? Sound, music and special effects and how it should be produced must be given a serious attention because they fixed human moods and allow him to react accordingly.

The director should also know the functions of all the sound systems such as microphones, tape or cassette player, mixer, compact discs, electronics amplifiers, equalizers, loudspeakers, synthesizers and so on. He must also have a good ear for sound, song and musical compositions even if he is not a music expert.

If the director is to produce a comedy, he must make use of sound that creates happiness in human mind and if his genre is tragedy, his sound must evoke and convoke great pity and sad emotions from the audience. Same also goes for his use and choice of songs and musical accompaniments which are themselves aesthetic and auditory sub-texts in theatrical re-enactments.

Sound effects are prerecorded or 'created' technical aids in theatrical performances. The director should therefore know how to produce and use natural and special effects such as moon, explosion/flashes, smoke, cock crow, crash on the door, sharp clinging of brass, sound of horn or flute, rain and thunder effects, bomb, siren, guns, sound of car and so on. He can use some of these effects offstage and onstage depending on the effects he is trying to create. He can also use sound and special effects, song and music in the beginning of the play as appetizer or background effects. He can also use them to bridge one scene to the other or while changing the set and finally, he can use them while drawing the play to an end in his curtain call. The director must take sound and special effects, song and music seriously especially in the total theatre conception. Interestingly:

> The director is usually his own sound designer because most educational theatre setups do not include a musician as part of the permanent staff of designers and even if they did, the coordination would have to be as close as that of the director and lighting designer because music is as personal and as delicately sensitive in its capacities for imagination arousal as is stage light (Hodge, 1971: 262).

Apart from all the technical aids discussed in this sub-section of this article, the use of masks and their functions must also be given attention by the director if he is to use them in the African theatre performances.

5.0 The Conclusion

Although job specialization is highly favoured in the theatre, the collaborative and group efforts of theatre workers in the production process pose greater challenges to them to know more than an area of specialization. It is only necessary that the director, most especially, must know how to utilize all the available technical aids in the theatre in order to spice up the overall aesthetics of his theatrical performances.

The following suggestions are also imperative for the director to take note of if he is to fully develop his theatrical potentials through the utilization of available, improvised and created technical aids:

1. The director must be interested in the use of technical aids and should not leave their use entirely to other designers. He must create his concept and see to its actualization through proper suggestions and constant monitoring.
2. The director must undergo in-house training and retraining so as to sharpen his knowledge about the day-to-day creative potentials inherent in technical aids' use.
3. The director must ensure that there exist, a good cordial relationship between him and his designers or aptly put, "director-designer relationship must therefore be a very close one" (Hodge, 1971: 242).
4. The director should be a great experimentalist by experimenting greatly and creatively with all the available, improvised and created technical aids at his disposal. Constant use of theatre technical aids will also make the director to learn through his designers and master the arts and dynamics of technical aids' use in the theatre.

The Directors Guild of Nigeria in collaboration with the Creative Designers Guild of Nigeria should take the utilization of technical aids seriously.

In conclusion, therefore, play directors must be interested collaborators and participants in the moderate and excellent use of technical aids' resources so as to make them conform with the technology and rapid globalization that has dominated the theatre industry. The director can only do this if the relationship between him and his designers (technical directors, scene designers, lighting designers, property managers, make-up artists, costumiers and so on) are theatrically friendly and artistically collaborative.

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