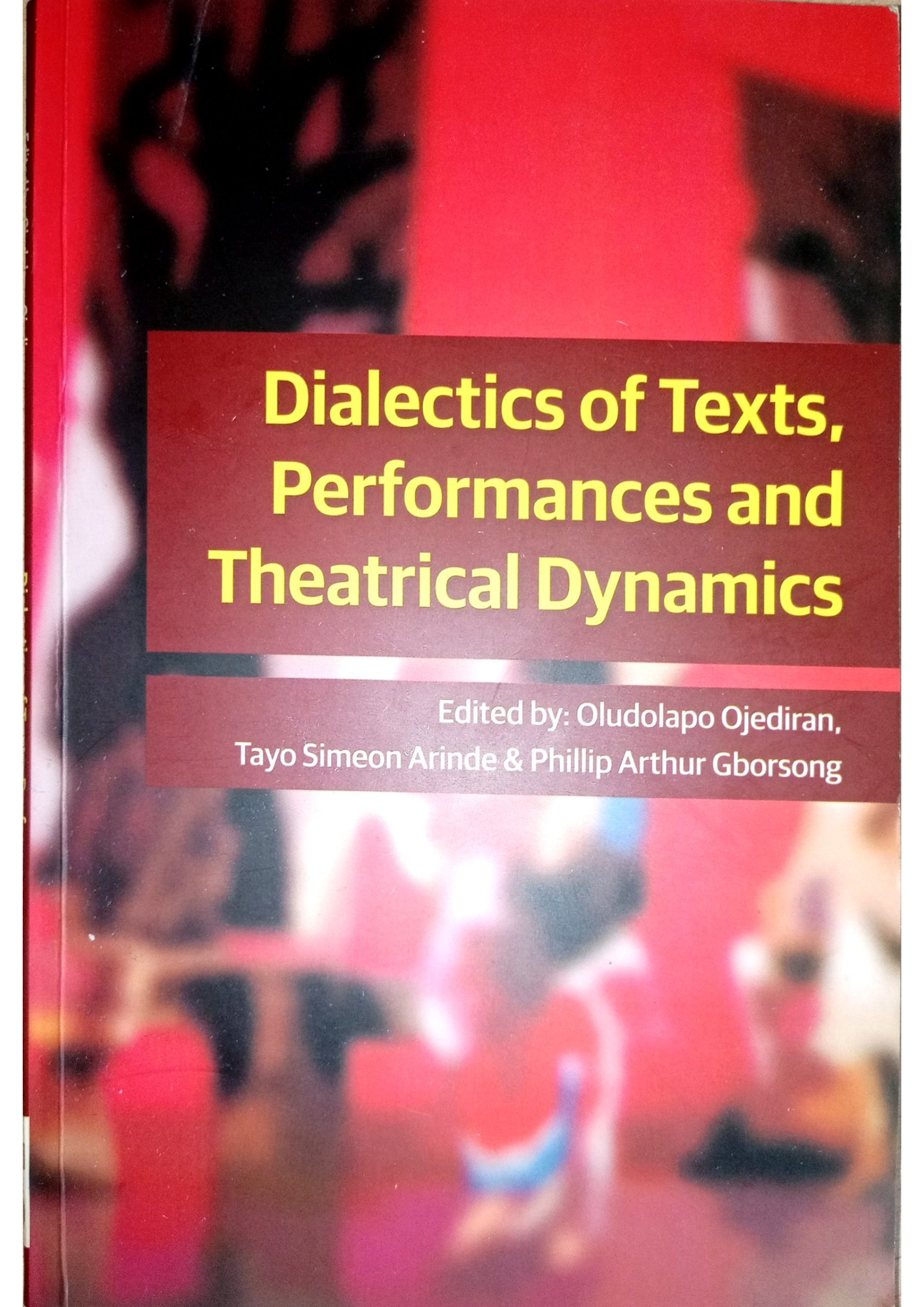




Dialectics of Texts, Performances and Theatrical Dynamics

Edited by: Oludolapo Ojediran,
Tayo Simeon Arinde & Phillip Arthur Gborsong

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Oludolapo Ojediran, Ph.D, Tayo Simeon Arinde, Ph.D
and Philip Arthur Gborsong, Ph.D



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



DEPARTMENT OF THE FOUNDATIONAL ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN

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'Dialectics of Texts, Performances and Theatrical Dynamics'

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and Philip Arthur Gborsong (2022)

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Foreword

I am honoured to have been asked to write the foreword of this book written by great academics in the field of Performing and Communication Arts. It has been my pleasure to know and work with the authors over the last two decades as senior academics with great passion for writing, excellence and great organisational abilities. I have had the privilege of watching them grow academically as they create niches for themselves and I am proud of their achievements so far.

The authors, Drs. Oludolapo Ojedian, Tayo Simeon and Philip Arthur Gborsong have distinguished themselves as great scholars by putting together their intellectual precision to produce this spectacular book, *Dialectics of Texts, Performance and Theatrical Dynamics*, which presents a good reading material on various discourses on artistic issues in Africa with particular examples from Ghana and Nigeria to a much wider public.

This important book consists of ten well researched and written chapters by many scholarly endowed authors from both Ghana and Nigeria. The book covers all the essential areas of the subject matter and is a great contribution to changes in various artistic issues and discourses of theatre and communication arts. The book expresses the commitment of the authors to enriching, training and research in Performing Arts.

Each author of the chapters utilises their personal pieces of wealth of experience for an elaboration of the chosen topics and bring home to their readers in such ways that the narratives can be properly understood. I am convinced that each author have put in their intellectual erudity and depth to deal with the various topics. The book has ten chapters and each dealt with varied topics of interests. The book embraces core academic writing styles, the

uniqueness of the female gender in theatre art performance and the interesting role performing arts can play in promoting health and well-being as it leads to fitness and healing in some respects. A critical analysis of the role of costumes in proper elucidation of roles of casts, teacher-student relationship in projecting understanding of various theatre plays based on student write ups and submissions as well as the impact that theatre art and plays can have on better understanding and as vehicle of societal development are also portrayed.

In my estimation, this is a very rich book which has captured the main areas needing attention. Without equivocation, I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all and sundry especially students and teachers of Performing Arts. The book will be a good reference and course material for all those undergoing training programmes in Arts. Finally, I must commend the authors in being able to harvest the experience of so many knowledgeable teachers and practitioners of theatre arts and come out with a book of this nature.

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DEPLOYMENT OF COSTUMES AND PROPS IN ABDULRASHEED ABIODUN ADEOYE'S TWO DIRECTED CONVOCATION PERFORMANCES

Abdulmalik Adakole AMALI

Abstract

*In a theatrical performance, the story is usually woven around a character or a group of characters in order to move the scenes and carry the action forward to tell a complete story to convince the audience. The director uses characterisation, visual and audio elements in the most creative ways to transmit a play text into live performance, using the script as the guide in conveying the core message. This is done with the primary intention of informing, educating or entertaining the audience. Hence, the director's insightful characterisation and proper use of costume, props and other theatrical elements helps the audience to understand the performance and the actors' role and function in the performance. With proper use of costumes and props the actor's identity and characters are put in to proper perspective for a better understanding. This study therefore examined how AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye as an artistic director uses costume and props to effectively achieve characterisation in drama as well as how these elements have helped to facilitate the understanding of the performances in *Tornadoes Full of Dreams* and *Adunni Olorisha*. This study revealed that through characterisation and proper application of costume and props, Adeoye has been able to transmit his directorial concepts for easy understanding by his audience. Therefore, the study concludes that explicit characterisation is brought to life by the director with a combination of effective orchestration of the costumier and props. However, the study recommends that for a play text to be properly*

interpreted and understood by the audience, there must be cordial working relationship between the director, costumier and the props manager. It is also recommended that, there should be a proper understanding of the play text, character and setting in order to provide the needed costume and props that will suit the performance.

Keywords: *Props, costumes, characterisation, directing, audience.*

Introduction

Costume and property go hand in hand in any performance, as they help in the translation of the performance. The appropriate intercalative use of costumes and props helps to portray and define the artistic director's imagination. It aids the personification and transformation of an actor into the physical form. It cannot be over emphasised that costume and props are very important aspects of theatrical productions. This is because they are integrated into the performance to bring about a seamlessly good production, aimed at giving a focal point for the audience. As part of the family of the technical theatre; this includes, lighting, sound, make-up and scenic design. Property and costume are the semi-twins. They are in most cases so bounded that at times the separation is quite difficult. The understanding between the artistic director, costumier and the property manager helps the narrative, setting, scenery and character in the production. This forms syntheses which assist in the total interpretation and give meaning to the actors, acting and the total performance.

Costumes and Properties in a Theatrical Performance

Costume has been a central part of the theatre right from inception, because of its importance in helping to add value and assistance to the translation of actors into character. It facilitates the proper understanding of the character and story line in a performance. Costume serves as the transformative power that

assists the director to transform the actor into a role. It is also used to enhance the story in bringing out the characters, identity, nuances or the general societal perception of the character.

The significance of costume in a performance can transient beyond the moment of use in the performance as it helps to enhance the audience enjoyment of the performance and as well as open the door to a broader understanding of the performance.

Asigbo (2013, pp.6-7) in citing Utoh-Eezeajugh defines costume as "the items of clothing and ornament worn by the actors or actress for the purpose of defining character and establishing the circumstances of the character's existence, by situating him/ her in time and space" also, Atane-Igbinovia and Ekhareafo (2016, p.170) are of the opinion that:

Costumes are often used to reflect, express and or enhance one's personality. This phenomenon occurs consciously or unconsciously, but the intent is to help individuals achieve some consistency between the tangible aspects of self and the intangible aspects of the costumes, both of which communicate impression of the self to others.

In a theatrical performance, there are different types of costumes. These may include:

- i. Ancient costume- these are made of the earliest time of man where animal skin and leaves and other accessories are used
- ii. Traditional costume- these have to do with the tradition and cultural background of the people dressing which is directly link to their identity and origin
- iii. Modern costume- these deal with the use of modern technology to create the materials used in the production of the costume
- iv. Contemporary costume- these have to do with what is applicable at the particular time of the production and applied directly in the production.

It is worthy of note that properties in the theatres are elements that

help to tell; give account and physically support the scene that are also used to enhance the actor and costume to tell a story in a performance. Again, in the same perspective, Strawn (2013, p.1) defines that:

Props live in the world of the visual design created by the scenic designer used to establish the stage setting for the play. They are the details fleshing out the architecture to define the characters in the play, set the time period, support the action needed within the structure of the play, and complete the “bridge” between the characters on stage and the reality of life objects.

Sofer (2003, p.2) supports that, “a prop is an object that goes on a journey; hence props trace spatial trajectories and create temporal narratives as they track through a given performance”. The distinction between costumes and props at times can be quite difficult in a performance. However, to help for better understanding, the following differentiation between props and costumes is identified by Sofer as cited in Fletcher (2013, p.199) that:

Prop can be more rigorously defined as a discrete, material, inanimate object that is visibly manipulated by an actor in the course of performance. It follows that a stage object must be “triggered” by an actor in order to become a prop...Stage props are powerful generators of meaning that are inseparable from other elements of the theater. Distinct from passive scene-setting objects, they interact with the material presence of the actor, the authorial words of the script, and the reception of the spectators to create drama.

This explanation helps in understanding and grouping props and costume as used in a production. Theatre properties otherwise known as props are objects used on stage set for a production which could be moveable, fixed or used in concurrence with the costume. The different type of props includes:

- i. Hand props- which includes walking stick, sword, pipe,

- and so on
- ii. Set props- comprises of furniture, wall picture, television, radio, and so on
 - iii. Costume accessories props- consist of items used to complete the costume attire like hat, glasses, rings, writing materials on a doctor's uniform and so on
 - iv. Personal props- these embraces money, handkerchief, and so on
 - v. Perishable props- these are props that are to be consumed or eaten during performances, for example, food, drinks and so on
 - vi. Destroyable props- these props that are destroyed as part of the performance and must be replaced each time there is a repetition of the performance.

Adeoye, A. A's Directorial Styles and Approach to Play Directing

Directors are responsible for the final output of a performance which includes the technical standards. They work closely with musicologist, choreographer, technical directors, costumiers, make-up artists, props managers and other crew members to give a good production. The director defines, enhances, refines and realises original ideas that make the performance aesthetically appealing, while also developing their concept based on the script. Uwin (2004, p.6) states that directing "is the expression of the subconscious. And like every artist you will have to learn how to draw on your own resources: your obsessions and intelligence, your neurosis and vulnerability".

Directorial style is synonymous with theatre production as it is part of the method or process to getting a production to a good result. However, there are many of styles and they are adapted by various directors for assorted of productions.

Ogunbiyi (2016, p.101) sees the director as "using the stage as a

platform for his presentation, the director translates and presents the script before the audience using his tools; the actors and designers. Through his presentation, he creates styles from which we judge his aesthetic works". Also, directorial style according to Babatunde (2016, pp.87-88):

Is the process, manner, method and technique of accomplishing something. It is peculiar to an individual; it is what distinguishes him/her from others. In the theatre, we talk of Femi Osofisan's style, Stanislavsky's style, viz: the preconceived or pre-blocking style of directing and the on-spot or improvisational style. There are various directorial concepts such as symbolism, naturalism, constructivism, avant-gadism, expressionism, epic and so on...is the overriding /guiding idea/principle that unites all the various elements that make up a production.

Babatunde further adds that, there are two distinct directorial styles; the preconceived or pre-blocking style of directing and the on-spot or improvisational style. Other directorial styles that have emerged over time include: the inner resources/actor's freedom directing style, the director's theatre directing style, the editing style and the computer directing style.

Due to the total theatre style and the straight-take technique which is prevalent in the Department of the Performing Arts of the University of Ilorin, Adeoye in a similar way Ogunbiyi (2016, p.106) in referring to Okolo's directing style takes advantage of this to hit the target brilliantly with an artistic dexterity of :

animating his performances through scintillating music, perfect choreographed dances, well rendered lines, swift change of roles by actors, elegant and flamboyant costumes, appropriate properties, masterly effect of lighting, well designed and constructed set, use of imagery, make-up, mask, multi-tasking of actors and a lots more.

This has given Adeoye dexterity to define himself using his inner confidence and depth of knowledge and experience and to be regarded as a deleterious and prolific director. The director is the cook and all other component of the theatre such as the directing styles, costumes, props, lighting, sound, set construction make-up and special effects are the ingredients that gives the final taste to the soup. A good director must know how to mix this combination properly with a focused mind, good sense of leadership and direction. He must have the artistic picture of what he wants to achieve and his objective at a good result. This leadership as Ogunbiyi (2016, p.101) reiterates is "extended to the multifaceted arts of the theatre which include, among others; costume, properties, set design, lighting and acting".

AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye has directed several plays from western to African theatre, but our emphasis shall be on his Nigerian directed plays for the university of Ilorin convocation performances, in which he showcased his artistic prowess not only in directing but also in costume and props. His quest for excellence transcends trough all facets of his life styles and activities.

In a constructive term, A.A. Adeoye is a "Maverick". He dares to go the extra mile in each production to achieve the artistic objective in telling his story. Adeoye does not compromise in any term as a director who is primarily interested in giving his audience what is different from the norm. With his positive "eccentric-ism", this tireless stallion has no boundaries in achieving goals geared towards the success of his productions. He is interested in making his audience to think outside the box; that nothing is impossible to achieve on stage especially when it comes to the application of costumes and props. A. A. Adeoye detests short cuts and prefers the artistic alternative of reflecting tone down reality.

However, one should note that a production varies from director to director; each having his/her own different approaches and styles. It will be impossible for two directors to produce the same thing if giving one script. Adeoye by nature and as a director is someone who has the ingenuity to crave his own creativity in each of his

production. He is that director who blends all styles and convention to have a good production.

The Use of Costumes and Props in Adeoye A.A. Productions

Tornadoes Full of Dreams and *Aduni Olorisha* are used as paradigms on how A. A. Adeoye applies props and costumes in directing his performances. Having worked with him as a property manager and a costumier, he adapts and combines various creative methods to arrive at effective results in his productions. Adeoye works hand in hand with his costumier and props manager to make sure the results are exactly as conceived based on the research on the play being produced.

Primarily, Adeoye is interested in his viewers and audience having instant grasp of the message of the play which does through his vast knowledge of the theatre. He always says that apart from God who is the maser creator, he also got his muse from his teacher, the late Professor Zulu Sofola who repeatedly told them that a good theatre personnel or practitioners must have the knowledge of all the areas of the theatre. This, Adeoye has followed religiously, having the knowledge both in theory and practice. It is therefore not surprising that he has effectively directed with uncommon artistic mien in drama and librettos with little or no difficulties as seen in the examples to be analysed.

A. A. Adeoye's Directorial Contribution to Prop and Costume in *Tornadoes Full of Dreams*

Analytical Synopsis of the Play

Tornadoes Full of Dreams is a play written by Bode Sowande. It is about slave trade in Nigeria and the events that led to their eventual freedom. It also exhibits the clash of supremacy between the Yoruba gods of Sango and Ogun. The story centres on Akinlade who is an Ogun worshiper and a slave trader. He raids Sango shrine and captures its priced female worshiper. After realizing the value of the girl, he decides not to sell her but meets Ayinde, a

slave dealer and a middleman between the blacks and the whites. Ayinde convinces him, plays a trick on him and sells him and the girl to the Europeans.

The duo of Ayinde and the slave girl are bought by Sidney who made the girl his mistress for twenty five years and had children with her. Time came when Talbot needed to go to France and he decides to sell the Magdalena (the Sango girl) and her children which angers her and she tactically poisoned Talbot. As she mourns Talbot, she saw Akinlade in the house in the company of one of the mulatos and she shoots and kills him. These actions lead to the freedom of the slaves and the resolution between Sango and Ogun.

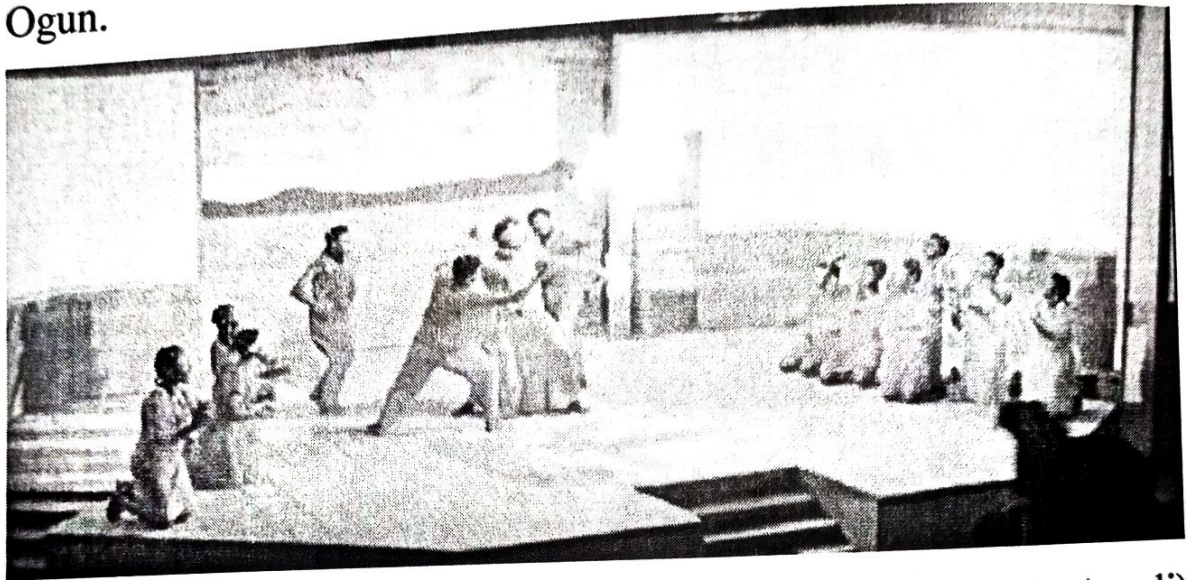


Fig. 1 Sango and his acolytes (photograph taken by A. A. Amali)

In this scene, as the director, A. A. Adeoye insisted that Sango's fire must come out of his mouth. He worked with props manager to construct Sango's symbolic axe to contain fuel and a lighter in a chamber within the axe. This ingenious construction allows the fuel and mix with the fire from the lighter to give an unbelievably real result as if the fire actually comes from Sango's mouth. The clever idea got a rousing response from the audience forming part of his belief that in theatre there is no limit to creativity.

Adeoye worked with the costumier and use of very sharp reflective red material for the clothing of Sango and his acolytes to depict the promethean nature of Sango. This gives a good effect to Sango or

his followers whenever they appear on stage with the reflection of the light on their costume. It lives strong reflective fire like glow when on stage. The cloth material was quite expensive but in the typical nature of Adeoye, he insisted on the best to get the best result for his product and his audience.



Fig. 2 African slave been shipped to Europe (photograph taken by A. A. Amali)

In this picture where the slaves were being taken to Europe, Adeoye made sure that actual chains were used to bind the actors together. He insisted that the chains should be buried and made to get rusty to create the reality that the chains are old and are constantly used for such a thing. Ropes depicting the period of the play were also painted and used on the waist and hand of the actors. He instructed that the slaves should be closely bound together to give them the feeling which will help get into their character.

The costume of the slaves were made of sack materials and left in termite holes. They were then painted to get them aged to reflect the surfing nature of the slave and time. The clothes were also roughly stitched with treads of different colours to reflect the condition of the slave.

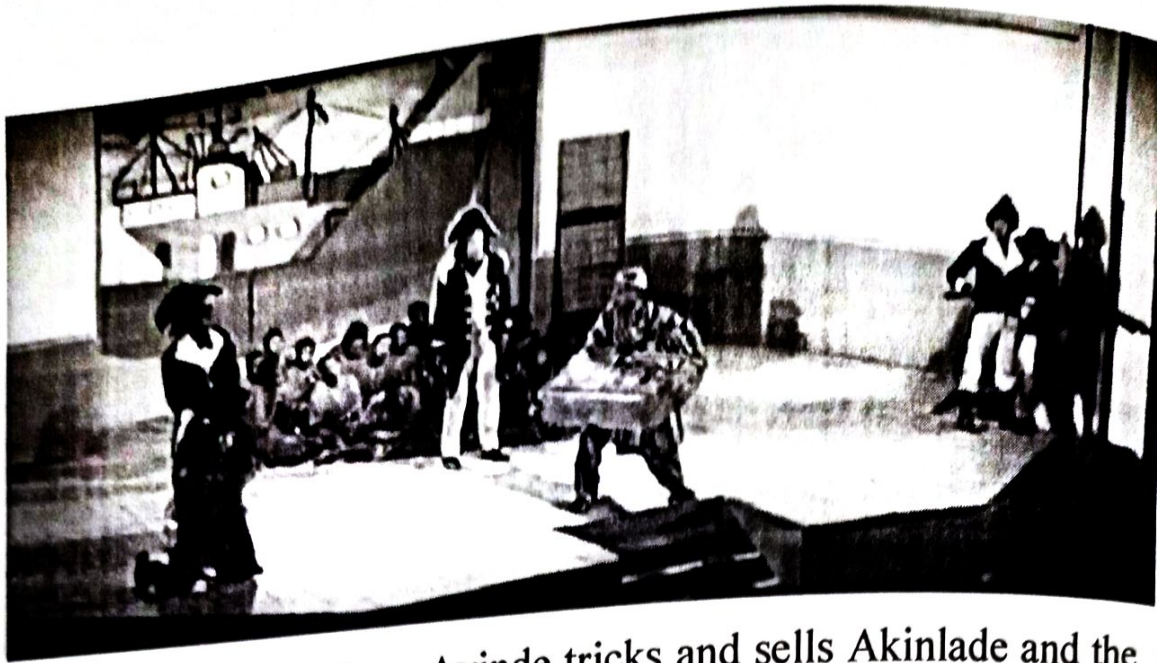


Fig. 3 The scene where Ayinde tricks and sells Akinlade and the Sango girl (photograph taken by A. A. Amali)

Fig. 3 shows a well-crafted gift bag with morrows on it and bottles of gin to show what Ayinde was given in exchange for the slaves they bought from him. Ayinde is also costumed in expensive Ofi material typical with wealthy business men at that time. The white Europeans are costumed in uniform identifying their origin. Akinlade is in his full warrior regalia on his knees as he realizes he has been sold.

Adeoye properly synchronises the props and the costume to bring the message and the cure element of the performance. This is in line with Banks (1993, p.218) which opines that properties are the “ways of defining and extending situations. It is also used to define character, suggest mood and depict period”. Riverman (2013, p.82) strengthens that:

Props, as mini narratives in their own right, are principal focalizers which bundle and condense meaning. They often bring a history to a play, apart from acquiring such while dramatic attention is being lavished on them. Like all theatrical signs, props can, to use semiotic jargon, be polyfunctional as indexical, iconic and symbolic signs (possibly all three at the same time). They are also mobile signs, meaning that they are capable of replacing any other sign system.

Adeoye's effective use of props and costume runs through all the facet of the production. This to a very large extent helps in the perfect execution of the story for better understanding for the audience. He is of strong conviction that when the appropriate props and costumes are used it makes ease to and understand.

A. A. Adeoye's Directorial Contribution to Prop and Costume in *Adunni Olorisha*

Analytical Synopsis of *Adunni Olorisha*

Adunni Olorisha is written by Olalusi, Kehinde Adedamola. The libretto mirrors the true life story of Susan Wenger a white woman who came to Africa and become the priestess of Osun, the Yoruba water goddess. She rises to the rank because of her love for arts, culture and tradition of the people of Osogbo where she found herself. She visits the kingdom with her husband with a warm welcome by the king and the entire community. She immerses herself into the culture, when her husband leaves her and returns to Europe and she marries Ayanbade a skilled drummer.

Despite having been opposed by the wicked incumbent Osun Priestess who deploys all forms of antics by invoking curses and atrocities, the wicked Priestess was defeated by *Adunni Olorisha*. She is then chosen by the people and goddess and becomes the Priestess Osun Osogbo where serves the people meritoriously for the rest of her life.



Fig. 4 The acolytes of *Adunni* with the Arugba (photograph taken by A. A. Amali)

Fig. 4 shows a veil made in the exact replica of the original and

supervised by Adeoye himself. The male and female acolytes are dressed in colours and texture of cloths as used in culture and actual performance of Osun Osogbo. Adeoye also insisted that with little improvisation, the hand bells carried by the Arugba acolytes should be the exact replica used for Osun Osogbo during the celebration. The bells are of varieties and produce different sound tunes as they are being shaken by the carriers to the rhythmic movement of the Arugba, song and the drums thereby giving a good blend and harmony.



Fig. 5 Ayanbade and Adunni dancing (photograph taken by A. A. Amali)

In this scene, Ayanbade and Adunni are dressed in the same type of Ofi cloth to show that they are couples. Also, Ayanbade's drum is seen on the stage to depict his profession as the couple dance together as the couple dances. The director always insists on the use of props to lay emphasis and helps in the creation of realistic picture on stage.



Fig. 6 The disposed Adunni Olorisha with acolyte laying curses in the land (photograph taken by A. A. Amali)

This scene, the Adeoye insisted that the disposed Adunni Olorisha is dressed in red and black which signifies war and destruction different from usual white which symbolises peace. She carries a black staff to indicate her dark powers of destruction. Her other acolytes are also in black with restless movement as the director has instructed to the show their destructive mood. While the two females on both sides carries clay pots of destructive power. The whole scene is dull and gloomy to show the impending danger.

The costumes are integrated into the performance and are set to bring life and meaning to proper execution of the production. As Pavis (1998, p.81) submits, that costume is

not only an ornament and an external wrapping for the actor, it is a link to the body. Sometimes it serves the body by adapting to the actor's gestures movements and attitudes; sometimes it restricts the body by subjecting it to the weight of material and form, enclosing it in a restraint as fixed as rhetoric or the alexandrine. . . Costume partakes alternatively and sometimes simultaneously, of the living being and the inanimate object. It ensures the transition between the interiority of the speaker and the exteriority of the objective world.

Adeoye as a director, always says that a scene should always speak for itself. In line with this ideology, his productions are seen as master pieces through characters and characterisations, costume, props and other technical elements of the theatre cleverly and creatively crafted together to give a holistic and pleasant result in his production.

Conclusion

It has been observed that there are various techniques and directing styles employed by AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye to achieve his directorial result. It is obvious that through his creative ingenuity, he has been able to effectively collaborate with technical team in terms of the costumes and properties to get a good performance for the audience entertainment, education and information. His

creativity in directing and intellectual prowess has stood him out to uniquely define himself as a director and an artistic manager being able to effectively and skilfully combine the various aspects of the theatre to get a wonderful theatrical performance.

Adeoye at each point has been able to meet the demands of his audience by challenging himself and making each production better than the previous. His creative combination of music, dance and drama has earned him respect from all genres of the theatre and has also proven his intelligence and resilience to attending the best in all facets of life. His good working relationship with his cast and crew members and a proper understanding of plays by him adds to the effective communication to the audience.

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