

UNCOMMON ARTISTRY

UNDERSTANDING BAKARE, OJO RASAKI'S
DANCE, DRAMA AND THEATRE



Edited by
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Foreword

In the career of anyone growing through the University system in Nigeria there are four interlocking traditions which are celebrative, commemorative, exhibitionistic, and tributary i.e. conferring of honours.

The first is the tradition in which parents and family celebrate with the prospective university student on Matriculation Day. After such a day the ambitious student undergoes a period of training and study at the end of which he has stepped into the second tradition.

The second is the tradition of graduating, going into National Youth Service as a patriot, and then convoking on Convocation Day. On that day he is robed, decked out, garlanded as an achiever. He may undergo altogether three such convocations if he wishes to pursue an academic career, steps which take him through Master's and Doctoral Degrees. Thereafter he embarks on a scholarly professional career, still within it, now fully steeped in the dyes of the Ivory Tower, he reaches tradition number three.

That third is the tradition of earning and being installed into a chair in the professional area in which he has demonstrated irrefutable expertise. He now has a profession he "professes", and is titled, "Professor", an authority and specialist in a defined, socially and culturally palpable area. There he makes his mark, shares socially revolutionary and status-changing ideas and theories with many within his Nigerian borders as well as beyond those borders as his publications join in the global battle for the minds of the young, old, and established thinkers and doers of the world.

It is at this stage, in the third tradition, that the man has what I want to call, "the festive commendation stage" - a Festschrift is organized in his honour.

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Festschrift-ism is the fourth tradition. In it, as in this book, edited by four well-entrenched fellow scholars and friends, there is a celebration – of the subject's birth, career achievements, highlights of controversies and contributions, underscoring the solidity and reflectiveness of the man's entire career.

A remarkable achiever has been taken through these traditions, and his name is Rasaki Ojo Bakare.

The joy this writer has in presenting this monumental theatre studies Professor goes beyond the joy of parents and family celebrating at Matriculation or Convocation, or Enthronement into a chair at which time the man gives the justification for earning a Chair with an Inaugural Lecture. My joy is that fuller because Rasaki Ojo Bakare has been under my personal, non-biological parental periscope for more than twenty-five of his fifty years: he was my undergraduate student; I assessed his suitability for professorial chair; I adjudicated Abuja Carnival Festive Events for him, when he was the Festival's Director; I supervised him as theatre director, as dance and choreography specialist, as playwright and writer of such jubilee marker plays as *This Land Must Sacrifice*, *Once Upon A Tower*, and mightily, *The Drums of War*. Nigeria, with the vagaries of its evolution as a country has been his homeground, in the way England was for Shakespeare, scientific Norway was for Henrik Ibsen, and socialist Russia was for Anton Chekhov.

Though a mere 50 years of age, Rasaki Ojo Bakare by this celebrative, encomiastic, and assessing picturization by this theatre and drama scholar to veaguos classmates, peers and parents has joined the ranks of those who come to limelight in this profession, as Soyinka demonstrated winning the Nobel at 52, and Esiaba Irobi underscored by winning the NLNG Prize at 50, and Sam Ukala joining at about the same age range.

It is a pleasure to invite you, dear readers, to share this book on "Rasaki Ojo Bakare At 50". You will be inspired,

motivated, challenged. The contributors have given you an all-round, rounded character treasure beyond the stage. Relish it.

Kalu Uka

Professor of Theatre Arts, UniUyo

Acknowledgments

The editors would want to acknowledge the subject of this book, Professor Bakare, Ojo Rasaki for graciously giving us the nod to embark on this scholarly labour. Our thanks also go to his amiable wife who helped facilitate the acquiescence of her husband for us to carry out this project.

In writing a book like this, many debts are incurred, not least to the friends and colleagues of Bakare who have over the years harassed us into clarity and made us sharply conscious of the need for a reliable guide to approaching the man and his works. Particular thanks are due to all scholars and artists who contributed articles here.

We would also like formally to thank those without whose cheerful friendship, professional conversation and generous assistance we would not have started, let alone finish. In this regard, heartfelt thanks go to members of the 'Bakare at 50' committee. Staff and students of Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, The secretarial staff amongst whom are Taiwo Olusola, Niyi Adeosun, Sunday Abatan, Catherine Oloni and Felicia Richard. We cannot end without recognising those individuals and scholars who have in one way or the other worked with Professor Bakare, Ojo Rasaki in sustaining and furthering the universe of performing arts in Nigeria.

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