



ISSN 1595-0972

The Performer

**ILORIN JOURNAL OF
THE PERFORMING ARTS**



VOL. 7(2005) and VOL.8 (2006)

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THE PERFORMER

The Performer is published by the Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. The editor welcomes articles in any area of the performing arts. Reviews of relevant publications as well as of performances will also be considered for publication. The journal is published once in a year. All correspondences, inquiries and articles should be addressed to the Editor, *The Performer*, Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

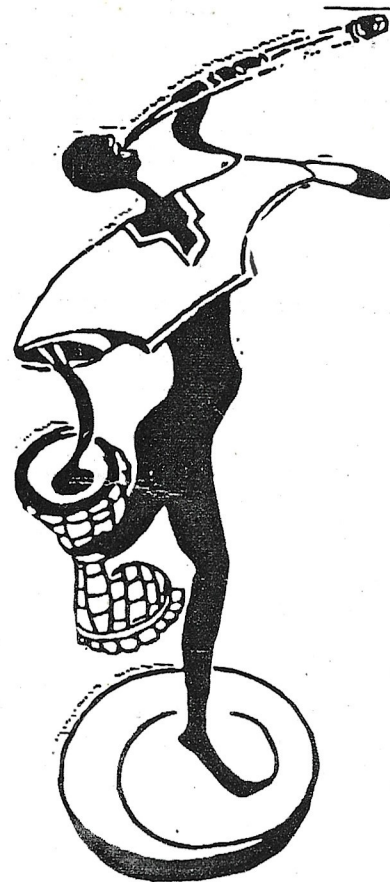
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The Performer

**ILORIN JOURNAL OF THE
PERFORMING ARTS**



Vol. 7, 2005

**Published by the Department of the Performing Arts,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.**

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

NIGERIA	FOREIGN		
	Dollar	Pounds	Deutschmark
Individual N500	\$ 30	# 25	35
Institution N600	\$ 35	# 30	40

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The Editor
The Performer: Ilorin Journal of the Performing Arts
 Department of the Performing Arts,
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know, at that stage you are a learning director. I can remember: *Three Penny Opera* and several other plays like that which combined music, dance and drama.

Musa: That means that you are a total theatre person even before coming here. And that probably, is the reason why I draw you into that historical excursion.

Kofoworola: Yes. Actually, when I came here and discovered that my Ph.D. Thesis "Hausa Performing Arts", is quite relevant. Incidentally, I came into Performing Arts". I have always been into drama, theatre or performing arts department. I then recollect that my research at Centre for Cultural Studies at ABU had always insist on harvesting of dance, music and making it dramatic because, no matter how much, you do with dance and music if they are not dramatic, then they may have no meaning.

Musa: Sir, there is this believe that Professor Dapo Adelugba is your mentor and role model especially in the area of play directing. Is this true?

Kofoworola: Yes, it is absolutely true. Dapo Adelugba is my mentor and role model. I think that he is even more than that. He is like a God father to me. He is the man that I try to emulate in...

Musa: Your directing style?

Kofoworola: Yes, he inspires me right from my undergraduate days when he directed *Kiriji* and several Wale Ogunyemi's plays and he is a model, a perfectionist who goes for the minutest details. The minutest details which you might not see ordinarily but which is very very important. He talked about the cameo part usually in play production. Usually, people always assume that somebody who has a big role to play in a play is the one who carries the play BUT Professor Adelugba, uncle Dapo is the one who made me to realise that the person who play the cameo part (that is, the small part) is like someone who holds the key that can open or close the applause of a play. Essentially, Adelugba goes for details and even if you are playing a major role in a production, it doesn't matter to uncle dapo Adelugba. Assuming that your role is just to come in and go out, he gives you the attention.

Musa: In dramatic production everybody is very important...

Kofoworola: Yes, dramatic production is composite. That dramatic directing must have a composite balance of various part

not just in terms of human resources but various parts in terms of technical resources that are connected with the play. The scenic background, the music, the lighting, even the colour, the changing of scenery, all have to go into some kind of harmonious melody itself. That blows and glows in order to bring out the best that can be given. Don't forget also that Adelugba also made me to realise that the *Debut* in a production can be beaten and unbeaten. In other words, a production, when it is premiered, you give it your best but that best may never come again or you can surpass that best because performance is temporal. What you perform today, tomorrow may be different depending on several other factors like the audience, the stage...

Musa: Prof. Sir, from my experience working with you, I see you to be a very patient director during the last year 2002 convocation performance you never get rattled, collaborating as it were with the crew and the cast members and decompartmentalizing the various aspects of the production what is the secret, so that prospective directors can learn from this experience...

Kofoworola: Thanks. You see, directing is a genetic art of human control and were it possible for artistic directors to go into the podium of politics, they will be best politician because you see, when you are directing, you are working under pressure and you are working with tangible and intangible factors. Factors that you can hold, factors that you cannot hold. The whole things become incomprehensible. In politics and in other managerial engagements where you direct human beings you always predict but in artistic directing, you can never predict and therefore you don't take chances and since you know this is a pre-occupation in which you should NOT take chances then you have to be patience. Being patience is a way of accumulating various psychological elements that are in fact, in the task ahead. That way, you will be able to get the confidence of the artists, you will be able to encourage them, you will be able to stimulate them, you will be able to enable them to bring out their best. If you are NOT patience and you are angry and shout all the time, there is a way to think that you will lead them and after leading them to a state and reinforce their confidence, then you can start browbeating. I think

that is the technique.

Musa: You learnt this technique from who and are there no danger in over decompartmentalization when the director can creatively weave the play together in one holistic blend?

Kofoworola: I learnt this technique from Uncle Dapo. He would raise your confidence, he would encourage you, he would be patience with you once he knows that you have grasped it then he will come and shape your role with his hammer of perfection because he is a very strong perfectionist. He will then start shouting because at that state, you have already reach a stage whereby there can be no going back I don't engage in overt decompartmentalization. Although decompartmentalization has its own advantages over doing it may be dangerous in directing.

Musa: Let us now go back to Wole Soyinka. How many of Wole Soyinka's plays have you directed. I am aware of that of the United State of America-----

Kofoworola: I think some of them were directed by me and took part in some also in A B U. A B U studio theatre is an experimental theatre and Soyinka happens to be one of our prized Nigerian playwrights who we have to showcase every year as part of the experimentation with the African and the comparative Western ideological theatre. It is a matter of tradition and convention even though A B U is known for popular theatre yet almost every year we make sure that Wole Soyinka is showcased along with Western playwright like Bertolt Brecht. That was even when I directed *The Bacchae of Euripides* and several others.

Musa: As one of the directors of Soyinka plays in the Nigerian theatre, what advice do you want to give to directors wishing to direct Soyinka's plays? How best should Soyinka's plays, especially his comedies be approached.

Kofoworola: I think the best thing is to read it several times and to equate it with observations that you see in the society. Remember also that in the society, there are always models of Soyinka's characters. Brother Jero is an example of Wole Soyinka's ideology of all that can be seen from the characteristics of the Nigerian attitudes to religion in particular which Soyinka turns into sarcasm. I believe that Wole Soyinka's play is not a play you read once and toss away. It is a play you need to read several times and then

concentrate on various scenes and various characters, looking at the contextual framework from Wole Soyinka's point of view. In any case, Soyinka is a creative giant who leaves you with several interpretations depending on the way you want it.

Musa: At this point sir, do you now support the motion that we can go beyond Wole Soyinka while deploying all arsenals at practical directing.

Kofoworola: Yes, I think that one can go beyond Soyinka. Soyinka in most of his plays was writing like a prophet. He was foreseeing the future and Soyinka was more or less a seer you know. In most of his plays there are many predictions that may not take place immediately but always take place even in the present situation in Nigeria...

Musa: Soyinka is a genius, a scholar in revolution, a firebrand activist and a constant forecaster and diviner, I still want you to speak more on the overt predictions in Soyinka's plays...

Kofoworola: I feel that anyone who is going to produce or direct Soyinka should forecast because the framework of his writings is that of forecast. If you look at *The Lion and the Jewel*, you will see his remarks about some of the things that are still happening now. Even till date, there is still this issue of cultural identity, the issue of educated illiterates who cannot stand on their own and so on and even there is still the issue of corruption...

Musa: As abundantly represented in *The Lion and the Jewel* by Baroka, the lion of Ilujinle...

Kofoworola: You are right. All these are elements of forecast that you find in Wole Soyinka's play and I believe that prospective artistic director can use that framework of forecasting element to build his directing of Soyinka's plays.

Musa: In relation to my own experiment with *The Lion and the Jewel* which I have directed and that which I humbly called "The Neo-alienation Style", this style has been valorized and projected into twelve aesthetic possibilities and is an expostulation, a re-mould and a recreation of the Brechtian alienation effects and a synthesis of the Western and African theatricals. The Neo-alienation Style has two swords. First, it is a theatrical style primary meant for writing and this we realized through the year 2002

Performing Arts' Lunch Time Production of *The Smart Game*' and as a directorial experiment, *The Neo-alienation Style* also aims at artistic deconstruction. Sir, I want your comment on your impressions on the performance.

Kofoworola: You see, this is part of the thing that I was saying. Your directing style in that plays was not only radical but highly dynamic because you introduced certain dance movements. You alienated some of the encumbrances which can discourage one you know if one wants to direct Wole Soyinka by battling with war fronts and several fronts. You want to battle with his language and understand it. You want to battle with his interpretation of cultural values, you want to battle with his forecasting framework and so you also want to battle with the scenic design and so on. But you see, what you have done in that play is to alienate the things that are out of the forces of that forecast, you radicalize it in terms of doing away with several of these materials and bring out a new artistic directing out of it which is really radical and that is why it was very successful you know. Many audience gone to the hall that day to watch the normal kind of Soyinka's

Musa: Long and endless linguistic erudition without stage icons.....

Kofoworola: Yes. But through your performance, we saw an alienating effect and an alienating touch in the directing style of Wole Soyinka's play. To the extent that it was successful not only in the African Hall in the University of Ilorin, Mini-Campus but also at the French Cultural Centre, Alliance Francaise at Ilorin where we have a mis-grill of audience made up of non-Nigerians. To that extent, I would say that was a very successful experiment, a new trend in play directing.

Musa: Prof, as you are aware, Professor Ayo Akinwale is my teacher of directing. I have also worked with seasoned Nigerian theatre: dramatists such as Akanji Nasiru, Olu Obafemi, Bakare Ojo Rasaki, Kalu Uka, Femi Osofisan, Inih Ebong, Umemedimo Atakpo and Professor Dapo Adelugba who is currently sharpening me theoretically and practically but one is also learning from your own practical directing, timely and positive comments during

viva and so on. As a pointer, your directing style when you directed Ododo's *"To Return from the Void"* was quite unassuming and mainly collaborative. You stood as a master collaborator, fertile in the engineering room of theatrical decompartmentalization yet devoids of directorial tyranny. You were simple in approach but firm, creative but quite in support of theatrical orthodoxy. You did not shout or 'break' your head as most of our directors used to do. Can you please, emphasis the secret or the trick of your rather patient collaborative approach or, can it work all the time?

Kofoworola: I think it is not a trick as such. It is a technique. You see, democratization is not only a theory that can be practiced in politics. Because we are political animals, democratization has its credits it is practiced in managerial engagements, in artistic directorial engagements, and in all walks of life. Now, the best way of getting people to do your will and be happy with it is to seek their conscience. Whereas you may have a particular view or a particular style which you want them to hold. You could let them practice their own and then you suggest your own and in the suggestion of your own, you will discover that you may be coming up with something. A kind of amalgamation of your own and their own, something unique and something special but what is important is that, in other to get the people (don't forget that directing is a corporate experience). Corporate experience in that you what all hands on board. My experience on directing is that once you are ready for performance you hand over the play to the stage manager, you may not be there again. So, the best way of building foundation is establishing that corporate democracy you know, get everybody involves and to consert, get everybody to contribute because whatever you continue will be part and parcel of something you will value. But whatever is imposed on you have alienated you and what it means is that well, you are turning yours artists to robots. And you know, robots like Fela will say: *Zombie Zonmbie*, turn here, they will turn, turn there, they will turn. But you know that art is...

Musa: Dynamic but can this collaborative approach of yours work all the time especially when a director is working

with "greenhours"

Kofoworola: Such a dynamic engagements, malleability is the thing and the way you can get people into the mood is to make them to be part of it. When they are part of it, you discover that they are partnership in progress, partnership in directing, partnership in improvement, partnership in perfection and you can never fail as a director.

Musa: Sir, I observe that there is a great shift between the first generation of Nigerian theatre directors in the literary tradition and the contemporary Nigerian directors. The first generation of Nigerian directors led by Baba, Professor Dapo Adelugba make use of some basic directing fundamentals where there is tradition, where there is a theory at work. You can see the operation of directing style. Here now, and to the contemporary directors, they experiment and experiment. What is your comment? What is your advice? What is your assessment of these directors? For instance, I respect the playwright's poetic licence but I am not a textual or slavish director, I don't belong to the traditional school of directing as such, I cherish the artistic licence of the director which should make him to create and recreate within the play's contextual motif...

Kofoworola: I think that what is happening is good. It is not as if the old generation did not experiment. In fact Professor Adelugba, Bayo Oduneye and several others directors also experimented you know but the pressure on the youth nowadays, the new age directors is so much under pressure and there are several competing factors. Look at the video also overtaken the live theatre. Look at the cinema, even the advertisements alone, pre-occupation in advertising is an art of directing too which can get people's full engagement. I think that the pressure is so much and there are several other...

Musa: Competing factors that the contemporary or new generation directors have to contented with...

Kofoworola: We have entered into the age of computer and the age of computer is an age in which several things can be happening together at the same time.

Musa: And one cannot afford to an onlooker. Ola Rotimi started, though briefly computer directing. I am also looking into

that and see, what advantage, programming movements and blockings can have on the art of play directing.

Kofoworola: Very good. The more of these several events happening at the same time, the more of these artistic elements...

Musa: In play production...

Kofoworola: Which the new age director can infuse into...

Musa: The live play...

Kofoworola: The better it would be. And I think that is the reason why I said that your play was radical and dynamic. You are very creative will directing *The Lion and the Jewel* You see, you were able to infuse several of the images of the current technological advancement into it and we cannot run away from that.

Musa: Generally, what advice will you like to give to prospective directors?

Kowoworola: The advice that I will give is that directing is an experience. Even experimenting in directing is an experience on its own. What is important for would-be-artistic directors is the consolidation of the fact and figure, concept and idea, directorial ideology, consolidation of those ideas in black and while is very important.

Musa: Bayo Oduneye pioneered the pre-blocking methodology but Ayo Akinwale popularized and make a profound meaning out of it. You also used that style in "To Return from the Void" where you normally write down the details of your daily and expected directing schedule. Is this not contradicting the collaborative approach?

Kofoworola: Yes I did. It is also important that directors should find out where they deviate from the norms and what is the result of the deviation. And the ability to record it and re-experiment and let people know your feelings. Your emotions, the psychological results and imports that have led you into that experimentation. Your ability to report it is very important. It is also important to listen to critics because critics are people who can see things from different angles and perspectives. Listening to them, not necessarily obeying them but seeing whether their perspectives fall in line with your own...

Musa: And how it can be fine tuned for future directing?

Kofoworola: That is very important these days, people are too much in a hurry.

Musa: Sir, one of the problems confronting the art of play directing in Nigeria as I have discovered, is the problem of improper documentation of production...

Kofoworola: It is bad. But artistic director must document his experience of the past in order to enhance his present standard, project for the future his own philosophical framework or his own artistic ideology. I would want to see you do more experimentation. Not only on Wole Soyinka but on other important playwrights like Femi Osofisan or even on Wale Ogunyemi or, is it possible for you to carry out the kind of experimentation on the play of Wole Soyinka with that of Femi Osofisan and...

Musa: Compare notes if it will work or not? I will do that soonest.

Kofoworola: Yes, to know if it work or not. Because we know the sum total of Wale Ogunyemi is on cultural regeneration and we are talking about Wole Soyinka who is a forecaster. This is the sum total of his plays and when you come to Femi Osofisan, you are talking about radicalism.

Musa: A radicalism coated in the ideology and tenet of Marxism...

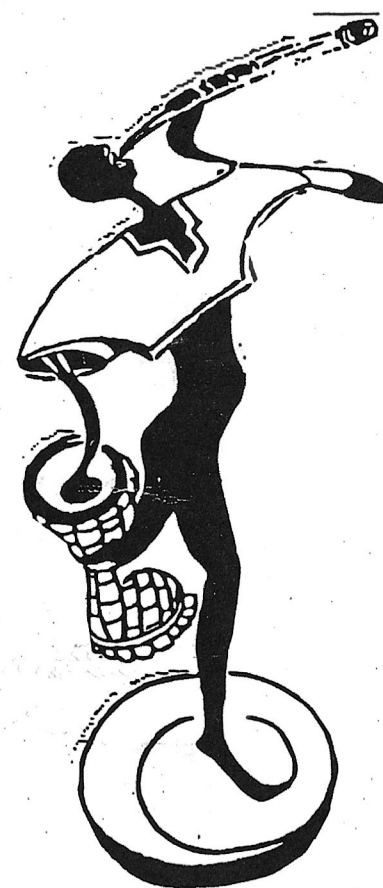
Kofoworola: Yes. So experimenting with various playwrights will make you to see if your experiment will work or not along the line of your own developed artistic style, which like I said is radical and dynamic. It is a way of consolidating your own identity as a young artistic director.

Musa: I am very happy for that comment, I am also most grateful to you for granting me this privileged interview within a short notice. I am certain that I will see you again for more stimulating intellectual discourse on the theatre and, the enviable art of play directing. Thank you.

Kofoworola: Thank you too and God's blessings to you.

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