

CHAPTER SEVEN:

COUNTER MISSION

KEHINDE ADEDAMOLA OLALUSI

CHARACTERS

King adigun

Queens

Cheifs

Abike

Akanni

Akinoye

Preist

Witches

Mothers

Pastors

Guards

Villagers

Drummers



TABLEAU

[The roll of drums amidst flicker of light brings the witches on stage].

They come in with a set of newly born twins, as they sing, dance and render incantations.

[The light is indicative of midnight and preferably dim to accommodate the aesthetics of the lamp carried by each witch. On the right and left sides of the stage, Adigun and Akinoye, princes of the land, are asleep].

The witches conjure Akinoye's spirit and present the twins to him. He takes them and dance happily. After a while they present the crown. He goes for it but they request the twins in exchange. He refuses and returns the twins as he goes back to sleep.

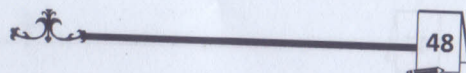
The witches then conjure Adigun's spirit and repeat the same process with him. He takes the crown in exchange for the twins. They engage in series of movements suggestive of covenant that seals their agreement.

[Light fades on stage while follow spot is immediately directed to the orchestra and isle where songs are rendered for movement one].

MOVEMENT ONE

[It is the coronation of Adigun as king at the village square].

Songs are rendered as villagers, men and women dance to the stage, the Chief Priest and his



acolytes also dance to the stage with the coronation materials then Adigun and his wives, the chiefs and guards equally come on stage with suitable dances. Guards are at the entrance as the occasion begins with dances from the maidens, the men and chiefs.

Suddenly, Akinoye appears with the intention of stopping the coronation, the guards try to stop him and eventually beat him up and drag him away when he is proving stubborn. Then, the chief priest together with the other chiefs begins the coronation proper. The witches are also present, but to the knowledge of Adigun alone.

[Preferably, the witches should watch the proceedings go on from backstage where a platform elevates them just above the constructed flats for aesthetic and esoteric actualization].

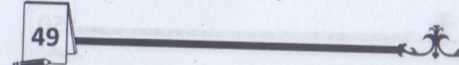
After the coronation, Adigun dances gracefully, himself and his wives and chiefs exit, and then the crowd dance out.

[Light fades].

MOVEMENT TWO

[Akanni's house]

Abike, heavily pregnant, comes out of the room and starts to sweep, Akanni her husband comes out with cutlass, hoe and basket and sharpens the cutlass. They do a light love duet. Then as Akanni heads for the farm, Abike falls into labour,



shouting and moving to the rhythm of the songs, the husband agitated and confused, goes out and returns with two midwives. They take her in as she continues to shout, one of the midwives comes out to assure the husband of safe delivery, she goes back in and returns with the other midwife, each carrying a baby. They are all happy, the babies are taken back inside, the husband calls the neighbours and they do a vibrant dance.

[Light fades].

MOVEMENT THREE

[At the palace].

The king sends the guards on errand as the witches arrive. Then the chiefs come in to consult with the king. Then the guards arrive with Abikes twins followed by the mother and father wailing and pleading. The chiefs show disagreement with the action of the king but with the support from the witches, unseen by the chiefs, he renders the chiefs mentally incapacitated; he gesticulates and turn them around one after the other to his delight.

He hands over the twins to the witches and together with the hypnotized chiefs do their agreement dance again. The witches depart. Abike and Akanni hold unto the king and chiefs for their babies. The king orders them to be beaten up as he waves to his chiefs and enters and the chiefs also make their exit.

50

MOVEMENT FOUR

It is the annual 'orisha ibeji' festival, the atmosphere is bubbling with songs, dances and drumming, it is happening at the palace. The king leads the town in a dance possession unto the stage. About five sets of twins putting on same costume (per set) are among the crowd, likewise pregnant women, one of whom is the king's wife.

Some groups including the set of twins and the pregnant women come out to dance; a twin masquerade also performs before the king and the chief priest perform the orisha ibeji festival rites by calling out the mothers of the newly born twins. Suddenly, there is commotion, every one rush out as the witches enter to take custody of a set among the twins, the king is dumbfounded, so he quickly move inside as the chiefs and guards console the mother of the twins.

[They all move out in a slow dance].

MOVEMENT FIVE

Some villagers come on stage with Abike and Akanni, in protest, the king comes out and drives them out of the palace. The chief Priest warns the king, he asks that sacrifice be offered to the gods of the land, the king signals to show his consent and the chief priest leaves, the king smiles sarcastically and enters, then the chiefs exit.

Light fades.

51

MOVEMENT SIX

Abike is mad, she dances like a mad woman from one isle through the apron to another isle. She drives people away and other mad acts, eventually runs out of the stage.

MOVEMENT SEVEN

The king's pregnant wife is in labour. A guard rushes out of the stage as the king comes out in anxiety. The guard arrives with midwives who follow the queen inside. After a while, the midwives come out with a set of twins. The king is alarmed and quickly orders the guards to take them out of the village, but just then, the witches come in to take custody. The king is adamant and reluctant, he fights it, but he is overpowered as they take the babies away.

MOVEMENT EIGHT

Abike (still mad) meets the witches and engage them in a dance contest. At the peak of the contest the witches go into madness dance and Abike becomes healed. She sees the babies and run out with them. Winding down the witches discover the babies' disappearance and head back to the palace in anger.

MOVEMENT NINE

The king and the queen in a mourning dance. The witches arrive and engage the king in a dance contest. At the end he is left paralyzed. The villagers arrive to meet him in that state. They reject him and send for Akinoye and insist the Chiefs crown him. The crown is removed from Adigun and placed on Akinoye. Adigun suffocates himself and is carried out. Abike comes in with the twins. The king orders her and her husband to take charge of them. They all sing and dance as Abike and others take their bow.

Curtain call.

LIBRETTIST'S NOTE

Counter mission is a creative endeavour. Though it is an imaginary creation, some of the situations are adopted from some happenings around. It is set in the Yoruba culture but choreographers could adopt other cultures if such culture fits into the story. Equally, the artistic balance of good over evil should be reflected in the dance action.

From the technical angle, choreographers may experiment with the witches. What readily comes to mind as the libretto is written in the ubiquitousness of the witches and this inspired a style where the witches would be elevated beyond the cyclorama (apart from there locale) where they stand to orchestrate their manipulations of the king, chiefs and others. However, choreographers can equally develop other favourable aesthetics that are artistically suitable.