

DANCE DISCOURSE AND SCRIPTS FOR THE STAGE

VOLUME 2



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Dedicated to:

The Librettists,
The Choreographers,
The Dancers,
The Technicians,
The Audiences,
The Critics;
The personnel who make dance happen
and
The Greatest Artist who inspires them all.

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CHAPTER FOUR

IMPACT OF DANCE IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN IN DEMOCRATIC SETTING IN NIGERIA

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and

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Introduction

There is no doubt about the fact that dance, music and electoral campaign are intertwined and indispensable companion in our recent democratic dispensation in Nigeria politics. The didactic, constructive and meaningful dance style, form, sequence and movement have been recognised as non verbal communication and symbolic art in the political parlance which serves as a means of communication, expression, social mobilization, political involvement, political consciousness and participation among the electorates towards orchestrating and achieving change mantra, democratic transition, democratic transformation and revolution. Consequently, the reverence of dance and change in Nigeria democratic society are unbreakable in all spheres of electoral campaign in an inch-prior to election in the country.

Paradoxically, it is no longer news that the power of dance transcends the façade of mere entertaining, educating, informing, celebrating and cultural identity among the electorates rather, it is a political paraphernalia and the mechanism employed by a political calculator in stimulating, arousing, motivating, propagating, sustaining and promoting political solidarity and supports within their political sovereignty. Thus, this validates the aforementioned assertion on the imperativeness of dance in the society. Onyemuchara (2015, p.17) asserts that;

Dance is a symbolic art form that transcends the overall aesthetics of the body to the cultural essence of a people...dance continued to develop beyond mere cultural activity, but that which can satisfy other needs in the society from economic, socio-political, educational, physical, psychological, and religious needs.

In addition, Obongko (2015, p.19) submits that "dance has been known in Nigeria to serve the purpose of communicating and promoting the sovereignty of our nation". From these précis, it is crystal clear that the impact of dance cannot be downplayed in cultural identity, cultural essence, economic growth and political transition in Nigeria and beyond. In a similar development, Iorapuu proclaims that:

Dance is a major activity in every culture. It is present at every social and official event of government and private organizations. Dance is a form of identity. It is very common in Nigeria to see ethnic groups showing their cultural identity through dance at every occasion with secular or religious colouration. Iorapuu (2007, p.38).

Therefore, this paper examines dance as a veritable and powerful tool in achieving unbeaten and high grounded campaign among the electorates in our democratic setting.

What makes up dance

Dance is clearly a medium of communication, in whatever form or type. A dance may be pure, abstract, study, dance drama, dance theatre or social dance. The facts that dance is a special kind of movement cannot be overemphasised, yet, movement of a body comprise a particular dance. Movement is defined as a process of moving, change is position posture. They are basically human behaviour couched in the framework of culture and society. Movement is a rigorous medium for both expression and perception. For dance to achieve its basic functions of educating and entertaining, it must employ the medium of movement which is its only medium of presenting its intended message. Mcfee (1991) affirms that no movement pattern will of itself be uniquely distinctive of dance, therefore dance is indeed 'a special kind of movement', but that its distinctiveness lies in the way we look at it, that dance is 'aestheticized movement'. Mcfee (1992, p.51).

Known fully, dance is aestheticized and informative in the rhythmical concept, movement and sequence. Mcfee reiterates that:

a moment's reflection shows that what makes a particular movement sequence dance rather than, say, gymnastics, cannot be features of the movement; there cannot be any exclusively dance-

typed movements - That is to say, movements that could only appear in dances and never appear anywhere else. (ibid).

In the same vein, he attests further what may be understood as dance is nothing but a dance and the ability to identify a movement sequence as dance, hence, to distinguish dance from other kinds of activity. Therefore, what distinguished dance from other forms of activity ranging from gymnastics, rites, rituals and games involved the context within which the activities are performed, perceived, and opinion and purpose of the dance be it traditional, modern and contemporary dance.

Dance as a Performance

It is no longer news that dance is not just an art, but a performing art in the theatrical phalanx. Therefore, it is overriding to examine the interconnecting rod between dance, music and other para-linguistics arts such as costumes, make-up, acrobatic display, masquerade, drumming, chanting, properties, lighting, among others. However, in the premise of this paper, music 'an auditory art' will be the subject of discourse in relation with its 'visual art' dance. Ufford in his own summation on the twin nature of music and dance asserts that:

Dance is a medium of emotions...this expression of emotion is actualized through rhythmic body movements. This emphasizes the relevance of music in any dance presentation. The fact that dance is performed according to musical beats shows that music comes to mind first before the rhythmic movements of the body. It provides the rhythm to guide direct the design of body movements which is dance. Ufford (2014, p. 80)

This assertion indicates that music and dance are inseparable entity and siamese twins in the performance and performativity irrespective of the forms, styles and pattern. More so, Enekwe in Akinsipe (2014 p. 223) ascribes that:

The Nigerian dance is characterized by a formalized rapport between musicians and dancers. There is active interaction between them. The music does not merely accompany the dancer. Both encounter each other, sometimes, in a dialectical sense.

In a nutshell, Africans are rhythmic and dance oriented, and dance has been acknowledged as an integral part of their life, hence, event, festival, ritual, rite or masquerade cannot claim of attaining serious standing without dance in African sociology, vice versa in recent democratic dispensation in Nigeria.

Review of dance and dancing styles in Nigerian democracy

Nevertheless, ranging from indigEkaitieus, modern to the contemporary dance, musicians and musical accompaniment has become the piper that calls the tune of dance style and movement. Dance scholars like Ufford and Olalusi pontificate that:

In some cases, one may not be inclined to dance but music creates the mood and motivates a listener to dance. The pulsating rhythm of the music sets fire to one's imagination and so, without any conscious effort, one's spirit gets been lifted, the feet begin to tap, the head nods to the beats of the sound, a smile comes to the face, little by little, enjoyment of the music sets in, and the problem and frustrations of the day are momentarily forgotten as one melts into the sound, becoming one with the music and dance. This is the magical potential of music. Ufford (2014, p. 80).

In his own assertion, Olalusi (2015, p. 8) opines that:

Practice of dance in contemporary Nigeria is gradually being dictated by musicians and their form/style of music. Similarly, these musicians have become dancers and have consequently used dance as part of the bargaining tools to sell their video.

These submissions lie on the significance and interdependence of dance and music in contemporary society. Inarguably, involvement of contemporary and indigEkaitieus music/dance styles, forms, movements and sequence has been proved as unbroken cord in the recent trends of our democratic transition and revolutionanization in Nigeria, and this is noticeable in all the electoral campaign in an inch-prior general election.

Omatsola (2015, p.101) in discussing the role of dance in advertising opines that "professional choreographers, musicians, composers and arrangers are hired to produce music and choreograph dances for the mass media... to

arrest the interest of the consumer of an advertised product...” similarly, musicians and choreographers are employed to compose music and dance movements and styles in praise of the contestant and during electoral campaigns and good dancers are hired to dance in moving vehicles which are usually pick up, frontiers, trailers, hilux and so on. These dancers choreograph beautiful contemporary modern and traditional movement/dance styles to the music and dance about the contestant anytime he is on a political campaign tour.

The prominence among the contemporary dance styles and movements in electoral campaign irrespective of the geo-political zones in Nigeria are: Sekem dance movement by Galaxy, Skelewu dance movement by Davido, Shoki dance movement by Lil Kesh, Kukere dance movement by Iyanya, Lagos Boys dance movement by Olamide, Open and Close dance movement by Simi, Shakiti Bobo dance movement by Olamide, Alingo dance movement by P-square, Alanta dance movement by Artquake, Galala by Daddy Shoki, Konko Below by Lagbaja, Makossa dance movement by Awilo Logoumba, Kerewa dance movement by Zule Zu, Kokoma dance movement by Reekado, Duro dance movement by Techno, Azonto dance movement by Fuse and Tiffany, Yahooze dance movement by Olu Maintain, Kolo mental dance movement by Faze, Bojom dance movement by Emekus, Okamfor dance movement by Iyanya to mention only a few.

More so, dance cut across all spheres of cultures locally and international, no histories, stories, tales, festivals, ceremonies, rites or religious can be completed without its connectedness. According to Alan cited in Adeoti (2014) proclaims that “dance is culture and culture is dance”. Hence, since dance permeates every aspect of life, then, the significance of indigEkaitieus dance cannot be underscore in the electoral campaign as a launch-pad of change in our democratic society. Traditional dance styles and movements such as ekpe dance of the efik, the egwugwu of the igbo, the Akume, Ajigbee and Ijov-Mbaku among Tiv and the Egungun among the Yoruba (TsEkaitiengu in Adeoti 2014) contributes immensely to breathtaking campaigns in all our geo-political zones; south-west, south-south, and south east, north-west, north-central and north-east.

Impacts of dance on electoral campaign

Dance clearly is functional in all aspects of human existence. Iyue (2009, p.119) asserts that:

Dance serves as a mode of communication with the gods as well as recording and transmitting historical happenings; it offers entertainment while serving as a forum for formal education... historical events, socio-cultural, political and economy issues usually provide abundant materials for creative dancing...

The significance of dance to the electoral process in the Nigerian setting therefore cannot be overemphasized. Highlighted below are some of the impacts:

Propagation of intention/manifesto

One of the major impacts of dance to the electoral process in the Nigerian democratic setting is that, it demonstrates the visions, and mission of the aspirant to the masses who form the greater part of the electorates. Supporters of the aspirant adorned in special costumes which usually carry a portrait of the choice candidate, select and arrange special movements to specially composed music that are symbolic and significant to the candidates intention. The melody of the music and the aesthetic appeal of the movement also help to win people to vote for that particular candidate. A good example of such is the political jingle (Ambo- Gbabe) that was produced by some musicians (Banky W, M I, Olamide, Flavor, Yemi Alade, Ice Prince and Dammy Krane) for lagos state governorship aspirant Ambode (who is now the governor of lagos state) which was a positive factor in his final victory.

Display of cultural identity

Another medium through which dance impact positively on the electoral process is that, it is an avenue for display of various cultures. During national conventions of political parties also the different zones and tribes in Nigeria assemble and rally round their candidates doing dances that are peculiar to their cultures. This is also found in the villages where supporters from different villages assemble (could be at the town hall or market square) on a fix date to campaign for their candidate, at such occasions the different groups are usually found singing, drumming and dancing. And the performances are peculiar to their localities.

Documentation purposes

The songs and movement/dance styles that are produced during the electoral campaigns are usually recorded through audio visual means and become

very useful for researchers and also in the following electoral session they could be rearranged to suit the period, time and essence of that season. Dance provides us with evidence about the past that reaches up to the present; on the other hand it is a vivid part of the present which links us to the past. Hagher (1993, p.71) shares thus:

We should not forget though that the tracking of dance in various socio-political moments in a specific place and its relation with the various socio political events, always according to history proves the validity of a dance as historical fact that it is a bearer of life of a previous loss.

The above quotation explains the relationship that dance create between the past and the present.

Provision of employment

The impact of dance to the electoral process is also present through the fact that, it provides temporal and permanent job for the masses. As earlier mentioned, during the electoral campaigns, musicians and choreographers are employed to compose as well as arrange movement that suit the messages of the composed songs and dancers are usually employed to dance to this music. Most often these dancers are paid on a daily basis or any time they go on campaign tour. Some of these dancers end up being permanently employed should the candidate emerge victorious.

Conclusion

In conclusion, dance plays a central role in the practice and transmission of African cultures ranging from social to religious context. Ugolo in Adeiza (2015, p.53) asserts that: "since time immemorial, man has used dance for spiritual, physical, social, economic and political development. It has served the needs of man especially in his attempt to reach equilibrium in survival strategy". Dance has been positioned as the umbilical cord among dance-culture, dance-religious, dance-electoral campaign, dance-development, dance-daily routes, and dance-ailments, in fact dance in every aspects of human existence. On this notion we can draw our conclusion that without dance, there can be no life, and dance is the bedrock that upholds the pillar of electoral campaign in our democratic setting.

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