

UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN



THE TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIXTH (276TH) INAUGURAL LECTURE

“IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT THEATRE AND ITS REALITIES ON THE STAGE AND THE ENVIRONMENTS IN NIGERIA”

By

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**DEPARTMENT OF PERFORMING AND FILM ARTS,
FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA**

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The Vice-Chancellor

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My Lord Spiritual and Temporal,
Distinguished Students of the Department of Performing and
Film Arts,
Students of the University of Ilorin,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Preamble

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, this is a great day, an important day to fulfill a significant dictate of the academic world, the tradition of the inaugural lecture. Inaugural lecture provides an opportunity for professors to introduce their work, and themselves, to the University community. Therefore, lectures from our professors focus on past, present and - at times – future contributions to the field, and personal reflections and memories.

After my secondary school education at Ejigbo Baptist High School in the present day Osun State, I had a little stint as a Pupil Teacher and thereafter secured a job as a News Assistance Trainee with Radio Nigeria, Ibadan. This marked the commencement of my exposure to theatre as a profession when I was introduced to the stage and the television under the producer

“uncle” Lekan Ladele in 1975. This exposure informed my decision to go for a Certificate Programme in Speech, Acting and Movement at the University of Ibadan in 1976. I later gained admission to study Theatre Arts at the University of Jos in 1976 and graduated with a B.A. Honours, Second Class Upper Division in 1980. The involvement in the field of performance further received upliftment, when I had my National Service with the Kano State Council for Arts and Culture and secured appointment as a Cultural Officer II in 1982 with the Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture. I had worked as a Teacher in a secondary school in Oluponna, Iwo for a couple of months from 1981. I rose to become a Cultural Officer I, before getting employed at the University of Ilorin as an Assistant Lecturer in 1998 with an M.A. from the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan in 1984. The academic journey culminated in the award of a Ph.D. of the University in 2000.

The academic journey was interspersed with the practical professional participation in the chosen field of theatre, some of which are; participation in the Schools’ theatre project of the Arts Council in Oyo State, and participation in the international tour of the National Troupe of Nigeria to London for the Commonwealth Arts Festival in 1984. I directed two consecutive editions of the convocation productions, *Ode for A New Dawn* (an Opera) by Bode Omojola and *Ozidi* by J.P. Clark at the University of Ilorin in 1988 and 1989 respectively. I also served as assistant director for *The Rally* (a convocation play) written and directed by Akanji Nasiru and directed *Kurunmi* by Ola Rotimi for WAUG 2010 held in Ilorin. I have been teaching courses in theory and practice of theatre at both graduate and undergraduate levels, and participated in some television and stage productions in various capacities in this university and outside, and I was opportune to spend my first and only sabbatical year at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua in Bayelsa State as the pioneer Head Department of Theatre Arts in the 2018/2019 academic session.

The journey so far has culminated in successful supervision of many M.A. dissertations, and Ph.D. theses, between 2014 and now, in addition to the myriad of B.A. long essays/projects from 1988. I became a Senior Lecturer in 2014 after being a Lecturer I in 1998 and earning a Ph.D. degree in year 2000. A lot of waters passed under the bridge during these long years and I cannot but sing praises unto the Lord for His mercies. I feel highly honoured to give this inaugural lecture today. It is the 276th in the annals of this University and the seventh in the Department but the first in the area of Theatre Management.

The six inaugural lectures presented in this Department are by Late Professors (Mrs.) Zulu Sofola (Dramatic Theory and Criticism), and Ayobami Olubunmi Akinwale (Sociology of Drama and Theatre); Professor Isaac Akanji Nasiru (Dramatic Theory and Criticism), Professor AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye (Play Directing), Professor Solomon Oziakpono Ikibe (Musicology) and Professor Jeleel Olanikanmi Ojuade (Dance). Today's lecture is the seventh in the Series, and "7" is an important number of spiritual significances in most religions, it is often considered to be a lucky number often associated with introspection, inner wisdom, and a quest for truth. In Pythagorean numerology, Number 7 means spirituality, it symbolises completion or perfection. The idea of the theatre is only made complete by the art of its management and administration, as a result, art management brings about completion in the coordinating of all the various elements of the arts of performance in all environments.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Late Professor Joel Adeyinka Adedeji, was the first African to give an inaugural lecture in the thespian Arts. He examined the topic; *The Theatre in an African University: Appearance and Reality*, in 1978 in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan. Since that presentation, at a period when there were only six Theatre Departments in the entire country, the theatre in various nomenclatures has increased phenomenally in both public and private universities

and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria. But the names of many have now been changed to improve appeal, engageability and employability for the course namely; Theatre and Media Arts, Performing and Film Arts- a development that has led to an explosion in students' enrolment for the course. The modification is not peculiar to Theatre as courses across faculties have had to modify their names to improve appeal and demand by potential students.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, this inaugural lecture is an opportunity for the "chair" to profess his knowledge before this diverse and erudite assembly, on a topic whose matter and manner are, of necessity, not restricted to the Ivory Tower. The ideas of inaugural lectures as conceived in British Universities would normally be delivered over tea or coffee at the faculty club. In Nigeria today, an inaugural lecture has become an "Iwuye" ceremony.

Introduction

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, this inaugural lecture titled: **Imagine a World Without Theatre and its Realities on the Stage and the Environments in Nigeria**, is presented in the University of Ilorin style- a universal style. A saying that "an artless society is a heartless society" (Goethe cited in **Oyewo**, 2008, p.2) highlights the significance of the arts, including theatre, in bringing emotional depth, empathy, and humanity to a society. Without art, a society risks becoming soulless and disconnected. We cannot fathom a world without theatre, because, theatre has the power to educate, entertain, and inspire, and its absence would be deeply felt. Theatre Arts bring people together, spark important conversations, and provide a platform for self-expression. Without them, our world would be dull, less empathetic, and less connected. In a Nigeria without theatre, Nigeria would lose a vital part of its cultural identity and creative expression. A world without theatre would indeed have a profound impact on Nigeria's cultural landscape; loss of cultural heritage because

Theatre plays a significant role in preserving and promoting culture, tradition, and history. It will lead to reduced creative expression because it provides a platform for artists to express themselves, showcase their talents, and it will negatively impact on Nigeria's economy. A world without Theatre will also have impact on education because it is an essential tool for education; promoting critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence. Theatre often serves as a platform for social commentary, activism, and advocacy, and these would be severely diminished without it. However, according to Kaplin quoted in Hampton (2008, p 57), "the arts enrich, transform and even save lives ... the arts are essential to life but in a different level of reality from food and air. One can live without the arts; one hardly does." An age long recognition of the Theatre Manager "as someone who is knowledgeable in the arts with which he is concerned... a continuing student of the arts" (Conte, 2007, p.7) makes the field of theatre management relevant to all the areas of specialisation in the theatre.

This is evident by the spread of the contributions of this lecturer to cover virtually all the areas of specialisation in the theatre; dance, drama, theatre, music and the media as well as the new media. This does not make him a dilettante, nor does it take him out of arts management to general management. The field of theatre recognises the universality of management but identifies two schools of thought and approaches in the training of a Theatre Manager; the creative and the bureaucratic schools of training. The creative school presupposes that a theatre person completes his training in the arts of the theatre with specialisation in all or any of dance, drama, music, technical theatre, acting, directing, and stage management and thereafter specialises in theatre management at a higher or professional level. The bureaucratic school is the opposite of this, whereby trained managers then go for training in the field of theatre to familiarise with the chosen arts they wish to manage. The theatre profession shows preference for the creative school because of its peculiarity and nature.

Conceptual Clarifications

Vice-Chancellor Sir, it is imperative at this juncture to clarify some terms and concepts to bring them into proper perspective in this lecture viz: The Stage, Environments, Arts/Cultural Management, Arts Administration, and Reality. I begin by saying that theatre and environment offer a wide field involving all of us as audience, performer, performance and the manager for the performance, government institutions and private corporate bodies.

The Stage: refers to both the performance venue and the entire theatre profession, hence the Nigerian stage transcends the performance space and includes the various theatre forms across the physical, media of communication (film and television media) and the virtual environments. It refers to the totality of theatre/performance that exist in theory and practice in Nigeria. Specifically, it refers to professional practice of theatre and the content of the diverse forms of contemporary theatre practice both outside and within the educational institutions in Nigeria. It refers to an academic discipline and a profession, encapsulating the literary, non- literary, traditional performances, festivals as well as the contemporary ones. The Nigerian stage therefore connotes the performance venue/ media, the performances and the play/performance making process as theatre.

Environments: The environments of the theatre in Nigeria encompass various dimensions that impact the overall experience of theatre practitioners and audiences consisting of the secular, spiritual, virtual, psychological, and physical environments. The Secular Environment consist of cultural context, social commentary, economic factors and government support as, while the Spiritual Environment refers to the intangible, non-physical aspects that impact the arts, cultural management, and arts administration. This environment consists of: traditional beliefs, mythology and folklore, and religious influences. The Psychological Environment is another crucial space for the existence of theatre in Nigeria as it provides platforms for emotional expression, catharsis, empathy and understanding.

Physical Environment is the last of all these environments but obviously the most noticeable and pervasive which often also create the background for the other environments; theatre infrastructure, performance spaces and technical resources. The impact of technology on the organisation, including digital marketing, online ticketing, and social media are also germane to the development and management of the theatre in Nigeria. Understanding these environments are essential for appreciating the complexities and nuances of the theatre and its management in Nigeria.

Arts Management: Arts Management is inextricably linked with Cultural Management, and Arts Administration. According to Brkic (2022, p.5),

Arts management is not only about management; it is primarily about the arts. A Janus “syndrome” of looking both ways should be followed, but the view toward managerial and economic aspects of the field is something arts managers have in common with general manager, while the view toward the artistic, the aesthetic, and the social is the main factor that differentiates arts management from the field of general management.

Ebewo and Sirayi (2009, p.285) quoting Mitchel and Fisher (1992, p.27) state that arts management has its origin in arts organisations (museums, galleries, theaters, orchestras) and originally referred to specific tasks such as fundraising, productions and public relations. In contemporary times, the term has been used in a broader sense to refer to the task of running cultural institutions and arts organisations.

Cultural Management on another hand is the management of cultural institutions, heritage sites, and cultural festivals, involves preserving and promoting cultural heritage, traditions, and values, emphasises community engagement, cultural exchange, and social impact, and encompasses areas like cultural policy development, heritage management, and community outreach.

Arts Administration: Arts Administration concentrates on the operational and administrative aspects of managing artistic organisations and programmes, engages in managing the day-to-day operations, finances, and personnel of arts organisations. It accentuates efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in arts management, and incorporates areas like budgeting, grant writing, human resources, and facilities management. In summary, Arts Management focuses on artistic and strategic aspects, Cultural Management focuses on cultural heritage and preservation, and Arts Administration focuses on operational and administrative aspects. The scope of Arts Management is broader including artistic programming and community engagement, while Cultural Management focuses on cultural institutions and heritage sites, and Arts Administration on internal operations. In effect, Arts Management requires strong creative, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills. Cultural Management requires strong cultural knowledge, community engagement, and preservation skills, while Arts Administration requires strong organisational, financial, and administrative skills.

Reality: According to Soyinka (2020, p.166) refers to the transformation of the environment, the arts and the environment of the arts. The real world is a combination of primary and secondary realities in which primary reality (unseen) exists in a world totally preoccupied with secondary reality (temporal). *The Holy Bible* attests to this in 2 Cor 4: 18; that "...the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Plato's Theory of Forms also known as the Theory of Ideas, in alignment with the scripture, posits that there are two realms of reality, a physical world we experience through our senses, which is imperfect and constantly changing and the world of forms, (A realm of abstract, eternal, and perfect entities that underlie the imperfect, changing world we experience). According to Janaway, (2005, p.5), Plato's the *World of Forms* is the true reality, while the *World of Sensible Things* is only an imperfect reflection or shadow of this reality. Plato calls this

spiritual realm the *Realm of Forms*. Plato's *Theory of Forms* asserts that the physical realm is only a shadow, or image, of the true reality of the *Realm of Forms*.

The Foundation of my Scholarship in the Theatre: From Rural Theatre Outreach to Cultural Diplomacy

After writing a project on *A survey of NTA Jos Audience in Plateau State* in 1980 for the B.A. Degree of the University of Jos, I proceeded for a Master's Degree in the University of Ibadan and graduated in 1984 with a dissertation titled *Theatre Outreach: Toward Social Development of Rural Areas in Oyo State (A Case Study of Awe)*. This focus on the rural community marked my incursion into theatre scholarship. The dissertation recognised the need to develop a set of strategies aimed at accelerating the availability and social functions of theatre in rural communities. The study observed that; "It is not merely that the benefits of theatre, outreach and growth have been inequitably distributed as they have, but the rural community themselves have been unable to contribute consciously to that growth within their communities in recent times" (Oyesoro, 1984, p.i).

The study attempted to proffer a solution in the accessibility of theatre to the rural community, and in effect utilising their vast but yet untapped theatrical resources, so that their social development rise as those of urban centres. It concludes that humanity needs to look back and assess the past adopting those beneficial and correcting the mistakes for a better future. The dissertation ends on a note of suggestion for the establishment of communal repertory theatre funded jointly by the community, individual, companies but with grants from government.

From this rural focus, my scholarship moved to the international arena with a Ph.D. thesis titled; "The Theatre in the Development and Management of Cultural Diplomacy in Nigeria." As a study in Theatre Management, it reveals that theatrical productions cannot be left out in Nigeria's cultural diplomacy. "This is because theatre exhibits Nigeria's cultural wealth and could make subtle but profound statements on the issue of foreign policy and in international relations" (Oyesoro, 2000, iv). The thesis therefore focuses on the study of the

administration, management and artistic analysis, evaluation and appraisal of the cultural agreements and theatre performances. The evaluation of two government cultural agencies responsible for and involved in cultural diplomacy in one way or the other. Two different models adopted from Veal (1994, pp.60-62) are employed to evaluate the Federal Department of Culture and the National Troupe of Nigeria. Below are the models; Mission-Goals Objectives and Objectives and Goals employed in the evaluation (**Oyesoro**, 2000, pp. 249-251).

Table 1: Mission-Goals-Objectives of the Federal Department of Culture and the National Troupe of Nigeria

	Federal Department of Culture	National Troupe of Nigeria
Missions	To be responsible for the administration of cultural policy including copyright and legal matters	To encourage creativity in order to achieve excellence in the Performing Arts
Goals	To encourage cultural participation. To maximise the use of culture in cultural diplomacy. To encourage artistic creativity.	To stage productions and workshops locally. To hold productions for international performances in other countries
Objectives	Formulation and implementation of cultural policies. Planning and execution of cultural and protocol agreement with friendly countries. Advising the Federal Government on matters relating to Arts and Culture. Planning, execution and coordination of cultural activities in Nigeria.	To encourage the discovery and development of talents in the Performing Arts. To achieve high artistic productions specifically designed for national and international tours. Ensure that its productions are geared towards national aspirations. To encourage the development of children theatre. To ensure the preservation of the repertoire of the troupe. Generate funds for government.

While the above Table 1 shows that there is a mission - goal-objective hierarchy, the differing values and philosophies of each organisation would expectedly lead to differing mission or goal statements. Table 2 below summarises the main positions of the agencies, offering suggestions as to what effect such might have on the mission/goals of the public agencies.

Table 2: Objectives and Goals of Federal Department of Culture and National Troupe of Nigeria

Source	Objectives and Goals Federal Department of Culture	Objectives and Goals National Troupe of Nigeria
Policies: Foreign Policy Cultural Policy Cultural Agreement	Aligning cultural policy to foreign policy. Formulation and implementation of cultural policy for Nigeria. Planning and formulation of cultural and protocol agreements.	Organising international performances. Implementation of Performing arts aspect of policy. To encourage high artistic productions for international tours
Artistic Values: Arts Performances Domestic	Advising the Federal Government on matters relating to Arts and Culture. Planning cultural agreements. Coordination of cultural activities in Nigeria.	Specifically concerned with the performing arts. To encourage the discovery of talents in the performing arts. Encourage creativity in the performing arts geared towards national aspiration.

International	Planning and executing in all arts.	Develop Children's Theatre Performance for international tours. Arts.
Economic Factors	Public service for featherbedding. To encourage public sector participation.	To generate funds for government featherbedding. To encourage creativity in Performing Arts.
Tradition	To encourage the arts generally especially traditional arts and culture	To ensure the preservation of the repertoire of the troupe.

Physical cultural diplomacy has a lot of advantages: face-to-face interactions foster deeper emotional connections and understanding, physical cultural events offer authentic, immersive experiences that cannot be replicated online. Other benefits are body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice convey nuances that can get lost in digital communication, enables the exchange of tangible artifacts, such as art, music, and traditional crafts and encourage community participation, promoting social cohesion and cultural exchange. They also engage multiple senses, creating a richer, more memorable experience, help build trust and credibility, essential for successful cultural diplomacy, provides context, helping participants understand cultural practices within their specific social and historical contexts. Lastly, they can lead to long-term relationships and collaborations, fostering sustained cultural exchange while allowing for immediate feedback, spontaneous interactions, and dynamic adaptations.

Ododo (2022) reiterated that cultural diplomacy has assumed a central position in the relationship between and amongst States in promoting understanding and cooperation. This position has been further democratised by innovation in technology which necessitates that "State actors and channels

must be strategically organised to enhance their role as leaders in the cultural diplomacy agenda in order to project the “National” image of the country and not just the nuances that appeal to the ingenuities and imaginations of independent creators” (Ododo, 2022, p.99). He articulates the role of the National Theatre and the National Troupe as the mobile tool taking Nigerian cultural expressions within and outside the country and also bringing back home elements from other countries. The paper concludes that the agencies cannot be left without a clear framework of operation because of their central position in internal and external cultural administration in Nigeria.

When one looks at the primary features of a live theatrical performance, one says that the limitedness of the performance to a particular time and space is the selling point of that performance. Being one of the oldest art forms, theatre has a unique relationship with its audience, being that they live and experience its many offerings in a particular place and at a particular time. In 2020, however, the COVID-19 pandemic, like it did to many industries, brought the theatre industry to a standstill. This is not the first time the existentiality of theatre will be threatened. When one observes the effects of different technological changes that theatre has experienced, and how these changes continue to shape consumers’ behaviour, one will understand why theatre continues to survive. It has been observed that at every time the existentiality of theatre has been threatened, the theatre has complained, re-strategised and emerged stronger. Thus, new experimentation by arts centres and personnel during the pandemic highlights the need for theatrical availability in the virtual space.

Recent development in the Internet and virtual space has significantly modified the direction of the theatre in cultural diplomacy, which in the digital era, involves using technology to promote cultural exchange, understanding, and cooperation between nations. Theatre in cultural diplomacy through virtual space offers a unique opportunity for global cultural exchange, collaboration, and understanding. Well-made films for example, offer foreigners deep understanding of the country of interest,

immersing them in the culture, language, sights, sounds of a nation, when a field trip is not feasible. However, digital cultural diplomacy can exhibit some weaknesses and that is the more reason why the live and virtual theatre can only be complimentary but not mutually exclusive in both local cultural policy environment and in cultural diplomacy.

A sizeable number of my scholarly contributions and presentations over the years addressed the issue of theatre in cultural diplomacy. Some of the works that are thus focused are **Oyewo** (2004)'s *Appraisal of Nigeria's Cultural Agreements and the Theatre* that adopt the performance evaluation method in the assessment of basic cultural agreements with foreign countries, programmes of cultural exchange and selected theatre productions used in Nigeria's cultural diplomacy. The paper concludes that:

since theatre has a very charismatic and significant presence abroad, there is the need for proper organisation through theatre management which can facilitate the development of cultural diplomacy in Nigeria through evaluation of cultural programmes, which in turn will translate to greater international visibility for the nation. (**Oyewo**, 2004, p.40).

Oyesoro's (1999) *Cultural Fusion or Unity in Diversity: The Theatre in Nigeria's Cultural Diplomacy* attempts to advance the discussion on the manifestation of theatre in cultural diplomacy. The paper concludes that the nation should not attempt to fuse the culture of the country into one as was attempted in some stage performances in Nigeria's cultural diplomacy programmes. Rather, the conclusion is that unity in diversity in the various cultures will be a better option in the use of theatre in Nigeria's cultural diplomacy. Other works in the field of cultural diplomacy are **Oyewo's** (2006b), *Ibsen and Osofisan and the Experimental: Links and Connections in the Nigerian/Norwegian Theatre* and **Oyewo's** (2007c) *Throwing Stones into the Market: The Theatre and Cultural Diplomacy in Nigeria*. In both papers, selected plays of Osofisan were used in interrogating the aspects of theatre in cultural diplomacy in

Nigeria. The sustained interest in Ibsen and Osofisan's drama in Nigeria represent a cultural renaissance which could be a subtler means of boosting relations across national frontiers. This forms the focus of **Oyewo's** (2006b) *Ibsen and Osofisan and the Experimental: Links and Connections in the Nigerian/Norwegian Theatre*. While Ibsen has attained the status of an icon for Norway and even beyond, Osofisan is currently one of the most prolific and the most widely performed playwrights in the Nigerian theatre. This paper examines the ideas that these icons symbolise through their plays and is motivated by the need for nationals of different countries and even governments to utilise the various rich cultural and intellectual heritage and artistic resources to promote friendship among nations. Two each of Osofisan's and Ibsen's plays were used in the comparative study viz: *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*, *The Midnight Blackout* and, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Master Builder*, respectively. The differences in the plays are more in the aesthetic and cultural devices used in communicating the message rather than in the themes. In conclusion the theatre is one potent means of achieving dialogue and is most suited to help in the search for a more cordial relationship and understanding between Nigeria and Norway.

Using Femi Osofisan's *Twingle Twangle a Twyning Tale*, **Oyewo's** (2007c) paper attempts to address the nature of activities requiring mediation, cultural constraints in estrangement and examines its benefits. It opens with the adventures of a set of twins as an enigmatic recipe to decide the better option between war and peace so as to test the many versions of possible reality.

The twins embark on a journey with two companions; Efundunke and Digbaro, experiencing irreconcilable differences which form their decision to split-up and go their separate ways. Taye and Efundunke head for the forest with a bag of herbs and musical instruments while Kehinde and Digbaro move to the coast with a bag of weapons Taye arrives at Ereko, becomes the leader of the town and marries the Princess as a reward for solving riddle, Kehinde on the other hand destroys the amphibian

monster preying on the coastal community of Etido becomes the king and marries the princess into the bargain. However, Taye's style of leadership attracts a mutiny among his soldiers and has to find out a way to compensate them by declaring war against the buoyant Ereko to allow them loot to buy their loyalty. This reinforces the ideological indoctrination that "for war to satisfy us as human beings, war must become a profitable career, it must be married with greed" (De Derian, 1991, p.76). The stage is thus set for a final confrontation with the odds highly against Taye, who ironically outsmarts Kehinde and his fearsome soldiers through the attitude of combating invasion with folded arms.

The playwright terminates the illusory world of the play at this point, and engages the audience in a debate on whether a man survives best in Ereko or in Etido. Diverse opinions are expressed; that man needs to live in both towns, that Etido is the better town where men live by the power of their muscles. Another opinion identifies with the triumphant Ereko believing that "even without muscles, one can rule the world" (Osofisan, 2002 p.90). The ideological relation between Etido and Ereko is a dialectical relationship where Taye elicits genuine respect but Kehinde terrifies his subjects. However, brutal confrontation is averted by Taye.

Oyewo (2007c) leveraged on two Yoruba proverbs that emphasise caution in mediating in estrangement in relations among nations. The two proverbs are; "Anyone who urinates in a stream should be wary because some of his own relatives may drink from the polluted water downstream," similarly "when one throws stones into the market, there is the strong possibility that it might hit one's own relative." It attempts to view the Yoruba concept of caution codified in throwing stones into the market as crucial in the enhancement of cultural relations. The philosophy of "Throwing stones" has influenced Nigeria to a considerable extent, and has impacted significantly on different activities requiring mediation both locally and externally. For examples, caution has contributed significantly to the resolution of the "June 12" debacle in Nigeria's political scene.

An aftermath of the "Dikko kidnap" saga was also significantly whittled down by the use of theatre in cultural diplomacy with Britain. The situation of post litigation negotiated settlement over Bakassi Peninsula also illustrates this concept. It is also exercised in Nigeria's joint development arrangement with Sao-Tome and Principe on petroleum and other resources in respect of areas of the economic zone of the two nation states, a unique and historical compromise in resolving a maritime border dispute. This concept of caution inherent in throwing stones into the market has occurred in virtually all facets of life in Nigeria because it has helped to bring about solutions to those seemingly intractable problems.

In a presentation by **Oyewo** (2024) on *Exploring the Links and Connections in Africa Diaspora Theatre towards the Didactic and Pedagogical Understanding of African Culture*, this lecturer reviewed one of the things that can sound the death knell to theatre in the African continent if not addressed. While battling with stereotypes and shibboleth assault from non-Africans, African theatre and culture suffer painfully from lack of understanding by fellow Africans, who are supposed to know better. For example, only seven (7) and eight (8) out of the 30 bilateral and multilateral MoU extant and active at the University of Ilorin and Obafemi Awolowo University, respectively, are with African universities. This amounts to 23% and 25.8% African focus, respectively.

There is, therefore, a strong need to use theatre in exploring links and connections within the African Diaspora, for the preservation of African culture, through a more creative expression, collaboration among African artists and universities and by exposing African students and faculty to African theatre and culture, and lastly for challenging misconceptions about the continent. In order to realise the above, it is recommended to: encourage cultural renaissance and reinvesting of interest in Pan-Africanism, enhance cultural exchange by signing active MoU among theatre departments, organising inter university cultural and theatre competitions. Making African cultural studies compulsory for all categories of students in African universities curricular is very important to make the theatre embody the spirit of unity in diversity within the categories of African diaspora.

Another Reality

One other reality where the theatre has strong potential is the reality of the mentally ill persons addressed in **Oyewo's** (2019b) *Psychometamimesis: Drama and Theatre in the Therapeutic Intervention and Management of Mental Illness*. This paper focuses on the therapeutic potential of drama and theatre in the treatment of aberrant psychological behaviour particularly functional conditions of mental illness or disorder. The assumption is that “psychometamimesis has a strong potential for treating mental illness because the world of the theatre is controlled in its own reaction to disequilibrium created in the universe” (**Oyewo** 2019b, p.7). This process is the appropriation of the play production process. Table 3 below generated by me explains the process and conveys the differences between Michael Etherton's play creation schema and **Oyewo's** “psychometamimesis”.

Table 3: Difference between Etherton Schema and “Psychometamimesis”

Etherton Schema	Oyewo's Psychometamimesis
Situates composition within the social process	Research into the actuality of inmates individually and collectively through their case file
Actuality is life observed for the purpose of artistic interpretation	A theme (first theme) is derived from this initial research (hypotext)
A story develops from this actuality.	Theme (2 nd theme) for the play will then be evolved from both case files and first theme
A scenario divides the story into scenes.	A story will emerge around the second theme out of which a scenario will then be written. Play script will emerge (hypertext).
Rehearsals: theatre style, conventions and language: dramatic composition, the elements of theatrical performance such as	Rehearsals: early period of rehearsals to be carried out within reach of the mentally ill person/s as an informal audience (as teaser) later period of rehearsals should be

costume, props, scenography, lighting design, sound effects and music are also designed for execution at performance	done away from the patient (for surprise element) production elements potpourri of the surreal, symbolic and occasionally the representational e.g natural costume, symbolic props and representational; suggestively realistic/symbolic set, character make up, music direct not incidental
The performance	Performance in slow motion
Play-text emerged	Performance
Follow up to confirm efficacy	Follow-up appraisal to include medical/clinical assessment of conditions of inmates.

Oyewo's (2019b, p.8)

It is observed that the nature of theatre and its aesthetics makes it a useful and potent instrument of mass mobilisation, education as well as the treatment of aberrant psychology conditions. In fact, in theatre, we find the same forces of cohesion, division and creativity as may be observed in the world of the mentally ill persons. However, the world of the theatre is controlled in its reaction to the disequilibrium created in the universe (**Oyewo**, 2019b, p.8)

Oyewo (2019a) in a paper titled *Examining the New Role of Arts Administration in Counterterrorism in Nigeria*, opined that the strategies to counter terrorism also requires non-military dynamics such as attitudinal change, discourses and dialogue, which can be propelled by arts administration. The focus of this intervention is on non-state terrorism. Although Arts and its administration has a greater role to play in a new world order plagued by terrorism, the theatre has largely brought about the danger of romanticising terrorism by treating its theme as an aesthetic category in performance and the arts. But structured arts programmes can be organised by arts administration to be effective in cubbing terrorism.

Managing Theatre and the Environments

The issue of the environments has been addressed by ne in some scholarly articles. For example, **Oyewo's** (2019c) *Managing Dance Theatre and the Environments: Texts, Performers and the Audience in Nigeria*, examined dance theatre performance, and the physical and spiritual environments of the performers and audience. The paper focused on the spiritual experience of some performers and audience members during the production of a dance theatre, *Rhythm of Life* by Ijeoma Akunna. It explores the cultural context surrounding human existence by probing into the portrayal and interdependence of gods/goddesses, spirits and human in African traditional milieu, i.e. the interaction of man and spirits in his aesthetic environments. It is a performance exploration of the mores, values which emblematises the cultural terrain of diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The methodology engaged in the paper is the new historicism and cultural analysis. Part of the key principles of this method is that the literary, performance and other cultural texts are connected in complex ways to the time period in which they were created. The paper concludes that though theatre has to do with aesthetic representation of reality, the world represented and encoded to be decoded in performance affect the environment of the dramatists/performer and audience. The cultural renaissance prominent in many contemporary dance librettos/plays leads to some form of atavism, because, the more contemporary plays and performances attempt to demystify and deconstruct the gods/goddesses and the esoteric, the more they unlock them through performance and reinforce the mysticism surrounding the esoteric. A proper understanding of the source material of these contemporary plays/performance is the only way to control the ethereal forces properly, because a lack of understanding will only lead to inadvertent territorial violation that will unlock a power beyond the control of the producer/manager, choreographer, “danceturgist” and dramatist.

This work also reveals, among other things, that the theatre goes a long way in the understanding of reality in

Nigeria. That the environments affect each other, and in the situation of representation that the theatre is, reality can be invoked by touching on the cultural codes which appear dormant but ignitable through stage presentation of the dance librettos and play texts. The production styles engaged in translating the libretto/script into performance determines to a large extent the level of invocatory tendencies that could result and the degree of its impact on the physical-spiritual environments of the audience.

Finally, as long as there are dance librettos and plays addressing revival of interest in past African cultures and civilisation, atavism will continue to emerge in performances of such stories touching on the cultural codes which appear dormant, but ignitable through stage presentation of the libretto/plays. It will continue to invoke the physical and spiritual environments of the performers and the “audience-in a performance/efficacy mode phenomenon” (Schechner, 2013, p.75). The producer/manager, choreographer and Director must properly channel the energy for positive ends. We advocate non-realistic production styles for culture-based stories/plays to prevent detonating the invocatory tendencies inherent in such scripts and the resultant productions and its impact on the physic-spiritual environments of the performers and audience.

Table 4: Comparative Analysis of Two Productions of *Rhythm of Life*, by Ijeoma Akunna

Items	1999 Production	2012 Production
Themes:	Transient nature of life	Transient nature of life
Genre	Satire: life satirised as Emeka passes through it.	Melodrama: melodrama ends in death of one or more people at the end.
Concept	Complexity	Choice
Interpretation	Man’s struggle through life	Man as a victim of his own choices.
Choreographic technique and styles	Modern and traditional dance approaches. Symbolic and representational.	Simplified realism with elements of surrealism

Setting: Technical	Igbo setting	Igbo setting
Production: set, lighting	White predominant colour with taints of blue. General flood lighting as a result of power outage. Performance ran on Generator with limited capacity to carry effects lanterns.	Three locales: Chike's house, Adah's house, Supernatural world. Cyclorama painted sky blue. Low current also affected use of lighting effectively, but coloured gels were used.
sound effects and music, properties } costume }	Spirit voice effects according to concepts, mood, images and characters.	Riverine, forest animal effects bright colours spirit husband in white and purple.
Props: Make-up	No totem for spirit husband. Spirit husband represented as "Esu" and not as Emeka's look alike.	Totem for spirit husband. Spirit husband-character make-up. Acolytes had long flowing hair like water spirit. Emekas Chi- Emeka's look alike but half human and half spirit.

Oyewo (2018, p.33)

From Table 4, it is deduced that myriad of artistic; choreographic, "danceturgical", dramaturgical, and technical decisions are accountable for the display of potency and efficacy of the seemingly dormant codes in one the two performances. It detonated the invocatory tendencies inherent in the potentially highly ritual libretto, and the resultant productions and its impact on the physic-spiritual environments of the performers and audience.

The spiritual environment also plays a prominent role in another paper **Oyewo** (2000) titled, *Theatre Management in Nigeria: western principles and Nigerian Reality*. The paper explored the limitation of western principles within the social-cultural reality in Nigeria and concludes that some cultural

practices become more potent because of the non-adaptability of some western principles. According to **Oyewo** (2000, p.56), the applicability of western principles to Nigerian reality in the theatre is restricted or limited as a result of variables in Nigeria, which usually qualify as crises situation within the canons of Western principles.

The paper reveals that two variables; the contextual (artistic and technical aspects of production) and the extra-textual variable (the non-artistic and management aspects of production) are Nigerian realities that limit the applicability of Western principles. It is then concluded that the Nigerian practices are not restricted to non-literary theatre alone but includes the modern theatre as well. It is however unfortunate that, “any attempt to revive an African past was either culturally suspect or simply diabolical” (Soyinka, 2020, p.79).

Poverty and Ethics in the Nigerian Theatre

Poverty is one great challenge that can afflict the theatre to extinction, while poor ethical standard can cause estrangement between theatre and the audience. The relationship between poverty and ethics of various professions, to a large extent, determines the degree of success of entrepreneurs in the profession. Theatre entrepreneurship has to interrogate the relationship between theatre ethics and poverty to evolve a panacea that will remove theatre practitioners from the pangs of poverty without sacrificing its professional, moral, political and ethical standards. The ethical problem of theatre as a profession today appears to be one of aligning ethics to economic success and separating poverty from the issue of ethical uprightness. The true ethical problem for the theatre entrepreneur today is how to get right down to the proper organisation of a successful and profitable theatre without any concern for being understood, without any concern for societal and moral values and professional ethical standards. There are theatre codes of ethics for every theatre worker to adhere to, it includes legal, administration, theatre usage policy, ticketing systems, audition practices, work ethics, professional code, quality and equity requirements.

Gaut (2006, p.432) classifies the relationship between art and ethics as follows: 'Autonomism (or aestheticism) –ethical assessment is irrelevant to aesthetic assessment, Moralism (or ethicism), which holds that works of art are always aesthetically bad in virtue of their ethical flaws and contextualism'. He concludes in favour of ethicism as the leading position in the long debate over art and ethics. Theatre ethics begins from the period of obtaining a property for performance, although theatre is a business, it starts with the investors and the theatre business has to follow the ethics of the profession, which include performance rights to avoid liability first and foremost. In administering the finances of a specific production and theatre organisation, one must take into account the specific aims, style and constraints of that production and the financial implication of the performance venue. Marketing and house management are two other salient aspects in the management and administration of the theatre.

Theatre ethics comprises certain aggregate principles which contribute significantly to improvement in theatre practice standards. Some of the principles are; sensitive relevant themes, good artist/audience relationship, and respect for the producing organisation, among others. It also refers to code of ethics which every theatre worker adheres to as an attitude towards craftsmanship. Nigerian theatre, like all world theatres is a profession that can end poverty in its theme and contents, but it is observable that most of the practitioners live below poverty line. Funding is used broadly to describe monies given to arts and culture from any agency or individual; most often in respect of government funding from national, state or local agencies and private corporate business organisations in terms of their particular remit to fund arts and culture.

Although poverty is not limited to the theatre profession alone, the theatre is strongly affected because of its nature as a highly perishable commodity. Partly responsible for this high poverty rating, but paradoxically necessary for its survival, is the occupational prestige it attracts. Often times the ethics and

emotional commitment of theatre practitioner leads to the romantic, but are at times pronouncements that negate that commitment. The theatre code of ethics and the understanding of its roles and interpreting such roles in a romantic parlance could and has at times contributed to the poverty of the artistes. This could be garnered from theatre codes of ethics which are neither superstitious, nor dogmas, nor forced by law. It is an attitude towards craftsmanship, a respect for associates and a dedication towards the audience. This code outlines a self-discipline which, far from robbing one of individuality, increases personal esteem and dignity through cooperation and common purpose. The result is perfection, which encompasses all that is meant by *Good Theatre*.

On the one hand is the romantic perception of theatre by the practitioners as being about society or about theatre itself, and on the other hand is the issue of commercial reality versus this artistic challenge. This has brought about myriads of questions that have contributed to the poverty of the artistes and the theatre profession namely; artist as philosophers viewing artistic inspiration as a spiritual essence, artist as moral conscience of society and artistes as immoral through the perceived undisciplined and immoral way of life of some which is often times erroneously deduced as the true reflection of the roles played by the artistes.

The Relationship between Poverty, Ethics and Theatre Entrepreneurship in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship is a panacea for poverty in the theatre profession, and that theatre as a form of business in Nigeria has thrived on the pedestal of entrepreneurship is evident in the numerous repertory theatres that were and are mostly owned, coordinated, and managed by a sole proprietor. Notable in the long list is the Ogunde Theatre Company, PEC Repertory Theatre by J. P. Clark, Remi Adedokun's Osogbo City Theatre Troupe (1974–1988), and Ola Rotimi's African Cradle Theatre (ACT). Living Theatre Company in Lagos, Crown Troupe of Africa, Eda Theatre Company, Pacesetters Arts Company, and

Footprints Arts Company are also notable. Hubert Ogunde's theatre was sustained due to his unique managerial style where his troupe was composed of his wives, children, and a few outsiders. Record has it that Ogunde was the troupe's proprietor, executive/artistic director, choreographer, actor, and administrator. Historically, theatre as business in Nigeria started with entrepreneurship intervention of Hubert Ogunde in 1944.

According to Clark (2014, p.176), he was commissioned in that year to produce a play as a fund-raising activity for the Church of the Lord in Lagos after which he floated his own theatre company, thus marking the beginning of the organised commercial theatre in Nigeria. This organisational approach was adapted by many succeeding founders of theatre companies; consequently, the concept of theatre entrepreneurship and management has been in existence before now. The survival rate and viability of Nigerian contemporary theatre offers a very strong reason that success in practice is directly proportional to high moral codes of ethics by the troupes. Ogunde theatre, Duro Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola, Adejumo and so on, are examples of successful theatre entrepreneurs with high ethical standards, contrary to some theatre troupes of the same period that felt they could thrive on immorality by showing semi pornography on stage. This category failed woefully, thus stressing the need for strong moral and professional ethics in the practice of the theatre.

This author watched some of the performances of these two categories in the early 1970s and could discern the difference in their themes. The former Theatre troupe, in an attempt to attract large audience mimicked the Indian movies and ended up with a caricature degenerating into pornography on stage. This immorality no doubt was instrumental to the premature death of such theatre troupes. Another category of theatre entrepreneur is late Jimi Solanke. Jimi Solanke's areas of competence include acting, oratory, singing, instrumentation, arts and craft, popular theatre, theatre producing and technical theatre, among others. These areas of competence have helped his entrepreneurial skills in the art, which has enabled him to be

truthful to the art. Until his death, he worked with his music band, and was passionately developing an Art Centre called 'Centre for Creative Performing Arts Enlightenment' in Ipara-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. This Centre is conceived to also serve as a finishing school for graduates of theatre arts schools and departments. Its training intends to employ the apprenticeship/internship system, focus on enhancement and not essentially theoretical but mainly practical while also utilising the home theatre culture that have been the hallmark of his Jimi Solanke Performing Outfit.

In times past and even in the legitimate theatre, the dramatist's choice for the theatre profession is already considered to be a choice for poverty. It is only his exploits in the practice that can guarantee success. Although Uncle Jimi specialised in acting and was an accomplished actor, he was a multidimensional artist, eclectic and multitalented with multiple competences, a situation that stands him in good stead as a successful theatre entrepreneur. In an interview, Solanke (2016) revealed that actor and comedian, Hafeez Oyetoro benefited from his theatre at the early period of his career and it was instrumental in one way or the other to his success on screen and stage. Hafeez Oyetoro formed his own troupe and was always performing where Uncle Jimi troupe was billed to perform. Solanke stressed that ethics and moral philosophy contribute to entrepreneurial skills and success, because its multidimensional approach entails selling virtually anything that is a direct or ancillary services and products of the theatre and performing arts organisation. According to him (2016), one of the major challenges of the conventional theatre schools which Solanke's outfit tried to address is the issue of their liberal arts nature which makes the curriculum too theoretical oriented. This often brings to the fore the issue of engageability and employability of graduates of these schools and their success as theatre entrepreneurs.

Work Ethics and Morals for Successful Entrepreneurship in the Theatre

Some of the work ethics of Uncle Jimi in an interview (2016) include: taking the job seriously; since the early days of his practice, he was always studying four to five scripts seriously at any given time; walking out of a performance contract, if situation is not honourable; taking training very seriously to keep up with the demands of the play which is always energy and intellect consuming; and having strong belief in the need to get totally absolved when making theatre, and to see theatre as a whole family and life. The Alarinjo tradition strongly informs this view but though he is married to an actress, he did not imbibe the polygamous practice of that tradition.

Humility is also an ethical code he holds dear because the temptation to be arrogant as a result of stardom is very strong in the theatre profession. He considers this to be a moralistic involvement of the Performing Arts profession, a thing that one should be conscious of within the community both in and outside of the theatre. Community and applied theatre have been the strong selling points of Jimi Solanke theatre, a situation that attests to the fact that stage theatre as a profession still has its space and could still be viable as popular theatre. This community theatre component has played a significant role in his survival and buoyancy, because popular theatre still has a space where live theatre will still be presented in and outside the conventional theatres within various communities.

The new media is having great impact on the direction of the theatre and significantly affecting the life/popular theatre. Ngugi wa Thiongo (2016, p.400) observes “the continuous literalisation of the oral and oralisation of the literary” as a phenomenon that blends the various modes of literature and performance to one in the crucible of technology. This blurring of the various spaces, written and spoken, is more predominant in the new media – internet and cyberspace. Uncle Jimi foresaw a synergy between the traditional approach to theatre and technology especially the new media, but believes strongly that the cyberspace will need to create a different format because

popular theatre will still have its own space. The wide acceptance for popular theatre is always guaranteed and relevant as long as there are grassroots communities. However, the aspect of virtual popular theatre is considered to be a potentially viable way to combat poverty in the theatre.

Developing a format to bring the conventional and popular theatre and the cyberspace new media together in a virtual theatre atmosphere needs to take into consideration such components of popular theatre as geography, location, culture, community organising, and emotional intelligence. As a committed artist, it is crucial to balance that commitment with commercial reality, which is the fulcrum of entrepreneurship. One may want to question why he stuck to the stage and was suspect of the movies. However, for as long as he was successful in his multiple competences, we can conclude that one can set one's scope but there is nothing wrong if another theatre entrepreneur merges the theatre, media and cyberspace.

I strongly believe that theatre practice in Nigeria can be successful without foreclosing strong ethical practices. Producers, theatre managers, artistes (actors and directors) have to refine their response ability to the peculiar public nature of the theatre profession. Their responsibility is not to give the society the impression that they are what they are seen to be on stage and screen: immoral, wayward, irresponsible, promiscuous, diabolical and so on. Raji (2018), in an interview, opined that 'the more (audience) get exposed, the more they watch plays, the more they relate with artistes in real life, the more they would begin to realise that there is a difference between the role of the artiste and the artiste as an individual'. It is crucial to note that the entrepreneurial approach set on strong moral principles in the arts and culture offer viable alternatives to the weakness of the pure unethical practices in poverty alleviation. These approaches which possess strong moral concerns are viable creative options to address the issue of poverty in professional theatre practice. A high ethical standard can attract occupational prestige, sustainable job creation and be a panacea for poverty in the theatre profession.

As mentioned earlier, a world without theatre would face the following realities: loss of cultural identity, reduced creative expression, decreased empathy and understanding, limited social commentary and critique, and impoverished emotional intelligence, reduced community engagement and social cohesion. Decreased tourism and economic revenue, and lack of diversity and representation are other resultant realities. These realities would have far-reaching consequences, affecting individuals, communities, and society as a whole. A world without theatre is beyond lack of theatre but shows the demise of good theatre, when the theatre is reduced to the banal, to sheer amusement as a result of television and new media intervention in theatre. Postman (1984, p.163), while writing about the era of television opines that; “what afflicted the people...was not that they were laughing instead of thinking, but that they did not know what they were laughing about and why they had stopped thinking”.

In essence, theatre can die when it is reduced to “vaudeville” (Postman, 1984, p.105) to sheer show business. However, Arts Management can come to the rescue through programmes and programming that will balance commercial reality with artistic challenge and social responsibility. Vice-Chancellor, sir we now go into a discourse of the various past and present realities of the theatre in Nigeria in historical perspective of its cultural significance and management. The past is categorised under the traditional, colonial and the post-colonial.

Past Realities: Traditional

Traditional Nigerian Theatre is total theatre and holistic in outlook combining music, dance, drama, and other art forms. It is improvisational, with a high level of audience participation. Traditional Nigerian theatre frequently employs symbolism and metaphor to convey complex messages. It fosters community bonding and social cohesion, helps preserve Nigerian cultural heritage, traditions, and values, and often serves as a platform for social commentary, addressing issues like justice, morality, and

governance. It is also integral to various rituals and ceremonies, such as initiation rites, harvest festivals, and funerals while sharing stories, myths, and legends, passing down history and cultural knowledge through storytelling. The mask dramaturgy, which exists in all cultures in Nigeria, is a strong example of the dramatic ritual aspect of the traditional Nigerian Theatre.

Ogunbiyi (2014, p.11) classifies the traditional forms into three, "Dramatic ritual, the popular tradition and Yoruba travelling theatre". Egungun Alarinjo, Kwag-Hir Puppet theatre, Ozidi Saga, Ekpe, The Monwu masquerade, the Idoma Alekwu, the Ogbo (Igbo traditional operatic form), the Bori spirit medium performance and the Ufie (Edo traditional Dance Drama) are examples of the dramatic ritual and the popular tradition across Nigeria. The traditional face a lot of challenges, which need to be addressed for the survival of the rich cultures therein. For example, efforts are needed to preserve traditional Nigerian theatre forms and cultural heritage. **Oyewo** (2006) addressed this issue in a paper titled *Primary and Secondary Orality in Nigerian Dance Art: A Study of Continuity and Change in Yoruba Traditional Dances*. According to him (2006, p.2;

The need to document and review oral arts treasures is crucial in order to regulate bastardisation or adulteration of the oral performance of present-day primary sources...The purpose is to assess the level of continuity in the dynamism of Yoruba traditional dance aesthetics and management in Nigeria.

The issue of orality can be explained through the primary and secondary oralities: Primary orality is the primary work of traditional performances that invariably gets transmitted into secondary work through the mediation mentioned below. Secondary orality on the other hand has to do, according to Adelugba (Dasylva, 2003, p.163) "with the recording of the old oral arts on celluloid, in video tapes, on audio tapes and so on". The paper suggests that a continuous comparative relationship between primary and secondary orality is one vital way to achieve a balance in the aspect of continuity and regulate change

in Nigeria's performance culture towards the preservation of her cultural heritage. **Oyewo** (2006, p. 12) further suggests the:

rescue of old film stock, so as to retrieve old secondary documentation of traditional festivals and dances. The retrieved stock could then become a living archive to promote and transmit dances and cultural values by exhibiting them in schools, youth centres and museums of arts and antiquities.

Funding and support, innovation and adaptation, and international collaboration are desirable means of preservation and promotion of the traditional Nigerian theatre. The inherent management structures in the traditional theatre could serve as a template to be employed in the management of modern and contemporary theatre in Nigeria. It is community-based thus providing for Guild System, the patrons system and the collaboration approach made possible by its total and holistic nature.

Colonial Era

During the Colonial Era, Nigerian theatre underwent significant changes due to the impact of colonialism. Traditional Nigerian theatre forms were viewed as "primitive" or "heathen", while the colonialists introduced Western-style theatre, which emphasised scripted plays, proscenium arches, and European-style drama. This led to a decline in traditional Nigerian cultural practices. Production and theatre management practices alien to African theatre such as commercialised theatre, where performances that were ticketed and profit-driven was introduced. Western-style theatre training institutions were established, offering formal education in drama, theatre, and performance studies. The Colonial authorities had built European-style Arts theatre building, which replaced traditional Nigerian performance spaces and also established Drama clubs fashioned after the western performance tradition (Adedeeji, 1980).

Post-Colonial Era

After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the country's theatre scene underwent significant transformations of which the establishment of the school of drama at the University of Ibadan in 1963 was a milestone. Its “curriculum and programme of activity... smirked of a colonial heritage” (Adediji, 1978, p.11). He further observes that:

the situation was complicated by a coterie of academics who had maintained a stance of snobbery and hidebound intellectualism in their defence of a status quo that relegated (theatre) to a mere frill on the fringe which should content itself with keeping up appearances instead of barking for reality.

Other significant developments are; the emergence of the National Theatre Movement, aiming to promote Nigerian culture and identity through theatre, the establishment of the National Theatre, Lagos, and the National Troupe of Nigeria to promote and develop Nigerian theatre. Theatre practitioners began to explore and develop indigenous theatre forms, such as the *Total Theatre* concept. All these combinations of the precolonial, colonial and post-colonial dovetailed neatly into a present reality. Cultural Centres were established in States across the country, cultural festivals like the Abuja Carnival, Festival Calabar, the National Festival of Arts and culture and traditional festivals like the Osun Oshogbo festival, and Argungu Fishing Festival gained prominence during this era (Ogunbiyi, 2014, p.120).

Present Realities

There is a proliferation of theatre programmes in universities in Nigeria with attendant increase in admission as a result of the influence of the Nollywood Film industry. This is a logical development of the impact and novelty of Television in the past starting with the establishment of the first television station in Nigeria- the Western Nigerian Television (WNTV) Station-in Africa in Ibadan in 1959 (Ogunbiyi, 2014, p.456). Drama of the literary and the popular traditions, which were being transmitted have now developed into television series

transmitted on Cable Televisions thus advancing theatre on the media in the present dispensation. Another significant development of the present reality is the proliferation of theatre departments in Nigerian universities and tertiary institutions, presently with about sixty theatre departments in these institutions from the humble beginning of just one in the early 1970s.

Funding, infrastructure, audience development, and technological advancement are some of the challenges facing Nigerian theatres, especially the live theatre. In spite of this however, there is a growing demand for Nigerian theatre, increasing recognition of Nigerian artists, and emerging trends in digital theatre. There is a renewed global interest in the Nigerian live theatre with productions like *Death and the King's Horseman* Directed by Mojisola Kareem for the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, UK 3rd -8th January, 2025. (Platt, 2025). Nigerian theatre festivals like the Lagos Theatre Festival and the Abuja International Theatre and the traditional, trado-contemporary and the contemporary festivals such as Calabar Carnival, and Abuja Carnival and Osun Oshogbo festival among others are attracting larger audiences by the day.

There is also an increasing recognition of Nigerian Artists in the global world such as the *Prince Claus Award*, the *BBC International Radio Playwriting Competition*, and are collaborating with international artists and companies, leading to new and innovative productions. New trends are also emerging in digital theatre through digital platforms enabling Nigerian theatre companies to reach global audiences through online performances, Nigerian theatre companies are experimenting with virtual reality experiences, providing immersive and interactive experiences for audiences. Terra Kulture in Lagos is a trail blazer in this regard Nigerian Governments at various tiers, private companies are providing support for the arts and investing in Nigerian theatre respectively. While Nigerian theatre companies are engaging with local communities, providing opportunities for participation and social impact and also exploring the theatre entrepreneur option in the development of theatre in Nigeria.

Future Realities

The future realities are divided into the realities deduced from the past and also a summation/proposal of my future scholarship about theatre and its management in Nigeria. It includes the future realities of the theatre in the universities as well, the communities, popular tradition and festivals. There is a renaissance in the arts and culture in Nigeria, a resurgence of interest in past civilisation cutting across the art of dance, drama, music, visual arts and crafts. This development suggests the reality of the future of theatre and calls for a true representation of the culture, authenticity and not distortion, so as to avert the danger of its degenerating to atavism or sheer show business. I foresee a future where these distortions and inadvertent misrepresentation in the global community will become the face of African culture through the theatre primarily for pecuniary gains, emphasising commercial reality above social responsibly.

On the other hand, on a more positive note, the theatre of the future will also have a strong section that sets out to genuine renaissance and interestingly it will be a theatre widely acceptable by the local audience. The solution to bridge the dichotomy is to present informed account of the culture in both local and foreign representation in performance. The new media is a strong reality of the future in the theatre, which will not only continue to strengthen the mediation of the film genre in the theatre, it will also continue to enhance the growth of skit-making and other arms of reality theatre. Theatre entrepreneurship will be the trend of the future theatre and serve as a bridge for the forms of theatre emerging in the present reality. Festival theatre and carnivals promise to regain new audiences and hopefully will be the new face of Nigerian Theatre sustainable by the employment of a blend of western management principles with Nigerian reality and indigenous management concepts. This surmises that a world without theatre and its study and practice is unimaginable.

Wellbeing of Theatre Practitioners

A significant component of the theatre profession has suffered neglect and that formed the basis of my research into the health situation of the practitioners themselves. I conducted a survey in collaboration with health professionals on the mental health and the total wellbeing of the artistes. The research is on burnout and stress reactions among selected theatre professionals in Nigeria and the USA (**Oyewo**, 2024, p.3). The field of the Theatre/Performing Arts is one that passes through a lot of stressful situations and experience burnout by its very nature and there have been reported cases of sicknesses and premature deaths related to the theatre among theatre professionals. Stressful conditions are prevalent in such setting as; interpersonal conflict, exposure to religious/potent scripts, noise pollution, fame and loss of privacy, income competition, consulting occultists and spiritualists, sexual urge/promiscuity, exposure to sex temptation, acting-stimulating living without attendant repercussion, and rituals.

Burnout among human service professionals such as medical practitioners, sportsmen and women, teachers, and engineers has been studied in various countries using diverse instruments. The MBI and GHQ12 are two of such instruments which are employed to study the burnout and stress reactions among select professional artistes in Nigeria and in the USA. The paper reports on the outcome of the study among the artistes in Nigeria, and some professional theatre artistes in the USA, especially professionals in the field of museum theatre. The choice of museum theatre is because of the nature of the job and audience engagement. This research assesses the burnout and stress situation among professional theatre artists with the aim of preferring solutions to address the aspects in the theatre. This invariably leads to results as well as specific mode of action and policies such as reduced hours of work, improved remuneration system, health insurance scheme for artists, among others, expected to douse the burnout and manage the stress syndrome effectively among artistes.

Dominic, Afolabi, Musa, and **Oyewo** (2017) carried out research on *Gender Issues and Theatre Performance in Promoting Wellness among Artistes*. This empirical study examines the relationship between gender issues and performance in the theatre with the sole aim of promoting wellness among artistes. The findings revealed that performance in theatre promote health and wellness of artistes. According to Dominic *et al.*, (2017, p.297), “practitioners seem to be in unison in what constitutes the nature and very essence of the theatre and considered theatre as an art form, a practical activity and an intellectual discipline”. Six dimensions of wellness identified by Fahey, Insel and Roth (2001) quoted in Dominic *et al.*, (2017, p.298) are physical, emotional, intellectual and mental, spiritual, interpersonal and social wellness and environmental, or planetary wellness are also applicable to the theatre profession.

Essentially, the use of physical body to present, perform and enact before an audience promotes wellness of artistes, because the use of body movement, gesture, and exercise involves muscular movement, and burning of fat among others. Theatre also uses drama, comedy, dance, and music among others to address issues that pertain to the society. According to Dominic *et al.*, (2017, p.298) health benefits that theatre performance has on artistes are:

the body movements are mainly aerobic exercises thus promoting, effectiveness and efficiency of the cardiovascular system, improves strength and posture, reduce the risk of low-back pain and injury. Since proper stretching / flexibility exercise is needed to maintain joint range of motion and reduce the risk of injury and muscle soreness, helps artistes to gain body balance, and burn excess fat among others.

The following conclusions were drawn from the study that gender equality exists among artistes, theatre performance empowers female artistes, theatre performance promotes health and wellness through body movement and physical exercise performed through rehearsals, dance, and drama but not in music

and that, though theatre performance promotes mental health, but use of performance enhancing drugs have long term effects on artistes. (Dominic, 2017, p.302). This study therefore recommends that female Artistes should be encouraged to “... inculcate the culture of wellness...as a lifetime activity for optimal health.” Use of performance enhancing drugs should be discouraged by both genders to prevent mental disorders.

My Contributions to the Community

Here are some of my contributions to the university system and the community, at large:

Within the University of Ilorin

- Staff Adviser, Performing Arts Students Association (PASA) University of Ilorin - 1991-1995.
- Member, Production Team for WAUG and Artistic Director for *Kunrunmi* by Ola Rotimi for WAUG 2012
- Facilitator, MoU between University of Ilorin and Reinhardt University, USA - 2017.
- Facilitated the donation of books (300 titles), teaching aids, professional violin, 10 pre-owned Lenovo Laptop Computers, 55-inch Smart Television set to the Department by Nigeria Connects, a USA-based organisation – 2018 - date.
- Member, Faculty Ethical Committee - 2020-2023
- Chairman, Unilorin Drama Village Sub-committee of Unilorin Lakeside Resort and Drama Village Committee - 2023-2024.
- Chairman, Production Subcommittee of University Ceremonials Committees - 2023-date.
- Head of Department of Performing and Films Arts - 2022-date.
- Chairman, Faculty Academic Staff Promotion (Junior) - 2023-date.

Other Universities

- Foundation HOD, Department of Theatre Arts, and Member of Senate, University of Africa, Toru-Orua (UAT) on Sabbatical leave) - 2018- 2019.
- Chairman, Faculty Committee of HODs on Curriculum for New “BMAS”, UAT - 2018-2019.
- Chairman, UAT Subcommittee on Entertainment for the First Matriculations Ceremony and Faculty Relocation Committee UAT - 2018-2019.
- Member, UAT Anthem Sub Committee - 2018-2019
- Facilitator, MoU between Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Nigeria and Pennsylvania State University, USA - 2007.
- Visiting Professor, Pennsylvania State University (two-week residency) - March, 2008.
- Visiting Professor, Pennsylvania State University - October, 2008.
- Visiting Lecturer, Departments of Theatre and English, Reinhardt University, Waleska, GA. USA - Aug.-Sept. 2013.

Outside the University Community

- Guest Lecturer, Oyo State Council for Arts and Culture. 2013 World Culture Day - May, 2013.
- Chairman, National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP), Osun State Chapter - 2008-2010.
- Deliverance Minister with Miracle (Fellowship) Centre, Ilorin under the leadership of Pa Dr. Olusola Ajolore and Rev Dr. E. O. Okanla - 2010-date.

Conclusion

Vice-Chancellor, Sir, distinguished invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, a major rationale for theatre in both local, national and in cultural relations is predicated on the firm belief that the theatre can be one means of healing the tragic situations, such as wars, hunger, poverty, confronting the world (Okkim, 1997, p.2). A toxic environment negatively affects the theatre far more than it affects the other aspects of the society. Whereas the theatre also suffers severely in such environments, but from history, its resilience to bounce back stronger is legendary giving the theatre and the practitioners a perceived sense of invincibility, rightly or wrongly. According to Mulcahy (1982), cited in **Oyesoro** (1999, p.53) “great art is sustained and strengthened by great patronage, poor patronage discourages and diminishes arts”.

It is unimaginable for theatre to die, because its death will bring great cataclysm to the society as revealed in this lecture. The theatre must survive, we cannot contemplate the dangers of a Nigeria without theatre not only because it is an essential aspect of life, although not in the same reality as air and water. but man can hardly exist as a human being without it. On the other hand, it serves myriad of functions that make it a necessity for a humane society. The death of the theatre is in the theatre, when it degenerates into sheer entertainment, show business, emphasising the licentious and the banal and obliterating good theatre, then it can mortify. We have seen that theatre in its various form; live theatre and in the media, and come to the conclusion that Arts management holds the panacea for sustenance of theatre in its positive form by organising and producing programmes that will strike a balance between commercial reality and social responsibility taking the various environments of its existence in Nigeria into consideration. Mr. Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests, I will want to end this lecture by making the following recommendations:

Recommendations

- Establishment of a performing company to compliment the academic arm and its tight academic schedule to emerge around three main concepts; of a teaching/academic support unit, research and community services, and revenue yielding theatre.
- Establishment of a finishing school to enhance the employability of theatre graduates as buffer zone between the classroom and the field after graduation.
- Professional Theatre Associations and educational institutions should exhibit proper control in enforcement of moral values beneficial to society that will not sacrifice artistic challenge for share commercial/pecuniary gains.
- Professional Theatre Associations should also serve as regulatory bodies to address the issue of the liberal arts nature of conventional theatre schools to enhance the engageability and employability of theatre arts graduates.
- The aspect of virtual popular theatre is considered to be a potentially viable way to combat poverty in the theatre. Developing a format to bring the conventional and popular theatre and the cyberspace new media together in a virtual theatre atmosphere needs to take into consideration such components of popular theatre as geography, location, culture, community organising, and emotional intelligence.
- Producers, theatre managers, artistes (mangers, actors, and directors) have to refine their response ability to the peculiar public nature of the theatre profession.
- There is need for advocacy for the strong commitment of the practitioners, which could be bound by the signing of a kind of 'professional oath', to work towards a stake holder's forum to foster unity among professional art bodies.

- Digital cultural diplomacy can exhibit some weaknesses and that is the more reason why the live and virtual theatre can only be complimentary but not mutually exclusive in both local cultural policy environment and in cultural diplomacy.
- There is a strong need to use theatre in exploring links and connections within the African Diaspora, for the preservation of African culture, by signing active MoU among theatre departments, organising inter university cultural and theatre competitions, making African cultural studies compulsory for all categories of students in African university curricular to make the theatre embody the spirit of unity in diversity within the categories of African diaspora.
- Relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations should regularly embark on the digitalisation of theatre production resource materials and cultural festivals exhibiting them in schools, youth centres and museums of arts and antiquities to promote and transmit culture.

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I am a product of the Oyesoro/Odewunmi Family of Awe and the Ayansiji Family of Irawo both in Oyo State, I cannot wish for a better source. I also express deep appreciation to Pa Joseph Oyerogba Oyesoro, Brother Tunde Odewunmi, Gbola Oyesoro, Diran Oyesoro and Tunji Adesesan. The head of the Ayansiji Family, Pa Ayanbisi Ayansiji and our amiable Pa (Deacon) Michael Ayanladun Ayansiji, I express grateful appreciation.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, permit me to recant a brief history about myself. My father, Pa Abraham Oyewo Oyesoro died in 1962 leaving five children for our mother Deaconess Janet Ayanyoyin Oyesoro (Oyewo), who passed on in 2019. To the glory of God, all five children are highly educated with three Professors in various universities in Nigeria. What a Mighty God we serve! I appreciate our dear mother who sacrificed for us and we equally celebrate the memory of our dear father. My siblings; Sister Funke Adeyeye (a retired Matron), Dr. Oyebowale Oyewo (Medical Doctor), Prof. Oyeronke Ogunlade (Professor) and Prof. Oyeyinka Oyewo, I highly appreciate you all and your families.

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Vice-Chancellor, Sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the death of the theatre portends ominous signs for mankind and proper management holds the key to its survival and *ipso facto* for a sane society. A world without theatre is unimaginable because it spells doom and disaster for mankind and secondly because the inherent potential of theatre and the intervention of arts management had always come to the rescue to see to the survival and revival of the theatre each time it has been threatened. I have presented the past, present and future realities for a living theatre. Permit me to break this silence by thanking you all for listening.

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Notes

June 12 represents a watershed in the struggle for democracy in Nigeria.

Dikko Kidnap A purported attempt by a military government in Nigeria to kidnap a minister on exile in Britain that brought about estranged relationship between Nigeria and Britain.

Bakassi Peninsula. A controversial territory between Nigeria and Cameroon which has been awarded to Cameroon by the World Court.

Interviews

Jimi Solanke (2016). Ile-Ife

Wumi Raji (2018). Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.