Voyages in Postcolonial African Theatre Practice

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Edited by
Charles Nwadigwe
and Keneth Bamuturaki

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Postcolonial African theatre has often been contextualised from a historical standpoint, with particular reference to the practice of drama and theatre in the post-independence era on the African continent. However, recent discourses on the dynamics and dialectics of the postcolony have argued for the expansion of the postcolonial perspective beyond its historical allusions. In the areas of artistic and knowledge productions, the postcolonial context has also been situated within the dialectical philosophy of power, subjectivity, and dependency foisted on Africa as a consequence of the colonial experience. The impacts of this historical and dialectical materialist reality are evident in the challenges that characterise the practice of drama, theatre, and the creative industries in Africa and the African Diaspora. In a rare approach to critical discourse, this volume inculcates both the historical and dialectical perspectives in the interrogation of the postcolonial African and the African Diaspora theatre practice. This uniqueness places this volume of essays at a vantage and thus brings some freshness to postcolonial studies in the arts, culture, and creative industries. With historical and contemporary analyses, the volume presents a variegated canvas and chiaroscuro portrayals of issues and trends pointing to a fundamental connection between the coloniser and the colonised and its visceral influences on the context and content of African theatre training, theories, practice, and development.

This volume has been made possible through the immeasurable support rendered to the editors by various persons and institutions. First, we sincerely thank our institutions of affiliation for providing the academic platform that propelled us to the international arena. We owe a debt of gratitude to Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria for providing a supportive academic atmosphere for Prof. Charles Nwadigwe to actualise his scholarly and professional potential and mentor younger colleagues across the globe. We are equally grateful to Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda for providing an enabling academic environment for Dr. Keneth Bamuturaki. Both Universities provided funding and or logistic support for the editors to attend the African Theatre Association (AfTA) conferences in the past. At these conferences, Prof. Nwadigwe and Dr. Bamuturaki had rare opportunities to make useful academic contacts and

very encouraging friends across different nationalities and continents. Indeed, it was at the 2019 AfTA conference hosted by the Agostinho Neto University (Universidade Agostinho Neto) Luanda, Angola that both editors met physically for the first time and began the professional conversations, friendship, and collaborations that finally blossomed into co-editing the present volume.

In 2022, Kyambogo University supported Dr. Bamuturaki in convening the African Theatre Association conference at Kyambogo University, Uganda which brought together many scholars from the African continent and the African Diaspora, some of whom are the contributors to this book. The idea to bring together the collection of essays in this book was therefore hatched and concretised at the 2022 Kyambogo University conference of AfTA where the selected papers were first presented before beginning their rigorous editorial journeys. Talking about journeys, it is instructive that the theme of the 2022 AfTA conference was "Voyages in Postcolonial African and African Diaspora Theatre Practice". Since then, the selected papers, contributors, reviewers, editors, and even the publishers have "voyaged" together, back and forth, towards the intended destination, until the ship anchored in its new berth–the birth of this publication.

The editors are immensely grateful to the African Theatre Association, headquartered in London, UK, for providing a supportive platform to enhance the academic and professional growth of African and African Diaspora scholars and practitioners of theatre and the creative industries. We thank the former Presidents of AfTA, Prof. Osita Okagbue and Prof. Kene Igweonu, the incumbent President, Dr. Sola Adeyemi, the Executive Board, and other members of AfTA as well as senior colleagues for their assistance and encouragement while the book project lasted. We are eternally grateful to the many scholars who accepted to review the papers despite their tight schedules. Apart from putting up with the editors' continual prodding and friendly "harassment", they also offered priceless suggestions to the contributors.

Furthermore, we acknowledge the management of Kyambogo University, particularly members of staff of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Vice Chancellor's office that supported the hosting of the 2022 AfTA conference successfully. The hospitality of the hosts is quite appreciated and even the souvenirs speak for themselves. Special thanks go to the then Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Professor Elizabeth Kyazike for being supportive. The editors wish to also acknowledge the professional

colleagues of Dr. Bamuturaki especially members of the Local Organising Committee (LOC) of the 2022 AfTA conference in Kyambogo University. Their selfless efforts helped to sow the seed that germinated into this book project.

The editors equally wish to acknowledge the painstaking efforts of the contributors to this collection for accepting to be part of the project and working tirelessly to meet editorial demands amid tight deadlines. Even as some were quite tardy in turning in their papers and corrections, they did it with infectious camaraderie and effusive gratitude for the editors' altruism. Finally, we are forever grateful to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for giving us this opportunity, by believing in our project and the editors and therefore accepted to publish the book despite our peculiar operational challenges. We thank Adam Rummens, Amanda Millar, Sophie Edminson, Mhairi Nicol and their teams at the Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their constant encouragement and gentle guidance during the project. Also, the editors cannot forget the uncommon understanding and compassionate disposition exhibited by our spouses and families who endured untold inconveniences while we worked on the book project. Thank you all.

Charles E. Nwadigwe
Keneth Bamuturaki

POSTCOLONIAL AFRICAN THEATRE AND VOYAGES OF PRACTICE: AN INTRODUCTION

CHARLES NWADIGWE
& KENETH BAMUTURAKI

The late colonial and early post-independence periods marked an epoch of important progress in African theatre in various spheres of professional practice –playwriting, directing, scenography, and performance. Indeed, the era witnessed the emergence and rise of vanguards that raised the banner of African theatre practice to considerable heights. One factor that clearly defined the work of theatre practitioners in the early postcolonial period was the quest to carve an identity of relevance both for the industry and the newly independent states grappling with social, political, and economic instability. The practitioners sought to build on the achievements already recorded by the colonial African theatre which was largely founded on indigenous folklore, traditional arts, residual performance, and cultural heritage. The theatre was desirous of gaining a stronger foothold and playing a more active part in the socio-political equations in the new nations. Hence, there were visible efforts to acquire more professional experience through apprenticeship under established artists, formal training in local and foreign institutions, developing drama and theatre curricula in higher educational institutions on the continent, and later forging collaborations and affiliation with foreign establishments working in the areas of literature, language, cultural anthropology, performing arts and allied creative industries.

The term "voyages" as used in the title of this volume reverberates with imagery of the turbulent and often murky waters that theatre artists in postcolonial Africa have had to sail through over the past decades. While the early postcolonial African artists harnessed a vision of building a strong foundation for the new nations through the arts, the African political elites, having witnessed the power of the theatre in the fight for

freedom, independence, and end to colonialism, became somewhat apprehensive and suspicious of theatre practitioners.

To clearly understand the postcolonial African theatre terrain, it is necessary to explore and contextualise the meaning of the concept "postcolonial" or the "postcolony". Although the term is often loosely associated with the period after the end of colonialism or following the attainment of political independence or self-government, Ashcroft *et al* (2006) have cautioned that postcolonial critics should consider the full implications of restricting the meaning of the term to "after colonialism" or after independence. In the same vein, Gilbert and Tompkins (1996, p.2) argued that "post-colonialism is not a naive teleological sequence that supersedes colonialism but rather an engagement with and contestation of colonialism's discourse, power structures, and social hierarchies". Similarly, Mbembe (2001) maintains that the postcolonial in Africa cannot be discussed in isolation from attendant questions of power and subjectivity, the West, and the "consciousness of those who are under its spell". Furthermore, for the African in particular, as expatiated by Kagolobya (2011, p.104), "working with postcolonial theory is an analytical process aiming at understanding first the colonial history and how the colonial ideologies were used to interfere with the indigenous cultural heritage…" In essence, the postcolonial, as a concept, is more than a period; it is a phenomenon that inculcates the processes and conditions under which the postcolony negotiates its existence as defined, influenced, and catalysed by the vestiges and hegemonic aftermath of the colonial experience.

A cursory look at recent theatre history in Africa, beginning with the advent of colonialism, reveals an ideological divide between artists and politicians engaged in the quest for state power. Since political establishments have always been wary of the power of theatre, an acrimonious relationship appears to exist between them. During the years of colonial rule, the colonialists understood the power inherent in African artistic forms of expression. The colonial administrators were particularly anxious about the intrinsic collective spirit in African traditional performances. Hence, through the Western Christian missionaries, the colonial powers unleashed attacks on indigenous performance forms describing them as indecent, satanic, and barbaric. For instance, in Uganda, the traditional wedding dance, *Endongo Mbaaga* performed by the people of Buganda was banned by the colonial administrators, describing it as sinful and overtly indecent. A similar treatment was meted out to the *Kpingi* dance of the Tiv tribe in Nigeria.

In place of African indigenous performance forms, the colonial authorities introduced Western performance forms such as choral music, concert shows, Western plays and dances, and allied operatic forms. In British-controlled territories, the mobile screening of English cinema in the hinterlands, performance of Shakespeare, concerts, and recitation of English poetry and children's rhymes were introduced in missionary-founded schools as an alternative to traditional folklore, songs, and performance practices. The introduction of Western theatrical forms and entertainment idioms in Africa using the Church and schools as entry points was part of a larger political pacifism and cultural ideology meant to reinforce the imperialist narrative of the West as being superior and more humane to indigenous peoples in their African colonies (Mlama 1991; Arowolo 2010; Igboin 2011).

Nevertheless, the resurgence of the theatre inculcating Western and indigenous artistic traditions became a potent weapon that nationalists deployed in the independence struggles with significant impact. However political patronage of the arts did not end with the attainment of independence in Africa. The new African leaders tried to appropriate the theatre for political ends. Some adopted what Kerr (1995) described as populist theatre whereby African ruling political parties sought ways of adapting local cultural performance practices to reinforce national consensus. African governments thus co-opted the arts and began using cultural praise songs and dances as potent tools to enforce ideology.

The vision to appropriate and domesticate theatre and the performance agency to serve the interests of the new African politicians was received with suspicion by the burgeoning new breed of postcolonial African theatre practitioners. Instead of giving in to the whims of the politicians and the new postcolonial power structures, the theatre artists invested in studying their socio-cultural, political, and economic milieu to address the immediate challenges of the nascent nations. This was against the backdrop of the betrayed expectations of independence when the new African elites who assumed office, and by extension occupied positions of power and authority became mired in corruption, dictatorship, and abuse of power. As theatre beamed its critical searchlights on these new leaders, a clash between the new powers and the societal watchdogs became inevitable.

Indeed the state of emergency ushered in by postcolonial African dictatorships prompted a regime where the artists went under siege but continued to critically reflect on the politics and political actors of their

time (Mbowa 1994). Following the blatant political repression from the regimes in their various countries, theatre artists devised some means of disguising their political criticism in complex styles of writing, language, and artistic presentation laced with imagery and symbolism. This is evident in the works of Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, Ola Rotimi, Esiaba Irobi, Robert Serumaga, John Ruganda, Byron Kawaddwa, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Francis Imbuga, Micere Mugo, Ebrahim Hussien, Tewfik Al-Hakim, Ama Ata Aidoo, Athol Fugard, Lewis Nkosi and many others.

Despite concealing their critical points in metaphors and creative styles, the postcolonial African artists did not escape the wrath of dictatorial regimes. As a result, creative artists worked under precarious situations often enduring long years in exile, detentions, persecution, and even martyrdom as exemplified in the case of Byron Kawaddwa the Ugandan dramatist murdered by the notorious Idi Amin regime which interpreted the performance of his play *St. Lwanga* as being critical of the politics of the time. Nigeria's Hubert Ogunde was luckier as he only had his theatre troupe proscribed and his livelihood cut off after being detained for a similar official interpretation of his play, *Yoruba Ronu*.

African playwrights both at home and in the Diaspora nevertheless continued to expose the atrocious political, economic, and moral decadence of the early African post-independence regimes. In applying the agency of theatre, the practitioners understood their political activism efforts from a nationalist viewpoint as a service for the liberation of the entire African continent from any form of oppression. They sought a critical re-evaluation of the social and political deviation of the newly independent society to arrest the slide and correct the situation. Being largely inspired by an intense desire to address the challenges of the continent soon after independence, the pioneer dramatists did not merely satirise political oppression, some of them went beyond the stage and engaged in field political activism which earned them more unpleasant brush with the law and accompanying sanctions.

Therefore, the expected continuation of the collaboration between creative artists and the nationalists (the new leaders) in building a strong progressive country after political independence could not materialise. The critical tradition of theatre has continued to endure over time with an even greater ferocity in the contemporary era. Consequently, theatre practitioners have frequently been stalked, harassed, and hounded into jails and this has become an established part of their occupational hazards. The political leaders have continued to show reluctance and, in some cases, blatantly

refused to fund and develop any aspect of the theatre, culture, and creative industries. Professional theatre structures and performance venues have over the years neither been built nor renovated. For instance, in many African countries, the only professional theatre houses that exist are the National Theatres which were built by the colonial administration or shortly after independence. In Uganda, the situation remains worrisome given that there have been debates about giving away the land currently occupied by the National Theatre to an investor so that they may construct a commercial mall. The National Theatre of Nigeria is perennially under threat of outright sale, privatisation, commercialisation, concessions, or lease to private sector investors depending on the whims and nomenclature adopted by successive governments.

Theatre practitioners have often been denied permission to perform at important venues owned by governments and stringent censorship laws have been enacted and enforced in various postcolonial African states. Perhaps, to further stifle the potent voice of the arts, the training institutions have habitually been starved of requisite human and material resources while student enrolment and staff development programmes for the creative arts have not been prioritised when compared to other disciplines. To survive, performing artists in many African countries have frequently been forced to accept jobs as public servants, made megaphones and appendages of government in the information and culture departments, and paid meagre salaries for subsistence.

The trend of luring popular artists with material rewards, contracts, and positions of power to sing praises of governments and politicians has become common in postcolonial Africa where artists routinely struggle to eke out a living. In some cases, postcolonial African regimes have often designated political cronies who use state resources to divide and disintegrate the theatre and performing arts guilds and fraternity. In the face of harsh economic conditions, artists have often fallen prey to the machinations of the postcolonial state and given up their historical role of being spokespersons for ordinary people. With some artists rewarded and others victimised, theatre practitioners found themselves in endless adversarial bickering, leaving their practice in the doldrums. All these have over the last decades laid the foundation for the slow pace of development and poor working conditions that currently subsist in the theatre industry across different regions of Africa.

Nevertheless, postcolonial African theatre was not limited to the African geographical space. For generations, Africans have been moving across

continents in response to various historical, political, social, and economic "push and pull factors" which, as Urbanski (2022) affirmed, have been driving the phenomenon of migration for centuries. Internal factors such as wars, political persecution, poverty, and misrule contribute to pushing Africans out of the continent. Africans have also been pulled to other continents by external factors such as slavery, employment, educational pursuits, freedom, healthcare, and better living conditions. These immigrants constitute a significant proportion of the African population currently in the Diaspora. Among the African Diaspora communities are theatre practitioners, trained either in Africa or abroad, who exploit their artistic heritage to connect with the motherland through dramatic writings, performance, and creative practice. The theatrical platform has provided a vibrant medium not only for the expression of their African identities but also for interrogating and coping with critical issues of concern in their places of abode such as racism, xenophobia, migration, citizenship, unemployment, discrimination, disillusionment, and nostalgia with the concomitant frustrations they unleash on the African immigrant community. Hence, a good measure of the postcolonial African theatre practice is negotiated on the countless performance spaces in the Diaspora across the globe.

However, the postcolonial African theatre practice has continued to face challenges of form and content, space and process, training and resources as well as the crisis of relevance and acceptance. In a dynamic global society characterised by technological ascendancy and flux, creative arts audiences are provided with an ever-increasing variety of choices for entertainment. In apparent response to the changing tastes of the contemporary audience, the postcolonial African theatre has continued to reinvent itself as practitioners continually respond to critical questions that underlie the very essence of their arts within their immediate and wider environments. This book collection therefore tries to address some questions about how the postcolonial African theatre has fared in the context of patronage and state hegemony. The volume equally explores how the practitioners negotiate and leverage creative practice to address crucial thematic, stylistic, and aesthetic factors and concerns that are at the core of postcolonial theatre practice on the African continent and the Diaspora.

Adaptation of existing materials into new forms has remained an aesthetic receptacle that dramatists will continue to draw from. Conventionally, borrowing from existing materials whether by adaptation, transposition or transliteration provides a rich narrative resource for contemporary theatre.

But in appropriating the old to create or invigorate the new, the postcolonial contemporary theatre practitioners both in Africa and the Diaspora exert some imaginative control over their poetic licence. This continues to yield a corpus of dramatic works that progressively reinvent themselves with appreciable originality as they transmute into various genres and transit from the media of text through the stage to the screen or vice versa as the case may be.

Therefore, in Chapter One of this volume, Omiyemi Green explores the variegated terrain of adaptation which has energised the Diasporic African theatre. From a true life event of a pod pushing her dead calf in a grief-stricken journey of several miles in the ocean, Green adapts a choreoritual anchored on Yoruba cosmology and Black consciousness to "undrown" and inspire freedom, healing, and wellness for participants at the USA performance who share in the highly symbolic cosmo-human interaction. In Green's *Dance of the Orcas*, echoes and images of slavery, race, freedom, and gender pulsate, reflect, and refract in a performance of history and culture whereby the waters metaphorically become a medium, a healing agent, an *Òrìṣà*, and ecotherapeutic channel for transporting the votive-worshipper to the "illud tempus" in ritual enchantment. The adaptation of *Dance of the Orcas* is carried further to the cinematic space where the shooting location of the film version set at Buckroe Beach in Virginia, USA exuded memories of slavery and Black history which signpost the filmic narrative.

Further, on the subject of adaptation and postcolonial African Diasporic theatre, it can be observed that an enduring phenomenon that also enriches contemporary theatre in Africa and the Diaspora is the trend of secondary adaptation. This is a creative practice whereby a piece of theatrical work undergoes multiple stages and layers of interpretation presented in new forms. Omiyemi Green's adaptation of the Orca's "funeral" journey and aquatic "dance" was further subjected to another adaptation into a film using the Buckroe Beach to anchor the tropes of memory, history, slavery, and African religious cosmogony which are thematic preoccupations of the narrative.

Similarly, in Chapter Two, Bisi Adigun presents a multiple adaptation experience of his troupe, Arambe Productions, in Ireland and Nigeria. The troupe first adapted Jimmy Murphy's Irish play, *The Kings of Kilburn High Road* into a Nigerian setting and specifically for a Nigerian audience, under the title of *Home, Sweet Home.* Thereafter, the adapted play, *Home Sweet Home* was further adapted into another play, *The Paddies of Parnell*

Street. This secondary adaptation was meant to suit the sociological needs of the Diaspora Nigerian (and African) audiences in Ireland.

It is interesting to note that these adaptations by Africans abroad were used to address topical issues of local concern to the African Diaspora community such as race, culture, citizenship, immigration, identity, marriage, unemployment, and nostalgia. Therefore, as Adigun's work indicates, adaptations both at primary and secondary levels are being explored and exploited by artists to address communal and deeply personal experiences of the Africans who lived (or still reside) outside the African continent.

The themes of culture, identity, citizenship, and migration frequently recur and resonate in postcolonial African theatre and they quintessentially capture the life voyages of the African on the mother continent and the Diaspora, the latter being marked by the tides, pangs, and taste of transnationalism and "inter-transnationalism", to use the phrase canvassed by Adigun, in Chapter Two of this book. Adigun had argued about "the universality of the immigrant experience" as "insider-outsider" while living "in another man's country". However, these artistic trends and thematic realities all affirm that the adaptation process and product both occur within spatial and temporal contexts. This is in line with Puchnor's (2011) third model of text and performance in which he argued that "the text needs to undergo a process of adaptation" in order to address current and emergent realities (Puchnor, 2011, p.292).

However, adaptation is neither a fortuitous nor a perfunctory experience. It requires skill that is acquired from training and continuous practice. The creation and development of formal and effective training programmes are reliable means of promoting skill and professionalism and ensuring sustainability not only in the theatre industry but in every human endeavour. Nonetheless, the postcolonial theatre practice in Africa is still bogged down by the crisis of inefficient artist-training programmes. This leaves a negative impact on the quality of its creative output and professional practice.

Traditionally, Africa boasts of a functional apprenticeship system that provides informal education and art training to indigenous performers. Many professional artists acquired their skills by working and learning under the tutelage of master artists who may be their parents, relatives, or leading performers in their communities. But this indigenous (in)formal training system started to wane when the traditions of formal Western

theatre training and practice introduced by colonial administrations began to gain ascendancy. These Western artistic traditions of training reflect some notions of cultural superiority and inferiority dichotomy which later became a vestige of the African colonial experience.

The challenges associated with various dimensions of theatre training in the postcolonial experience of sub-Saharan Africa attracted the focus of five chapters of this volume. The Western theatre practice and scholarship often disregarded indigenous African art forms as local, "ethnic arts and ritual" practised through heredity or natural flair, lifelong learning, and informal apprenticeship training. These "ethnic arts" are sometimes considered "unteachable" in the Western sensibility and modern or contemporary sense of arts training and pedagogical structuring. Hence, ethnic arts are often marginalised or excluded from the curricula of the arts and humanities programmes of both lower and higher educational institutions.

In Chapter Three of this volume, Mercy Ntangaare examines some key issues concerning theatre pedagogy in Africa and the place of the Drama School in the scheme of education. The chapter chronicles the teething and developmental challenges facing the establishment and flourishing of drama and theatre education in Uganda. Indeed, there are brambles to be cleared by theatre people themselves if the theatre programme is to be accepted by the public as a legitimate and lucrative course of study in higher educational institutions. Although Ntangaare used the Ugandan experience as a case study, it can be argued that the situation is not very different in many other parts of Africa where the academic programmes in performing arts are treated with skepticism, levity, and disdain leading to low enrolment statistics, poor funding, lack of infrastructure and other requisite resources for curriculum delivery. Ntangaare's study and findings affirm that the content and delivery of the curriculum of theatre training schools and departments require surgical treatment and constant review to place and sustain the discipline of drama and performing arts in general on the front burner of national and global relevance and development.

Historically, the postcolonial African state inherited a lopsided educational system that is tilted towards the sciences to the detriment of the humanities. This was reinforced by the "advice" of foreign educational "consultants" often foisted on Africa by the Bretton Woods system which dictates educational funding and structures as part of the conditionalities for granting loans to poor countries in the Third World. This agenda has led to the prioritisation of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

(STEM) in curriculum development, delivery, and educational funding considered a reliable way out of poverty. Hence, as Uka (2000) argued, under such conditions and mentality, the liberal arts are not considered in the scheme of utility. This is because the postcolonial African "society tends to measure usefulness in terms of immediate utility; it tends to measure value in terms of the concrete and visible. The Engineer can build a bridge or a house, no matter if it collapses a day after". It is thus difficult to "fit drama and theatre into this pattern of social utility" and the discipline is consequently "often rated low down on the utility scale. Indeed, most subject areas in the Humanities tend to suffer this low-rating" (Uka, 2000, p.33).

Despite the strident agitation for the inclusion of the arts in the scheme of educational priorities, leading to the emergence of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) concept, the situation has not really changed. While the proponents of STEM and STEAM are locked in debates about utility value, inclusion, or exclusion from educational programming, the old order continues to prevail. Hence, budgetary funding for the arts, culture, and creative sectors remains comparatively poor in many African countries, showing "a serious problem of priorities" as the "capital allocations tend to be on the very low side" (Ojewuyi, 2011, p.24).

The pervasive negative attitude and perception towards the theatre as a "suitable" profession with utilitarian values and high economic potential still persist. Hence, an intractable problem facing the postcolonial African theatre scholar and practitioner domiciled in the African Ivory Tower is how to change the popular misconception about theatrical arts as an academic and lucrative course of study in tertiary institutions of learning. Tochukwu Okeke interrogates this complex question in Chapter Four using the instrumentality of scenography and multimedia performance for analysis. The growth of contemporary theatre practice in a given country can arguably be measured by how much effort practitioners commit to the visual and spectacular aspects of performance.

Using a multimedia performance of Esiaba Irobi's *Colour of Rusting Gold*, Okeke discusses the extent to which trainee Nigerian designers have learned from nascent postcolonial scenography practitioners. In an apparent response to some of the questions raised by Ntangaare in Chapter Three of this volume, Okeke submits that scenographic experimentations, deployment of technology, and reinforcement of multimedia performance in both educational and commercial theatres can help generate the needed

public attraction and popular following for the theatre industry. Perhaps, the theatre needs to leverage the popularity already achieved by the home-video (videofilm) industry in Africa. As the audience attraction towards the screen with its attendant visual aesthetics grows exponentially, Okeke's study seems to point toward training practitioners to adopt theatrical innovations anchored on multimedia design and technology to invigorate the theatre curriculum, increase audience patronage, and ultimately raise the economic potential and viability of theatre business.

In Chapter Five, Eric Jjemba continues the debate on arts training by focusing on one of the most overlooked areas of the creative arts - dance. African choreographers and dance scholars frequently decry the popular misreading of dance as mere entertainment, an unserious pastime, and a natural flair inherent in every African that need not be taught in a formal school. Having recognised this reality, Jjemba's study takes off on the premise that indigenous dance is the more denigrated dance form in Uganda where ethnic dance is neither recognised nor taught in the formal educational system.

Using field data gathered over some years through the participant-observation approach, Jjemba found that in an environment where dance as an art and profession is struggling to find its footing and gain public acceptance, the quest to teach ethnic dance in the university system is a frustrating experience and virtually a pipe dream. To actualise this objective, the African dance lecturer-practitioner would need to overcome the tripartite challenges of enrolment, curriculum design, and delivery. With the prevailing bias among parents, education policymakers, and prospective trainees, getting students to enrol into a dance programme as a separate course in the university, not combined or integrated with other arts, becomes difficult. To get the programme approved, dance teachers would have to design a curriculum that can be considered "acceptable" and this implies being economically viable and culturally grounded with contemporary relevance for the 21st-century globalised youth. Again, Jjemba affirms that getting the resources for the curriculum delivery presents another daunting task as qualified dance lecturers, funding, space, and training facilities are scarce despite international collaboration efforts. Developing a teaching method for ethnic dance pedagogy in a contemporary university calendar is equally an additional challenge as Jjemba's study highlighted.

Internationalisation has become an attractive trend and policy in global higher education (Teferra & Knight 2008; Altbach & Knight 2007).

Indeed, with the dominance of internationalisation in student enrolment, programme structure, curriculum content and delivery, staff development policy, and institutional administration, African Universities are increasingly making efforts to leverage the agency of internationalisation to promote their academic programmes and personnel through collaborations and exchange programmes with foreign universities. From the study carried out by Eric Jjemba in Chapter Five of this volume, it appears that collaboration with foreign universities could be an effective way of promoting some seemingly marginalised and underfunded academic programmes such as dance and theatre.

Furthermore, Richard Kagolobya in Chapter Six evaluated the trend and effectiveness of internationalisation in dance training using the parameter of intercultural communication. He illustrated the communication and cross-cultural challenges faced by participants of such international collaboration programmes in contemporary Africa using the intercultural exchange programme of the Makerere University of Uganda on one hand and EuroAmerican Universities on the other. The Chapter focuses particularly on the "verbal and nonverbal indices" that characterise and impinge on the intercultural dance exchange and collaboration programme between Makerere University's Department of Performing Arts and Film and the Norwegian University College of Dance, New York University, and Stanford University respectively.

Although Kagolobya acknowledges the potential of the international exchange and collaboration programme in promoting dance studies and training in Uganda, he deduced from the available field data and therefore submits that the objectives of such cross-cultural collaborations were being hampered by language and cultural barriers. This was aggravated by the relatively short duration of the programme which did not allow the participants adequate time to properly acclimatise and understand "paralanguages" and intercultural nuances of each other. This limitation, if addressed, could facilitate "communication accommodation", prevent "expectancy violation" and enhance the optimal effectiveness of the Uganda dance training experience. It would also facilitate similar transnational and intercultural theatre programmes meant to foster cultural understanding thereby raising the interest and enrolment of young people in dance education and practice.

In a related context, it is apparent that the reluctance of the average African youth to get proper education and professional training before venturing into the creative industry has continued to raise concern among

scholars and practitioners. In Chapter Seven of this book, David Ijiribi and Peter Ereu highlight the issue of formal music education and training among popular musicians in Uganda. They investigated the backgrounds of popular music artists in Arua city and found that a greater percentage of them did not acquire music education. In addition, they observed that these popular music artists were mostly youth attracted to the music industry by the lure of stardom, quick wealth, and celebrity status. They could not score, read, or write music. They also relied on computer-programmed music to produce their songs and lacked knowledge of composition, musical instrumentation, and orchestral organisation. Hence, this trend as Ijiribi and Ereu found, resulted in substandard music productions, the proliferation of indecent and lewd content, copyright infringements, a negative image of the industry, disregard for social responsibility, and increased frustration among these young artists. In the words of Soyinka (2020, p.83), "Music, we know, is one of those creative mediums that are very susceptible to abuse. The missionaries abused it… A number of contemporary musicians - even composers and performers in social music - blithely perpetuate the aural abuse". Consequently, these young artists without requisite training fizzle out of the music industry after an album or few singles with attendant loss of their investments.

An aggregation of the issues raised in Chapters Three to Seven of this volume would point to the fact that the creative industry in postcolonial Africa is on the verge of a training and programme crisis. The importance of the youth in building a stable and progressive society or destabilising an organised and peaceful community cannot be overemphasised. Honwana and De Boeck (2005) observed that the youth as a social category in postcolonial Africa are both "makers and breakers" as well as "perpetrators and victims" of a globalised culture. The creative industry holds an exceptional attraction to the postcolonial African youth who exploit the medium to construct their identities and make a living in a continent plagued by high unemployment rates and social insecurity.

However, a significant percentage of the youth in contemporary Africa are not eager to get a good education and professional training in the arts institutions. They either look down on the performing arts as mere pastime and an economically unviable enterprise or they crash into the industry and appropriate its agency to make quick money without undergoing formal training. The latter has become more rampant because the industry is poorly regulated and largely subsists on the informal mode of practice and these ultimately contribute to lowering the standards of cultural productions on the African continent. But it can also be argued that the

postcolonial African state is only responding to the pulls and negative impacts of colonialism and the global economic and cultural order. With crushing debt burden, armed conflicts and rising unemployment in Africa, materialism and utility value become key considerations in career choice, and the youth are trapped in this "worldwide web" of poverty and survival. Hence, increased enrolment, funding, policy support, and legal protection for training prospective professionals in theatre and creative industries are rarely a priority in a postcolonial African state.

Going by emergent trends in contemporary society, it appears that the public acceptance of theatre as a medium and industry will continue to be influenced or determined by its relevance to societal needs and aspirations. Hence, despite the challenges faced by postcolonial African theatre practitioners on the continent and the Diaspora, the evaluation of theatre's commitment and contributions to the advancement of the African peoples remain imperative. This reality is the focus of Chima Osakwe's work in Chapter Eight of this volume as he reflects on the relevance of Esiaba Irobi's drama to Nigeria's political and economic development. Using Irobi's play, *Cemetery Road*, Osakwe dissects the travails of the average Nigerian citizen under the military dictatorship that dominated a reasonable part of the country's post-independence history.

The incursion of the military into politics and governance has remained an ugly landmark on the political landscape of many countries of the so-called Third World. But while some nations have managed to develop stable democracies, the trend of coup d'état continues to recur in Africa, particularly in the West and Central regions to the amazement of observers across the globe. This ugly phenomenon attracts critical reflections from African creative writers who frequently decry and lampoon the trend through their works.

Therefore, in Chapter Eight, Chima Osakwe discusses the theatrical contributions of Esiaba Irobi, the late Nigerian playwright whose works have consistently attacked the ruling class for corruption, maladministration, and abuse of power. Irobi's drama, *Cemetery Road*, according to Osakwe, mirrors the dreadful and hopeless situation of Nigerians who groan under the jackboots of the military junta. But, it could be argued that Irobi's *Cemetery Road* goes beyond military rule. It is indeed a commentary on the failed and dysfunctional postcolonial African state characterised by autocracy, collusion with foreign agencies, graft, and bestial impunity of the ruling class who have continued to make the lives of the people

miserable, brutish, and short, hence their frequent traverse along the cemetery road.

The regular criticism of the ruling class by dramatists has created an atmosphere of distrust between the political elite and theatre practitioners. The ruling class often accuses playwrights and theatre artists of incitement, inflaming the public's distrust of politicians and instigating civil disobedience and mass violence. Consequently, autocratic governments in Africa have developed various strategies to curtail the powers and popularity of the creative artist.

In Chapter Nine, Charles Nwadigwe delves into the politics and strategies of censorship which is one of the weapons used by the ruling class to incapacitate and control the theatre industry and its practitioners. Although the incidence of censorship has been a part of theatre history for centuries, as Nwadigwe also observed, his study nevertheless focused on a peculiar dimension of the problem which is "venue censorship". This is the tendency of governments to deny performers access to performance venues thereby preventing them from reaching target audiences with their messages.

Indeed, Charles Nwadigwe traces the history of the phenomenon in Nigeria, to the colonial era as illustrated by the Ogunde Theatre experience. In a society where most standard performance venues are owned and controlled by the governments and their cronies in the private sector, denying access to venues instead of proscribing a particular play, becomes an ingenious and effective weapon deployed by postcolonial regimes against the contemporary theatre industry. While presenting some cogent arguments as to why the popular theatre mode of market and roadside shows appears incapable of achieving the desired results, in Nigeria, Nwadigwe submits that a viable option lies in theatre entrepreneurs pooling resources together to develop their own performance venues and cottage theatres in local areas.

In view of the myriad of development challenges facing low-income economies, the theatre is increasingly being applied to address context-specific challenges of local communities. Perhaps, the popular theatre approach may not be quite effective in reaching and tackling the ruling class in some contexts as Nwadigwe contended, but it is arguably a potent medium for reaching and catalysing social change among the low-income and downtrodden masses in Africa (Chinyowa, 2007). In Chapter Ten of this volume, Keneth Bamuturaki and Grace Mbabazi explore the subject of

applied theatre and societal effectiveness using the Theatre for Development (TfD) methodology.

Based on their empirical studies and field experience with fish farmers in Uganda, Bamuturaki and Mbabazi argue that there are conditions under which the effectiveness of the TfD approach can be enhanced. Using sample TfD workshops, they illustrate that applying Baseline and Endline studies could help theatre practitioners and development agencies measure and evaluate the impact of TfD on the target population. In practice, the conventional TfD process or workshop is divided into a number of stages which end with follow-up action. Among all the stages, follow-up appears to be the most contentious because it takes place several weeks or months after the workshop has ended. Critics often argue that in many cases, the follow-up component of TfD is not carried out owing to time and financial constraints. Sometimes, the follow-up stage is poorly executed under improper conditions that impede the effective measurement of the TfD workshop outcome.

However, the study by Bamuturaki and Mbabazi provides a functional assessment method for empirically ascertaining the exact conditions of the target population before the TfD workshop (Baseline). It equally ensures that the follow-up action is properly carried out to evaluate and measure any changes in the conditions of the target population after the workshop (Endline). Hence, based on the Baseline and Endline studies carried out by the practitioners, they concluded that the improvement in the business plans and marketing skills of the volunteer participants was a clear indication of the positive impact of the TfD workshop on the fish farmers.

However, in Chapter Eleven, Oluchi Igili appears to differ and conceptually disagree with the foregoing conclusions on TfD and its functionality. Thus, she continues the controversial debate on TfD and its developmental impact on target communities, particularly those living in poor, rural environments of low-income countries. The chapter leverages some prevailing counter-discourse on development, international aid, and global economic order which are tilted in favour of the West while the Global South remains at the receiving end. The crux of Igili's argument is that TfD is part of the global politics of economic imperialism. Hence, the "development" that TfD purports to bring to the poor countries of Africa is only a "mask" to perpetuate the hegemony of the West.

The study illustrates its position by attempting a dialectical and radical analysis of some previous TfD projects carried out in Nigeria. Based on its

units of analyses, Igili's study opines that TfD is another medium of encouraging self-help which amounts to self-exploitation rather than empowerment. This is hinged on the view that the postcolonial African governments with their development partners that possess and control production capital and state resources have failed to transform the living conditions of the poor people. Hence, by persuading the impoverished people to embrace "development" through their own means, TfD is indirectly a tool for deceptive "developmentalism". In essence, the study submits that contrary to popular view, TfD is an exploitative design of international monopolistic capital that cannot foster positive change and sustainable development for the African downtrodden class.

While the debate on the efficacy and actual beneficiary of the TfD project rages on, another burning issue in postcolonial theatre practice is concerned with indigenous festivals and their sustainability in the contemporary era. Africa has a rich repertoire of indigenous festivals that are performed from season to season. However, many of these traditional performances are fast in decline or already extinct owing to the effects of globalisation and foreign religions. In Chapter Twelve of this volume, Ruth Epochi-Olise examines the masking festivals of the Ndokwa people in southern Nigeria and their dynamics and trajectories in view of the impact of colonialism, modernity, and Christianity on Ndokwa indigenous cultural norms and values. The chapter analysed a number of Ndokwa masquerade festivals with pictorial evidence and observed that despite the "disruptive forces" of Christianity, modernisation and globalisation, the festivals have shown remarkable vibrancy and resilience. Hence, the festival performances continue to provide avenues for socialisation, cultural promotion, communal diplomacy, social cohesion, and identity construction.

However, many indigenous African festivals continue to reflect elements of modernism even as they struggle to resist or assimilate emergent trends in technology and popular culture. These elements are reflected in their costume materials, designs, props, accessories, performance spaces, publicity techniques, and production organisation. Therefore, in the Ndokwa masquerade festivals, Westernisation and rural-urban migration are taking their toll on the performance traditions. As young people continue to leave the villages and hinterlands where the festivals are mostly domiciled, in search of lucrative livelihoods in the cities, they acquire urban tastes and consequently embrace multiculturalism and new lifestyles. This trend is not helpful to the indigenous tradition of apprenticeship and the succession system in the arts and crafts practice

that require the young ones to understudy and take over from the older generation. But Epochi-Olise opines that this modernisation trend could be turned into an advantage by repackaging the festivals into contemporary tourism events to generate revenue, create jobs and sustain the festival culture.

A major factor that drives the transformation of indigenous festivals and cultural heritage into a thriving tourism industry is policy. But the postcolonial African state is habitually characterised by political uncertainty and policy somersaults. When a new administration comes into office, it often abolishes the policies of the predecessor and creates new ones. This invariably diverts the allocation of resources to some sectors of the economy while others are underfunded. Such conditions result in waste of resources already invested in ongoing projects, loss of jobs, litigations with contractors and partners, and the erosion of trust and confidence of investors.

In Chapter Thirteen of this volume, Francisca Nwadigwe extends the discourse on indigenous cultural heritage with a focus on cultural policy and tourism development. The study establishes that there are "push and pull factors" which determine visitors' choice of tourism destination. It also connects these factors to the "concentric circle model" of cultural development. The chapter further contends that these "push and pull factors" do not stand alone or operate in isolation because they are linked to other sectors of the economy and are largely determined by government policy. The "push" factors compel a tourist to travel out while the "pull factors" motivate and attract a tourist to choose a particular tourism destination to visit.

Furthermore, the study presents a comparative illustration of the impacts of policy stability and volatility on the culture and creative industries in a postcolony using two State Governments in southeastern Nigeria as case studies. The study found that political interference is a key factor in policy inconsistency and lack of continuity in the programmes of the culture and creative sector. This is reflected in the recruitment of human resources, choice of programmes, funding, and operations of agencies in that sector. All these results in low private sector investment, low productivity, and underutilisation of the sector in wealth creation and growth of the country's GDP. The chapter concludes that effective cultural policies for the postcolonial African state would create jobs and support multiple livelihoods through the culture and creative industries and therefore boost the economy. But such policies must be consistent and backed by some

funding, legislation, dynamic culture agencies, and an enabling environment for the private sector to invest in the industry.

African oral traditions have continued to undergo transitional changes from the colonial experience to the contemporary era. Vanguards of cultural revival and promotion have often advocated the adoption of practical measures towards the preservation of oral traditions of Africa. The packaging of oral traditions into creative content offered as part of tourism events has been recommended as a veritable means of preserving cultural heritage. Nonetheless, what to do with African orality in the era of digital technology remains a crucial question.

The questions of preservation and utilisation of African oral traditions in the digital age are addressed in Chapter Fourteen of this volume by Idowu Olatunji, Stephen Ayinmode, and Peter Gandonu. The chapter examines the content of some oral traditions among the Yoruba of Nigeria and argues that apart from providing raw materials for the creative industries, orature can provide resources needed to regenerate African health systems, marriage institutions, conflict resolution, ethnic diplomacy, and social relations. Therefore, the authors used Tunde Kelani's *Thunderbolt (Magun)*, a Nigerian film that interrogates inter-tribal marriage, adultery, and betrayal of trust to illustrate their arguments.

Based on the analyses of the film's content and themes, they submit that African orature can be preserved through cinematic documentation by using them as production elements and raw materials for filmic narratives. Hence, following their interpretation of the pivotal characters in the film, Ngozi and Yinka, their turbulent marital experience, the travails of Ngozi, the villainy of Yinka, and the final resolution of the main conflict, Olatunji *et al* conclude that film has a unique advantage of promoting positive values embedded in African oral traditions while discouraging abuses by applying the concept of poetic justice to punish offenders.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the postcolonial African theatre has been voyaging along a tempestuous sea of competing needs. From the African continent to the Diaspora, the theatrical voyage has often experienced storms and turbulence that impede the sail of theatre practice. The current book reflects topical issues in the chequered history and contemporary trends that characterise the postcolonial African theatre. Theatre practitioners have experienced, engaged, and interrogated adaptations, designed formal artist training programmes, addressed development challenges of the people through applied theatre interventions, tapped from oral traditions,

boosted the local economy in their environments, and strongly challenged the decadent politics and maladministration of the post-independent African elite. In the process, postcolonial theatre has faced crippling censorship, stigma, poor funding, and a lack of supportive cultural policies. These challenges are still prevalent in contemporary practice hence the relevance, effectiveness, and utility value of theatre will continue to be determined by its ability to withstand emergent and recurrent difficulties.

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