



Research Article

MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTION APPROACH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LIVE THEATRE IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF BOLANLE-AUSTEN PETERS' PRODUCTION OF "FELA AND THE KALAKUTA QUEENS"

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 06th June, 2018

Received in revised form 14th July, 2018

Accepted 23rd August, 2018

Published online 28th September, 2018

Key words:

Directing, Multimedia, Production, Approach, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Live theatre in Nigeria no longer seems to attract the patronage of the Nigerian audience, as theatre halls are increasingly becoming empty. A major reason for this phenomenon is the inability of Nigerian directors to adopt a media friendly play production approach that aligns with the present digital and technological realities of the contemporary Nigerian society. Nigerian directors are therefore challenged to adopt a media - friendly play production approach if they must win back lost theatre patrons. The foregoing is the aim of this study as this research examines the multimedia production approach and its implications for live theatre in Nigeria, using Bolanle Austen-Peters' production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens" as a case study. The study employs the qualitative research method to realize set objectives, and adopts Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of "Postdramatic Theatre" as its theoretical framework. The study observed that the multimedia production approach has proven to be successful and profitable in the city of Lagos, Nigeria, and recommends that Nigeria directors in other cities embrace the multimedia production approach in their play interpretations.

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INTRODUCTION

Theatre is a collaborative art that involves the harmonization of the human and material resources of the theatre in a production by an artistic director. Louis Jouvet (1963), a French actor and director, describes the art of play directing in a more encapsulating way when he submits that:

To direct a production means to help the actors with their memorizing and to mold the text in rehearsals so that it is freed of bookishness and takes on the feeling of the players, to make the actor comfortable and to know how to do this. It means nourishing, sustaining and revitalizing the actors, encouraging and satisfying them and finding their proper theatrical diet; it means bringing forth and raising that family-formed according to a different formula for each new play-which we call a theatre company (p.28).

From the above quote, it is correct to say that the director is that creative and interpretative artist in the theatre responsible for interpreting plays on stage before a live audience, at a particular place and time, using actors, a script, a stage space, other production elements, and the one who harmonizes the efforts of the artistic collaborators of the theatre in a production.

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It is also important to note that in the process of interpreting a play, a director uses two important elements which are: a directorial concept and a directorial approach. A directorial concept refers to the central image, metaphor or message of a production which a director wants to pass to his audience, while a directorial approach refers to the means through which this message is passed to the audience. Bell-Gam (2007) asserts that "directorial approach is the method which the director adopts in his production. There are two approaches namely: presentational style and representational style" (p.86). Kpodoh Daniel (2006) citing Stanley Obuh affirms that "presentational is the theory and practice of drama as a frankly theatrical and fictional presentation, as against the opposite extreme of representation, which attempts to create an illusion of reality on stage" (p.29). Obuh's definition agrees with Fredrick Durenmat's (1976) position, who opines that "the present day theatre presents two aspects: on the one hand, a museum but on the other, a field of experiments" (as cited in Johnson, 2001, p.121).

However, live theatre in Nigerian is increasingly declining because of the absence of patronage on the part of the Nigerian audience. A lot of reasons have been advanced for this phenomenon such as the rise of the television and video mediums, the security situation in the country among other reasons, but a major cause of the current state of live theatre in Nigeria is as a result of the old fashioned style of interpreting plays that many Nigerian directors are stuck with, and their inability to adopt a media - friendly play production approach

that aligns with the present social realities of the contemporary Nigerian society. It is important to note that the present day contemporary Nigerian audience is digitally conscious and technologically savvy, as such; they expect to see technological traits in theatre productions. This thus challenges the contemporary Nigerian theatre director to adopt a media-friendly approach in his play interpretations if he must satisfy the tastes and meet the expectations of the present day Nigerian audience. The foregoing is the aim of this study as this research examines the multimedia production approach and its implications for live theatre in Nigeria using Bolanle-Austen Peters' Production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens" as a case study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theory of "Postdramatic Theatre" of Hans-Thies Lehmann. Hans -Thies Lehmann, a German theatre researcher in his book *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), studied a number of stylistic traits in the avant-garde theatre of the 1960s till date and came up with the theory of "Postdramatic Theatre." The postdramatic theatre, as conceived by Lehmann is not concerned primarily with drama itself but aims at producing a performance in which the text is put in a special relation to the given circumstances of the performance and the stage. This theatre strives to produce an effect on the spectators than to remain true to the text. Hence, the term "postdramatic theatre" means theatre after drama. According to Munby (2006), "to call theatre 'postdramatic' involves subjecting the traditional relationship of the theatre to drama; to deconstruction and takes account of the numerous ways in which this relationship has been refigured in contemporary practice since the 1970s" (p.2). Lehmann's theory of "Postdramatic Theatre" is a testament to a new emphasis on performance in European and North American Theatre and art from the 1960s onwards, which led to a paradigm shift in the study of theatre and to the emergence of Performance Studies as a discipline. The emergence of new avant-garde art forms such as Happenings, Environments, Fluxus events and Performance Art or Live Art all resulted in a new attention to the materiality of performance in theatre and in renewed challenges to the dominance of the text, challenges that had previously been championed by the historical avant-garde, mostly by Antonin Artaud. The text was to become just one element in the scenography and general performance writing of theatre (Munby, 2006, p.4). Lehmann's choice of the term 'postdramatic' instead of 'postmodern' to describe the new theatre is based on the fact that postmodernism, whether it is approached through Lyotard, Baudrillard or Jameson originated outside theatre and performance. In this regard, Johannes Birringer asserts that:

What postmodern theories of textuality and visual representation (and the spectating subject examined by film theory) lack is a more concrete historical understanding of the complex and conflicted relations of text and language to performance and space in the theatre. Even more importantly, the lack of concrete theatrical knowledge of the reconceptions and revisions of various approaches to the acting in, and staging of, textual and contextual (scenographic, choreographic and musical) work carried out by several generations of avant-garde artists in this century (as cited in Munby, 2006, p. 14).

Lehmann's study identifies the *caesura* of the media society as one of the most crucial contexts for postdramatic theatre, an example of this is seen in the Wooster Group's high-tech, intermedia aesthetics, which makes use of video, film, electronic sound effects, microphones and computer programmes to disrupt, fragment and infract the dramatic text and bodies of characters (as cited in Munby, 2006, p. 18). Postdramatic theatre therefore denotes a theatre that feels bound to operate beyond drama and also includes the presence or resumption or continued working of older aesthetics, including those that took leave of the dramatic idea in earlier times, be it on the level of text or theatre (Lehmann, 2006, p.27).

According to Munby (2006), Lehmann sets out to find a language for the new theatre forms but does so by systematically considering their relations to dramatic theory and theatre history, including their resonances with (and divergences from) the historical theatre avant-gardes. He systematically considers the new theatre aesthetics in terms of their aesthetics of space, time and the body, as well as their use of text. He also explores theatre's relationship to the changing media constellation in the twentieth century, in particular, the historical shift out of a textual culture into a 'mediatized' image and sound culture (p.1). Wessendorf argues that:

Even though the concept of postdramatic theatre is in many ways analogous to the notion of postmodern theatre, it is not based on the application of a general cultural concept to the specific domain of theatre, but derives and unfolds from within a long-established discourse on theatre aesthetics itself, as a deconstruction of one of its major premises (as cited in Munby, 2006, p. 14).

This study therefore adopts Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of "Postdramatic Theatre" as its theoretical framework. In applying the theory of "Postdramatic Theatre" to this study, this research shall examine how the aesthetics of space, time, the body of performers, the text, and how such high-tech intermedia aesthetics such as video/ film projections, and sound effects were used by Bolanle Austen-Peters in the production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens."

Directing: A Definition

Directing involves the ability of a director to creatively and interpretatively unify the efforts of the different theatre collaborators in a production, to create a unified aesthetic experience; which is a scintillating play interpretation on stage before an audience in a particular place and time. Robert Wills (1976) conceives directing as the process of transforming a director's personal vision into a public performance (p.3). Bayo Oduneye, a Nigerian director, in defining the job of the director submits that "you add a little spice here, a little spice there, with flavour. You stir it all and you have a good meal" (as cited in Musa, 2002, p.55). For Wole Soyinka, the director's job is:

A complex business. It is a sociological phenomenon. It relates to the environment, the cast in hand, how much time one has, how many actors there are, how to balance the amount of time given to each actor in view of just how much time one has to put a play on stage and of course, the overall theatrical images which one wants to represent, the dynamic tensions of the

various special images which one wants to create on stage (as cited in Musa, 2002, p.55).

Whereas Chuck Mike, a Nigerian director who specializes in Theatre for Development performances, sees the job of the director as an experience in which ideas or an idea is shared and corroborated with animate and inanimate considerations which manifest in display (as cited in Musa, 2002, p.55). In most professional theatre outfits, the director is assigned a play to direct, while in others, he is often in a position to choose the script himself. The job of the director is more artistic than managerial as he interprets the script, cast actors, rehearses them, works with other artistic and non-artistic collaborators in designing a production and coordinates all elements into a finished product. The artistic functions of the director include script selection, analysis of the script, setting up of a production committee and convening production meetings, auditioning of actors, casting of actors, coaching and rehearsing of actors, and staging the play, while the managerial functions of the director include: scheduling of meetings, organizing rehearsals, and liaising with other professionals in the theatre.

The recognition of the director as an independent artist occurred less than a century ago. Harold Clurman (1972) observes that the director as we know him today is a product of the nineteenth century theatre. Modern directing began in 1866, with the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen (p.9), and the development of directing has had much to do with the development of modern theatre which has witnessed a lot of dramatic innovations. Prior to this time, in ancient Greece, playwrights often directed and acted in their plays, however, the modern period ushered the director to the position of authority as we know him today; as the harmonizer of all the arts of theatre in a production.

The Director's Media

The director's media refers to the tools used by the director in his interpretation of scripts creatively in collaboration with other artistes in the theatre's three dimensional space, giving shape, sound, rhythm, images and unity to his artistic vision in the presence of a live audience. In fulfilling this objective, the director works with the elements of the script, actors and the space or stage. The script is the raw material from which the director builds from. It provides him with the idea or story. The script may be written in the form of a playtext or unwritten; where the director relies on improvised story lines and works this out with his actors in order to create theatre. A play (the text), as defined by Azunwo, Eziwho Emenike (2014) is "a creative and artistic letter composed by the supposed conscience of the theatre" (the playwright), "first and foremost to the director, actors and other members of the production crew, informing them of his current ideological standpoint, vision and positive commitment to the development of his society. The supposed conscience of the theatre weaves the society of his play through: plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle" (p.52). Hence, the play or script serves to guide the director as he performs his creative and interpretative functions.

The actors are the human personnel who embody the roles in the play. They are the agents of the dramatic action. They assume the roles created by the playwright by suppressing or augmenting aspects of their personalities in order to reveal the actions and motivations of the characters in a play. As such,

the director cannot do without them. The space or stage is the place where the dramatic action or performance takes place. For Johnson (2001) "wherever is found suitable for locating the drama becomes the space or stage" (p.54). It may not necessarily be a raised platform. The space is the venue for the performance; it is where the director works with the actors. Thus, a director needs a space to enable him function and realize his objectives. However, in addition to these tools, Bell-Gam (2007) adds that the director also requires time, costumes, makeup, lighting, designs and adequate funding to realize his goals (p.73). He also advises that an artistic director should budget properly for a production, as he (the director) does not manipulate these tools alone but does it in collaboration with other professionals in the theatre (Bell-Gam, 2007, p.73).

Principles of Directing

The principles of directing are regarded as the guiding codes that govern the art of play directing, and must be applied and present in every well directed play. As identified by Alexander Dean and Lawrence Carra (2009), in their book *Fundamentals of Play Directing*, these principles are Composition, Picturization, Movement, Rhythm and Pantomimic Dramatization:

Composition

Composition simply means the arrangement of actors and properties on the performance space by the artistic director. Bell-Gam (2007) defines composition as the rational arrangement of actors or objects on stage through the use of emphasis, stability, balance and sequence to achieve beauty (p.84). Oga (2007) describes composition as the general arrangement of a stage picture using both animate and inanimate objects in order to create the environment for the dramatic action by the director (p.93).

Emphasis is the giving of attention to an important stage figure or object to capture the attention of the spectators. It is the projection of a character or an object for the audience's recognition (Oga, 2007, p.93), as well as the giving of attention to the most important character or object on stage by the artistic director (Bell-Gam, 2007, p.85). Emphasis can be achieved through body position (the body position of the actor), level (high level, low level), contrast, and focus; especially with the use of lights. Bell-Gam (2007, p.85) identifies the following kinds of emphasis:

Direct Emphasis: Here only one important stage figure is emphasized.

Duo Emphasis: Here two characters or stage figures are given emphasis.

Secondary Emphasis: In this type of emphasis, the most insignificant figure is given the emphasis.

Diversified Emphasis: Here emphasis is given to several figures at the same time (p.85).

Picturization

Picturization is the visual representation of the relationship among characters and objects on stage. Picturization is the image composition creates on stage. Oga (2007) asserts that composition is the general arrangement of objects on stage, while picturization portrays the emotional relationship between

objects/characters on stage, and in order to achieve good picturization, the director must understand the background of the situations, the socio-economic background of the characters and the setting of the play generally (p.93).

Movement

Movement is referred to as the displacement of the body of an actor from one stage area to another. Oga (2007) opines that movement may express itself through walking, running or dancing; it is the act of transiting through space within time, from one stage position to another. Movement is used by actors in entrances and exits to express the mood of a character, to emphasize a character or characters in relation to others, to evaluate characters and to suggest subtextual meanings (p.93). The use of movement by a director is also captured in the use of blocking (the direction of the movement of an actor in relation to the stage space by a director).

Rhythm

This is the giving of life to the hidden pulse of a play. Bell-Gam describes it as "the response to accented beats" of the play (2007, p.84). It deals with the rhythmic pattern or flow of the play and its connotative value. For example, shorter beats or pulses convey an element of excitement, sharpness, irritability, while longer beats or pulses give the impression of futility, composure, dullness. Oga (2007) refers to it as the ordering of sequence of auditory or visual impressions as perceived by the audience (p.94). Rhythm deals with the tempo and flow of the dramatic action. As a principle of directing, rhythm is very important because it establishes mood, the dramatic genre, dramatic situation and characterization. The dramatic action of tragedy in terms of tempo is slower than that of comedy. Rhythm can also be captured in the use of songs and music in a play, as well as in the use of drums and other rhythm-producing instruments, as these help to augment and supply pace to the dramatic action.

Pantomimic Dramatization

Pantomimic Dramatization refers to the use of gestures, mime and action without words by actors. According to Bell-Gam (2007), in pantomimic dramatization, meaning is given to movement, gestures without words or dialogue by actions (p.84). For Oga (2007), pantomimic dramatization refers to the theatrical communication that relies on the use of gestures, facial interplay, body language and movement generally to the exclusion of dialogue. It combines all the different principles of directing (p.94).

Multimedia: A Conceptual Review

The term 'multimedia' simply means the use of more than one artistic mediums or a combined use of several mediums in a theatre production. These mediums include text, audio, images, animations, film, video and live performance. *Oxford Dictionary.com* defines multimedia as "the art of using more than one medium of expression or communication," or designates or relates to applications which incorporate the mediums of text, audio, video and animation interactively. However this research does not include multimedia in cyberspace (the use of the internet for communication). This study focuses on analogue and digital forms of multimedia that are not internet based. Pauline Sheldrake (2007) observes that analogue devices include sound recording equipment and slide

and film projections. Digital technologies include computer generated video, sound scopes, animations, still images, and kinetic interactive equipment either worn or triggered by live actors in the theatre space (p.5). David Saltz advances that the digital technologies of multimedia can further be categorized according to their ability to react with the performers and other production elements on stage. The two categories are linear multimedia and interactive multimedia. Linear multimedia reacts to performance in the theatre space; its changes are triggered by the computer technicians who operate under the direction of the director. This form of multimedia remains unchanged (unless the changes are generated by the computer operator) regardless of the performance in the theatre space. Interactive multimedia is responsive to stage actions of the performers and other production elements, meaning that this type of technology changes its contents when triggered by either the physical movements or by the voices of the performers or light and sound elements on stage. The response can be random or programmed in some way. Hence, it is the live performance that creates the changes to the multimedia portal displays (Saltz, 2001, pp. 107-108)

Synopsis of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens"

The play "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens" which took place at Terra Kulture, on the 28th of December, 2017, in Lagos, begins with a surrealistic plane; the world of the gods. Fela is seen in the middle of the gods. Oya, one of the gods, tells him that Olodumare is sending him on a mission to go and fight evil on the earth. He has been given 27 maidens to go with on this mission. The virgins sing and dance with Fela in the middle. Next, we see Fela's shrine; the 27 maidens begin to transform themselves into Queens, as they apply makeup and wear other accessories. Fela comes in and tells the crowd to respond as he plays his saxophone. He plays a tune and the crowd responds accordingly. He welcomes everybody to his shrine and says it is where they give good music and make people feel relaxed. He informs them that it is a yabbies night and everyone is allowed to say what they want to say, but he will be the one to begin first. He tells them how Nigerians copy everything the Whiteman brings: religion, governance, in the name of democracy, which he calls demonstration of craze. He breaks into a song "teacher don't teach me nonsense." He talks of how politicians steal money and hide in foreign accounts, but if it was a poor man who stole ordinary bread to quench hunger, they will beat and nearly kill him. He calls out his two attendants, ID and Duro, and instructs Duro to play the role of a politician while ID plays the role of a thief who stole bread, he then raises the song "authority stealing" and they perform. The next scene reveals Fela's house as two maidens, Alake and Kevwe discuss. Kevwe tells Alake that Fela has finally sent for her, and she wants to go and cook for him first. Fela comes in, while ID and Duro are rehearsing. Fela sits down as he reads a newspaper. He calls ID and complains of why people steal in the country without consequences. Laide, a maiden, enters and tells Fela that she thanks God that society has him; that he would win over society. Fela catches her trick and asks her what she wants. She asks him if she can come to Kalakondo tonight. He replies her no, and says they have a timetable; she should wait for her turn. She tells him that he knows that the timetable does not favour her. She needs to see him more than once a week. Fela says if he is seeing them more than once a week, he will die. She tells him that he

cannot die and says he sees Funmilayo and Adejowo more than two times a week. Kike, another maiden, comes in and asks if she can come to Kalakondo, Fela replies her no, that they have a schedule in place. Alake tells the ladies to wait for their turn. Fela exits, while the ladies engage in a quarrel which results in a fight enacted in a dance with the song "na shakara oloje." Fela returns and scolds the ladies; he tells Laide that her blood is too hot and tells her to follow him to Kalakondo to cool her off. She refuses, Fela says she is doing "shakara"; playing hard to get. This is dramatized as Laide and the other maidens perform the song "shakara oloje ni," as Laide turns down Fela's advances. At the end of the performance, Fela asks who is cooking for him, Kevwe says it is her. He tells her to bring the food to his room. Laide asks Fela what about her, and he tells her to continue with her shakara, that he does not have time; she then tells him that she was joking.

Next, a lady by name Malaika arrives the Kalakuta with her briefcase. The maidens interrogate her to know who she is and her mission. Alake tells her that they do not have space for another woman. Malaika tells them that she came for them too; that they are her idols and even if the world thinks they are sex toys and artistic zombies to Fela, they are more than that. She distributes gifts to them and learns that they have a performance that night at the shrine. Adejowo says they have a new dance to be performed called "open and close." The women perform the "open and close dance" and Malaika is amazed. Fela comes in and sees Malaika, after introducing herself; she tells Fela that he is absolutely irresistible. Fela is elated. She tells him that she likes his sound. The two familiarize and Fela asks Malaika to tell him how much she knows him. She tells him about his mother Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, the formidable defender of market women, a terror of kings and the supreme activist of Nigeria. Fela says she knows him well. She tells him that she came to Nigeria because of him, his music and everything he represents. She says his influence in the global music village cannot be overstated. He is a showman per excellence. Fela asks her if she loves him, and she tells him not to flatter himself. She asks why he needs so many backup vocals and dancers, and he replies that the women are more than ordinary backup vocals and dancers to him; he then asks if she would like to be one of them. Malaika tells him that she is not cut to be one of them. Fela tells her that the women are not ordinary; they are tough, artful, unafraid and ready to match with him to battle, and tells her not to judge them by what she sees. He tells Malaika that she would be privileged to be one of them. Malaika says he is crazy. Fela tells her that his head is upside down, just the way the country is upside down. He then performs the song "upside down," but the performance is cut short by a loud bang at the gate.

Two policemen rush in and say they have a warrant to search the premises. They begin to search and are unable to find anything incriminating. One of the policemen quietly brings out a wrapped weed from his pocket and drops it on the floor. He bends down to pick it and calls the attention of his colleague. With this evidence they demand that Fela goes with them. The maidens surround Fela, shielding him from the policemen. This is interrupted by the rushing in of the parents of Fela's women to get their daughters. The police, with their batons, break through the blockade attacking the maidens.

Malaika sneaks out, while they take Fela away accusing him of using voodoo on the women.

The next scene reveals some men who have come to Fela's house to take Laide. They tell her that her father sent for her. She tells them that she is not coming back home, then they forcefully carry her away with them, while a crowd of parents invade Fela's house to carry their daughters who defiantly say they are not leaving. A group of uniformed men come in and one of them, Mr. Olaoye, tells them to lock the place; that they are taking the women to welfare. The next scene reveals a court room. Present are Justice Ogbonnaya, the parents of Fela's women and the Petitioners' lawyer. After so many witnesses with no real evidence, the judge, infuriated by Mrs. Ajayi's story of her daughter who is only 15 years, and part of Fela's women, remands Fela in prison for sexually violating minors and in possession of marijuana, while the parents of the girls rejoice at this.

The action progresses to Fela's house as Fela's women are busy with different activities. Fela returns, the ladies hug him and curse the government for keeping them in remand homes. They tell Fela that they escaped climbing fences. Fela tells Laide that he heard that her parents came to kidnap her. She tells him that she also escaped from the house, and if they kidnap her one million times, she will escape one million times. Fela hails the ladies for their courage. They ask him how he escaped from Kirikiri (prison). He tells them that they released him when they saw that they could not break him. He tells them that from now on, they will beef up the security in the place. They will divorce the notorious Nigerian state and have their own republic; the Kalakuta Republic. The women are elated. He tells them about what he learnt in prison, how politicians sell the masses. How the leaders sit over a cup of tea and decide the fate of others while drunk. He tells the audience that he composed a song for them, after which he performs the song "beast of no nation" with his women. Malaika returns and hugs Fela who is pleased to see her. She says she loves the way everyone shielded their differences the minute they were confronted by the soldiers. Fela tells her that in the midst of their differences and competition, his women will always constitute a coherent force against any identified enemy. Funmilayo says they never saw Malaika when there was trouble; that she appears and disappears. Malaika takes Fela inside.

Next, we see the maidens busy with different chores. Jibike, one of them complains she cannot find her soap and says it is her turn to see Fela. Malaika tells her that she can use hers, but she insists she wants her soap. Funmilayo calls Jibike and tells her to forfeit her meeting with Fela tonight for her else she will reveal her secret to Fela. Jibike is intimidated, but courageously tells Funmilayo to go to hell. Laide, infuriated by Funmilayo's action, attacks Funmilayo as they fight. Fela rushes out and after hearing from both sides, he performs the song "yellow fever;" satirizing Jibike for bleaching and sentences her to 16 hours in Kalakuso (a make-shift cell), and sentences Funmilayo to two weeks edit (two weeks without sex), for stealing Jibike's soap and for blackmailing her.

The next scene reveals Fela as he gives his maidens money from a briefcase. He tells Malaika that she has to work like everyone before she can be paid. He asks her what she would like to do, she tells him to give her time to think about it. After this, Fela's women, summoned by Funmilayo, plan and beat

up Malaika for coming to steal Fela from them. Her cries draw the attention of Fela who rushes out and interrogates the women. Malaika, unable to provide a witness to defend her case, is disappointed as Fela dismisses the case. Fela goes inside, the women attack Malaika again, and this time, she goes in, returns with her luggage and leaves. After this we see Lekan, another of Fela's boys soaked in blood as he staggers in. Fela comes out and enquires from him what caused it, and he replies that he had an argument with some soldiers, and after answering them back, they beat him up. Fela instructs them to take him to the doctor. Two soldiers come in demanding that they release Lekan to them. Fela tells them that they cannot take him because he is wounded. They tell Fela that he is obstructing justice. He tells them that they can come with their rifles and bazookas; that they have no right arresting anyone there. The soldiers exit and Fela orders ID and Duro to secure the gates that he suspects that the soldiers will be back. Soon, soldiers armed with guns storm the place, brutalizing everyone and manhandling the women.

The next scene reveals Fela's unconscious body on an operating bed in a hospital, as a doctor attends to him, while a policeman stands by to observe. The multimedia screen displays the EKG monitor with spikes and dips indicating the waves of Fela's unconscious heartbeats. At downstage area are some of Fela's women seated on the floor, looking terribly battered as nurses attend to them. The policeman standing beside the doctor tells her that Fela must not die, that he needs to go to court and then to prison. Fela's women lament how they were raped, stabbed, stripped naked and beaten by policemen. One of the nurses says they have suffered all these things and have been labeled prostitutes and drug addicts, yet they still stay with Fela. The women say they believe in him and stand with him, the nurse says they have been brainwashed. The ladies resolve to stand with Fela no matter the circumstance. The nurse asks them what if Fela dies; Fumilayo says Fela has put death in his pocket. The maidens begin to sing praises to Fela. The EKG beeps; a wave is seen as Fela jerks back to consciousness. The policeman is happy. Fela wakes up and asks who wants to kill him? The police officer tells him that he is glad he survived, and now the long hand of the law can deal with him severely. Fela calls him a motherfucker and tells him to get out, after which they perform the song "unknown soldiers."

The next scene showcases Fela and his women. The women are unhappy as they lament that they have nothing because the police destroyed everything. Fela tells them that they will go to Beko's house, that they owe him. The next scene shows Fela and his women in Decca with their luggage. They sing the song "international thief thief." Fela tells Mr Ogeus that they breached the contract he had with them, and they owe him 250, 000 naira. Mr Ogeus tells Fela that it is a private company. He brings out his phone and calls the police, while Fela and his women perform the song "palava he dey find." Two policemen come in and tell Fela that he and his women have invaded a private property, and that they would have to follow them to the station so that they can discuss things amicably. Fela later leaves with them. After this, some policemen arrive and tell Fela's women that they have a court order to vacate them from the premises with immediate effect for constituting public nuisance. The women leave dejectedly.

Next, we see Fela, his women and his band boys. The mood is a sad one as Fela says the government does not like him because he uses his music to speak for the oppressed. He says they have the audacity to call his women prostitutes and says he has been jailed almost 200 times. He says the government destroyed Kalakuta, he moved to Cross Road hotel, they still came there, he moved to Decca, to Ghana, to Parisona in Ikorodu and then to J.K's place, and they keep following him. He tells them that the most painful one was how they killed his mother by throwing her through the window. He says he has a song for that, tries to play the song "unknown soldier," in an attempt to revive the spirits of the women. The women tell him that he is the one everyone loves and respects, but they have been rejected, after giving up everything to be with him. They are now outcasts. They ask him why they should make music. To redeem the honour, pride and respect of the women, Fela decides to marry them.

They prepare for the wedding as Pressmen come to interview Fela. One of them tells Fela that his way of life lacks decency; the way he dresses and treats women. He tells the press that he does not care what people say about him, and that as far as he is concerned, he must marry his women because without them, there would be no him. He tells them that if they are looking for news, they can come and cover the wedding. He picks up his saxophone and performs the song "ololufemi." The final scene shows the marriage ceremony as a priest performs a general cleansing on the women. After this, Fela tells the women that he is the cover they seek, and as he weds them, let all their dignity be restored. Let the whole world know from now that they are wives and not women sold for pleasure. He is their King and they are his Queens. After which he performs the song "water no get enemy," celebrating the loyalty of the women.

Directing and Multimedia in "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens"

This analysis shall examine the use of the aesthetics of space, time, bodies of the performers, the text, sounds, and other production elements such as high-tech intermedia aesthetics as video and film projections in the production by the director. These would be discussed using the principles of directing, which are composition, picturization, movement, rhythm and pantomimic dramatization. Such play production processes as script selection, audition and casting, are excluded from this analysis because the production is owned by a private theatre company, and most times their productions are commissioned or sponsored, as such, they have a retinue of actors on standby to perform roles, consequently, the directors table cast actors for roles in productions. Hence, discussions on the use of directing and multimedia in the production would be based on analysis of the production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens", while discussions on the rehearsal stages of the production would focus on the whole process of planning and using multimedia from the pre-rehearsal stage to the post-production stage of the production. Furthermore, this analysis would focus on a selected scene where multimedia was used, so as to provide for a better understanding of the discourse.

In scene ten of the production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens," the stage composition reveals a hospital ward as Fela's body is being operated on by a medical doctor. Fela is lying on a medical bed at upstage centre, while a female doctor

stands to operate on him, beside her is a policeman. Behind Fela, the doctor and the police officer is displayed on a multimedia screen on the wall of upstage centre, an image with the inscription "GENERAL HOSPITAL WARD 1." On centre stage left and downstage left are a group of nurses standing and attending to Fela's women whose voices can be heard as they cry and wail from pains. In terms of lighting, the stage is dark, except for a blue light cast on downstage left, which is supported by the light from the multimedia screen projector.



Fig. I Showing Fela being attended to by a Doctor and a Policeman addressing the Doctor

From the stage composition, we can see that the stage is balanced, as no part of the stage appears heavier than the other in terms of the distribution of the stage figures. We see the use of levels and planes, as Fela is lying on the hospital bed upstage centre (up plane and up level) and Fela's women are seated on the floor downstage left (down plane and ground level). The standing of the doctor, the nurses and the policeman represents power and authority (strong body position), while Fela's women who are sitting on the ground are in a weak body position that signals defeat and helplessness. Fela's body gains emphasis because he is the centre of attention and the stage composition is stable and firm as it glues the stage figures to the stage space, while the element of sequence unites the different figures on stage by the stage space.

From the stage composition, the picturization elicits the feeling that all is not well as Fela appears to be battling for his life, while his women bemoan the calamity that befell them after the police raided the Kalakuta Republic, and set it abaze, destroying everything they had. In terms of movement, we see the policeman addressing the doctor upstage centre in the image above. The actions in this scene are rendered operatically against a tune played by the orchestra. The policeman addresses the doctor thus:

Policeman: Doctor, this man must not die.

Doctor: I will not allow it.

Policeman: He has to go to court and then to prison. *(The Doctor gesticulates, trying to explain things to the policeman, he reacts).*

Policeman: Sharrap! Listen, keep him alive. *(The Doctor agrees nodding her head).*

After this, at centre stage left and downstage left areas are Fela's women on the ground, as they sorrowfully speak out their ordeals, responding to an interrogation from a nurse, still rendered operatically with a tune from the orchestra. We see four nurses attending to the women. Some of the women are on drip.



Fig II Showing a Nurse as she addresses Fela's women

Nurse: *(Standing diagonally in a bent position centre stage left as she addresses the women pointing at them).* You have been raped, beaten, imprisoned, ostracized by your family, you have been labeled prostitutes and drug addicts because you are with Fela. How do you continue to stay with him after these hardships?

Maidens: We believe in him.

Lara: We will stand by him.

Nurse: You have been brain washed to the point that you find no fault in him.

Lamile: We will stand by him come what may, in his struggle against corruption.

Kike: We will stand by him; come what may, even if it means brutalization.

Nurse: What if he dies?

Maidens: *(Chorus) Fela? (They reject the idea of Fela dying and begin to sing praises to his name).*

The action moves over to the multimedia screen as Fela's spirit is seen leaving his body as it ascends up.



Fig III Showing Fela's spirit leaving his body as it ascends up

The maidens continue to sing praises to Fela, while the Doctor is seen still working on the body of Fela. His spirit returns to his body, after which Fela jerks back to life and is assisted to a sitting position by the Doctor, he then responds to his name in the song by his women.

Fela: Who dey there? *(The policeman rushes in from upstage right and addresses Fela).*

Policeman: Oh my goodness! So it is true? Now listen, the long hands of the law can now deal with you severely.

Fela: Get out of here you motherfucker!



Fig IV Showing Fela as he comes back to life

The above actions showcase how the principle of movement was used by the director in this scene in terms of blocking.

The principle of rhythm is captured in the individual beats and timings that separate each unit of action in this scene, which animate the hidden pulse of the scene, giving it tempo and energy. This is also supported by the songs and drumming from the orchestra, as they help to establish the sad and optimistic mood of the scene, the tragic-comic genre of the play, the situation of the scene and the characterization of the characters.

The principle of pantomimic dramatization is expressed in the use of actions without words to convey messages. An example is seen when the Doctor is attending to Fela's body and after his spirit returns, he jerks back to life. The jerkily movement of Fela's body is pantomimic and dramatic; signally that life has returned to his body.

In terms of costumes, the nurses are dressed in their professional attire made of a white gown and a small white cap and shoes; the Policeman is dressed in a black long sleeve shirt with black trousers and shoes, a baton and a cap, while the Doctor is dressed in a shirt and trouser with a white coverall. Fela wears a traditional *adire* long shirt, while his women are dressed in a mixture of traditional Yoruba women attires, and some are dressed in jeans and shirts. All characters wear straight makeup appropriate to their class and character, and this highlights their natural features.

Speaking on the processes involved in the planning and use of multimedia in the production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens," Ikenna Okpala, the Stage Manager of the production submits that:

There are different departments that work day and night to ensure the success of all our productions. One of them is the projection team - they are involved in the creation and design of all multimedia displays. They usually come in not less than two weeks before the opening night. Prior to this time, they would have invested ample time in reading and dissecting the script; speaking to the director and stage manager to share their ideas and also to know the plans of the director. After this they go away to prepare the first draft, which is subject to the director's assessment. There can be as many drafts as possible until the director is duly satisfied. The next phase would be the technical run, which is usually programmed a week before the first public showing. We make sure to have as many runs as possible to allow perfect synchronization of lights, set, music, costumes and of course multimedia. This is the process we use in all of our productions, including "Saro The Musical 2" and "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens." The person who handles multimedia in our projects is Mr. Ice Nweke, and has this to say about the process: For me I take every show as a new one, so when I was called by the production company BAP and was briefed on the story about "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens," my first step was to do a full research on Fela, the Kalakuta Republic and his wives. I spent sometimes visiting the Kalakuta museum in Ikeja and paid lots of visit to the African shrine. I wanted to take myself back into time to that very era, that very time and place when Fela and his queens existed. I wanted to create and set multimedia visuals that encapsulate everything about that time and also help push the boundaries of the story. After the research I started attending the rehearsals with the approach to see how best to create each

scene visually by introducing every element that I have created during the research and also make all the necessary adjustments to help solidify each scene (I. Okpala, personal communication, February, 22, 2018).

Multimedia Production Approach and Its Implications for Live Theatre in Nigeria

The use of multimedia as a new approach to play production in Nigerian theatre by Bolanle Austen-Peters in the production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens" indicates a lot for the future of the postmodern Nigerian theatre as well as the art of play directing. Of course she did not just stumble on the idea using multimedia in her productions; it was an idea that was inspired by the social realities of the time. When asked about how her career began as a director and what influenced her choice of using multimedia in her productions, Bolanle Austen-Peters responds thus:

Well, I became a theatre director when I decided to produce "Saro The Musical" in 2013. I felt the need to stage a Musical/Stage play with international standard and change the narrative about the comatose Nigerian theatre. Before directing Saro in 2013, I observed the productions that took place in Terra Kulture every Sunday and realized that there was something missing. There was a disconnect and the turnout was mostly low. So we did our research and realized that the demography of those who would like to see a stage play is lower than those who would go to the cinema, so in order for us to capture our audience we decided to incorporate multimedia into the story we are telling. With the use of multimedia we have been able to engage our audience and further explain the story being told. By synchronizing the old style of live stage performance and the modern cinema we created a different, better and amazing experience. So I can say what inspired our choice of using multimedia was the need to create a modern experience and from the business angle we wanted to attract both young and old audience (B. Austen-Peters, personal communication, January, 30, 2018).

From Austen-Peters' submission, the choice of using multimedia was a necessity because of the need to boost theatre productions in Nigeria to international standard, and this led to the synchronization of the old style of live theatre in Nigeria with modern cinema elements, as well as the need to attract both young and old audience to the theatre. Speaking on the advantages of using multimedia in the production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens," she submits thus:

Multimedia has been very impactful in all our productions because it helps tell the audience the part of the story that probably will not be acted but can be seen and this helps the audience understand the story better. I would give you an example, in "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens" when Fela died, we were able to show Fela's spirit leaving his body and returning into his body, ordinarily we wouldn't be able to show you that if we stuck to the old method (B. Austen-Peters, personal communication, January, 30, 2018).

From her response, it is obvious that the use of multimedia in theatre productions provide directors with an additional back up to the story presented on stage, by showing the audience parts of the stories that will not be acted out, as well as providing more visual impact to the stories directors tell. When

asked to evaluate the impact of her use of multimedia on the audience in her productions, she responds thus:

The impact is amazing, the audience gets to understand the story better, multimedia also serves as a form of entertainment on its own, so for the younger ones who naturally might get bored watching the play we keep them glued to their seats with multimedia. From the business angle, you generate additional income from advert placement on the screen (B. Austen-Peters, personal communication, January, 30, 2018).

From her submission, multimedia productions provide entertainments to young adults and children, who might get bored watching only live drama, and just like adverts on television reality shows, multimedia productions afford directors extra opportunities to make money through advert placement on the screen in course of a production.

Speaking on the ability of multimedia productions to sustain the Nigerian theatre audience, Bolanle Austen-Peters submits that:

For us at BAP Productions, we see the multimedia approach to theatre production as the future and the way to go. We want our audience to be entertained and to leave the arena with an experience and yes the multimedia approach has proved to sustain the theatre audience because the experience is a combination of live play and cinema. From the feedback we get from our audience, multimedia is actually a brilliant way to retain our audience (B. Austen-Peters, personal communication, January, 30, 2018).

Ikenna Opkala, the Stage Manager of the production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens" also adds that:

Sincerely I think it can. It lacks very intense technical requirements, and the audiences are always marveled at how they are transported into various sceneries in an instant. Unfortunately most of the present theatre students are not being taught to explore this alternative. They all seem to be stuck in the traditional theatre system, and part of it draws from the fact that it is more cost friendly to invest in traditional theatre here in Nigeria. But I do believe in multimedia theatre too in the quest to grow the Nigerian theatre. Mr Ice Nweke, our Multimedia Designer also has this to say: Yes the multimedia screen can help in sustaining the theatre audience and this is based on what is being projected on the screen, how it is projected, the amount of research put into it in its creative process. And finally, we are in the digital age, where almost everything is automated. We are in the era where as much as traditional theatre is vital to the growth and progress of theatre, the digital/computer era can only help push the boundaries and give a broader depth, perspective to the art form (I. Opkala, personal communication, February, 22, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Every theatre is a product of its time and era, as such; it exists to serve the people of its time. However, problem is bound to occur when a theatre can no longer meet the needs and aspirations of the age and people it exists to serve. The foregoing is the case with live theatre in Nigeria that is increasingly suffering the lack of patronage from the Nigerian audience. Many reasons have been advanced for this phenomenon, such as the rise of the film and television mediums, poor quality of theatre productions, the security situation in the country, amongst others. But a major reason for

the present state of live theatre in Nigeria is the old fashioned style of interpreting plays on the part of Nigerian directors that continues to alienate contemporary Nigerian audiences from theatre shows. Nigerian directors are therefore challenged to adopt a media-friendly play production approach that aligns with the digital and technological realities of the contemporary Nigerian society, if they must win back lost theatre patrons. Interestingly, some Nigerian directors, especially in the Western part of Nigeria, like Bolanle Austen-Peters, are beginning to employ multimedia in their play productions.

This study has examined the multimedia production approach and its implications for live theatre in Nigeria using Bolanle Austen-Peters' production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens" as a case study. The study employed the case study and content analysis research approaches of the qualitative method to realize set objectives, and adopted Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of "Postdramatic Theatre" as its theoretical framework. The study observed that the multimedia production approach, which combines more than one artistic mediums in a production, such as the elements of text, audio, images, animations, film and video with live performance, has proven to be profitable and successful in the city of Lagos, Nigeria, because of its ability to attract both old and young audiences to theatre productions, as it synchronizes the old style of live stage performance with modern cinema features to create a different, better and amazing theatre experience. This study therefore recommends that Nigerian directors in other cities embrace the multimedia production approach in their play interpretations, if they must win back lost theatre patrons.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to Dr. Ilami Clive Krama, Prof. Emmanuel Calvin Emasealu, Prof. Henry Leopold Bell-Gam, and Dr. Edum Sunday, of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, and Prof. Sam Ukala, of the Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, whose opinions and advice were valuable in the realization of this work. God bless you all.

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How to cite this article:

Tekena Gasper Mark and Henry Leopold Bell-Gam (2018) 'Multimedia Production Approach and its Implications for live Theatre in Nigeria: a Case Study of Bolanle-Austen Peters' Production of "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens"', *International Journal of Current Advanced Research*, 07(9), pp. 15591-15600. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijcar.2018.15600.2853>
