

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

**PROCESSING THE PROCESSES FOR
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
A THEATRE DIRECTOR'S APPROACH**

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE

By

PROFESSOR HENRY LEOPOLD BELL-GAM

DIP, B.A (HONS) MA, DEA, PhD PARIS, FRANCE

Department of Theatre and Film Studies,

Faculty of Humanities

INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES

NO. 142

OCTOBER 26TH, 2017

University of Port Harcourt Press Ltd.,
University of Port Harcourt
Port Harcourt
Nigeria.
E-mail: uniport.press@uniport.edu.ng

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ISSN 1119-9849
INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES: NO: 142
DELIVERED: OCTOBER 26TH, 2017

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Designed, Printed and Bound by UPPL.

ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

2:45 P.M. Guests are seated
3:00 P.M. Academic Procession Begins

The procession shall enter the Ebitimi Banigo Auditorium, University Park and the congregation shall stand as the procession enters the Hall in the following order:

ACADEMIC OFFICER
PROFESSORS
DEANS OF FACULTIES/SCHOOLS
DEAN, SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
PROVOST, COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES
ORATOR
REGISTRAR
LECTURER
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ACADEMIC)
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ADMINISTRATION)
VICE – CHANCELLOR

After the Vice-Chancellor has ascended the dais, the congregation shall remain standing for the University of Port Harcourt Anthem. The congregation shall thereafter resume their seats.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S OPENING REMARKS

The registrar shall rise, cap and invite the Vice-Chancellor to make his opening remarks.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR SHALL THEN RISE, CAP, MAKE HIS OPENING REMARKS AND RESUME HIS SEAT.

THE INAUGURAL LECTURE

The Registrar shall rise, cap and invite the Orator, Professor Julie N. Umukoro to introduce the Lecturer.

The Orator shall then rise, cap, introduce the Lecturer and resume her seat. The Lecturer shall remain standing during the introduction. The Lecturer shall step on the rostrum, cap and deliver his Inaugural Lecture. After the Lecture, he shall step towards the Vice-Chancellor, cap and deliver a copy of the Inaugural Lecture to the Vice-Chancellor and return to his seat. The Vice-Chancellor shall present the document to the Registrar.

CLOSING

The Registrar shall then rise, cap and invite the Vice-Chancellor to make his closing remarks.

The Vice-Chancellor shall rise, cap and make his closing remarks. The Congregation shall rise for the University of Port Harcourt Anthem and remain standing as the Academic (Honour) Procession retreats in the following order:

VICE-CHANCELLOR

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ADMINISTRATION)

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ACADEMIC)

REGISTRAR

LECTURER

ORATOR

PROVOST, COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

DEAN, SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DEANS OF FACULTIES

PROFESSORS

ACADEMIC OFFICER

DEDICATION

This lecture is dedicated to my parents Mr. Sofiri Leopold Bell-Gam and his lovely wife Mrs. Evelyn Bell-Gam of blessed memories

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Almighty God for His loving kindness and divine protection since the beginning of my career. I wish to thank my amiable dedicated and caring wife Amb. Comrade Mrs. Theresa Kikpoye Bell-Gam JP for her support and encouragements during the trial periods and during the preparation of this lecture. Being a Theatre Artists herself, I can gladly claim that she is my producer, my stage manager, my costumier, my director and house manager. Indeed she process my processes.

Many thanks to my children Tonye, Henry, Gloria, Pamela, Princess and Edna. Henry, Princess and Edna are specially appreciated for standing and motivating me daily.

My thanks also go to my brothers Senebo Dienye Sofiri Bell-Gam, Professor Winston Ibifubara Bell-Gam, Hon. Dagogo Bell-Gam and my sisters Dr. Ama Thenacho and Dr. Emilia Bell-Gam for their assistance during the planting season of my academic career. It was my two elder brothers Dienye and Winston that sent three of their siblings including me for studies overseas having lost our parents. This is a rear gesture, I remain grateful to them. I thank my step brother Assissi Bell-Gam of blessed memory, my sisters-in-law, Mrs. Bose Bell-Gam, Mrs. Christiana D. Bell-Gam, Dr./Mrs. Hope I. Bell-Gam and Mrs. Mina Bell-Gam for their encouragements.

My ever caring and wonderful cousin Professor S.J.S Cookey, 2nd Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt , his wife lady Gladys Cookey of blessed memory, I thank you for the care and encouragement. Thanks to His Royal Majesty King Dandeson Douglas Jaja. JP Jeki the V, Chairman Rivers State Council of Traditional Rules, the Amayanabo of Opobo Kingdom and his Council of Alapu for giving me the opportunity to serve as member of Opobo Cultural Committee.

I thank the Federal Government and the then South Eastern State Government for supporting my brothers with the award of scholarship that saw me through the M.A to PhD programmes at the University of Paris VIII Vincennes and Saint 'Denis France. I am grateful to my lecturers especially Professor Andre' Veinstein who supervised my Ph.D Thesis.

My in-law Chief Magnus Arugu, thank you for your fatherly relationship and your moral support. My Mother-in-Law Mrs. Priscilia Umarani Arugu of blessed memory, thank you for the gift of Theresa as a wife. Thanks to Evans Junior, my wonderful in-law, who rendered wonderful services to make this lecture succeed.. My colleagues in the Department of Creative Arts, Department of Music, Department of Theatre Arts and Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Department of Students Affairs thank you. Thanks to Azunwo Emenike and Tekena Gasper my colleagues for the motivation and corporation. Special thanks to Edum Sunday a lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, for his motivation and also performing the secretarial duties to make this lecture succeed. God bless you

I remain grateful to Chief Ambassador S.M.K Taribo J.P former Minister Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission, Nigerian Embassy Paris for his encouragement in Paris and even now when he has retired. His Royal Highness Eze Clifford Chetta Nwuche, Eze Igbu Upata the II of blessed memory. Your encouragement and sponsorship of my productions locally and internationally remain indelible in my mind. Thank you Eze. I also thank Chief Dr. Mike Amachree J.P Proprietor of Port Harcourt Brooklyn Centre and President of Centre for the Promotion of Tourism, Arts & Culture in Nigeria for his encouragement. Late Chief Dr. Sam Eke of SAMEKE Group of Companies is appreciated for his sponsorship of *Orukoro*. Major (Ven.) H. Ugwu is thanked for his spiritual guidance.

I am exceptionally grateful to the Vice-Chancellor Professor Ndowa Lale and the University security unit for their prompt response when I became a victim of whistle blowing at my residence. I am grateful and happy to be alive to deliver this inaugural lecture in your watch. I am grateful to the current Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. T.V. Burutai and Rev. Major Woduga, the State Security Service (SSS) and the Nigerian Police Force for their efforts in rescuing my wife. The following Ministries, and agencies are thanked for affording me the opportunity to appreciate productivity in the theatre profession: They include Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Information, National Orientation

Agency, Centre for the Promotion of Tourism Arts and Culture (CEPTAC), Centre for Black African Arts and Civilization (CIBAC), Radio Television and Theatre Workers Arts Union (RATTAWU) and Tess “K” Theatre Port Harcourt.

Finally, my thanks go to all my students, especially those who accompanied me to Sheffield, Great Britain for the International performance.

Protocol

The Vice – Chancellor

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Deans of Faculties

Distinguished Professors and Scholars

Heads of Departments

Staff and Students

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

PREAMBLE

Permit me to begin this lecture by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor of this Unique University of Port-Harcourt Professor Ndowa E. S. Lale for giving me the opportunity to deliver this long expected inaugural lecture. It is my pleasure to also thank the Department of Creative Arts which housed three disciplines namely; Theatre Arts, Music and Visual Arts in which I served as co-ordinator of programmes and Acting Head of Department for several years. The Department later split into Theatre Arts and Fine Arts and Design and recently Music. I also served as Head of Department of Theatre Arts and pioneer Head, Department of Music. My association and interaction with staff and students of the various units afforded me the opportunity to learn, research and combine the aesthetics of the various arts units in my productions.

Vice-Chancellor sir, a close look at all my productions on stage reflect the roles of Drama, Music, Fine and Applied arts in communication. I do believe that these were the attributes. Professor B. Nwigwe saw and hinted me that he was nominating me to serve as the foundation Head, Department of Music in this University, a challenge I took very seriously and by the grace of God a vibrant Department of Music now exists in the Faculty of Humanities. I sincerely thank the then Vice Chancellor Professor Don Baridam who appointed me to serve in that capacity and Professor Nwigwe for his prophetic nomination.

I sincerely thank Professor Michael Oti who as a member of an international Sport Committee, nominated my play *Orukoro* to represent Africa in the World University Games and Cultural Festival held in 1991 in Sheffield England. This exercise projects the cultures and theatrical image of this University so much so that, the then Vice-Chancellor Prof. K. Harrison called me on phone while I was still in London with the University Theatre Troupe and offered me immediate accommodation on campus on my return.

Vice Chancellor sir, let me reveal to you that as a Theatre artiste I am a storyteller and have the poetic licence to observe people and I

am entitled to intrude into people's affairs, it is from this exercise that some of us theatre artists create characters that we use to mirror the society and call for "Change" through our plays and productions before an audience. I am bold to say that through observations, I know the characters of most Nigerians especially those in politics and the University of Port Harcourt including you the Vice-Chancellor. Just don't worry if you find yourself on stage any day.

I deliberately do not want to begin this preamble with what influenced me to train as a dramatist but Theatre Arts conditions me to be a historian, philosopher, preacher, prophet and above all, a scientist. Vice-Chancellor sir, permit me to commence as a historian by giving a brief information on my motivation for the choice of theatre as a profession. My father Senebo Sofiri Leopold Bell-Gam, the "author of the famous Igbo literature text titled" *Ije Odumodu Jere* during the colonial era was an educationist who served as Headmaster in various towns such as Owerri, Bonny, Port Harcourt and Egwanga now called Ikot Abasi. With my mother his beautiful wife Evelyn they had six children with me as the fourth child. My parents were culturally and artistically inclined. I started my primary school at Saint Georges School Egwanga where my father was the Headmaster. At the end of every year various cultural activities were organised and prizes awarded to the best group. As a child of six years I started participating in masquerade displays as a dancer, singer and drummer. My mother was the patroness of a famous cultural group called *Digbosogh* which in addition to masquerade displays during annual festivals displayed a traditional dance-drama entitled *Govenor*. This dance-drama showcases the arrival and political intrigues of the colonial masters in the Niger Delta. I never missed watching the production.

I was also influenced by the performance of the Opobo-Nwaotam and at that early age I joined the Ogele- Mkpa group as a dancer and singer. I was also a chorister and strong member of Saint George's Anglican Church Egwanga where we organised drama during harvest and other church programmes. My association with *Mkpojufor* a famous local comedian who went from house to house

amusing people and receiving donations also influenced my creative thinking. The man could dance, sing, act and can finish over ten cups of Garri within few minutes if provided. The day I carried him on a bicycle was a special amusement for the public. I did not relent expressing my creativity in Regina Coeli Secondary School, Essene as Sergeant Major of the famous college band. In Anglican Grammar school Port Harcourt I was crowned and costumed the “Queen” and during festive periods kept in a hut where people paid money to have a hand-shake with me. In Wilcox Memorial Comprehensive Secondary School Ogbor Hill Aba, as an active member of the Dramatic Society, I initiated and produced several play-lets. I took the second position in the then Eastern Nigeria essay competition, with the topic “Hard-work” and received an award of £50. Christmas, Easter were also occasions for me to display my interest in drama and theatre. I was a regular organiser of liturgical plays on the birth of Christ, His crucifixion and resurrection and participated in Agaba, Ulaga and Amakekwu dances at Aba

My artistic experiences did not degenerate even during the civil war. I quickly set up a theatre troupe name Armed Forces Entertainment Group designed to entertain the army at regular intervals. The first outing of the troupe at Egwanga nearly had a tragic end, just as the audience had assembled and the play *This is Our Chance* written by Ene Henshaw and directed by me was to begin; three war planes bombarded the town, but the show still held. In the same town I was a member at that tender age of Egwanga Dramatic Society comprising of Civil Servants. I acted the role of Albert Lumunba in a play “Patrick Lumunba” to entertain members of the audience who were seriously in dire need of pleasure during the war. Vice-Chancellor sir, with these experiences my friends, brothers and sisters were not surprised that I finally read Theatre Arts at the University of Paris where I was also influenced by the works of great theatre geniuses like Molière, Eugene Ionesco, Stanislavski, Grotowsky, Bertolt Brecht and others.

Vice-Chancellor Sir, this story is to inform you that every artist is endowed with talents that are inbuilt; all that is needed is for the

crude talent to be refined. You are observing that I have now been placed on a stage facing you the audience. Usually when people hear that Henry Leopold Bell-Gam is going on stage, they know what to expect: intimidating stage presence, psychedelic body movement in dance patterns, provoking dialogue, and exciting pantomimic dramatization. Today you will not see that blend of aesthetic elements that make up theatre production. I also have no doubt in my mind that the title of this lecture may have kept many of us in suspense. The questions likely to be asked are “Is Henry Bell-Gam not in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies? What is he processing? Is the theatre now a processing company? I do not blame anyone who thinks that way. He may be right, he may be wrong, we will discover at the end of the lecture. Let us however accept that life is a process, and every process needs to be processed to achieve the desired goal. Theatre is life processed by the director for the audience.

Permit me to emphasise that I am a Theatre Director and also a Playwright and have lived and functioned in the business of processing ideas bothering on the issues of leadership, unemployment, child abuse, corruption, cultism, examination malpractice, poverty, kidnapping, militancy, tribalism, nepotism, hypocrisy, oppression, electoral indecency and cultural revival through my works. However, today’s business is strictly on directing because I am a Professor of Theatre Directing. This informs why the title of this 142nd inaugural lecture is **Processing the Processes for National Development: A Theatre Director’s Approach.**

CONCEPTUAL REVIEWS

Theatre thrives on processes in its realization of goals. Thus, we have playwriting processes, acting processes, design processes, directing processes and management processes. In all these processes actions are executed with a mission that every process is processed to arrive at a process meant for the audience to restructure and make society better for humanity. It is important to clearly direct the focus of this lecture by examining such essential concepts which include theatre and drama, playwriting and playwright, acting and

actor and directing and director. Issues of the theatre as a discipline, a field of study and a profession revolves around these concepts.

Theatre and Drama

According to Cohen (1988), theatre is derived from the Greek word *Theatron* which means “a seeing place, a building, and a company of players”. The term can also mean a company or group of persons who through artistic performances entertain an audience. (Theatre troupe), a Lecture Hall, Hospital where surgery is performed. There is also the War Theatre associated with the Military. e.g. Operation Lafia Dole and Church theatre like Holy Ghost Theatre where Christian miracles are displayed. Theatre also includes a performance structured to entertain an audience. Accessing the concept of theatre, Wilson and Goldfarb (1999) state that “Theatre is art and as such it mirrors or reflects life. It does not try to encompass the whole of life at once, rather, it selects and focuses on a part of the total picture (p.1).According to Burns (1972) theatre is:

An arena in which it is possible to study manifestations of the social values, form and conventions of society, and also the images of social reality which people of different kinds and at different times have construed for themselves.(p.)

Theatre irrespective of the style and form it operates remains man’s greatest creation to complement the creation of God. Infact the difference between the creation of man and that of God is the issue of universality and limitations. Whereas God’s creation is universal, man’s own creation is limited. You can see the earth and the sky wherever you go but you cannot see an art work, a musical performance, a dramatic piece or even a play-text anywhere you are until you come in contact with it. According to Wright (1972)

God made man in his own image and manmade theatre in his own image. He was fully aware that the world was filled with hate, discord, unhappiness, rivalries, misfortune, misunderstandings, conflicts, wars, accidents and destruction but he also knew that there was abundance of

kindness, generosity, love of mankind, brotherhood, fun, excitement, joy, contentment and personal satisfaction. Symbolically, he chose two masks to represent his creation: a mask of tragedy, that wept, and a mask of comedy, that laughed (p.3)

Performances are either to express the pains of man in the name of tragedy or express the joy of man in the name of comedy or a mixture of both, the tragic situation and comic situations. Vice Chancellor sir, when you watch a performance on stage, screen or listen to a radio drama, it cannot be far from either comedy, tragedy or tragicomedy with the sole aim of expressing man's dreams, aspirations, fear and joy. At every moment of your life you are either sad or happy but situation have made some individuals to live in joy and sorrow at the same time which is the reason for the tragi-comedy genre. No wonder, Arnold (2001, p.2) is quick to declare that:

Into theatre performances we pour our dreams, our myths and stories, our struggles and fears. The conflicts that divide us and the laughter that make us whole take their place on the stage. We make a journey through space and time that is limited only in our imagination

Indeed, theatre has continued to provide an opportunity for man to confront the government, social issues, religious issues and economic issues. This effort has produced desired result apart from the entertainment dimension

Historical Perspectives

In his desire to have the three basic needs of life: Food, shelter and clothing, the early man engaged himself in farming and hunting. First he built a hut for himself using tree branches, made fire by cracking of rocks, used the leaves to cover his nakedness, wild fruits and the proceeds from his hunting afforded him enough food. He was happy and contented with his family. Observing the smartness and quick escape by the animals during hunting, he decided to disguise himself by wearing the skin of the animal he killed to

deceive his prey. He imitated the animal which ignorantly drew closer while he shot and killed it. On getting home, he gathered members of his family, other associates, appointed one person to impersonate the animal while he played the role of the hunter, thereby demonstrated how he executed the hunting. This was acting. Similarly, man was fetish and worshipped unknown and natural occurrences that beat his imagination such as rain, thunder, flood and the sun. Man believed in the existence of totems, and that the soul of the dead dwelt in the big trees as their resting places. To ensure effective communication with such supernatural forces, he used the wood to carve a mask to represent this different phenomena. This is why masking remains essential elements in masquerade displays and are associated with deities.

Theatre in Ancient Greece

The conventional acceptable origin of Theatre is traced from the 5th century BC in Greece associated with religious rites in honour of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and fertility. Plays were presented at the city of Dionysia, an annual games festival which brought the entire community together in celebration and during which emerged the first playwright Aeschylus (525 – 456 B.C) who wrote quite a number of plays including the trilogy, *Agamemnon*, *Achilleis*, *The Danaides* and *Laius*. Other playwrights include Sophocles (497 – 405 B.C) who wrote *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, and *Electra* and Euripides (485 – 406 B.C) who wrote *Media*, *The Bacchae*, *Alcestis* and *Hippolytus*. A scrutiny of the works of these three famous Greek playwrights show that their works revolved on tragedies. Aeschylus wrote of the gods Sophocles wrote on heroes while Euripides wrote about men. Comedy also flourished in ancient Greece as Aristophanes emerged using comedy to freely attack the socio-political problems in the environment.

Evolution of Theatre in Nigeria

A discourse on the origin of theatre in Nigeria may be speculative. What is however certain is that anywhere human beings exist, there is theatre. Nigeria did not have a name until the British colonized the various ethnic states; the Yorubas, Hausas, the Ijaws, the Ibos, Efiks,

etc. were more of city states. These city states had their indigenous political, socio-cultural and economic values that sustained their existence. Their beliefs in the existence of gods and deities influenced governance, leadership and good judicial system. If one stole, he was taken to the shrine for judgement and the result was immediate. The Chiefs, the Council of Elders were honest people who ruled the city states with integrity and proven accountability to the people. The age grade system was sustained and constituted into cultural groups who performed their rituals and festive ceremonies. Their dance steps, music, costumes, musical equipment were unique. Ceremonies associated with childbirth, initiation into womanhood, marriages, coronation of kings and chieftaincy installations, widowhood rites, harvest festivals, new year festivals were organized with vigour and peace aesthetically embellished with masquerade and dance displays.

The British colonization and imposition of the Christian religion on the people's ancestral religion introduced a new form of theatre known as Concert especially in the Church. The birth and crucifixion of Jesus Christ were dramatized to attract more converts. The process of transforming theatre as a social element and popular entertainment was championed by Hubert Ogunde. The establishment of Colleges/Universities gave theatre an intellectual and popular boast in Nigeria. There are over forty Universities in Nigeria training artists across the country. The demands may have redefined the name such as Theatre and Film Studies, Theatre and Communication Arts, Theatre and Media Arts, Theatre and Performing Arts, Dramatic and Performing Arts, Theatre and Cultural Studies etc. but their curricula is theatre in theory and practice. Similarly, the establishment of the National Theatre has also influenced the emergence of State Councils for Arts and Culture across the country. As we speak almost all the states have cultural centres and this has also made the discipline take a more active stage in the development of the country. The emergence of the Nollywood industry is another evolution stage of theatre in Nigeria which has added to the GDP of the country. Currently, Nigerian theatre is

dominated by the stand-ups because it appears that in every family there is a comedian.

One can critically submit that the development of theatre in Nigeria has evolved from the traditional sacred to secular rites of masquerades, festivals, to Literary tradition with playwrights such as Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clarke, Ola Rotimi, Ene Henshaw, Zulu Sofola etc., actors Joke Silva, Olu Jacobs, Pete Edochie etc., and directors such as Ola Rotimi, Henry Bell-Gam, Emmanuel Emasealu , Sam Ukala, Chris Nwamuo, Abdurasheed Adeoye etc. emerging, to Nollywood and currently stand-up comedy producing such comedians as Ali Baba, Julius Agwu, Basket Mouth, AY, Dandy Humorous, Akpororo, I Go Dye and Gordons etc.

Who is a Theatre Artiste?

A Theatre artiste is someone who is able to transform his natural character to another character for the purpose of educating and entertaining an audience through acting, directing, playwriting and other arts of creativity. A good performance in the theatre is not about the natural personality of the artists but about the character he or she impersonates on the stage through his art. Permit me to put it to you sir that this is the time for all those who regard theatre arts as an institution of unserious business to have a rethink. We are solid, consistent, focussed, creative and admirable.

Who is involved in the Theatre?

The answer to the question is simple; the artists and the audience. The artists present a performance before an audience who gets emotionally involved in the performance. In addition to being the financiers and patrons of the Theatre, the audience especially in the indigenous African theatre setting may during a performance cease to be an audience and transform to participants. Mr. Vice-Chancellor in a situation where a member of the audience dances into the arena to appreciate a dancer/masquerade through pecuniary award at that instance, he ceases to be part of the audience but a performer. This suggest that theatre is inescapable to human reality

Nigerians from my observation are generally involved in this process of audience participation in Theatrical performances. For this reason, I am forced to insist that every Nigerian is a Theatre artiste and Nigeria a huge stage for theatrical expressions. Among Nigerians and at all levels, the educated and the illiterates, there are potential actors, actresses, make-up artists, costumiers, stage managers, business managers, directors, dancers, singers, musicians, and designers. What they do daily does not differ from what characters in plays do.

Objectives of the Theatre.

Theatre is not a joke as some Nigerians assume but a very creative, serious and intellectual activity designed to influence the behaviour of man in his relentless efforts to contribute to the development of his environment through a cohesive processes. I was amazed when a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria declared that: “The Senate is not a Theatre, this is where we think and take decisions for the development of the country”. Well he may be right but I believe that his declaration is a total expression of ignorance, he does not understand the theatre. Can he recounts to us how many times the Senate and different houses of Assemblies such as Rivers, Ekiti, Delta and Ondo States etc. have displayed recklessness, violence and savagery during their different assembly sittings. I recall that in one of the states, the most cherished ceremonial object, the MAZE was used to smash a colleague’s head. Now let us be sincere to ourselves, drama and theatre being embodiment of conflict and resolution what can be more dramatic and theatrical than the actions of the Senate and House of Assembly. Am also very grateful to God that this action does not occur in the University of Port Harcourt Senate where I belong. Justifying this objective, Whiting (1954) opines that “The theatre makes its appeal on two levels: the aesthetic and the intellectual levels. On the aesthetic level the theatre contributes to the emotional needs of man and his hunger for the beautiful. The objective of the theatre rests on the 5Es which are:

- i. Education
- ii. Enlightenment
- iii. Entertainment

- iv. Escape
- v. Excitement

Elements of Theatre

The success of any theatrical production depends on the strength and ability of several elements. These include

- i. The play, the script or the drama.
- ii. The actor who executes the performance of the character
- iii. The Artistic Director who is responsible for the aesthetic and thematic interpretation of the work of the playwright (The drama)
- iv. Adequate environment for the performance.
- v. The audience who consumes the performance

Drama

Before I discuss drama, let me inform us that there is usually a misinterpretation of the term drama and theatre. The two words are different but mutually functional. Theatre encompasses all arts including drama. Drama is part of theatre but cannot stand as theatre until subjected to a creative interpretation. The word drama is derived from the Greek word *dram* which translated into English simply means a thing done, to do, to act, to sing to dance, to imitate, to build, to direct, to write, to produce, to analyse, to perform, to create, to entertain, to advertise, to organise, to construct, to laugh, to empathise, to get angry, to quarrel, to kill, to kidnap, to provoke, to disguise, to investigate, to settle conflicts. In all these situations something is done. There is no body in the Nigerian society who does not do any of these things. If you don't, I do. I am sure the Vice-Chancellor does.

I see the story of Adam and Eve in their beautiful Garden of Eden as recorded in the Bible as an exciting and thought provoking dramatic experience initiated by Satan who urged them to eat the forbidden fruit. One may ask why the Almighty God created Adam and Eve. Male and female, why not create only the man or the woman? We agree that if the Almighty God in His wisdom created man alone or

woman alone, there will be no procreation. He created and admonished them to multiply in their likeness. We are also told that God created man in His own image and created the woman out of the ribs of the man. Hence, men claim that women are weaker sexes. Obviously the creation of man and woman was the beginning of conflict which is the core of drama. The natural forces are also in conflict with each other for example, day and night. Also observed by the ancient philosopher in his Enneads as translated by AH Armstrong (1988) reality is made up of two forces, light which represents goodness and perfection and darkness which represents the corruption and evil. And these forces are forever in constant conflict with each other. Similarly, different species of plants and animals, different geographical environment, hot areas, cold areas. Seasons such as harmattan, summer, winter rainy season, dry season have influenced man in many ways. Perhaps there is the need to ponder at what would have happened if the creator created everything about man equal. That is same colour, same height, same, same language, same mannerism, same voice, same strength, same sex, same face, and same destiny. Imagine a world with these characteristics, in such a world, definitely there will be no conflict because everything is equal. There will be no corruption because people will be satisfied with what they have, there will be no stress and quarrel because the pattern of living will be the same. There certainly will be no robbery because nobody will lack the basic necessities of life. Man's navigation through the rivers of struggle for survival brings him into conflict with others who are equally struggling to survive. I am delighted to reemphasize that the Almighty God is the first and greatest creative artists and dramatist. Drama is a scripted action of man's concept of life through dialogue, characters and conflict. Different definitions of drama have been documented over the years. For instance Igwe (2009) defines drama as a genre of literature written and intended to be performed by actors before an audience wherein the dialogue and actions of

characters tell the story. (p.220). For Amali (2008) drama is the totality of man's life's and death's activities and experiences, seen and unseen, real and imagined world". He identified three types of drama: imaginary, real, natural, imitation and actual living drama. For him, while the imaginary drama exist in imagination, psychology, spirits, dream, fantasies, illusions thought, vision feeling, the imitation drama imitates totally or partially man's life, death and environment, real, natural and actual, living drama deals with the real natural and actual living human and non- human activities, actions, experiences, conditions, environments of the worlds". Amali's findings justify very vividly our claim that every human being involved in activities in this physical world is acting.

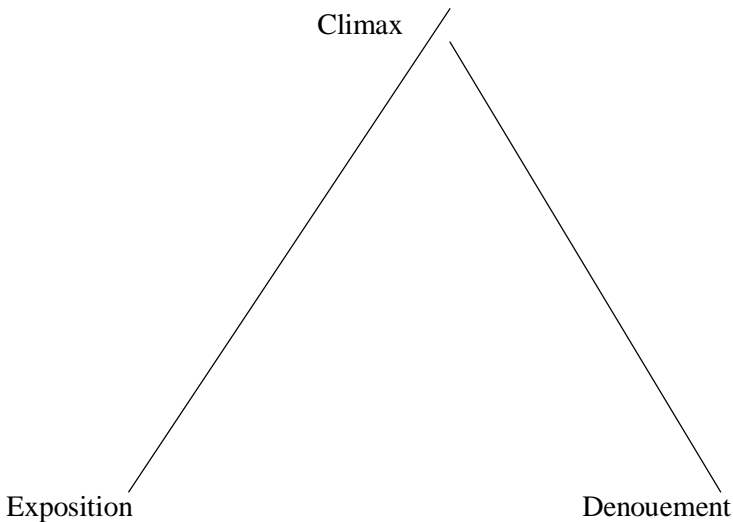
Let me at this juncture emphasize that in spite of misinterpretations, re-interpretations and translations of Aristotle's magnum opus *Poetics*, its content is yet to be totally refuted by scholars. Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher (384 – 322 BC) is globally recognised for his contributions to dramatic theory and criticism. His theory on dramaturgy remains the most acceptable in the theatre tradition for playwrights. In his definition of drama which he christened tragedy, he posits that:

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in the language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of emotions. (p. 10)

In Aristotle's sense, drama is highly elitist and should be reserved for the kings and highly placed figures. He saw drama as a concept for the highly referred. He gave the most enviable and acceptable suggestion to playwrights at the level of structure of plays. For Aristotle, a well written play should consist of three unities: unity of place, time and action. He went further to identify the six parts of a play which are plot, character, diction, thought, music and spectacle. According to Cameron and Gillespie (2000)

Plot: orderly arrangement of incidents in a play;
Character: the impersonated person in a play; Idea:
All good drama possess ideas, Language: this must be
captivating and emotional to reflect the character,
Music and spectacle

The plot of a play in the sense of Aristotle comprises of exposition, conflict, complication, climax resolution/ denouement. These different parts must be well crafted by the playwright because it forms the basis for which the director identifies and analyses the dramatic action before the interpretation. A typical plot flows as indicated in the Fry Tags pyramid thus:



Another element of drama that is very important to the playwright and the director is character. Simply defined as the different personae that express the dramatic actions through dialogue. A person who through imagination, creativity relaxation internalizes the behaviour of a person and enacts same on stage. It is essential to note that the Theresa you observe acting Grandmother ceases to be

Theresa at the end of the play. Cameron and Gillespie (2000, p. 49) observe that: “Dramatic character is at best, an imitation of a selected aspect of humanity. This is why a sane person can in acting play the role of a mad man”

Kinds of Characters

- Protagonist: This is the central figure in dramatic action
- Confidante: A character who confides in the protagonist
- Antagonist: This is the character in conflict with the protagonist.
- Raisonneur or author’s character.
- Foil: This character makes a fool of other characters in a serious dramatic action by creating an ironic atmosphere in a serious action.

Apart from the issue of plot and character, dialogue is another important element that is very important to both the playwright and the director in their crafts. Simply defined as conversation between two or more individuals who communicate their feelings to one another.

Factors Affecting Dialogue

It is essential to appreciate that certain factors affect dialogue. They are Language of the character, geographical and cultural environment of the character, social experience and status of the character, age of the character, sex of the character, moral attitude and conduct of the character and temperament. Considering these factors, it is obvious that many of you if not all of you here seated are potential playwrights. One does not necessarily have to undergo the vigorous training in Theatre Arts or Film Studies to be a playwright. No matter how popular their plays may sell, they are classified technically as “Armature playwrights” because most of them do not adhere to Aristotelian structural principles of playwriting which the professional does.

Playwriting and the Playwright

The craft and art of documenting imagined or real stories through dialogue, characters and conflict is Playwriting. Any artist who crafts believable ideas through characters and conflict for the reading audience is a playwright/dramatist. Observation is the first process in playwriting. The universe and the immediate environment afford an enviable opportunity for playwriting. Playwrights observe the behaviours of people around them, their mannerism, their ways of speaking, their language, their relationship with others and their general attitudes including mode of dressing and cultural background to create believable characters. The second process is inspiration. A playwright is always inspired and motivated to write plays by the issues within his environment. Obviously, when more than one person are involved in a story, there will definitely be conflict and dialogue. It is the individual conflict and dialogue that form the major composition of a play the major aspect being “conflict”.

Acting and the Actor

Acting is a process of communicating ideas through the use of the body by an actor. An actor is an individual who impersonates a character documented or imagined to express ideas. Ancient Greece did not only produce the already mentioned playwrights, history maintains that she produced the first actor.

How did it happen?

Dionysus the Greek god of fertility and wine was always being worshipped by the Dithyrambs a 50 man choral singers at the temple singing praises and thanking Dionysus. One day the leader of the Dithyrambs: Thespis pulled out from the group and assumed the personality of Dionysus while responding to the praise from the rest of the 49 members. By this gesture, Thespis became the first living actor. This is why theatre artists are referred as Thespians

The Stage

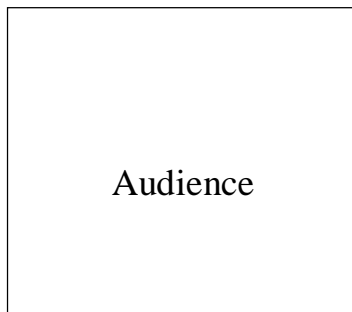
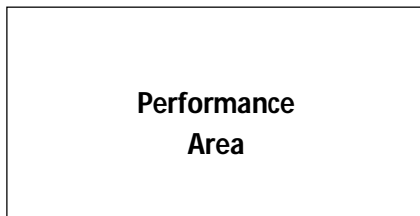
The stage by simple definition is the part of the theatre where performances take place. It is the environment used by the artistic

director to showcase the realities of life in a theatrical form. It exist in two categories namely: the closed stage and the open stage. The closed stage is a structural arrangement with a clear demarcation between the performers and the audience. It constitutes a raised platform and the audience is seated facing the same direction. A typical example is the proscenium stage.

Stage Geography

The stage for any conventional performance has the following areas

Up in Stage Right	Up Stage Centre	Up stage Left
Centre Stage Right	Centre Stage Centre	Centre Stage Left
Down Stage Right	Down Stage Centre	Down Stage Lift

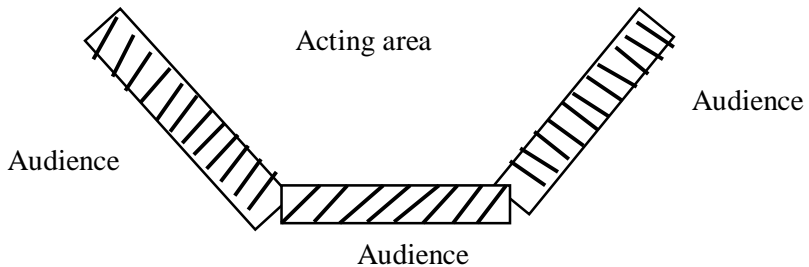


Proscenium Stage

Because of its origin from Italy, it is also referred as Italian stage or picture frame, or pin whole stage. The audience watch a performance happening in a room without a fourth- wall. The

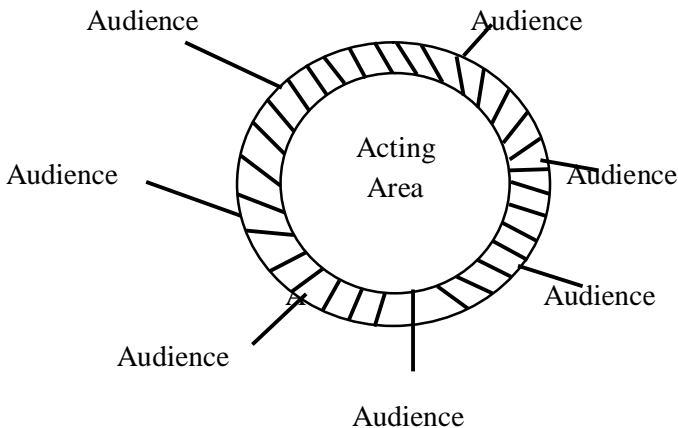
audience does not have access to the acting area. The open stage is the opposite of the closed stage and there is no demarcation between the acting area and audience. The audience and the performer share the same space. A typical example of an open stage is the one in the CRAB referred to as Thrust stage. In this stage structural arrangement, the audience are seated facing three directions with the acting area at the centre

Thrust Stage



Another example of the Open stage is the Arena stage also referred to as island stage or Theatre-in the Round. In this arrangement, the audience sits round the acting arena. Mostly found in the typical African traditional theatres especially in the villages. Another name for this stage is island stage.

Arena Stage



In the course of my research on performance location, I discovered another natural open stage which is the Aquatic Theatre. It includes all performances that take place on water. eg Boat Regatta and other complimentary performances such as the Egwein in Okrika. In this structure, the following stages are observed.

- i. Floating stage
- ii. Fluid stage
- iii. Shore-line stage.

Given their advantages and disadvantages, I have processed and utilized the various types of stage with the same adjustment in my numerous productions. It was very convenient to stage my plays in Proscenium, Thrust and Arena stage because of the convenience of the audience, their safety and their aesthetic appeal. First, it was easy to mount the sets, lighting and sound equipment for adequate illumination. I however experienced some difficulties in the use of the thrust and arena stage. The performers at times mask each other thereby preventing the audience from seeing all that is happening on the stage. The arena, though very accommodating to the audience had its own serious problems, since the audience has easy access to the stage, they disturb the performance by forming a mini arena inside the main arena, thereby preventing most members of the audience from experiencing the entire performance. Performance on water during a regatta outing has its own problems. Tidal waves, depth of the river, constitute major problems for me as a director and the performers. Another major problems associated with Aquatic performance is the uncontrollable attitude of the performers who are mostly unprofessional. It is a risky performance because drowning of a performer may occur

Audience

In various life activities, people gather to justify the event. For example, spectators watch footballs, worshipers in churches are referred to as congregation. Congregation is used in a university environment as an assembly of all graduates in the institution. Those who watch plays in the theatre are called audience. Theatre being a social and cultural event is associated with the larger societies who in turn constitute the audience during performance. In preparing

their arts for the audience; the theatre artists reveal behavioural patterns inherent in diverse cultures, attempt to resolve conflict and also afford entertainment for them.

According to Vaclav Harvel, a playwright and former president of Czech Republic (1994) “the theatre is more than just performance of tales. It is a place for human encounter”. Mr Vice Chancellor sir, the audience constitute a group of persons who individually assemble in the theatre to watch a play. Classifying them as social audience, Cameron and Gillespie (2000, p. 27) identify three important traits of theatre audience.

- They are group of people rather than individuals
- They come together at a special place and a special time to watch a performance
- They affect the way actors perform, and so they affect the performance.
- They influence the way actors perform actors thereby affecting the performance

Cohen (1988, p.43) declares that “the gathering of the audience is however, an important consideration in the presentation of a play” entailing a process that is not without its artistic and cultural significance”. Nwamuo does not fail to mention the importance of the audience in the theatre when he observes that the Theatre audience is a group of people drawn to a Theatrical event by the appetite of art at a certain time and place, and that is aware of itself as a homogenous group of art lovers.” Commenting on the role of the audience in theatrical performance, Anigala (2006, p. 27) attests that “The audience is an integral element in any dramatic or theatrical performance. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the audience is not in the theatre only to be entertained. They are through the Box Office distinguished financiers of the production. They empathize and also act as critics of the production. It is amazing to observe that even in the church, indigenous music, songs and dance steps are synthesized in harmony to afford the Christian worshipers glorious joy and peace in worship. By our nature as Africans and Nigerians in particular, our songs, music and dance steps are influenced by our immediate environment. For example in the Niger Delta region notably Rivers

State the wriggling of the waist during dance is an imitation of the movement of fishes in water. Most northern dances are influenced by the movement of cows, in the Ibo region were most of them are hunters and farmers their dance steps are influenced by the movement of animals, hunting etc.

Vice-Chancellor Sir, I am making no attempt to be satirical in my presentation. However, I am tempted to suggest and validate my submission that every Nigerian involved in any form of job is acting performing an essential role for the benefit of the society. Believing that such persons have at least once in their lives been a theatre audience. Wainscot and Fletcher (2010) reveal that:

At its most basic levels, theatre provides a sensory experience for the audience, it appeals to the human senses as the audience is actively involved in perceiving, processing, reacting to, and storing a fast number of stimuli (p.27)

There is no doubt that these virtues gathered from theatre experience can be translated into the job ethics by the individual thereby enhancing productivity for national development

Directing and the Director

The term directing is the scenic and visual interpretation of a play-script. The 'word' directing is not strange to many of us. Anybody who is a director does the process of directing. In the ministries, parasternal, industries, universities, many are designated as "Directors" performing the functions of making sure that performance is carried out effectively by the workers under their watch in line with the stipulated guidelines and processes of the organization. All executives, legislators and judicial leaders are directors of the Nigerian administration. Similarly, all Vice Chancellors, Deans, Heads of Departments, lecturers, Union leaders and students are directors. Generally speaking, directing is tailored in two ways. You first be a director to yourself before directing others. Therefore, directing begins with the individual.

Historical records suggest that until about one hundred years ago, there were no theatre directors. Actors individually interpreted their

roles, determined and decided their movement on stage, designed their costumes, decided on colours to use, the properties etc. Although the actors were managing themselves directorially does not mean that directing did not exist at the beginning of theatre events. The Ancient Greek theatre applied the Teacher-Director system” didaskalos” which means “teacher” for play interpretation. As scientific experimentation evolved and improved by 18th/19th centuries realistic directors began to emerge. Towards the end of the 19th century George the II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen emerged as the first conventionally accepted theatre director. It was the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen that assembled all the artistic elements: stage construction, actor’s movement costume and make up, music etc. as a collective unity and began to effect blockings. This action which gave him full responsibility as the general supervisor of theatrical productions made him the first modern director. Between late 19th century and early 20st century Andre Antoine in Paris and Konstantin Stanislavsky influenced by the Duke of Saxe- Meiningen developed stylized directing. At the end of this historic evolution a standard internationally accepted directorial processes were established and the theatre artistic director began to handle the following responsibilities such as selection of plays for production, auditioning, casting, integrating the play, conceptualized the play, co- ordinate the dressing constructing the ground plan, coaching the actors, effecting the blockings and harmonizing the production for the pleasure of the audience. The director’s function in the theatre is tasking and very demanding although he is fully in charge and have overwhelming influence on the production crew and the actors, the audience do not see him physically on stage during the performance but feel his impact and contribution through the actors and the production crew. Hodge (19, p.7) confirms that:

The Director is a talker, a verbal imagist, for his primary work is communication- not directly to the audience but to the actors and designers who then transmit his ideas to the audience.

Again for him, an artistic director is an analyst, a communicator, a master designer, instructor and a critic. These are exactly what I am. The Theatre as a cultural institution has an effective administrative

structure. The realization of a performance involves the contributions of collaborators from the artistic and managerial or administrative unit. The different personnel are displayed in the organogram below:

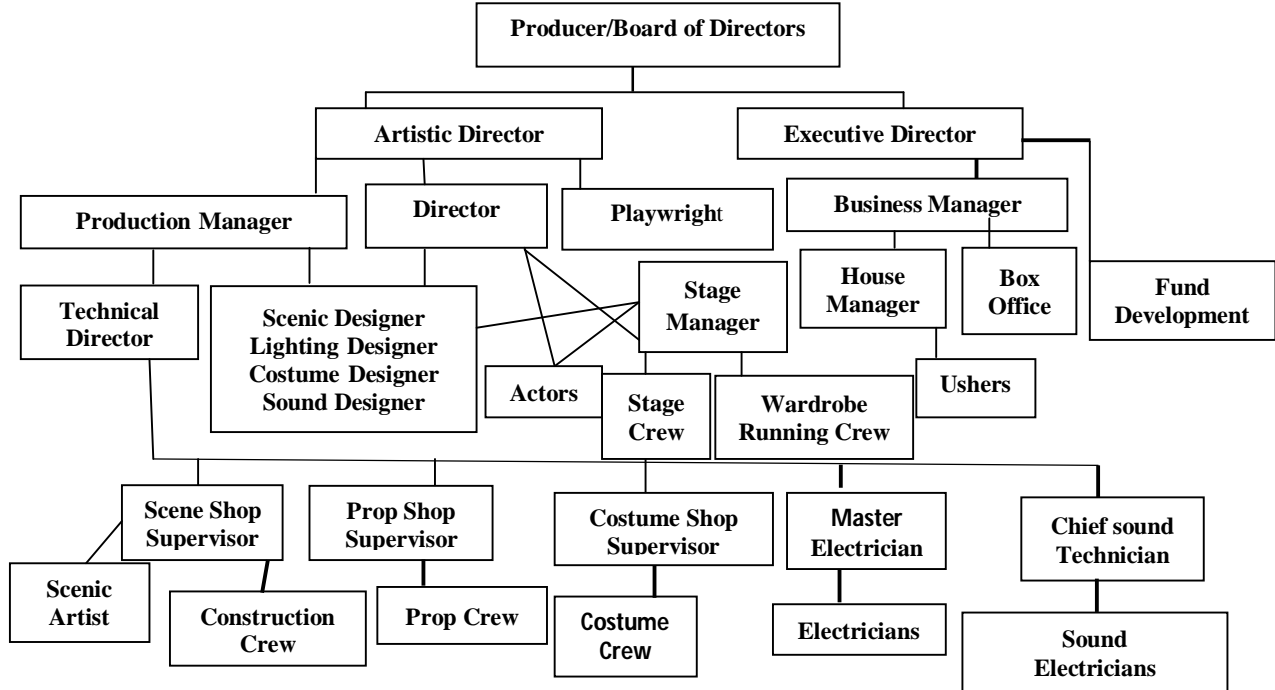
Directing Theories and Approach

Modern play directing must be backed up with one of the three major directing theories. Chris Nwamuo (1985, p.168) highlights the theories. Which are “Gordon Craig’s theory, the Laissez- faire theory and the Via-media theory. Quoting from Gordon Craig’s *the art of Theatre*. Chris Nwamuo further observes that Gordon Craig’s theory preaches the necessity for complete unity in the theatre, believes that the director is the artist of the theatre through whom the audience receives the playwright’s message. He concludes that if this is true, the director must be an absolute dictator who shapes actors to carry out his ideas. This is a true scenario in the directorial process. Some directors are dictators, some are bullies and heartless in fact wicked. I don’t possess these unfriendly qualities yet I am able to carry my actors and actresses along to a destination successfully.

Collaborators in the Theatre Processes

A group of persons trained artistically in different aspects of the theatre for the sole purpose of presenting plays and other forms of performances to an audience is referred to as troupe. A theatre troupe consists of the different personalities and professionals. The playwright and artistic director belong to the Artistic arm. The Theatre manager and his personnel are in-charge of the managerial aspects of the theatre. My function is to direct the play, and manage the production crew in “Team spirit” .those involved in the execution of production include; the assistant artistic director, the stage manager, the costumier and make-up artiste, the technical director, the stage hands . A typical theatre consist of the personnel indicated in the organogram below:

THEATRE ORGANIZATION CHART



S/N	COLLABORATOR	RESPONSIBILITY
1	The Producer	The financier of the theatre.
2	The Artistic Director	Does the scenic interpretation of the script. He is the chief executive of the troupe, controls the artists and production policy.
3	The Designer:	Takes charge of all designers of stage constructions
4	Lighting Designer	Handles stage lighting
5	Costumier or wardrobe Mistress	Is in charge of providing costumes for the actors. May work with the designer when necessary
6	Production Manager	In charge of ensuring smooth atmosphere for the production
7	Business Manager	Takes care of business transactions,
8.	Bouncers	Check the activities of gate crashers
9	Sound Technician	Responsible for all audio techniques in the production
10	Assistant Artistic director	Assist the director in directing the play
11	The Stage Manager	Takes the blockings and produces the prompt book. Although it is the Artistic Director who decides through composition on which part of the stage a character should be. It is the responsibility of the stage manager to document the placement in the prompt book. The prompt book documents, the names and addresses of the artistes, their telephone numbers etc. indicates the rehearsal schedules and the ground plan for the production, details of the properties for the production. This document is essential because it is a reference book for future producers of the same play. The costumier and make –up produces the costume chart while the Technical Director produces the Technical details on the production which include the following: The stage design, the lighting and sound designs. These are submitted to the Artistic Director who incorporates them into the production book. The production book indicates a total analysis of the production: The synopsis, the concept, the challenges, the characters and the cast.

DIRECTORIAL PROCESSES OF *ORUKORO*

The processes that I undergo as a director make my role in contributing to national development very unique. Although I am not a Minister, a Commissioner, a Governor or the President in the government of this country, I have acted and interpreted government policies. This I do rigorously to champion development. Here are the processes I applied in processing the processes using *Orukoro* as text and performance. This section of the lecture shall make reference to *Orukoro*, one of the plays which I wrote and directed. The play is internationally known and has brought honour to the University, Nigeria and Africa, in our tour to Sheffield, England. The entire festival was named after the play as “Spirit of the World”. This production exposed some of our students who are currently lecturers to the western culture and is still a memorable event in their lives.

Sheffield Performance Advert of *Orukoro*

Summary of *Orukoro*

Orukoro is an articulation of Creek Theatre and Natural Drama of Nigerian riverine folks. The play which is a total theatre of regatta, dance, music, ritual, mime, songs, worship, drama, incantations and fine art, is set in the physical and metaphysical world where man commune with his fellow man and his spiritual being. The play tells the story of Okoloama's search for peace through purposeful leadership and preservation of cultural values. Tumini, upon his conversion to Christianity and serious affiliation to the Whiteman's culture detests the Okoloama's culture as paganism. He connives with the Whiteman to destroy the shrine of Oru, murders King Perekule, the custodian of the Okoloama's culture while Oru-Ogolo manages to escape. His vision is to eradicate every symbol that projects the culture of the people so as to enthrone his Christian God. His attempt to ascend the throne brings him to serious conflict with Idawari who represents the true feelings and values of the Okoloama's kingdom. His machination fails and Oru-Ogolo who represents the gods prophesies that Idawari will be King of Okoloama. These prophesy attracts hatred from Tumini who also connives with his white allied to murder Idawari. This act by Tumini attracts the wrath of the gods, Chiefs, Elders and members of the Okoloama community invade him and he commits suicide. Upon his suicide, the gods chose Karibi, a very young, dynamic and innocent boy to lead the kingdom.

Choice of Play

I have over the years explained that the functions of the director begins with choosing a script for interpretation and communication thus:

This is the first function of the artistic director. It is his right to choose a play of his interest. Several conditions guide his choice of play. These include: purpose of the play, number of cast, social and cultural relevance of the play, the thematic contents; the budget, venue of the proposed performance, the dramatic genre, the availability and adaptability of the actors and actresses and the target audience. (Bell-Gam, 2007, p.126)

My aim as a Theatre Artiste is to influence the society to imbibe the spirit of hard-work, decorum and acceptable moral values that will enhance positive and sustainable development for the nation and the individuals through playwriting and directing. Factors affecting my choice of plays are the message or thematic content of the play, the cultural and social relevance of the play. I seek to understand the thematic contents, the messages and their political and social implications in the environment before I sign any contract to direct a play. I always ask the following questions, is the play culturally viable? Do I understand the culture of the environment where the story is situated? Do I have the facilities to travel to the concerned environment and conduct research? What is the social relevance of the play? Does the play conform to the social realities of the environment? If not I apply the principle of adaptation in its interpretation. After asking and receiving responses to the above question, I analyse the characters and the numerical strength of the theatre troupe and distribute copies to each member. If the play has less number of characters, I go for guest artistes. At the fifth stage of the process, I invite my production crew for a workshop to discuss the play after copies have been distributed to each member.



Research Excursion to a Shrine at Uguta

Play Analysis

By definition - this is the screening of the play script in order to perceive the in-depth meaning of the playwright's concept by the

artistic director. It is the first process I embark on after choosing the play. Francis Hodge sees play analysis as “perception” itemized seven major steps in the analyses process. These include: Given circumstance, dialogue, dramatic action, characters, idea, tempo and mood. All these areas are expected to be observed in the play script. What do they really mean?

- i. **Given Circumstance-** Stanislavski, a Russian dramatist coined this phrase to define the playwright’s setting in the play. Every play has a geographical location, the culture, the time, the season, previous events and the interest of the principal character.
- ii. **Dialogue** – this is basically the discussion between characters. From what each of the characters in a play says, the audience will further comprehend the story and the given circumstance.
- iii. **Dramatic Action-** the basic essence of drama is to resolve conflict which according to Francis Hodge (32) is the clash of forces in the play and the resolution through actions.
- iv. **Character-** simply put, characters are the dramatic personae who are involved in the conflict. Without characters there can be no dramatic action.
- v. **Idea** - this is the meaning of the play, its concept and justifications
- vi. **Tempo** - Francis Hodge (52) defines tempo as the changing rate or beat of the dramatic action in a play. according to him “ when a sequential arrangement of tempo are combined, that is when the varying beats of several consecutive units are strongly felt, you have identified the pulsation of the play- is rhythm.
- vii. **Mood** - Every well written and directed play generates emotion on the audience. A tragic play generates emotion of pity and sadness while a comic play will generate a happy mood.

Consequent upon the above I commence with the first step that deals with the analysis of the basic idea. My interpretation of *Orukoro* begins with the analysis of the dominant idea to discover the

structure and meaning of the play. Even though I am the playwright, the performance is totally different from the play. For Clurman (1972) had earlier declared that “the director is the author of the stage play” and that the work of the playwright does not exist anymore on the performance floor. This simply means that Bell-Gam as the playwright of *Orukoro* is different from Bell-Gam as the director of the same play. The reason is simple for the playwright plays with words and characters but the director plays with pictures and actions. Vice-Chancellor sir, you will observe that the theatre as a discipline has very meticulous and serious ways of handling the process of production. Even the structure of the play analysis has serious impact on the society. For example given circumstances is associated with environmental issues, dialogue is a mechanism that calls for peace while characters are associated with the peoples’ ethical values and social behaviours. Ideas are what govern the world, creates avenues for progress and development. Tempo is also associated with the society development level. When a stated plan or plans are sequentially carried out without delay, the time schedule is observed. In order words projects should be scheduled and carried out on time. Keep to the rhythm and structure of the operations. By moods, we are reminded that the world or our environment is full of joy and is also full of hostilities. There is need for adjustment. Life goes on no matter the circumstance. All these areas are expected to be observed in the play script.

Setting

I was quick to identify the setting of the play which is riverine and dominated with both human and spirit beings. The dramatic actions were basically set within the colonial era where most African traditions and cultures battle for survival in the face of the Christian religion. I also identify previous actions that centre on the Okoloama kingdom and analyse the level of dialogue in the play in three levels; between man and the gods, man and man in an attempt to share his dreams and aspiration. Oru-Ogolo’s dialogue below is a clear communication between man and his supreme being.

Oru: This is for you (pours some wine on the floor). Ha! haha, Oru! This again is for you. (Suddenly goes into a

trance) yes, yes, yeeeeees! The voice of Oru is the voice of Oru-Ogolo and the voice of Oru-ogolo is the voice of Oru (calms down again) your women will be fruitful. (Procession rejoices) they will give birth to dedicated men who will fight for Okoloama (Bell-Gam 1999)

Budgeting

Every production must be budgeted for. The budget gives a clear financial implication of the production. Obviously, no company, industry or organisation will want to be at a loss after its programme. This is also very common among commercial Theatres worldwide. Vice-Chancellor Sir, let us examine a typical budget for the Production of *Orukoro* tour as one of the processes

1. AUDITION

- Production of 40 scripts at 600 per copy = N24,000.00
- Production of forms, adverts, documentation and refreshment for audition panel for two days N200,000.00

Total = 224000.00

2. REHEARSALS

I. Allowance for 35 participants

- 25 Artiste at N5000.00 per day for 14 days = 1,750,000.00
- 4 Crew members at 6000 for 14 days = 336000.00
- 1 artistic director and playwright at 8000 for 14 days = 112000.00

II. REFRESHMENT /WELFARE

- 10,000 per day for 14 days = 140,000.00

Total Budget for Rehearsals = 2,338,000.00 Camping

Accommodation

35 rooms at 15,000.00 per day for 14 days = 4, 900,000.00

Feeding

- 3000 for 30 Artiste per day for 14 days = 1, 260,000.00
- 4000 for 4 crew members per day for 14 days = 224000.00
- 5000 for 1 playwright and artistic director per day for 14 days = 70,000.00 **Total = 11,130,000.00**

3. TRAVELLING LOGISTIC AND TRANSPORTATION

i. Transportation

- Hiring of vehicle for the Artistic Director for two weeks at 10,000 per day = 140,000.00
- From PH to Lagos for Visa at 20,000 each for 30 artiste = 600,000.00

ii. Accommodation

- 35 rooms at 15,000.00 per day for 4 days = 2,100,000.00
- Travelling Uniform at 10,000 per artiste for 35 persons = 350,000.00

iii. Logistics

- Visa Fees
- Health Certificates = 100,000.00
- Passport = 1,225,000.00
- Artiste Tags = 60,000.00
- Flight tickets at 400,000.00 per person for 35 artiste = 14,000,000.00
- Adverts and flyers = 150,000.00
- Production Brochure = 1,000,000.00
- First Aid Kit = 20,000.00
- Souvenir = 1,000,000.00

Total = 20,745,000.00

4. PRODUCTION MATERIALS

- Costumes = 1,000,000.00
- Properties = 500,000.00
- Makeup = 250,000.00
- Lighting = 500,000.00
- Sound and Sound Effect = 450,000.00
- Set Design = 800,000.00
- Drums/water pots = 240,000.00
- Packaging of production material = 2,000,000.00

Total = 5,740,000.00

5. REMUNERATION HONORARIUM OF ARTISTES

- 50,000 for 4 guest Lecturers for orientation each = 200,000
 - 30,000.00 for 25 Artiste per day for 14 days each
= 10,500,000.00
 - 35,000.00 for 4 crew members per day for 14 days each
= 1,960,000.00
 - 50,000.00 for 1 playwright and artistic director for 14 days
= 700,000.00
- Total = 13,360,000.00
- Total = 50, 975,000.00
- Contingency = 50, 97500.00

Grand total 56, 072500.00 (Fifty Six Million, Seventy Two Thousand Five Hundred Naira)

The budget is submitted to the Theatre Producer for consideration and release of funds for the production. At the release of fund the troupe proceeds to the next process:

Audition

Audition is the practical examination of interested artists for production. Its main purpose is to determine the suitability of persons for roles in a play by subjecting them to practical demonstration and exhibition of their talents.

Types of Audition

Schanker and Ommaney (1972, p.342) classified audition into the following.

- i. Open audition. This involves interested auditionees who are not members of the theatre company
- ii. Closed audition. Restricted to only members of the Theatre company
- iii. Prepared audition or textual try-out. In this process, auditionees are allowed to bring in a prepared materials from any play which they memorize and put into action.

- iv. Cold reading audition: in this instance, materials are imposed to the auditionees for action.
- v. Improvisational audition: Here dramatic situations are narrated to the auditionees who are expected to act out the situation.
- vi. Call – back: This is the final stage of the process. After the general audition exercise, successful auditionees are invited for the final selection

Vice – Chancellor Sir, I carry out my audition in an atmosphere of calm, discipline and fair-play. One who does not fit in, does not fit in, no favouritism as we see in most Nigerian interviews

Call Time

Call time is the agreed meeting time for rehearsals. In the theatre profession adherence to call time is of paramount importance. The timetable associated with the production must be respected and complied with by the artists involved. I have explained earlier that theatre is life and obviously not a timeless phenomenon. Nature has timely designed every action of man. Consequently, in the theatre rehearsals and productions are scheduled and must start and end at the appropriate time. Therefore, all Theatre artists are giving “Call-time” that is the time they should arrive at the theatre for rehearsals and public performance. The question of African time does not arise

Casting

This is basically, the fitting into roles the qualified auditionees into every character in the play by the artistic director. Several criteria are applied in this process. They are, stage presence of the prospective actor, voice/audibility, character interpretation, stamina, discipline, response to call-time and health status

Types of Casting

- i. Table casting: The use of formula actor
- ii. Double casting: Two persons in one role

Vice – Chancellor Sir, in my professional production and processes, I do not rely on table casting, but I did so in the production of

Orukoro because many artists declined to play the role of a chief priest due to the spiritual demands of the role. I researched and discovered Mr. Columbus Irisoanga, a seasoned actor who played the role of Oru – ogolo. This was a risky casting because natural causes could bring about disappointment, I realized this and quickly table cast Mr. Jack Moses who is now a reorganized Bishop to act Oru – ogolo in the absence of Mr. Columbus Irisoanga, a seasoned actor and lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies. I remained very consistent in double casting other roles in the same play. Double casting is not peculiar to the Theatre director. For obvious reasons, the University of Port Harcourt provides for the Vice – Chancellor to have two deputy Vice – Chancellors. In your tenure a male and a female, so you have no problem at all. For example, Mr President is sick and the Vice President is on with administration and life goes on. This equivalent to double casting is in the theatre.

Rehearsals



Professor Bell-Gam Addressing members of cast in a Rehearsal Session

Simply put Mr. Vice – Chancellor, what the church choir master and the sports coach refer to as “practice” is termed “Rehearsals” in the

Theatre profession. Rehearsals are the try-outs or practices organized by the artistic director to ensure that the actors are conversant with the dramatic actions and the roles they are supposed to play. It is the most essential process in play production. It is during rehearsals that team spirit, relationship between the characters, composition, picturization, movement, rhythm and pantomimic dramatization are achieved. The ground plan which forms the architectural design of the actor's movement is followed and at this time the Stage Manager has the opportunity of effecting the blockings. It is important to note that any well directed play must reveal the five vital directorial elements already mentioned.

Before commencing rehearsals one must have a plan called Schedule. Rehearsal schedule is a time-table indicating the call time and venue of the rehearsals. The Theatre, being an expression of life, everything is timed and properly programmed. Therefore respect for call – time is important if the rehearsal process and production must succeed. Only indisciplined actors ignore call-time. I disengage with such actors in my productions.

I begin my rehearsals with warm up exercises especially at the preliminary stages. The reason for the exercises is to keep the actor alert and ready for the interpretative process. After the exercise section, I commence serious group play reading. At this level, I listen to the different actors I have cast to play different roles and confirm or disagree with my casting. This group play reading affords me the opportunity to also listen to the voices of the actors and their levels of rhythm and reactions to other characters. After the group script reading which may take at least one or two weeks depending on the length of the play. I proceed to research where I allow all my casts to do individual research on their characters for at least one week. I recall that I had to travel with some of my major actors to Azumini to research on the drumming and reactions of the priestess of Oru. This creates an opportunity for the actor to fully understand his character and give a better interpretation.

I commence blockings immediately after the research exercise. In a choral rendition the musical conductor places the singers at strategic

points and according the parts of the singers. Tenor, alto, bass, soprano etc., the idea here is to harmonize the rhythm for auditory and aesthetic pleasure of the audience. Similarly in foot-ball, the coach places the players at strategic positions for co-ordination. In the Theatre, blockings are done to co-ordinate the movement on stage to be meaningful and coordinated to unite the dramatic essence of all the characters on set (Bell Gam, 2007). The artistic director in this process points out to each actor his specific positions on the stage during a performance. The documentation of the process of blocking is done by the Stage Manager for inclusion in the prompt book. The stage manager's general report on the overall programme are also expected in the prompt book. Having undergone these processes, and believing that the actors and actresses have taken in their lines, rehearsal proper begins according to the rehearsals schedule.

In blocking the play, I am building the story through movement and placement of objects. At this level I apply the principles of directing as articulated by Alexander Dean and Lawrence Carra (1974) which includes composition, picturization, movement, rhythm and pantomimic dramatization. In applying these principles I consider the response of the audience and the dramatic action. In arranging the characters and objects, I consider the emotional relationship between the characters before moving them to different areas of the stage. In doing this I consider the issue of emphasis, sequence and balance. The process of blocking is the actual cooking stage and I don't hurry. I attend to it with calmness, discipline and respect for the actors. Am never shy to accept suggestions from actors even in their movements because I always believe that they are partners in the creative process.

The moment I finish with blocking the play I commence the polishing process where a critique of the blockings is done. At this level I evaluate the movements, their pronunciations, their mannerisms, use of hand properties, relationship with the stage properties and general interpretation of the play by the actors. At this stage I tell the actors the truth about their interpretation and also tell

myself the truth about my placement and movement of actors. This moment I must confess that in my entire directing experience is the most tedious and revealing. For those who may not understand the true feelings of play polishing cast your mind to the proofreading and editorial process of your written manuscript of any article or creative work.

The next process I engage in is the technical stage where I thoroughly rehearse all the technical aspects of the production such as rigging of lights, sound effect, setting and striking with stage hands, costume parades, special effects makeup, songs and the regatta scene for Orukoro. A technical rehearsals involves the production of the entire play with full costumes stage properties, technical equipment for lighting and sound, full acting but without an audience. It is an exhibition of the entire collaborative efforts made by the artistes during the rehearsals in order to determine and appreciate the aesthetic blend in the entire production processes. I segment technical rehearsal as follows.

- i. Costume parade
- ii. Lighting and sound cues
- iii. Stage handling/setting and striking
- iv. Songs and choruses

At this stage I also ensure that all the production elements are properly designed and executed by the different collaborators. Importantly too for *Orukoro* experience I took days to rehearse the drumming and songs for harmony. Setting and striking are always painstakingly attended to for smooth flow of the different scenes. To set for the production is to keep the environment with the necessary production materials such as lights, set pieces and the necessary props ready for a scene in the production. Issues of scene changing and where to keep the set pieces are considered whereas the removing of the different stage materials brought in is the striking. This action is done in each of the scenes that demands striking and setting.

The next preparation process is the dress rehearsal which is usually my enjoyment night because I test the dish first before allowing the audience to enjoy it. Some artistic directors combine Dress and Technical rehearsals because it saves cost and reduces tension. In this process the technical aspects are tested with full costumes of the actor and actresses. It is the last rehearsal before the major production. This period is a full blown performance with all the needed materials of the production. During this stage of my directing I sit in the auditorium and allow my stage manager to run the show. I don't interrupt the performance during the run, I don't even make corrections again because the dress moment is most times the eve of the opening night.



**Henry Bell-Gam Directing his Technical Crew in a Regatta
Performance at Isaka Beach, Port Harcourt**
Performance Proper



Drummers and Orukoro Dancers in Performance Mood



Orukoro Fertility Dancers



Orukoro Fertility Dancers in a Communication with Oru

At this level of the production process, the product of the advertisement through radio, television, bill boards and flyers which began two months or even three months earlier is exhibited to the public. Tickets have been purchased by members of the audience at the box-office in the Theatre on the day of the performance. The House Manager makes sure that the theatre is ready to accommodate the envisaged number of audience. Security devices are put in place, the seats are numbered accordingly. At exactly the stipulated time the curtain opens and the show begins. In the next few hours the audience relax and consume the artistic delicacy. This is the final product of the artistic processes. This product which is the play or the show must be marketed as responsibly as possible to the audience. For the artists and the artistic director, it is a special day for the exhibition of several days of hard-work. It is for them a time and opportunity to contribute to nation building through social and moral criticism

Documenting the Production

Productions in the theatre are documented in the production Brochure, Prompt Book and Production Book. The production book is a comprehensive compilation of all aspects of the production by the artistic director. The following are reflected in the book

- Synopsis of the play
- Play analysis
- Production concept (message)
- Cast and production crew
- Production style
- Rehearsal schedule
- Budget
- The costumes and makeup
- Properties
- Sound and lighting
- The ground plan
- Dedication and acknowledgements

Note that the production book serves as a reference point for research students and theatre directors.

Production Brochure

Presentation of plays to the audience is a serious business and the audience must be given a production brochure to guide them on the performance details. The major information in a production brochure include the welcome address by the artistic director, , synopsis of the play, cast and crew list , director's note, approach, acknowledgements, date, time and venue of the production and photographs of major crew members. The brochure is usually given to the audience as they purchase their tickets from the box office

Box Office

This is a special area or a platform where tickets for productions are sold. Audience patronage reflect seriously in the box office. It is through the box office that all the efforts of the artistic director and his collaborators manifest positively or negatively. A successful play for a commercial performance like Orukoro is referred as box-office

smatcher or hit because the play generates impressive revenue. All tickets are sold in the box office by ticket takers under the supervision of the Business Manager. The image of the theatre rests in the box office

PROCESSING THE PROCESSES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Vice-Chancellor sir, here we are on processing the processes for national development. However, the term development is highly theoretical and appears practically impossible to a Nigerian who was born, bred, schooled and is working in Nigeria. The concept appears more like a text book mentality because its definition makes it alien to most Nigerians. A sincere assessment of the environment and life style in Europe informs us that Nigeria is far from being counted as a developed country. Walter Rodney (2005) maintains that: “development in human society is a many sided process. At the level of individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being” (p.1). While one agrees with Rodney’s position one wonders if it can be practiced in Nigeria, the answer is yes and no. yes because as human beings Nigerians have the ability to undergo training at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels to acquire skills. Unfortunately the urge for education among the youths is challenged by the fact that not everybody can afford education, the government is not even willing to sincerely fund education in the country. Lale(2012, p.20-21) confirms this when he observes that: “... this has been due to in part, to dramatic rising cost on the one hand fuelled by the *massification* of higher education and inability or unwillingness of government to meet these cost”

Udoidem (1992) who defines development as: a process or a state of being highlights that national development means a gradual process of unfolding for the better or growth of a nation. Nigeria is not developed because there is no improvement of material being of all citizens, there is wealth for the most powerful and rich individuals alone, there is no sustainable way such that today’s consumption does not imperil the future, there are serious poverty and inequality

of access to the good things of life and there is no attempt to seek improved physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life. In Nigeria there are abandoned projects, poverty, and unemployment. Naanen (2015) defines:

Development as the incremental improvement in the quality of human life. In ensuring human wellbeing, economic growth must be combined with development. There cannot be economic growth without development as conventional measurements of growth such as income per capita presuppose the equal distribution of proceeds of economic growth... (p.5)

Nigeria as a democratic country needs a government that will prioritize the well-being of the governed. In its totality, good housing, education, health services and employment. Nigeria needs philosophers in governance and leadership. Socrates of ancient Greece defined a philosopher as one who loves wisdom (Subrata Mukherjee et al 2007, p.60) and proceeded to inform that theatre fans could not rule because of their conception of what beauty is, and distinguished between beauty and beautiful things. He explained that beauty was a single thing which manifested itself in form of a beautiful face, beautiful colour or a beautiful voice. Following these descriptions, for him, theatre fans and music lovers could appreciate beautiful things, but were incapable of seeing and understanding the nature of beauty itself (p.60). Socrates views are correct since he commented on aesthetic appreciation by theatre fans and music lovers. Fans of the theatre and music lovers are not professional artists.

Plato on the other hand was of the opinion that philosophers can rule a people when he opined that: A philosopher would be able to administer justice and act for the good of the community. He further described the philosopher as “someone with good character, calm disposition and a sound mind”. Such a being according to him

Would have the quality of a ruler namely, truthfulness, high mindedness, discipline and courage, undoubted by death,

and being a lover of truth, he would be honest and forthright. He will not be petty or mean, being above physical and material pleasures. Devoid of emotional ties and economic consideration, he would be public spirited and wise since the state was directed towards the highest and noble end (2006, p. 60).

How many Nigerian politicians possess these qualities when they aspire to contest for Local government Chairmanship? House of Assembly or Representative or even Gubernatorial, what is their target? To serve the people or to loot the people's money? I will leave you to generate the answers to these crucial questions. Perhaps the theatre can do better in providing valuable answers to this questions through productions

Vice-Chancellor sir, my major worry as an artist is that of Nigerians who abandoned their ways of life and embraced the Western culture, power tussle and the incessant search for a true leader in Nigeria. I am interested in conscientising and educate Nigerians in particular and Africans at large on cultural values through the theatre. I have therefore, consistently engaged in processing plays of reputable and erudite Nigerian playwrights, regatta and festival performances of Nigeria with the intention of championing national development to the audience. I choose plays, rehearse the plays, and presents them to the audience for national development. In the process, I use songs and music to call attention to issues that affect society. I chose plays that capture the sufferings of the masses and call for effective leadership from the family unit to the entire society. In all my academic papers and productions, I have made frantic efforts to identify the African traditional theatre with attention on the Riverine areas of the Niger Delta where I grew up. Vice Chancellor sir, I am from the water area of Nigeria and I like water, the river and anything that comes with it fascinates me and keeps me alert. This environmental factor prompts me to search for the sources for these contemporary theatrical activities that dominate the culture and tradition of the Riverine people in particular and the entire Africa. My attempt to promote national development relies on oral tradition,

oriental theatre and theatre of the absurd, mythology, legendary, supernatural communication, ritual objects, costumes and the language of the drums. All these I do, to attempt at creating a miniature of the society which is aimed at fostering national development. Such plays as *Adamma*, *Jehovah*, *Mrs. Edwin*, *Orukoro*, *King Jaja*, *Igboduogu Dreams of Obio*, *Erebie*, *No Sarifice*, *No Marriage*, *Mrs. Manfreds Dream*, *Ube Republic*, *The Hidden Treasure*, and *Enemies of Destiny* which I have directed over the years are all development driven. Wole Soyinka's *Kongi Harvest* which comments on dictatorship, corruption and change in communal values. Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* which comments on the intrigue and betrayal, poverty, conflict, infidelity, love, deceit and family tragedy of the Niger Delta, *Once upon Four Robbers* by Femi Osofisan strongly comments on social injustice and the erosion of moral values, crime and rebellion are all attempt in performance by the director to foster national development. There is no iota of doubt that the public productions of these plays had empathic effects on most members of the respective audiences and contributed to change of attitude and promote peaceful coexistence.

A conversation between a senatorial aspirant Prince Eremadu and Chief Oriri in Henry Bell-Gam's *Ube Republic* clarifies the situation:

Prince Eremadu: I want you to help me talk to the Chiefs about me.

Chief Oriri: This your ambition is somehow. Do you realize that our King, your father is old? And you are the heir to the throne? You want to deprive the ancestors their legitimate rights because of politics? Won't you bring about a curse upon the community? And more hardship to the people?

Prince Eremadu: I don't think so chief. The ancestors themselves will understand... (*Ube Republic* 15-19).

This conversation between two well-placed characters in the society explains the ugly situation we find ourselves. Both Prince Eremadu

and Chief Oriri are corrupt. Prince Eremadu is bribing his way to an elected position with the intension of grasping millions that are not meant for him. This is a dominant issue that I have consistently processed to my audience .Permit me at this juncture Mr Vice - Chancellor to refer to and substantiate on nature, God and conflict with few comments by Karl Marx's historical dialectics and philosophy of human development. Conflict itself being an existential concept inherent in human society, Karl Marx point of view was that class struggle is a major source of conflict. He therefore advocated for classless society. For him, the idea of class citizenship should not exist, rather he encouraged the production of goods and services shared equally among individual members of the society, if this is done, class struggle will come to an end. He maintained that class struggle exist as a result of the exploitative culture between the rich and the poor in the society. For class struggle to end all conflicts, the present system of governance must be destroyed and one begins to imagine a society free from all forms of exploitation. To achieve this he advocates for communism as a system of government that will completely eliminate all forms of conflicts.

Karl Marx philosophy of human development took a critical and holistic view of human society and the existence of class struggle as a result of the different classes of individuals existing in the society- namely; the Proletariat and the Bourgeoisies. He believed that for a society to advance to the level of humanity, there will be a revolution by the lower class or proletariat due to the inherent exploitation and humiliation against them. The poor naturally believes that since the rich refused to give them what belongs to them, they wish the rich to die so that they will invade their property and share things in common. This is the case we see reflecting in *Orukoro* because the only solution to the continued oppression of the masses by corrupt leaders is total elimination. For Claude Ake in Efemini's Claude Ake's philosophy of development, implications for Nigeria Efemini (2003, p.1) "Understanding the meaning and nature of development has remained an on-going concern for man" Deciding whether given societies are developed, developing, or not

likely to develop has equally posed some difficulties. Ake thinks economic growth or industrialisation alone is not development. Development for him is the process of social transformation in which the people themselves are in charge of the process". Vice – Chancellor Sir, I do completely agree with Karl Marx and Efimini's point of view on Claude Ake's philosophy of development.

In our dear country Nigeria today, conflicts related to the elements of Karl Marx's theory and philosophy of conflict and Efimini on Ake's philosophy of development do exist. Nigerian society is a classed one. First, one identifies the differences between the rulers and the ruled, the employer and the employee, the rich and the poor, I am tempted to mention the sick and the healthy, but I realize that every Nigerian is sick. If it is not financial sickness, it is emotional sickness such as anxiety, depression, contamination of the hippocampus etc. If it is not physical sickness it is spiritual. So none of us is entirely healthy. This, I have consistently pursued to correct through my productions. In our dear country Nigeria, each individual in the various mentioned groups also naturally have in them some characterless and unacceptable conflicts. The following are noticeable in us; discrimination, power tussle , greed, wickedness, lawlessness, corruption, hatred, religious hypocrisy, pretends, pride, unfaithfulness, deceit, hunger, tricks, cultism, robbery, touting, 419, OBT, insurgency, militancy, hooliganism, prostitution, waywardness, indiscipline, impunity, examination malpractice, destructive criticism, and other socio political and moral vices.

In expressing my development ideas I use songs from plays and others from musicians. Any song that captures the mood and cultural drive that is aimed at championing development are usually integrated in my performances. For example Dennis Brown's song titled *The world is troubled* is a call for consolation. It defines the facilities and predicament of human beings in totality. The suffering, hunger, injustice, killing, kidnapping in different parts of the world. The singer clearly states that the world is troubled through whatever means it is happening now is a prophesy that must come to pass. Let

us be good and be pure. Let us come together and live in peace. Timaya's song *Pity for Us* is a call on Nigerian politicians to reinvent their conscience and pity the citizenry. Max Romeo's "*Stealing in the Name of the Lord*" is a critic on corrupt men of God and politicians who sap the economy of the Nation. Fela Ransome Kuti's songs have featured in most of my performances to support the call on Nigerian government to order. In the play "*Orukoro*" I used the song "Who shall be the king of Okoloama"? to lament the incessant search for true leadership in Nigeria.

Vice-Chancellor sir, ladies and gentlemen, let me illustrate how politicians parade corruption in this our dear country. Once upon a time in this country precisely in the south, a top government official dressed in a Jumper and wrapper with parts of it flowing almost half a kilometre behind him and tied on the neck of his guard with the wife always by his side. To me at that tender age, I found it funny, but seriously that was an exhibition of recklessness, search for unnecessary affluence, intimidation, greed, savagery, slavery and disrespect to the dignity of human existence and uncalled institutionalisation of materialism. I am sure many young boys of my age then and young girls aspired to be like him and his wife. The Danchiki or Agbada dress popular among the northerners also became an object of ridicule and desire to get rich quickly. A re-adjustment of the dress from the right indicated £1000 (one thousand pounds) and from the left £500 (five hundred pounds). Recently a gubernatorial aspirant applied a joke which earned him victory over his opponent. He said to his electorates that the most important thing he would do for the people was to concentrate on stomach infrastructure. These gestures and behaviours place the executors on the stage of natural living theatre because people laughed on seeing them. There is no doubt in my mind that the attitude of these Nigerians must have influenced the action of some dissident youths who now parade in the jungles in Nigeria.

Vice-Chancellor sir, *The Cultural Policy of Nigeria* (1988) clearly states the relevance of the theatre in the cultural and developmental life of the people through the promotion of the arts. It endorses the

promotion of the performing arts, fine arts as vital elements of tourism in Nigeria and calls for the implementation of the following for the states:

The state shall preserve, promote and establish conducive conditions for creativity by encouraging the establishment of strong national professional association for artists, authors, dramatists and film makers.

This policy has been fully implemented by the entertainment industry. There exist in Nigeria today several arts associations some of which include, the Association of Nigerian Theatre Artist (SONTA), National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP) Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), and Actor's Guild of Nigeria (AGN) Association of Movie Producers (AMP) Director's Guild of Nigeria (DGN). These organizations have all collectively championed development through their collaborations and individual efforts.

50 Universities offer solid training in Theatre Arts, Theatre and Film Studies, Theatre and Media Arts and have produced uncountable graduates who are serving the Nation in various capacities, thereby contributing effectively to national development. Although a theatre graduate is qualified to work anywhere human beings exist but the areas of professionalism includes: the Arts Council, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and in the Educational sector as teachers.

The National Theatre Igunmu Lagos built for FESTAC 77 is a cultural edifice accommodating many staff and the National Troupe of Nigeria who for decades have served and ensured the development of the country through their different theatre performances. It is observed that these associations have carried on credibly well but are still facing some challenges. First among the challenges is the gradual decay of audience patronage of the theatre profession, its ethical values and traits, lack of grants for the artists to properly engage in her entertainment mandate and provision of the necessary facilities for professional training in the over 50

educational institutions across Nigeria. The Nollywood industry now identified as an economic booster of the Nigerian economy is an offshoot of the theatre. Permit me Vice-Chancellor to congratulate us and to reveal that 65percent of the Nollywood actors are products of the University of Port Harcourt.

Through its therapeutic effects, theatre has healed the sick, especially those suffering from damage in their hippocampus: the part of the brain that regulates our behaviour. Theatre at its indigenous level has also reaffirmed the culture and mutual existence of Nigerians as true Africans through various cultural festivals and in so doing influenced collective struggle for survival and unity of purpose.

The entertainment quality of the theatre has influenced the emergence of private localized theatre that has engaged the youths positively. The activities of uncountable comedians existing in Nigeria justifies this positive engagement of the theatre. Most comedians own private performance labels such as Opa Williams' *Night of a Thousand Laughs*, Basket Mouth's *Uncensored* Gordon's *Comedy Clinic*, I Go Dye's *Warri go Bow* etc. this has empowered the Nigerians financially and thereby adding value to life and national development.

The theatre has also served as check and leaders who are influenced by the theatre are highly philosophical in their attitude to life, they are upright, stainless, committed to serve humanity, disciplined, tolerant with charming disposition, effective, calculative, firm, fair in justice, team players and father to all who work under them. Certainly, in a country with moral disposition, leaders will rule in an environment devoid of violence, agitation, restiveness, kidnapping, corruption and other forms of gangsterism.

The theatre has no doubt contributed immensely to the attempt by Nigerian Government to achieve the United Nations millennium development goals which are:

- i. Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger

- ii. Achieve universal primary education
- iii. Promote gender equality, man power women
- iv. Reduce child mortality
- v. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- vi. Ensure environmental sustainability
- vii. Develop a global partnership for development

Many Nigerian playwrights and theatre directors have through their plays commented and influenced the achievement of the millennium goals. In addition to dramatic and theatrical experiences, most of the advertisement by the National Orientation Agency and Ministry of Culture and Tourism on malaria and oil bunkering are also in tandem with the desire to achieve the goals.

Vice Chancellor sir, take a look at the University, you will appreciate that it is the artists that build the world, the contribution of the theatre in building the world is enormous and that is why great leaders like Ronald Reagan of the United states was an actor who contributed to the building of America. A reflection on some of Emenanjo's critiques on Nigeria as cited by Ndimele (2016) observes that Nigeria among other short-falls remains a giant of Africa in search of her nation. An evergreen land people but hollow, greedy and evil. A land of giants where there is perpetual movement and yet there is no motion, continuous change and yet no continuity. A country at war with itself characterised by frequent ethnic group agitation for self-determination, self-actualisation. A country where good ideas are deliberately frustrated or killed mindlessly. A country peopled by overly conquered, impoverished and naïve electorates and so on. In all these the theatre director has consistently processed to achieve national development

Conclusion

Vice- Chancellor Sir, I completely agree with William Shakespeare that the world is a stage and those that dwell therein actors. One perceives this beautiful country called Nigeria as a stage where each individual occupies a space and plays his and her role from childhood to death when he or she takes a glorious exit. In the

process of life and living, the individual performs roles and activities that bind him together with other people, obviously indicating that we need each other irrespective of geographical, ethnic, language, barriers, occupational and professional differences. Why do I support that we are all actors and actresses? Yes I am so convinced because as assumable non-theatre artists you possess all the qualities a trained theatre artiste possesses: first, you have an energetic body that is dynamic. Secondly you possess a good vocal cavity that can result to a laudable voice when you speak. Thirdly you leave in an environment where amazing events occur in different cultural expressions. Fourthly, theatre is life, it is your existence that makes life possible. Finally performances in the theatre are lifted from the experience of human beings. No human being can be disassociated from the theatre, it is either one is the performer or form part of the audience. This informs why even some inaugural lecturers commence their lectures with or end with a song in a theatrical style.

Two categories of artists exist in Nigeria. Those who are professionally trained and those who are artists on the stage of real life, natural and actual living drama. Wherever we belong, I group all of us as artists, mirror and critics of the society, character moulders, disciplinarians, watch-dogs. With these qualities, the theatre artistic director, through rigorous processes creates empathy in the audience thereby instilling in them a sense of moral re-invention. I strongly believe that lack of due process is strangulating the development of people and industries in Nigeria. Every job specified by any staff has a terminal point that ensures positive result. Movement of files in any office is a process which enables the messengers to move a file from one table to the other until that file gets to the overall boss for final approval. If the process is stagnated the affected person suffers the consequence.

Vice-Chancellor sir, let me reemphasize that the theatre director begins his job with the conception of ideas through proper planning. He consider factors such as venue, audience, availability of execution materials, etc. before settling for a text or a script for a performance. The director's primary concern is audience satisfaction

rather than his personal gains. The director at every moment of his interpretative processes considers the audience before making choices. In the same manner Nigerian leaders must consider the masses in making choices for development to be achieved. Nigeria has for decades faced governance and leadership dilemma at the expense of development.

Nigeria has three tiers of government such as the Federal, State, and the Local Government. In these tiers of government, leadership and governance as a process of development are manned by the President at the Federal level with his Ministers, Directors of different agencies and other federal appointees. At the state level we have the Governors and their Commissioners, Directors and Special Assistants while at the local government level, we have the Executive Chairmen with their Supervisory Councillors. These tiers of government have failed because the leaders have not been able to apply the leadership principles of the director such as honesty, intelligence, creativity, service, in processing development for the nation. It is only when the individual is given an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of democracy through education, housing, employment that development can be achieved.

Vice-Chancellor sir, the processes of choosing a play/script is comparable to the choice of projects. Just like the director, every leader irrespective of the tiers he is in charge of, must consider the budget of the project he is to execute, availability of the needed manpower, consider the social and cultural relevance of the project to the people and above all consider the impact of the project to the masses. Just the way productions are not for the personal consumptions of the director but for the audience, projects are to be executed for the benefit of the masses by our leaders not for their pockets. Every play from the stage in a theatre or film from screen, radio drama from different radio stations are targeted at the audience and are carefully chosen by the producer-director for the audience. The films you watch are all products of the era and they satisfy the audience. The colonial performances were basically tailored towards magic experiences with happenings that marvels the audience. At

that period the issue of violence from political and ethnic colourations were not domineering as we started experiencing it within the 1960s. During the postcolonial era, the battle over who rules and governs became a social problem that the theatre had to comment on. When Nollywood came up and dominated the commercial scene with Kenneth Inebue *Living in Bondage* the dominant social problem was the illegal means of acquiring wealth through ritual killings. Some of us can still remember the Willy Willy era championed by Innocent Ohiri. These productions were very popular and helped to reduce interest in blood money through ritual killings

Currently the dominant genre is comedy due to the hash condition faced by Nigerians. Tragic works have been reduced to avoid torturing the Nigerian masses that are already facing the issues of poverty, unemployment and untimely death. Film productions such as *The Wedding Party*, *Osofia in London*, *Mr. Ibu*, and *Akin n' Ukwa* are comical. The internet is recently dominated with different comedy skits and Nigerians are becoming more and more comedians to either make ends meet or attract attention from their guests and those they come in contact with Pastors, lecturers, Vice-Chancellors, governors and head of agencies are situational comedians. Sir, some of the remarks you make at senate sessions to make us relax are comic and makes you a situational comedian

Audition on the other hand can be seen as screening/interview associated with appointment of government agents and employment of qualified hands for different ministries. Vice-Chancellor sir, productions like the Nigerian project have failed due to wrong recruitment of hands. I have observed that the elites hardly fail, once your party is in power, you may not even contest but will win. Interview sessions in Nigeria are devoid of failure if you are in the good books. In some Universities, you will be shocked to see those who could not perform during an interview session getting the position while those who demonstrated competence are often left out due to lack of connection. In the classrooms, public service, appointment of ministers, commissioners and supervisory

councillors, the screening processes are poorly processed and when an integral part like the screening process is poorly processed the result is what we see today. Claude Ake once declared that when “the process is faulty the product will definitely be faulty”. The director in a command/commissioned production is usually faced with a lot of interferences from financiers but because he cannot take chances, he resists such interferences. Infact Nollywood film directors suffer such fate because it will not be uncommon for an executive producer to instruct the director on actors not to audition for personal reasons. The same is what our governors, chairmen and even the president face due to party affiliations, tribal sentiments and godfatherism.

Recommendations

Vice-Chancellor sir, I submit that leadership should be embodied as a philosophy by every individual, be a leader in your actions, be a leader in the execution of your functions in the office. Re-invent and rediscover yourself as an implement of progress. Like the theatre artistic director, aim at putting smiles in the faces of your clients. Let the chain of activities from the office of the commander in-charge to the last director in Ministries flow consistently as the production chain from the choice of the play to the final production.

The theatre should be embraced by all as a viable instrument for change in the present political reality of our country-Nigeria. Re-invigorate the activities of the National theatre and facilitate cultural exchange within and outside the country through the national troupe. Encourage the establishment of private theatres in the states and cities. Treat the theatre as an important arm of the Nollywood industry because it is the theatre that trains the actors.

A serious restructure of the curriculum of theatre should be done to expand and improved upon in line with the current reality of the digital age. The change of names as observed in various universities should be encouraged by Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) to keep the theatre alive irrespective of the emerging medium. I strongly recommend Theatre and Film Studies to accommodate the

Nollywood Industry which is a brainchild of the theatre. We must train our students to fit into all the medium of entertainment to empower them upon graduation.

There is also the need for government to fund the entertainment industry because a nation that has no functional entertainment industry lacks a platform for the display of her ideas to the rest of the world. Functional theatres should be built for all the state councils for Arts and Culture to provide the needed entertainment and fund for the government because there appear to be no Arts Council with a functional theatre including the training institutions like the University of Port Harcourt

The centre for black African arts and civilization (CEBAC) the national Gallery of Arts and the National Museum in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism have for decades embarked on cultural activities to enhance development. They are encouraged to resuscitate the Abuja carnival, states cultural carnivals and ensure their sustainability.

Permit me sir to observe that no matter how highly placed and powerful an individual may be, the barber will not apply much strength in turning his head anyhow. Human survival is structured in such a manner that no one remains an island. The social structure demands absolute service to each other's desire. When a service to one another is rendered with seriousness of purpose, good ethical values that are devoid of corruption, development will emerge at all levels. If every individual emulates the enduring qualities of the Theatre artist especially the artistic director and gradually applies the processes in the process of his functions, Nigeria will be a tourist heaven in terms of infrastructural and social development. A neglect of the processes with impunity attracts the social vices the country is now experiencing. I appeal to all of us having identified that we are all artists performing our different roles in this natural living theatre of ours (the world) should re-invent ourselves as leaders, directors and supervisors in our various job situations to enable us contribute creditably and meaningfully to the development of our nation. I

know the challenges are there but with patience, tolerance, hard-work, discipline and commitment as seen in the theatre directorial processes, Nigeria will be better. Though she faces tribulations, corruption and gangsterism – our hope is that all will be well in Nigeria.

Vice-Chancellor sir, permit me to state at this juncture that leaders at all levels are strongly advised to adapt the ingenuous ways of the theatre director and be wise. Please go to the theatre director, all ye Nigerian leaders, consider her ways and lead well for national development of our Dear Nigeria. This is the crux of this lecture

Thank you for your attention.

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APPENDICES

PERFORMANCE PICTURES



Bell-Gam Surveying the Sea for Rogetta



Thanks giving procession in Orukoro



Initiation of the seven virgins into fertility dance



Tumini's wife Ibiere in the search for periwinkles discovers the body of King Perekule



The Okoloama community mourns King Perekule



Bell-Gam on advertisement for Orukoro.



Sheffield performance

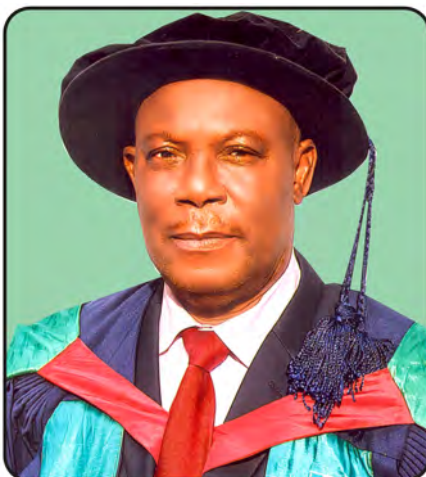


Bell-Gam in performance of Orukoro



Orukoro fertility dancers

CITATION



Professor Henry Leopold Bell-Gam

DIP, B.A (HONS) MA, DEA, PhD PARIS, FRANCE

Professor Henry Leopold Bell-Gam, our erudite scholar and inaugural lecturer today was born on the 8th of September 1950 to Mr. and Mrs. Sofiri Leopold Bell-Gam of Chief Cookey-Gam's War Canoe House in Opobo Kingdom. His father, Mr. Sofiri Leopold Bell-Gam was himself an educationist and a writer whose famous Igbo literature book titled *Ije Odumodu Jere* became a model text for secondary schools in his time. Little wonder young Henry Leopold Bell-Gam found a role model in his father, Mr. Sofiri Leopold Bell-Gam the Headmaster and turned out to become an academic, a playwright and indeed, a renowned Professor of Theatre Arts.

Professor Henry Leopold Bell-Gam, the fifth child of Late Mr. and Mrs. Sofiri Leopold Bell-Gam, started his academic journey in 1957 with his primary education at St. George's School, Egwanga, and Opobo. Thereafter, having acquired the Primary first leaving Certificate at the end of the programme, he proceeded to Regina Coeli Secondary School, Essene to commence his Secondary

education. As it was common in those colonial days for teachers, particularly Headmasters, to be moved periodically on transfers to kick-start new or groom existing schools, they were frequently moving home and family. This itinerant lifestyle, though may have at its gains, tended to be more detrimental to family and dependants. This, therefore was the lot of Mr. Sofiri Leopold Bell-Gam the Headmaster. As a result young Henry Leopold Bell-Gam have had to attend three secondary schools, one after the other, until he was able to complete his course of training at the secondary level in 1973.

Fully prepared to launch out for his University career, the young Henry Leopold Bell-Gam opted for an oversea training, and so was transported to Paris in France in 1974. There, he spent the first one year in Universite de Paris III (Sorbonne) Paris, France to study the French Language, a prerequisite for further studies in France. Soon as Monsieur Henry Leopold Bell-Gam was done with this aspect of his training, he proceeded with ease to acquire in a roll, a Diploma in Science and Technique of the Theatre and a B.A. (Hons.) in Theatre Arts from Universite de Paris VIII (Vincennes, France) in 1977.

Commencing with the post-graduate studies soon after, he bagged the Master's degree (M.A. in Theatre Arts) in 1978. At this point he took a break and returned home to Nigeria for the mandatory National Youth Service corps (NYSC) scheme, carried out in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Jos, where he was retained as Assistant Lecturer. He also served as a Cultural Officer in the Federal Department of Culture, National Theatre, and Igomu. Lagos. This done, he returned again to Paris, to continue his studies and in 1981, he bagged his doctorate degree; Ph.D in Theatre Arts (Aesthetics of Theatre/ Directing).

He joined the University of Port Harcourt in 1982, as Lecturer II in the then Department of Creative Arts, of the Faculty of Humanities. He has since risen steadily through the ranks and has served the University in many capacities. He was Coordinator of the Department of Creative Arts, Acting Head of Department (Theatre Arts) from 1989-1995, Associate Dean, Faculty of Humanities,

2002-2006. He got promoted to the rank of Professor in the year 2005. He was one of the stakeholders that chaperoned the birth of the Department of Music and was given the mantle of leadership as its first Head of Department from 2009-2011. Again, he was appointed head of Department of Theatre Arts in 2012 but only for a brief spell before he got appointed in the same year as Dean of Student Affairs, a position he held till 2014. Also, he has served in various University Committees such as Convocation committee, Uniport Strategic Planning Committee, Post-graduate results verifications Committee, Degree Results Verifications Committee, just to mention a few. Professor Henry Bell-Gam has also served as a member of Planning Sub-committee, Festival of Arts and Culture, Rivers State Council for Arts and Culture; Rivers State Committee on International Youth Year (University of Port Harcourt representative); Panel on Restructuring of JSS Scheme of Work in Creative Arts, Rivers State Ministry of Education, Port Harcourt; Planning Sub-committee, World Conference on Tourism; Member of Jury: Drama competition, Federal Government Colleges, Sports, Arts and Cultural Festivals; *Telefest 87*, Nigerian Television Authority, Lagos: Chief Judge: National Youth Service Corps Drama and Dance competition, Abuja, Chief Examiner for Creative Arts Junior Secondary School Examination, Ministry of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Member: Accreditation Panel, National Universities Commission (NUC), for University of Abuja and the University of Uyo, Benue State University, University of Nsukka among others. Chairman: Committee on Regatta and Sports (*Rivifest 96*), 1996, External Examiner at the Graduate and Post-graduate levels to different Universities which include Imo State University, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Delta State University, University of Calabar, University of Nigeria Nsukka, University of Jos.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor sir, Professor Henry Leopold Bell-Gam, given his pedigree, has proved to be, not just a man of letters but an outstanding professional in his discipline of Theatre Arts where he has carved a niche as Playwright, producer, director, actor, dancer, singer at one time or the other. Today, he is widely known for his

famous play *Orukoro* which has had several commissioned outings here in Nigeria and one symbolic international outing. Specifically, Bell-Gam brought laurels to the University of Port Harcourt as one of Africa's entries in the World University Games and Cultural Festivals held in Sheffield (England) in 1991. The fame of *Orukoro* Fertility Dance was such that it set the tempo of the festival and got to be appreciated as the spirit of the world. Being a renowned and acknowledged performing artist, Professor Henry Leopold Bell-Gam has now and again played indispensable roles in artistic mentorship as is reflected by several awards which include South Eastern State undergraduate scholarship award (1976), Federal Government post graduate scholarship award (1981), Award of excellence-Association of Theatre Arts Students, University of Port Harcourt (1991), Award of excellence — (Orukoro Theatre Troupe to Sheffield) Association of Theatre Arts Students, University of Port Harcourt (1992), Award of Excellence, Association of Theatre Arts Students, University of Port Harcourt (1995), Life time Achievement award the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artistes (SONTA) (2011), Merit Award- Ibani Youth development foundation (1998), Acknowledgement of Veteranship by Actors Guild of Nigeria, Rivers State Chapter (2006)

In the aspect of academic mentorship, Professor Henry Leopold Bell-Gam has proved to be an ardent academic as revealed by the ever growing number of undergraduate students under his purview and the teaming number of graduate students he has chaperoned. He supervised the first PhD of the Department of Theatre Arts that won an award and the candidate is now a professor and the current Dean of the Faculty of Arts Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Similarly, he has served as external assessor to different Universities for over 10 associate professors and 17 professors. His vast academic exploits can be best appreciated through his original publications of books, including more than a dozen volumes of plays. Also to his credit are several articles and chapters in books which continue to grow by the day. He is happily married to Theresa, his heartthrob of many years and with children

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen of this august gathering. I am merely the trumpeter, and my duty, simply is, to herald the man of the moment; indeed the master chef himself, very much set to serve his broth. Permit me therefore to invite a mentor, father, assessor of assessors, supervisor of supervisors, teacher of teachers, theatre director of directors, an administrator per excellence, a lover, a father figure and a friend Professor Henry Leopold Bell-Gam to the Rostrum to present his inaugural lecture

Professor Julie N. Umukoro
Orator.