

Orature and Theatrical Practices in Nigeria

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Abstract

Due to the intrinsic attributes of orature in performative arts, many scholars have paid little or no attention to the integral and distinctive contributions of orature in the evolution of theatre history and practice. But in looking at the various theories on the origin of theatre and the various studies on the evolution of theatre practices over the ages, one could see that orature had played significant roles to the advancement of theatre which hitherto had not been given a meticulous academic scrutiny.

Using a library/desk research methods, this paper is therefore set to examine the significant contributions of orature to the growth of theatre practice in Nigeria using southwest, the most advanced theatre culture in the country as a case study. It is also the aims of this study to identify challenges involved in the deployment of orature to the service of theatre practices and offer plausible solutions.

Introduction

The term “Orature” and not “Oral literature” used in the paper is a deliberate effort in creating a clearer concept that would capture the notion of “the creative oral expression” similar to the term literature which stood for “the creative written expression.” As a result, the choice of title for the paper is not a mistake nor is it an accidental design. It is meant to address and capture the specific interest of the author and to delineate the area of coverage in this study.

The term *orature* is no longer a strange or new one, according to Oyin Ogunba (2006:12), “It came into being about forty years ago and was first used, ...in East Africa to replace earlier term like oral tradition, oral literature, oral literature, and primitive literature.” For over thirty five years Ogunba had propagated this term in the western part of Africa. In his efforts to lionize the appropriateness of this term in conceptualizing the creative process of oral expression through which cultural knowledge and creativity are developed, preserved and transmitted to the audience, Ogunba once considers the inappropriateness of other terms and comes up the following submissions:

The term *Primitive literature*, he sees as the most inappropriate on the premises that it is based on racist assumption that creative oral expression is inferior to creative written expression. But in reality “a superiority/inferiority categorisation does not apply at all since each of the two creative modes achieves its aims and goals perfectly well within its own universe.” (12) He equally believes, the label of *Oral tradition* is not suitable on the ground that the term is more in line with anthropological discourse than creative oral expression. The concept of *Oral literature* and its variant *Oral literature* according to Ogunba (2006:13)

“have been in vague for a long time,” the only inadequacy he sees about the term is the *literature* element, since literature (litera) suggests something written in which case oral literature becomes a contradiction in terms. He then postulates that:

...since the material we are trying to label is oral rather than written in any form. The term *orature* is, therefore, a fortunate (happy) creation and a most appropriate one because it combines both the oral component (*ora*) and the *cultus* (culture) element.

Furthermore, Ogunba (2006:14) opines that, even though, every culture has a creative oral past but orature has lingered much longer in Africa and other developing areas in the world than in other cultures which embraced literacy much earlier. Besides, he points out that:

When cultures move from orality to literacy, there is usually a transitional period when there is a state of indeterminacy between orality and literacy. Nigeria and most of Africa are still at this transitional state and this is the reason why understanding the orature of these communities is vitally important in accessing the psyche of the people.

Conceptual Framework:

Orature:

Base on the foregoing, the connotation of the term *orature*, in this paper will imply: a creative oral expression, an oral explicit oral communication, an artistic process that depends on the mental and eloquent power of the performer. As an innovative venture, orature involve a process in which observation, knowledge, general findings and other creative components on the use of language are committed to the memory of the artiste/communicator.

Moreover, in this artistic and creative process, the performer be it a singer, actor, musician, communicator or stand-up comedian must be physically present in a place in order to establish his identity and importance before a live audience, a camera or a microphone. The notion of orature in the paper shall not be restricted to artistic creativity in heroic poetry, myths, legendary stories, songs, dance and other dramatic displays but extend to embrace the preservation of cultural values and transmission of didactic information through eloquent communication. Therefore the concept of orature will equally be used interchangeably with a creative oral expression, an eloquent oral communication, or other rhetorical arts.

In identifying the characteristic of orature, Ogunba (2006:14) once again, points out that the study on orature is still in its infancy and this is largely due to the language barrier. According to him, the available studies thus far are still both language – and – culture bound, while findings are still tentative. Nevertheless:

... some general features, some notions of the poetics of armature are already discernible. Orature relies very heavily on performance ingenuity. Because there is no finite text and because the material being performed often exists only vaguely in the mind of the populace and has to be called up and energized by the chanter: a great deal depends on how it is realized by a particular performer. Eloquentia is, therefore, an indispensable attribute of a good chanter and of good orature in general.

In addition, a long duration of performance could be identified as a second attribute of this arts form. Even Ogunba would agree that, a good performer (singer/musician/stand-up comedian) could effortlessly go on for as long ten hours nonstop and such an artiste is often appreciated with loud ovation. Thus orature

indeed, provides a perfect context for artistic showmanship and exhibitionism. In most cases, a great portion of text in orature “has been handed over from generation to generation with relatively slight modification and therefore, it has acquired the sanctity and aura of perfection which age and longevity tend to bestow on artistic material.” For their sources of information and inspiration, most artistes in this category usually rely heavily and recall from personal experiences and other cultural exposure.

Theatre:

The term theatre as established in many textbooks, originated from Greek word – *theatron* which meant a place of seeing, however, the word theatre is used to connote more than just the venue of performance, or the building where performing arts are staged, it could also imply a profession (i.e. theatre artiste), or used interchangeably with various genres of performative arts: drama, dance and music as well as stand-up comedy or other forms of oratory delivery.

Practice:

The word practice often connotes action rather than ideas, it deals the way of doing things as in a convention or mode of operation, it could imply a habitual display or a customary act, an established rite. To others, it means a professional calling – a work or business of some professionals such as a theatre practitioner, a doctor, a lawyer or any other fields.

Orature and the Origins of Theatre:

In looking at the various theories on the origin of theatre and in tracing the genealogy of theatre practices over the years in Nigeria, it is appropriate to reiterate the fact that, many scholars have glossed over the unique nature/attributes and contributions of orature in their theatrical discourse due to the intrinsic nature of its functions in theatrical performances. However, the impacts and the contributions of orature to the theatrical evolution will now take the centre stage of this paper. In diagnosing the importance and the contributions of orature to theatrical history, theory and practice in Nigeria this study will commence its exploration from the various theories on the origin of theatre.

Therefore, the launching point for this paper shall be the theory on the ritual origin of theatre. The speculation holds that “theatre developed from ritual and myth. The hypothesis thus situates the origin of theatre in the human’s quest to understand his physical and metaphysical environments and his determination to appease and control natural forces around him. According to Hameed Lawal (2010:3):

In the beginning, people gradually become aware of forces that appear to control their food supply and other determinant of existence. Having no clear understanding of natural causes, they attribute them to supernatural or magical forces. Next, they began to search for means to win the favour of the[se] powers. Over a period of time, they perceived an apparent connection they have sought to bring about. The devices are then repeated, refined and formalized until they become ritualized. At this stage, the entire group performed the rite while the ‘audience’ is the super natural force.

In dissecting the presumption captured above, one would agree that this assumption is common to many studies on theatre histories. However this speculation could not be held as exclusive origin of theatre because the same presumption could also be used as to establish the origins of religion, music dance and other genres of performing arts.

A second look on this theory will reveal the fact that, even the code of communication might not be as comprehensive or sophisticated as it is today, yet oral communication must have been deployed to gain

understanding on the working of the environment. Just as the same oral skill is required in establishing a common front on which the primitive man seeks to appease the supernatural force or in his attempt to confront the physical threat to lives and properties.

A great deal of efforts and eloquent must have been deployed in order to bring out coordinated action which is the hallmark of any refined and formalized ritual. Moreover, the successes achieved by the early men and other human endeavours are often documented through different genres of orature - storytelling, myths, legendary tales, or heroic poetry. Many of these narratives, legends and myths often developed around rites, which contained elements based on factual or fictional persons, places or events.

In modern time, the rites in ritual drama are still perceived, conceived, developed and transmitted through oral narrative. Furthermore, even the refining or formalizing process of ritual is equally done through orature. In appreciating the effective deployment of oral creative expression (especially oral poetry) in events / historic documentation, one could not but to reaffirm what has been credited to Ogunba (2006:15) that, "a great portion of the poetry has been handed over from generation to generation with relatively slight modification and, therefore, it has acquired the sanctity and aura of perfection which age and longevity tend to bestow on artistic material."

Another theory that is closely linked to the ritual origin of theatre is the storytelling presumption. Going by the working concept of orature in this study one would agree that storytelling is a genre of orature and theorists in this school believe that, to relate and listen to stories are fundamental human traits. Even though it could be pointed out that, this instinctual theory or storytelling theory on the origin of theatre is deficient in the sense that, human instinct is broad to accommodate so many other human activities aside from drama and theatre.

However, the premise that the early man is illiterate gives credence to the fact that most of the culturally transmitted values are coded and disseminated with the aids of cultural artefacts through storytelling. Therefore, in buttressing an undisputed claim that, storytelling is a common property of every community, Graeme Turner (1988:68) opines that:

Some societies may have no equivalent to novel, but all societies tell stories, Story-telling can take many forms – myths, legends, ballads, folk-tales, rituals, dance, histories, novels, jokes, drama – and can be seen to serve many apparently different social functions – from entertainment to religious instruction. It seems that story-telling is part of our cultural experience, inseparable from and intrinsic to it

On their part, Gill Branston and Roy Stafford (2007:41) reiterate the fact that through storytelling, man makes meaning out of life by speculating that, "All cultures make stories, as involving and enjoyable ways of creating sense and meanings." Consequently, it has been suggested that, "drama and theatre originate from the narrative desire/instinct of man" because storytelling act over the years has developed from the process in which the recalling of events (a hunt, war or other act) is based on more elaborated act of a narrator's pantomime and impersonation into full assumption of roles by different persons in a coordinated dramatic performance / theatrical performances.

Another speculation on the origin of theatre is the imitative theory, which opines that theatrical performances emanated from man's natural desire to imitate the various movements in his environment. Hence, man seeks to imitate animal's movements and their various sounds. And this is one of the reasons, why the Yoruba would say: "if you desire to capture a monkey you must behave like one." In other words, the imitation of animals that is borne out of the need to hunt animals for food or to subdue them for domestic chores must be carried out in such a way that the target will be successfully lured into man's will.

Furthermore, it could be proven that man ability to imitate is not restricted to the imitation of the animal movements alone, just as human gestures and other visual activities in man's surroundings could be replicated.

In stretching further this utility notion for imitation, one would see also that the young ones learnt the act of imitation from the adult just as young hunters must be inducted into the art of the game hunting. From all indications one could see that the indoctrination into the act of imitation is made easy and possible through an eloquent and explicit oral communication, aided with other code on human paraphernalia. Consequently one can say that the amassed human actions or the accumulated hunting techniques are preserved, shared or transmitted to the young ones through orature.

In using the children instincts for roles playing to buttress man natural impulse to imitate, one would agree with the fact that, children imitate the adult's worlds as games and a close observation of this game would reveal the level of dexterity invested in imitating adult's utterances, gestures and movements. Even at this infant level of acting, oral communication skill is a crucial factor. As Ogunba argues that, a child who initiates the game often works without a script or a finite text and the material performed exist only vaguely in the minds of the children and has to be called up and energised by the group leader. Even though the usage of language might not be highly artistic but, a great deal depends on the ringleader and how he/she wants the game to go.

In widening the imitative/utility hypothesis on the origin of theatre one could come up with a dance / gymnastic theory. According to this theory, performative arts evolved gradually out the imitation of rhythmical movement in nature: in this case, the occupational movement of man, the rhythmic movement of threes, fishery, and other acrobatic movements of other animals are often incorporated into dance and other creative performances. Even in at this level, there are evidences of at least two genres of a rhetorical art (songs and chants) playing complementary roles.

Orature and Theatre Practice in Nigeria:

One can say categorically that the Nigerian theatre scene has gone through many phases of development/transformation. Even though, Ogunsuyi identifies three schools of film in Nigeria, based on the three major tribes of the country: the Yoruba, the Hausa and the Igbo film schools (2007:21-39); but for the purpose this paper, the Yoruba theatrical experience which is the most developed theatre culture in the country shall be used as reference point.

Hypothetically, one could say that the Yoruba theatrical advancement had gone through seven developmental phases which could be identify thus: *the era of the traditional ritual theatre, the reign of Alarinjo travelling theatre; the modern travelling period, the era of radio drama, the television drama period, the celluloid films experience, and the video production period.* Attempt shall be made in this discourse, to analyse the important roles orature had played in the advancement of theatrical performances in each of these periods.

The Era of the Ritual Theatre:

Going through the various theories on the origin of theatre, one would agree with the fact that the Yoruba theatrical experience must have equally started with ritual drama. This fact is more tenable if one should consider the various rites surrounding of the existence of over four hundred and one (401) *Irumole* in the land of Oduduwa (Ogunba, 2006:3). Theoretically, the survival and existence of rituals around these deities from time immemorial till date have proven beyond doubt that the various ritual activities at each of the shrines of these gods and goddess are of an infinity life span. It is only fair to acknowledge role of orature in the surviving strategies of the ritual drama from cradle till date. Firstly, an eloquent oral

communication must have played significant roles at the cradle of any ritual drama. Usually this is a period when nothing could be documented in any other form except through orature. At this period, orature stood as the basis of the entire artistic format or the creative mode of preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge and values. Thus heroic poetry, myths, legendary stories, which incorporated elements of dance, song, and drama could be seen as variants of orature. The language here is the combination of both verbal and non verbal communication. Aside from serving as a means of documenting and transmitting cultural knowledge, coded messages on various rites at each shrine, the invocation of a rhetorical art although with slight modification tends to bestow on each material it preserved refined entity and aura of perfection in which the rough edges of such knowledge, narrative or chant have been smoothed over the years.

In addition, orature has permits the artiste/cantor of the ritual songs “to exhibit all his knowledge (or pseudo-knowledge) and artistic skills, be they in eloquence, mimicry, or the telling use of aphoristic statements” (Ogunba, 2006:15). Often, the performing artiste in ritual drama especially the priests are with versatile memories and due to their profound knowledge in history and custom they are seen as encyclopaedias of community history and culture.

The Reign of Alarinjo Travelling Theatre:

Although the genesis of Alarinjo traditional Yoruba travelling theatre’s existence could be dated back to the reign of Alaafin Obolu in Oyo around in 1590, but the written account of this theatre could only be traced back to the journals of Hugh Clapperton and Richard Lander in February 22, 1826. From Adedeji (1981)’s account, one can see that Alarinjo theatre existed and preserved through orature for close to two and half centuries (236 years) before the activities of this theatre are documented in written form. Between 1826 and 1943, the vibrancy of this theatre also lingered for another hundred and seventeen years with the intrinsic strength of orature, before the European influences prompted Hubert Ogunde to champion another form of theatrical entertainment.

A closer review of the operation of the Alarinjo will further demonstrate the roles of the orature in the practice of the traditional theatre. According to Adedeji (1981:229):

The troupes were exposed to all kinds of dire situations and sometimes, awful experiences when they travelled from place to place. They needed the cultus as a bulwark to shield them and as a watchful eye to superintend their performance. They never performed without the permission of the Alagbaa of the town or village they entered.

The bulk of communication of this *Egungun apidan*’ era is in oral format, so the seeking for permission to perform or the invitation of the troupe are carried out through orally or coded symbolic messages which must be convey by a good orator/massager. The entrance and the welcoming procession of the *Alarinjo* into any community is done amidst funfair of drumming, here too a rhetorical art of chanting and singings still played a major part. Meanwhile, the arrival of this troupe must have been previously announced through local town crier who equally used *face to face* oral communication.

It is important to note as well that as a performative art, the Alarinjo performing troupe equally rely heavily on performers’ ingenuity, as they operate without a written text. Each member of the troupe is equipped with mental and rhetorical skills on the use of language, proverb and idioms that enable him to encode in his memory all the accumulated knowledge, observations and findings. Basically, the troupe depends on various abilities of every member in recalling at will any idea required for their performance.

It is on record that *Egungun apidan* never perform without a creative oral expression coded in an opening “*salutation of Ijuba.*” This homage has been designed and handed over from generation to

generation in form of poetry. From the available account, the troupe members and the masque-dramaturges are still bound together by ancestor-worship. According to Adedeji, “The masque-dramaturge built his repertory and filled it with playlets especially with *efe* (satire) – a performance which diverted his patrons and spectators alike...” It is through this performance that the troupe directed their greatest appeal.

From this assertion, one could see glaringly the contribution of the rhetorical skill as a major channel of dramaturgical communication. In the same way one can see that the greatest weapon of the *efe* performer lies on his use of language/diction with which he paints characters and events. As a performer he is expected to have developed to a great level his ability to raise logical argument through the invocation of appropriate proverbs, anecdotes or idioms; and add his own slant, permanent and unique colouration to his subject matter. In most cases, an eloquent oral and a good display of non-verbal communication skill is often greeted with loud ovation by the audience.

Traditionally, a masked *efe* performer is regarded as ancestral spirit and for the fact that he knew, “everything that breaks over the social taboo is funny...” he often invoke some of these anti social behaviours in his presentation and his spectators will reflect with amazement when they see that the presenter has no restriction on issues he can trample upon in the arena of play. Consequently, the audience often laugh when their revered gods were revealed in sketches as caricatures. Sometimes, the troupe members often enjoy immunity from public assault over on their performance. However, as quoted above, there are times when the troupes are exposed to all kinds of dire situations. In buttressing this fact Adedeji opines:

There are reports of charms having been used on the performers by some unknown person in the audience especially during the performance of the *Masque of the Bao-constructor*, the actor also was unable to remove his costume at the end of the act. To maintain their prestige, therefore, the actors also armed themselves with counter-charms.

Despite their challenges, the troupe still managed to retain her spectators through the jugglery, acrobatics and the various dancing displays. Most especially the troupe banked on their a rhetorical art of chanting and miming of the lead singer which often excite wonder and admiration in his spectators. In Adadeji’s view, “These were the features for which the “Alarinjo” was remembered long after he had trampled away and until the next time when he showed his face once again.”

Base on the afore-analysed nature of Alarinjo performance, one could see that the plot and the story so portrayed, are by-products of orature. In other words, the performance is designed, preserved and transmitted to the audience in oral form. As a creative oral expression, the intrinsic values of orature lie in the conjuration of active imagination, creative improvisation and energetic and spontaneous performance.

If these activities is further broken down one could see that an active imagination can assume unlimited creative proportions; secondly, it could easily be enriched and enlarged by artiste’s life experience, personal exposure and his contact with other artistic forms. The improvisation often breed an immediate reconstruction of experienced or witnessed action which Stanislavsky treats as the “magic if” theory of acting. Spontaneity on the other hand brings about quick response to issue and condition, activates the actor’s wit, stimulate imagination, and increase concentration.

The Modern Travelling Theatre Period:

Going by an interview conducted for Ogunde, and reported by Adedeji:

Hubart Ogunde who became the first Nigerian artist of the contemporary theatre to turn professional and assume the leadership of the flourishing theatre troupe, recalled that his experience and source of inspiration belonged to the Alarinjo theatre. "I was playing drums with the masqueraders in my home town when I was young, and these Egungun people gave me the urge inside me to start a company of actors." (1981:244)

This assertion simply implies that the personnel, the technique and the presentation patterns of the then modern travelling theatre were indebted to *Egungun apindan* travelling troupes which thrived on creative oral expression.

In looking at the modus-operandi of the modern travelling theatre as pioneered by Ogunde and his colleagues in Yoruba theatre world, one could see that as it is with the Alarinjo travelling theatre, each performing troupe in the modern theatre was ran as family business where the director of the troupe was the head of the family that makes up 80% of the troupe members. The announcement of the entrance of any performing troupe into any town is equally made possible through successful deployment of oral communication. In this case, a mini-bus will move round the town announcing the name the troupe, the leader/director, the title of the play to be shown, and playing abstracts or audio tape from the troupe's previous production(s).

The stage production is often divided into three parts of the *opening glee*, *the presentation*, and *the closing glee*. The opening glee also include *ijuba* or salutation, which may be presented in any of these genres of orature: chant, poetry, or songs. Other section of the opening glee might include acrobatic display, energetic *Bata* dance or other cultural dances. Essentially, the opening glee is meant to relax the audience as they settle down to watch the main presentation for the day. The main production of the day might be a serious drama, comedy or melodrama. While the closing glee like the opening is also packaged in songs – departing songs and cultural display/dance, basically it is meant to round off the show.

Once again it is necessary to reiterate that the performances in the opening and the closing glees are creative oral expressions in the sense that there is no written format on how each should be presented but the act of *ijuba* and other components of these glees are often designed, rehearsed, preserved and presented to oral form. For instance, the *ijuba* poetry (*ewi*), chant (*rara*), or songs are skills that are impacted and acquired from one to the other through oral communication. Moreover, each troupe has a unique way of introducing a show, just as the repertoire of plays of each group varies from one another.

Orature is the centre format of dramatic creativity of the modern travelling theatre, here the composition and the structuring of the plot of a play is never developed as a written script, although there might be a sketch of various action jotted down but there was never a full dramatic script used until Geoffrey Axworthy, Soyinka and his colleagues introduced literary theatre in the 1960s at the University college, Ibadan.

During thi period rhetorical art is a vital means of improvisation during rehearsal, and oratory skill is highly required during performance. For instance a good rendition of *ewi* poem/ or *rara* chant during *ijuba* at the opening glee often magnetize loud ovation from the audience just as a good rendition of incantation would excite the spectator in a serious drama. A witty pond on words, a comic presentation of issue or a crafty display of acting skill on stage are capable of activating different responses such as laughter, indignation, love, admiration, anger or other emotions from the audience.

Orature and Dramatic Performance on Electronic Media:

According to Branston and Stafford (2007:41), "Making stories or narratives is a key way in which meanings and pleasure are organised and made vivid both in and outside the media..." Essentially, dramatic

expressions on electronic media are not only an effective way of creating meanings and pleasures but a pedagogical means of sensitising, mobilizing and influencing the masses toward positive changes. Consequently, in this section of this paper, the dramatic performances that will go under scrutiny will include the audio / radio drama on one hand, and the audio-visual - television dramas, celluloid film and the video film productions on the other.

Orature and the Radio Drama:

Due to its production style/technique, one could say that radio drama and other dramatic shows which include advertisements/jingle on radio are different forms of creative expressions hence they are genres of orature. Radio drama in its pre-production stage may require writing script but its final production is an oral creative expression where each performer must be physically present before the microphone. This is a production where various dramatic elements must be converted into auditory senses.

According to Hyginus Ekwuazi (1994:155-156), "Though radio, unlike television is not audio-visual, its innate potentials for making or creating picture are unrivalled. For unlike television that creates pictures on the screen, radio creates pictures where they register most: in the mind; in the listener's mind – where such pictures can assume any size..." Radio drama has a unique way of creating individual personality on air through voice qualities and modulation or musical tune. Orature is of great essence in radio drama/dramatic jingle, here, language is spiced or embellished with creative anecdotes, proverbs, idioms, songs, and other creative oral expressions while rhetoric, expressiveness, fluency are essential ingredients of radio presentation.

Orature and the Screen Drama:

The introduction of television station in the western region of Nigeria in 1959 and the production of the first Yoruba celluloid film: *Ajani Ogun* in 1976 opened other frontiers for the production of the Yoruba dramas apart from the stage and the radio presentations which the Yoruba audience are used to. In Segun Olusola (1981: 371)'s view:

By the time television was introduced in 1959, the educated elites in the city centres of Lagos and Ibadan were already used to the once-a-month amateur dramatic presentation either at the British Council or the University College, while the less educated working class urban dwellers looked forward to a quarterly season of Ogunde Theatre presentation or Ogunmola's Travelling Shows. Since these two sectors of the Ibadan Community constituted the bulk of the television audience of 1950 to 1960, it was natural for the earliest television producers to conclude that audience expectations would include some measure of dramatic presentation.

In looking at the structure of the television drama, one could say that, what happens with the old and the modern travelling theatre where technique, personnel and modus operandi are not only shared but transferred from one to the other, equally occurred in the case of the stage presentation and television drama / the celluloid film productions as the other two forms of dramatic presentations borrowed from the stage. According to Ekwuazi (1987:17):

...The tendency for an emerging film culture to borrow its personnel, technique and plot from the stage. Said Soyinka, and this more or less sums up the rationale for the speech: "the two (the stage and the screen) are interrelated and mutually complement each other so often, both in practice and theory, that newcomers to the cinema, which includes all of us, tend very often to transpose the form of theatre directly into film with of course very stagey, static films"

Furthermore, it will not be out of place to point out that most early Yoruba films on celluloid are produced with scenario scripts – scanty description of actions on each scene of the plot – a carry-over technique from the stage. Apart from the script serving as a reminder on what to do during shooting, the bulk of the work on film production that is based on a scenario script depends on oral creative expression. Eloquent and quality oratory skills are equally required in creating genuine team spirit during production. Here the script provides next to nothing on giving basic information on the nature or the mood of the film as the director must rely on their accumulated experiences, resourcefulness while and his cast and crew must depend on their creative skills in order to pull through a production.

The Video Production format that imaged as post structural adjustment response to economic downturned in the country is equally indebted to orature. Up till now, some films are still produced with scenarios scripts, where the directors or the choreographers give instructions from their memories, while actors and dancers rely on improvisations and their creative ingenuities.

The formal system of a Yoruba film is unique in way word/audio message assumed equal strength as the visual images. In some films the audio messages are made stronger than the kinetic images. A further diagnosis of the audio component of a Yoruba film would expose the intrinsic functions of oral creative expression. For instance, the invocation of incantation in a traditional war scene, will exhibit the actors' skills in eloquent and fluency. It is a way of revealing an actor's capacity to memorise lines or poetry (incantation), it could also showcase his knowledge on the use of aphoristic statements and his diction in painting characters and events. Sometime words are even used in Yoruba screen to paint a crucial scene or report unseen / off screen events

Moreover, the use of sound track in film is another form of oral creative expression deployed for multiple purposes within a film system. For instance soundtrack could be used to as a *plant* that will be nurtured to explode at the appropriate time and situation in the course of a film. It could also be used enhance suspense; serve as a complement in bridging different scenes in a film. However, it could also be deployed for other inappropriate purposes such as: using it to duplicate the story already shown or about to be shown, playing unrelated music as soundtrack or invoking soundtrack that overwhelms the most important audio messages in a scene.

Conclusion

Having gone through the theoretical exploration on of orature and other key concepts, traced the creative and functional deployment of orature in the service of theatre and other theatrical practices right from the cradle to date, it is only proper to round up the study with a look on the challenges in the application of orature in performative arts and suggest plausible solutions:

In the ritual drama practices which exist up to date, one could see that rites and other invocation/incantations used are still passed down through orature. Even as we speak, the use of oral means in preserving creative expression does not recognise individual authorship as all creative works in oral form in any African community belong to the race and not to the individual artiste.

Up till the point of writing this paper, the use of orature in documenting myth, historical events and ritual still lack precise technique of authentication. As long as the human memory which preserved an original version of a story will only exist within a fixed period, this authentic version of the myth/historical events might go into extinction with the demise of such experience/memory. Moreover, each story will suffer a great manipulation under the subjective view of its narrator who will bring his personality to bear during his performance. Moreover, the accumulated '*slight modifications*' over the years on a story or myth has a strong capacity of creating a brand new story out of the initial one, and this could cause the original version to be totally lost in transit.

In attempting to solve the problem of non recognition of individual authorship of oral creative works and the lost of original works, some artistes had gone to the studio to record folksongs, poems and other lyrics in modern music genres but the fact still remain that those artistes had just succeeded in documenting and thus prevent the lost of the original format of these selected songs/poems or lyrics while the authorship still belong to the race thus, another artiste is entitle to used the same work if he / she so desire.

Secondly, for the fact that orature creates, preserves and transmits through human brain and that there is no formalized / standard way of impacting the amassed human actions or the accumulated creative oral expression techniques outside human mind, many accumulated artistic ritual knowledge/skills could also being lost with a sudden death of an experienced leader of a cult or an experienced artiste in the community. For instance many records of great herbalists and traditional healers are lost for good due to the fact that there is no other means of preserving such record (i.e. a documented backup for the accumulated knowledge/skills.)

Due to the spontaneous and transient nature of orature many great performances are never preserved for others who were not fortunate to be physically present at the venue of these performances. Secondly the fact still remain that a single act in oratory performance varies with each performance and no two performances of a single act is the same without slight modification. Unlike the literary counterpart, where many great works of literary icons survived centuries after their deaths, the works of great performers that are not capture through oral media such as radio, tape recorder, television, film or video camera hardly live a month, a year or a decade after the performance.

Even with the introduction of analogue audio and audio-visual media, many works of orature were captured; but these media were still not as durable enough as the print media which can last for centuries without any alteration to the quality. Some of the creative expressions in oral forms that were recorded with this analogue devices still went into extinction due to the poor storage facilities, while the quality of some recoverable items were reduced drastically due to unpalatable economic conditions where electricity is not regularly supplied to the storage facilities.

Nowadays, there is new hope of increased longevity for many oral creative works with the introduction of digital technology which is superior to the analogue technology but care most still be taken in using these new devices. Even with the availability of so many digital technologies on audiovisual system, and documentation many performative arts are made easy. Yet each performer must be encouraged to avail him/herself with the used of digital devices. For instance, consumer video camcorder could be used in documenting each performance and if such recording is well packaged for public consumption; such effort could be another source of income for the artiste. Secondly traditional artistes / oral performers are equally encouraged to take part in radio programmes or television shows or video film production so as to prevent the lost of and to preserve of their artistic creations.

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