

African Culture and Performance Dynamics in the Dramaturgy of

AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye



Edited by:

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DR TAIYE ADEOLA

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Foreword



I feel honoured and humbled to be requested to write this forward to scholarly works written on Professor AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye, a scholar par excellence and Professor of Theatre and Drama, being a Festschrift in commemoration of his 50th birthday. My short stint at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria, as a visiting Professor of French Language, gave me an opportunity to know and interact extensively with the vibrant scholar, Professor A. A. Adeoye. Undoubtedly, his lectures gave me the courage to write this foreword. I therefore, relish on the fact that I have submissions from theatre scholars of National and International repute who have done justice to their contributions on the witty, critical and experimental Professor AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye in particular, and on theatre scholarship in general.

Naturally, this work is yet another contribution to the ever dynamic discourses within the symbiotic gulfs of Theatre, Drama and Culture, which were carefully put together and edited by three vibrant and intellectually stimulated scholars: Drs. Oludolapo Ojediran, Tayo Simeon Arinde and Philip Arthur Gborson. Truly, this bold step of theirs cannot be divorced from the obviously commendable efforts that have been invested in the work, considering the intellectual erudity and artistic depth of Adeoye's dramaturgical and theatrical quip which is reflected both in writing and practice.

African culture and performance dynamics in the dramaturgy of AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye is a work of about 500 pages, and (it) is made up of 38 Chapters. Notably, the book is divided into three (3) organic parts. Part One contains a wide array of well-articulated discourses within the experimental and socio-critical space of AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye's dramaturgy and theatre. Undoubtedly, the contributors of the Chapters in this part explore textual, sub-textual and inter-textual themes such as the total theatre aesthetics, socio-political discourse, the role of drama in nation building, ardent ideological and philosophical projection, interpersonal meta-function, indigenous aesthetics, religious tolerance, etc., all within the nexus of AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye's literary and performative theatre. The discourses in the Part Two of the book are geared towards the need to contextualise the liminality of performance aesthetics and communication arts under the permeating icons of feminism, humour and socio-criticism, media and film aesthetics, textuality and the third world, and so on. The third and last Part is the outline of an interview with the Dramaturge himself, which takes recourse through the influences and modalities

that have shaped his fulfilling life as well as his theatre on practical and theoretical wheels.

Indeed, all the scholarly contributions are convincing enough for us to assume that this critical work is part of the growing trends of scholarly explorations that are artistically crafted to address socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural challenges that are confronting Africans, and the world at large. In my candid opinion, this book can be considered as a ready source for consultation by scholars, researchers and definitely a coursebook for students in the expansive field of theatre scholarship and its other related disciplines. I invite you to a robust academic discourse leading to cross-fertilisation of knowledge and experience.

Professor Dowini D. Kupoole

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AbdulRasheed Adeoye's Purpose and Approach to the Use of Music in Play Productions



Taiye Shola Adeola

Introduction

The use of music in play productions, either on stage or in movie, is a regular feature employed by directors to serve different purposes. These purposes which can be musical or non-musical tend to define to a great extent the approaches employed by the directors in the execution of their intentions. Folajimi (2014, p. 95) observes that the blend of drama and music, being two forms of entertainment, often results in mesmeric entertainment aesthetics. Adekoya (2007, p. 270) submits that besides being a form of entertainment and spiritual stimulation, music also conveys meaning. This is also implied by Akinwale (1998) cited in Ikibe (2012, p. 18) that the Nigerian audience is not satisfied with only dialogue drama, but drama that is spiced with musical performances – instrumental, vocal, or a combination of both vocal and instrumental music. Music, which manifests in form of vocal renditions, instrumental accompaniment and performance or sound effects, is crucial to the realisation of the thematic ambition of the playwright and the actualisation of the performance concepts and aesthetics of the production crew.

AbdulRasheed Adeoye, as a playwright and director, is known for the employment of music in his dramatic preoccupation, either as ordered sound for special effects, singing, instrumental accompaniment for dance performance in the play, or instrumental accompaniment for punctuation of actions in the play. According to Bocket and Ball (2000, p.47) “music, as we ordinarily understand the term, does not occur in every play. But if the term is extended to include all patterned sound, it is an important ingredient in every product, those wholly silent”. Although Abdulrasheed Adeoye did not train to specialize as a musician, his exposure to some musical training at his undergraduate training as a Performing Arts student in the University of Ilorin, and his interest in music for total theatre, has greatly influenced his intentions as a playwright and interpretations as a director. This

paper therefore establishes AbdulRasheed Adeoye's romance with music in the discourse of the approaches and purposes, to his use of music as exhibited in his plays and productions.

AbdulRasheed Adeoye's Purposes for the Use of Music

It is observed that the pursuit of Abdulrasheed Adeoye's neo-alienation style is paramount in his conception and execution of plays and performances. According to Adeoye (2009, p.vii), "Neo-alienation theatre relies on the theatre of performance, rather than the theatre of literature, being a realistic reworking of the robust African festival theatre, which aesthetically celebrates the total theatre idiom". This pursuit is further demonstrated in the infusion of the twelve aesthetic possibilities of neo-alienation model into his plays as playwright and director. The use of music which is captured in neo-alienation approach as the "aesthetics of theme song of audience/players' systemic fraternization" and "the modern operatic aesthetics" are two of the twelve aesthetics that are clearly evident in Adeoye's endeavors as a playwright and artistic director.

When the use of music in a play production is blended with other directorial tools, it is essentially and ultimately to heighten the meaning and reinforce the audience's understanding of a play. When music is employed in a play, it serves different purposes that are defined by factors such as the setting of the play, moods in the play, the genre, the style, thematic preoccupation, and so on. In other words, music has been found to enhance a play production in various ways, such as, setting of moods, fill up transitions, musical interludes, performer and audience relationship, and so on. Ikibe (2012, p.18) citing Tobrise (1993, p. 47) observes in the discourse of the usefulness of music in drama and refers to Wale Ogunyemi as a popular playwright/Artistic director, who used music to "emphasise moods in order to create varying atmosphere of fear, joy and gloom".

While establishing the reality of the presence of various intentions of the use of music in drama in the plays and productions of Abdulrasheed Adeoye and other playwrights and directors, five purposes dominating Adeoye's use of music as exhibited in some of his play scripts and directorial works have been identified. We intend to discourse them in this paper as his motivations for the engagement of music.

Contextualization

Contextualization is used here to mean situating the play, as well as establishing it, not only in the setting of the play, but also in the theatre of performance, in such a way that the audience gets carried along and participating. Adeoye's use of music to establish and situate the play is demonstrated in *The Killers* (2009) and *The Smart Game* (2012). In both plays, Adeoye introduces the play and the actors to the audience through music. Excerpt from the

opening of *The Smart Game* (2012) is given:

As the drum rolls affectionately from the open space in the orchestra pit, a creatively dramatic, lively and visible orchestra populated by eager and enthusiastic Thespians contest for space in the auditorium. They are singing and distributing the handbills of the first Song of the Play to the audience to ring the bell of the audience/players systemic fraternization. Simultaneously, two masked players, donning white cardboards with the major inscriptions of the songs clearly written on the front and back of the cardboard, move slowly and dramatically to the rhythm of the song and beat to the stage... (Adeoye, 2009, p.1)

This same purpose of contextualization is seen in the way Adeoye introduced the actors in *The Killers* (2009) to the audience. In the prologue we find the following words:

The harmonious tune of the Wazobia National Anthem vibrates intermittently in the auditorium to punctuate the serene atmosphere. Consequently, nine radiant dancers swing to the tune of the anthem from the auditorium and move to the stage, talking generally and joyously about "The Annual Independence Competition". Lights bring in Ahmed, Emeka, and Lanwa donning Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba costumes, respectively. Obviously, they are the leaders of the nine dancers. Through choreographed movements, they sing and dance to the song of "We Match on"

It is observed that in these two plays *The Smart Game* (2012) and *The Killers* (2009) Adeoye used the same approach to achieve his purpose of contextualizing the plays. The use of the orchestra and lead drummers on stage, as well as presentation of key players at the opening with music, feature in both plays, and this can be identified as a style employed by him.

Characterisation

Kofoworola (2017, p. 179) in his discourse of the nature of character and characterization in drama submits as follows:

Characterization is the making of the writer, the playwright even the actors in the portrayal of the characters which they represent in a performance. Because they (writers, playwrights and actors) define, describe or determine the nature of the characters. It can be argued that they present the characters in accordance with the concept or principles of characterization which they want to project.

Music is used by Adeoye for the introduction and establishment of characters, as well as giving identity to characters in a play. This, he does in a number of ways, such as, making

the character to sing to introduce him/her self, or dance to the music that introduces the character any time he/she comes on stage. This is also achieved through the use of instrumental music that depicts the nature of the character. Cooper and Mackey (1995, pp. 19-24) submits that "the words of the character under analysis are the key method of coming to decisions about his or her character". They identified various sources of information for analysing a character as character's own words, character's own actions, other characters' words, other characters' actions, stage directions and the subtext behind any of the character's words.

Adeoye explored the use of the character's word in *The Palmwine Drinkard* (1972) by Kola Ogunmola, which he directed for the 2016 University of Ilorin convocation play in which this writer also participated. Lanke, the major actor was made to sing a song at the beginning of the opera to introduce himself, which was not part of the original script. In consonance with Adeoye's style of contextualization, which is to register the play and the actors with the audience, a song is created for that purpose. Excerpt of the song is given below:

Lańkẹ̀ Ọ̀mu lorúkọ̀ mi (My name is Lanke the drunkard)
 Ẹ̀lẹ̀bá, Adẹ̀mu mi ló kú o (Ẹ̀lẹ̀bá, my Palm wine tapper died)
 Sùgbón nísinsìnyí o ó ti di dandan (But right now, compulsorily)
 Mo fẹ̀ lo bá ikú jà o (I want to go and fight with death)

Characterization through the use of music is also evident and implied in the activities of three of the nine dancers in *The Killers* (2009). Ahmed, Emeka and Lanwa, whose dancing and singing makes obvious as the leaders of the nine dancers. This purpose of music for characterization is also evident in the roles of the two drummers in their interaction with the dancers (*The Killers*, pp.1-3)

Pulsation

Pulsation is used here to imply the rhythmic movement in time and tempo as it relates to a performance. Abdulrasheed Adeoye also employs music to set and sustain pace and rhythm in his plays. Cooper and Mackey (1995, p. 44) defines pace in drama as the "rate of movement in general; speed, velocity as they relate to rapidity of motion or action". According to the drama teacher on line:

Rhythm refers to the timing and pace of the drama. It also means the beat or tempo of the performance. As a rule, rhythm should never be the same throughout the drama, regardless of its length. Rhythm can follow the emotional state of one or more characters or the atmosphere of the performance at particular moments (www.thedramateacher.com, retrieved on 29th January, 2018)

The way Adeoye deployed music in *The Smart Game* (2012) and *The Killers* (2009) from the beginning to the end of the plays, has great influence on the pace of the plays. Music is used to achieve consistency of particular and desired pace of rhythm at various points in the plays. The introduction of music at the beginning of the plays, either as songs or musical instruments, sets the pace of his plays. Music also serves as rhythmic guide to actors in their speech, actions and movement through the use of background music, rendered by the orchestra or drummers on stage. In *The Killers* (2009), the interaction between the narrator and the orchestra gives a call and response with a rhythmic flow consistent with the pace set from the beginning of the play (*The killers*, p.8). The pace of both plays determined by the various moods, atmospheres, tensions, and setting generally oscillates between fast, moderately fast and moderately slow thus making the pace to reflect the mood and activity in focus in the play.

Demonstration

Penchant for spectacle and glamorous display of artistry is another intention of Adeoye for the use of music in his plays. The use of loud drums and group noise at the opening of performances, as well as insertions in his plays is a common feature of plays directed by Adeoye. Simultaneous rolling and sounding of drum beats, as well as crowd sounds from the orchestra, or actors in their different positions of cue, usually feature in Adeoye's plays. For example, the opening statement in the playwright's directions in *The Smart Game* (2012) is "As the drum rolls affectionately from the open space in the orchestra pit, a creatively dramatic, lively and visible orchestra populated by eager and enthusiastic Thespians contest for space in the auditorium" (p.1).

The above statement indicates that the very first activity that kick starts the play is music, realised through the rolling of drums. It is observed, however, as one who has worked with Adeoye, in a number of productions, the rolling of drums to start almost all plays, which seem to have become his directorial pattern, though not always appropriate. Nonetheless, in pursuance of his neo-alienation style, which is rooted in the total theatre concept, he engages music for pace and spectacle from the beginning; to a trained musician, this method can be musically inappropriate.

Disposition

Disposition is used here to mean Adeoye's use of music to set and reflect tones, modes and moods in his plays. It is the use of music to reflect attitudes, temperament and general outlook of the actors and atmosphere of the performance venue, which extends to the audience. There is a general friendly disposition between Adeoye's players and the audience generated through the use of music. Adeoye engages music as a basis of interaction between the actors and the audience setting the pattern of performance for the play, or performance as the case may be, thereby generating a disposition that the audience carries throughout the

performance. This he infuses into his scripts and executes as a director. It is reflected in Adeoye (2009, p.1) thus:

They are singing and distributing the handbills of the First Song of the Play to the audience to ring the bell of the audience/player' systemic fraternization. Simultaneously, two masked players, donning white cardboards with the major inscriptions of the songs, clearly written on the front and back of the cardboard, move slowly and dramatically to the rhythm of the song and beat to the stage...

The following excerpt of the dialogue between the Diviner and Narrator Two in *The Killers* (2009) is quite instructive on the dispositions as one of Adeoye's intention in the use of music.

Narrator Two: (*Walks from the auditorium to meet the Diviner*) Go away and you shouldn't draw my wrath this night or was it not you and I who agreed to tell our stories?

Diviner: No, I argued that reproducing unfounded stories might blur our audience's vision. I then proposed to you that we should perform a theatre of reality where our audience will be able to see themselves in our dramatic actions, where they will be psychologically attached to our play without losing their sense of reasoning.

Narrator Two: Yes. But your present action has negated the tragic mood of the moment. You are singing and dancing when the Deputy Director's body awaits burial.

Diviner: Sorry for that but I am dancing and singing to express my existence and essence in this world of nothingness, beclouded by wickedness through heartlessness, Or don't I have a right to deconstruct?

Narrator Two: Yes, you have a right but why not a short dirge, at least to honour our honest hero, the Deputy Director and allow our audience to accept the reality of death in our lives?

Diviner: Yes, but you have to start the dirge. As for me, I have been consumed by cultic songs. My comic interlude, for your information, is an extension of the tragic canon.

Narrator Two: Is our play a tragedy?

Diviner: Leave that to critics. We may, however, end this play as a melodrama.

Narrator Two: Meaning that you too will be consumed before the end of the play...

Diviner: No! The split image, I represent so many things in this play. Meanwhile, let us send the Deputy Director to ultimate house where nobody will go and return.

(The orchestra sings a short dirge, as the Deputy Director's corpse is carried away by some of them. Diviner and Narrator Two are exchanging clothes) (*The Killers*, 2009, pp.45 – 46).

The power of music to generate and heighten moods, influence emotions and activate intentions is demonstrated in the excerpt above which is always utilized by Adeoye in his dramatic engagements.

His Approach to Using Music

Having discussed five purposes of Adeoye's use of music, spelt out as his intentions which we have classified as contextualization, characterization, pulsation, demonstration and disposition, we intend to go on to discuss the methods that he employs in actualizing these purposes. Five approaches that characterise the realization of these intentions are discussed as follows:

Consultation and Collaboration

According to Becker (1974, pp. 13-14), "all 'artistic' work involves the collabouration of a whole range of people, only some of whom are conventionally defined as 'artists'". Grieve and Perrin (2011) citing Gardner (2011) as reported in the Guardian International edition online (www.theguardian.com) declares that, "every bit of theatre is now reliant on collabouration", we can collabourate more, and we should. Not only to make public subsidy stretch further, but because partnerships are so creatively rewarding. This statement by Gardner is true of AbdulRasheed Adeoye in his approach to play production. He is known for his collabouration with musicians and dancers for the realization of his vision for a play. This writer has been involved in this collabourative effort with a number of play productions, especially convocation plays at the University of Ilorin. Adeoye, like other artistic directors, understands the place of consultation and collabouration for a successful production. Avampato (2012, p.2), in an interview with Jim Nicola the artistic director of the New York Theatre Workshop discusses the art of collabouration inside the New York Theatre Workshop, and submits that, "Without collabouration, you can't make a play". He states further on collabouration as follows:

From my first day on the job in theatre, I understood in a visceral way that no man is an island in this business. A successful show effectively fuses the talents of a vast cast of characters, onstage and behind the scenes. And yet the writers,

actors, musicians, designers, crew members and managers involved in a show often have competing interests, needs and opinions about how a production should come together. To add further complication, all of these parties have their creative reputations riding on the outcome of the final product (mediashift.org, published on August 8, 2012, retrieved on 1st February, 2018).

One can conclude that Adeoye has succeeded in using this approach of collaborating with other professionals, especially in music and dance, whose opinions he respects and factors into his dramatic endeavors to enhance his productions, thereby succeeding as a playwright and artistic director.

Adaptation

Adaptation of existing songs to suite context and content of a play is another approach employed by Adeoye. In *The Smart Game* (2012) he uses seventeen songs and alludes to this fact of adaptation on (p. 73), when he states that, "most of the songs in this play are re-created and adopted from the fertile Yoruba folkloric tradition by us, while a few are recalled from the repertoire of some committed Nigerian musicians and dramatists".

From the above, it is observed that Adeoye, as a playwright, adapts existing tunes of folk songs to his own texts, or borrows verbatim music and texts from Nigerian musicians and dramatists. Adeoye either indicates specific songs to be adapted in the play or give suggestions of the type of songs to be used, leaving the specificity of the song to the director or players. For example in *The Killers* (2009, p.46) he indicates as follows:

The orchestra sings a short dirge, as the Deputy Director's corpse is carried away by some of them. Diviner and Narrator Two are exchanging clothes.

In this case, the type of song to be used is a dirge, but the specific dirge is left at the discretion of the performers. An example of where the specific song to be adapted is indicated is on page 57 of *The Killers* (2009) where the orchestra is specifically told to sing "*Adire ba lokun*" (The hen lands on the rope) as a bridge. The song which is a popular game song among the Yoruba is adapted in the play. Another example where the specific music is indicated is on pp. 1-2 of *The killers* (2009) where the drummers played "*Awa l'agba*" (we the elders – the leaders) and concluding it with "*Kowokowo*" (let it fall) other examples are "*Be riwa e yo mowa*" (when you see us, celebrate us) (*The Killers*, 2009, p.3); "*Aloha – Aloha*" (*The Killers*, 2009, p.8); "*Akiti lo le ja*" (Akiti can fight) (*The Killers*, 2009, p.13); "*Ara o gbodo ni mi*" (I must not be in discomfort) (*The Killers*, 2009, p.25); and "*Adire ba loku*" (The hen lands on the rope) (*The Killers*, 2009, p.57). This approach in a way, establishes the notion of Africaness in his neo-alienation aesthetics creation.

Composition

Composition of original songs that goes with the thematic occupations of his plays, as well as composition of new songs to actualize his directorial intentions which may not be part of the original scripts, especially for other authors' plays being directed by him is another approach employed by Adeoye in his use of music. It is observed that Adeoye also composes songs as part of his plays. This is evident in *The Killers* (2009) in which we find the following songs: The song of "We Match on" (p.1); "Don't do it" (p.11); "Don't Kill Them" (p.12); The song of "Stop the Violence Action" (p.51); "Be Your Brother's Keeper" (p.51); "Talk o Talk o" (pp.52 -53); "Write o Write o" (p.56); "The Killers" (p.59)

Interaction

Interaction between the players, the audience and the chorus group, which Adeoye usually refers to as orchestra in his script, is another approach. As we have observed at the beginning of *The Smart Game* (2012), musical interaction between the players and the audience is established as the players distribute the lyrics of the first song of the play to them and the two masked players carrying cardboards bearing the major inscriptions of the song to make participation easy for the audience. Interaction between the players and the orchestra is also a feature of this approach by Adeoye. For example in *The Killers* (2009) the special number of "KowoKowo" (let it fall, let it fall) (pp.1-2) played by drummer one is verbalized by the orchestra. Most often, there is a response by the orchestra to the singing done on stage by the actors, usually for emphasis.

Instrumentation

It is observed that Adeoye has the flair and preference for the use African traditional drums; one may conclude that the reason is because his neo-alienation style which, according to him, is a reworking of the robust African festival theatre, runs through his plays, and influences his directorial approach to play productions. The use of drums and drummers, as we have discussed earlier, is a feature in Adeoye's dramatic enterprise. His use of drums is also a reflection of the setting of his plays, and the task to be executed by the drums in the plays. For example the drums in *The Killers*, the Yoruba speech making drums are employed because they have to make statements in the play like it is done in the prologue on pages 1-2, the excerpt is given below:

Àwa làgbà (We are the elders – the leaders) X2ce

Adiye funfun làgbà adiye (White fowl is the leader of all fowls)

Àwa làgbà (We are the elders- the leaders) x2ce

Adiye funfun lagba adiye (White fowl is the leader of all fowls)

Kowokowo (Let it fall) x2ce

Araba o wo mo (Araba tree is no longer falling)

Oju ti iroko (Shame to Iroko tree)

Kowokowo (Let it fall)

Instrumentation, which most times are ensembles of Yoruba drums, also includes the use of other tribal instruments as the setting of the play that Adeoye is directing demands. It is however observe that either for lack of resources which can be financial or human, or for the purpose of improvisation, Adeoye, many at times, makes use of the available set of drums from any culture to accompany the musical requirements in his plays. He is particularly fond of using the set of Badagry drums to accompany the music of the orchestra, while specific drums that will reflect the setting and actions on stage are used on stage.

Conclusion

We set out in this paper to discuss the purposes and approaches of Abdurashheed Adeoye in the use of music in his written and directed plays. His purposes have been defined as his intentions and functions for the use of music. Five dominant purposes have also been identified and captured in this paper as contextualization, characterization, pulsation, demonstration and disposition. The paper has also discussed five of Adeoye's approaches to the use of music as collabouration, adaptation, composition, interaction and instrumentation.

It can be concluded that Abdurashheed Adeoye, as a playwright and artistic director, has effectively utilized the medium of music as a tool to drive his dramatic intentions. In pursuit of his neo-alienation theory, which cannot be separated from the total theatre concept, rooted in the African festival theatre, Adeoye in collabouration with other experts in music, dance and drama, have succeeded in fusing music to heighten meaning relevant to play/production context, establish his characters and regulate the pace of his performances through the use of music. His penchant for spectacle defines his use of rolling of drums at the beginning of his plays, and generates a friendly disposition between the audience and the players.

It is clear that Adeoye's approaches to the use of music in his plays and productions have enhanced his purposes for the use of music. The alignment of the approaches with the purposes, has greatly contributed to the effectiveness of the music in the plays, thereby contributing to their success. However, while appreciating these purposes and approaches which seem to have become a pattern or style of Adeoye, we want to suggest that there is need

to re - examine his addiction to the use of drum rolling and drummers at the beginning of all plays, and to consider other musical approaches to start his plays.

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