

Chapter One

General Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Directing is an aesthetic conceptualisation that embodies the directorial ingredients and artistic inputs of a play director into a play, in the process of rehearsals, to achieve a scintillating, enjoyable and delightful performance which can be appreciated by the audience and directing/performance scholars and critics. Therefore, directing aesthetics are directing ingredients creatively imbued into a play in the process of interpreting the play for audiences' consumption. Such performances are ingeniously directed and embedded with irresistible dramatic actions, awe-inspiring mise-en-scene, mise-en-actor, prodigious dramatic techniques and overwhelming spectacles. The ingredients are: picturisation, blocking, movement, rhythm, songs, planes, levels, sound, pantomimic dramatisation, choreographic directing, spectacle, silence, freezing, perfect lines delivery/rendition, drumming, chants, incantation, invocation and so on.

Beyond the elements of the theatre, which are infused to play production in the process of play directing, are the directing aesthetics. They are the major ingredients and tools of a good theatre director. The function of directing aesthetics in a production is to enhance the interpretation of the play which brings about a beautiful performance. Hence, play directors must be skilful and creative to be able to explore the tools of directing aesthetics in the process of rehearsals in order to achieve a good performance.

It is of utmost importance to note however, that directing aesthetics in performances must conform to the laid down directing theories and the chosen directorial style(s) of production employed by the director. Style is described by Clurman (1992, p. 172) as the “manner in which the spine is to be articulated.” A director may decide to adopt realism, naturalism, symbolism,

theatre of images, expressionism, impressionism, surrealism, amongst others, as his style of production, while another may prefer to explore Grotowski's Poor Theatre, Johnson's Theatre of Poverty, Becket's Theatre of the Absurd, Brecht's Epic theatre, Ukala's Folkism, Adeoye's Neo-Alienation Style and Theatre, amongst others. Thus, the director who is a unifier must unify his directing aesthetics with his directorial style or style of production. No wonder Robert (1997, p. 200) elucidates on the theatre director as a unifier and synchroniser that

the director's work has more to do with earth than with fire. It is more concerned with nuts and bolts than with gossamer while the eventual goal is to build a beautiful castle that soars into the air, the director must first pay attention to the solidity of the foundation.

Here, the professionalism of the theatre director is required. He must therefore, pay complete attention to the minutest part of play directing, from choosing the play to staging its performance.

It is thus, worthy of mention that the audience is an integral part of a production. This is because the performance is meant for the audience's consumption. This view is enunciated by Oamen and Diakpomrere (2014, p. 135) who note that

the audience is aware of the content of theatre but they may not be aware of the process of packaging it. However, when it is not properly packaged, it will certainly lack the aesthetic which is to the audience what the nectar is to the bees. When a production does not meet audiences' expectation, it rebuffs the audience, and this brings apathy which fuel lack of patronage

Therefore, the audience is very important to the theatre director. This why Emasealu (2010, p. 123) opines that "a complete theatrical activity cannot be said to have taken place unless it

enjoys audience patronage.” Hence, the director must consider the audience in the presentation of his performance by doing a good job while exploring the directing aesthetics in his performance.

Suffice to say that the genre and setting of a play determine the directorial approaches to adopt for the performance. This is to say that if the play-text is a Western play, the infusion of directing aesthetics will be a different ball game from that of an African play. The African theatre performance is replete with all the elements of total theatre aesthetics which combine all the ingredients of the theatre such as dance, music, chants, spectacle, acrobatic display, pantomimic dramatisation, to mention a few. These are embedded into a play production to give the performance an astonishing appeal. On the other hand, the Western performance is typically slow and wordy, with dramatic actions and emphasis on lines and movement. Therefore, the theatre director must do justice to the interpretation of the play according to its genre, setting, and the director’s chosen style of production and directorial style.

The theatre director is described by Wilson (2001, p. 117) as the “key contributor to a theatre event...the person that rehearses the performers and coordinates their work with that of others, such as the designers, to make certain that the event is performed appropriately, intelligently and in an exciting manner.” This unique responsibility of the director makes him an important figure in the theatre. The director as a creative artist must possess the skills and qualities needed for play directing and be conversant with directing aesthetic elements. Hence, no matter the amount of artistic devices that may be installed in the theatre, if a theatre director is not available the performance is heading towards failure.

Directing aesthetics, qualities and elements are not independent techniques or resources in themselves because the theatre director revolves his interpretation of a play around laid down

theories or canons. For instance, Dean and Carra's (1974, p. 210) five fundamentals of play directing: "composition, movement, picturisation, rhythm and pantomimic dramatisation" are important guidelines for theatre directors in the process of directing plays. Thus, before a play can be presented before an audience, it must go through some textual directing criticisms and analyses, that is, the interrogation of the directorial prescription by a playwright in his/her plays to affirm its quality and workability on the stage. Johnson (2001, p. 41) reflects on this clearly by insisting that

plays are often chosen because they can be achieved on the stage. Every stage, whether the proscenium, the thrust, the round, the pit etc, has its limitations. They are not given to elaborate flexibility. Good plays are those scripted with stage limitations in view. Where a playwright ignores the considerations that a stage is mostly static, and creates situations that are overtly tasking or absolutely impossible on the stage, his script will remain largely a literature piece as performances of such will be shunned. J.P Clark's *The Raft* has not been produced either on the Nigerian stage or outside, as it should have been because the play's setting is absolutely on the sea.

Johnson's concern about the workability of a play on stage is valid because the beauty of any drama script is for it to be tested on stage, performed and produced as many times as possible. However, before the play could be directed and presented before an audience, it must go through certain artistic stages of pre-production and production. These are stages of play analysis, rehearsal and performance. At rehearsal stage, directing aesthetics are imbued into the play by the director which later forms an aspect of directing and performance aesthetics.

Hence, the director divides his directing into two- the theoretical framework and practical framework. Under the theoretical framework, the director examines, discusses and analyses the following; Biography of the Playwright, Synopsis of the Play, The Play Analysis, Thematic Preoccupation of the Play, Genre of the Play, Setting, Period, Theme, Characterisation, The Sociological Relevance of the Play, Language of the Play, Style of Writing of the Playwright and so on. This first stage of analysis is called theoretical framework; it enables the director to understand the selected play in terms of context, content and the vision of the playwright. When reading and analysing, images run through the director's mind which eventually form the basis for his interpretation of the play. This stage is called play reading, play studying and play analysis. The director as the overall head of the performance is expected to be a bit knowledgeable about everything because, according to McDonald (1990, p. 4), the director is "a practitioner in the theatre field who oversees and orchestrates the mounting of a theatre production... by unifying various areas and aspect of production." Therefore, the theatre director is the master of the arts of the theatre.

The second part of the directing analysis is the practical framework. The following directorial issues are expected to be analysed under the practical framework; The Directorial Concept, Directorial Style, Directorial Approach, Styles of Production, Picturisation, Movement, Blockings, Rhythm, Sound, Music and Songs, Planes and Levels, Emphasis, Costume Analysis, Make-Up Analysis, Props, Set/Scenery, Lighting and so on. The practical framework is a very important part of production. It helps the crewmembers to understand the direction of the performance as envisioned and conceived by the artistic director. However, only number one to twelve of the aforelisted concern the director solely. Although, he works closely with other crewmembers to achieve their creative visions for the performance, but his or her major duty

revolves around the first twelve concepts. They are known as directing aesthetics conceptualisations.

Borrowing from Kofoworola (2012, p. 24) who divided performance criticism into two - “descriptive performance criticism and prescriptive performance criticism”, this study categorises directing aesthetics criticism under the ‘prescriptive directing criticism and descriptive directing criticism’. In the former, the prescriptive directing criticism states to the director on what he thinks and believes, and how a play should be directed; while in descriptive directing criticism, the critic attempts an explanation of the form in which a performance should take. Directing criticism therefore serves as the art of examining directing elements in play performances. It also facilitates the understanding and appreciation of a drama text through its stage interpretation for audience’s consumption. It is with this understanding that we carry out a comparative study of directing aesthetics in the performances of Femi Osofisan’s plays.

Interestingly, a good director wants a play to be directed beyond entertainment with his creative and directorial ingenuity. Hence, he goes into deep research of the historical background of the play at hand in order to understand the vision of the playwright. The director, therefore, harnesses his interpretative skill in the presentation of the play.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Before now, many scholars such as Gibbs and Mugo (2014), Jeyifo (2013), Abubakar (2012), Adeyemi (2011) Adeoye (2005), Awodiya (2002), amongst others, have analysed and examined Femi Osofisan’s plays and performances. Some have studied his plays in the areas of thematic engagements, postcoloniality, sociological relevance, political undertone, feminism, theatrical elements, writing style, and the relevance of his works to the society. It is noteworthy

however, to say that, to our own knowledge, we are yet to come across any study on the directing aesthetics of his performances as directed by the selected directors.

We have also noticed that there is inadequate infusion of essential directing aesthetics in play performances. Also, there are certain expectations of the directing critics which the director must take cognizance of, for instance, understanding the type of audience and the environment the play is to be staged which has not received serious attention to our notice. In the same vein, there is inadequate documentation of directors' works in Nigeria or Africa as a continent in relations to Femi Osofisan's plays. To the best of our knowledge, many plays have been staged with different directors experimenting with new styles, but very few of these styles are documented. This is why Adeoye (2012, p. 29) avows that

much attention has been devoted to dramatic theory and criticism in the Nigerian theatre, while little attention is paid to the documentation of the works of the directors. This is what Effiong Johnson calls the directorial challenge to the African directors...even though theatre directors in the Nigerian theatre are now fighting hard to document what they considered experimental in their various theatres for posterity; more still need to be done.

These are therefore, the missing links that this study fills.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate and interrogate directing aesthetics in the selected performances of Femi Osofisan's selected plays as directed by six Nigerian play directors namely, Bakare, Ojo Rasaki, Tunde Awosanmi, Muyiwa Awodiya, Sola Adeyemi, Femi Ayeni and Ola Ifatimehin. These theatre directors who are Femi Osofisan's enthusiasts have directed many of his plays. The plays examined are *Women of Owu*, *Once Upon Four Robbers* and *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. Consequently, the objectives of the study were to:

- (i) evaluate the effectiveness of directing aesthetics in the selected performances in relation to dramatic communication;
- (ii) examine the prevalent directing aesthetics in selected performances of Femi Osofisan's plays;
- (iii) investigate the features of textual directing in the selected plays of Osofisan and their relationship to the performances;
- (iv) interrogate the selected directors' creative inventions in the six performances of Femi Osofisan's plays; and
- (v) state how relevant the creatively invented directorial styles and approaches, if adopted, could be to theatre directors in Nigeria.

1.4 Significance of the Study

African performances need to be reviewed from time to time in order to ensure their adherence to unavoidable performance principles guiding play production directorially and in terms of other elements of the theatre. It is also important to examine the aesthetics embedded in these performances in order to justify their relevance to the audience and to the development of the society generally. When a performance is selected for critical assessment, it is important to assess it beyond the physical beauty, there are deeper and hidden beauties to examine. For instance, many performances are staged without considering the rules guiding play directing. Although, they appear interesting but they lack the beauty of a true performance.

The significance of this research, therefore, lies in the location of artistic identity in terms of directing aesthetics, especially to African drama and stage performances. It is our belief that the documentation that is achieved in the course of this research will contribute, in its modest measure, to scholarship in the theatre, especially in the area of directing.

The cultural credo, sociological mien and topical relevance of the plays of the highly celebrated Nigerian playwright, Femi Osofisan, cannot be over-emphasised. Indeed, the need to give contemporary colouration and artistic commentary to the plays of this dramatist by African, especially Nigerian directors is a feat that is not only imperative for the Nigerian populace, but for budding artistic directors, directing scholars and other theatre practitioners across time and space. Therefore, this research work contributes to the constantly growing bodies of literature on the transformational powers and artistic tendencies of Femi Osofisan's plays from a directorial angle.

1.5 Research Methods

This work employed the descriptive research method and the interview tool to gather data. The descriptive method allowed us to illustrate the directing aesthetics in six performances of three of Femi Osofisan's plays as directed at different times by six directors, while the interview tool assisted the researcher to learn details of the directing aesthetics employed by the directors over a given period.

1.6 Research Questions

In the course of this research, after reading our selected plays and watching their performances; the following research questions are begging for answers:

- (i) how effective are directing aesthetics in the selected performances in relation to dramatic communication?;
- (ii) what are the prevalent directing aesthetics in the selected plays of Femi Osofisan in performance?;
- (iii) what are the features of textual directing in the selected plays of Osofisan and their relationship to the performances?;

- (iv) what are the selected directors' creative inventions in the six performances in terms of Femi Osofisan's plays?;
- (v) how relevant are the creatively invented directorial styles and approaches to Nigerian theatre directors of the 21st Century and beyond?

1.7 Scope of the Study

In reality, Femi Osofisan has published over fifty plays, and the plays have been performed at different times, however, the performances of three out of his numerous plays are selected as the focus of this study. Some of the selected theatre directors of these plays have been on the Nigerian stage for over two decades, while others have spent at least ten years in the Nigerian theatre, becoming authorities on their own and they are unapologetically African in their approaches towards play directing.

However, in the course of this study, references are made to relevant works of other directors and playwrights whose works are relevant to the study. Our choice of the three plays of Femi Osofisan and the six directors is informed by Osofisan's writing style, the relevance of his works to the society; the thematic preoccupations of his plays which ranges from the themes of freedom for the oppressed; historical reconstruction; political restructuring; social change and national development; and also for the creative prowess of the selected directors. Our examination of the plays and their stage performances are limited to the writing styles and form of the plays and the directorial considerations, the performance techniques and directorial approaches of the selected directors.

1.8 Justification of the Study

When a play is chosen for critical assessment either as written text or as performance, it is important to assess the play beyond the ordinary surface. A work as this is long overdue

considering the fact that many plays are written without considering the rules guiding playwriting or the interpretation of the play by the play director. Femi Osofisan is one of the most produced playwrights in Nigeria to the best of our knowledge; his works exhibit a high level of artistry on stage. His works have attracted audience attention and he seems to have a certain philosophy and style to writing.

In the same vein, Femi Osofisan's plays depict and celebrate African cultural values and identity; they also contribute to scholarship in the areas of African theatre and dramaturgy; while at the same time, having immense contribution to the growth and development of socio-political, cultural, economic and religious growth of Nigeria and Africa at large. Consequently, the variegated, multi-dimensional, and cross-cultural undertones of Femi Osofisan's plays are too substantial to be ignored. Therefore, the choice of the researcher to select six directors who are largely representative of different geo-political zones, background, educational status, and directorial subscription, within the nexus of their adoption of different directing styles to stage Femi Osofisan plays is with the view to reiterate the border-crossing attributes of Femi Osofisan's dramaturgy.

The justification of this work is therefore, borne out of the need to examine and document various directing aesthetics employed by selected Nigerian play directors of Femi Osofisan's plays. The study also owes to the need to identify relevant dramatic and theatrical parameters (devices and aesthetic considerations) with which play directing could be approached for better theatrical praxis.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of the study is the fact that some of the selected directors could not provide their performances' materials due to loss of the productions' documents which included:

pictures, videos, programme notes and production' books or director's 'bibles'. However, other relevant materials were recovered and made available to this researcher.

In the same vein, the researcher could not embark on many research journeys for the required materials, but her attendance at the stage performances of many of Femi Osofisan's plays became very useful in the practical analysis of the directorial styles and approaches explored in the plays. We were able to interview the play directors of the selected plays and some others as: *Women of Owu*, *Once Upon Four Robbers*, *The Midnight Blackout*, *The Engagement*, *Aringindin and The Night Watchmen*, *The Inspector and the Hero*, *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Context*, *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*. The researcher also had the recorded performances of some others, which were made available to her by people who directed the plays, acted in them or watched them. This study was confronted with the challenge of scarcity of scholarly materials on directing aesthetics, particularly in the performances of Femi Osofisan's plays owing to the fact that there has not been any previous works which have examined and analysed the performances of Femi Osofisan's plays from the perspectives of the directing aesthetics. However, these limitations did not by any means reduce the quality of this research work.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms and Concepts

In the course of this study, a number of terms and concepts are adopted. It is, therefore, important for us to define such terms here for easy comprehension. Such terms and concepts include the following:

- (i) Aesthetics
- (ii) Directing Aesthetics
- (iii) Performance Aesthetics

(iv) Textual Aesthetics

Aesthetics

Aesthetics as a philosophical phenomenon is used to examine and appreciate the beauty or ugliness of an object, human being, or artwork. Aesthetics strives to ascertain why a particular thing is regarded as beautiful and why another is not or attempts to define or identify the factors that make a phenomenon to be functional and effective while some others are not. In its judgment of an object, aesthetics follows the laid down rules governing the examination of such object. This is the direction in which the term is applied in this study.

Directing Aesthetics

Our concept of directing aesthetics has to do with the beauty of play directing and the skills of the play director in the interpretation of the play. They are the directing elements imbued in a play in the process of directing. It can also be described as the elements of directing that are brought to bear in the process of rehearsal by the director. The aesthetic qualities of the director in the production process are what help the play drive its overall message to the audience. These can be referred to as directing aesthetics.

Performance Aesthetics

Performance aesthetics are the elements of aesthetics that enhance beauty, perfection and overall success in a performance. The aesthetics of performance is beyond the artistic director, although he is the overall head of a theatre production. However, performance aesthetics can only be achieved with the collaboration of the entire crew members in a production. There is the need to harness all the element of the theatre for complete performance aesthetics to be achieved. These elements are dance, music, chants, songs, costumes, light, props, make-up and so on.

Textual Directing Aesthetics

Textual directing aesthetics is a technical term conceived to represent directing and artistic elements created ingeniously by the playwright into his play. Such plays are enriched with creatively plotted stories, imaginative dramatic elements and techniques for the actualisation of their thematic concerns. A play rich in textual directing aesthetics attracts play directors to itself, it also appeals to their sense of interpretation.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 The Context of Aesthetics

Aesthetics can be referred to as a philosophical phenomenon and a branch of philosophy that runs through all aspects of life. It is a study of beauty and the properties of a system that appeal to the senses, as opposed to the content, structures, and utility of the system itself. Various scholars and great philosophers of high repute such as Kant (1724-1804), Baumgarten (1714-1762), Addison (1672-1719), Hutcheson (1694-1746), Hegel (1776), and Budd (1988) have written comprehensively on the concept of aesthetics. As a matter of fact, aesthetics or ‘æsthetics’ as a phenomenon owes its name to Alexander G. Baumgarten who derived it from the Greek word *aisthanomai*, which means perception by means of the senses. According to Kant (1782, p. 6), aesthetics is “the science which deals with the conditions of sensuous perception...and branch of philosophy that criticizes the taste of an art analysis by spiritualising it to a divine plane and giving it a metaphysical meaning”. Kant continues his definition and description of aesthetics as averred by Beardsley (1967, p. 6) “in a series of four “moments”. Each of these four moments “develops sets of arguments. According to him, Immanuel Kant summarized the findings of each of the moments as follows:

- (i) First Moment *Taste* is the faculty of judging of an object or a method of representing it by an *entirely disinterested* satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called *beautiful*.
- (ii) Second Moment The *beautiful* is that which pleases universally without requiring a concept (i.e. a reason).
- (iii) Third Moment Beauty is the form of the *finality* (or *purposiveness*) of an object, so far as this is perceived in it *without any representation of a purpose*.
- (iv)

Fourth Moment The *beautiful* is that which without any concept is cognized as the object of a *necessary* (i.e. universal) satisfaction (or delight) (Beardsley, 1967, pp. 6 - 7).

This summary of the above quotation is that taste is essential in the judgment of beauty and the beautiful.

Thus, ‘taste’ which comes from human mind, according to Kant, is crucial in the assessment of beauty. Similar to Kant’s submission is Budd’s (1988, pp. 144-145) definition of aesthetics which he describes as the “study of the origination of beauty in a mind and their effect on that mind.” Budd here sees aesthetics as the pleasant feelings of a man towards an object in his mind. That feeling he refers to as “the origination of beauty”. Budd’s definition like Kant’s relates aesthetics with “sensuous perception” of the mind. It, therefore, means that aesthetics as a concept can be used to “distinguish those objects which are delightful to look upon or listen to, from those which are not” (Hartley, 2006, p. 106). This, therefore, explains why beauty is subjective because one man’s food might be another’s poison.

While describing the unique functions of aesthetics, Hegel (1967, p. 77) avers that it is a “form of beautiful experience by which the rational rendered sensible, which the sensible appearance being the form in which the rational content is made manifest.” Kofoworola (2004, p. 3) explains Hegel’s description of aesthetics as what “can only be said to be beautiful if it adapts to the principles of beauty as being laid down by aesthetics scholars and examined by human mind.” This means that the human mind is a factor in deciding as to whether an object is beautiful or not. Therefore, the human mind and the senses are indispensable in the judgment of aesthetics. This can be related to ‘sense of perception’ as noted by Kant and Budd. Budd (1988, pp. 143-144) further posits that

what distinguishes an item's aesthetics from its non-aesthetic properties is the nature or style of aesthetic appreciation, which is the particular attitude that is distinctive of aesthetic appreciation; you must adopt this attitude in order for an item's aesthetic attitude to be manifest to you and if you are in this attitude you are in a state of aesthetic contemplation.

Another important description of aesthetics that can be likened to Kant's and Budd's is that of Hutcheson (1725, sec, I, p. xiii, II) who states that

the ideas of beauty and harmony, like other sensible ideas, are *necessarily* pleasant to us, as well as immediately so, neither can any resolution of our own, nor any *prospect* of advantage or disadvantage, vary the beauty or deformity of an object. ...in the external sensations, no view of interest will make an object grateful, nor view of detriment distinct from immediate pain in the perception, make it disagreeable to the sense.

Drawing from the above, it is evident that aesthetics is synonymous to words like “‘pleasant’, ‘beautiful’, ‘beauty’, ‘kind’, ‘honourable’, ‘just’, ‘decent’, ‘honest’, ‘right’, ‘ethical’, ‘proper’, ‘gentle’, ‘meek’, ‘good’, ‘sweet’ *Columbia Encyclopædia* (2005, p. 6147) and any good thing. Whenever a person is seen exhibiting these virtues, he is seen as beautiful, if it is an object that is pleasant to look at in terms of colour, shape, and uses, then, it will be termed beautiful. This therefore, means that beauty cannot be divorced from aesthetics or aesthetics from beauty.

In the African worldview, such things as virtuous, upright and decent are aesthetically pleasing if they are positive. African people believe all good things are beautiful, but not all beautiful things are good. This is why the Yoruba axiom says “gbogbo ohun to n dan ko ni wura”

which means ‘not all that glitters is gold.’ They therefore, search for deeper meanings in both essential and non-essential values. Kofoworola (2004, p. 120) submits that

the appreciation of beauty among the Yoruba ethnic group or Africans in general, is not based solely on the manifestation of beauty which is derived from the physical feature of presentation. Thus, the physical appearance or the tangible texture is not the main (or only) criterion of evaluation.

According to *Catholic Encyclopædia* (1912), aesthetics is a philosophical theory which investigates the physiological and philosophical principles of art, the conceptions of art, of beauty, and of the beautiful in art and also the universal laws of artistic activities, also the presupposition of all scientific discussion is indispensable in aesthetics.

Many of the definitions of aesthetics, just like the above definition, relate the phenomena to art and creativity; that is, things or phenomena created by man to express one feeling or another, like painting, sculpture, drawings, architecture, music, drama, dance, mime and so on. This simply implies that aesthetics can be used as a philosophical theory of interpreting and appreciating an artwork. For instance, in theatre productions, aesthetics has influenced different areas like costume, make-up, props, scenery, dance, music, drama, and mime.

In the same vein, Hartley (2006, p. 103) defines aesthetics as the “philosophical subject that is concerned with the nature of art and the criteria of artistic judgment.” Hartley’s definition reflects that art is essential to aesthetics. It has been argued, however, that both works of art and non-art objects can possess specific aesthetic properties such as beauty, gracefulness as well as properties that are not specifically aesthetic such as size, shape and are susceptible to aesthetic and non- aesthetic appreciation and subject to aesthetic and non-aesthetic judgments.

Kant (1822, p. 27), however, is of the opinion that aesthetics goes beyond arts and that it has manifested in

every culture and subculture throughout history and consequently it has survived the demise of each era or civilization. From food through to music and architecture, all of our possessions and many of our experiences are purposively shaped by designers for aesthetics as well as functional purposes... There is aesthetics in arts, music, performing arts, literature, gastronomy (food); it exists in the sciences-information technology, electronics, video games, mathematics, neuroesthetics, industrial design, urban life, landscape design, architectural and industrial design. The term has been acculturated by dramatists to denote ingenuity in plays and their performances.

Kant's submission above explains why theatre directors and other dramatists desire aesthetics as the overall spectacle in their performances after putting their body and soul into the making of the theatre. Hence, theatre performances and aesthetics are inseparable because aesthetics is an essential part of the criteria of the artistic judgment of theatrical performances.

Overall therefore, we see aesthetics as the study of sense perceptions and how they can be articulated, magnified and communicated through any medium like Television, Radio, or in this case, the Stage, through the art of directing.

2.2 Play Directing in the Postmodern Theatre

Play directing was not given much significance in the theatre in the olden days because it was not professionally done until the twentieth century. Thus, the art of play directing has been confirmed by different directing scholars such as Adeoye (2019), Johnson (2017), Wilson and

Goldfarb (1991), Barranger (1995), Dean and Carra (1965) and so on, as a late 19th and early 20th centuries nomenclature and a relatively new phenomenon in the global theatre.

However, an overview of the evolutionary trend reveals that even though the art of play directing was not at some point a nomenclature, it has all along been in existence in one form or the other, depending on the extent to which the dramatists unified their productions. Wilson and Goldfarb (1991, p. 34) explain this when they state that “although the title may have been new, the function of the director has always been present in one way or another... At various times in theatre history, the leading performer or playwright of a company served as a director, though without the name.” In the same manner, Johnson (2017, p. 196) also affirms this when he states that

though the profession of the director and the term “directing” were never known or used at the outset of the theatre practice in Greece, tinges and semblances of “directing art” were not totally excluded from the performance scheme. The fact of the competitiveness of the drama festivals instructed participants to be painstaking, thorough, critical, analytical and convincing.

From the beginning of time, in the Greek theatre for instance, playwrights such as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Menander coordinated their casts (chorus and actors) whenever they wanted to perform their plays. Hodge (1988, p. 5) avers that such famous playwrights as “Aeschylus, Shakespeare, and Moliere acted in and often directed their own plays”. Thus, the playwrights functioned as the directors and producers of their plays. Almost every side of their productions was done by one singular person who is the playwright without taking cognizance of the fact that portfolios can be divided for easy and quick achievement.

Interestingly, this same practice continued in the Roman theatre where dramatists such as “Titus Maccius Plautus, Publicus Terence Afer, Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Horace and so on who acted in and coordinated their plays themselves” (Adedokun, 2001, p. 3). The same tradition went on to the medieval theatre where dramatists such as “Hrosvitha (c.935-973) and Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179)” (Adedokun, 2001, p. 3) acted in and coordinated their actors. In his inaugural lecture, Adeoye (2019, pp. 6 - 7) states that “King Usertsen, the III of Egypt, instructed the then interpretative artist, I-Kher-Nefert in 1887, to assemble performers for the production of the “Egyptian Abydos Passion Plays.” This makes the Egyptian dramatist, I-Kher-Nefert the first theatre director in the world history, even though there was no nomenclature as director in the theatre then.

Another dramatist who unconsciously functioned as theatre director is Choragus, a co-trainer of the chorus in the Greek drama. Dean and Carra (1965, p. 23) describe Choregus’ work stating that it

consisted not only in teaching and technique of dancing to the individual dancers and in perfecting the synchronization of movement, but also in interpreting the subject matter of the strophe and antistrophe in terms of positions; movement and rhythm....

Choregus blended the interpretative movement to the spoken word so that the word, besides being reinforced and clarified, might connote a definite mood quality for the spectator.

In spite of all the efforts of I-Kher-Nefert and Choragus in assembling performers and making theatre lively by adding movement, it did not occur to anyone that play directing “could transform theatrical presentation until the era of George II (1826-1914), the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen in 1874” (Hodge, 1988, p. 8). As a matter of fact, George II, Duke of Saxe-

Meiningen stepped forward to coordinate the actor's movement and lines during rehearsal, giving them blocking. That was the beginning of modern directing.

This same trend continued even in the medieval theatre while in later centuries, “either individual or group directors and stage manager were the forerunner of the director” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, p. 11674). Hodge (1988, p. 5) reveals that in the

last quarter of the nineteenth century, the idea of a separate craftsman began to take shape – a skilled coordinator who understood all the crafts of the theatre and who could devote his full energies to bringing them together into a single, artistic, and rhythmic whole in order to express in the best possible way what the playwright had in mind. This was born simultaneously in the twentieth-century theatrical art and the director as the major theatrical artist.

Hence, George II's era birthed the term ‘play directing’ in the world theatre. This is variously recorded by many theatre textbooks, journals and articles. For instance, Dean and Carra (1965, p. 24) confirm that George II “devised a system in which a single directing mind brought scenery, costume, stage lighting and acting artistic unity”. His ability to coordinate all these elements into a theatrical performance made him popular and a recognised fore-runner of play directing in the world theatre. Johnson (2017, p. 200) corroborates Dean and Carra about George II being “the first director who exercised a central artistic discipline over the theatre company and production, controlling or coordinating the entire units of the production into the wholesome artistic and aesthetic piece.” Consequently, George II's roles gave birth to what is known as modern theatre directing today and this fact cannot be overemphasised. He formed a German acting troupe called the Meiningen Players. This, Cole and Chinoy (1973, p. 22) record for historical purpose that

May 1, 1874 has come to have a special place in the history of the director, for, on that date; the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen brought his unknown troupe to Berlin to display the unique accomplishments of a director's theatre. The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen utilized all the innovations... intensive rehearsals, disciplined, integrated acting, and historically accurate sets and costumes to create realistic stage pictures. But the Duke went significantly beyond his predecessors, in that he attempted reconciliation between the usually compelling illusions of the painted set and the moving actors... He interpreted the text through the medium of all the theatrical arts... He blended the theatrical arts into a symphony of visual and aural minutiae.

Thus, the beginning of modern directing is associated with the Meiningen Players, a German acting troupe organised in 1874 by George II. In the time of Ludwig Chronegk as the leader, the group worked as a unit, setting an influential example of effective ensemble playing. George II contributed immensely to theatre in his era; he was "supervising and coordinating every element of his theatrical productions into an integral whole" (Wilson and Goldfarb, 1991, p. 34). Thus, the George II's ingenuity and creative prowess brought into limelight, the art of play directing in the modern and postmodern worlds.

Nevertheless, numerous theatre directors, thereafter, have emerged and they have in one way or the other, contributed their own quota to the development of the art of directing in the theatre. Examples of these directors are the leading realistic directors of the late 19th Century which Leiter (1994, pp. 1-210) lists as

André Antoine in France, Otto Braham in Germany, Adolphe Appia in Germany and Edward Gordon Craig in England, German Max Reinhardt, Erwin Piscator,

Bertolt Brecht, David Belasco, Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Samuel Beckett, Augusto Boal and so on ... The most innovative of these was probably Constantin Stanislavsky in Russia who stressed ensemble acting and the importance of actors' absolute identification with their roles.

Therefore, it is worthy of mention that play directing began to become more prominent during the industrial age which came before romanticism. Hence, play directing is still evolving. However, as at today, play directing has assumed worldwide status due to its indispensable nature among theatre crews.

There is a robust discussion in the theatre on elements of play directing in the works of directing scholars like Johnson (2017), Adeoye (2016 and 2011), Yerima (2016, 2013, 2010 and 2007) and so on. For instance, while Johnson (2017, pp. 206-208) in his analysis of the principles of directing, describes directors' capacities as "intuition, techniques, experience, exposure, temperament, speed etc ...and directing elements as directorial approach, directorial skills, directorial concept and directorial image", Adeoye (2012, p. 26) discusses aesthetics of dramaturgy in relation to the director's interpretation of a play by opining that

between the aesthetics of dramaturgy lies directorial poetics which encapsulates the director's style, method, approach and concept for the interpretation ... The style of one director differs from another because they are two different creative artists with different interpretative imaginations. Hence, no two directors can approach the same play the same way... in the theatre generally, the endless nature of creative or artistic imagination thus makes one theatre director to be radically different from the other.

Play directing is thus, the interpretation of play script on the stage which is ambiguous and complex. It requires high level of skills and expertise. Hodge (1971, p. 1) reveals the challenging nature of play directing as

a highly sensitive craft, involving intensive play analysis, exceptional skills in communication and approaches to the making of a style...stimulation and arrangement of the doing of the others, a very complicated process requiring many exceptional skills of its own.

The art can also be described as the interpretation of the playwright's script by transporting the lifeless imagery in the script into reality on stage with the use of theatrical elements such as actors, costumes, make-up, sounds, dance, songs, among others. Cohen (1988, p. 188) also defines directing as "an art whose product is the most ambiguous, perhaps the most mysterious in the theatre". This mysterious, enigmatic and inscrutable nature of play directing does not only bother the Western directors, directing scholars and practitioners in Africa are also of the opinion that play directing is a very complex art. Wole Soyinka cited in Musa (2011, p. 34) describes play directing as a

complex business. It is a sociological phenomenon. It relates to the environment, the cast in hand, how much time one has, how to balance the amount of time to each actor in view of just how much time one has to put a play on stage and of course the overall theatrical images which one wants to represent, the dynamic tension of the various special images which one wants to create on stage.

It is interesting, however, to state that despite its complexity, determined, competent, hard-working and zealous dramatists have chosen the art of directing as their area of specialisation in the theatre.

Over the decades, play directing has become an ingenious, creative and interpretative source for play scripts. The phenomenon has had global impact such that it has received global eminence due to its inherent capability in the art of the theatre. Play directing is an important and distinctive artistic weapon of interpretation and a major tool for theatre directors, through which they bring into limelight the playwright's vision. It is important to say at this juncture that, the director's interpretation may be different from the playwright's vision. If this happens, it will only add to the beauty of the performance, because every work of art is subject to diverse interpretations.

Play's interpretation by a play director involves lot of stages which range from casting the right actors, rehearsal; directing and blocking the cast members in terms of sound and dramatic actions; and performance. The interpretation therefore, involves the use of theatrical elements such as characters, dialogue, costume, props, scenery, songs, music, chants, dance, to mention a few. Interestingly, there is no way a performance will be staged without the input of an artistic director or a coordinator. Eregare Emmanuel Oga quoted in Oga (2004, p. 29) describes directing as an art which

brings about or being able to project to the fore, the message of the playwright through various elements of directing which can be found in lighting, scenic design, in décor generally, costume- make-up generally which can be found in sound and textual interpretation and analysis of the play and speech nuances.

No matter how much energy and resources are put into the production, how effective the lighting, make up, costume and props are applied into the production, the play can still be very poor, if not well directed. Directing, therefore, takes the forefront of play production while other

art forms follow. Suffice it to say at this juncture, that the success of a production largely depends on the director's work.

Directing is divided into two frameworks - the theoretical and practical frameworks. Some theatre directors tend to ignore the theoretical framework, which comes before the practical realisation of a play. Failure to foreground oneself in the theoretical aspect of directing will lead to poor practical realisation of such a play. Under theoretical framework, issues such as genre of the play - tragedy, comedy, and satire or burlesque - should be determined. For instance, questions that must be answered include: what type or level of language is used in the play? what type of plot structure or plot development is inherent in the play? why does the play have a cyclical or episodic plot structure? what production style does the theatre director intend to use? Is it realism, symbolism or the Brechtian style?; among others.

It, therefore, becomes imperative that play directing should be seen and studied not just as single tradition with homogeneous themes and forms, but as an interpretative culture that embodies sub-textual. African theatre directors need to diversify their approaches to directing plays in order to move the world closer to the audience. The practical framework, on the other hand, is the analysis of the play in practical sense. That is, directorial-wise in terms of concept, approach and style of the director; it also includes the analysis of the costumes, props, stage set, lighting and other theatrical elements needed for the performance.

2.3 The Play Director as an Interpretative Artist

Adeoye (2019, p. 6) avers that the “Play Director is the intelligent leader, the rounded artist, and the *primus inter pares* of the performance team, who cannot be pigeonholed because of the expanding nature of his duties and the numerous theatre conventions he has to work with and learn from.” This implies that the director is the dominant figure in theatrical production. The

role of the theatre director as a leader, shepherd, interpreter, manager, coordinator, and above all “director” makes Peter Brook, one of the most important directors of the Twentieth Century; refer to him as ‘god’. He avers that the director

does not ask to be god and yet his roles imply it. He wants to be infallible, and yet an instinctive conspiracy of the actors is to make him the arbiter, because an arbiter is so desperately wanted all the time. In a sense the director is always an imposter, a guide at night who does not know the territory and yet he has no choice - he must guide, learning the route as he goes (Brook, 1968, p. 38).

However, the skills, creative ingenuity and feeling of superiority by the playwright in the process of play making are not enough, the theatre director who would interpret the play for the audience’s consumption is also very important. Without the artistic interpretation of a play script which is known as play directing, the message of the play may be lost, even when read. This is because play scripts are meant to be interpreted by play directors with the use of all the elements of the theatre for an audience.

Is it then not enough for the director to be interpretative only and not creative? Though, the directorial concept may distort the script but the director would be able to focus on the aesthetics of the production more. The director decides the interpretation of the script, casts actors, works with the other crewmembers in designing the production, rehearses the actors and coordinates all elements into a finished performance. He is a human relations expert, especially with the casts and crewmembers. A decision maker, professional per excellence, business manager, publicity director, he must be knowledgeable in all the portfolios of other crew members, even if he is not perfect, he however must know something about everything.

The theatre director is, therefore, like an all-in-all in the theatre, a manager, interpreter, designer, supervisor and above all, a creative artist, he interprets the play. He is many things rolled into one. The director analyses the play script in order to understand characterisation, lines, messages, and dramatic elements of the play. As an interpretative artist, he pays total attention to the minutest part of play directing, from choosing the script to staging the play. He creatively and interpretatively “oversees and orchestrates the mounting of a theatre production... by unifying various endeavours and aspects of production” (McDonald, 1990, p. 4).

Brockett (1974, p. 76) sees a director as an “interpretative artist” who is responsible for the artistic vision of the production and for the interpretation of the play script. The director is also described by Cameron and Gillespie (1989, pp. 99-155) as a unifier, who is

saddled with three responsibilities - interpretation, presentation and management... As interpreter, presenter, and manager, he not only analyses the dramatic text, but also evaluates the nature of the expected audience and assesses the abilities and potentials of the other theatre artists.

A director therefore, needs to know how to work with a team to achieve that vision. He must develop the ability to organise complex activities and the personal qualities to deal with actors and members of the production team.

Thus, the job of the artistic director as an interpretative artist includes the following: choosing the scripts, studying the play scripts to determine artistic interpretation and choosing the actors. The director also instructs actors on acting methods, blocks and creates picture for the play as well as direct all aspects of dramatic productions on stage. The director also makes all the final decisions concerning costumes and set.

2.4 Types of Theatre Directors

Many theatre scholars such as Johnson (2017), Wilson (2001), Leiter (1994) and so on have written extensively on the various types of theatre directors. While Johnson (2017, p. 198) vaguely identifies three different directors as the slave or text, the auteur and the collaborator, Taylor (1997) lists the following as the three types of director: Text, transformational and auteur directors. It must however be stated that there are numerous types of theatre directors; this study shall examine the following:

Eclectic or Experimental Directors

This type of director combines various kinds of styles and approaches in his direction of a play and creates a new style from them. An eclectic director experiments with the play script in the process of its stage interpretation and transforms the play by adopting various types of directorial styles and approaches. The first sets of directors in this category according to Leiter (1994, pp. 1-323), are “Vsevolod Vaslov Meyerhold, Max Reinhart, Mikhail Chekhov, Yevgeny Vakhtango, Alexaner Tairov, and Peter Brook”. The eclectic director uses a number of directorial styles in his direction of a theatre director.

Slavish or Text Director

The slavish or text director is a cooperative, supportive and obliging person who yieldingly follows the script as written and instructed by the playwright. Johnson (2017, p. 198) describes the slavish or text director as a person who “respects the script deeply and conveys the playwright’s intentions as faithfully as possible”. This type of director interprets the play word-for-word.

The Auteurish Director

This type of director only uses the storyline of the playwright as a raw material. Wilson, (2001, p. 128) describes the auteur director as someone who makes “more drastic alterations or transformations in the material, taking responsibility for shaping every element in the production, including the script” and can “re-write or eliminate text in order to present his own vision of the material. The auteurish director is a creative director, however, he steps on many playwrights’ toes because he “nearly entirely does not reckon with the playwright and if he exists at all, is but a mere member of the creative team” (Johnson, 2017, p. 198). Many playwrights do not want their storylines altered. However, the auteurish director deconstructs the play in order to suit his own directorial vision for the performance.

Creative or Transformational Director

The creative or transformational director “uses the script as a raw material to make something out of it. He takes the most imaginative liberties of the script” (Johnson, 2017, p. 198). This type of director alters and distorts the playwright’s script to his own creative advantage. To him, it does not matter what the playwright feels. What matters to him is the fact that, there is a script he likes and wants to stage. Whether the playwright would want his script distorted or not is immaterial to him. The auteurish director and creative or transformational director are similar in their functions while the difference in their productions is in their directorial styles and approaches to the interpretations of the plays.

Collaborative Director

Unlike the slavish or text director who “respects the scripts deeply and conveys the playwright’s intention as faithfully as possible” (Johnson, 2017, p. 198), the collaborative director

discards the script but steers up his team for the creation of a scenario. Once a “direction” or “shape” is attained, the collaborative director who is more of a coach or “steerer” of discussion will lead the group to take up rules which are rehearsed to perfection for a performance (Johnson, 2017, p. 199).

In the same manner, Leiter (1994, p. 244) describes the collaborative director as a creative director

who blends the best contributions of a team into finished work of art. He considers the actor the theatre primary artist. Many of his visual conceptions combine an impressionistic disposition of form with light, mood, and color as well as with highly selective compositions devoid of unnecessary detail.

The collaborative director is therefore a creative director who combines the playwright’s vision with his directorial vision in an experimental form, such that the outcome of the performance may appear different from the expectation of the playwright.

Democratic Directors or Negotiator

The democratic director or negotiator democratically allows actors to have an input into the director’s concept of play directing. This is in tandem with Brockett’s (1996, p. 317) apotheosis of the art of “directing as psychology”, which deals with how the director “works with other human beings (cast and crew)” (Adavi, 2012, p. 158). Furthermore, the *Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia* (2000, p. 5749) explains that the democratic director or negotiator, “focuses on a more improvised and mediated form at rehearsal and creation, using the idea of the production team and actors to shape a theatrical work in quite a democratic style” cited in (Arinde, 2012, p. 100). This, Akinwale (2010, p. 35) refers to as “The School of Inner Resources” of the actors, which is a blocking style where the director allows the actors to move

themselves on set. According to Arinde (2017, p. 242), director “approves some of their movements, he rejects some.”

Super Director

Another type of director that can be found in the theatre is the super director whose “instructions and directions”, according to Adeoye (2012, pp. 51-52), “must be obeyed”. Examples of super directors are Max Reinhardt (1873-1973) of Austria and Ayo Akinwale (1951-2020) of Nigeria, who the failure on the part of some of his actors to effect his opinion has made him to de-cast them”. In another development, Arinde (2017, p. 241) sees Vsevolod Meyerhold and Max Reinhardt as authoritarian directors. The super director can be likened to the autocratic director in that both take absolute control of the stage, cast and crew members in the process of interpreting the play.

However, there is a slight difference between the two types of directors; while a super director only demands that actors obey his instructions and directions, the autocratic director on the other hand, forces his opinions on both cast and crew members in a manner that resembles bullying.

2.5 The Concept of Directing Aesthetics for the Stage

Directing aesthetics has to do with the beauty of play directing and the skills of the play director in the interpretation of the play. It can also be described as the systems of aesthetics that are brought to bear on play production. Directing aesthetics makes a performance meaningful, interesting and aesthetically pleasing. Adeoye (2012, p. 26) asserts that, “the process of realising the product of all forms of performances can be located in dramaturgy; the dexterity, skill and technique used in theatricality”. The aesthetic qualities of the director in the production process are what help the play to drive its overall message to the audience and they can be referred to as

directing aesthetics. Directing aesthetics' qualities and elements are not independent techniques and/or resources in themselves because the quality of any play depends on the style adopted by the theatre director. Directing aesthetics in play subsets in the style or approach of the playwright as well.

A play director must be skilled enough to interpret a play for a performance that is capable of gluing the audience to their seats. For instance, Cameron and Hoffman (1974, p. 1657) say that the director must be a:

master of the vocabulary, the techniques, and the creative methods of his actors, and he must be constantly flexible in using them...the director must be able to reach every actor on his own terms...and he not only must bring the roles into balance with his own concept of the play and with the plastic elements of lighting and space, but he also must have confidence in the many techniques that actors use.

The skill to direct a play is therefore, a vital key needed by a play director to achieve directing aesthetics within his performance.

2.6 A Survey of Directing Aesthetic Elements

The infusion of directing aesthetics into a play in the process of rehearsal makes such a performance a good play with good directing. No wonder Cameron and Gillespie (1996, p. 179) describe good directing

as an internally consistent, exciting production... it creates compelling pictures, movements... it has technical polish-smooth cues, precise timing, and a perfect blending of all elements – that radiates 'authority', the artists' confidence in their

work. Good directing combines all elements into whole; everything belongs; everything is carried to its proper full development; nothing is overdone.

It is evident from the submission above that good directing can be achieved with certain directing elements and features. As a matter of fact, there is a robust discussion in the theatre on the features and elements of play directing in the works of directing scholars like Emasealu (2017), Adeoye (2013 and 2011), Johnson (2003), Akinwale (2000 and 2003) among others. For instance, Johnson (2017, pp. 206-208), in his analysis of the principles of directing, describes directing elements as “directorial approach, directorial skills, directorial concept and directorial image.” Adeoye (2012, p. 26), while discussing aesthetics, dramaturgy and directorial poetics of Ayo Akinwale’s theatre, opines that,

between the aesthetics of dramaturgy lies directorial poetics which encapsulates the director’s style, method, approach and concept for the interpretation of his play, and in his theatre generally. The endless nature of creative or artistic imagination thus makes one theatre director to be radically different from the other.

In the light of Adeoye’s submission, it is evident that even if two directors adopt the same approach in the process of play directing, they cannot achieve the same result. This is what Johnson (2017, p. 202) refers to as “the principle of directorial variables” which he says can also be termed the principle of “persona-vision”, “taste differential” or “creative uniqueness”. Johnson further explains that there is the need to recognise that

there exists other brands, types, approaches, systems, styles, techniques, which can be applied to directing a play, and doing so successfully. A scholar or practitioner should not exhibit brazen narrow-mindedness or restricted or limited

conservatism in assuming that there is only a one-way acceptance praxis of directing in a humanistic field beclouded with elastic stretches of creativity, ingenuity and inventiveness (Johnson, 2017, p. 202).

Scholars such as Adeoye (2012), Emasealu (2010), Cameron and Hoffman (1974), and so on share the same view with Effiong Johnson on the differences in directorial approaches of artistic directors. For instance, Cameron and Hoffman (1974, p. 306) see it from the perceptive of directors' relationship with their actors: "each director has his own exercises and his own way of relating to his actors..." Akinwale (2000, p. 116) in his discourse on directorial styles and approaches, defines directorial style as "the method employed by the director in harnessing all elements of the theatre, to achieve meaningful communication with the audience". It is, therefore, no gainsaying that different styles and approaches from different directors contribute to the diversity of results achieved.

Thus, directing aesthetic elements have to do with the creative ingenuity of the play director who explores the elements of play directing combined with his directorial skills and approach to create a performance full of aesthetics, which will appeal to the sense of beauty. The following are the elements of directing aesthetics:

Casting

Casting is the process of selecting fitting and proficient actors for the characters in a play-script that is intended to be interpreted by a theatre director. It is an artistic interview conducted in order to discover the inherent performative skills of an intending dramatist. Inyang (2005, p. 66) defines casting as the "allocation of roles to actors who are competent to act such roles, having being auditioned and found qualified to do so." An apposite casting helps the director to realise his vision within a short period, while an inappropriate casting can lead to his failure. On

their own part, Nyatuame and Bello (2013, pp. 77-78) define casting as the “process of selecting the cast for the production. The main tool used in casting is auditioning. This is the process of assessing the quality and suitability of the performers available to enable one selects which performer best suit a particular role.”

Consequently, Dean and Cara (1974, p. 310) list the following as the qualities to look out for in a would-be actor during audition: “physical appearance; age; voice quality and diction; and sense of movement and rhythm.” Inyang (2005, p. 68) on the other hand, identifies “sensitivity and imagination, personality and carriage, audience appeal and projection capacity, acting experience, possession of special skill or talent, or personal tonality and creative ingenuity” as attributes to look out for during audition. There are different types of casting, namely:

- i. Type Casting Approach - this can also be referred to as ‘private audition’, it is a casting approach that enables producers or directors to choose professional actors to act specific roles based on their expertise and previous performances.
- ii. Open Audition Approach - this is a method of casting where potentials are invited to attend an open audition where they appear before the artistic director and other artistic panel members in order to display their acting prowess and compete for roles. Here, “the actor must be seen to possess talents for vicarious communication experience” (Daniel, 2005, p. 184).

It must be stated that, other types of casting have emanated due to growing trends, cultural dynamism and global influence of information, communication and technology, especially under the permeating force of the social media. One of such types of casting is:

- iii. Media Casting Approach – This approach is all encompassing in that, it can come in form of video interview whereby an intending actor is asked to record a five-

minute video of himself or herself acting a particular role. This casting approach has been conceptualised as the “Video Monologue Casting Approach” by Emelobe (2019). Media Casting Approach can also be in the form of an audio recording in order to discover the voice quality of such actor. By the same token, it can also manifest in the form of Pictorial Casting Approach which involves casting an actor through the assessment of the pictures of such an actor.

It is needful to mention that, the dominant characteristic and advantage of the Media Casting Approach is that it does not require the physical appearance or contact of both the director or members of artistic panel and the potential actor. Ironically, this is a major weakness of the casting approach in that it is unreliable because of the likelihood of actors putting up false skills or hiding their flaws and other relevant acting techniques that naturally would have been seen if there was physical contact. However, a good theatre director should be able to make a fine actor out of an interested budding actor. No matter how poor a budding actor appears, a good theatre director should painstakingly attend to such amateur actors with the view to discover and utilise the actor’s inner talents.

Blocking

Blocking is one of the elements of play directing aesthetics; it enhances the beauty of a play performance. Brockett (1974, p. 178) defines blocking as “establishing each actor’s movements from place to place and position at each movement.” It is the movement with lines on stage by an actor to relate with other actors or the audience. At the early stage of rehearsals, the director holds blocking rehearsals with the cast and crewmembers. The actors mark the places blocked in their play scripts with pencil. This enables them to remember their blockings

when they come for subsequent rehearsals. Lawal (2015, p. 109) notes this as an element of directing which

has to do with the physical demarcation of the acting area for actors and actresses on stage. It also has to do with director and stage manager working out where the actors and actresses will come on and off the stage.

With blocking, the director creates desired pictures that suit the scene and mood of the play. In Wilson's (1991, p. 76) opinion, blocking is described as an art of play directing which is used to decide, "where and when performers move and position themselves on the stage." Johnson (2001, p. 108) sees blocking as

an architecturally related concept, which found its way into the theatre to define or explain the systematic translation of the director's concept of a play from his head and the production script to the stage using actors, properties and other paraphernalia of production. It is the construction of the concept, scene by scene, from beginning to the end of the script.

Thus, blocking is the stage-by-stage building of a play. In rehearsal, the director gives the blocking of a scene to the actor while the stage manager notes the blocking down by drawing it in the promptbook so as to remember in the next rehearsal. Umukoro (2005, p. 205) avows that, the stage manager

sits close or beside the director while noting down on his script, the blockings and movements given each other. With this, he serves as a reminder to both the director and the actor in subsequent rehearsal; hence, he is able to take charge of rehearsal should anything befall the director.

If an actor forgets his blocking, the stage manager reminds him.

There are two types of blocking; the first one is the pre-blocking style which is also known as pictorial paper blocking while the second one is called on-the-spot blocking or organic blocking. The theatre director usually does the pre-blocking (pictorial blocking) before rehearsals. He blocks and directs the play in his book - production book or director's diary - before having it transferred on stage. The on the spot or organic blocking is

the process of stimulating actors to image-making through the use of six visual tools: (1) groundplan, (2) composition, (3) Gesture, (4) Improvisation with properties, (5) picturisation, and (6) movement. Its function is to help actors discover dramatic action by "feeling" its inherent illustration (Hodge, 1988, p. 72)

Organic blocking is therefore, a type of blocking that has to do with the theatre director directing and blocking the play for the very first time in rehearsal, sometimes, the director will allow people's contribution from right, left and centre.

The aesthetics of blocking according to Johnson (2004, p. 132) must serve the following functions:

movement suitable to role; (ii) movement suitable to the situation; (iii) movement suitable to the mood depicted; and (iv) movement suitable to the action at the time of execution. Movement suitable to role means that actors should be given movement according to their characterisations, that is, a criminal cannot move or walk like a king on stage, his movement must be "shrouded with fear, suspicion and risk, should be clad with scary steps . . ." (Johnson, 2004, p. 132).

Johnson's (2004) submission about actors' movement on stage is apt and relevant to blocking because of the relationship between blockings and movement. No director will relegate actors'

movement in play directing, as it is an integral part of play interpretation. Johnson (2004) further categorises actors' movement as instructed by the director through blockings as follows:

(1) Movement suitable to situation has to do with the kind of movement that an actor does because of the kind of situation he finds himself; (2) Movement suitable to mood which is triggered by the mood of the play, a sad character cannot be given fast-paces movement, he must be intentionally slow to synchronise with his state of mind; and (3) movement according to stage action which is done in relation to what the playwright says.

If a character is a warrior, he must move like a warrior not like an old man or woman. Thus, blocking aesthetics or aesthetics in blocking is very important in play directing, it enhances the rhythm of the play because of its sufficiently creative movements, it also aids the understanding of the play by the audience.

Lines Rendition

During rehearsal, many things pertaining to the rendition of lines by the actors must be handled carefully. The pronunciation of words for instance, is an important part of lines rendition. Many actors find some words difficult to pronounce, "if the director is not good with speech training. It is advisable that he or she should get a speech artist to teach the actors the art of pronunciation, enunciation, projection and modulation" (Johnson, 2017, p. 17). If lines are rendered appropriately, actors' speeches enhance the directing aesthetics of a performance.

Movement

Movement in play directing has been appraised within the trappings of artistic interpretation by scholars such as Johnson (2017), Atakpo (2005), Wilson and Goldfarb (1999), and Hodge (1988), and so on. In play directing, movement is the way the actor walks or moves on stage. Hodge (1988, p. 143) sees movement as an

important tool in organic blocking that it must be given spotlight...it is the actual transit of an actor from one point on the stage to another. Although it includes gesture in that the body sphere is always animated during the process of movement, it is a separate tool from gesture.

In most cases, the director uses the lines in the play to move the actor on stage. Some lines when rendered will demand the actor to sit, walk, bend, or move with it. Movement is an integral part of directing aesthetics. Without movement, the actors will be static and glued to one position.

Picturisation

Another element of directing aesthetics is picturisation. Hodge (1988, p. 131) defines picturisation as the

detailed storytelling brought about by the combined use of composition (the arrangement of the group), gesture (the individual moving within his own sphere), and improvisation with properties (objects added to composition and gesture) for the specific purpose of animating the dramatic action....although gestures pertain only to the individual, picturisation concerns a group of actors in which each actor uses the gestures appropriate to his own character. Picturisation then is a still picture containing detailed storytelling illustrations brought about by

individualising and personalising composition through the use of gesture and properties.

We agree with the above because picturisation is the process of telling a story in a pictorial manner; it usually goes hand-in-hand with lines and movement. However, sometimes, “picturisation may...not be supported by words...Picturisation contributes to the meaning or the thought” (Monta et al, 2008, p. 171). Picturisation is a great tool in the hand of the director. Adavi (2012, p. 161) defines picturisation as the “placement of characters on stage and the crowd management on set”. The play director uses picturisations to create levels, planes and to emphasise some actors on stage. Picturisation enhances the beauty of play performances.

Pantomimic Dramatisation

Pantomimic dramatisation or pantomime is an element of directing aesthetics. In the hand of a creative director, pantomime is used to add beauty and flavour to the play. Pantomime also enhances the telling of the story in a non-verbal form. It is also used to create suspense in a performance. Lawal (2015, p. 126) describes pantomimic dramatisation as “in pantomimic dramatisation, the play director uses movement without sound, music or dance to achieve the effect.”

Space

Space in play directing is an integral aspect of blocking, composition and picturisation. Brook’s (1968, p. 9) postulation that “I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage” reveals the importance of space to a theatre director as it is his own world where he decides on whose play to bring into it. Subsequently, space cannot be jettisoned in the process of play interpretation. Note worthily, space is a non-verbal communicative tool that invigorates, clearly defines and reinforces dramatic actions.

Tempo

Tempo is the speed of the event on stage; it is the rate of speed of movements in expressing mood, and rendering of their lines. Hodge (1988, p. 98) states that tempo can be established by the director when he emphasises

contrast both in speech and movement; to make the audience instead of the actors, supply movement, by turning their eyes from one portion of the stage to another; to build up the volume, the speed, the intensity of the tone of voice here, chop it there; accelerate the motion of the actor, both in movement and gesture; speed up the rhythm of the company as an ensemble; slow it down, then build again, in short, to approach every problem related to everything the audience sees, hears or thinks about the variety, inventiveness and still more varieties.

We want to agree with this statement because tempo speeds up the rhythm of the play and helps catching the attention of the audience.

Directorial Concept

Directorial concept is an integral part of a play production because the interpretation of the play revolves around it. Adelugba in an interview session with Adeoye (2011, p. 289) describes directorial concept as “the ideas of the director... The director must have concepts, views. The initial directorial concepts should be discussed especially with the production staff.” The importance of conceiving a directorial concept in the process play interpretation has been established in the writings of Adeoye (2011), Wilson (2001), Wilson and Goldfarb (1999) and so on. For instance, Wilson and Goldfarb (1999, p. 62) define directorial concept as an “overall image or metaphor of a play” while Wilson (2001, p. 125) sees it as a way for a director “to embody the spine in a production and to implement style is to develop a directorial concept.

Such a concept derives from a controlling idea, vision or point of view, which the director feels is appropriate to the play.”

The climax of the functionality of directorial concept in the theatre is clearly articulated by Atakpo (2005, p. 279) who affirms that, “directorial concept must of necessity create a unified theatrical experience for the audience.” The directorial concept defines the central themes, ideas, mood, tone, and visual appeal of the play. It denotes the way the director envisions the play. It is also a written expression of how the director will approach the play and what s/he wants the audience to take away from the show. Roger and Roberto cited in Johnson (2017, p. 208) give vivid explanation on when and how to devise a directorial concept by stating that

once directors have considered the myriad possibilities a play offers, they develop a (directorial) concept for the production, that is, an interpretation of the play and the means to express it. The concept usually works on two levels, internal and external. Internally, the director - like the actor - looks for the central idea that holds the play together...after grappling with the intellectual and emotional center of the play, directors consider the visual and aural elements that may best realize the concept

Thus, directorial concept is the unifying idea that the production team tries to create - it is the specific point of view the play is approached from.

Directorial Style

Styles are the results of the artistic experiments carried out by different dramatists who are busy carving a niche for themselves in the theatre. While Akinwale (2000, p. 6) opines that “style is very difficult to define because it has been used to designate various concepts,” Hodge (1988, p. 275) posits that “style is what makes form individual and specific.” Benedeti (1976, p.

115) postulates that “style is a quality which results from characteristic mode of expression or method of presentation.” Style thus, creates an identity for a play director.

Every good play performance has an identifiable and distinguishable quality, structure and texture; this distinctive artistic production is usually brought to stage through the incessant effort and hard work of a theatre director. With the application of ingenious directorial styles, different play productions that are full of indescribable aesthetics have been produced on the Nigerian stage by many stage directors. Style, according to Quirk et al (1999, p. 1653) is defined as “a particular way of doing, designing or producing something, especially one that is typical of a particular place, period of time or group of people”. Style means different things to different people. Akinwale (2000, p. 115) says it is a nomenclature that is difficult to define because “even plays of the same type vary considerably, and style is one of the casual organisms of this variety”. Musa (2007, p. 42) confirms this by stating that style is

an affectionate and emotional mode and method of doing things by the designers in the theatre. Consistently, however, is the dominant key to style. Once a theatre director has consistently used a method of directing, that directing method then becomes his own directing style. A directing style, however, is also an identity...

Directorial styles are the unique attributes of a theatre director while directing plays. These styles vary from director to director. Adavi (2012, p. 157) avers that “style simply means realising a play in an aesthetic manner and mode...it is applicable to artistic directors in their directorial concepts”. Therefore, directorial style is the particular way a theatre director interprets a play. It is a unique way that he is later identified with, in terms of directing. It is a “quality which results from a characteristic mode of expression or method of presentation” (Akinwale, 2000, p. 115).

Many researches carried out by theatre scholars in Nigeria and beyond have observed that no two directors can have the same style or approach no matter how they try. Wright (1972, p. 114) explains this more clearly: “no two directors can give the same total effect, even if they have been assigned identical cast and staging. A director’s particular style is always there, evident in shadings of meaning, changes in emphasis, interpretation, characterization and movement.” If Wright’s submission is right, then the Nigerian theatre should be boastful of numerous directing styles and theories by now, but the reverse is the case. This is, however, not to say that play directors have not been creative enough in the Nigerian theatre but to admit that there has been a poor documentation and archiving culture until the last few decades. This has therefore, contributed to the loss of numerous creative inventions, directorially, in the Nigerian theatre. As a matter of fact, Awodiya (2011, p. 259) observes that

the Nigerian theatre afflicted by ephemerality, has never been very good at keeping records of its activities. Fortunately, an individual like Dapo Adelugba has sought to combat the carefree attitude of record keeping of artistes by his solo effort to document productions, playwrights, directors, actors and theatrical activities in general in Nigeria.

This researcher is of the opinion that Nigerian theatre directors and dramatists should emulate Dapo Adelugba by keeping records of their stage play performances; otherwise, all their creative inventions will be lost into the winds.

There are directors who are of the opinion that directors do not need to evolve any theory, they should just do their work of interpretation. One of such with this unconventional school of thought is Jude Patrick Oteh cited in Ogunbiyi (2016, p. 110) who in an interview says

I do not like the situation where people compartmentalize themselves in the name of theories, in terms of people saying this is my style and I am going to maintain it. I think about fluidity, because of our economy, and because of our state of development and the state of Nigeria. I think most of us should begin to be fluid in our creation. I think upcoming directors should as much as possible avoid theories. Yes, they should use theories as a learning process, but let them not be held down by theories.

Therefore, it has been recommended severally by scholars such as Nwagbo (2012), Johnson (2003), Awodiya (1993, pp. 7-15) and so on that play directors should try to adopt a directorial style in the production making process; they are also advised to evolve theirs, as it will go a long way in building the art of play directing in the Nigerian theatre. For instance, Johnson (2003, p. 107) encourages African directors to evolve an approach when he says that it is their responsibility to have

one whose workability has been tested with several experiments. You have the more demanding responsibility of having it documented for the benefit of mankind. This helps in more ways than one. It helps situate the practice within a paradigm and bestows upon it professional reckoning. It helps establish the fact that one has an independent creative acumen. It helps expose the African theatre Aesthetics outside the local shores, and also provides a reference base for the study of theatre practice in Africa, both within and outside African shores

A theatre director who has been functional for more than two years can be said to have gained some directing experience, however it will take more than two years to be sure that a director has actually evolved a workable and plausible style. At this time, the style would have formed part of

his or her passionate ‘directorial habit’ which he or she can no longer repent from, He therefore, unconsciously puts it on stage even when he does not intend to. The directorial style employed gives the play an identity that makes it different from the performance of the same play but directed by another director. Akinwale (2002, p. 122) states that “the style employed by a director becomes visible during the performance. Some styles are related to periods and hence such terminologies as realism, symbolism, expressionism, surrealism and so on.”

Directorial Approach

Directorial approach is the distinctive method applied by a theatre director in the process of play interpretation. Like directorial style, directorial approach varies from director to director. Cameron and Hoffman (1974, p. 1653) explain that directorial approach “is loosely applied to several areas to the written record of the director’s idea about a play; to the idiosyncratic use of stage techniques that distinguish one director from another; and even to the concept of theatre that underlies a director’s work.”

Johnson (2017, p. 209) emphasises the importance of directorial approach to a director in the process of play directing by saying that, “having a directorial approach is crucial, for obvious directorial enhancement(s) that it offers the scheme.” We agree with Johnson’s (2017) assertion because, directorial approach is a must for the artistic director because there is no way he can direct the play without applying a particular approach or method.

Dance

Dance is said to have “been part and parcel of most cultures in the world, it has been regarded as the oldest of the art forms” (Ugolo, 2014, p. 232). Dance is mostly used for entertainment in many cultures of the world and it is largely seen as an aesthetics enterprise. As one of the elements of directing aesthetics, dance is a strong force that drives most African

theatre productions to desire artistic and aesthetic expectation. Thus, it has become a veritable tool in the hands of most African theatre directors such that many of their works are incomplete without dance imbued with them. Ugolo (2017, p. 286) asserts that

the dance art in Nigerian traditions and cultures harmonises and domesticates the other art forms in its expression. It is at once utilitarian in its expression and combines the other artistic traditions . . . to communicate. Due to the multifarious nature of its expression, it combines and aggregates, thereby making its language highly symbolic and abstract.

Bakare in an interview with Musa (2007, p. 117) at the University of Lagos on the 26th of July 2006 observes that

it will be interesting to note that dances advance the plot structure of a play, though there are principles to follow when choreographing dance in dramatic productions. The first is to study the script and understand the role that the playwright wants dance to play in the script. You have dances in dramatic productions that are meant to serve as commentaries on the happenings in the play. What you first of all do is to ask from what the playwright has written, what role is dance going to play in his drama? When you are sure of that role, then you begin to work it out. Because if the dance is meant to advance the plot of the play, the choreographic approach is different from when the dance is meant to serve as commentaries and so on. So, it depends on what the playwright wants the dance he has in place to do...

Dance is useful as spectacle because it helps to provide some relief from the overwhelming plot of the drama. It entertains and enhances the aesthetic value of drama production. Ufford (2005, pp. 266-267) opines that

dance, being a sensuous art, found its way into theatre as a means of creating spectacle and evoking empathy in the audience. Directors and actors use dance to enhance their techniques and concepts . . . dance can also be used as a vehicle for transition. An actor, through the manipulation of his body movements within a peculiar rhythm and musical pattern, can flow into another realm and existence in a play production . . . Most times, directors use dance to improvise war scenes and general conflict point.

Interestingly, dance performances, whether hunters' dance, elders', masquerades', celebration/ceremonial dance, war dance, property, occupational, maiden's cult dance, religious dance which Ojuade (2004, p. 240) says is "the major sources of dance in Nigeria" among others, always keeps the audience glued to their seats as it adds beauty and ecstasy to theatre performances. In fact, Nwadigwe (2012, p. 31) sees dance as an art that has the tendency to thrill the audience beyond one's imagination; he articulates his point by saying "dance performances are conventionally regarded as spectacular. The sheer movement of dancers in varying patterns, motifs and vocabularies is sufficient to create a thrilling experience for the audience." No wonder, some plays are simply interpreted using the medium of dance and music.

Songs and Music

Songs and music in stage performances are used to enhance the telling of the story, to accompany dances, movement and rhythm, to aid transition and to build the tempo of the performance. Ikibe (2017, p. 339) affirms that

music can be used in various aspects and segments of a play production. For instance, once the director of the play counts, the drummers at the orchestral would roll the drums at the beginning as an opening glee instead of a narrator coming out with a lengthy introduction of the play.

Music in a performance enhances the overall aesthetics of the play. Akinwale in Ikibe (2012, p. 18) opines 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”. This is one of the reasons most Nigerian directors employ music to enhance the interpretation of a play script.

Sometimes, songs are employed to reveal the hidden fact about the play, a character, a place or an event in the play. With music, suspense can be created, music helps the director to understand the situation of a play and it therefore, enhances the work of the director. Songs and music are very important, especially in African play performances. Songs are used to create mood in the performance and they enhance the telling of a story; some songs are used to tell the story instead of lines. It also directs the attention of the reader or audience quite specifically within the image.

Dramatic performances in Africa usually have musical accompaniment, this means drumming and singing. Akinwale (1998, p. 54) emphasises the need for an “artistic director to incorporate music in their play productions, whether or not the playwright has used music in the text of the play”.

Musical Directing

Some musical forms are explored by theatre directors in the process of achieving directing aesthetics in a performance. Adeoye (2012, p. 3) affirms that “Solomon Ikibe calls on

theatre directors to employ the service of musicologists in their theatre enterprise.” While Ikibe in (2017, p. 343) recounts that

play directors should learn the rudiments of music and harmony or engage good musicologists to assist at such moments of their play productions...going ahead to learn how to play some musical instruments would be encouraging as well.

An all-round director should therefore, be able to have an ear for music so as to weave it into his production to make a composite whole. In another related development, Adeola (2017, p. 351) asserts that decisions on how to use music in a play production by a theatre director goes through the processes of “studying and analyzing the script to know the musical demands; understanding the theories guiding the play production like the genre, directorial images, style of production and so on”. This infers that the theatre director must be vast in the area of music so as to make appropriate use of musical aesthetics in his performance.

Rhythm

In play directing and theatre performance, rhythm has to do with the dramatic sound and the flow of the tempo and pace of the performance. Hodge (1988, p. 59) states that rhythm refers “in part, to the accumulative effect of the unit beats and is, perhaps, another way of describing surges . . . rhythm is the *effect* of accumulative tempos, and that is a way of describing *multiple tempos* brought together.”

Thus, a continuous flow in beats and units are combined together to make rhythm. Lawal (2015, p. 56) posits that rhythm which can be “obtained in music, speech and movement of the body...is a re-occurrence of certain accents, sound and inflection that establish a pattern”. Rhythm helps with the flow of a performance and sometimes, it can heighten the tempo and mood of a theatre performance. Olalusi (2012, p. 148) avers that rhythm is an important aspect of

music and consequently drums. It is an indispensable quality of variety in drums” while Jones (1959, p. 26) avows that “rhythm is to the African what harmony is to the Europeans, and it is in the complex interweaving of contrasting rhythmic patterns that he finds his greatest aesthetics satisfaction.” Consequently, rhythm is an important part of theatre performance and a significant element of directing elements.

Rhythmic Beats

Rhythmic beats is described by Hodge (1988, p. 53) an element of a play that comprises

the playwright’s “music” in a play – its moods and tempos. They derive from (1) the qualities of the dramatic action in each unit and from (2) the juxtaposition of these actions. Thus, the rhythmic beats give a play its emotional overtones, its poetic qualities, and part of its mystery.

In other words, rhythmic beat refers to the mood, tempos and music in a play or performance. It is a driving force of a performance in that it enhances the dramatic action. The absence of rhythmic beat in a performance can cause a performance to lack mood, tempo and dramatic actions.

Sound

Sound is an important element of directing which enhances the interpretation of the play and brings alive the play to be interpreted. Iji (1994, p. 9) opines that sound “provokes a range of metaphors, suggestive of both literal, visual, and aural perceptions, as well as perception through mental stimulation of one’s mind’s eyes wherein even the ears have eyes of their own.”

Thus, sound can be likened to the breath of a performance. Dean and Carra (1974, p. 22) are of the view that a play, “must be interpreted in terms of dramatic action and dramatic sound...” Sound, if appropriately applied into a theatre production, “creates memorable and

effective theatre effect” (Ejeke, 2015, p. 1). Sound is important in theatre performances because theatre is an imitation of real life situation. Ejeke (2015, pp. 1-2) further explains that sound

manifests in various forms in our environment. Suffice it to say that there are sounds of town and country, sounds made by machines, animals and man or natural sounds from water and wind...because theatre production is a representation, reflection and refraction of what happens in the world, we seek to incorporate a variety of these sounds in our theatrical productions for the sake of verisimilitude and creative aesthetics.

Sound therefore, could be made with the actors’ mouth when rendering their lines, because “the human voice is the primary source of sound in a play production” (Ejeke, 1994, p. 47). Sound could also be made by drumming or playing musical instruments, tapping of the feet on stage, clapping, whistling, among others. Interestingly, Hodge (1971, p. 154) posits that “the art of the theatre does not lie dominantly in the visual but in its balance with the oral-aural experience.” Consequently, play performance is an experience in sound as well as in sight.

Spectacle

Spectacle is an integral aspect of drama which gives it its compelling appeal and aura. During rehearsals, the director creates spectacle into the play, this gives the performance a pleasurable outlook and a variegated effect which keeps the audience in awe. Ojediran (2017, p. 148) defines spectacle as

the creative species/devices that stir up the audience during a performance which can be used as a form of comic relief or tragic muse. That is, it may either create a surprise in comedy or arouse emotion such as fear in tragedy. These can also be referred to as condiments in a performance that makes it spectacular for the

readers/audience to be more interested in reading or watching a creative work of art because it appeals mostly to emotions.

Spectacle adds aesthetics to a play production on the stage. Atanda (2017, p. 269) defines spectacles as “an aspect of the scenery, costumes, dance, and special effects in a production.” The use of spectacle further emphasises aesthetics in a play performance. Spectacles can be realised as an aesthetic effect in a stage performance through acting, lines delivery, movement, pictures, colours, lighting, costume and make up, setting/scenery, mise-en-scene, mise-en-actor, smoke, dance, freezing, chants, incantation, invocation, colours and silence. It is noteworthy that, “spectacle can also be achieved in dance” (Ufford, 2005, pp. 266-267).

The places of some of these elements in play performance are examined below:

Silence

Silence is a dramatic device that is often used to sink dramatic communication into the score of physical action. Silence in a performance is a “pause - an element of tempo” (Hodge, 1988, p. 59). Silence on its own is communication, while some people say silence means consent, some say it is a way of expressing peace and calmness. Some directors use silence to interpret some dramatic actions in a play with the use of freezing technique, mime, slow motion or pantomimic dramatisation. In a performance, where an actor dies, the director might want all the people on stage to be silent for few seconds without the use of any musical instrument or sound. Sometimes, in between a dance performance, or a movement, the director may ask that everyone keeps silent for few seconds before drummers resume their drumming, acting and lines rendition. Silence is beautiful in a performance if well harnessed for it takes a skilled director to know its usage.

Mise-en-scene

Mise-en-scene is another element of directing aesthetics that we want to consider in this study. According to Adenugba (2007), aesthetics is a French word which is pronounced as

“meez-ahn-sen” which means “staging an action” and it was first applied to the practice of directing plays... in film production, mise-en-scène is what the layman calls “film trick”. Unlike film production, it is very difficult to achieve mise-en-scène in stage plays because the audience cannot be deceived, they see how the events are unfolding but most of the times, good directors will still achieve their effect one way or the other using their expertise. This could be achieved with the use of other elements of the theatre like costume, make-up, lighting, sound and so on . . . Mise-en-scène thrives to make the acting and role playing of actors as true to life as possible, the director works the actor to a point where he exhibits extremely everyday like attributes and gesture (<http://filminnaija.blogspot.com/2007/07/>).

Mise-en scene is an element of directing aesthetics which enhances the overall beauty of the performance. It can be achieved with lighting effect, sound effect, dances, songs, acting and so on. The total beauty achieved from all these elements is referred to as mise-en-scene.

Colour

Colour is employed in the theatre in order to create tones, contrast, and artistic effect and to enhance the overall appeal of the scene on the stage. It is usually explored by theatre designers who use it for their costume design, make-up, scenery, lighting and properties. Appropriate use of colours will enhance the aesthetics of the play in performance. “Colours must be selected to

suit character dispositions and even the drama genre. A well-instructed designer should know what colours go with royalty, clowns, foresters, engineers, etc” (Johnson, 2001, p. 104).

Drumming

In Africa, drums are crucial elements of theatre performances. They are beaten by professionals to accompany music and dance. In most cases, singing and dancing are impossible without drums. Olalusi (2012, p. 145) opines that the

synergy of dramatic enactment, blending of African drums and rich display of creative cum energetic dances remain a vital flow and artistic drive of a production. Apart from this, its communicative and entertaining qualities have ensured its constant usage within productions.

Olalusi’s submission above aligns with Adeoye’s (2012, p. 6) opinion who describes drum as an “essential material culture in the worldview of the people of Africa. Its importance in the Nigerian theatre is a reflection on the essence of music in the making of the African total theatre idiom, the multi-media fore-runner in our repertory.”

The art of drumming is a skill, very few people in the theatre can boast of this skill. Drumming is an integral part of theatre performances in Africa. Drumming is one of the elements of directing aesthetics. Some African directors use talking drums to interpret lines in a play, this is common in Nigeria theatre where the Yoruba ‘dundun’ drum and some of the family of Bata ensemble can talk likewise the flute and wooden gong of the Ibo tribe.

Suspense

The theatre director, in the process of the interpretation of a play-script employs the use of suspense to hold the audience in anticipation and anxiety of the events in his performance. Suspense provokes surprise from the audience. It is a constant essential element in the play

directing. The directing aesthetic elements discussed above are crucial to the theatre director because he wants to see an interesting, well interpreted performance such that it would communicate meaningfully to the audience. The audience, therefore are significant in the theatre because they are the consumers of theatrical presentations. Emasealu (2017, p. 229) emphasises the importance of the audience when he says that the

audience remained significant because they pay gate fees and through other forms of sponsorship. Every director must put audience consideration first for a play is put together primarily for the delight and intellectual nourishment of the audience. The director should have a rough idea of his anticipated audience as this would help in his choice of script and his overall attitude to the enactment of it.

Emasealu's points explain why some directors edit play-texts in order to suit the audience's taste; this is however, not to say that the storyline will be altered.

The above aesthetic elements are great tools in the hands of theatre directors to enhance the beauty of performance and to create holistic theatre performance. The proper interpretation of a play with the application of directing aesthetics elements by the director usually results in an exemplary performance.

2.7 Elements of Performance Aesthetics for the Stage

The import of this sub-theme is to reconcile the role of the director in performance aesthetics which are listed as costumes, props, songs, scenery, set designs, make-up, music, instrumentations, acting, and lighting, some of which will be examined below:

Acting

McGrow (1980, p. 3) defines acting as “behaving as if things that are not real are real. It is the art of make belief. Acting is the art of imitating real event on stage by an actor as “the

assumed character moves, speaks and appears in real life under the circumstances indicated in the play” (Branson Howard cited in Lawal, 2015, p. 59). The skill of acting is a performative art; its technique is an interpretative artistic genre. Acting is also a composite art of creative, interpretative and performative arts. The actor is the life wire of the performance, good acting from him requires more visual elements appearance, gestures and facial expressions and sound voice. A perfect casting by the director makes a good acting which leads to a good performance.

Lighting

Lighting in stage performance helps to depict the time and season of the play. It indicates day or night; it also depicts the atmosphere and environment conditions such as rain, fog, tornado, sand storm in which the story of the play is set. Johnson (2001, p. 128) opines that “by the convention of producing plays in the night, lighting is necessary- not typical theatre light from perhaps theatre lamps such as the Leko, Ellipsoidal, Fresnel, Floods and Spots etc, but lighting from readily available source, which provides basic illumination.” Lighting is also used for effects - to create shadow and thus raise suspense or it can be flooded around an image to create the effect of “supernaturalism or celestuality.” Josef Von Sternberg states that, “the proper use of light can embellish and dramatize every object” (Microsoft Encarta, 2004). Stage lighting serves the purpose of general illumination and effect in a play.

Costume

Costumes are any material worn by an actor in a play production to build up, emphasise or portray a character. In simple parlance, costumes, according to Shuaib (2006, p. 65), “enhances stage pictures and actors’ dramatisation in any play production process.” It also helps to depict place, time setting, culture of the story, as well as determine the social class of the character being depicted. Costume includes clothing, eye wears, foot wears, headgears and

clothing accessories. According to Utoh-Ezeajugh cited in Adegbite (2019, p. 185), “costume is a craft, which aids the illumination of a character, for the actor as well, the audience included in a performance. It aids in creating the appropriate appearance for the character they play.” Hence, costumes are worn to indicate status and sociological milieu of a production. Costume is also a tool of communication in a performance. Shuaib (2008, p. 4) states that costumes “are high points of the communication of . . . theatre mould among various communities in Nigeria.” This, Adegbite (2019, p. 184) reiterates by stating that, “the essence of costuming in a play production is to pass across certain information about the characters and generally educate the audience by giving a clearer interpretation of the play.”

Brockett (1974, p. 390) explains that “costumes may establish character’s social and economic status by distinguishing between the lower and upper classes, between rich and poor or between more or less affluent members of the same group.” In fact, Arinde (2013, p. 29) also says that “costume . . . states the importance of a character in a scene, depicts stages of dramatic action - from moody mood to joyous mood. Costume may even be used to pump-up or deflate an actor.” Costume adds to the aesthetics quality of any production be it an African or non-African play. This is as a result of its multifunctional roles. Gasner (1963, p. 390) asserts that

the clothing an actor wears when he comes upon the stage to play his part is his costume. It is not his own dress. It is the dress of the character he is representing . . . the costume of the actor is the heightening, the translation into theatrical term of the dress of everyday life.

The culture of the land where the play is set determines the costumes to be worn by the actors of the play, other elements that determine what costumes to wear are the period of the play, the status of the characters, environment, and occupation. This is because in play

performances, costumes are worn to indicate status and sociological milieu of the production. Brockett (1974, p. 390) explains that “costumes may establish character’s social and economic status by distinguishing between the lower and upper classes, between rich and poor or between more or less affluent members of the same group.” Therefore, “the aesthetics essence of costuming in a theatrical performance cannot be undermined, its capacity to giving insights to the setting, concept, themes, period, moods, and the intended message of the performance can hardly be ignored as well” (Adegbite, 2019, p. 184). Furthermore, the theatre director is not burdened with the thought of directing the play alone, but also the thought of fixing all the elements of the theatre appropriately into the performance.

Make-up

Make-up is the materials used to enhance and adorn the face, head or body of the character being played by an actor. It is also used to conceal, mask, and disguise the actor. Make-up materials includes powder, lipsticks, pancakes, wigs, masks, eye brows, eye liners, eye shadow, hair attachments and so on. Arinde (2013, p. 29) describes make-up as an element of the theatre “that makes a character to fit into the intended age, status, event and physique.” Make-up helps to depict the right mood in a stage production; it also helps the audience understand the actor without verbal communication. Shuaib (2014, p. 23) defines make-up as an element of the theatre that “can be taken to be anything applied to face and other parts of the body with the aim of enhancing beauty of affecting appearance.” Make-up is also used to transform a character from a particular age to another. Nkanga (2005, p. 188) reiterates that, “costume and make-up comprise all the outfits, accessories and body adornments worn by an actor, including even mask . . . the make-up an actor wears must be interpretative of the character and situation. That is to say that the actor’s make-up should speak volumes of his roles in the play.”

Props

Properties are the stage belongings that are needed to set up a home, farm, market or any setting according to the demands of a play script. Properties are also used by actors to enhance their acting. Props can be movable or immovable. Movable props are usually needed by the actors to act with either by carrying, holding, moving, among others. For instance, a farmer or market woman will need a basket, cutlass, hoe, among others. Immovable props on the other hand, are usually left on stage even when actors are not on stage; such props are chairs, tables and so on. Just like make-up and costume, Arinde, (2013, p. 30) says props in a performance

indicate one's ethnic, political, economic, and social standing, properties also shows a character's status and affinities. You will easily identify a king by the staff and the horse-tail he carries about. The social standing of an individual in the play will be indicated by the type of property that he or she has in his house.

Properties on stage contribute to the aesthetics of performance. Props can also further tell the story and give the audience an insight into who the actor is. For instance, if an actor holds a walking stick, it means he is either an old man/woman or someone with a bad leg. It is worthy of note that, "stage costumes, make-up and props (properties) are three most distinct and unique elements of the theatre that are closely tied to the actor than any other element in the theatre. This is so because they are directly used or handled by the individual actor" (Nkanga, 2005, p, 187).

Setting/Scenery

Setting is also known as scenery and it implies the locale where an action takes place in a stage play. Scenery is another theatrical spectacle which drama has appropriated. Setting helps the audience to understand the story and the environment the event takes place. The set design

according to Johnson (2001, p. 98) stands for the “play’s locale, which means the background or environment chosen by the playwright for the play.” Scenery plays an important role in drama. The set construction and scenery design add beauty to the entire stage production,

2.8 The Dramaturgy and Ideology of Femi Osofisan in the Selected Plays

Femi Osofisan, whose pen name is Okinba Launko, is a prolific writer in the African theatre terrain. A poet, novelist, critic, essayist, songwriter, comedian and actor, Osofisan is categorised among the post-independence Nigerian authors. Born on the 16th of June 1946 in a small Yoruba town called Erunwon, Ijebu-Ode in Ogun State of Nigeria, Femi Osofisan had his primary education in Ilesa, Ife, Erunwon and Ifo. He moved from one town to another because of the loss of his father at his tender age of three months. Femi Osofisan fell in love with literature and drama while at Government College, Ibadan. He began to write poems and short stories for the national dailies in his Secondary school days. He proceeded to University of Ibadan in 1966 where he studied French Language. In 1967, he attended University of Dakar, Senegal for his one year abroad French Language programme. Osofisan obtained a B.A in French with Second Class Upper Honours degree from the University of Ibadan in 1969.

After his first degree, Femi Osofisan attended University de Paris III, Paris, France, as part of his graduate programme. While in Paris, he had the opportunity to work with theatre experts such as Peter Brook, Ionesco, and Gercy Growtoski. Having worked with these radical theatre practitioners, Osofisan worked with “the Black Theatre in Paris. He returned to Nigeria from France in 1972, and was appointed Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Ibadan” (Obafemi and Yerima, 2004, p. 119). In 1974, Osofisan obtained his Ph.D. at the same Department.

Although, he studied French, he became a Professor of Drama in 1985. Today, Osofisan has written more than sixty plays of different genres and forms, published and produced. He “enjoys a reputation as the most regularly performed playwright in Nigeria” (Back page, Femi Osofisan’s *Major Plays 2*, Opon Ifa readers). Femi Osofisan has remained a frequent name since his arrival in the Nigerian theatre in the 1960s as a playwright, director, critic and dramatist generally. Akinyemi and Falola (2009, p. 3) observe that

Femi Osofisan is a man of many parts. He is a playwright, poet, novelist, storyteller, linguist, theatre producer, stage director, songwriter, literary scholar, and social critic. One common trend in all of these aspects of Osofisan is his desire to fight for the marginalised masses and to create a better society for all to live in.

In an earlier development, Banham (2006) cited in Adeyemi (2013, p. 18) highlights that, “Osofisan’s dramatic aim is to expose the conscience of his audience by making spectators reflect on the performance to respond to societal issues”.

As a matter of fact, there is hardly any area of the theatre he is not conversant with. This therefore, makes him an all-round artist in the Nigerian theatre and beyond. His continuous functionality makes him relevant and ageless. Obafemi and Yerima (2004, p. 120), while describing the achievement of Femi Osofisan, submit that

it has become an indisputable fact of theatre history that he is the fastest growing, most prolific and most produced African dramatist. He is the leading voice of the second generation Nigerian dramatists, following that of Wole Soyinka and Bekederemo-Clark.

Some of Osofisan's plays are *The Chattering and The Song* (1976), *Who's Afraid of Solarin* (1978), *Once Upon for Robbers* (1980), *Morountodun* (1983), *Red is the Freedom Road* (1983), *No More the Wasted Breed* (1983), *Altine's Wrath* (1983), *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (1986), *Another Raft* (1989), *Birthdays Are Not for Dying* (1990), *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991), *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* (1991), *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest* (1992), *Women of Owu* (2006), *Wesoo Hamlet or The Resurrection of Hamlet* (2012) to mention but a few.

Before now, many scholars such as Gibbs and Mugo (2014), Abubakar (2012) and Adeoye (2005) among others, have analysed and examined Femi Osofisan's plays and performances. Some have studied his works in the areas of thematic engagements, postcoloniality, feminism, theatrical elements, writing style, and the relevance of his works to the society; others analysed the performances of his plays as directed by other people. Julius-Adeoye (2008, p. 69) describes Osofisan as "the leading light among the radical dramatists in Nigeria, one who parody government's failure and use an artistic medium to call down fire and brimstone. His ideology is embedded in his writings, be it critical works or dramatic exploits". Bakare (2008, p. 104) also affirms Julius-Adeoye's point when he describes Osofisan as

a prolific writer today in Nigeria after the Soyinka generation. With about forty plays written and produced and about twenty-five published...he is a songwriter, an actor...He is one of the post-independence Nigerian authors who have taken up an up-front style of criticism of authoritarian and corrupt tendencies.

Drawing from the above, it is important to examine the effect of Femi Osofisan's plays and performances on the audience and the society. For instance, his impact in correcting the ills of the society, changing the evil ways of people and shaping the Nigerian society through his

works cannot be overemphasised. As a matter of fact, this point has been noticed by scholars across the globe. This is why Obafemi (1982, pp. 118-119) describes Osofisan as someone who is being committed to conscientising his readers and viewers which eventually brings about “mass awareness to a positive revolutionary alternative to social decadence”. On the same point, Gbileka (2012, p. 99) corroborates Obafemi by stating that “the recurrent theme expressed in Osofisan’s theatre is the egalitarian socio-political restructuring of society where there will be equal opportunities for all.” This is so because the role of drama is to correct the ills of the society as observed by Fischer, (1963, p. 48) when discussing the role of a work of art which includes drama, concludes that in a decaying society like Nigeria “art if it is truthful must reflect decay. And unless it wants to break faith with its social function, art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it.” Just like Fischer’s explanation of the function of art, Osofisan’s dramas are intended to change the decay that is reflected in the society.

Aligning with Fischer’s opinion above, Eze-Orji and Emokpae (2017, p. 180) aver that “the functionality of the dramatic art in Africa transcends the notion of entertainment but it largely borders on its use to correct, judge or measure, and restore a general acceptable social order.” Hence, Osofisan as a dramatist has used his ink to right the wrongs of African societies and her leaders. For instance, *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* as a metaphor for a post-colonial nation like Nigeria and the African countries that have one time or another been ruled by greedy leaders whose mission for ruling is selfish is targeted towards shaping the Nigerian society. As a social crusader, Osofisan used *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* to campaign for an ideal society. This correlates with Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s (1997, p. 2) proposition that

literature cannot escape from the class power structures that shape our everyday life. Here a writer has no choice. Whether or not he is aware of it, his works

reflect one or more aspects of intense, economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society. What he can choose is one of the sides in battlefield. The side of the people or the side of the social force and classes that try to keep the people down. What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics?

We agree with this postulation in its entirety. As reflected in Wa Thiongo's submission above, Osofisan attacks all forms of oppression, tyranny and injustice, especially among African leaders. His plays are either revolving around the themes of revolution, corruption, nepotism, the fight for freedom, religious issues, or segregation, among others.

Osofisan used *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* to project his belief in collective fight against oppression and slavery. Awodiya (1995, pp. 39) opines that Osofisan, is a "virile sociopolitical crusader, is a gadfly and a consummate defender of the downtrodden." like in *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. Osofisan believes that the corrupt leaders in the society can be chased through collective fight against corruption.

Gbileka (2012, p. 102) opines that history is dynamic in Femi Osofisan's drama and that he "bends history to serve his artistic and social vision. He shows the other side of history too. He shows that even in the historical past, the misuse of power were challenged." Gbileka's observation about Osofisan's usage of history is also corroborated by (Olasope, 2013, p. xv) who she observes that Femi Osofisan's uses "myths and history to question political tyranny." Thus, this researcher pitches her tent with these two scholars as we have also observed that Osofisan's *Tegonni (An African Antigone)*, *Many Colours Make the Thunder-King*, *Morountodun* are products of myths and history of Yoruba land and are used to fight against injustice.

Judging from the discussions above, it will not out of place to refer to Femi Osofisan as the conscience of the society. This is because Akinyemi and Falola (2009, p. 5) describe a playwright as the conscience of the society when they state that, “the committed writer is the conscience of the society and it falls on him or her to make the audience aware of the social, economic and political problems and the cause and possible cure of such problem.” In *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest*, Femi Osofisan discusses the deception of dictator leaders such as Iyeneri. The playwright uses a masked pressure group to challenge the usurp of the shrine. Osofisan’s message as the playwright is projected by the action of the Yungba Yungba group. Atakpo (2008, p. 132) states this vividly when he avers that the Yungba Yungba group

has come together for the onerous task of unseating Iyeneri. The playwright uses this to intimate the people about the situation in Nigeria where the three major tribes have refused to come together as they do not trust each other, to form a common front and move towards a democratic rule.

Once Upon Four Robbers is another Osofisan’s play that he used to correct societal ills. Atakpo (2008, p. 127) also observes this when analysing the play, he posits lucidly that Osofisan clearly

shows that the Nigerian society is in the continuous process of manufacturing its own potential assassins (armed robbers), if the socio-political arrangements in vogue continue. If the “haves” continue to have and the “have not’s” continue to feed from the gutters . . . If unemployment and starvation are our permanent companions, and if the degree of corruption and pen robbery in high places persist, if money, wealth and ostentation remain the yardstick of measuring

success, and money no matter the means it is gotten becomes our god and is so worshipped by Nigerians . . . then the execution of armed robbers will not stop

Perhaps the greatest aspect of Femi Osofisan's aesthetics is his writing style, the use of simple language makes his plays comprehensible for both elites and semi-literate. Obafemi and Yerima (2004, p. 124) affirm that Osofisan

consciously cultivates his own stage-craft, dramaturgy and vision outside the range of a legacy of uncritical influences. The way, in which Osofisan chose to differentiate himself and his plays from those of Soyinka and other influences, was, firstly, to find a way of writing a popular and accessible form of English language, which the literate and semi-literate Nigerian audience would understand and enjoy. Osofisan has made a choice of accessible linguistic and structural paradigm...he had to limit the symbolic element and concentrate on more concrete, touchable issues in his plays.

A writer may choose to write in any language of his choice. This however depends on the target audience and the language that is accepted in such society or country. In Nigeria today, most writers write in the English Language due to the fact that English is the general language for all and it is soon becoming a global language. Some writers, although they write in a familiar language, may choose to be complex while some will write in a simple but correct language. While Adeoye (2005), Yerima (2003), and others consider William Shakespeare and Wole Soyinka's plays as complex in terms of language, they see Femi Osofisan's language as easily digestible.

Interestingly, the simplicity of Osofisan's language accounts for the reason why many play directors prefer his plays especially because his lines are self-explanatory. Little wonder

why Ifatimehin (2019) responds to this researcher in an interview session on the question of why he directed Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*, he said: "Femi Osofisan's language is usually simple but he often plays on words. Then, his language usually carries a duality largely located within the Yoruba pragmatics and the English vocabulary. This makes his use of language quite fascinating." In a similar manner, Femi Ayeni (2019) in an interview session opines that Femi Osofisan's language is "straight forward. It is an everyday language laced with humor, simple but not simplistic. He also stays with the Yoruba culture through code mixing and code switching in his dialogue and songs."

Hence, Femi Osofisan uses language to build characterisation. Sometimes, Osofisan bends over backward to use 'Yorubaenglish' which Adelugba (1985, p. 6) refers to as "adventurism in creativity in which we achieve polyvalence and multiteity of forms and content" in the Nigerian Theatre. Yorubaenglish according to Femi Osofisan is speaking code-mixing of English and Yoruba "where the flavor and the rhythm of local speech determine the structure and syntax of the English ... Some combine a range of registers to represent plural voices" (Osofisan, 2001. pp. 77-78).

Thus, language serves as a limited indicator of social class in Osofisan's plays. His characters speak languages that are appropriate to their classes, these languages range from Standard English Language, distorted English Language, Pidgin English, Yoruba Language, among others. Abiodun (2014, p. 15) opines that, "the injection of language apart from being for aesthetics is to affirm strongly the setting of the play, and also to create a strong psychological link between his readers and the message of the play." The language of the play helps the reader and director to know the setting of the play. It also helps them understand the environment of happening and events in the play.

There is no ambiguity whatsoever in Femi Osofisan's works even when he decides to be symbolic. For instance, in *Many Colours Make the Thunder King*, the symbolic characters of Alagemo, Osun - Forest, Oya - River and Oba - Mountain did not make the play complicated or difficult to figure out. The language used makes it easy to be able to understand and interpret the play accordingly/appropriately.

Sometimes, Femi Osofisan creates characters that cannot pronounce English words well, example of such characters is Mama Alice in *Once Upon Four Robbers*. Osofisan in some of his plays also makes people of a community pronounce words the same way. Example is in *Once Upon Four Robbers* where the market women pronounce sergeant as 'Saje'. In *A Restless Run of Locusts*, Osofisan creates political thugs who can only communicate in pidgin and some street slangs. Ukpokodu (1996, p. 48) stresses that Pidgin when used by Femi Osofisan in his play is for "the unschooled, and mostly illiterate characters," while Standard English is for the schooled and literate political elites." Example of such scenario in *Once Upon Four Robbers* can be found in Soldiers' lines below:

Soldier 2: 'Yessah!'

Soldier 1: 'Darrin mi!'

Soldier 2: 'Yes, di'yah I'm here'

Soldier 1: 'How many pickin we get?'

Soldier 2: 'Pardon?'

Soldier 1: 'Pickin, we pickin. How many we get now?'

Soldier 2: 'Hm, which kin' question be that? Why you dey axe me? You know say na two I born.'

Soldier 1: 'Na this tax from here. He say that if we get three children, we go qualify for rebate.'

Soldier 2: 'I no tell you before? You see yourself now.'

Soldier 1: 'Shirrup! By this time tomorrow, you hear?

Soldier 2: 'Hen-hen?

Soldier 1: 'By this time tomorrow, I orders you to born anodder pickin!

(*They all laugh*)... (*Once Upon Four Robbers*, p. 56)

In other instances, Femi Osofisan introduces Yoruba words to nativise the plays; he also uses proverbs, especially Yoruba proverbs which he translates to English Language without losing its proverbial flavour and meaning. Examples of the Yoruba proverbs used in his plays are - Many words do not fill a basket - "opo oro o kun agbon" coined from *A Restless Run of Locusts* (p. 32). This proverb can literarily be explained as "a word is enough for the wise." Thus, it is revealed here as analysed above that language is an indispensable and instinctive medium in human communication.

Femi Osofisan, according to Atakpo (2008, p. 129) "uses the style of tragic humor to bring about" his characters' "self recognition on the tragic individual." Some of his plays are imbued with different humourous words and lines, characters and language; this however, does not affect the message of the playwright. Some of his comedies are: *The Engagement*, *Love's Unlike Lading*, *Who is Afraid of Solarin* and *Midnight Hotel*. Although, the plays provoke laughter from their readers and viewers but they have never failed in projecting the mission and vision of the playwrights. Bamidele (1996, p. 71) compares Osofisan's humour to a cracker-barrel humorist by stating that

the style of humour that is peculiar to Osofisan might be described as that of the cracker-barrel humorist. The features of the cracker-barrel humorist are evident both in his conversations and writings. Like a cracker-barrel humorist, he is sharp in mother wit, and as a person, he learnt the technique of anecdotes, homily, metaphor, the proverb or wise saying, rural dialects and tricking autography and grotesque misspellings that may tilt towards the burlesque. He is a fun-maker who reveals in playing with meanings for “various” reasons. With him meanings are inverted, turned upside down, reversed not solely to make fun but it may be to let you see the illogicality or stupidity of an earlier statement.

The skills and dexterity of Femi Osofisan in humour also contribute to the attention his plays receive from readers and directors. Osofisan, in response to Awodiya (1993, pp. 43-44) says that he believes in

laughter as a good weapon for the stage, laughter helps to entertain...and it entertain on stage, but then you have to use humour in such a way that you can direct it against certain wrongs and certain agents of wrong doings in our society, so the laughter acquires a purpose...laughter is a very useful explosive device on stage so I use it often.

Femi Osofisan is also known for his generous use of storytelling with allegorism, realism and symbolism in most of his plays. Awodiya (2002, p. 5) affirms that, “Osofisan has found a credible approval of rendering in a manner those appeals to African sensibilities. He also explores flashbacks, folk songs, folktales, dances and his style is largely avant-gardist in nature. Agboola (2012, p. 357) observes that

Osofisan, has a unique approach to theatrical possibilities...He does not just write plays, he writes with specific socio-political targets, that are aimed at societal transformation. And in doing so, he has consistently, over the years, employed potent theatrical mechanisms, which amount to his style, and which has contributed greatly to the sustenance of theatre practice in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular.

Femi Osofisan writes historical plays that are based on real events but could be reconstructed for aesthetic purposes and dramatic actions. Some of his historical plays are about the victims; examples of such historical plays are: *Ajayi Crowther* (2011), *Nkrumah-ni...Africa-ni!* (2009), *Richard Lander and the Travelling Polygamist* (2009) and so on. Olasope (2013, p. xix) observes that Osofisan “has always dialectically interpreted and re-interpreted history and myth from the perspective of the victims.” Ola Rotimi in Emasealu (2010, p. 29) enlightens writers that “historical resources offer possibilities for matching human concerns of the past with issues that preoccupy us today.”

Interestingly, Femi Osofisan celebrates the rich Yoruba culture, the traditions and nuances of ingenious Yoruba culture in his plays. As a matter of fact, he seems to be familiar with many Yoruba gods such that he wrote about a number of them in his plays. Osofisan (1982, p. 78) affirms that “Orunmila is the presiding spirit of my plays...” Awodiya (1995, p. 46) explains lucidly that Femi Osofisan is

influenced by the religious worship of the traditional Yoruba communities. The Yorubas worship numerous gods and spirits. In Yoruba belief, the living, the dead and the unborn coexist and interact freely in a continuum. Like Soyinka, Osofisan has identified certain Yoruba gods such as Orunmila, Obatala and Esu that

provides him with the kind of structures that he needs to articulate his artistic vision. But unlike Soyinka who uses Yoruba gods in a more direct and literal way - the way they were used in the traditional society- Osofisan uses them as metaphors, not as deities, to project his ideological viewpoint as well as make social comments.

In a similar manner, Osofisan deconstructed the characters of some gods in some of his plays while he reconstructed them in some other. Obafemi and Yerima (2004, p. 126) have explanation for this, they opine that

Femi Osofisan's reconstruction of history is for the sake of a revolutionary change, and this dominates his more recent plays. He thinks of the tragic incidents in history in the light of tragic experiences, a passing phase which must be corrected when it recurs in life.

Awodiya (1995, p. 197) avows that Osofisan demystifies the gods

in order for the audience to understand that they do not possess the extraordinary powers being ascribed to them by the people. Awareness is given that the destiny of the individual is in his hands and not in the hands of any god. Therefore, it is of no use for anyone to rely on the gods to solve his problems in life.

On the contrary, Bakare (2018, p. 47) seems to share another opinion other than that of Awodiya (1995) and Olasope (2013). He opines that Osofisan deconstructs Yoruba myth and the gods because

he doesn't believe that African religiosity is true. Every society has its spiritual foundation and they are valid, that's the only thing in Osofisan's creativity that I don't agree with and that's because he is a Marxist. Marxian aesthetics condemns

glorification of the supernatural, you can see this in his demystification of Anlugbua in *Women of Owu*.

In all of the arguments about Osofisan's deconstruction, reconstruction and demystification of Yoruba gods or not, as presented above, we believe that, his intention is to present the gods to his readers and audience as 'people' who were once humans and had flaws like the humans. Such flaws are seen in Anlugbua's inability to rescue his worshippers in time of their need in *Women of Owu*.

Suffice it to say that Femi Osofisan is known as a crusader of the female gender. He gives voices to his female characters like Titubi in *Morountodun* and Yobi in *Aringidin and the Nightwatchmen*. This is because Osofisan believes women are important in the fight for justice in any given society. Babatunde (1996, p. 5) postulates that, "Osofisan is committed to saying that the notion of rating a woman as a second class citizen is erroneous and illogical in his plays." Hence, he creates women and apportions important roles to them in the societies of his plays, thereby, giving them the relevance the society refuses to give them in reality.

As a matter of fact, the female questions seem to bother Femi Osofisan so much that most of his works showcase women's strength. Both physical and inner abilities in which the society has accorded the male gender are equally accorded to the female gender in his plays. This accounts for the reason Osofisan is described by many scholars as a male feminist writer. In the words of Udengwu and Ukaegbu (2012, p. 12), they describe Femi Osofisan as

one of few African male writers known to have developed a thematic and dramaturgical levels, strategies such as myth, revolutionary aesthetics, selfless, intelligent and brave heroines juxtaposed with self-seeking opportunistic men as

in *Morountodun*, *The Women of Owu*, *Tegonni* and *The Chattering and the Song* to initiate as well as interrogate gender balance in his writings.

Awodiya (1995, p. 108) lists three characteristics concerning female characters as: “their revolutionary qualities, liberal consciousness, and conservatism.” He further identifies three different groups of women in Osofisan’s plays. Awodiya (1995, pp. 108-109) states that

the first group comprises young and progressive, positive and revolutionary women... the second group are the socially conscious liberal women who are eager for social reform. They do not lead revolutions by themselves but are being led by radical fighters for social justice. They showed deep understanding of how they are being exploited by the system. In fact, their social consciousness makes them to accept change and is fully committed to effect it . . . The third group includes conservative, reactionary and usually old women who lack consciousness and are adamant to social change, such women who have tendencies to oppose or resist social transformation.

Osofisan (2001, p. 6) himself, explains why he is enthusiastic about the plight of the female gender in Africa, he says

ever since I began to write, I have been deeply concerned about the sorry plight of women in our society and elsewhere. Quite independently, of any feminist movement, I have always tried to expose and denounce the wrongs which our society inflicts upon women, just on account of their gender. (That is why I wrote plays like *A Restless Run of Locusts*, *Altine’s Wrath*, *Fires Burn But Die Hard*, *Tegonni* and so on ...

Osofisan's experience as a child who was brought up among women also influenced his position on African women. In Osofisan (2001, p. 8), he admits his bias for women, he confesses to the fact that, "I have benefitted to a significant extent from their generosity and kindness at various points in my career. I admit a bias for women, which makes me extremely sensitive to the female condition around us."

No wonder in many of Femi Osofisan's plays, the female characters are usually empowered with enormous strength. He bestows on them wisdom and courage to fight in the faces of injustice, oppression and deprivation against them. Awodiya (1995, p. 108) is of the opinion that "the female question is one of the themes that Osofisan is most preoccupied with. It appears to be a fascinating topic for him." Little wonder in *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*, Femi Osofisan decides to liberate and grant women freedom through the character of Ayoka who has been looking for a way to challenge Iyeneri. Femi Osofisan makes most of his female characters radical; avant-garde; constructive; optimistic and innovative.

Femi Osofisan sometimes celebrates some elements of borrowed culture in his works, especially those aspects that have been adopted and accepted by the society which includes Western marriage practices, education, and burial rites. However, he does not subject the African culture to Western culture; rather he explores African culture, Nigeria and most especially Yoruba culture as the basis of his works. Incantations, proverbs, riddles, traditional rituals and folk rites are well employed in his stories. For instance, the sub-texts to *Once Upon Four Robbers* are based on Yoruba culture and the Nigerian political situation with the aid of storytelling technique.

Another interesting writing skill and strength of Femi Osofisan is his adaptation genre. In fact, he is said to be one of Africa's most celebrated adaptation enthusiasts with the successful

transposition and publication of *Tegonni (An African Antigone)* (1995) which is an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, Euripides' *The Trojan Women* as *Women of Owu* (2001), Charles Dickson's *A Christmas Carol* as *One Legend Many Seasons*, Nikolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector* as *Who is Afraid of Solarin* (1997), Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed, No More the Wasted Breed* (1983), J.P. Clark's *The Raft* as *Another Raft* (1989), among others. With these, we concur that Femi Osofisan is a master in the art of adaptation. This, Iji (2014, pp. 122-123), succinctly puts by saying that

in many ways, it is not hyperbolic to assert that, as a postmodernist master of adaptation-translation-and-transposition techniques...Osofisan...attempts to outshine Brecht many of the Brechtian presentation aesthetic convergence of the audio-visuals, manifest in the cinematic, carnivalesques and episodic panorama. A cursory review of Osofisan's adaptation of well-known dramas, old or modern, would attest to this assertion . . .

Kofoworola (2014, p. 74) in his analysis of Femi Osofisan's versatility in writing asserts that

indeed Osofisan's sheer versatility, and frequent experimentation results in a new form of hybridization which makes his plays dynamic. The resultant hybridization in his works classifies his work in the new theatrical category the 'post-colonial' which transcends the old theatrical form of Soyinka and the other early playwrights.

Apart from being a playwright and theatre director, Femi Osofisan is also known as a good musician and song composer. Many of the songs in his plays are composed by him. His readers are used to his numerous songs and music that they can identify an Osofisan's play on stage even if they are not told the title of the play. Examples of play in this category is *The*

Chattering and the Song, a play which Obafemi and Yerima (2004, p. 120) say that Osofisan incorporates

dance and music to evolve a type of drama, which is becoming known as the Osofisan aesthetics. The play was written in 1976 and shows how Osofisan has been able to use the inherited traditional theatrical conventions to achieve a new type of contemporary Nigerian drama.

It will not be out of place therefore, to state that songs, music, dance and rhythm have become Osofisan's signature. He creates songs in his plays to enhance the telling of the stories and to warn his characters or entertain the audience. Some of Osofisan's songs are also created to ask questions while some are meant to spur audience to revolutionary actions.

Like songs in Femi Osofisan's plays, he also uses music to enhance the telling of his story. He pays attention to details and explores the total theatre aesthetics which has made him popular with his directors and audience. The intelligent usage of music and dance repertoire in his plays is an important aspect of Osofisan's aesthetics. In fact, in most of his plays, he creates Music Band to play major roles. The following are some of Osofisan's songs and music:

A song in *Women of Owu*:

E sure fun mi	Shower me with blessings
Mo nrele oko	I am going to my husband's house
E si ba mi yo	And rejoice with me
Mo nrele oko	As I head for my matrimonial home
Okunkun parada	Darkness, melt away
Imole tele mi lo	And light, accompany me
E ba mi yo sese	Come, celebrate with me

Sese la nyo moko

A groom is met with rejoicing (p. 72)

A song from *Once Upon Four Robbers* (2011)

Ewe a je

Herbs will answer

Oosa a je

God will respond

Ewe a je

Herbs will answer

Oosa a je

God will respond

E-e-e!

E-e-e!

Boo gbaso wa oja

If you have come to the market with cloth

Maa jo!

Start dancinh!

Boo gbesu wa oja

If it's yams you've brought

Maa jo!

Dance! (p. 38)

A song from *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*

Piri lolongo nji

The olongo bird

Piri lolongo nji

Is always spritely

Iyeneri o,

Iyeneri

Ebo a fin!

Good luck to you!

Ajinde ara

Rejuvenation

Yi o ma je

Will be your lot (p. 30).

For Femi Osofisan, songs and music are means of communication. Some of his songs are targetted towards correcting the government and the people in the upper class, the bourgeoisie and the poor masses, while some are meant to appease the gods. In *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Osofisan uses songs used song to hypnotise people. Ukala cited in Agboola (2012, p. 362) observes that “songs and music constitute parts of the elements used by Osofisan in eliciting audience participation.” though he says “he tempers a number of these, especially in his translation, to enable them to bear the sensibilities of their new context.” Thus, the audience is important to Femi Osofisan. Obafemi and Yerima (2004, p. 126) observe that Osofisan “plays,

therefore, dramatise questions, which are directed to the audience; he suggests ways of achieving revolutions, of what stuff revolutions leaders are made, and what consists the rightness and authority of their cause?" Thus, Osofisan's respect for the audience cannot be overemphasised; his approach in relating with the audience can be likened to the Brechtian alienation effect.

Femi Osofisan has written numerous political plays. He makes profound political statements and responds to the nation's political situation with plays such as *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest* (1993), *Aringindin and the Nightwatchment* (1992), *Another Raft* (1989), *Midnight Hotel* (1986), *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (1986), *Morountodun* (1983), *The Chattering and The Song* (1976), *A Restless Run of Locusts* (1975), among others. Femi Osofisan is keenly susceptible to pulse of the nation, and to the tragic political, religious economic and socio-political realities that exist in the country.

Femi Osofisan, being a theatre director himself, has over the years, wielded the skill of playwriting such that he knows how to write a textual directing enriched play. Olu Obafemi in Awodiya (1995, p. 17) states that, "Osofisan creates aesthetic beauty out of language...that Osofisan successfully domesticates and indigenises the English language to achieve authenticity as well..." Femi Osofisan writes his plays, bearing in mind that play directors will interpret them on stage. Embedded in his plays are textual directing elements which are artistic elements created ingeniously by the playwright into his play. A play that is rich in textual directing appeals to theatre directors. Embedded in such plays are creatively plotted stories, imaginative dramatic elements and techniques for the actualisation of their thematic concerns which are complemented with imagery, characters, storyline, illusions, conflicts, imaginations, lines and language use, proverbs, metaphors, innuendos, music, dance, poetry, songs, stage instructions, among others.

Hence, textual directing elements require skills, expertise, and the creative ingenuity of the playwright. Femi Osofisan knows this and has mastered the arts of play writing and play directing at the same time, which is why he textually directs his plays in most cases. A playwright must have some knowledge of play directing, such a playwright writes a play better than a playwright who has no idea about how plays are mounted on stage. The skills to direct a written text is therefore, a vital key needed by a playwright to be able to achieve directing within his play. However, textual directing cannot be as perfect as directing on stage since textual directing aesthetics has to do with the play-texts alone and can only be read and understood by a good play director. Although, there could be cases of creating textual directing without the playwright knowing what s/he has done, but those who create textual directing deliberately do it better than the former.

Interestingly, Sotimirin (2008, p. 136) avows that Osofisan's dramaturgy "often draws inspirations from traditional culture, but he is distinguished by the fact that he uses the devices of oral literature and songs because of alienation technique." He protests against cultural alienation with plays like *Tegonni* and *Esu and the Vagabound Minstrels* and so on. He also speaks for the silenced, suppressed majority, common people and the lower classes. Osofisan also speaks against the ruling classes who have installed themselves into positions of privilege at the detriment of the victims of economic injustice, poverty, and neglect, that is, the people in the lower class. Osofisan (2001, pp. 6-7) himself expresses his distastefulness and disaffections for the dominant ideology of the African post colonial ruling classes and articulates his continuous alliance with the poor masses

. . . given the kind of writer that I am, I am always spontaneously drawn to social injustice and to its victims. The way I was born and raised, I find all my reflexes

conditioned to react with instant hostility to the dominant ideology of our postcolonial ruling classes, at the same time as my sympathies effortlessly flow to those confined to the margins of (official) history. Easily, I find myself in alliance with the struggling poor and helpless wretched of the earth. In a gerontocratic society, the suppressed women are my heroes.

Femi Osofisan's ideology and philosophy are unique. The reason is because of the influence that his background, environment, experience, society in terms of political, sociological, cultural, economic and religious situation have on him. When speaking about Femi Osofisan's ideology, Oloranju (2014, p. 3) asserts that, "Brecht is one of Osofisan's greatest influences especially in terms of play structure". However, Lanre Agboola observes that aside Brechtian influence on Femi Osofisan, Marxism is also a major philosophy that he embraces. In his words, Agboola (2008, p. 72) insists that

it seems that Osofisan's stratification approach to his society's ills can be traced to his Marxist ideology leaning, which Obafemi and Yerima (2004:119) claim he imbibed through his encounter with Brecht's plays in production during his working stint in France, shortly after his degree.

Ifatimehin (2019) pitched his tent with Agboola (2008) that Osofisan's ideological orientation is bent towards "group awareness and change. So it's quite common to attribute his techniques to Brechtian and Marxist notions". In the same vein, Ayeni (2019) corroborates Ifatimehin (2019) that Osofisan is

greatly influenced by Brecht and Marxism. His Brechtian/Marxist influence permeates his works as an ideologue. He is the leader of the playwrights of the emergent tradition in Nigeria, nay, Africa with the belief in a new world order

through the arts. I also love the gender balance in his characterisation. His leaning towards Obatala is also worthy of note in his works.

It is worthy of mention that, Ifatimehin (2019) and Ayeni's (2019) submissions have been contextualised by D. S. Izevbaye who observes in Awodiya (1995, p. 49) that Osofisan has a "very strong sympathy for Marxist ideas about politics and society and he believes that a country like Nigeria certainly needs revolutionary stance on the part of its writers to make possible a new egalitarian society."

Still on the subject of Osofisan as a Marxist playwright, Bakare (2008, p. 104) argues that Osofisan "has through his works, made emphasis on collective responsibility and mass movement; he seems content with pursuing only the crux of the Marxist aesthetics." Contrary to Bakare's point of view above, Eshiet (2014, p. 64) reveals that

Osofisan has often frowned at the tendency by literary critic to identify him with any ideological tag. His main concerns in his dramaturgy are: the emancipation of the mind-set of the oppressed in order to effect equity and justice: the upgrading of the proletariat: the advocacy of a classless society; and the betterment of the lots of humanity on the platform of an egalitarian society.

However, in an interview session with Osofisan (2019), the playwright reveals his opinion about the argument concerning his relationship with Marxism. He states that everyone is

free to call me what they like. They are free to use whatever label they want. All I know that I am doing is that there should be justice for all. There is too much hypocrisy from the ruling class, too much exploitation and these must end. I am craving for a society where everybody will be happy.

While some scholars continue to label Osofisan as a Marxist playwright, others such as Adelugba (1995) and Awodiya (2019) have argued that his work is Proto-Marxian. For example, Dapo Adelugba in Awodiya (1995, p. 49) argues that “although Osofisan espouses Marxian doctrine, I do not think that it would be adequate to describe his works as Marxist as many critics do, and are unable wholly to justify that description ... I would rather say that his work is proto-Marxian.” Awodiya (2019) in an interview session also postulates that “I therefore say Osofisan’s plays are Proto-Marxian ideogise.”

Osofisan uses his plays to speak boldly and ceaselessly in defense of freedom without the fear of the military power who were in Nigerian government at that time. Another example is *Once Upon Four Robbers* which contributes to the

debate on public execution of armed robbers in Nigeria; the play explores the moral and legal definitions of ‘robbery’ in the wider sense, and the implications of the Armed Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree 47 of 1970 on the public psyche...Osofisan advances the argument that it is really everybody who is criminal in intent and act and who therefore needs to be re-membered to a society that is just. He contends that the root cause of the endemic criminality of the people lies in the three symbols of authority and influence in the society – school, church and the home (Adeyemi, 2019).

Femi Osofisan’s major concern is to awaken the consciousness of his readers and viewers to prevailing injustice and to point them in the direction of the proper ethical conduct in a given society. Thus, building an ideal society becomes his main target.

However, Adeyemi (2019) in an interview session sees Osofisan’s ideology from another perspective, in his own opinion, he says

critics have described Femi Osofisan as ‘revolutionary’, ‘Marxist’, ‘socialist’, ‘leftist’ and other terms that suggest non-conformism among traditionally conservative Nigerian writers. Osofisan however rejects these labels and argues that, such terms ‘breed specific attitudes’ that prejudice peoples’ reception of a writer and lead to certain expectations and critical assessment. As such, despite his outwardly socialist lifestyle, Osofisan refuses to publicly identify with any ideology.

Sola Adeyemi in the quotation above corroborates Awodiya’s (1995, p. 47) stance where he confirms that Femi Osofisan “shuns dogma and ideological labeling. He reveals that Osofisan does not preach any of these misunderstood ideologies but prefers to simply stay around a core of ideas...”. Osofisan himself in an interview session with Awodiya (1993, p. 73) where the latter asks about his political ideology, says

well, when I am asked this kind of question, I tend to be evasive because all the labels that I am aware of, they say everything and nothing. The labels, various isms have been so abused and so misused, particularly in our context here in Nigeria. So there are several misconceptions...I have preferred not to preach any of these isms or anything like that, you know. But to simply let a group of ideas coalesce towards what I hope would be progressive political resolution of our problems.

This is why Adeyemi (2019) in an interview with this researcher states that

despite Femi Osofisan’s reluctance to associate with any ideology, Osofisan’s drama articulates the historical and cultural processes in the society from a class perspective. Apart from this, Osofisan is a Yoruba man with deeply held

traditional beliefs, a post-negritude's thinker and a pragmatic writer who grew up under strong colonial, Christian and Yoruba influences.

Instead of Adeyemi to pitch tent with other scholars who see Femi Osofisan as a 'revolutionary', 'Marxist', 'socialist', leftist' and other terms, he decides to describe his ideology as that of a materialist, he says

ideologically, Osofisan is a materialist whose study of other cultures and beliefs has helped to define an open and eclectic attitude to religion, culture and social contexts, and this is the ideology that informs and influences his drama...

The quotation above betrays Adeyemi's initial submission in which he argued that Osofisan should not be tagged to any ideology. Thus, like others, Adeyemi places Osofisan within the polemics of a theory that he called "the materialist".

Thus, this researcher believes that instead of referring to Osofisan as being Brechtian, Marxist, Proto-Marxist, Radical or Conservative, it is better to examine and appreciate his vision which is to see a society that is free from exploitation, oppression and moral decadence. This is because of his earlier submission that he wishes that

everyman is born free and equal. That every man has a right to life and to the means of maintaining life. That inequality such as we practice in this country can only lead to doom. But that, if the situation is going to change, it can only be changed by us and not through any divine intervention. That nobody should exploit the labour of others for his own personal enrichment, and so on and so forth (Osofisan in Awodiya, 1993, p. 72).

This researcher therefore, concludes that, in spite of all the labeling that have been attributed to Femi Osofisan, one major thing is sacrosanct, which is his rejection of social vices and degeneration, corruption and injustice. To us, this important philosophy describes his ideology.

2.9 A Review of some Play Performances in Nigeria

Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* was directed by Femi Osofisan as a command performance for the 2nd Convocation Ceremony of Kwara State University, Malete in 2014. Osofisan employed two assistant directors in the persons of Olabisi Adigun and this researcher. However, this researcher could not work in that capacity due to her acting role as Iyalajo which was more engaging for her during the rehearsals. The director exhibited a high level of laudable interpretative skills and directorial prowess in the performance. For instance, in his audition process, he employed two styles, the "type-casting" audition style in which characters like Iyalaja, Olohun Iyo, Elesin Oba and some major characters were type cast. The remaining cast members in the performance who were amateurs attended an open audition before their casting took place.

Osofisan explored the 'total theater aesthetics' as a basis for his directorial approach in the performance of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. In terms of interpreting the play's complex language, Osofisan analysed the lines for the cast members for better understanding by playing the role of speech director and language teacher/instructor in rehearsal. He made it a serious point of duty to break into pieces every word for his cast members, this includes pronunciation and lines rendition.

The performance started with Elesin Oba, Olohun Iyo, drummers and dancers, dancing to the market square for Elesin Oba's suicide ritual. Osofisan moved and blocked them from the auditorium, behind the audience; they danced in between the audience to the apron where they

rendered most of their lines before ascending the stage in the first scene. Osofisan also elicited enormous emotional expressiveness in his direction of Elesin Oba and Olohun Iyo; he incorporated music, chants, acrobatics display, dance and mime into the production.

Osofisan also ensured the appropriate use of costumes, make-up and props that complied with every occasion in the play. For the technicalities involved in the play, he dictated the technical requirements to the concerned crew. He also approached the interpretation of the play from the Grotowskian's perspective of theatre production - Poor Theatre. The difference between Osofisan and Jerzy Grotowski however, is that Osofisan is not against the use of make-up, costume and props, his argument is that anything that must be brought on stage apart from the actors must be minimal. Osofisan gives some level of power and freedom to his actors by allowing them to be creative and not forcing them to the directing style of the director.

This freedom given to his actors in the rehearsal of Wole Soyinka's *Death and The King's Horseman* helped Osofisan's actors to act intuitively and allowed them to develop and interpret the play in the best natural sense possible. Osofisan's style therefore, emphasised not only the need to condition the actors to the directing style of the director but to also be as creative as the director did on stage.

The layout and decor of the set created the right ambiance before the actors entered the stage. This combined with the beauty of the colourful costumes used by the actors allowed the audience to feel as though they were in the heart of a market in Oyo, Nigeria. The props used looked real while the lighting illuminated the stage and enhanced the telling of the story. Each of the characters played an important part; the removal of any of the characters would have affected the overall telling of the story. However, there were a few moments audience could not hear some of the actors; but thankfully, this did not disrupt the story. Although very interesting,

entertaining and thought provoking, the performance was rather too long. It should however, be noted that Osofisan could not finish directing the play due to his other engagements in Germany and China as at that time. He therefore, handed over the last two scenes to one of the assistant directors- Bisi Adigun.

Esiaba Irobi's *The Colour of Rusting Gold* was directed and staged by Uche Nwaozuzu and Ndubuisi Nnanna at different times and venues. While the first performance was directed by Uche Nwaozuzu and staged in 1991 at the Arts theatre, University of Nigeria, Nsukka; the second performance was directed by Ndubuisi Nnanna and staged at the same theatre hall and university on the 4th of April, 2004. The two performances of Esiaba Irobi's *The Colour of Rusting Gold* were reviewed by Ezanne Igwe and Ikechukwu Erojikwe from the perspective of transport and psychosis on the actors of both plays.

Igwe and Erojikwe's (2017, p. 573) reveal that Steve Ogbodo, the character who played Ogidi in the 1991 performance of *The Colour of Rusting Gold* experienced a disturbing condition tagged as transport and psychosis. He narrates his experience in Igwe and Erojikwe's (2017, p. 573)

... Otagburuagu (Ndubuisi Nnanna) wanted to strangle me on stage ... he was delivering his lines and I was listening (to his voice). I was kneeling down and he was standing above me. The way he was rendering his lines made me to believe that he was going to do what he was saying ... I looked up and said to myself, my God this man is going to kill me. It was no longer the guy (Ndubuisi Nnanna) that I knew before but another person ... Otagburuagu ... I ran off from the stage. He pursued and dragged me back ... I ran because I was really scared and it was not part of my blocking. This is because Ndubuisi has transformed to Otagburuagu. He

really strangled Ogidi because people in the auditorium were all screaming ‘you are killing him’. I could not put my hands to protect me from the strings and he was tightening the noose ... I had to go limb ... that was when he left me dead.

Otagburuagu in Esiaba Irobi’s *The Colour of Rusting Gold* is a Dibia – an Ahajioku, although he is not expected to spill blood, however, he spills blood in order to save lives which makes him a disobedient Ahajioku who refuses to adhere to the rules binding him as a Dibia. The performance left Steve Ogbodo and Ndubuisi Nnanna traumatized for a very long time.

In the same manner, Ndubuisi Nnanna’s performance of Esiaba Irobi’s *The Colour of Rusting Gold* almost turned to a nightmarish experience for one of the cast members who was almost strangled to death on stage. In Igwe and Erojikwe’s (2017, p. 573) review, the character Ogidi (Ikechukwu Erojikwe) narrates that

during the time Otagburuagu (Boma Eremie-Ilamin) his master was meant to strangle him he was almost killed in real life. His account is that the act has been rehearsed a lot that both Otagburuagu and Ogidi knew when Ogidi was meant to die on stage but Otagburuagu did not stop at that point because he knew Ogidi was not dead. During all rehearsals, Ogidi never experiences any harm on stage. How then can we explain what happened on the performance night? He knew that Ogidi, though dead on stage was still breathing. The blocking given by the director was that once Ogidi goes limb Otagburagu should stop strangling him. Otagburagu (Boma Ilamina- Eremie) refused to stop.

The experiences of the two actors (the two Otagburuagus and the two Ogidis) in both performances of Esiaba Irobi’s *The Colour of a Rusting Gold* describe a situation where an actor over-acts and suffers from multiple personality disorder. Apart from the traumatic experience

from the actors, the audience applauded the performance because what they could see were actors who acted their roles realistically unknown to them that the two Ogidis were almost dead.

Ezanne Igwe and Ikechukwu Erojikwe also reviewed the performance of Emeka Nwabueze's *Echoes of Madness* as directed by Uche Nwaozuzu. The performance was staged on 26th January, 2007 as the convocation play of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. According to Igwe and Erojikwe (2017, p. 575), the "performance was exhilarating because all the actors performed very well." Theatre and performance elements such as props, dance, music, scenery, make-up and so on contribute extensively to the beauty of the performance while the "songs, in creating the mood, charge the tempo of the play." Just like the performances of Esiaba Irobi's *The Colour of a Rusting Gold*, Igwe and Erojikwe also examined the performance of *Echoes of Madness* from the perspective of transport and psychosis on the actors, they reveal that the

actor who played Obiora (Kene Igboeli) had traits that suggested the role he played did not leave him after the performance. There were some traits of madness in him and this affected his psyche. This event shows that the actor did not endeavour to acquire the needed acting skills required (Igwe and Erojikwe, 2017, p. 575).

Another performance worthy of mention is Bode Sowande's *Tornadoes Full of Dreams*, directed by AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye. The play was reviewed by Aponmade (2019, pp. 88 - 95) and Arinde (2019, pp. 187 - 199), and it reported to have been directorially woven into the 'indigeneous traditional aesthetics' characterised by ritual, proverbs, code-mixing, folkism and symbolism; and AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye's Neo-Alienation Style' characterised by its twelve features which Adeoye (2012, p. iv) lists as follows:

1. The aesthetics of theme song of audience and players' systematic fraternisation;
2. Multiple role-playing aesthetics;
3. The aesthetics of artistic deconstruction;
4. The aesthetics of human props and demystification;
5. The multiple narrators' aesthetics;
6. The aesthetics of de-technicalisation;
7. On-the-stage make-up and costuming aesthetics;
8. The aesthetics of complete instrumentation on stage;
9. Photoramic-caption's aesthetics;
10. The modern operatic aesthetics;
11. Trado-modern aesthetics; and
12. The critical recalling curtain call aesthetics.

Aponmade (2019, p. 90) states that the “indigenous traditional aesthetics’ are located and discussed within the scope of the performance of *Tornadoes Full of Dreams* as directed by AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye.” On the same performance, Tayo Arinde avows that “the same performance which AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye directed for the 31st convocation and 40th year anniversary of the establishment of the University of Ilorin is entrenched in the Neo-Alienation Style.”

Arinde (2019, p. 193), who also examined the production of Kola Ogunmola’s *Palmwine Drinkard* as directed by AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye for the 2016 University of Ilorin Convocation Play concludes that, “Adeoye used not less than six, out of the twelve theatrical

aesthetics of his neo-alienation style” in the performance. In the same vein, Adeola (2019, p. 171) avers that:

Adeoye explored the use of character’s word in *Palmwine Drinkard* (1972) by Kola Ogunmola . . . Lanke, the major character 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 contextualisation, which is to register the play and the actors with the audience, a song is created for that purpose.

In his review, Adeola (2019) explains that, AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye applied all musical techniques such as pulsation, disposition, demonstration, composition, instrumentation, rhythm, tempo, tones, loud drums and group noise in the direction of *Palmwine Drinkard* to creatively interpret the operatic and musical performance.

The performance of AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye’s the *The Smart Game* in 2002 also comes handy in this review session as Adeoye who is the director adopted his ‘neo- alienating aesthetics’ in the performance. Fasoranti (2018, p. 14) explains that the performance of *The Smart Game* can be likened to the typical African theatre productions where there are blends of the total theatre idioms of dancing, drumming, singing and so on. She avers that

the beginning of Adeoye’s *The Smart Game* in production was very exciting as some actors were already planted in the midst of the audience while some took their cues from different parts of the auditorium, the drummers rolled the drums and the actors came out, singing from different directions, giving the audience leaflets with the following song written on them:

Theatre is the house of truth
And what you are about to see

To see and to watch
Is nothing but the truth and the essence of our being
Bury your head in deep thought
Learn greatly still
Do not alienate yourself (2ce)
From this artistic experience

They audiences began to sing along with the actors in the theme song which Adeoye (2009, p. vii) refers to as the “aesthetics of theme song of audience and players’ systematic fraternization.” Some actors played more than five roles, this falls within the ‘multiple role-playing aesthetics.’

AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye also directed Wole Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel* for his Ph.D. practical production at the Africa Hall of University of Ilorin, Mini Campus, Ilorin on the 10th and 11th of March, 2004. This researcher happened to be one of the actors in the performance. The play was reproduced at the French Cultural Centre, Alliance Francaise, Ilorin on the 31st of July, 2004 to mark Wole Soyinka’s 70th birthday. While directing the play, Adeoye explored the neo-alienation aesthetics. Some players acted as animals while some acted as props. In the scene of the sexual intercourse between The King and Sidi, the director created a human bed of about six actors, while some of them covered the scene from the audience with their bodies. The director also explored the aesthetics onstage wearing of costumes and make-up before the audience. Fasoranti (2018, p. 18) states that the

director made some of the storylines narrated by more than four players (the multiple narrators’ aesthetics) while some were in operatic forms- this falls within the modern operatic aesthetics. In fact, there were many plays-within-play in *The Lion and The Jewel*, Sidi (The Jewel, Lakunle (the Village Teacher) and Sidi’s friends acted the role perfectly.

Another performance review is that of Bakare, Ojo Rasaki's *This Land Must Sacrifice* done by Ogbonna (2017, p. 567) who was also the director of the play. Her review reveals that she adopted the

Brechtian Approach, The Inner and Outer Resources Directing Style and the Editing Directing Style as a means of achieving unified production... using both directing style will enable the actors to creatively interpret their roles and contribute their experience to the performance.

According to her, the performance came out successful especially Movement 12 where she reworked using "the 'Editing Directing Style' and each cast and crew drew his/her contribution from their socio-cultural values" (Ogbonna, 2017, p. 568).

The performance of Alex Asigbo's *The Reign of Pascal* which was performed at the Open Air Theatre, University of Abuja and directed by Olympus Ejue has been reviewed by Monsuru Oladotun. Oklobia (2019, p. 553) reflects that

staging the play, *The Reign of Pascal Amusu* at the Open Air Theatre, University of Abuja with Olympus Ejue as director was not without a lot of obstacles with particular regards to the design components required to interpret the play . . . The play employed the use of the whole stage in all the scenes. This also compounded and added to the encumbrances encountered.

Oladotun's observation above infers that, the performance of *The Reign of Pascal Amusu* as directed by Olympus Ejue Olajide was filled with a number of setbacks. These setbacks, according to him, can be traced to "issues of lack of patronage, funding and non-availability of proper design in Nigerian theatres" (Oklobia, 2019, p. 558).

The review of Akinwumi Isola's *The Spirit of Lagos* done by Olusola Fosudo and Babafemi Babatope reveals that, the performance was directed by Sola Fosudo for Lagos State University's (LASU) 2017 Convocation and for Lagos at 50 Celebration. Although, the play was originally published under the title of *Herbert Macauley and the Spirit of Lagos*, it was performed as *The Spirit of Lagos* because the Management of LASU wanted a convocation play that would "have relevance to the Lagos at 50 celebrations" (Fosudo and Babatope, 2019, p. 387). Fosudo contracted skilled crew members such as: Olori Peju Sonuga as Costumier, Babafemi Babatope as Assistant Director, Adebola Ademeso as Stage Manager, Yeside Dosumu Lawal as Choreographer, Shina Ayodele as Technical Director and so on. In fact, the songs were taught by a veteran, who knows the songs and how they were to be sung.

With this professional crew, the performance of *The Spirit of Lagos* was a huge success. For instance, the Technical Director ensured smooth scene transitions and theatrical aesthetics as he "adopted multiple sets that made the major scenes permanently pre-set onstage. The set turned out to be an innovation and improvement over what ordinarily could have been cumbersome, time-consuming scene transitions that would have necessitated several settings and striking of sets" (Fosudo and Babatope, 2019, p. 388). In the same manner, the Costumier and the Props Manager also did a good job.

Fosudo adopted the fundamentals of directing and used the flexible pre-blocking directorial style. He "came to the rehearsal with an exclusive paper illustration of the stage composition, picturisation, movement and pantomimic dramatisation of each scene" (Fosudo and Babatope, 2019, p. 389). The director functioned as an eclectic director by mixing different styles such as symbolism, realism and the popular Method Acting of Constantine Stanislavsky.

2.10 A Review of some Performances of Femi Osofisan's Plays

This researcher had the privilege of watching *Women of Owu*, directed by Ade Adeseeke, a lecturer of the Department of Ekiti State, Nigeria. The play was staged at the University of Ilorin Theatre on the 17th of May, 2017. Despite the nature of the play script which is devoid of dance, the director infused some dance movements which enhanced the telling of the story in a dramatic form. The performance was a blend of dialogue, music, dances, amongst others, with a rich and appropriate costume, make-up, props, scenery, lights, and stage.

The performance began with the demolition of Owu Ipole city by the allied warriors of Ijebu, Oyo and Ife after they have killed every man and male children in the town while the women and girls were taken captives. Ade Adeseeke made use of the stage space appropriately but for some still pictures here and there. Adeseeke also paid too much attention to long conversations, which reduced the dramatic actions in the play. The scene where they narrated the event of the past was not well realised as we were not taken to the past with their narration. The dances from ritual dance to the protest dance were perfect for their scenes. The transition from a seemingly celebration dance to a protest dance was well directed.

Yemi Atanda directed Femi Osofisan's *The Engagement* as an educational theatre in the Department of Visual and Performing, Kwara State University, Malete in 2015. He employed the total theatre technique in his direction. The use of flamboyant costumes and fantastic make-up, the tempo and pace of the performance was loud and fast. The performance, which he realised as farce was staged managed by Lanre Agboola. The performance was greeted with so much applause and was well received by the audience and critics. Atanda used some poems, "especially, ones written by AbdulRasheed Na'Allah as intro to the performance" (Atanda, 2020). Apart from using the performance to train his students, the director also staged it in order

to welcome students and members of the university community to the beginning of the 2015/2016 academic session, and to celebrate the Distinguished Professor Femi Osofisan who happened to be the author of *The Engagement*.

Femi Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen* (1992) was also directed by Yemi Atanda as Kwara State University's 4th Convocation Play in June 2016. This researcher was the costumier of the performance. The artistic director started the production with an open audition which was immediately followed by casting. The rehearsal lasted for a month before the performance proper. The cast interpreted their roles perfectly, while lighting, costumes, props, songs and dances enhanced the interpretation of both the director and the actors. The audience's turnout was highly impressive as the performance hall was filled to the brim. The most interesting scene in the performance was the scene created by the director where he introduced a chanter and some priests to perform a ritual of cleansing. Yemi Atanda adopted Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed which he considered as a theory that is in "line with the themes of the play" (Atanda, 2020). The overall production was a huge success but for the poorly lit light. "Rigging of light was problematic. Another contending problem was sound generation and sound management, in a theatre, such technical problems may mar the performance if adequate care is not taken."

Femi Osofisan's "The Fabulous Adventures of a Sugarcane Man", directed by Tunde Awosanmi has once been reviewed by this researcher in her M.A thesis in 2012. The director adopted his 'Theatrical Space Animation' directing style which guided how he interpreted and deployed key artistic elements like characterisation, costume, use of music, dialogical narratives and all the other elements that help shape a theatrical production in the performance. In the performance, Awosanmi worked hard on every casts of the play, bringing out the best creativity

in them during the rehearsal. This he did by allowing the actors interpret their roles on their own before he added his own interpretations. Therefore, the blend of the two interpretations (inner resources and outer technique) gave the play the beauty that was well applauded by the audience, crew and the critics that were present in the theatre. The director used sound effects, comic relief, folk songs, suspense, chants, different dances and generous use of light to create a holistic theatre performance and entertainment. With the use of sound effects, the director created fear where necessary. The good interpretation of the play by the director made the performance an exemplary one.

The production of Femi Osofisan's *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, directed by Alex Asigbo was staged in 2012 as an educational theatre and a departmental production in which the director made most of the artistic decisions. The performance, which ran for only one day, was essentially premised on traditional African directorial style and Ola Rotimi's pressure cooker technique which implies that the director drilled the students cast at a very fast pace and exercises were emphasised. Alex Asigbo also borrowed a leaf from Jerzy Grotowski's Poor Theatre Style by creating props and scenery with the actors' bodies. In an interview session with the director, he described the production as "an exciting one, women played male roles and the audience loved it. It was a matinee that ran for only one day" (Asigbo, 2020). The performance was staged in an open-air theatre because the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State did not have a conventional theatre as at the time of the performance. However, "it was just as good to experiment the African traditional style that we adopted" (Asigbo, 2020).

Femi Osofisan's *Altine's Wrath* was performed at the Department of Visual and Performing Arts, Kwara State University in 2012 as a form of educational theatre. The

performance, which was directed by the playwright himself and assisted by this researcher, was generously infused with theatrical elements such as costumes and make-up, props and songs which were composed by the Playwright and the Assistant Director. The intention of the Director was to train the amateur actors who were students of the Department on the techniques of acting and directing.

2.11 Theoretical Framework

In examining directing aesthetics in the performances of Femi Osofisan's selected plays, this study adopts the theory of 'Eclecticism' as modified by Alizadeh et al. (2012). First propounded in 1705 by Christian Thomasius (1655 - 1728), a German legal theorist and university scholar who used the theory of eclecticism within the context of religion, Eclecticism has been modified by several other scholars such as Halem (1994), Alizadeh et al (2012) and so on.

Eclecticism combines various kinds of styles and approaches in the directorial art. It is the art of "selecting what appears to be the best from various doctrines, methods, or styles such as an eclectic taste in music. It is composed of elements drawn from various sources. For instance, an Eclectic Art incorporating romanticism and impressionism" (*Webster Collegiate Thesaurus*, 1976, p. 213).

In general, Eclecticism describes a combination of a variety of influences, mainly of elements from different historical styles in architecture, painting, the graphic and decorative arts, as well as music in a single work. (Alizadeh and Hashim, 2015, https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01A1ZNQIG?ref=k4w_embed_dp_err&tag=bing08-20).

The above definition has also been recontextualised by Alizadeh et al (2012, p. 3) who insist that, "directorial arts should be done by combining various kinds of styles and approaches." One

can therefore deduce that, the two conceptual trappings above point to the fact that Eclecticism is a potpourri of styles.

It is worthy of mention that, Eclecticism is a theory that is being used in different fields such as English language, religion, medicine and so on. In English for example, scholars such as Freeman (2000), and Kumar (2013) have examined Eclecticism as a language theory. For example, Kumar (2013, p. 1) in his study of “The Eclectic Method- Theory and Its Application to the Learning of English” posits that:

Eclecticism involves the use of a variety of language learning activities, each of which may have very different characteristics and objectives . . . The Pedagogical approach or method of teaching and learning English is related to learning and teaching of English based on perceptions of that eclectically bridges the gap between learning and teaching models.

Therefore, Eclecticism is the combination and assimilation of different beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thoughts. Contextually, Eclecticism is part of the radical, revolutionary movement of the “postwar European era (that) incorporates a range of avant-garde techniques” (Wilson and Goldfarb, 1999, p. 336).

In another development, Halem (1994, p. 327) reflects that, Eclecticism “does not hold rigidly to a single paradigm, draws upon multiple theories, styles, or ideas to gain complementary insights into a subject, or applies different theories in particular cases”. However, this is often without conventions or rules dictating how or which theories were combined. In the performative space of the theatre, Eclecticism is a new theory in postmodern study, and it is adopted for this study because of its multi-functionality and multi-dimensionality in scope and praxis.

Furthermore, the essence of the theory to this research is due to its liberality and ability to accommodate any style, theory, approach and ideals. For instance, Eclecticism as a theatrical theory was developed by some directors such as “Max Reinhart in Germany, Meyerhold in Russia, Mikhail Chekhov in Russia, Yevgeny Vakhtango in Russia, Alexaner Tairov in Moscow, and Peter Brook in Britain” (Halem, 1994, p. 327). In the same vein, Alizadeh (2016, p. 123) reveals that

the eclectic theatre is a relatively new form in the world. It seems that this theatrical form has been developed by some directors . . . They emerged a new style as directors; in other word, they selected forms and combined the findings with their inner thoughts and created a new phenomenon called eclectic theatre.

The fact is that, the theatre directors listed by Halem (1994) and described by Alizadeh (2016) evolved new styles from their numerous experiments in the theatre through the combination of various theories. In other words, these artistic directors combined the findings from their artistic introspection with their inner thoughts and created, in the process, a new phenomenon called eclectic theatre. A typical example is Vsevolod Vaslov Meyerhold who combines

scenic constructivism, which utilised Cubism in creating shapes onstage; bio-mechanics, a physical style of acting that incorporates acrobatics and extreme body posture; revising *commedia* and other comedic forms; and stylized directing procedures, known for formalist concepts that revolutionized the theatre (Krasner, 2008, p. 75).

Subsequently, there is need to conduct a brief historical mapping of the emergence of the theory of Eclecticism in play directing. The submissions of scholars such as Krasner (2008), Hodge (1988), Wilson and Goldfarb (1999) and Leiter (1994) to mention but a few, have brought

into clear perspectives, the evolution of Eclectic Theatre in theatre scholarship. To examine but one of these scholars, Wilson and Goldfarb (1999, p. 319) assert that, “some theatre artists in the early twentieth century tried to bridge the gap between realism and antirealism. These practitioners – known as *eclectics* – were not doctrinaire; instead, they argued that each play should define its own form.”

Having discussed Eclecticism and its functionality in the theatre, it is imperative to situate and itemise its main features as a directorial theory. Therefore, we can contextualise these features into the following themes and tendencies:

- i. it is highly experimental and unconventional;
- ii. it combines various directorial theories in a single production;
- iii. it is common amongst iconoclastic theatre directors;
- iv. it is a liberal theory because it can accommodate any style, theory, approach or ideal;
- v. it is multifaceted in praxis and borderless in practice.

It should be stated, however, that one of the weaknesses of the theory of Eclecticism is that, due to its variegated characteristics and experimental nature, it does not allow theatre directors to have a particular identity.

Invariably, the theory of Eclecticism is apt for this study because it relates directly to the directorial styles and approaches of the six selected theatre directors. Although, the primary texts for this study are three play-texts of Femi Osofisan in production, each of which was directed by two theatre directors, their approaches and styles towards each performance were hinged on the eclectic style of directing. It is based on this premise that eclecticism served as the basis of our theoretical framework for this research.

The following chapter comparatively interrogates directing aesthetics in the stage performances of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki and Tunde Awosanmi.

Chapter Three

Comparative Study of Directing Aesthetics in Two Performances of Femi Osofisan's

Women of Owu

3.1 Synopsis of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*

Women of Owu (2006) is an adaptation of a Greek play - Euripides' *The Trojan Women* (1971). The play tells the story of Owu-Ipole City that has just been burnt down by the warriors of the allied forces of Ijebu, Oyo and Ife who invade and massacre the entire men and boys of Owu-Ipole city except the king - Oba Adejobi and some of his chiefs. The king and chiefs have absconded from the city through some of the secret exit routes a night before the attack. Okunade leads the allied forces and the mercenary soldiers from Ibadan to Owu-Ipole under the pretext of rescuing and liberating the oppressed Owu people from the control of their tyrant king. Owu Ipole is a city built round with highly formidable walls and gate which make it impossible for the invaders to infiltrate until the seventh year of their camping in front of the city gate after many attempts to penetrate and invade it. Hence, the city of Owu is burned to the ground.

Okunade, the leader of the warriors and a one-time popular craftsman, abandoned his trade to train as a soldier in order to take revenge on Dejumoo, the prince of Owu-Ipole, who is now married to his wife. He has now become the Maye of Ile-Ife - the chief warrior. After conquering the city, the Owu women are taken as slaves while those of the royal lineage, such as Erelu Afin - the queen of Oba Adejobi, Iyunloye - the wife or former wife of Okunade, are kept as loot for their generals and princes. Meanwhile, during the birth of Dejumoo, the gods decreed that he should be killed to avoid the doom that shall befall the city of Owu. However, his mother, the Erelu does not allow it. He grows up and takes Iyunloye, the wife of Okunade, as a wife. This is the root cause of the war.

The play begins with the women mourning the painful deaths of their husbands and sons. Anlugbua, their ancestral god, visits in a human form to see what damage has been done to his worshippers and their beautiful city. The women, in lamentation take turn to talk about their experiences in the war. They share the memory of the brutal killings of the five princes, sons of Erelu Afin. They also talk about the rape of the betrothed princesses by the soldiers; about how Orisaye who has been betrothed to the gods all her life is asked to join the harem of Balogun Kusa because she is a virgin. The women, in their sorrow curse the soldiers while Orisaye foresees and prophesies doom for the warriors. The women, especially Erelu Afin, expect Iyunloye to be severely punished for causing this tragedy on them. To their utter dismay, Okunade, her affronted husband asks that his men should take Iyunloye away and ride with him in his caravan. He promises that Iyunloye will later be stoned by the women. This is however not true as Okunade is once again charmed by Iyunloye's beauty.

3.2 Thematic Preoccupation of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*

Femi Osofisan invested a great deal of originality in his *Women of Owu* by situating it in a community where a similar occurrence had taken place and the real story of the city is used as the original material, expertly blending the former and the latter structural resources. It is one of Osofisan's plays written in poetic form rather than dramatic form. This is because the original, Euripides' *The Trojan Women* is a long verse of dramatic poetry. It is a beautiful work of poetry. *Women of Owu* is similar to its original material in terms of the thematic preoccupation, language and form of writing which is also poetic. Within the canvas of African tragedy, Osofisan addresses salient issues that are definitive of the plights of women in the society. He does this by passing a substantial commentary on women being at the receiving end during ravaging moments in most African societies, and indeed, across the globe.

Women of Owu reveals how the people of Owu are with the highest level of wickedness of oppression and subjugation. The play chronicles a people in suffering whose hope seems to have lost completely. Most of the women merely await the arrival of their bosses whose intention is to sell them into slavery or reserve them for themselves; others only hope for death. For example, Erelu Afin's only hope is death since she has lost all her children, except for Orisaye who Balogun Kusa decides to keep for himself as a wife. Erelu Afin, after seeing that there is nothing left to live for decides to commit suicide. A former wife of a king cannot stoop low by sleeping with just a common man like the chief who wants to take her in as wife. She, therefore, commits suicide. The case of Balogun Kusa is pathetic in the sense that he wants to have a share of the gods' bride (Orisaye), for Orisaye is betrothed to the gods of Owu city. This is dangerous and disastrous as well. In fact, it is the root cause of the failure of the Ife warriors after winning the war in Owu-Ipole. Orisaye places a curse upon all the warriors and they all die on their way home.

Iyunloye is accused by the women, especially Erelu Afin, for causing the tragedy by seducing Dejumò. Iyunloye, in return, accuses Erelu Afin as the root cause of their doom. This is because, during the birth of Dejumò, the gods decreed that the baby should be killed to avoid the doom that will befall the city of Owu. However, his mother, the Erelu, did not allow it, so the child is spared. Now, he has grown up and has taken Iyunloye, the wife of Okunade as a wife. Lawumi, One of the gods of Owu city, is accused by his son, Anlugbua, also a god, of causing the havoc done to Owu people and their beloved city. Lawumi does not deny, rather she explains that she incited and edged the allied forces on to perpetuate the destructive war because of Owu-Ipole people's arrogance against her as their goddess.

It is needful to comment on the fact that, Osofisan uses archetypal characters such as Iyunloye to describe, with the hope of completely discarding the aftermath of betrayal, infidelity and greed in an ailing society. Within the orbit of these myriad of thematic constructs, the themes of warfare as a destructive, man-made, conflict-aggravating and havoc wreaking event and most importantly, of the immeasurable roles of women in the society, remain obvious sites of sub-textual interpretations in the play.

3.3 Brief Biography of Bakare, Ojo Rasaki

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki was born in Aramoke-Ekiti, Ekiti State of Nigeria, on the 8th of November, 1964. He attended Ansar-ud-deen Primary School, Ado-Ekiti between 1971 and 1976; his Secondary School was at the United High School, Ilawe – Ekiti between 1976 and 1981. Bakare furthered his education by attending the prestigious University of Calabar between 1986 and 1989 to study Theatre Arts. He continued his education at the same University between 1990 and 1991 and bagged a second degree in the same field of study. He later attended Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria between the years 1993 and 2000 where he was awarded his Ph.D. Drama degree.

Bakare was an actor and dancer under Jimoh Aliu Cultural Troupe, between 1981 and 1982, and under Hubert Ogunde's Theatre in 1982. He later became a teacher at Joro High School, Ibule, Ondo State in 1985. Bakare worked with the Ondo State Centre for Arts and Culture between 1985 and 1996 as a Freelance Producer and at the Ondo State Television between 1985 and 1996. Bakare joined academics as a Graduate Assistant in Dance and Theatre at the University of Calabar from January, 1991 to October, 1992. In October 1992, he moved to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria's Theatre Arts Department as Dance and Theatre Lecturer; he also taught at the Department of Dramatic Arts as Lecturer 1 in Dance and Theatre at Obafemi

Awolowo University, Ile-Ife between 1997 and 2000. He later joined University of Uyo's Theatre Department as Senior Lecturer in Dance and Theatre in 2000. He left Uyo for University of Abuja as Senior Lecturer in Dance and Theatre in 2003; he left UniAbuja as an Associate Professor and assumed duty in Federal University, Oye-Ekiti as Professor in the year 2011.

Bakare has held many administrative positions such as Director, University Performing Company at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria between the years 1992 and 1994; Head, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Uyo, Uyo between the years 2000 and 2001; Coordinator, Post-Graduate Programme, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Abuja between the years 2005 and 2009; Head, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Abuja in the years 2009, 2010 and 2011; Deputy Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Abuja in 2011; Head, Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti from 2011 to 2015; Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti from 2013 to 2015; Dean, Faculty of Arts, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti from 2015 to 2017; Chairman, University Admissions Committee, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti from 2013 to 2016. Bakare, Ojo Rasaki is currently the Chairman, Committee of Deans, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti.

Other administrative duties Bakare has performed are: Director, National Troupe of The Gambia, Banjul, The Gambia in the years 1994, 1995 and 1996, Assistant Director, National Troupe of Nigeria, Lagos in 2001, Artistic Director/CEO of Abuja National Carnival Secretariat, Abuja between the years 2009 and 2013 and so on. Bakare, Ojo Rasaki has just been appointed as the Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture of Ekiti State in 2019 December

As a dramatist, Bakare has written over forty plays and books on theatre; however only ten of his plays have been published. His creative prowess and skill in the art of the theatre includes but not limited to the following areas: dance, directing, lighting, playwriting, dramatic

theory and criticism and so on. Bakare Ojo Rasaki is among the prolific third generation playwrights in Nigeria. On 17th July, 2019, Bakare, Ojo Rasaki delivered his inaugural lecture titled *The Healing Properties of the Performative Trinity for a Troubled Society* (2019) at the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria where he examined the therapeutic function of theatre – dance, drama, and music in collapsing Nation.

3.4 Bakare's Directing Aesthetics in the Performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki directed *Women of Owu* as a command performance for the first Ekiti-State Festival of Arts and Culture (EKIFEST) in 2013. Bakare chose the play because the issue of “let us treat the woman well” was in the front burner in Ekiti State then. The wife of the then Governor, Mrs. Fayemi, is a renowned activist in women matters. She sponsored the play. She wanted him to do a play that treated the plight of women. Bakare felt *Women of Owu* would arouse the interest of the government of the day because the government was pro-women. The following are the directing aesthetics in the performance of *Women of Owu* as directed by Bakare:

Picturisation

The performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* as directed by Bakare was full of dramatic actions with beautiful pictures on stage. Bakare used planes and levels to create pictures. The war scenes he created into the performance also came out beautifully because of the pictures he formed with the bodies of the actors. There were stage pictures that held audience tight to their seats in Bakare's direction of *Women of Owu*. His pictures range from diagonal to horizontal, circular, semi-circular, cluster, straight, arc and so on.

Movement

The different movements in this performance were well synchronised with lines and rhythm. Interestingly too, Orisaye's appearance on the stage with a lamp in her hand was dramatic and full of different actions that are subject to diverse interpretations. As a matter of fact, her movement round the stage; running, dancing and then, sometimes taking a long pause, helped the audience to understand her characterisation as someone who is not mentally stable and who perhaps is overwhelmed by the violence that surrounded her; and also, as someone who is possessed by a very strong spirit

Pantomimic dramatisation

Bakare explored pantomimic dramatisation in his direction of *Women of Owu*. Through the medium of dance and drums alone, Bakare delved into pantomime. An example was the scene where the women pleaded with Orisaye to stop her display of madness; Bakare explored the aesthetic of pantomime to project and portray the women in their worried and crestfallen state.

Rhythm

The performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* as directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki blossomed on rhythm. Bakare used drumming to create rhythm, while beats, sounds and dramatic actions enhance the rhythmic counts of the performance. Different patterns and pitch of rhythm were created and they permeated the acting of the actors, to their movement, lines rendition and so on.

Planes and Levels

Bakare used planes and levels to create pictures in the performance of *Women of Owu*, in the war scenes that he created into the play. He built them into the war dances.

Dance

The performance of *Women of Owu* as directed by Bakare thrived on dances. For instance, he introduced choreographed dances into the performance using traditional motifs. He did not use existing traditional dances in the Nigerian culture. Originally, in the script, the war scene is reported and narrated by the women. However, Bakare made the scenes to happen on stage. He added two war dances; this was because he did not want to report the event as written in the play but he wanted them acted out for the play to be interesting. He, therefore, used dance and choreography to communicate the war to the audience. He did this simply to arouse the interest of the audience instead of a group of women sitting down, crying and lamenting. That might be boring. He punctuated those sitting and crying with vivid high point actions like war movement and then he went back to lamentation and crying.

Music

In the performance of *Women of Owu*, Bakare introduced African instrumentations that accompanied the dances and the movements he created into the plays. The performance also thrived on music. He used music to actualise liveliness in his performance. All the scenes from the opening scenes to the end were invigorated with music such that it placed the performance in a musical theatre genre which is not far from a typical African performance.

Songs

In the production of *Women of Owu* as directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki did not introduce new songs, because the play is already replete with so many songs, originally. He used Osofisan's songs to interpret some of the lines and they surely enhanced the aesthetic and interpretative essence of the play. Bakare identified the musical parts his cast members sang. The members of the chorus were divided into four groups of soprano singers, alto singers, bass

singers and tenor singers. This was in order to make the play interesting. They sang melodiously and harmoniously. When it was time for dirge, they rendered it sonorously and melancholically such that it moved the audience to tears. The dirges they rendered were as follow:

Dirge 1

Orun dedeede bi orin aro	The hereafter, like a dirge
Oyigiyigi, a ti rubo	Mighty Father, we have sacrificed
A o yi pada, a o darugbo	Let's not die, till we reach old age
Oyigiyigi, Oba omi	Mighty Father, God of waters
Titiiti lori ogbo	Long, long lasts the head of grey
Oyigiyigi, Oba omi	Mighty Father, God of waters
A ti rubo iye, Oluyeyentuye?	We bid for long life, for grey hair
A ti rubo agba, Oluyeyentiye?	We bid to grow old. Father of elders
Akalamagbo kii ku lewe!	The vulture does not die young

Dirge 2

Kii ku lewe! Ei ku lewe!	Does not die young, does not die young!
Akalamagbo kii ku lewe!	The vulture does not die young

Dirge 3

Titiiti lori ogbo	Long, long lasts the head of grey
-Akalamagbo kii ku lewe!	The vulture does not die young
Ani ba pejo lejo o pa	Whoever summons a snake dies by it
-Akalamagbo kii ku lewe!	The vulture does not die young

Dirge 4

Orunmila a se won nitan

Orunmila will break their legs!

Se won nitan

Break their legs

Se won nitan

Crush their legs

Se won nitan

Smash their legs!

Blocking

Bakare gave his actors movements that gave meaning to their lines. He interpreted the play with beautiful movements. They sang when it was necessary, stood when necessary, sat when necessary and kept quiet when necessary. His blocking enhanced the totality of the beauty of the performance such that people asked for more, the play ran for four nights and audience kept trooping in.

The Directorial Style

Bakare's directorial styles in the *Women of Owu* are choreographic directing and situational directing. The first principle about Bakare was that he did not operate within any box; he did not want to be a Brechtian or Stanislavskian. This is in line with the theory of Eclecticism which is the theoretical premise of this study. Bakare believes that a theatre director should not be stuck to one particular directorial theory, and that he or she must be able to artistically experiment with diverse theories.

The point being made above is apt because Bakare believes that theatre directors who are rigid apostles of existing theorists are not doing justice to their works. In fact, he confesses that, "Those people created the way they created because they were reacting to their own realities and peculiarities; they were responding to their situations back then. Why must I be following them in 2018? I should also follow my realities and peculiarities" (Bakare, 2018). He further says that:

as an artist, you have created boundaries for yourself if you confine yourself to a theory; a true artist does not have a boundary. I look at the prevailing circumstance/situation under which I am working. What resources are available to me, either man or material or financial resources? Under which kind of situation are we going to be performing? These are the things that determine my directorial style, approach to a particular work that I am directing. I want to respond to my own realities in 2018 (Bakare, 2018).

Hence, Bakare, in the performance of *Women of Owu*, explored choreographic directing combined with the total theatre aesthetics. This cannot be divorced from the Eclectic theory, which is the theoretical framework for this study. The movements of actors were rhythmic, their lines delivery and dramatic actions also followed certain pattern of rhythm. Bakare made the play episodic and created a narrator who described each episode in his narration. The movements were exaggerated in a bid to make both actors and audience active and to make the play alive.

Directorial Approach

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki functioned as an auteurish director in the performance of *Women of Owu* (2003) with his directorial approach. He introduced a narrator from the beginning to the end. He processed the message of the play by simplifying the high intellectual level of the play.

According to him

except you have a very theatre intelligent audience, you may have a group of audience that will watch *Women of Owu* and go home, asking what the play is all about. They may not understand. It is a play that is too intellectually deep. I understood not everybody who will come to watch the play will be a theatre

intellectual. I just wanted a play that people will watch, understand and enjoy (Bakare, 2018).

This is why Bakare created a narrator who ran across the performance. He processed the information from one movement to another. Bakare made the play more episodic by punctuating those long winding moments of talking and crying, bridging them with narration. That way, the audience understood the play. Some secondary school students also watched the performance because, that period, *Women of Owu* was in the secondary school syllabus for General Certificate of Examination in Nigeria. Therefore, some secondary schools in Ekiti-State took their Literature-in-English students to watch the play and they said they enjoyed the performance and understood it more than what they have read in the text.

Bakare also changed forty percent of the content of *Women of Owu* by making radical changes in the play. He said:

Women of Owu is one of Osofisan's few works that will naturally be boring on stage if a director decides to be interpretative. So, I refused to be interpretative which means I was not loyal to the script. I decided to be creative. Of course, it was a festival environment and I wanted a play that will be interesting to my audience. I didn't want a boring play on stage (Bakare, 2018).

Those intervention assisted Bakare to achieve his directorial vision which was to entertain the audience and allow them to see a play they went home to muse over.



Picture 1: A picture showcasing the warriors the performance of *Women of Owu* directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki
Photo Credit: Fasakin

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki completely rewrote the first fifteen minutes and last fifteen minutes of the play, in a process of which deconstructed it. The theory of deconstruction as propounded by Jacques Derrida, one of the well-known twentieth century philosophers, was very handy for Bakare in the process of interpretation of the play. He did not deviate from the moral instruction or the thematic preoccupation of the play; it was still Osofisan's story. He only introduced some mechanisms to lessen the intellectual depth of the play so that the audience could understand it. For instance, Bakare brought on stage, the king of Ile-Ife who was only mentioned but not created as a physical character by the playwright. This is clearly an eclectic and the deconstructionist directing approach. An audience who had read the play-text might wonder who the king in the performance of *Women of Owu* directed by Bakare is in the text, but at the end of

the performance, such a person would have realised that directorially, series of interpretations had been put into it without altering the message of the playwright. Bakare heavily brought his theatrical, particularly directorial experience, to bear on the play and that made it interesting.



Picture 2: The King of Ile-Ife as created by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki into the performance of *Women of Owu*

Photo Credit: Fasakin

Spectacle

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki made use of special effects such as creating real fire on stage with the use of flame and lighting effects where the huts are supposed to be burning. The audience yelled in ecstasy from the beginning to the end because of the spectacle. It should be noted that, Bakare is unapologetically African because he believes that African arts must communicate Africans. He knows his audiences are African and he played on their aesthetic sensibilities. He created music

and dance as spectacles in the performance of *Women of Owu*. He also used narrative technique to create spectacle into the play.

3.5 Brief Biography of Tunde Awosanmi

Tunde Awosanmi hails from Ilesa in Osun State of Nigeria. He was born on the 25th October, 1965 into the family of Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Sunday Awosanmi. He attended Government Teachers Training College, Demonstration School, Ilesa, between 1971 and 1977. He later studied at Methodist High School, Ilesa between 1978 and 1982 for his Secondary education after which he proceeded to Ilesa Grammar School for his A Levels between 1984 and 1986. He bagged a Bachelor of Arts degree in Dramatic Arts from University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife) in 1991. Awosanmi proceeded to University of Ibadan where he obtained his Master Degree and Ph.D. in Theatre Arts in the years 1995 and 2003 respectively.

During his childhood days, Tunde Awosanmi's father bought all the available plays of Wole Soyinka which he was made to read even though he did not fully understand most of them. He also watched different stage plays of Duro Ladipo. These awakened his interest for the theatre. His brilliant performance in Literature-in-English as an 'A' Level Student also triggered his love for the theatre the more. Tunde Awosanmi is currently a lecturer at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan. His areas of specialisation include: Dramatic Theory and Criticism and Play Directing. He has become a Personal Assistant to Wole Soyinka as far back as 1999 and he is still working in that capacity till date. He has also worked with Chuck Mike as Assistant Theatre Director and Femi Osofisan on several occasions. This he still does till date. Awosanmi functioned as the host Theatre Director of the English plays of "Chams Theatre Series" (a computer hardware and maintenance services company).

3.6 Directing Aesthetics in the Performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* as Directed by Tunde Awosanmi

Tunde Awosanmi directed *Women of Owu* first in 2011 for the Classics Department of University of Ibadan to create awareness about Classical Studies. The Classics Department did not have enough applications from students to study Classics, therefore, the Department commissioned the play, being a classic play itself. The target audiences were the students from secondary schools then, because the play was in their curriculum for Literature-in-English. However, apart from the secondary school students who were massively mobilised to watch the play, there were many other audiences from all walks of life at the Cultural Centre where the performance was staged. The play ran for four days and the theatre was filled up each day. The 2011 performance was sponsored by Guamanian Onokore, an alumnus of the Department of Classics, University of Ibadan, who had just completed his tenure as the Chairman of Council of University of Ibadan. The second time Awosanmi directed *Women of Owu* was 2012 for the same Department for the same purpose. This time, it was sponsored by Chevron-Texaco Oil and Gas Company, Nigeria. Awosanmi was able to bring professional actors from Lagos and other places in Nigeria.

Again, he directed the *Women of Owu* for the third time in 2016. This time around, it was directed for the International Conference on “Femi Osofisan, Post Negritude, Tradition and 50 Years of Nigerian Literary Drama” which was used to commemorate Femi Osofisan’s 70th birthday. The play was staged at the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre on the 15th and 16th of June, 2016. Awosanmi interpreted the script beyond lines, movement, singing and dancing.

For this study, one of the performances of *Women of Owu* directed by Tunde Awosanmi which was presented in honour of Femi Osofisan during his 70th birthday will be examined. The

following, therefore, are the directing aesthetics in the performance of *Women of Owu* as directed by Tunde Awosanmi:

Picturisation

Awosanmi's pictures in the performance of *Women of Owu* were amazing and beautiful; he used picturisation to lay emphasis on some scenes in the production. He created clear, vivid and neat pictures ranging from cluster to triangle, to semi-circular, and to confrontational positions as can be seen in the pictures below:



Picture 3: A picture showing characters in a clustered position in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* directed by Tunde Awosanmi
Photo Credit: Michael Ogunbiyi



Picture 4: A picture showing the aesthetics of ‘speaking picture’ of characters in confrontational position in the performance of Femi Osofisan’s *Women of Owu* directed by Tunde Awosanmi
Photo Credit: Michael Ogunbiyi

Movement

The movements of the characters in the performance of *Women of Owu* were beautifully and creatively done. What amazed this researcher as an audience and observer was how Awosanmi ingeniously harnessed movements, blockings and rhythm in a way that made them a whole lot of beauty and colour to the performance and it was a beautiful sight to behold. The movement of the actors enhanced the telling of the story. At a point, the women sat down, then, in another moment, they were all lying down dejectedly on stage as if they were awaiting their deaths. In a few moments, they were up again, energetic and revengefully dancing and swaying to fast tempo, music and songs.

Mood

Awosanmi engaged the women of Owu in a serious conversation with the audience in order to simulate appropriate moods that were constantly transitional. The actors did most of the

talking by lamenting and mourning some of the audience responded by gently nodding their heads, some were in a very deep purgation of their emotions while some others talked back to the actors. The fact remains that through the use of sound effects, slow movements, line rendition, dull colours, dramatic action, mime, dirge, stage pictures and lighting effects, Awosanmi effectively achieved a remarkable level of catharsis in the performance.

Blocking

Awosanmi gave the audience lines and movement that fitted each situation. With his blocking, his pictures were defined. There was not a single action or movement that was misunderstood. Awosanmi took blocking more seriously in his directorial interpretation of *Women of Owu*; every scene had a special blocking necessitated by their feelings, moods and lines. He used blockings designs and patterns that further invigorated the message of the play.



Picture 5: A picture depicting Tunde Awosanmi's creativity in blocking in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*
Photo Credit: Michael Ogunbiyi

Pantomimic Dramatisation

Awosanmi employed pantomime in the performance of *Women of Owu*. There were some of the dramatic actions which he created that were in mime and pantomimic dramatisation. For example, some of the women's mourning scenes were depicted with pantomimic dramatisation in order to achieve aesthetics in the performance.

Lighting

For Tunde Awosanmi, lighting aesthetics was as crucial as directing aesthetics due to the important role it played in the performance. Thus, lighting was conspicuously explored by the lighting man and it added to the overall aesthetics of the performance. Yemi Adebo who is the lighting man paid great attention to shadow effects and dark atmospheres through the use of cool and dull colours that were realised through lights to further expand the affective weight of tragedy which was the saturated mood of the performance.



Picture 6: A picture depicting the judicious use of light in the performance of *Women of Owu* as directed by Tunde Awosanmi
Photo Credit: Michael Ogunbiyi

Acting and Role Playing

The actors in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* as directed by Awosanmi were excellent in that they portrayed and acted their roles believably such that audiences forgot it was only a play. Their acting penetrated to the audience sense of emotion and feelings. As an audience and observer, this researcher waited at the end of the performance to interview about three actors due to their beautiful acting. The actors who acted as Iyunloye, Erelu Afin and Orisaye were fantastic as they portrayed their characters in an exemplary manner. In the interview session, the actors said the director made them achieve their beautiful acting in the performance of *Women of Owu* because of his good directorial skills and creative ingenuity.

Space

Space was used judiciously within the lexicons and polemics of proxemics in Tunde Awosanmi's direction of *Women of Owu*. Space as used by Awosanmi invigorated, defined and reinforced the dramatic actions in the performance. For instance, space was used by him to show the contra-distinction between characters such as Anlugbua, who largely exists on a different psychological plane of characterisation, and the women of Owu, who exist on another interpretative cadre. This spatial cum pictorial poetics remains a palpable identity in the directorial aesthetics of Awosanmi as it permeated major aspects of the performance.



Picture 7: Space was well harnessed by Tunde Awosanmi in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*
Photo Credit: Michael Ogunbiyi

Music and Songs

In the performance of *Women of Owu*, Awosanmi said songs in the play helped him with his interpretation of the play. Some of the songs were even interpreted into dramatic actions. The song “wele wele” was interpreted alongside the ritual scene where Erelu Afin went into trance in order to summon Anlugbua, their god. The song rendered in the scene is as follows:

Wele-wele leri nse o	Softly, softly falls the dew
Wele-wele leri o	Softly, softly the dew
Sewele, sewele lojo allele o	Gently gently comes the evening rain
Sewele, sewele lojo	Gently, gently it rains
Iku o ni gbowo	Death will not accept money
Iku o ni gbebe	Death will not accept a plea

A kigbe-kigbe oro iku	Repeatedly we groan from the pain of death
Iku o loogun o	But there's no medicine for Death!
Mba sinmi o, sajule orun	I'd have stayed peacefully in heaven instead

The music helped the performance to be interesting; it also enhanced the telling of the story and gave meaning to the performance.

Style of Production

Tunde Awosanmi played on symbols in his performance of *Women of Owu*. He used sticks as metaphors through which he created pillars as symbols of strength for the women after losing their husbands and sons; after being raped, abused and molested. All they had left was the *Opo Ile* (pillars) as companions in their darkest time. Awosanmi also evolved another symbolic scenario in the scene where the stage instruction recommends a spotlight on Anlugbua. What Awosanmi did was to bring an *Egungun* (masquerade) to appear instead of Anlugbua himself. This was also symbolic in the sense that the appearance of an *Egungun* indicates the appearance of the ancestors, who perhaps have come to give important information. This is in line with Anyebe's (2012, pp. 449 – 450) thought on the identity of a masquerade who he says is a

form, an entity or person that is construed as spirit. Masquerade is an ancestor coming to the living in time and space. It is an ancestral manifestation in historic form. Masquerade is construed as supernatural entity appearing in symbolic form. A masquerade may not necessarily be physical masked, as they do not always appear in physical forms. Voices and musical instrumentations could also constitute a masquerade.

The character of a masquerade in an Africa performance, according to Perani and Smith (1998, p. 26) is to “capture the essence of the spirit represented.” The duo further opine that

when a man wears the mask, he is no longer himself when he dons with the robe. Instead, the man takes on the character and entity that the mask represents. That is, the residence of the masquerade is a theatrical entity that has inbuilt character. The master is transformed into this inbuilt persona as soon as he wears it... masquerades are generally highly respected in Africa (Perani and Smith, 1998, p. 26).

Masquerade's appearance is the "affirmation of the dead among the living...masquerade serves more than one function while it is a representation of the spirit world, it also serves as an interpreter of messages between the living and the spirit world" (Amali, 2014, p. 183). This is why Awosanmi made the *Egungun* (masquerade) appear instead of Anlugbua to indicate the appearance of an ancestor.

Rhythm

Rhythm ran across the performance; it manifested in through the lines of the actors, movement, dances, and all the actions in the performance. Awosanmi used drumming, lines delivery, songs, music, and chants to create rhythm into the play. The most remarkable scene was the scene where Orisaye came on stage, dancing and singing to the beautiful "ekun iyawo" (bridal poetry).

It is worthy of note that, ekun iyawo is the song, chant and self-praises rendered by the bride on the eve of a Yoruba traditional wedding ceremony. It is one of the major highlights of Yoruba traditional wedding ceremony. Ekun iyawo is considered "one of the final rites of marriage ceremony in traditional Yoruba society" (Adumati, 2012, pp. 65-66). Raji and Ajadi (143) define Ekun Iyawo as "a sub-genre of oral poetry sung by the bride as she prepares to leave

for her husband's home.” The significance of Ekun Iyawo to the performance aesthetics enhanced the creation of mood and rhythm into the performance.

Planes and Levels

Awosanmi used planes and levels to create beautiful pictures in his direction of Femi Osofisan’s *Women of Owu*. With the bodies of his actors, planes and levels were drawn severally; these added to the beauty of the play. For instance, in the scene where Erelu Afin invoked the spirit of Anlugbua, the women laid on the stage while Anlugbua stood tall. This created two levels of high and low as can be seen in the picture below:



Picture 8: Picture displaying the use of levels in the performance of Femi Osofisan’s *Women of Owu* directed by Tunde Awosanmi
Photo Credit: Michael Ogunbiyi

Another scene where planes and levels were judiciously explored was where the warriors insisted on collecting the grandson of Erelu Afin, being the only male still alive, so that they could kill him.



Picture 9: Picture showing the use of levels in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* directed by Tunde Awosanmi
Photo Credit: Michael Ogunbiyi



Picture 10: Another picture showcasing the use of levels in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* directed by Tunde Awosanmi
Photo Credit: Michael Ogunbiyi

Sound

The play *Women of Owu* can hardly be staged without the use of sound because the lines of the play are full of lamentations, crying and mourning. Hence, sound in Awosanmi's direction ran almost from the beginning of the play to the end. For example in the scene where the women summoned Anlugbua, they used songs and chants to create sound. These two were also complemented with soft drumbeats which served as rhythmic beat for the scene.

Directorial Style

Awosanmi's directorial style is undoubtedly eclectic, and the adoption of the theory of Eclecticism for this study becomes relevant here. He used his concept of 'theatrical space animation' which is a form of experimental theatre. According to Awosanmi in Adumati (2012, pp. 76), the theory of 'theatrical space animation' has the following features

animation of dead space and play script to resurrection by according liveliness to all the signpost of indexes; approaching the animation of space in a symbolic manner; invocation of the words for dramatic effect; creation of multiple "narrational" characters among others.

Apart from exploring the theory of 'theatrical space animation' in the performance of *Women of Owu*, Awosanmi also experimented on the play with an entirely new theory which he described as an experiment that is leading him to the "formation of some theories that look into the indigenous material and knowledge for the construction of interpreting approach to African plays, even Western plays" (Awosanmi, 2018, p. 67). Awosanmi is of the opinion that the African theatre is replete with too much of Western theories:

my contention is that we have been served more than enough with Western theories. I am not saying that those theories are not authentic but that we need to

liberate our creative energy and intelligent from the enslavement to foreign theory. To do this, we need to look into indigenous knowledge for theories of interpretation.

In his direction of *Women of Owu*, he formed a new theory out of his combination of theatrical space animation and aesthetics of indigenous materials, which is why we refer to him as an eclectic theatre director.

Directorial Approach

Tunde Awosanmi is one of the Nigerian directors who pay serious and detailed attention to every work in a play. In his direction of Osofisan's *Women of Owu*, he accessed the play to search for the central symbolic material which is not even mentioned or pronounced in the play for once. In an interview section with this researcher, Awosanmi described his approach to the direction of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*, by stating that

Women of Owu has the same characteristics with Euripides' *The Trojan Women* which is problematic for any director to direct. The quantum of dramatic action in the play is not impressive. A director is, therefore; faced with the duty of re-inventing the play and creating a platform, and doing it in such a manner that it becomes some kind of platform for dramatic actions. So, you kick out the dramatic action from the long narratives of lamentation.... If it were to be presented in the original way that it has been written, then you are risking a situation whereby audience might start going out after about fifteen minutes or twenty minutes of the performance.

Therefore, Awosanmi converted some of Osofisan's lines in *Women of Owu* into action by using the pillars as the symbolic elements in the play which Femi Osofisan never mentioned. Thus,

Awosanmi researched into the field of architecture, civil engineering and designing. He also researched into the traditional way of building and designing a house. Awosanmi (2018) said, “a building is usually set on the structure of pillars”. This was why he capitalised on the pillars in his interpretation of the play.

When the Ife Army and the allied forces came to raise Owu to the ground and burnt down the homes and all the pillages they need to do, so I told myself that something must remain, a city cannot be in ruin like that. The pillars- (popularly called opo or opo-ile in Yoruba Language) must remain (Awosanmi, 2018).

The pillars, therefore, became Awosanmi’s directorial approach to the play. From the beginning of the play to the end, the women held on to their pillars, using them to do many things ranging from walking sticks to weapons of protest and resistance, to fighting tools, to drumming sticks and so on. Awosanmi referred to the ‘opo ile’ (pillar) as “pillars of ruins”.

there are many pillar symbols in the play. So I decided that I will create some kind of bonding between the women who are lamenting and the ruined houses by holding on to the pillars as their last hope. In essence, it then turn out that everything got burnt but the opo ile remained, that is my way of saying that adversary may come and destroy the environment, something always remain behind. And in this particular instance, it is the opo ile that remains. Then I dug further by going into Yoruba mythology, into Yoruba folkwisdom, through proverbs and ese ifa, to see what the ese ifa says about opo ile, and what significance is opo ile in Yoruba proverb, what does folkwisdom say about opo ile? And I came out with outstanding instances where opo was said to be very

important. That also goes to say that the quality of a particular opo-ile will depend on the quality of the wood from which it is made (Awosanmi, 2018).

In Tunde Awosanmi's analogy, he believed that because of the sophistication of the Owu people at that time, the pillars did not all burn in the fire. The playwright also describes this in his stage instruction that the pillars refused to burn easily. Awosanmi (2018) further stated that

whereas every other thing got burnt so easily because their civil engineers were sophisticated enough to have been able to identify a very strong wood from which they were able to fashion their 'opo ile' for their homestead. Then, I was able to transfer the inanimate quality of the 'opo' unto the animate object in the play, that is, the women. So in a way, the women were able to hold on to the 'opo' as a source of last strength to withstand the adversary of the enemies and that is the reason you find in the performance that the women did a lot of things with the pillar (opo). In the hands of the women, the pillars were in three dimensions, they functioned in three capacities: (i) the pillars served as a source of last strength, so the women derived some kind of energy with them; (ii) the pillars also served for the women as companions- there is a companionship which they derive from the pillars; (iii) the pillars were also used as instruments of protest (Awosanmi, 2018).

Dance

Awosanmi transformed the play with dances. He employed Debo Ajibade, a choreographer who infused as many dances as possible ranging from mourning dances, protest dances, ritual dance and so on, into the play. The dances, accompanied by the songs were used to interpret the play. With dances, the play was transformed from a dialogue play into a play that was full of dramatic actions. The performance took another artistic dimension from the previous

performances of *Women of Owu* directed by other directors that I have ever seen. In fact, Osofisan, the playwright who also watched the play, testified to this by saying that he had never seen *Women of Owu* directed and performed in such a spectacular way.

Spectacle

Awosanmi's performance of *Women of Owu* was full of spectacle that was breathtaking. The appropriate use of the pillars, the use of drumming, songs, chants, dances 'oriki' (praise singing), dirges, and so on, gave the play a total beauty that overwhelmed the audience. Example of such scenes was where Orisaye appeared on stage for the first time with a burning lamp in her hand. Her dances, display of madness, beautiful lines rendition, songs from the women which accompanied her movements and dances, the chants of 'ile-oko', popularly known as ekun iyawo and a blend of dirge which was rendered melancholically in the background came out as an awe-inspiring and astounding spectacle. It was indeed a beautiful sight to behold.



Picture 11: Picture showing the use of spectacle in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* directed by Tunde Awosanmi
Photo Credit: Michael Ogunbiyi

Drumming

In the performance of *Women of Owu*, as directed by Awosanmi, drumming was employed in a creative manner such that it enhanced the beauty of the performance. Interestingly, there was a scene where Awosanmi made the women use their pillars- 'opo' to beat the ground of the stage and the scene was amazing.

It should be noted that after the performance, Femi Osofisan who was a member of the audience commended the crew and cast members, particularly the theatre director –Tunde Awosanmi. He went on stage to congratulate all the actors one after the other.



Picture 12: Femi Osofisan congratulating the actors and commending the director after the performance of his play - *Women of Owu* directed by Tunde Awosanmi
Photo Credit: Michael Ogunbiyi

3.7 Comparative Analysis of Directing Aesthetics in Tunde Awosanmi and Bakare, Ojo Rasaki's Directing of *Women of Owu*

The directing aesthetics in the artistic direction of Osofisan's *Women of Owu* by Bakare (2013) and Awosanmi (2016) are necessitated by the different directorial approaches and styles they employed. For instance, while Bakare capitalised on his choreographic skills to create pictures into the performance of Osofisan's *Women of Owu* which transformed the play from its boring state to a lively one in performance, Awosanmi created pictures to lay emphasis on some characters and scenes. His picturisation was clear, vivid and neat. Bakare also synchronised movements with lines and rhythm in the performance of *Women of Owu*. For example, Orisaye's movements were well directed such that she was able to convince the audience that she was indeed possessed by a strange spirit. The movements of the characters in Awosanmi's performance of the play were beautifully and creatively done. He engaged the women in a serious conversation with the audience. The actors walked to the audience while lamenting and mourning. The audience responded by gently nodding their heads while some were in a very deep purgation of emotions and others talking back to the actors.

Bakare's performance of Osofisan's *Women of Owu* thrived on music and African instrumentations. Although, he did not introduce more songs because there are enough songs already in the play-text, he therefore, divided the members of the chorus into four groups of soprano singers, alto singers, bass singers and tenor singers. In the same vein, Awosanmi's performance of the play blossomed with songs and music. Femi Osofisan's songs in the play came handy in his interpretation. Some of the songs were even interpreted into dramatic actions. The music helped the performance to be interesting; it also enhanced the telling of the story and gave meaning to the performance.

The creative ingenuity of Bakare, Ojo Rasaki in the artistic direction of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* enjoyed the candour of the total theatre idiom. Amongst the triad of drama, music and dance, Bakare played more on choreographic movements in his performance of the play. Indeed, war dances, planes, patterns and levels were theatricalised by Bakare in the performance. On his own part, Awosanmi also used planes and levels that added to the beauty of the performance. He played on different interpretative levels ranging from standing, to bending, to kneeling, to squatting, and to lying on the stage. Contextually, his use of planes and levels are highly tailored towards interpreting each lines and actions of the play. Tunde Awosanmi employed Debo Ajibade, a seasoned choreographer, to spice up his performance with dances. Most of the dances infused into the play were abstract movements unlike the war and energetic dances employed by Bakare.

Bakare did not use silence technique in the direction of *Women of Owu*. This was due to the fact that, dramatic actions significantly held sway in the performance and it was difficult to allow for any single minute of silence. Conversely, Awosanmi made use of silence technique although; it lasted for a few moments. It permeated into the entire theatre space such that all audience kept mute until drumming resumed. The audiences were enchanted by this rare dramatic technique and applauded the actors.

The performance of *Women of Owu* directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki blossomed on rhythm. Different patterns of rhythm were created such as humming of songs while actions were going on stage. More so, choreographic movement of the actors, rhythm in lines renditions, drumming as interlude and so on were used to enhance the artistic quality of the performance. Rhythm also spanned through the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* directed by Tunde Awosanmi. In terms of line rendition of the actors, movements, dances and all actions in

the play, rhythm was emphasised in the performance. A typical example of rhythm in the performance was in the scene where the women used their 'Opo-Ile' to make continuous sounds in the songs, chants and drumming. Other copious examples span through the performance.

The blockings that Bakare infused into the performance gave meaning to the lines of the actors. This is because he interpreted the play with appropriate interpretative blockings, and the actors stood, sat and moved when necessary. Awosanmi gave the actors blocking that complemented each situations. With his blocking, his pictures were clearly defined and there was not a single action or movement that was misunderstood. Awosanmi adopted an impeccable blocking technique in his directorial interpretation of *Women of Owu* which enabled him to pay attention to every little detail of the performance. Every scene had a special blocking necessitated by the feelings, moods and lines therein. Hence, the message of the play was further invigorated through the blocking designs and patterns created by Awosanmi.

The use of spectacles remains one of the attractions of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* as directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki. He created different types of spectacles with fire, sound, costumes, lighting, songs, dances, props and narrative technique in the performance. Similarly, Awosanmi also created spectacles by using long and thick sticks to depict the ruins/pillars in the performance. He also used lights, fire, songs, chants and dances as elements of spectacle in the performance.

The poetics of deconstruction on play directing has remained an obvious site for intellectual reflection in the experimental orbit of theatre directing. Being a deconstructionist director, Bakare completely re-wrote the first fifteen minutes and last fifteen minutes of the play. One of Bakare's deconstructionist approaches is his introduction of a king into the performance in order to aid the understanding of the play by the young audience. Awosanmi on the other

hand, searched for the central symbolic materials which are the pillars- 'Opo-Ile'. From the beginning of the play to the end, the women held on to their pillars, using them as walking sticks, as weapons of protest and resistance, as fighting tools, as drumming sticks and to carry out other stage activities. Retrospectively, Bakare's directorial style was hinged on 'choreographic directing' and 'situational directing' because he functioned as an auteurish director, while Awosanmi employed his theatrical space animation which he blended with experimental theatrical forms.

It should be noted that the two directors examined in this chapter have directed *Women of Owu* more than once for different audiences at different periods and time. Thus, this researcher considers them most suitable theatre directors for this chapter. The next chapter of this study examines the comparative study of directing aesthetics in the performances of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Muyiwa Awodiya in 1983 and Sola Adeyemi in 2008.

Chapter Four

Comparative Study of Directing Aesthetics in Selected Performances of Femi Osofisan's

Once Upon Four Robbers

4.1 Synopsis of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers*

Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* satirises the Nigerian society and her realities through four robbers- Angola, Major, Hassan and Alhaja. The robbers, who after watching the public execution of their leader - Alamu at the bar beach, are in dilemma of whether to quit or continue, this creates a serious disagreement amongst them. Major believes that it is best for everybody to go his or her separate ways as every man must now live for himself. However, because of their bitterness towards the government and the society, they determine there and then to avenge the death of Alamu.

The robbers are introduced to Aafa by the playwright even at the same spot where they are still mourning their leader. They try to rob Aafa but luck runs against them as Aafa seems more powerful. With muttering of some Islamic injunctions, Hassan and Angola become unconscious and begin to do the biddings of Aafa. Alhaja and Major intervene, Aafa releases Angola and Hassan. One would think they would have learnt their lessons, but no, they begin to hit the religious man until he becomes exhausted and begins to beg them to stop. The Aafa even promises to help them in their 'trade' of robbery given one condition that they will not kill in any of their operations again. They reluctantly agree to his condition and Aafa, who is thought to be a pious Muslim, brings out an Ifa oracle and begins to render incantations. Surprised, the robbers later realised that the Aafa is also a traditionalist. Aafa gives the robbers a song each to aid their robbery without recourse of violence or murder.

They use the method as explained by the Aafa in a market to rob all the market women and men. The soldiers who are watching over the people and their goods in order to avoid a repeat of the incidence find it hard to believe that the robbers do not use any weapon but songs and dance to rob the people. Thus, they make jest of the market people, however, it soon gets to their turn as the robbers meet them, even when they are still laughing at the women. Like the women, they dance and are robbed alongside the market people. In the process of trying to figure out what just happened and how it happened, Major, one of the robbers is arrested; Alhaja disguises like a corn seller and makes her way to the soldiers' camp in an attempt to save the captured Major. Other robbers later join Alhaja in her rescue mission. Their plan works only for a moment. However, Femi Osofisan refuses to condemn the robbers or applaud the soldiers. He leaves the end of the play open for the audience to determine who is guilty or not between the robbers and the soldiers who also steal from the robbers in the play. Whichever group is pronounced guilty by the audience is to be executed.

4.2 Thematic Preoccupation of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers*

The major role of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* to the Nigerian society is to serve as a medium of social change. The play is no doubt one of those texts that are still relevant to the situations in Nigerian society of today. This proves that playwrights are prophets and seers, as it appears that Osofisan saw into the future when writing the play. The relevance of the play to the present socio-political and economic situation can therefore, not be overemphasised.

Once Upon Four Robbers was written during the era of General Gowon and first published in the year 1980. During the 1970s, it was common that convicted armed robbers were executed publicly by a military firing squad, which as at then was referred to as the "Bar Beach Show" (Adeyemi, 2015, p. 6). This is because most executions were done at the Lagos Bar

Beach. Osofisan finds the government's position so despicable and quickly responded by presenting a moral argument against the outrageous practice through his play, *Once Upon Four Robbers*. This position is in consonance with Adeyemi's (2015, p. 6) submission that

Osofisan wrote the play to contribute to the debate on public execution of armed robbers in Nigeria. The play examines the moral and the legal definitions of "robbery" in the wider sense, and the implication of the robbery and fire arms Decree 47 of 1970 of the public psyche.

The issue of armed robbery became so prevalent and raging in the Nigerian society after the Biafran War, with the likes of Anini, Sina Rambo and so on as gang leaders of their teams. This made the Nigerian government to make a decree that robbers should be publicly executed.

Thus, Femi Osofisan's view is that there are more critical issues than execution of robbers, such as hunger and unemployment that should be critically looked into by the government as they are the major problems that drive people to crime. Osofisan's argument according to Awodiya (1995, p. 270) is that

if armed robbery is a disgrace and a death-affirming reality in Nigeria, so are hunger and unemployment. Indeed, his ultimate intention in writing the play however is to "shock" the public into a "new awareness" so that its attitude of "passive acceptance or sterile indignation" may be channeled towards a "more dynamic, more enraged determination" to confront itself.

Therefore, the play proves that poverty is a major force that drives people to crime in Nigeria. Another major issue raised in the play is the class issue where the rich have power over the poor. The robbers refer to the rich as a class created by the military through corruption; forgery; smuggling; and law-makers breaking the law they created.

The playwright insinuates that every Nigerian is a potential armed robber in one way or the other, directly or indirectly. Some people are armed with guns while some are armed with their pens; others are armed with positions and powers. Osofisan uses Sergeant to reflect the corrupt nature of Nigerian soldiers when he refuses to release the money found where to the market women or at least, to the government. Here, the issue of dishonesty is treated using the character of Sergeant who sees the money and decides to tell Soldier I not to let anybody know about it.

Soldier 1: The money it's all here!

Sergeant: (Knocking him down) : shut up, you fool! Can't you restrain yourself! (Looks round rapidly.) Corple, take care of the money. And listen, you dogs who may have been cursed to eternal poverty! As far as we know, the robbers ran away with the money! Is that clear? We found nothing... (p. 54)

These are the people who suppose to protect the citizens but they are also robbing people indirectly of their inheritance. Hence, Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* is a typical representation of the Nigerian society and very relevant one at that. Interestingly, Osofisan uses Major to summarise his message. Here, he says

Major: ... Man is so fragile, so easy to kill especially if he robs and lies, if he wantonly breaks the law. Today that law is on the side of those who have, and in abundance, who are fed and building, who can afford several concubines. But tomorrow that law will change. The poor will seize it and twist its neck. The starving will smash the gate of the supermarket; the homeless will no longer yield in fear to your bulldozers. And your children, yes your dainty little children will be here where I stand now, on the firing block... (p. 69)

The market women like Mama Alice, Mama Toun, Mama Uyi, Bintu are not left out of the corrupt people of the society. This they do through hoarding of goods and thereby creating artificial scarcity of goods which mostly leads to inflation. Invariably when there is inflation, only the rich can afford to buy goods irrespective of their prices, while the poor continue to die gradually. In their own defense, the women explain why they must inflate the prices of their goods.

Bintu: we have to pay the rent, pay the tax

Mama Uyi: For the tax-man has no friends

Yedunni: And the headmaster threatens to send the children into the streets.

Mama Alice: Brother die and must be buried.

Bintu: Sisters have their wedding day.

Mama Alice: Children fall ill need medicine

Mama Toun: Needing food.

Bintu: And even the simplest clothes wear out and must be replaced

Mama Alice: So who will pay the bill if the market doesn't?

Bintu: Where shall we turn if not our stalls?

Mama Toun: How can we live, if profit lower or cease?

Mama Alice: How can we survive if the price control office refused to be bribed.

Sergeant: You hear that you have been robbing from victims

Mama Alice: The market is our sanctuary (Pp. 72-73)

The above are the instances and situations in which the market people used to justify their acts of robbing their buyers. The market women however, do not believe that they are thieves; this is the reason why they are agitating for the execution of the known armed robbers, those that are visible to the world as real thieves.

It should be noted therefore, that Femi Osofisan used *Once Upon Four Robbers* to emphasise the need for the government to know that job must be created when people complete their education without which armed robbery, thuggery, hooliganism, among others will continue in the country. Osofisan also points out that religious leaders are still rooted in traditional beliefs. Today, in the society, both Pastors and Aafas are being hypocritical by visiting herbalists in order to get power, yet they condemn traditional religion. This is why it is not strange to see ifa oracle (opele) in the hand of Aafa, a Muslim cleric in *Once Upon Four Robbers*.

As a matter of fact, the robbers are victims of societal ills. They are not born thieves. For instance, Hassan and Sergeant are brothers from the same mother, while Sergeant makes it through extortion on the masses, Hassan who is not opportune to get a white collar job, finds himself in the midst of robbers as a member.

Femi Osofisan is thus, a socially committed playwright who does not joke with the political, economic and the socio-cultural development of his country. This is why he transforms all these issues into plays to drive a message home to his audience. In *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Osofisan is of the opinion that everyone is guilty in one way or the other - from the robbers to the market women, soldiers, and majorly, the country's leaders. Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* is therefore, a call to change.

4.3 Brief Biography of Muiyiwa Awodiya

Professor Muiyiwa Awodiya was born at Ilesa in the year 1947. He holds a Diploma in Theatre Arts and MFA in Theatre Administration and Management from the University of Georgia in 1979. Awodiya was appointed as a lecturer in the department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan in 1980. In the same year, Muiyiwa Awodiya joined the University of Benin, department of Theatre Arts. Between 1992 and 1997, Awodiya was the Managing Director of Muson Centre in Lagos, Nigeria. He later bagged his Doctorate degree from the University of Ibadan in 2002. Awodiya retired from University of Benin in 2017 when he clocked seventy after thirty-seven years of meritorious service. He is currently with the Department of Theatre Arts, College of Humanities and Culture, Osun State University, Nigeria.

Muiyiwa Awodiya is well acquainted with Femi Osofisan's works. In fact, he has written two books and edited two others on his works. The titles of the books are: *Femi Osofisan's Excursions in Drama and Literature: Interview with Femi Osofisan* (1993). *The Drama of Femi Osofisan: A Critical Perspective* (1995), *Interpretative Essays I* (1996) and *Femi Osofisan's Interpretative Essays II* (2002). As a matter of fact, Awodiya is an enthusiast of Femi Osofisan's works such that he has directed about twenty (20) of his plays which include: *Women of Owu* (2019), *Twingle-Twangle: A Twynning Tayle* (2015), *Many Colours Make the Thunder-King* (2004), *Tegonni, An African Antigone* (2003), *The Oriki of a Grasshopper* (2000), *Nkrumah Ni... African Ni!* (1996), *The Album of the Midnight Blackout* (1995), *Another Raft* (1994), *Morountodun* (1992), *Fires Burn and Die Hard* (1992), *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* (1991), *Birthdays Are Not for Dying* (1990), *The Inspector and the Hero* (1990), *Midnight Hotel* (1989), *Aringindin and the NightwatchMen* (1989), *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (1988), *Altine's*

Wrath (1988), *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1983), *Red is the Freedom Road* (1983), *No More the Wasted Breed* (1983), and *The Chattering and the Song* (1982).

4.4 Directing Aesthetics in the Performance of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* Directed by Muyiwa Awodiya

Muyiwa Awodiya directed Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* in the year 2001 for the purpose of entertainment and to generate public awareness about the need to re-structure Nigerian society. The play was staged at the University of Benin Theatre and National Theatre, Lagos. The performance which ran for two weeks had a fantastic audience turnout each night of performance. Muyiwa Awodiya chose Femi Osofisan's play because he thought that Femi Osofisan's plays are aesthetically flexible to direct, either for a poor theatre or a rich theatre. He said, "all his plays can be directed as experimental plays without music or total theatre plays or with music" (Awodiya, 2019).

According to Awodiya (2019), what attracted him to *Once Upon Four Robbers* is because of "the revolutionary structure of the play in terms of form and content. The play begins with a form of riddle in Yoruba culture and later changes into a revolution". In this process, the play changes its structure to empowering the robbers and advocating the re-construction of a country like Nigeria. Muyiwa Awodiya therefore, saw a need to direct the play because it has the tendency of positively affecting the audience. The crew members of the play were Richard Mofe Danijo, Igo Boyo, Pedro Agbonifo, Stanley Ohenhen, Ametor Adepoju, Chucks Omessah and they acted their roles perfectly. The following are the directing aesthetics in the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Muyiwa Awodiya:

Picturisation

The performance of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Muiyiwa Awodiya was rich in directing elements. This is evident in the beautiful pictures created with the actors' bodies and even some of the immovable props on stage. Awodiya used planes and levels to create pictures. In the scenes where the robbers attacked the market women, Awodiya created pictures such as diagonal, horizontal, circular, semi-circular, cluster, triangle and straight lines. For instance, when he created the cluster, he made the audience panic for a moment because the market women, having seen guns ran into one another's arms for protection. The robbers also formed another beautiful picture by surrounding the people. When they began to sing and dance, the market women formed two straight lines with small triangles in and out each of the lines. These pictures made the performance beautiful. In the scenes between the robbers and Aafa, Muiyiwa used levels to create pictures.

Movement

In the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Muiyiwa Awodiya as the director gave his actors movements that synchronised with their lines. In the trance scene of Alhaja, Awodiya gave slow pace movements from her lines - "nothing changing...only my story starting anew" to "they will rise then, go into the garden arm-in-arm, their feet in warm dust, to where, at the foot of the tree, Ogun is waiting in a gourd to be discovered" (p. 67). Awodiya then made her sit down slowly while she continued her lines. He made Hassan to move quickly to her, shouting "Alhaja! Alhaja! We're still here!..." (p. 67).

Blocking

Muiyiwa Awodiya pre-blocked the play. He brought the pre-blocking text to the students' cast members in order to note it in their script after which the director started moving the play.

Awodiya judiciously used the stage areas and appropriately too. He blocked actors with lines and movement from one part of the stage to another, USR - (Up Stage Right) to USC - (Up Stage to Centre) to DSL - (Down Stage Left) and so on.

Rhythm

A play should not lack rhythm and if a play's tempo is low, it is a minus on the performance. In the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Muiyiwa Awodiya, there was judicious use of rhythm with drumming, gunshot sounds, songs, dances and lines rendition. Awodiya was particularly interested in the achievement of rhythm in the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers* through the exploration of theatrical elements aforelisted.

Pantomimic dramatisation

Awodiya opened the performance with pantomimic dramatisation in the scene where Alamu, the leader of the gang robbers, was killed. All the market women came to the scene dramatising in a non-verbal conversation, while the military men marched to the rhythm of the drum. A non-verbal order by the Sergeant, Alamu was shot.

Planes and Levels

Awodiya used planes and levels to create emphasis in the performance. He created levels by placing characters on set at the same time on different levels. This happened in the market scenes where some buyers stood on their feet and the sellers sat on their chairs and stools. In the scene where the military men came to protect the market people and their products, there was clear and vivid use of planes and levels.

Sound

Awodiya's application of sound in the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers* was highly professional. This is because he adopted the total theatre tradition in his interpretation of the play. He also engaged some members of the actors as the chorus to create sound by singing

and drumming, most especially in the robbery scenes with the “...bo gbe’su wa’ja, ma jo lo” song and the sound of the gunshot emanating from the keyboard. Awodiya also created different sounds that complemented the happenings in the performance. This, he did bearing in mind Oscar Brockett’s classification of sound which he categorised under three groups, namely: “the actors’ voices, music and abstract sounds, and realistic noises” (Brockett cited in Ejeke, 2015, p. 2). At the Bar Beach, where the killing of Alamu took place, Awodiya created sound to depict the arrival of the military men who heralded the condemned criminal to the scene; he also created gunshot sounds.

Dance

The performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Muyiwa Awodiya was rich in dances; firstly, because there are stage instructions that state that the market women and the military officers should dance, secondly; and because Awodiya’s directorial style which is the democratic and negotiator directing styles are combined with the African total theatre idiom which gives room for dances in a stage performance. Despite the fact that the choreographers were students, they created different beautiful dances into the performance. They explored African traditional dances and movements in the performance.

Songs and Music

In the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Muiyiwa Awodiya used songs to form rhythm into the play. The play is originally replete with so many songs such as:

1. Iton mi dori o dori	An ancient tale I will tell you
O dori o dori	Tale ancient and modern
Dori olosa merin o	A tale of four armed robbers
Danon-danon akoni ni won	Dangerous highwaymen
Ajijofe apanilekun	Freebooters, source of tears
Awodi jeun epe	Like kites, eaters of accursed sacrifice

Arinko sole dahoro

Visitors who leave the house
desolate

Ran ni lo sorun apapandodo...

Dispatchers of lives to heaven!

Iton mi dori o dori

An ancient tale I will tell you

Dori olosa merin o

A tale of four armed robbers

Nijo ina ijoba jo won

The day government fire burnt them

Owo te oga gbogbo jaguda

And the gang leader was caught

Ijoba wa kehin e sokun

And his back was turned to the sea
etc (pp. 19-20)

2. Awa ti wa,

We are what we are

A o ko, a o ko!

And no apologies!

Awa ti wa,

We are what we are

A o ko, a o ko!

And no apologies!

Sasangbaku wosi wosi

We are what we are, gate crashers,

A belemu-memu

Who, uninvited, bash into parties

Consume the drinks

A belelubo jelubo

Devour the food

Ka ko won nisu

And loot the store

Kelegbe megbe

Ah, do not provoke

Samusamu la mu

We're scalpel-sharp, our gash deadly

Sasara lobe

our knives are long and needle-tipped

Gbegbere logbe

Our wounds are ghastly, ghastly

Danfo la duro!

We have no equals! (p. 25).

The above songs and many more such as “*ero oja olowo, jalolo jalolo ...*” were used in the performance of Femi Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Muyiwa Awodiya. However, despite the volume of songs in the play, Awodiya still introduced more songs into it in the process of rehearsal. In fact, he used some of the songs to interpret some of the lines and they surely enhanced the aesthetics and interpretative essence of the play. Awodiya used both African and European instrumentations to accompany the dances and movements he created into the performance.

Directorial Approach

Awodiya did not alter the story line; neither did he cut the lines of the play. He said that the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers* was challenging and very demanding, but very interesting and a worthwhile experience to undergo in terms of teaching theatre to students. He added that the production was an enjoyable and entertaining experience for him as a theatre director. Awodiya was interpretative in the process of rehearsal because his major intention was to teach his students directing skills and approaches. Muiywa Awodiya's overriding directorial tendency is realism. His directorial approach in the play *Once Upon Four Robbers* relied on the concept of 'realistic play directing' and the concept of 'total theatre directing'. The total theatre, quite naturally, accounts for the reason why Awodiya fell under the camp of eclectic directors.

Awodiya employed music, humours, ridicule and seriousness to satirise the society. This is to say the application of many songs in the play *Once Upon Four Robbers* by Muiywa Awodiya was not a mistake. Following the tradition of total theatre aesthetics, he made sure that the performance thrived on music, dances, chants, rhythm and songs. Thus, as a director, he employed the realistic, experimental and total African theatre technique, making him an eclectic director.

Directorial Style

The dexterity and dynamism of the directorial style Awodiya employed in his direction of *Once Upon Four Robbers* were unmistakably distinctive such that the performance came out alive in a manner that it was close to a real event. In the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers*, directed by Awodiya, the actors and actresses were democratically allowed to have an input into the director's concept of play directing. This style aligns with Brockett's (1974, p. 317) view about the art of "directing as psychology", which deals with how the director "works

with other human beings (cast and crew)” (Adavi, 2012, p. 158). This is not to say that Awodiya did not take charge as the artistic director of the play but it only explains that he is a director who believes in the creative sense of his actors. In Krasner’s (2008, 136) opinion, it is

terrifying, if not dangerous for the director to bore into the actor’s psyche in the name of art. Such behaviour is a cheap imitation of Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner. The consequences of a desire to imitate attributes of great teachers but without substance or originality. The results are the development of trusting actors or students, diligently trying to comply. Along the way, their dignity is compromised as well as their creativity and art.

Awodiya’s style can also be referred to as ‘negotiator style’, which *Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia* cited in Arinde (2012, p. 100) describes as “a style in which the director focuses on a more improvised and mediated form at rehearsal and creation, using the idea of the production team and actors to shape a theatrical work in quite a democratic style.” Adavi (2012, p. 158) sees a method such as Awodiya’s style of directing as what can be summed up as the “reasoning, thinking, and the imagination of a good director.”

The directorial propensity and style of production applied by Muiyiwa Awodiya tend towards realism blended with symbolism as justified in his use of props and costumes. His style is largely avant-gardism in nature and his works attempt to describe human behaviour and represent phenomena and situations as is in real life but with an infusion of realism and a little dose of symbolism. These were evidences in all the scenes of the performance which involved that the acting of the actors, costumes used, props, sets, scenery and all the theatrical elements employed.

Spectacle

The combination of lighting, costume, props, scenery, dances, music and songs in the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Muyiwa Awodiya created a beautiful and thrilling spectacle. Other elements of spectacle in the performance included freezing techniques; this was used in the scene where Aafa came on stage to ask the audience who the guilty team was - the robbers or the military men. In fact, the audience enjoyed this mise-en-scene such that they applauded the actors in their freezing positions. Drumming was another element of spectacle explored by Muyiwa Awodiya in the performance; he used drumming to interpret some of the lines while actors danced to it to the enjoyment of the audience.

4.5 Brief Biography of Sola Adeyemi

Sola Adeyemi holds Diploma and Bachelor of Arts, summa cum laude, in Theatre Arts from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Master of Arts degree in Drama and Performance Studies, University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg), South Africa, and Ph.D. in English (Theatre Studies), University of Leeds, UK. He also holds Certificate in Alternative Forum Theatre, Certificate in Set Design, Lighting and Costume, Graduate Teaching Certificate, and Post Graduate Certificate of Higher Education (PGCertHE). Adeyemi currently lectures at Goldsmiths, University of London where he is the Programme Director for Master of Arts World Theatres. His researches include world theatres and performance studies, intercultural performance culture; avant-garde performance; contemporary British theatre; postcolonial literature and African Studies; and diasporic African and black British theatre in its exploration of the politics of identity. Adeyemi is a Research Fellow at the International Research Centre, FreieUniversitaet, Berlin, Germany (2017-2018), and Fellow, Higher Education Academy (UK).

Having passed through Femi Osofisan as a student at University of Ibadan, Nigeria, in the late 1980s, Adeyemi is very familiar with Osofisan's plays. He has acted, directed; stage managed and produced many of his plays. As a matter of fact, Adeyemi wrote his Bachelor of Arts' Dissertation on Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*, his Master of Arts' Thesis was on the comparative study of the works of Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande and those of South African playwrights – Mbongeni Ngema and Gcina Mhlope; while his Doctorate Degree was on Femi Osofisan's dramaturgy.

Adeyemi has directed about a dozen of Femi Osofisan's plays. These include: *The Engagement* (Nigeria December, 1990), Lesotho (26th-27th, April, 1994), South Africa (May, 1997), *Twingle-Twangle A Twynning Tayle* Nigeria, 13th-16th June, 1996, for Femi Osofisan's 50th birthday), *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (3rd August, 1991; Command Performance for President Ibrahim Babangida, Cultural Centre, Ibadan), *Birthdays Are Not For Dying* (1996 at University of Ibadan as workshop and it was also recorded for BCOS radio but it was never broadcast), *Once Upon Four Robbers* (South Africa in 1998, in United Kingdom at University of Leeds in 2008 and at the University of Greenwich, 2013), *Women of Owu* (Loughborough University, United Kingdom, 2011), *The Oriki of a Grasshopper* in 1994 at University of Ibadan, *Who's Afraid of Solárin?* between 26th and 28th 1996 at University of Ibadan. Adeyemi said that he “remembers this production of *Who's Afraid of Solárin?* with sorrow as a few of the cast/crew are now gone – Joe Emordi (Oga Joe), Laide Adewale (Uncle Laide), Regina Inyang, Nike Bolarinwa, Bunmi Obasa). He also directed *Midnight Hotel* in September 1996 at Shell, Warri. *Fiddlers on a Midnight Lark* in January 1997 at University of Ibadan and Alliance Francaise, Lagos and so on. Adeyemi (2019) said in an interview with this researcher that “Femi Osofisan's plays can be staged anywhere, either on a formal thrust or proscenium stage, or on any open

space.” This is the reason why it was not difficult for him to stage almost a dozen of Osofisan’s plays outside Nigeria. He further said that the productions of Femi Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers* improved his understanding of the playwright’s work.

4.6 Directing Aesthetics in the Performance of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* by Sola Adeyemi

Sola Adeyemi directed *Once Upon Four Robbers* in South Africa in the year 1997 at the Winston Churchill Theatre, Pietermaritzburg, United Kingdom at University of Leeds in 2008, and at the University of Greenwich in 2013. Interestingly, the South African performance “was a commissioned play” (Adeyemi, 2019). The idea was to do a Nigerian play in South Africa, because he had directed two South African plays and the audience wanted a Nigerian play. Therefore, Adeyemi (2019) said he chose a

play that would resonate with them and would also explore ‘Nigerianness’. . . The performance which ran for almost one week- from Tuesday to Sunday, was staged in a theatre that could sit about two hundred and fifty (250) people and it had audience that filled the theatre hall on all nights except the first night.

The South African performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Sola Adeyemi will be examined in this section. The performance was located within South African socio-cultural realities. One of the captivating things about Sola Adeyemi’s direction of the play is the fact that his actors were White men and women or South Africans as the case may be. This researcher is also fascinated by the fact that Adeyemi did cross-gender casting for his cast members in the performance. He explains that:

The use of female actors ... I could say it was mainly experimental but that won’t be totally correct. Whilst the production was experimental, including the staging,

the use of female performers was expedient on availability ... Having a female student act the role of Aafa didn't really matter because, as you are aware, that role is a cipher; in its narrative essence, its representation transcends religion into the realm of – as someone recently mentioned – magical realism. Aafa is garbed as Muslim priest, an Orunmila devotee, etc. but his main role is that of a narrator, to move the story along, as in all plays by Osofisan. The role of the narrator is very important and is not defined by masculinity or femininity, otherwise, we would be asking why Aperin is a female in *Yungba-Yungba*...

Some of the cast members were: Lucky Mavundla- an ex-militant who is now sadly dead. He was part of the Ngema theatre group before fleeing to Tanzania in 1990 to fight apartheid from the frontline. He was an actor and a teacher, and he was fit for the role of Major. Oupa Jackson was Hasan. There were Xolani Mdluli, Sibusiso Dlamini, and MltheMhlokwe. “I remember the performance of Yasmeen Engel Brecht as Alhaja, especially in the trance scene. That was in South Africa. In the UK, they were students, namely: Bethan Frisby, Pooja Kaur, Raphael Kemp, Sophie-Leah Morgan, and Sara Campbell” (Adeyemi, 2019).



Picture 13: Picture showing the four robbers and Aafa in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Sola Adeyemi.
Photo Credit: Sola Adeyemi

It is noted in the course of this research and especially during our interview with Sola Adeyemi that, he as a theatre director is highly fascinated with the traditional Yoruba storytelling format in play-texts; this is why, he said “*Once Upon Four Robbers* is attractive to me” (Adeyemi, 2019). The following are the directing aesthetics in the performance:

Picturisation

Sola Adeyemi in the performances of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* created different pictures to enhance his directorial interpretation of the script. These pictures ranged from triangular shape to semi-circular to diagonal, horizontal, circular, cluster and straight lines. In the market scenes for instance, Adeyemi created multiple triangular pictures with the market

women's bodies while buying and selling their goods. Before robbery, the market women gathered in a cluster at the sight of the robbers and just when they wanted to react, the robbers started singing their hypnotising songs. The market people formed two horizontal lines which had some triangular shapes in them; this was done without any form of masking. These pictures made the performance beautiful.



Picture 14: Picture showing the appropriate use of picturisation, a robber robbing the audience in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Sola Adeyemi. Photo Credit: Sola Adeyemi



Picture 15: A picture displaying placement and arrangement of actors on stage in the performance of Femi Osofisan *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Sola Adeyemi
Photo Credit: Sola Adeyemi

Blocking

In the scene where the robbers were lamenting about government's inability to provide good jobs for the citizens, Adeyemi blocked the characters using movements and lines. He also used blocking to create pictures. For instance, Adeyemi blocked Aafa to be in the centre of the robbers while they surrounded him in a scene where they all were having a conversation as can

be seen below:



Picture 16: A photo showing a picturisation of Aafa and the robbers in an argumentative position

Photo Credit: Sola Adeyemi

Movement

Sola Adeyemi created movements that enhanced his interpretation of the play. In the scene where Angola came in with incantation, he gave Angola a slow-motioned pace such that his movement aligned with the incantations and injunctions. There was silence on stage and the military men and market women began to move in a slow manner to the stage left (SL) so as to create space for Angola whose mission they did not know.

Adisuuru-gbeje!

Atewo-ni-yagayaga-fi-gboore...

A kii moruko iku ko pani lomode

Iku, Apanisigbomogbe!

Who lurks in patience to collect a pledge

The yagayaga plant collects gifts with open palm

When you name the name of death, He pledges you long life

Death, your name is Apanisigbomogbe, I

	name you
Odaramagbo la ape koto Oku:	Death, your home of corpses is called Odaramagbo
Apeja-pada-lona-orun-alakeji!...	I call it roundly, to win A lifge back from the road to heaven (pp. 73-74).

The intention of Angola was to stop the killing of the other robbers- Alhaja, Major and Hassan. Other scenes where Sola Adeyemi creates special movements was the ‘Iton mi dori, o do ri...’ scene. In this scene, Adeyemi planted some actors in the midst of the audience and they took their lines and movements from the audience to the stage. It was a beautiful performance and the audience applauded the actors.

Planes and Levels

Planes and levels were created by Sola Adeyemi when the market women performed the song of the market for the military officers. Adeyemi arranged them using planes and levels. The picture here was beautifully arranged. Another scene where levels were emphasised was when the four robbers came to the market scene with their song. While the market women were dancing, the robbers were busy packing their loots. Their acts of bending down and packing the loots also created other pictures with levels. Levels were also brought to bear in the scene where Aafa hypnotised Hassan and Angola with Islamic injunctions and asked them to be praying in an Islamic way as can be seen in the picture below:



Picture 17: A picture showing Aafa in the centre, Angola and Hassan - right and left, praying in an Islamic way

Photo Credit: Sola Adeyemi

Pantomimic Dramatisation

Sola Adeyemi explored pantomime in the last scene where Aafa came in with the line - “A stalemate...” He came on stage to ask the audience who should be released and who should be executed. Another impressive pantomimic dramatisation feature in the performance of Femi Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Sola Adeyemi was in the Islamic prayer’s scene where Aafa, Angola and Hassan who were praying only moved to their inner rhythm as they bend and rise uniformly.



Picture 18: A photo showing Aafa and some of the robbers in a pantomimic dramatisation of the Muslim prayer

Photo Credit: Sola Adeyemi

Sound

Sola Adeyemi created sound that complemented his interpretation in the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers*. Some of these sounds included gunshot sound from the bank robbery scenes, songs from the play as rendered by some members of the actors and orchestra. Adeyemi also created sound in the two scenes where the military men appeared on stage to execute the condemned criminals. These sounds were infused into the performance to make a composite whole. As asserted by Brockett (1974, p. 106) that “sound makes its greatest contributions when it is designed as a unit and carefully integrated with the production as a whole.”

Lines rendition

Sola Adeyemi encountered some challenges in the performances of *Once Upon Four Robbers*. However, the one worthy of mention was the cast members’ inability to pronounce

Nigerian words, names and songs correctly. This is because the actors were non Nigerians (non Yorubas). However, Adeyemi overcame the challenge by making them to repeat the names of characters and their lines continuously.

Music and Songs

Sola Adeyemi used a lot of South African protest songs. Before the first lines: “What do you think they’ll do with his body?” The robbers sang the famous anti-apartheid song, *Shosholoza*!:

Shosholoza
Kulezo'ntaba
Stimelasiphume South Africa
Shosholoza
Kulezo'ntaba
Stimelasiphume South Africa
Wen'uyabaleka
Wen'uyabaleka
Kulezo 'ntaba
Stimelasiphume South Africa

A rough translation by Sola Adeyemi:

Go forward
Go forward
from those mountains
on this train from South Africa
Go forward
Go forward
You are running away
You are running away
from those mountains
on this train from South Africa

There was also the popular song composed against Verwoerd, the Apartheid Prime Minister, a name Sola Adeyemi changed to “People” in the song; *Ndodemnyama we Verwoerd*:

Naants’ indod’ emnyamaAmabantu!
Pasopanantsi’ ndodemnyama, Amabantu!’

Here is the black man, Amabantu!
Watch out, here is the black man, Amabantu!’

Adeyemi (2019) also revealed that, there was “a scene where the people and market women opened the scene after the first robbery, with a song of lament (if I recollect rightly)”:

Senzeni na? Senzeni na?
Senzeni na? Senzeni na?
What have we done? What have we done?
What have we done? What have we done?

At a point, the robbers modified the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* song to “*Umngane we Sizwe*” (We are friends of the Nation!). In his words, Adeyemi (2019) said:

we also used Mbongeni Ngema’s *S’timelaSase-Zola*, which basically translates as being on Zola’s train. Zola Budd was the popular barefooted South African athlete. Being a robber and making all the money made them feel like they are on the Zola’s train. This was used after the success of the first robbery. This was definitely suggested by Lucky Mavundla, who used to act with Ngema. And what play would not include the famous *Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika*, the South African anthem, which we used to end the play, whether the people voted for the robbers to be executed or freed. Of course, we kept some of the original songs because this was essentially a Nigerian play. However, this was a period when I was very interested in semiotics and symbolism, and therefore used the songs for the meaning they conveyed.

It is evident that Sola Adeyemi deconstructed Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* in his interpretations of the play, and in fact, this happened in all the places he directed the play. On directing aesthetics infused into the South African performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Adeyemi's focus was on acting and line delivery he was very interested in music and lighting.

Dance

Sola Adeyemi infused different energetic and suitable dances. This was made possible by his choreographer in person of Lucky Mavundla, a South African who created modern and some cultural Zulu dances. The market scenes were majorly the scenes with dances. In his UK and Greenwich performances, there were limited usages of dance except for the dances suggested by the playwright where necessary.

Directorial Approach

Sola Adeyemi did not alter the storyline. He is of the opinion that Femi Osofisan's plays offer flexibility of interpretation, allowing the director/producer to stage the plays with minimal props and scenery, but they also offer the possibilities of interpretation with large and complex scenery and costumes. Adeyemi (2019) said the most important consideration is that

Osofisan's plays require enormous directorial expertise or high technicality from the director. And then try and get your production team to understand your vision, which you should also share with the actors preferably at the first meeting. Learn the songs first and break your rehearsals into sections or segments where you sing the songs to raise morale, keep the spirit and create a focus.

The universal theatre approach common to Yoruba performance culture is the approach Sola Adeyemi employed. He allowed the actors to learn the lines and provide an interpretation based on their understanding. This was of course after several sessions of reading and discussing

the script in seminars and in tutorials. In South Africa, it was easier. The approach involved explaining the context of the play and allowing an interpretation that recuperated the experience of the actors – “made up of one or two professional actors, civil servants, students, ex-militants. Because a few of the actors were Indians and Afrikaans, it made for an interesting drama” (Adeyemi, 2019).

Generally, his directorial approach was to allow for an in depth reading and understanding of the “dramatic context – geographical, environmental, and historical, giving minimal instructions and letting the actors have freedom of movement and interpretation” (Adeyemi, 2019). He therefore, completed the process of rehearsal by occasionally stepping in to re-direct movements and line delivery for synchronicity. Adeyemi explored the theatre elements of the play through interpretation and re-interpretation of the elements and the thorough exploration of the cultural and historical context.



Picture 19: A photo showing Alhaja in her trance-like state
Photo Credit: Sola Adeyemi



Picture 20: A picture showing Alhaja in a devastating mood and state of mind, while Angola and Hassan are busy figuring out the way forward
 Photo Credit: Sola Adeyemi

Adeyemi (2019) explored what he called the Yoruba performance culture. He said:

Most performers in Yoruba performances are not specially costumes or made-up, even though more focus is on the masquerades, the arugba Osun, etc. But, what of the drummers, the Alarinjo performers, the dancers? (An aside: One of the influences on the performance was some pictures of Ajóféèbó Troupe during Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Nigeria in 1956. Apart from their puppets, members of the troupe were in their "special" costumes, to differentiate them from the audience. This is to effect quick scene changes, a format employed also by Yoruba Travelling Theatre troupes).

Directorial Style

Sola Adeyemi is largely a ‘negotiator’ director and he tends to focus on a more improvised and mediated form of rehearsal and creation, using the ideas of the production team and actors to shape a theatrical work in a quite democratic style, but based on the general structure of the play. To understand this, one has to realise that he trained as a designer and dramaturg, so he has a design of the drama which he then fills with the characters. If the actor’s interpretation does not fit in with his ideas, he chooses to discuss the context and direction with the actor.



Picture 21: Aafa, being played by a woman as a directorial style by Sola Adeyemi
Photo Credit: Sola Adeyemi

When asked whether Sola Adeyemi has evolved a directorial style, he said “my style can be described as democratic, experimental, and traditional which is usually informed by the cultural context of the drama” (Adeyemi, 2019). Adeyemi’s combination of different styles makes him an eclectic director.

Spectacle

Sola Adeyemi as the director of the performance of *Once Upon four Robbers* produced considerable spectacle through freezing, drumming, dances, movement, chants and incantations, costumes, props, scenery, music, songs, among others. Some other elements of spectacle in the performance include chants, incantation and lines delivery, among others. For instance, Sola Adeyemi also explored the freezing technique in the scene where Aafa came to the stage to ask the audience who should be executed. Most of the transitions were illuminated with lights as stage effect, playing on the meaning of colours. These made a lot of difference to the play such as heightening the entertainment level of the play. It also facilitated the understanding of the play by the audience- especially when the actors sang a song in English language.



Picture 22: A picture showcasing how Sola Adeyemi explored picturisation
Photo Credit: Sola Adeyemi

4.7 Comparative Analysis of Directing Aesthetics in Muyiwa Awodiya and Sola Adeyemi's Direction of *Once Upon Four Robbers*

The elements of spectacle used in the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Muiyiwa Awodiya were the freezing technique, drumming, dances, and music. The audience enjoyed this mise-en-scene that they applauded the actors in their freezing positions. Sola Adeyemi in the performance of the same play also explored drumming, dances and music, complemented with movement, costumes, props and scenery to create spectacle.

Muyiwa Awodiya created picturisation with some of the immovable props on stage by creating insightful planes and deeply interpretative levels. Some of the pictures he created are diagonal, horizontal, circular, semi-circular, cluster, triangle and straight lines. These pictures made the performance aesthetically appealing and artistically pleasing. Equally, Sola Adeyemi created different pictures to further enhance his directorial interpretation of the script. For example, in the scene where the market women were dancing, the robbers were busy packing their loots, and their act of being down and packing the loots created beautiful pictures with planes.

Muyiwa Awodiya as the director gave his actors movements that synchronised with their lines. A typical example is seen in the trance scene of Alhaja in which Awodiya gave her slow paces movement which she did with her lines. Likewise, Adeyemi created movement that enhanced his interpretation of the play. The scenes where Adeyemi created special movement was the 'Iton mi dori, o do ri...' scene. Awodiya pre-blocked the play before directing the play at all. He judiciously used the stage areas and appropriately too. He blocked actors with lines and movement from one part of the stage to another, USR to USC to DSL and so on. Adeyemi created a semi circular picture with Alhaja in the center; he also used levels to create pictures

between the robbers and Aafa. Awodiya and Adeyemi created rhythm in their performances of *Once Upon Four Robbers* with drumming, songs, music and lines. Both Awodiya and Adeyemi explored pantomimic dramatisation in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers*

The directorial style Awodiya employed in his direction of *Once Upon Four Robbers* were unmistakably distinctive such that the performance came out alive in a manner that it was close to a real event. Awodiya adopted the democratic directing concept which can also be referred to as the 'negotiator style.' Sola Adeyemi used a trans-cultural style to deconstruct *Once Upon Four Robbers* by infusing, amongst others directing aesthetics, South African dances into the performance of the play in South Africa and cross-gender casting for the performance. This was made possible by his choreographer in person of Lucky Mavundla, a South African who created modern and some cultural Zulu dances.

Awodiya and Adeyemi used planes and levels to create emphasis in the performance. He created levels by placing characters on set at the same time on different levels. Both directors adopted sound in their performances of *Once Upon Four Robbers*. They used gunshot sound emanating from the keyboard. The performances were also rich in dances; Adeyemi uses a trans-cultural approach to deconstruct *Once Upon Four Robbers* by infusing South African dances into the performance.

Awodiya was interpretative in the process of rehearsal because his major intention was to teach his students directing skills and approaches. Generally, the directorial approach adopted by Sola Adeyemi allowed for an in-depth reading and understanding of the dramatic context in terms of geographical, environmental, and historical interpretations. Muiyiwa Awodiya used songs and music to form rhythm into the performance. However, despite the volume of songs in

the play, Awodiya still introduced more songs in the process of rehearsal. In fact, he used some of the songs to interpret some of the lines and they surely enhanced the aesthetics and interpretative essence of the play. Awodiya used both African and European instrumentations that accompanied the dances and movements that he created into the performance.

Sola Adeyemi used a lot of South African protest songs. The robbers sang some famous anti-apartheid song such as, Shosholoz! There was also the popular song composed against Verwoerd, the apartheid Prime Minister, a name they changed to “People” in the song; “Ndodemnyama we Verwoerd”. They also sang South African National Anthem, “*Nkosi Sikelele’ iAfrika*” which they used to end the play, whether the people voted for the robbers to be executed or freed. Of course, Sola Adeyemi kept some of the original songs because this was essentially a Nigerian play. However, this was a period when the director was very interested in semiotics and symbolism, and therefore, used the songs for the meaning they conveyed.

Having inquired into the directorial features of both Muyiwa Awodiya and Sola Adeyemi in their directions of Femi Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers* with the view to identify the areas of convergence and divergence in their use of directing aesthetics, the next chapter of this study examines, comparatively, the directing aesthetics in the performances of Femi Osofisan’s *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Femi Ayeni (2011) and Ola Ifatimehin (2018).

Chapter Five

Comparative Study of Directing Aesthetics in Two Performances of Femi Osofisan's

Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest

5.1 Synopsis of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*

In *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*, Femi Osofisan chronicles the political situation of a country like Nigeria where dictatorship, oppression, tyranny and social injustice are the order of the day and a continuous clamour for true democracy remains the song of the majority populace. The play takes a new dimension from other plays of Osofisan because it only featured by female characters both young and old. *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* is set in an unnamed small village with three families namely: the 'Mayesoge group', 'Aroorotan group' and 'Jesuwon group'. These three families can be said to represent the major ethnic groups in Nigeria (Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba).

Typical of Femi Osofisan, he employs the festival medium in *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* through which he reflects the political predicaments of the village. The annual festival of Iyeneri, the priestess is in progress with splendor and pageantry which include cleansing of the land. For a decade, the three groups -The Mayesoge Girls with Osingin as the group leader, The Jeosunwon Girls with Rokeke as the group leader and The Arooroton Girls with Gbemisola as the group leader have participated without any form of disruption. However, this year's festival will be disrupted by a newly formed group called Yungba-Yungba which consists of three masked members namely: Ayoka, Dunbarin and Laboopo. According to the Yungba-Yungba girls, who are led by Ayoka, there is a need for re-structuring and re-adjustment of the annual festival. Their argument is hinged on the fact that they are denied their democratic rights.

For a decade, Iyeneri has remained in office as Chief Priestess and has changed the rules of the competition so as to hinder others from challenging her position. This revelation is unknown to many; they are oblivious of the fact that originally, the dance contest segment of the festival is to choose the succeeding Iyeneri, who will oversee the next festival and rule as the Chief Priestess for one year. This person, is thus, chosen from the group that comes first in the dance contest, preferably the leader of the group. Interestingly, Osofisan uses dance competition to replace ballot election in the play.

Therefore, Ayoka insists that Iyeneri, the current Chief Priestess who has served for ten years should relinquish power. After Ayoka's continuous and incessant plan to stop Iyeneri from making the throne her birthright, she and her group members succeed. Here, Femi Osofisan explores the revolutionary approach by the Yungba-Yungba group to conscientise other group members to revolt against the tyranny and oppression of Iyeneri. Consequently, with strong unity of purpose, they achieve their aim.

5.2 Thematic Preoccupation of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*

Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest satirises political leadership in Africa as characterised by dictatorship, corruption, nepotism, despotism, tyranny and social injustice. Ayoka and other youths, having realised the extent of their ignorance and how the old women, especially Iyeneri, have trampled on their rights, become agitated and begin a campaign against corruption, power drunkenness, and the dictatorship of their so-called leaders. *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* is not only a play about power drunkenness or bad leadership; it is also about the conscientisation of a people to be awakened to the collective fight against all forms of injustice, corruption and authoritarianism. The play is aimed at reminding the society, especially the youths that only those who are eager and passionate to repossess their right will get it back by

fighting rightly and strategically. The youths in *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* feel unrepresented in the village's political and economic affairs. They feel left behind and marginalised. Thus, Ayoka and her group members in the Yungba-Yungba group thoughtfully come up with their own plan to end the injustice against the youths and the people generally by Iyeneri, the chief priestess. In one of her explanations to other youths, Ayoka says:

Ayoka: Just listen. I say, as our foremothers danced, so did they also remember the welfare of their community. As their songs, so did they keep in mind their responsibility to others and to themselves. They never forgot that they had to find two women to represent them every year, in the assembly of the Baale. Well, as you know, Iyaloja normally sits there, as a representative of the older women. But what of the youths? Shouldn't they have a voice too? If so, who should it be? Our foremothers were much enlightened than us! Two hands, they said are needed to lift a load! Just as you need the voice of the old, you must listen to the cries of the young, for it is only that way that harmony comes to the land.

Femi Osofisan's language in *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* is simple and moving. It is laced with indigenous Yoruba language adages. Awodiya (2002, p. 5) describes the play as one in which the playwright enriches with "proverbs which are enhanced with dialogue superbly enriched with drum, movement and song, and the dance unfurled itself in a diction mellowed by innovative, metaphors as the locus of action remained indefinably African."

Femi Osofisan captures the brazen arrogation of power by using the metaphor of 'dance' to comment on the electioneering process in Nigeria. This he does by infusing his messianic impulse into the consciousness of Ayoka which makes her speak the mind of the playwright and explain the reason why dance is preferred to election. Ayoka says:

Ayoka: That was how the dance contest came about. Our foremothers, skillful dancers and musicians themselves, saw at once how fun could be mixed with serious business. They knew the tremendous amount of training, and energy, and self-discipline it takes for anyone to win our championship, and they knew these were also the qualities needed for responsible leadership! So, in place of elections, they chose the dance! And every year therefore, whoever won the contest became at the same time our political head, leader of the younger women, and companion of Iyaloja . . . For years, Iyeneri has been exploiting our ignorance, and our generosity, and our indifference! If the festival must continue, then Iyeneri must step down now! She must surrender her powers! Besides, the annual festival used to be an occasion for the selection of a new priestess. But Iyeneri has subverted that now for an occasion for the picking of husbands alone (p. 25).

Through the socialist lenses of the playwright, Ayoka further argues that:

Ayoka: It is no fancy believe me! But as you can see, all that tradition has been changed! One person has usurped the post! For ten years non-stop! Ten years! Should we continue to accept this?

Voices: No-oo-ooo! Speak now, our mothers! Is this true? You must speak! You can't keep silent any longer!

Iyaloja: They have said it all, we have nothing more to add. Except perhaps to confirm that, yes, a number of us here, of we your mothers, have been priestesses in the past, when the competition was still open! Yes indeed, it was our first training in leadership.

Voices: And we never knew! Just imagine! There we were. Dancing gleefully away, like infants!

Ayoka: That's how it used to be my friends! In the past, any one of us here could be the priestess! It was never the birthright of single woman! It was not a personal legacy of anyone, to be passed down the family line! No! it was always won at an open competition, the reward of merit! Nad that is what we insist it must be again! Or what do you say?

Voices: Yes, yes! Let's return to the open competition! (pp. 25-26)

Therefore, the vision and message of the playwright, which is to preach against oppression and tyranny by leaders in Nigeria, Africa and the World at large is brought to the fore through the continuous struggle of Ayoka and her group members in their bid to fight for their rights no matter what.

5.3 Brief Biography of Femi Ayeni

Olufemi John Ayeni hails from Ipoti-Ekiti, Ekiti State of Nigeria. He was born in Kafanchan, Kaduna State, on 1st July, 1966 to the family of Late Special Apostle (Dr.) Theophilus Olaleye Ayeni and Mrs. Elizabeth Mosunmola Ayeni. He had his Primary Education at Bakin Kogi 2, LEA Primary School, Kafanchan between the years 1971 and 1977 before proceeding to Government Day Secondary School, Kafanchan for his Secondary Education between the years 1977 and 1982. In the year 1988, Femi Ayeni obtained his first degree, combined honours in English and Performing Arts from the University of Ilorin, and his Masters of Arts degree in the same department and university in year 2017. Ayeni was the president of his secondary school's Drama Club and the Artistic Director of the Dance and Drama Club back in his NYSC days at Kano State, Nigeria in 1988/1989. Between the years 1989 and 1992, Ayeni

became the resident director of the Pioneer Playhouse (a private production outfit) in Kaduna, Kaduna State.

Before the establishment of the Department of Theatre Arts in Kaduna State College of Education, Gidanwaya in 2002, Ayeni was employed as a lecturer in the Department of English from 1992 to 2002. He later became a foundation staff member of the Department of Theatre Arts of the same institution in 2002 where he is currently teaching. His area of specialisation is Speech Production; however, he has a special passion for Directing. As a matter of fact, Ayeni has directed over thirty (30) full length stage plays which include Western and African plays till date. Ayeni is currently working on his Ph.D. dissertation in Speech Production at the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE).

Ayeni is very much acquainted with Femi Osofisan's works. He has read over ninety percent of his works including plays, collection of poems, critical essays, short stories (with the pseudonym Okinba Launko) and newspaper articles. He has also directed eight (8) of his plays to date. They include: *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1989 and 2003), *Morountodun* (1998), *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (1992 and 2013), *A Restless Run of Locusts* (1997), *Midnight Hotel* (2007), *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest* (2011) and *Tegonni (An African Antigone)* (2012), and *Women of Owu* (2013).

5.4 Directing Aesthetics in the Performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* Directed by Femi Ayeni

Femi Ayeni directed *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* for the tenth (10th) Anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Theatre Arts, Kaduna State College of Education, Gidanwaya in 2011. The performance was later taken out as exchange programme with the Department of English and Drama, Kaduna State University and Theatre Arts

Department, College of Education, Akwanga, Nassarawa State. It ran for an initial two (2) nights at the College and a night each at Kaduna State University and College of Education, Akwanga. He staged it for four (4) nights in all. However, for the purpose of this study, this researcher wishes to examine one of the performances staged at the Kaduna State College of Education, Gidanwaya because it is the only one this researcher has its video.

Ayeni said that the main attraction to Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* was because it is an all female cast play and also because of its thematic concern, which is about democracy. He encountered some challenges which ranged from raising an all-female cast and crew which he said was overwhelming, to learning the songs and dances, which he said were a bit tasking for the student actors who he referred to as amateurs, and the major one which was raising fund for the production.

During rehearsals, "the amateur actors were fantastic and a delight to work with" (Ayeni, 2019). He also said the audience did not believe that the cast members were made up of students when the production was held due to the brilliant acting and performance skills. The performance was well staged that one would think the student actors have been acting the play all their lives. In her acting as Iyeneri, Helen Lucius gave a brilliant performance as the powerful and ever pompous Chief Priestess. Salome Adaukeh who acted as Ayoka performed so brilliantly to the admiration of the audience. The actors seemed to have unlimited energy and the connection between them and the audience was commendably thrilling, he concluded.

The performance was interspersed with songs, music and dances accompanied by drumming which gave the performance a sustainable tempo and rhythm from the beginning of the performance to the end. The entire performance came out as a spectacular and beautiful

energetic one. It left the audience gasping in the ecstasy of their mind-blowing and scintillating experience.

The performance singled out every actor as a unique character who played out her role to the latter. The interpretation of the director was superb due to his eclectic directing style - combining different directing styles from different artistic directors such as Ayo Akinwale's Straight-Take-Theory, Ola Rotimi's Pressure Cooker Technique and so on, played out well in the performance. The overall outcome of the performance made this researcher conclude that Femi Ayeni is a good theatre director. Having functioned as an auteurish director and a transformational one, one would think the storyline would have been deficiently altered or marred; however, his careful and creative editing of the script to favour his Kaduna audience eventually played out well. Consequently, directing aesthetics employed by Femi Ayeni in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* are discussed below:

Picturisation

Femi Ayeni in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* created pictures that enhanced the beauty of the performance and the narrative. He also used pictures to create emphasis, planes and levels. In the scene where the three groups did their dance competition, Ayeni created beautiful pictures ranging from circular to semi circular pictures, from triangular to rectangular, and to cluster. Example of such pictures can be seen below:



Picture 23: A picture showing how Femi Ayeni explored picturisation in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*.

Photo Credit: Femi Ayeni

Blocking

Femi Ayeni blocked the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* by placing the three different groups at the centre stage right (CSR), up stage centre (USC) and centre stage left (CSL) consecutively. He also used emphasis to block Ayoka in the Orchestra Pit (Apron) when she comes on stage as an insane person. The whole stage was judiciously used with appropriate placement of characters in the right positions.



Picture 24: A picture showing how Femi Ayeni blocked Ayoka when she comes to stage as an insane person in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. Photo Credit: Femi Ayeni

For instance, the major character that has the longest lines in each scene was blocked to move from one stage area to another, relating with the actors on set and the audience when necessary.

Pantomimic dramatisation

Ayeni explored pantomime in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* in many scenes; however, the scenes that were remarkably significant in his exploration of pantomime were the rehearsal scenes by the three groups.

Planes and Levels

In the opening scene, Femi Ayeni created levels by placing some characters in the orchestra pit while other actors remained on set.



Picture 25: A picture showing how Femi Ayeni harnessed planes and levels in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*
 Photo Credit: Femi Ayeni

Rhythm

Ayeni used drums, songs, chants and music to create rhythm in the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. The rhythm raised the tempo of the play such that the audience was mesmerised by the thrilling outcome of the performance. Ayeni explored Ayo Akinwale's Straight-Take-Theory - a theory that propagates that one scene should flow into another without any visible interruption of dramatic action. This theory enhanced Ayeni's creation of rhythm into the play by bridging each scene with songs; it blended so well with the performance as one scene ran into another without a noticeable break.

Music and Songs

The performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Femi Ayeni has about six different movements which thrived on music and songs in all the scenes with variety of musical instruments to accompany them. The songs that were rendered are from the play text. Some of the songs are:

Song 1

Awa la lorin	Singing is our trademark
Aroorotan i sason obinrin	The Arooroton are no pushovers
To ba je tijo	And when it comes to dancing
E sun sehin ki e woran	Just sit back and watch us
Awa la lorin	We composed the song
Ti ologose nfi don	That the wagtail boasts with
Awa la jo titi	And such was our dancing
Mu onilu sa lo sorun!	That the drummer fled to heaven (to rest) (p. 12)

Dance

The dances in the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Femi Ayeni were enthralling and hypnotising at the same time. Nwadigwe (2012, p. 31) observes “dance performances are conventionally regarded as spectacular. The sheer movement of dancers in varying patterns and motifs is sufficient to create a thrilling experience for an audience”. Little wonder, therefore, why the audience enjoyed the performance; they applauded the scenes that were infused with dances. Sande (1997, p. 5) opines that “a successful dance concert invariably leaves the audience with feeling of having had a significant experience whether emotionally moving, visually stimulating, kinesthetically exciting or simply clever and entertaining”.



Picture 26: A picture showing how dance was explored in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Femi Ayeni.
Photo Credit: Femi Ayeni

This is true of the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Femi Ayeni. In the scene where the three groups embarked on a dancing competition, Ayeni explored different Yoruba dances ranging from bata dance to apepe dance and to bata oge dance. Ayeni (2019) confirms that he “paid particular attention to dance aesthetics in the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* as it was a major attraction to my audience.”

Sound

The performance was interpreted both in terms of sound and movement. With musical instruments, drums, voices, and songs, sound was produced to create rhythm and tempo in the performance. In the prologue scene, Ayeni used the song of ‘Wundia Meta ni mo bi...’ to create sound from the beginning:

Wundia meta ni mo bi,
Ilu, Orin ati Ijo;
Wundia meta ni mo bi,
Ijo, Ilu at'Orin!
Three daughters have I
Drum, Song and Dance
Three three daughters have I
Dance, Drum and Song!

Apart from songs, Ayeni used drums, sekere, agogo and other musical instrument to create sound into the performance.

Style of Production

Femi Ayeni's style of production in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* was symbolism; he adopted this approach because it "helps to resist the temptation of biting more than one can chew as a director in terms of cost of production" (Ayeni, 2019). In addition, he was working with a cast and crew of amateur trainees at NCE level. This style was reflected in his usage of costume, props and most especially, the set and scenery.

Directorial Approach

- i. it is highly experimental and unconventional;
- ii. it combines various directorial theories in a single production;
- iii. it is common amongst iconoclastic theatre directors;
- iv. it is a liberal theory because it can accommodate any style, theory, approach or ideal;
- v. it is multifaceted in praxis and borderless in practice.

Femi Ayeni's approach in his direction of the play was simple. He edited the lines of the play in order to suit his interpretation of the play and adapt, to an extent, for the Northern audience. As a result of this, the Eclectic theory which is the theoretical framework for this study, and which is a liberal theory because it can accommodate any style, theory, approach or ideal, becomes germane to our discourse. Also, the multifaceted, flexible and borderless nature of the theory makes it relevant to our understanding of Ayeni's directorial approach.

Although, Femi Ayeni did not alter the storyline, he employed crewmembers whose contributions to the performance resulted in an overall beauty of the play. His Assistant Director was Helen Lucius Abba, Justina Ugwuoke managed the stage and Grace Dominic handled the costume. The make-up artist was Joan K. Dauda while Victor Yako served as the technical director. Choreographer was Jude Ikeji, and business manager was Salome Adaukeh. They all contributed immensely through their various schedules to the artistic success of the production.

Directorial Style

Ayeni's directorial style was eclectic. It was a potpourri of different directing styles. This was in consideration of what was most suitable for his amateur (students' trainee) cast and crew. For instance, he dwelt mostly on the rehearsal referee of Ola Rotimi's "Pressure Cooker Technique" which Emasealu (2010, p. 121) defines as a method that "involves the striking of idiophone musical instruments loudly and in quick succession. The actor is to render his lines and fulfill blockings at a very fast pace with this bewildering clangour in the background". Ayeni also explored the "Straight-Take-Theory" of Ayo Akinwale which Akinwale (2010, p. 36) describes as a directorial style "conceived to generate an unbroken stream of dramatic action that progresses without interruption right from the beginning of the performance". These styles fascinated Ayeni and he adopted them during the rehearsals of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance*

Contest. While he used the “Pressure Cooker Technique” to check if the actors can memorise their lines by heart, he explored the “Straight Take Theory” to ensure there was no blackout throughout the performance. This is so because Okpadah (2018, p. 493) has observed that Akinwale’s ‘Straight-Take-Technique’ as a “theatre lighting style in which stage lights remain on from the beginning to the end of the performance”. In line with Okpadah’s observation is Ejue’s (2019, p. 42) description of the ‘Straight-Take-Technique’ as a style that “drums up support for a style of lighting a production in a way that negates the usual scene-to-scene blackouts.” Thus, Ayeni explored the “Pressure Cooker Technique” and ‘Straight-Take-Technique’ theories in order to win the attention of the audiences, who are predominantly Hausa because the play is of Yoruba setting embedded with largely Yoruba idioms, images, tradition and culture.

On whether he has evolved a directorial style himself, Ayeni (2019) said that he did not want to put himself in a straight jacket of a particular style of directing, especially as a teacher of directing. “I feel I need to let my students into the various directing styles and possibilities through my works. Basically, I will say my style is eclectic” which this researcher agrees to.

Another interesting style Femi Ayeni explored is the ‘Ensemble Acting Dramaturgy’. Huberman et. al. (1993, p. 498) describe ensemble acting dramaturgy as a “mutually created chemistry of acting together resulting in a commitment to serving the play and not the ego of any particular actor.” Ayeni, aware that some of his students’ cast members might come up with unprofessional flimsy excuses to exit the rehearsal even when the performance date has already been announced as typical of amateur actors, decided to adopt the ‘Ensemble Acting Dramaturgy’ which allows a director to take all his actors through the lines, movements, and

picturisations of all the characters in a play. Thus, when one actor is missing, another one steps in to take his or her role.

Spectacle

The performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Femi Ayeni was fully entrenched with spectacles such as silence, drumming, freezing technique, and lines rendition. The production was fantastic. Ayeni (2019) said that

it was the most acclaimed and best received performance in the then nine (9) year history of the Department of Theatre Arts, Kaduna State College of Education, Gidanwaya. It brought out the best in me as a director and the best in the cast and crew too.

Below are the analyses of the elements of spectacle explored in the performance:

i. Silence

Silence was not employed in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* as directed by Femi Ayeni. Rather, he used songs to bridge scenes where necessary in line with Ayo Akinwale's 'Straight-Take-Theory' which he explored as the directorial style.

ii. Freezing Technique

Ayeni explored freezing technique in his direction of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. This was done severally to punctuate the dance movements and to lay emphasis on some scenes. Ayeni also used freezing technique to create surprise for the audience when the Yungba-Yungba group unveiled their masks.

iii. Lines Rendition

Femi Ayeni used lines rendition to create spectacles as he kept asking the orchestra to repeat some of the lines rendered by the actors on stage. When Ayoka rendered her lines, the audience stood up in awe of her speech delivery. She bit every word, enunciated and pronounced words correctly. She also used the upward and downward reflections in her line delivery.

iv. Drumming

The main musical instruments used by Femi Ayeni in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* to accompany the songs were bata ensemble, gangan, Iya-Ilu, agogo (gong) and sekere. The combination of all these musical instruments produced different interesting rhythms danced to in the performance.

5.5 Brief Biography of Ola Ifatimehin

Ola Ifatimehin was born on 1st April, 1981 to the family of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bolanle Ifatimehin. He is a native of Ilafin-Isanlu, Yagba East LGA, Kogi State. He attended Central Primary School, Numan, Adamawa State Nigeria between 1985 and 1989, Government Secondary School, Numan, Adamawa State from 1993 to 1996 and later proceeded to Kaduna State Polytechnic, Zaria for his Interim Joint Matriculation Board Certificate between 1999 and 2000. In 2001, Ifatimehin gained admission to study Theatre and Performing Arts at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and graduated in 2006; he went back after his National Youth Service Corps for his Master of Arts Degree between 2009 and 2011 and his Ph.D. Degree between 2014 and 2017 in the same Department and University.

In 2012, Ifatimehin was employed as Performing Arts Officer I at the National Council for Arts and Culture, Garki Abuja and later moved to Bayero University in 2014 where he was employed as a lecturer at the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts till date. He teaches

Play Directing, Acting, Theatre Criticism, Transposition and Adaptation, Theatre Workshop and Theatre for Development at the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts, Bayero University, Kano. He is currently the Head of Department. Ifatimehin is a seasoned theatre director and he has directed many plays which include but not limited to Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* in 2005, Ahmed Yerima's *Otaelo* (2015), Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (2016), Williams Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (2018), Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* (2018), Denja Abdullahi's *Death and the King's Grey Hair* (2019) and Ola Rotimi's *Holding Talks* (2019).

5.6 Directing Aesthetics in the Performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* as Directed by Ola Ifatimehin

Ifatimehin directed Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* for the 2018 induction exercise at the Performance Studio of the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts, Bayero University Kano, Nigeria. Ifatimehin (2019) said he was attracted to the play- *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* because the playwright already "makes it easily accessible for stage productions". The provision of songs and detailed stage directions gave him more courage to direct the play. In an interview section with the director, Ifatimehin (2019) said that Femi Osofisan's "imagery and revolutionary aesthetics appeal most to him." Therefore, the following are the directing aesthetic elements embedded in the performance of Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Ola Ifatimehin:

Picturisation

Ifatimehin creatively employed picturisation in his direction of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. The pictures improved the unfolding of events. He explored the popular triangular picture by using a group of people divided into three clusters to form a triangle in

some scenes. Also, Ifatimehin created three big circles from the three groups of dancers representing the Aroorotan, Mayesoge and Jeosuwon groups in the first scene. His use of semi-circular picture is also highly commendable. There were other scenes where he created clusters, diagonal pictures and rectangular pictures. An example of picturisation in the performance can be seen in the picture below:



Picture 27: A picture showing the circular pattern of picturisation in the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Ola Ifatimehin
Photo Credit: Ola Ifatimehin.

Blocking

The first scene opened in a playground with three circles of community members on down stage right (DSR), down stage centre (DSC) and down stage left (DSL) seated and swaying while singing. A semi-circular picture was created with the actor's bodies at the Up Stage Centre (USC) while the storyteller was seen seated in front of them; she was also swaying to the rhythm of the drum as she narrated her story. They all moved to the song of 'Alo o mureke mureke/4x,

mo gbe alo mi de o, alo o mureke mureke’ as adapted by Ifatimehin into the performance. The orchestra sang in a call and response mode.

Movement

Ola Ifatimehin created movements with the actors’ lines. The movement corresponded with the lines while it enhanced the blocking of the play. The different movements created also improved his interpretation of the play. The director used some actors’ movements to build tempo and create different moods. Some of the movements created aided the director’s placement of actors to form pictures.

Pantomimic Dramatisation

Ola Ifatimehin employed pantomime in his direction of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. Some of the scenes where pantomimic dramatisation came to play were the festival scene and the dancing contest scene. The Priestesses came out from the backstage without saying a word; yet, serious acting and dramatic actions were on in a beautiful and creative manner. In one of the scenes, the pantomimic actions were complemented with the chant below:

Irunmole igbo ati iwin oko
Eyin te modo son rere
Eyin to fohun tooro segberun ede
E ma wa. E ma bo sasa...

Spirits of the forest and farmland
Those that make the river run
Those we call with a single note
Those with many syllables
Gather, gather...

Rhythm

In the performance of Femi Osofisan’s *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*, Ola Ifatimehin created rhythm that sustained the tempo of the play from the beginning to the end. He used drums to create rhythm; the play was saturated with different songs and music. Chanting

also rented some scenes and created a beautiful flow of enjambment. The actors' lines synchronised with their actions.

Planes and Levels

Ola Ifatimehin's use of planes and level was commendably ingenious. A scene worthy of mention is the scene where Iyeneri appeared on stage and she was conspicuously emphasised by means of level. This was intentionally done by the director in order to show to the audience how much of power she wields and how much of fear she creates in the mind of the people. While she stood tall at Up Stage Centre, other people bowed down in reference of her. Thus, she became more emphasised. With the use of emphasis, Ifatimehin created levels in the performance; the Yungba-Yungba groups were also emphasised when they came in masks and others were scared. The Mayesoge's group members squatted while each member of the Aroorotan group knelt on one leg each, the Jeosuwon group members were simply directed to bend down a little. They stayed in these positions for about seven seconds with the ingenious use of the freezing technique, thereby causing a breath-taking and beautiful picture to behold.



Picture 28: A picture showing planes in Ola Ifatimehin's direction of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*

Photo Credit: Ola Ifatimehin

Dance

Hairat Yusuf, one of the lecturers in the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts, Bayero University, Kano choreographed the dances in the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. Yusuf infused what she referred to as 'creative dances' into the performance. She also created Yoruba rhythm from the Konga drum and agogo (gong) that were made available to her. Yusuf also created dance steps that ranged from bata oge to contemporary Yoruba dances. In the scene where the three families engage in dance contest, Yusuf created contemporary dance movements combined with some bata oge to showcase the situation in the scene. In the last scene, the two dancers that came to celebrate their freedom from the grip of Iyeneri did a choreographed movement of bata dance.

Yusuf explored Yoruba contemporary dance that has to do with standing posture in the tableaux scene. She created images through these dances. She changed some Yoruba traditional dance steps to create another form of dance. This made her creation a hybrid of existing dances from the Yoruba traditional and contemporary dances, hence eclectic nature the dance. She also explored bata dance in the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* because the performance was staged for predominantly Hausa audience and she wanted them to be familiar with the play since bata dance is believed to be “one of the most popular dances among the Yoruba speaking people of the Western regions of Nigeria, which was derived from the set of drums used for the dance” (Itsewah, 2014, p. 151). The bata dance added colour and beauty to the play. The audience seemed to understand the language of the dances as they were moving to the rhythm of the drumming right on their seats. The choreographer blended the dances well to the scenes.



Picture 29: A picture showing the proper use of dance in the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Ola Ifatimehin
Photo Credit: Ola Ifatimehin.



Picture 30: Picture showing dances steps from some of the dancers in Ola Ifatimehin's direction of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*
Photo Credit: Ola Ifatimehin.

Music and Songs

The performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Ola Ifatimehin was periodically interjected with music and songs. As a matter of fact, the first scene was replete with songs and chants with the accompaniments of drumming, agogo and sekere. The infusion of the songs and music created by the music director, Nihinlola Banjo, to complement those in the play text made the whole performance look like a musical theatre. The following were examples of the songs rendered by chorus in the performance:

(1) Ajekun iya ni o je
Eni ti o to ni na
To n dena deni
Ajekun iya ni o je (from the director)

(2) Arifin ni tabi edi ni
Tegbe ni tabi egba ni
Oke kan ga joke
Abeni ta nba wi diti?

Is it insult or stupidity?
Are you cursed or charmed?
Some hills towers above others
And surely, you can't be deaf?

3 Eni ti o gba pe
A ju won lo
Ko lo ko si salanga!

Whoever will not admit
Our superiority
Should jump into the latrine

4. Eyin Jeosunwon
Eyin ko la mba wi?
Eni gele wa ba ba mu
Ko ya we mori

You Jeosunwon
Are you listening or not?
Whoever our head-tie fits
Should promptly wear it

5. Eni ti o gba pe
A ju won lo
Ko lo ko si salanga

Whoever will not admit
Our superiority
Should jump into the latrine (p. 61)

Sound

The blending of sound and sound effect through the use of drums, sekere, agogo and actors' voices by Ola Ifatimehin created a special effect that made the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* a unique one. The total package of the play gave a thrilling and scintillating experience which can be likened to Ejeke's (2015, p. 3) description of theatrical performance that is well packaged with sound effects. He asserts that "the blending of sound, sound effects and visual action give a more complete theatrical experience that represents life more realistically, more effectively and more dramatically."

Directorial Approach

Ola Ifatimehin's directorial approach took the form of workshop style. This is because he worked with students who were amateurs and needed tutelage in the art of theatre production. According to him, he stated that his "productions are deconstructive. He sought the silences and ironies in interpretation for more relevance and context appropriateness" (Ifatimehin, 2019). Ifatimehin altered few lines and movements in the play script in the process of interpretation. His directorial approach to *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* is largely Brechtian. This is because he explored the epic nuances of communality of performance: narrator, songs and

dances, which appeal to reasoning, minimal emotiveness and so on to simply play out societal realities. His vision was to enact the story through music and dance with no reliance on set.

Directorial Style

Ola Ifatimehin in his direction of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* adopted Brechtian approach and Jerzy Grotowski's poor theatre. Krasner (2008, p. 366) defines poor theatre as a concept that "strips the theatre of its showiness, emphasizing, instead the actor's voice and body as theatre's essential features ... meaning the eradication of the actor's bourgeois mannerism and clichés." The actors wore T-shirts and black trousers as costumes in all the scenes. Interestingly, the performance, despite the absence of colourful costumes, make-up, props and other elements of the theatre, still came out beautifully. This is because Ifatimehin worked heavily on other elements of directing to bring out the beauty of the play. This explains why Krasner (2008, p. 369) avers convincingly that

by gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion.

Ifatimehin's adoption of Jerzy Grotowsky's Poor Theatre and Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre could be said to be contradictory because Brechtian styles require the use of costumes, make-up and other theatrical elements whereas, Grotowsky's Poor Theatre advocates for minimal or no theatrical technicalities. However, Ifatimehin skillfully blended the two theories by borrowing the use of songs, drumming and narration techniques from Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre while his application of costumes is borrowed from Jerzy Grotowsky's Poor Theatre. When asked

whether he had evolved a directorial style, Ifatimehin said he was simply adaptive to the requirements of doing the production.

Spectacle

Ola Ifatimehin explores spectacle in the direction of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*, the most interesting aspect of which is the freezing technique and punctuation of the body each time the different groups danced. The scene of the Yungba-Yugba group dance received a huge applause from the audience. The following are the elements of spectacle used in the performance:

i. Silence

Ifatimehin created silence by stopping the drumming and music intermittently in some scenes. This was used to punctuate the dancers' movements and to lay emphasis on some important dramatic actions.

ii. Colour

The use of colour in the performance of *Yungba-yungba and the Dance Contest* was pronounced, this is because the T-shirts and trousers worn by the actors were differentiated by colours - black, white and red.

iii. Drumming

Ifatimehin adopted Brechtian epic theatre technique. His use of drumming to accompany the dances in the play was ingenious in spite of the limited musical instruments used, namely Konga drums, gong and sekere.

5.7 Comparative Analysis of Directing Aesthetics in Ola Ifatimehin and Femi Ayeni's Directions of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*

On the comparative plane, the creative ingenuity and directorial dexterity of Ola Ifatimehin and Femi Ayeni cannot be overemphasised. Similarly, the areas of intersection of these two directors cannot be done away with in terms of their direction of Femi Osofisan's plays, especially *Yugba-Yugba and the Dance Contest*.

To begin with, Femi Ayeni created pictures that enhanced the beauty of the performance and in enacting the story. He also used pictures to create emphasis, planes and levels. Ola Ifatimehin also explored the popular triangular picture. His use of semi-circular picture is also highly commendable. He also created clusters, diagonal pictures and rectangular pictures.

Femi Ayeni gave blockings by using the stage judiciously with appropriate placement of characters in the right positions. Ifatimehin also ingeniously and skillfully did the blocking of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. Femi Ayeni synchronised movements and lines to create characters' mood and to enhance the telling of the story. Ola Ifatimehin also created movement that corresponded with the actors' lines while it also enhanced the blocking of the play.

Note worthily, Femi Ayeni created enthralling and hypnotising dance steps in the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. Ayeni explored different Yoruba dances ranging from bata dance to apepe dance and to bata oge dance. Ola Ifatimehin employed Hairat Yusuf who infused different dances into the performance. *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* in performance, directed by Femi Ayeni had about six different movements which thrived on music and songs in all the scenes with variety of musical instruments to accompany them. Ola Ifatimehin's performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* was periodically interjected with music and songs. Femi Ayeni created levels by placing some characters in the

orchestra pit while other actors remained on set in the opening scene. Ola Ifatimehin also explored planes and levels in his performance.

Ola Rotimi's "Pressure Cooker Technique", Ayo Akinwale's "Straight-Take-Theory" and the 'Ensemble Acting Dramaturgy' were adopted by Femi Ayeni in his direction of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. Conversely, Ifatimehin adopted the Jerzy Grotowski's poor theatre. Ayeni used drums, songs, chants and music to build rhythm into the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. The rhythm created raised the tempo of the play, the Straight-Take-Theory he adopted also enhanced his creation of rhythm into the play by bridging each scene with songs. Ola Ifatimehin also used drums, songs, music, chants to create rhythm that sustained the tempo of the play from the beginning to the end.

Femi Ayeni deconstructed the play-text by editing the lines of the play in order to suit his directorial interpretation of the play. His decision to edit the play-text was influenced, among other factors, by the Northern audience for whom the play was to be staged. Ola Ifatimehin's directorial approach in *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* is largely Brechtian. Ayeni interpreted the performance in terms of both sound and movement. He also created sound rhythm and tempo with musical instruments, drums, voices, and songs in the performance. Ola Ifatimehin blended sound drums, sekere, agogo and actors' voices to create a special sound effect that made the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* unique.

The performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Femi Ayeni was fully entrenched with spectacles such as silence, drumming, freezing technique, and lines rendition. Ola Ifatimehin also explored spectacle in the direction of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*, the most interesting aspect of which was the freezing technique and punctuation of the body each time the different groups danced.

Femi Ayeni explored pantomime in the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* in the rehearsal scenes by the three groups. Ola Ifatimehin also employed pantomime in his direction of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*. Some of the scenes where pantomimic dramatisation came to play were the festival scene and the dancing contest scene. The Priestesses came out from the backstage without saying a word; yet, serious acting and dramatic actions were on in a beautiful and creative manner.

The following chapter contains the concluding part of this study, in which the findings of the study will be discussed, while recommendations and suggestions will be made for further critical researchers in related fields.

Chapter Six

Summary, Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 Summary

The major assignment this research carried out was the examination of directing aesthetics in the performances of Femi Osofisan's selected plays - *Women of Owu* (2006), *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980) and *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* (2012); with critical comparative analyses of the artistic directions of *Women of Owu* by Bakare, Rasaki Ojo (2013) and Tunde Awosanmi (2016), *Once Upon Four Robbers* by Muyiwa Awodiya (1983) and Sola Adeyemi (1997), and *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* by Femi Ayeni (2011) and Ola Ifatimehin (2018). This was done in relation to how the theatre directors employed directing aesthetics in the performances during the process of their stage interpretation; what their directorial approaches were; what their directorial styles were; and, what directorial concepts and the theories they employed.

Aesthetics has close affinity with style; hence, it differs from person to person and from play director to play director. This work is conceptualised to identify these unique traits in the different productions and found that their application made each production a uniquely outstanding creative piece. The study defined directing aesthetics as the articulation, application and communication of perceived events or scenarios through the use of specific elements of directing in the process of directing and interpreting a play for the stage for consumption by the audience.

These directing aesthetics are listed as picturisation, blocking, movement, rhythm, music and songs, planes and levels, spectacle, sound, pantomimic dramatisation, directorial concept, directorial style, directorial approach and so on. Thus, the essence of directing aesthetics in a performance is to create a magnetic mise-en-scene such that the audience are mesmerised and

enthralled in awe of the beauty of the performance. A performance rich in directing aesthetics succeeds in gluing the audience to their seats no matter the length of the play.

The study has also been able to ascertain the directorial possibilities to Femi Osofisan's plays and also examined the performance aesthetics of Femi Osofisan's plays in production. In the course of the research, we were also able to examine the thematic ideological and performance factors that influenced the plays of Femi Osofisan and the directing aesthetics of the performances of his selected plays for validation of the quality of the performances. This study also has been able to document the performances of the selected plays and the directorial styles and approaches of the selected directors.

Thus, this research work has discussed directing aesthetics applied in directing selected Femi Osofisan's by six different Nigerian theatre directors. This work is conceptualised to identify these unique traits in the different productions and found that their application made each production a uniquely outstanding creative piece.

6.2 Conclusion

This study has been able to examine six performances of Femi Osofisan's plays that spanned through two centuries – from 1983 to 2018. In doing this, we conclude that directorial styles, approaches, concepts and techniques of Nigerian theatre directors have evolved due to the constantly growing trends and dynamism of the Nigerian nation. Consequently, theatre directors in the 1980s and 1990s (representing the first century) adhered strictly to existing conventional directorial styles and approaches, while theatre directors from the 2000s (representing the second century) experimented mostly with the deconstruction of play-texts as well as the experimentation of the same, combining different directorial styles and approaches in their theatrical productions - making them eclectic directors.

In an attempt to study the directing aesthetics in the performances of Femi Osofisan's plays, this study has carried out a comparative analysis of three of Osofisan's plays as directed by six different Nigerian directors, one play to two directors. The performances of *Women of Owu*, *Once Upon Four Robbers* and *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* were selected for analyses and directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki, Tunde Awosanmi, Muyiwa Awodiya, Sola Adeyemi, Femi Ayeni and Ola Ifatimehin respectively. The issues of principles, rules and guidelines of directing have been considered to be of paramount importance in the desire to achieve an aesthetically pleasurable performance

It is worthy of mention that the six performances examined in this study were performed for different audiences of different socio-cultural backgrounds, and staged at different cultural locations. Coincidentally, the two performances of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Femi Ayeni and Ola Ifatimehin were staged at the Northern parts of Nigeria – Kaduna, Kaduna State and Kano, Kano State respectively. Conversely, while the performance of *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Sola Adeyemi was staged outside Nigeria in three different locations (one in South Africa, and two others in the United Kingdom), the second performance of the play directed by Muyiwa Awodiya was staged in Benin City, Nigeria. In the same vein, the two performances of *Women of Owu* directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki and Tunde Awosanmi were staged in Nigeria, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State and Ibadan, Oyo State respectively.

The study concluded that play directors should endeavour to be creative as much as they are interpretative. They should also ensure the appropriate application of these directing aesthetics in their works. A director that does not pay attention to directing aesthetics listed above while directing any play is a bad director. Such performances are bad productions and should have been left for good directors to handle. Hence, directing aesthetics are crucial to stage

plays because they help in the interpretation of the play and enhance the overall beauty of the performance. Therefore, it is not enough for the director to be interpretative, he must also be creative. While directing the play-script, he or she may need to craft his own work of art using the script as a basis.

The study concluded that the directorial approaches and styles of the six selected directors thrived on the trajectories of the Nigerian, didactic and mythical worlds of the selected play-texts and this informed the directorial aesthetics inherent in the selected performances.

6.3 Findings and Recommendations

It is revealed in this study that, Femi Osofisan's selected plays are embedded with dramatic and theatrical elements such that enhance good directorial interpretation which we refer to as textual directing aesthetics. Also, there was judicious use of directing aesthetic elements in the selected plays of Femi Osofisan in performances as directed by the selected Nigerian Theatre directors. Consequently, the directing aesthetic elements employed in the selected performances were able to address and critique societal problem raised in the plays. Furthermore, the directorial styles and approaches of the selected directors enhanced the quality of their performances such that the performances came out superlative, exceptional and outstanding. Importantly as well, the application of directing aesthetics in stage plays and performances gives meaning and purpose to such plays. Equally, composite pictures were created in the selected performances through the application of blocking as well as directing elements.

It is revealed that directing aesthetics such as picturisation, blocking, rhythm, sound, music and songs, dance, planes, levels, spectacle, pantomimic dramatisation, choreographic directing, silence, freezing, chants, drumming and so on. The study also revealed that that the

production of any play cannot be done without the afore-listed performance aesthetics such as the costumes, make-up, mise-en-scene, props, songs, light, accessories, and so on.

It is observed that the performances of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki in 2013 is different from that of Tunde Awosanmi which he directed in 2016. Of significance is the type of audiences both performances had, while Bakare's performance was attended by the audience that are not knowledgeable about theatre. Awosanmi's audience were theatre scholars and critics. Our findings in the two performances of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* as directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki and Tunde Awosanmi are that:

	Bakare, Ojo Rasaki	Tunde Awosanmi
1	Bakare functioned more as an auteurish director in the performance of <i>Women of Owu</i> in that he altered the sequence of events in the play and made the invisible characters visible.	Tunde Awosanmi functioned as a creative and translator director by exploring the traditional aesthetics to discover the meaning of Opo-ile in Yoruba traditional culture and wove his interpretation of the play revolved around the symbolic representation of the pillar. He romanced the African cultural instrumentation and employs the story telling narrative technique in his approach to play directing.
2	Bakare, Ojo Rasaki (2013) and Tunde Awosanmi (2016) were different in content and presentation. The only similarity is that the two directors directed the same play-script; and	Tunde Awosanmi applied directing elements such as rhythm through the use of the pillars he created into the performance, music and songs, dances, picturisation, blocking, spectacles and so on. Tunde Awosanmi in play directing digs

		deep into the indigenous philosophies of Yoruba culture in his approach.
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Table 1: Comparative analyses of the direction of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki and Tunde Awosanmi.

It is also revealed that the performances of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* as directed by Muiyiwa Awodiya in 1983 and Sola Adeyemi in 1997 are different in context and contents. This is because of the differences in their choice of directorial styles and approaches. Therefore, our findings in the two performances as directed by Muiyiwa Awodiya and Sola Adeyemi are that:

	Muyiwa Awodiya	Sola Adeyemi
1	Awodiya functioned as a democratic director, which is also known as the 'negotiator style' in the performance of <i>Once Upon Four Robbers</i> .	Adeyemi functioned as an auteurish director by editing the lines of the play-text and changing the most of the setting's requirements and location of the play from the Yoruba setting to South African setting.
2	Muyiwa Awodiya functioned as a democratic director, which is also known as the 'negotiator style'.	Adeyemi functioned as an auteurish director by editing the lines of the play-text and changing the most of the setting's requirements and location of the play.
3	Sola Adeyemi employed the creative and auteurish directorial approach.	Awodiya employed the democratic directing approach.
4	Muyiwa Awodiya did not alter the lines in the play nor did he change any	Sola Adeyemi deconstructed Femi Osofisan's <i>Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest</i> by

	scenes. He adhered strictly to Osofisan's instructions in the play.	infusing South African songs in the performance while he converted the market scene in the play to banking hall.
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Table 2: Comparative analyses of the direction of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* by Muyiwa Awodiya and Sola Adeyemi.

In the performance of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Femi Ayeni (2011) and Ola Ifatimehin (2018), it has come to the fore that the performances, due to their different choices of directorial styles and approaches, were different in structures and contents. It is also observed in the course of this study that the performance of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Ola Ifatimehin was an Induction Play. When asked why a lecturer would decide to direct an induction play, Yusuf (2019) responded that "the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts, Bayero University, Kano is a new Department and the Director could not afford to allow amateur students to handle the Induction Play". Our findings in the two performances of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by Ola Ifatimehin and Femi Ayeni are that:

	Femi Ayeni	Ola Ifatimehin
1	Femi Ayeni functioned as an eclectic director by exploring multiple directing styles and theories ranging from Ola Rotimi's pressure cooker (in rehearsal) to Ayo Akinwale's 'Straight-Take-Theory' and "Ensemble Acting Dramaturgy".	Ifatimehin functioned as an experimentalist director and a workshop's resource personnel director. Talking about Ifatimehin as an experimentalist director, Yusuf (2019) revealed that "Ifatimehin would give a male actor a female role for the purpose of experimentation". This, we believe, is ingenious in that he believes

		every actor should be able to act any role no matter the gender.
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Table 3: Comparative analyses of the direction of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* by Femi Ayeni and Ola Ifatimehin.

It has also come to the fore that no matter how two different directors try to imitate or emulate each other, they cannot achieve the same result in their performances. In the same vein, no two productions of the same play director are the same. This is to say that a play performance has its unique characteristics and features and can never be the same with the same performance by another theatre director who directed the same play. Hence, the differences in the two performances of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* (2006) as discussed in this study directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki and Tunde Awosanmi are unique and different in directorial approaches, styles, concepts, interpretations and all the elements of directing aesthetics. The performances of *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* as directed by Ola Ifatimehin and Tunde Ayeni were both successful to the satisfaction of the directors and their audiences. However, while Femi Ayeni felt that he needed to build on the aesthetics of dance in order get the full attention of his audience, Ifatimehin's choreographer needed to be extra conscious of the type of dance to put on stage because of the sensitivity of the Bayero University's audience. The performances of *Once Upon Four Robbers* directed by Muyiwa Awodiya and Sola Adeyemi were also very successful in their different locations.

In summary, the findings of this study, among others, are that the:

- (i) effectiveness of directing aesthetics in the selected performances of Femi Osofisan's plays was determined by the audience's reactions, theatre designers, performance critics and scholars;

- (ii) prevalent directing aesthetics such as picturisation, blockings, mise-en-scene, rhythmic beat, silence and so on, were theatricalised in the selected performances of Femi Osofisan's plays;
- (iii) features of textual directing in the selected plays of Femi Osofisan such as dialogue, imagery, conflict, language, plot structure and so on, shared remarkable relationship with some of the directors' styles and approaches and enhanced their interpretations;
- (iv) selected directors' creative inventions in the six performances such as theatrical space animation, trans-cultural aesthetics, cross-gender casting, visibility of the invisible, democratic spacing and so on, could be relevant to Nigerian theatre directors in their directorial works; and
- (v) creatively invented styles and approaches of the six directors studied have been adjudged successful and useful to theatre directors in Nigeria.

Having carried out research on the elements of directing aesthetics, and having done critical comparative analyses on six different performances of three of Femi Osofisan's plays directed by six directors, this study recommends the following:

- (i) theatre directors should consider plays that are rich in textual directing aesthetics for artistic direction and ensure their application in the creative enterprise of play directing;
- (ii) play directors should at the point of directing plays, bear in mind that actors are not just to be placed on stage but arranged pictorially with lines and movement being built into a certain rhythm that flows and enhances the meaning of the play in interpretation;
- (iii) play directors should ensure the appropriate application of directing elements in the process of directing by endeavouring to be creative as much as being interpretative;

- (iv) a would-be-director of Osofisan's plays must be versatile in the theatre, creative and ready to break the rules of conventional theatre as much as understand Osofisan's dramaturgy and ideology;
- (v) Tunde Awosanmi's directorial style in his direction of *Women of Owu* which he tagged the 'Traditional Directorial Aesthetics' is recommended for would-be theatre directors of Femi Osofisan's play because of the effectiveness of the style in aiding the understanding and interpretation of Osofisan's dramaturgy and ideology;
- (vi) Sola Adeyemi's directorial style in his direction of *Once Upon of Four Robbers* was hinged on the deconstructionist directorial approach which enabled him to adopt the poetics of trans-culturalism and cross-gender casting. In light of the above, his directorial style is recommended to Nigerian and especially, foreign theatre directors of Femi Osofisan's plays due to its flexibility and easy adaptability to foreign cultures and environments;
- (vii) due to the importance of the art of play directing in the theatre and the society at large, play directing should not only be a male-dominated area in Nigeria. Women are therefore, encouraged to take up the challenge of the art of play directing. Similarly, there are many female playwrights already and other areas such as dramatic theory and criticism, costume and make-up, children theatre, theatre for development and so on are already flooded by women (and the men alike) in the Nigerian theatre space, unlike in play directing. This study is therefore, of the opinion and recommends that play directing could be a good tool in the propagation of women-centered ideologies, philosophies and dramaturgies in the hands of female theatre directors;

- (viii) performance criticism in the area of play directing should be taken with more rigour and professionalism in Nigeria and African theatre practices;
- (ix) directing scholars in Nigeria and African should endeavour to write more books in the area of play directing due to the paucity of books in the field; and
- (x) theatre directors should endeavour to document their productions as it can aid the teaching of play directing theories and techniques, styles and approaches to directing students and budding directors and researchers.
- (xi) play directors should endeavour to watch performances directed by other theatre directors in Nigerian, African and the World theatre at large with critical consciousness of critiquing and also learning from it.

Importantly, the study recommended that play directors should adopt the theoretical and practical frameworks used by the six selected directors. This is because the identified frameworks were determined by culture, environment, performance motif and the audience.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

This researcher is of the opinion that there are researchers who are or might want to explore related studies and aspects such as: A Study of Proper Application of Costume and Make-Up in the selected Performances of Femi Osofisan's Plays, Performance Analysis of Femi Osofisan's Plays in Production, A Study of Directorial Style and Approaches in the works of Selected Nigerian Theatre Directors, A Study of Textual Directing in Selected Nigerian Plays, and so on. We consider these topics and more, related to our study, and we also see them as further study areas.

It is noted that directing critics are mostly on the lookout for directing aesthetics in any stage play performance they are examining or critiquing. Directing Aesthetics as a research area

can therefore, be expanded in a further research by directing scholars. For instance, it can be examined in the performances of other Nigerian playwrights such as Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Zulu Sofola, Olu Obafemi, Ayo Akinwale, Ahmed Yerima, AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye, Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh, and so on. Directing aesthetics can also be studied in the works of theatre directors outside Nigeria. This will enhance scholarship in the area of play directing in Nigeria, Africa and the world at large.

It is based on the above premise that we have, in this study, made some suggestions that can be of assistance to any scholar in the field of Play Directing and other areas of the Theatre who might want to embark on such researches. Some of the suggestions are listed below:

A would-be researcher on directing aesthetics in the performances of Femi Osofisan should be vast in the knowledge of Osofisan's ideology, writing styles, language and so on. For instance, Osofisan usually infuses folktales such as fables, riddles, folklores in his plays irrespective of the flow of the story he is telling. In most cases, these folktales enhance the telling of the stories as they will have relevance to the original story in the play. A typical example can be found in his *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* where he tells the story of the hand and limbs. His aim in the play is to use the folk story to preach how "we each have our roles to perform and must walk the road of destiny; men must learn to live unequal as they are born, for rebellion is brief and vain – they last, who do not complain" (p. 44). Sometimes, Osofisan can be deeply proverbial or metaphorical in his writing approach, like in the case of *Many Colours Make the Thunder-King*, where he creates the characters of Ants, Forests, River, Mountain, and so on. It is therefore, suggested that a would-be director of Osofisan's plays must be acquainted with his writing styles so as to know how to interpret without confusion and mis-interpretation, such plays.

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Interviews

An email interview with Muyiwa Awodiya on the 8th of February 2019.

A phone interview with Tunde Awosanmi on the 16th of January, 2018.

A one-on-one interview with Bakare, Ojo Rasaki on the 12th of February, 2018 in his home of Ado-Ekiti.

A phone and email interview with Femi Ayeni on the 12th of September, 2019.

An email interview with Sola Adeyemi on the 16th of April 2019

A one-on-one interview with Alex Asigbo on the 7th of January 2020

A phone interview with Yemi Atanda on the 6th of January, 2020

A phone interview session with Emeka Emelobe on the 15th of October, 2019.

A phone and email interview with Ola Ifatimehin on the 3rd of July, 2019.

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Appendice I

Excerpt of an Interview of Bakare, Ojo Rasaki Conducted by the Researcher on his Direction of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* on 16th January, 2018.

Researcher: My name is Abiola Olubunmi, Adumati. I am a Ph.D. student at the Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. I am working on the topic- **A Study of Directing Aesthetics in Selected Performances of Femi Osofisan's Plays.** I have done the first stage of the research. The next stage is the analyses of selected performances of Femi Osofisan's plays as directed by selected theatre directors. I am aware that you have directed one (some) of Femi Osofisan's plays. Please, I will like you to share your experience with me.

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: My name is Bakare, Ojo Rasaki.

Researcher: Femi Osofisan is a popular playwright in Nigeria and beyond, having written, published and directed many of his plays. How acquainted are you with his works?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: I am well acquainted with Femi Osofisan's plays

Researcher: You said you have directed *Women of Owu*, what interested you to direct this play in particular?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: I directed *Women of Owu* as a command performance for the first Ekiti-State Festival of Arts and Culture (EKIFEST) in 2013. I chose the play because the issue of "Let us treat the woman well" was in the front border around Ekiti State then. The wife of the then Governor, Mrs. Fayemi, is a renowned activist in women matter. She sponsored the play. She wanted me to do a play that will treat the plight of women. When you look at *Women of Owu*, the plights of the women within the

context of that war was very relevant at that that period. I felt it would arouse the interest of the government of the day because that government was pro-women.

Researcher: Femi Osofisan being the reason we are doing this, what do you think about the language of the play? How do you consider the language of Femi Osofisan?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: Osofisan uses language to build characterization, his language is usually part of his works, he uses the language that is simple for his audience to understand, he even sometimes bend over backward to use Yorubaenglish. His language is part of the aesthetics because you will love what you are hearing, it will entertain you and you will want to hear more. Osofisan also loves folktales, he is a poet and a storyteller. Sometimes, he leaves the dramatic dialogue of the moment and goes back to folktale to bring out a moral story that is relevant to what is happening at the moment. He deconstruct our myth, he doesn't believe that African religiosity is true. Every society has its spiritual foundation and they are valid, that's the only thing in Osofisan's creativity that I don't agree with. Marxian aesthetics condemns glorification of the supernatural, you can see even the demystification of Anluebua in *Women of Owu*.

Researcher: Did you alter the storyline? Did you cut Osofisan's lines? If yes, why?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: I changed forty percent of the content of the play and made radical changes to it. Like I said earlier on, *Women of Owu* is one of Osofisan's few works that will naturally be boring on stage if a director decides to be interpretative. So, I refused to be interpretative which mean I was not loyal to the script. I decided to be creative. In that situation, I was functioning as a creative director, not as an interpretative director. Of course, it was a festival environment, and I wanted a play

that will be interesting to my audience. I didn't want a boring play on stage. The first thing I did was to introduce a narrator from the beginning to the end, to process the information. Except you have a very theatre intelligent audience, you may have a group of audience that will watch *Women of Owu* and go home, asking what the play is all about. They may not understand. It is a play that is too intellectually deep. It is not everybody that will watch the play will be theatre intellectual. I just wanted a play that people will watch, understand and enjoy. I had to introduce a narrator and other things that are not originally in the script. I completely rewrote the first fifteen minutes and last fifteen minutes of the play. Not deviating from the moral instruction or the thematic preoccupation of the play. It is the still Osofisan's story. I only introduced some mechanisms to lessen the intellectual depth of the play so that the audience will understand it. I invested the play with theatrical experiences to make it interesting.

Researcher: How did you explore the theatre elements of the play?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: I introduced more dances, more instrumentation, but not more songs because the play is already replete with so many songs originally. I also introduced a narrator that processed the information from one movement to another ran across the play. That way, the audience understood the play even the Secondary School children that came to see the play because that period *Women of Owu* was in the Secondary School syllabus for General Certificate Examination, in Nigeria. Some of the Secondary Schools in Ekiti-State brought their Literature-in-English students to see the play as well during the festival. I had to reconstruct the end. I also made use of special effects which brought to bear beautiful in the spectacle. I made the

fire real on stage with the use of flame and lighting effects where the huts are supposed to be burning.

Researcher: What was/were the challenge(s) you went through during the process of the rehearsal/production?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: My challenges were to make my cast to understand the script and understand the characters; the play itself does not interest them except the lady who had played the role of Iyaloja before in LASU. Many others were encountering the play for the first time. However, I believe that they are not professionals. My approach enabled them to succeed.

Researcher: Do you think the play would have been more interesting if Osofisan had shown the actions instead of reporting them?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: I think the play would have been more interesting if those actions in the play had been allowed to take place in the play than been reported. The error the playwright committed is to report the interesting actions.

Researcher: In general, what advice do you have for would-be directors of Osofisan's plays?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: Upcoming directors should be themselves, discover yourself, seek to understand yourself, be original. They should know that it's a rough terrain where they struggle and sweat before things become smooth.

Researcher: Did you infuse dance into the performance?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: I infused some dances that I created using traditional motifs, I didn't use existing traditional dances in Nigerian culture. Originally in the script, the war scene is reported and narrated by the women. However, I made the scenes to happen on stage. I added two war dances, this is because I didn't want to report the

event as written in the play but wanted them to act out them out for the play to be interesting. I used dance and choreography to communicate the war to the audience. Because those are the things that will interest the audience instead of a group of women sitting down, crying and lamenting. It could be boring. He punctuated those sitting and crying with vivid high point actions like war movement and then he went back to lamentation and crying.

Researcher: What was the directorial style you used for the production of *Women of Owu*?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: My directorial style in the direction of *Women of Owu* is what I referred to as chorographic directing and situational directing. My first principle is that I do not operate within any box, I don't want to be a Brechtian or Stanislavskian. I believe that the directors following the dictates of those theorists are not doing justice to their works. Those people created the way they created because they were reacted to their own realities and peculiarities, they were responding to their situations back them. Why must I be following them in 2018? I should also follow my realities and peculiarities. As an artist, you have created boundaries for yourself if you confine yourself to a theory, a true artist does not have a boundary. I look at the prevailing circumstance/situation under which he is working. What resources are available to me either man or material, financial resources? Under which kind of situation are we going to be performing? These are the things that determine his directorial style, approach to a particular work that I am directing. I want to respond to my own realities in 2018

Researcher: What was your directorial approach? Please explain it.

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: When I am creating, I remove the toga of an academic because the two do not go together. It reminds me of the late Abimbola Ojomo, very brilliant, he spent ten years trying to write a play because he was too critical of what he was writing and he was applying every rule to his writing. Just be an artist and throw it out. If you are talking of style, every artist has his style. Creativity is bringing into existence what never existed. I leave critics my approach a name they like. I am an artist when people have said he's stylistic, Ojoism, Bakaresque, stylistic, eclectic. Though, the directorial concept may distort the script or diffuse attention but the director would be able to focus on the aesthetics of the production more.

Researcher: Who were your cast members?

Bakare, Ojo Rasaki: My cast members were Youth-Corps members.

Researcher: Thank you very much.

Appendice II

Excerpt of an Interview of Tunde Awosanmi Conducted by the Researcher on his Direction of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* on 18th February, 2018.

Researcher: My name is Abiola Olubunmi, Adumati. I am a Ph.D. student at the Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. I am working on the topic- **A Study of Directing Aesthetics in Selected Performances of Femi Osofisan's Plays**. I have done the first stage of the research. The next stage is the analyses of selected performances of Femi Osofisan's plays as directed by selected theatre directors. I am aware that you have directed one (some) of Femi Osofisan's plays. Please, I will like you to share your experience with me?

Tunde Awosanmi: My name is Tunde Awosanmi.

Researcher: Precisely, how many of Osofisan's plays have you directed and which ones?

Tunde Awosanmi: I have directed almost all of Femi osofisan's plays, they include: Tegonni (*An African Antigone*), *The Fabulous Adventures of the Sugarcain Man*, *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*, *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*, *Once Upon Four Robbers*, *Nkruma Ni... Africa... Ni*, *No More the Wasted Breed*, *Altine's Wrath*, *Women of Owu* and so on.

Researcher: Have you evolved a directorial style? Please explain it.

Tunde Awosanmi: My directorial style is tagged 'Theatrical Space Animation' states that "a stage becomes dead at the end of a performance". Therefore, the director is to animate the space that is dead to resurrect. The moment the director moves on stage, the performance space resurrects and it becomes lively again. The director needs certain 'Signpost of Indexes' which are the elements of the theatre: actors, property, set, make-up, dance, music, costume and so on within the concept of directorial space animation to accord liveliness to all the elements of the theatre. The aim of the style is to animate the dead space and play script to resurrection by

according to liveliness to all the signposts of indexes; approaching the animation of space in a symbolic manner; to invoke the words and lines in the play for dramatic effect; the signposts of indexes must be made to be in special interaction within the space; and, the creation of multiple “narrational” characters. I discovered that if narration is not properly handled in a play, it will give the play an interpretation on the negative side. So, I resolved that I will find a solution to the problem by doubling the narrator. Two people or more people would act as ‘a narrator’.

Researcher: What was the directorial style you used for the production?

Tunde Awosanmi: I experimented on the play with an entirely new theory which is an experiment that is leading to the formation of some theories that look into the indigenous material and knowledge for the construction of interpreting approach to African plays, even Western plays. African theatre is replete with too much of Western theories. My contention is that we have been served more than enough with Western theories. I am not saying that those theories are not authentic but that we need to liberate our creative energy and intelligence from the enslavement to foreign theory. To do this, we need to look into indigenous knowledge for theories of interpretation.

Researcher: What was the style of production you explored in the performance?

Tunde Awosanmi: I played on symbols in the performance of *Women of Owu* by using sticks as metaphors through which I created pillars. I evolved another symbolic scenario in the scene where the stage instruction recommends a spotlight on Anlugbua. What I did was to bring an *Egungun* (masquerade) to appear instead of Anlugbua himself. This is also symbolic in the sense that the appearance of an *Egungun* indicates the

appearance of the ancestors, the dead people who perhaps have come to give important information.

Researcher: Have you evolved a directorial style yourself? Please name and discuss it.

Tunde Awosanmi: Yes, Theatrical Space Animation.

Researcher: How did you explore dance in the play?

Tunde Awosanmi: I employed Debo Ajibade, a choreographer who infused many dances into the play.

Researcher: How did you explore theatrical elements of the play?

Tunde Awosanmi: I made use of sound effects, movements, colours, dramatic action, mime, dirge, lighting effects, costume, props, make-up, Rhythm and so on. For instance, the songs in *Women of Owu* helped him with his interpretation of the play. Some of the songs were even interpreted into dramatic actions.

Researcher: What were the challenges you encountered during the process of the rehearsal/production?

Tunde Awosanmi: *Women of Owu* has the same characteristics with Euripides' *The Trojan Women* which is problematic for any director to direct. The quantum of dramatic action in the play is not impressive. A director is, therefore; faced with the duty of re-inventing the play and creating a platform, and doing it in such a manner that it becomes some kind of platform for dramatic actions. So, you kick out the dramatic action from the long narratives of lamentation.... If it were to be presented in the original way that it has been written, then you are risking a situation whereby audience might start going out after about fifteen minutes or twenty minutes of the performance.

Researcher: What was the significance of the Pillars you brought on stage?

Tunde Awosanmi: when the Ife Army and the allied forces came to raise Owu to the ground and burnt down the homes and all the pillages they need to do, so I told myself that something must remain, a city cannot be in ruin like that. The pillars- (popularly called opo or opo-ile in Yoruba Language) must remain. There are many pillar symbols in the play. So I decided that I will create some kind of bonding between the women who are lamenting and the ruined houses by holding on to the pillars as their last hope. In essence, it then turn out that everything got burnt but the Opo ile remained, that is my way of saying that adversary may come and destroy the environment, something always remain behind. And in this particular instance, it is the opo ile that remains. Then I dugged further by going into Yoruba mythology, into Yoruba folkwisdom, through proverbs and ese ifa, to see what the ese ifa says about opo ile, and what significance is opo ile in Yoruba proverb, what does folkwisdom say about opo ile? And I came out with outstanding instances where opo was said to be very important. That also goes to say that the quality of a particular opo-ile will depend on the quality of the wood from which it is made. Whereas every other things got burnt so easily because their civil engineers were sophisticated enough to have been able to identify a very strong wood from which they were able to fashion their opo ile for their homestead. Then, I was able to transfer the inanimate quality of the opo unto the animate object in the play, that is, the women. So in a way, the women were able to hold on to the opo as a source of last strength to withstand the adversary of the enemies and that is the reason you find in the performance that the women did a lot of things with the pillar (opo). In

the hands of the women, the pillars were in three dimensions, they functioned in three capacities. The pillar served as a source of last strength, so they derived some kind of energy with the pillars. Two, the pillar also served for them as companions - there is a companionship which they derive from the pillars; it was also used as an instrument of protest and pillars of ruins.

Researcher: Thank you very much.

Appendice III

Excerpt of an Interview with Muiyiwa Awodiya Conducted by the Researcher on his Direction of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers*.

Researcher: My name is Abiola Olubunmi, Adumati, I am a Ph.D. student at the Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. I am working on the topic- **A Study of Directing Aesthetics in Selected Performances of Femi Osofisan's Plays**. I have done the first stage of the research. The next stage is the analyses of selected performances of Femi Osofisan's plays as directed by selected theatre directors. I am aware that you have directed one (some) of Femi Osofisan's plays. Please, I will like you to share your experience with me?

Muiyiwa Awodiya: I am Professor Muiyiwa Awodiya, who retired from University of Benin at 70 after 37 years of Meritorious Service. I'm now at Osun State University, College of Humanities and Culture, Department of Theatre Arts.

Researcher: Femi Osofisan is known to be a popular playwright in Nigeria and beyond, having written, published and directed many of his plays. How acquainted are you with his works?

Muiyiwa Awodiya: I am very well acquainted with His works because I have written two Books and edited two others on His works.

Researcher: Precisely, how many of Osofisan's plays have you directed and which ones?

Muiyiwa Awodiya: I have directed about Twenty (20) of His plays which include: *The Chattering and the Song* (1982), *Morontodun* (1992), *Once Upon four Robbers* (1983), *Another Raft* (1994), *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* (1991), *Midnight Hotel* (1989), *Twingle-Twangle: A TwynningTayle* (2015), *The Oriki of a*

Grasshopper (2000), *Women of Owu* (2019), *Many Colours Make the Thunder-King* (2004), *Tegonni, An African Antigone* (2003), *Birthdays Are Not for Dying* (1990), *Fires Burn and Die Hard* (1992), *The Inspector and the Hero* (1990), *Red is the Freedom Road and No More the Wasted Breed* (1983), *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (1988), *Altine's Wrath* (1988), *Aringindin and the NightwatchMen* (1989), *The Album of the Midnight Blackout* (1995) and *Nkrumah Ni... African Ni!* (1996).

Researcher: What do you think about Femi Osofisan's plays, particularly in terms of directorial possibilities?

Muyiwa Awodiya: The Plays are aesthetically flexible to direct, either for a poor Theatre or a Rich Theatre. All the plays can be directed as experimental plays without music or total Theatre plays with music.

Researcher: What can you say about Osofisan's ideology?

Muyiwa Awodiya: Osofisan's Ideological Sympathy as a radical writer who advocates social change can be perceived from His dramatic and Non-dramatic writing. I place Osofisan's plays ideologically on the left. Osofisan's is certainly a Man of the left, a radical writer and critic who has embraced a class approach to the production and reception of literature in our society. He has a very strong sympathy for Marxist ideas about politics and society and He believed that a Country like Nigeria certainly needs revolutionary stance on the part of its written to make possible a new egalitarian society. I therefore say His plays are Proto-Marxian ideogise.

Researcher: You said you have directed *Once Upon Four Robbers*, what interested you to direct this play in particular?

Muyiwa Awodiya: What interested me in directing the play is because of its revolutionary structure of the play in terms of its form and contents. The play begins with the form of riddle in Yoruba culture and later changes into a revolution in terms of its contents and thereby changes its structure to empower the Robbers to advocate the Re-structure of Nigerian society.

Researcher: Did you alter the storyline, or cut the lines? If yes, why?

Muyiwa Awodiya: No

Researcher: Where did you stage the play?

Muyiwa Awodiya: In University of Benin Theatre and National Theatre, Lagos.

Researcher: For what purpose?

Muyiwa Awodiya: For the purpose of entertainment and to generate public awareness about the need to re-structure Nigerian society.

Researcher: What was your directorial approach? Please explain it.

Muyiwa Awodiya: My Directorial approach relies on the concept of Realistic play directing and the concept of total Theatre directing.

Researcher: What was the directorial style you used for the production?

Muyiwa Awodiya: The directorial style was democratic style of play directing in which the Actors and Actresses are democratically allowed to have an input into the director's concept of play directing.

Researcher: Have you evolved a directorial style yourself? Please name and explain it.

Muyiwa Awodiya: The realistic style of play directing as well as African concept of total Theater; This means that the play is Re-producing a convincing real-life situation on the stage and engages the audience and creating the illusion of reality as well as

total African Theatre technique because in Osofisan's plays, He employs music, humours, ridicule and seriousness to criticise the ills of the society.

Researcher: Discuss the style here, please.

Muyiwa Awodiya: The style is realistic, experimental and total African Theatre technique.

Researcher: How do you consider the language of Femi Osofisan?

Muyiwa Awodiya: The language is simple and shuttle; the language is prose vernacular of everyday language of the people which can be easily understood.

Researcher: What can you say about the production?

Muyiwa Awodiya: The production is challenging but very interesting but a worthwhile experience to undergo in terms of teaching theatre to students.

Researcher: How did you explore the theatrical elements in the performance?

Muyiwa Awodiya: The theatrical elements of the plays were adequately explored to meet the aesthetic demands of the plays.

Researcher: What can you say about the production of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* as directed by you.

Muyiwa Awodiya: The production was very demanding but enjoyable and entertaining experience as a theatre director to go through.

Researcher: Who were your crew members? Mention names and their contributions to the production.

Muyiwa Awodiya: Richard Mofe-Damijo, Igoboyo, Pedro Agbonifo, Stanley Ohenhen, Ametor Adepoju, Chucks Omessah.

Researcher: For how many days did the production run and what was the audience turnout like on the first day?

Muyiwa Awodiya: It ran for two weeks and the audience turnout was fantastic.

Researcher: Compared to the first day, what was the audience turnout like on other days?

Muyiwa Awodiya: The audience turnout was fantastic on other days.

Researcher: What were the challenges you went through during the process of the rehearsal/production?

Muyiwa Awodiya: The usual challenges that any director goes through when directing a play, for example, students not coming to rehearsal on time, students not focusing on their roles, indiscipline, lack of concentration at rehearsals.

Researcher: In general, what advice do you have for would-be directors of Osofisan's plays?

Muyiwa Awodiya: My advice is that the directors of Osofisan's plays must be patience with the actors and the actresses, identify with them and coming down to their level in order to get the best out of them.

Researcher: Thank you very much.

Appendix IV

Excerpt of an Interview with Sola Adeyemi Conducted by the Researcher on his Direction of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* on 11th March, 2018.

Researcher: Good evening sir. My name is Abiola Olubunmi, Adumati, I am a Ph.D. student at the Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. I am working on the topic- **A Study of Directing Aesthetics in Selected Performances of Femi Osofisan's Plays.** I have done the first stage of the research. The next stage is the analyses of selected performances of Femi Osofisan's plays as directed by selected theatre directors. I am aware that you have directed one (some) of Femi Osofisan's plays. Please, I will like you to share your experience with me.

Researcher: Please, introduce yourself sir.

Sola Adeyemi: My name is Adeyemi and I am the Programme Director, MA World Theatres, Goldsmiths University of London, UK.

Researcher: Femi Osofisan is a popular playwright in Nigeria and beyond, having written, published and directed many of his plays. How acquainted are you with his works?

Sola Adeyemi: I am very familiar with the work of Femi Osofisan. I have acted, directed; staged managed and produced many of his plays, since the late 1980s. My BA Dissertation was on his *Morountodun* and my MA Thesis was a comparative study of his work and that of Bòdé Sówándé with those of South African playwrights – Mbongeni Ngema and Gcina Mhlope. My PhD was on his dramaturgy.

Researcher: Precisely, how many of Osofisan's plays have you directed and which ones?

Sola Adeyemi: About a dozen. These include (in Nigeria, unless otherwise located); *The Engagement* (Nigeria, Lesotho, South Africa), *Twingle-Twangle A Twynning Tayle*,

Farewell to a Cannibal Rage, Birthdays are not for Dying, Once Upon Four Robbers (South Africa, UK), *Women of Owu* (UK), *The Oriki of a Grasshopper, Who's Afraid of Solarin, Midnight Hotel, Fiddlers on a Midnight Lark, The Arrow of God*; and *the Wounds of Man* (London).

Researcher: What do you think about Femi Osofisan's plays, particularly in terms of directorial possibilities?

Sola Adeyemi: Osofisan's plays open a vista of opportunities for the director. The plays are not codified and fixed, requiring enormous directorial expertise or high technicality. First, the plays are written for the actors, in a simple language that informs the actors understanding and interpretation of the scripts. The plays offer flexibility of interpretation, allowing the director/producer to stage the plays with minimal props and scenery, but they also offer the possibilities of interpretation with large and complex scenery and costumes. However, for me, the most important consideration is that they can be staged anywhere, either on a formal thrust or proscenium stage or on any open space. I have acted and directed Osofisan for a field, a Victorian theatre, a school hall, a proscenium theatre, a theatre in the round, a studio, and a lecture theatre. For the director, perhaps the only understanding needed to direct an Osofisan is an understanding of the play and its contexts – cultural, historical and social. Without the cultural and social understanding, there is bound to be a misinterpretation of the play, especially in the use of language and meaning.

Researcher: What can you say about Osofisan's ideology?

Sola Adeyemi: Critics have described Femi Osofisan as 'revolutionary', 'Marxist', 'socialist', 'leftist' and other terms that suggest non-conformism among traditionally

conservative Nigerian writers. Osofisan however rejects these labels and argues that such terms ‘breed specific attitudes’ that prejudice peoples’ reception of a writer and lead to certain expectations and critical assessment. As such, despite his outwardly socialist lifestyle, Osofisan refuses to publicly identify with any ideology. Despite this reluctance to associate with any ideology, Osofisan’s drama articulates the historical and cultural processes in the society from a class perspective. Apart from this, Osofisan is a Yoruba man with deeply held traditional beliefs, a post-négritudist thinker and a pragmatic writer who grew up under strong colonial, Christian and Yoruba influences. Therefore, ideologically, he is a materialist whose study of other cultures and beliefs has helped to define an open and eclectic attitude to religion, culture and social contexts, and this is the ideology that informs and influences his drama.

Researcher: You said you have directed *Once Upon Four Robbers*, what interested you to direct this play in particular?

Sola Adeyemi: The fascination of the traditional Yorùbá storytelling format makes *Once Upon Four Robbers* attractive to the director. Osofisan wrote the play to contribute to the debate on public execution of armed robbers in Nigeria; the play explores the moral and legal definitions of ‘robbery’ in the wider sense, and the implications of the Armed Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree 47 of 1970 on the public psyche. As usual with Osofisan’s drama, the sub-texts to *Four Robbers* are based on Yorùbá culture and the Nigerian political situation. Osofisan advances the argument that it is really everybody who is criminal in intent and act and who therefore needs to be re-membered to a society that is just. He contends that the root cause of the

endemic criminality of the people lies in the three symbols of authority and influence in the society – school, church and the home. The dramatist uses the Yoruba storytelling tradition; he also responds to the contemporary social problem of armed robbery and the inability of the government to provide a credible solution. These two frames of provide the most attractive fascination for me.

Researcher: Did you alter the storyline, or cut the lines? If yes, why?

Sola Adeyemi: Not in the South African production as it was not necessary. The idea was to do a Nigerian play. However, the UK production at London was produced during the banking crisis of 2008, so the market scenes were changed to the banking hall of a major bank, one of the first to collapse during the crisis. The idea behind the change was to emphasize the message of the play, that criminality is not limited to the gun toting criminal or the bankers, but that the government also connives.

Researcher: Where did you stage the play?

Sola Adeyemi: In South Africa, at the Winston Churchill Theatre, Pietermaritzburg, because I had directed two South African plays and the audience wanted a Nigerian play. I choose a play that would resonate with them but that would also explore ‘Nigerianness’ to them. In the UK, it was chosen by my students out of the options I presented before them. There was a class of 17 students and we wanted a play that would have a role for everybody instead of two or three short plays.

Researcher: What was your directorial approach? Please explain it.

Sola Adeyemi: Simple. The universal theatre approach common to Yoruba performance culture (often mis-identified as ‘total theatre’). I allowed the actors to learn the lines and provide an interpretation based on their understanding. This was of course after

several sessions of reading and discussing the script in seminars and in tutorials. In South Africa, it was easier. The approach involved explaining the context of the play and allowing an interpretation that recuperated the experience of the actors – made up of one or two professional actors, civil servants, students, ex-militants (ANC). Because a few of the actors were Indians and Afrikaans, it made for an interesting drama. Generally, my directorial approach is to allow for an in depth reading and understanding of the dramatic context – geographical, environmental, historical, etc, giving minimal instructions and letting the actors have freedom of movement and interpretation. I step in occasionally to re-direct movements and line delivery for synchronicity.

Researcher: What was the directorial style you used for the production?

Sola Adeyemi: I'm more of a 'negotiator', and I tend to focus on a more improvised and mediated form of rehearsal and creation, using the ideas of the production team and actors to shape a theatrical work in quite a democratic style, BUT based on my general structure. To understand this, you have to realise that I trained as a designer and dramaturg, so I have a design of the drama which I then fill with the characters. If the actor's interpretation does not fit in with my ideas, I choose to discuss the context and direction with the actor.

Researcher: Have you evolved a directorial style yourself? Please name and explain it.

Sola Adeyemi: The above is generally my style but it is usually informed by the cultural context of the drama.

Researcher: Discuss the style here, please.

Sola Adeyemi: Democratic, experimental, and traditional. The important aspect is that everybody understands the drama, and can step into any role, if necessary, because they know the play.

Researcher: How do you consider the language of Femi Osofisan?

Sola Adeyemi: Osofisan experiments with language to produce plays that are socially relevant.

The plays are mostly written in Standard English, making the plays accessible for production either as they are written or in adaptation to local realities, but based on common and easy to comprehend idiolects. Although, written in Standard English, the texts display a variety of writing styles and varied language registers, taking into consideration the different shades of English spoken in Nigeria, the Pidgin range that differs according to the area in which it is spoken as well as the level of education or sophistication of the speaker. For instance, there is a marked difference between the way a police man and a university lecturer use the language, or even between two policemen of different ranks, or between characters from different areas of Nigeria.

Researcher: What can you say about the production?

Sola Adeyemi: The productions improved my understanding of Osofisan's work. When actors or students cast their interpretation on a script, it always brings out a new flavor of that script.

Researcher: What are the directing aesthetics you infused into the play(s)?

Sola Adeyemi: Though my focus is always on acting and line delivery, I was very interested in music and lighting. Even though the plays were staged outside Yorubaland, the

actors sang the songs in Yoruba. Most of the transition was effect with lights, playing on the meaning of colours.

Researcher: How did you explore the theatre elements of the play?

Sola Adeyemi: Through interpretation and re-interpretation of the elements and the thorough exploration of the cultural and historical context.

Researcher: What difference did they make to the play(s)?

Sola Adeyemi: Includes elements of heightened entertainment. Increases the understanding of the play, especially when the actors sing a song that is then projected around the theatre in English!

Researcher: What can you say about the production of Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* as directed by you.

Sola Adeyemi: As above.

Researcher: Who were your crewmembers? Mention names and their contributions to the production.

Sola Adeyemi: The crewmembers were always those working either for the theatre or the university.

Researcher: Who were your cast members? Mention few names and discuss their acting/performance skills here, please.

Sola Adeyemi: Lucky Mavundla, an ex-militant who is now sadly dead. He was part of the Ngema theatre group before fleeing to Tanzania in 1990 to fight apartheid from the frontline. He was Major. Oupa Jackson was Hasan. There were Xolani Mdluli, Sibusiso Dlamini, and Mothe Mhlokwe. I remember the performance of Yasmeen Engelbrecht as Alhaja, especially in the trance scene. That was in South Africa. In

the UK, they were students: Bethan Frisby, Pooja Kaur, Raphael Kemp, Sophie-Leah Morgan, and Sara Campbell.

Researcher: How many days did the production run and what was the audience turnout like on the first day?

Sola Adeyemi: In South Africa, the run was a week, from Tuesday to Sunday. The theatre could sit about 250 people. It was filled on all nights except the first night. In the UK, it was for three days – an exam and two performances for the paying audience. The attendance was between 80% to 90% each night (capacity: 180).

Researcher: What were the challenges you went through during the process of the rehearsal/production?

Sola Adeyemi: Pronunciation of words correctly.

Researcher: In general, what advice do you have for would-be directors of Osofisan's plays?

Sola Adeyemi: Know your Osofisan. Know the playwright thoroughly. Do not limit yourself to the play you are directing but study his other plays. And then try and get your production team to understand your vision, which you should also share with the actors preferably at the first meeting. Learn the songs first and break your rehearsals into sections or segments where you sing the songs to raise morale, keep the spirit and create a focus.

Researcher: Why did you use female actors to act male roles in the UK performance, especially the character of Aafa? Shortage of male actors or were you being experimental?

Sola Adeyemi: The use of female actors. Well, I could say it was mainly experimental but that won't be totally correct. Whilst the production was experimental, including the staging, the use of female performers was expedient on availability. There were 17

students in the class, and only two of them were male! Still, they all auditioned for the available roles and it so happened that one of the male students acted Hassan and the other acted, I think, Sergeant. Having a female student act the role of Aafa didn't really matter because, as you are aware, that role is a cipher; in its narrative essence, its representation transcends religion into the realm of – as someone recently mentioned – magical realism. Aafa is garbed as Muslim priest, an Orunmila devotee, etc. but his main role is that of a narrator, to move the story along, as in all plays by Osofisan. The role of the narrator is very important and is not defined by masculinity or femininity, otherwise, we would be asking why Aperin is a female in *Yungba-Yungba*...

Researcher: Did you explore Grotowskian style of poor theatre in the UK performance? (No props as such, costume wise, make-up etc).

Sola Adeyemi: No, I did not explore “Grotowskian” method of production. That was Yoruba performance culture. Most performers in Yoruba performances are not specially costumes or made-up, even though more focus is on the masquerades, the arugba Osun, etc. But, what of the drummers, the Alarinjo performers, the dancers? (An aside: One of the influences on the performance was some pictures of Ajóféèbó Troupe during Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Nigeria in 1956. Apart from their puppets, members of the troupe were in their “special” costumes, to differentiate them from the audience. This is to effect quick scene changes, a format employed also by Yoruba Travelling Theatre troupes).

Researcher: Is this UK production where market scene was converted to bank scene?

Sola Adeyemi: Yes, we staged a banking hall scene. As I recall, this was during the banking crisis of 2008 and we wanted to pose the question of who the real “robbers” in the society were.

Researcher: Thank you very much.

Appendice V

Excerpt of an Interview with Femi Ayeni Conducted by the Researcher on his Direction of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* on 5th March, 2018.

Researcher: Good evening sir. My name is Abiola Olubunmi, Adumati; I am a Ph.D. student at the Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. I am working on the topic - **A Study of Directing Aesthetics in Selected Performances of Femi Osofisan's Plays**. I have done the first stage of the research. The next stage is analyses of selected performances of Femi Osofisan's plays as directed by selected artistic directors. I am aware that you have directed one (some) of Femi Osofisan's plays, thus, I want you to share your experience with me. Below are the questions raised:

Researcher: Introduce yourself please.

Femi Ayeni: I am Femi Ayeni.

Researcher: Femi Osofisan is known to be a popular playwright in Nigeria and beyond, having written, published and directed many of his plays. How acquainted are you with his works?

Femi Ayeni: I am very much acquainted with Femi Osofisan's works. I have read over 90% of his works including plays, collection of poems, critical essays, short stories (with the pseudonym Okinba Launko) and newspaper articles.

Researcher: Precisely, how many of Osofisan's plays have you directed and which ones?

Femi Ayeni: I have directed seven (7) of his plays to date. They include: *Once Upon Four Robbers*, *Morountodun*, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, *A Restless Run of Locusts*, *Midnight Hotel*, *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest* and *Tegonni (An African Antigone)*.

Researcher: What do you think about Femi Osofisan's plays, particularly in terms of directorial possibilities?

Femi Ayeni: Femi Osofisan's plays are a director's delight. They give room for a lot of artistic (directorial) possibilities and manipulation irrespective of the time and place settings in which you wish to situate them.

Researcher: What can you say about Osofisan's ideology?

Femi Ayeni: Osofisan, in my opinion is greatly influenced by Brecht and Marxism. His Brechtian/Marxist influence permeates his works as an ideologue. He is the leader of the playwrights of the emergent tradition in Nigeria, nay, Africa with the belief in a new world order through the arts. I also love the gender balance in his characterisation. His leaning towards Obatala is also worthy of note in his works.

Researcher: You said you have directed *Once Upon Four Robbers*, what interested you to direct this play in particular?

Femi Ayeni: The main thematic concern of democratization and opening up the political space was the major attraction. I was also got interested in the play because of its all female cast.

Researcher: Did you alter the storyline, or cut the lines? If yes, why?

Femi Ayeni: I didn't alter the story line but tampered with the lines to a little extend. This was to suit my interpretation of the play and adapt, to an extent, to a northern audience.

Researcher: Where did you stage the play?

Femi Ayeni: The play was performed at three different venues. The first was at the Kaduna State College of Education, Gidan Waya as a students' final year production in the

Department of Theatre Arts. Then at the Kaduna State University, Kaduna, and College of Education, Akwanga, Nasarawa State, all in 2011.

Researcher: What was your directorial approach? Please explain it.

Femi Ayeni: My directorial approach was symbolism I adopted this approach considering the Brechtian alienation. This helps to resist the temptation of biting more than one can chew as a director in terms cost of production and the fact that I was working with a cast and crew of amateur trainees at NCE level. I felt the basics of the production were just enough for cast, crew and audience.

Researcher: What was the directorial style you used for the production?

Femi Ayeni: My directorial style was eclectic. It was a pot-pourri of different directing styles. This was in consideration of words was most suitable for my amateur, (students trainee) cast and crew. I dwelt mostly on the directing styles of Ola Rotimi and Ayo Akinwale.

Researcher: Have you evolved a directorial style yourself? Please name and explain it.

Femi Ayeni: Not really. I don't think, as a director, I should put myself in a straight jacket of a particular style of directing, especially as a teacher of directing. I feel I need to let my students into the various directing styles and possibilities through my works. Basically, I will say my style is eclectic.

Researcher: How do you consider the language of Femi Osofisan?

Femi Ayeni: Straight forward, everyday language laced with humor; simple but not simplistic. He also stays with the Yoruba culture through code mixing and code switching in his dialogue and songs.

Researcher: What can you say about the production?

Femi Ayeni: The production was fantastic. It was the most acclaimed and best received performance, in the then nine (9) year history of the department. It brought out the best in me as a director and the best in the cast and crew too.

Researcher: What are the directing aesthetics you infused into the play(s).

Femi Ayeni: Movement, picturisation, composition, speech production, economy of space, actor-audience rapport.

Researcher: How did you explore the theatre elements of the play?

Femi Ayeni: Like I mentioned earlier, Osofisan is the director's delight. He already simplified exploration of theatre elements in the play. I simply cashed in on the dialogue, music, dance, design and mimetic components of the play. I paid particular attention to dance aesthetics in the play as it was a major attraction to my audience.

Researcher: What can you say about the production of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* directed by you?

Femi Ayeni: *Yungba Yungba...* was quite interesting and challenging too. The idea of an all female cast was quite novel and intriguing to a lot of people around here, especially the large size of the cast.

Researcher: Who were your crew members? Mention names and their contributions to the production.

Femi Ayeni: My assistant director was Helen Lucius Abba, the stage manager was Justina Ugwuoke, costumier was Grace Dominic, make-up artist was Joan K. Dauda, technical director was Victor Yako, Choreographer was Jude Ikeji, and business manager was Salome Adaukeh. They all contributed immensely through their various schedules to the artistic success of the production.

Researcher: Who were your cast members? Mention few names and discuss their acting/performance skills here, please

Femi Ayeni: Iyeneri - Helen Lucius, Aperin – Joan Kaliyat Dauda, Ayoka – Salome Adaukeh, Dunbarin – Patience Daniel, Laboopo – Suzana Nkechi Ihejirika, Iyaloja – Joan B. Maiyaki. These group of actors, though amateurs were fantastic and a delight to work with. To summarise their acting and performance skills, staff and students of the Department of English and of Drama of the Kaduna State University (KASU) did not believe the cast was made up of NCE students when the production was held in the University.

Researcher: How many days did the production run and what was the audience turnout like on the first day and other days?

Femi Ayeni: The audience turnout was huge every day of the performance. The second night of the performance in my Department was bigger than the first. It ran for an initial two (2) nights at the College before we did a night each at Kaduna State University and College of Education, Akwanga. We had four (4) nights in all.

Researcher: What were the challenges you went through during the process of the rehearsal/production?

Femi Ayeni: Raising an all-female cast and crew was daunting. Learning the songs and dances was also bit tasking for the students. Financing was also a challenge.

Researcher: In general, what advice do you have for would-be directors of Osofisan's plays?

Femi Ayeni: They must study and understand Osofisan's ideology and dramaturgy. A would be director of Osofisan's plays must be versatile in the Theatre, must be creative and ready to break the rules of conventional Theatre.

Researcher: Thank you very much.

Appendix VI

Excerpt of an Interview of Ola Ifatimehin Conducted by the Researcher on Direction of Femi Osofisan's *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* on 7th March, 2018.

Researcher: Good evening sir. My name is Abiola Olubunmi, Adumati; I am a Ph.D. student at the Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. I am working on the topic- **A Study of Directing Aesthetics in Selected Performances of Femi Osofisan's Plays.** I have done the first stage of the research. The next stage is analyses of selected performances of Femi Osofisan's plays as directed by selected artistic directors. I am aware that you have directed one (some) of Femi Osofisan's plays, thus, I want you to share your experience with me. Below are the questions raised:

Researcher: Can I please know you sir/ma?

Ola Ifatimehin: My name is Dr. Ola Ifatimehin, a lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts Bayero University Kano.

Researcher: Femi Osofisan is a popular playwright in Nigeria and beyond, having written, published and directed many of his plays. How acquainted are you with his works?

Ola Ifatimehin: Osofisan's plays belong to a gamut of Plays I consider as my favourite.

Researcher: Precisely, how many of Osofisan's plays have you directed and which ones?

Ola Ifatimehin: I have directed two Osofisan's plays (*Morountodun* in 2005 and *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest* in 2018 and was heavily involved in the production of *Red is the Freedom Road* (2017).

Researcher: What do you think about Femi Osofisan's plays, particularly in terms of directorial possibilities?

Ola Ifatimehin: He makes his place accessible for stage productions. He provides you with songs and detailed stage directions. But it is his imagery and revolutionary aesthetics that appeal most to me.

Researcher: What can you say about Osofisan's ideology?

Ola Ifatimehin: His ideological orientation is bent towards group awareness and change. So it's quite common to attribute his techniques to Brechtian and Marxist notions.

Researcher: You said you have directed *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest*, what interested you to direct this play in particular?

Ola Ifatimehin: Well, I had recently purchased a number of plays. And I was to direct a play for the 2018 induction exercise. The class had over 70 students and had just read *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest* and was fascinated. The class size and the potentials of the text made me to pick it.

Researcher: Did you alter the storyline, or cut the lines? If yes, why?

Ola Ifatimehin: Usually my productions are deconstructive. I seek the silences and ironies in interpretation for more relevance and context appropriateness. So a few lines and movements were altered.

Researcher: Where did you stage the play, for what purpose?

Ola Ifatimehin: Performance Studio of the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts Bayero University Kano Nigeria, for induction purposes.

Researcher: What was your directorial approach? Please explain it.

Ola Ifatimehin: Largely Brechtian. We invoked the epic nuances of communality of performance; narrator, songs, dances, appealing to reasoning, minimal emotiveness,

etc to simply play out realities which are with us and needed logical apprehension.

The vision is to tell a story through music and dance with no reliance on set.

Researcher: What was the directorial style you used for the production?

Ola Ifatimehin: My directorial style is usually a blend of dictatorial and democratic styles. They are applied as the need arises.

Researcher: Have you evolved a directorial style yourself? Please name and explain it.

Ola Ifatimehin: I don't want to think that I've evolved a directorial style. I'm simply adaptive to the requirements of doing a production.

Researcher: How do you consider the language of Femi Osofisan?

Ola Ifatimehin: His language is usually simple but he often plays on words. Then, his language usually carries a duality largely located within the Yoruba pragmatics and the English vocabulary. This makes his use of language quite fascinating.

Researcher: What can you say about the production?

Ola Ifatimehin: I think the students pulled through. The audience went along.

Researcher: Thank you very much.