

EJOLLS: Ekpoma Journal of Languages and Literary Studies

Volume 13, Numbers 1 and 2 edited by B.O. Anyanwu and O.S. Omoera

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2022, EJOLLS Ekpoma Journal of Languages and Literary Studies Volume 13, Numbers 1 and 2

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Volume 13, Numbers 1 and 2



April 2022

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Analysis of Lighting Effect Creation in Duro Ladipo's Ogun Lakaaye

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Adebayo John BADEJI

Abstract

Lighting is an indispensable part of any theatre production. It gives worth and explicit understanding to actions in a performance. The use of light for stage performances goes beyond mere illumination but creates effect and serves other purposes in performance aesthetics. It is on this ground that this article analyses the lighting arrangement and impact in the stage production of Ogun Lakaaye, as University of Ilorin Convocation play. This article uses the deductive and participant observation methods. For deductive method, we analyse and deduce information from recorded video tapes. Thus, the information gathered from the video tape serves as our primary source while our secondary source incorporate articles from scholarly journals, monologue, textbooks, and web sources. We discovered that, lighting designers' explorations are limited because the type of equipment used are out of date. With new inventions, theatre/stage light can now serve the purpose of set design, illumination, and effect creation.

Keywords: Lighting effect, Ogun Lakaaye, Theatre, Performance aesthetics, Paralinguistic.

Introduction

This article posits that light originators in a performance venue ought to investigate and enhance new lighting strategies that will work on the arrangement of lighting and the nature of execution in the theatre. Indisputably, this period is described by mechanical headway and this should influence lighting in the auditorium for breathtaking light passing on execution. One of the performance aesthetics in stage and screen production is lighting. This is because it aids the visual ability of the audience. Sanusi (1995, p.56) cited in Lawal (2010, p.117) avers that "scientifically, light is a form of energy conveyed in

an empty space at high velocity? Light certainly is responsible for the sensation of sight. It is the part of the electromagnetic spectrum detected by human eyes." This suggests that lighting stimulates humans' eyes to clear vision. It helps the audience' eyes to be clearly fixed on pictures. Taylor (2000, p.7) explains that "what distinguishes this part of the electromagnetic spectrum from the rest is that radiation in this region is absorbed by the photoreceptor of the human visual system and thereby initiates the process of seeing."

Apart from aiding visibility as expatiated, lighting is one of the most essential technicalities used in both stage and screen productions. It performs different functions such as setting the mood of a play,

ensuring clarity of pictures on stage and screen and it is significantly used to create special effects and helps the interpretation of character's role, the visibility of the audience. In this regard, Norbert (2008, p.149) submits that stage lighting is an art of using artificial light (now mostly electric light) to illuminate the stage (even screen set) in order to showcase actors in their dramatic world, to punctuate their moods and emotions, to fire their imagination and that of the audience, as well as to lay bare, the actors' fields of thought.

The advancement of technology in the world and its adoption in the theatre has greatly influenced lighting of performances in screen and on stage toward producing aesthetically pleasing pictures. The importance of lighting design and technology cannot be overemphasized in television, stage, and video and film productions. This is because it is a paralinguistic embellishment that contributes to the visual effect and aesthetics of productions. It assists the classification, clarification, identification, intensification and digitization of the visual design in theatrical and filmic products. Theatre scholars, commentators, designers and technicians such as Bellman (1994), Pilbrow (1997), Gilette (1997), Reid (2001), Oni (2004), Adegbite (2009), Parker and Wolf (2009), Lawal (2010) and others have described over the years the qualities of lighting beyond mere aestheticism, illumination and intensification of technical and dramatic qualities in theatrical and film productions, but as the livewire in any production.

Theoretical Bearing

The theory we explore for this study is Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe's theory of colour, which was published in 1810 as *Zur Farbenlehre* and was translated to English in 1840. Goethe in this theory condemned Isaac Newton's theory of light which states that 'colourless (white) light is split up into its component colours when directed through a prism' (when a white light passes through a prism, it brings out variety of colours.) As opposed to this, Goethe's concern was not so much with the analytic treatment of colour, as with the qualities of how phenomena are perceived. According to Kentsis (2005,

p.2), "Goethe protested the destruction of phenomenal essence that occurred during the phenomenon's dissection into its component parts" such that when a white light passes through a prism, what is the place of sensory organ of sight in the experiment which views the result in the presence of light? (Kentsis, 2005: 6) "Both light and eye were directly involved in the perception of colour and shape." This forms the crux of this study, such that the brightness of light enhances clear vision, vis-à-vis the colours, images and even actions on stage. In the same vein, Lehrer (2006) submits that:

The point of Goethe's dissatisfaction with Newton's theory is that the theory provided a mechanism for the creation of colour with its essential components being contained in light as an object, instead of functioning in the Sensorium of the subject, or instead of the interaction between light and its perceived and intuited effect.

Lehrer's assertion points out the significance attached to the sensory perception of an experiment by Goethe. In his experiment of the theory, Goethe shifted the prism close and a bit far from the source of light to observe the position of colours separated by bright light and dark light. It is pertinent to note that light is what energizes our visual system. Light reflected from objects into our eyes enables us to see. Light enters the eye through the pupil. It is focused on the retina, and is transmitted to our brain via the optic nerve. A significant part of our brain is dedicated to the processing of visual information. The human eye allows good depth perception, excellent colour perception, reasonable motion detection, and great visual acuity. This sensory perception and the relationship of light with the eyes is what Lehrer referred to as taking cognizance of the "functioning of the sensorium of the subject or the interaction

between light and its perceived and intuited effect." That is the reason why Corie (2011, p.285) submits that:

The cones are responsible for high-level daytime photopic vision, meaning they are active in relatively high light levels and are responsible for our color vision. There are three types of cones, each sensitive to different wavelengths (colors) of light. The rods, which operate under very low light levels, are responsible for low-level nighttime, or scotopic, vision and respond somewhat differently to light than

do the cones. Because there is only one type of rod, these receptors can provide only information on the amount of light leaving a surface-not on the color of this light.

From the above assertion, there are two tissues in the sensory organ of the eyes that determines colour vision. These are the cones and the rods. The cone is said to be active in relatively high light level as they are responsible for our colour vision while the rods operate under very low light. That is to say; the relationship between light and the sensory organ of the eyes is responsible for coloured, bright, dull and dark vision. This is, however, the position of Goethe in his theory of colour. There are four main features of the Goethe's theory of colour. These are the theory of light and darkness, the experiment of the turbid media, the boundary conditions and the light and dark spectra. However, we will only explain the theory of light and darkness as it is relevant to this research. Specifically, Goethe didn't see darkness as an absence of light, but rather as a polar to and interacting with light; colour resulted from this interaction of light and shadow. It is the simplest most undivided, most homogenous being that we know. Confronting it is the darkness. Thus Sepper (2009, p.15) posits, "shade is a part of light and colours which are shadow- the result of shade is light itself. Based on his experiments with turbid media, Goethe characterized colour as arising from the dynamic interplay of darkness and light."

Synopsis of the Ogun Lakaaye's Production

Ogun Lakaaye, a dance play by Tunbosun Oladapo was performed on Wednesday, October 20, 2010 as convocation play, for the 26th convocation ceremony of the University of Ilorin, which took place at the

University's Performing Arts Theatre at 7:00 p.m. This dance play was directed by Ayo Akinwale, the then Head of Department of the Performing Arts. Ogun Lakaaye is about the story of one of the gods in Yoruba cosmology; Ogun is the god of iron. According to legend, he paved the way for other gods on their way to earth, thus, he is referred to as 'The Pathfinder.' Ogun's successful exploits on distant soil has earned him admiration from his people and recognition by his king, Sango. In recognition of his heroic deeds, the king gives him a wife. Unfortunately, the wife proves to be mischievous; quarrelling

with the first wife at every opportunity available. Ogun is blinded by her beauty and pays no attention to her bad ways. His home front suffers due to the unceasing fights between his wives while His career continues to soar.

Inopportune, Ogun turns power drunk and even goes to the end of disrespecting the king in his palace when his wife tells him that the first wife reported him to the king. The King is angered and in conjunction with his chiefs plans to ridicule Ogun, with Iyalode at the forefront of the ploy. Iyalode successfully tricks Ogun's second wife into drugging Ogun's meal. Ogun falls into a deep sleep only to wake in the market square, stripped of his charms and powerful wig. The whole village is angered by Ogun's pride but the King spares his life and gives the wig back to him. In the midst of all this, Sangohinde, an infamous hooligan, along with his men lay siege to the vulnerable town. Ogun once again rises to the duty and confronts Sangohinde who he eventually vanquishes after an intense fight that involved physical and paranormal vigour. Ogun forgives his second wife and is once again restored to his Olympian height. All together, the production was made up of ten movements.

Analysis of Lighting Effect in Ogun Lakaaye's Production

The use of lighting in stage production is a technical aspect of the theatre, which brings life to performances. Lighting helps to define the mood, tone and the atmosphere of a theatre performance. In the same vein, the use of lighting in the production of Ogun Lakaaye dance performance helps to advance the story of the Ogun Lakaaye the eponymous character. There are various theatre lighting equipment that was used for the performance. They include the follow spot, the par cans, Fresnel lights, cyclights, and ellipsoidal, etc. In the tableau, two Fresnel lanterns rigged at the centre stage are lit with a

green gel inserted in one and purple gel on the other. In this scene the people are in confusion and are looking for a way out of their predicament. The projection of this green light shows that people are in great confusion as it is shown in the picture fig. 1 below.



Fig. 1 Fresnel lamps with green and purple gelatin inserted in them.

Evaluating the lighting projection in the above picture, it symbolizes that the people are in confusion, commotion and disorderliness and they are looking for a way out and finding solution to their problem. It also means that their world is void and darkness is upon the face of the land. More so, follow spot is another lighting equipment, which is used to advance the story. It plays a significant role in narrating the god's predicament and Ogun's accomplishment of creating a way by clearing the path for other gods to ply. In the first scene, the follow spot is used to reveal the gods when they were coming from heaven to the world. They were all looking for the right way to ply as it is shown in the picture fig. 2 below

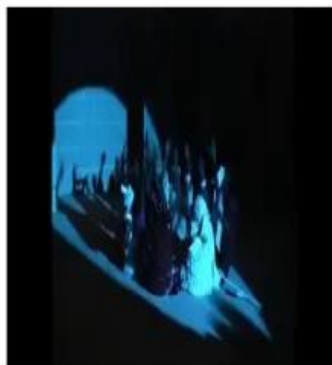


Fig. 2 The gods are looking for a way to cross a gulf

The above picture explains that they have spent days and nights looking for a way out of the gulf. However, they put on all their effort to rescue themselves from the gulf. In this regard, another gulf is created with a Fresnel light from the center stage above the actors and the gods are trying their best to

create a way for themselves. These gods have tried their best but all effort was futile until ogun cleared the path with his machete. This is seen in the picture below



Fig. 3 The gods are looking for a way out of the gulf

Ogun Lakaaye clears the road for the other gods. The focal point here is the use of light to create two gulfs. In the picture below, Ogun clears the road while the other gods follow.



Fig. 4 The use of lighting to create two gulfs; Ogun clears the road with his machete

Lighting Equipment and Techniques Explored in Ogun Lakaaye

If a performance is to be staged in the theatre, the technicalities available in the theatre are what will be used to aid the production. Similarly, in the production of Ogun Lakaaye, three lighting equipment were used to advance the production. These are follow spot, Fresnel lamps and par cans. They are, however,

conserved to giving a spectacular performance. Consequently, how these lights are used will be explained. This follow spot light is rigged behind the last seat in the theatre and it focuses the stage. The lantern is rotational and can be shifted to focus any part of the stage as the light is thrown. It focuses in

the circumference of a circle and its diameter can be enlarged and reduced. Its intensity can also be reduced and increased base on the desire of the lighting designer's score for the production. In view of this, the follow spot light was active from the beginning of the production to the end. Follow spot was used to achieve focus. This light is used to direct the sight of the audience to the performers. In doing this, the other part of the stage area is dark while the actors alone will be seen on stage. This answers to our theory which explained that our eyes are fixated to a portion of light through the activation of certain organs called cones, while the other organs known as rods are activated to seeing (dark vision) the dark part of the stage.

Functions of Lighting in Ogun Lakaaye

There is one criterion used to measure the functions of light in a theatrical performance, and this is how a light designer properly manages the light to interpret the idea or the story line of the performance on stage. In this regard, the functions of lighting in Ogun Lakaaye are;

i. Selective visibility

The most significant function of stage lighting is visibility because the aim of coming to the theatre is to come and see the performance. So, the audience should be able to see what you want them to see or not see what you want to make hidden to them. The action is revealed by acting and dialogue but focus and seeing the action is determined by light. For example, actions are going on the stage and stage left simultaneously and light is focused on stage left. Naturally, the action on the stage left will attract visibility. In this direction, light is used to perform the function of selective visibility in the production of Ogun Lakaaye. Two actions are going on simultaneously at the stage right, which is the king's palace and the stage left, which is the façade of Ogun's house. Although, the actors have halt their movements on the stage right but the action on the stage left is progressing; in that light is positioned on the stage left as it is seen in the picture fig. 5

below.



Fig. 5 Using light for selective visibility

ii. It interprets the moods in the performance

Mood could be the feelings created in a performance and it is sometimes transferred to the audience. Feeling could be that of happiness, sadness, love and sympathy, etc. However, these feelings are also projected through light in the theatre. In view of this, the feelings that are projected through lighting in this dance theatre are confusion, love and danger, etc. The state of confusion is when someone is uncertain about what is happening. This can be seen in the tableau of this performance as people are seen struggling for a way of unfavorable condition and are looking for comfort zone. The pictures below show how lighting is used to project confusion.

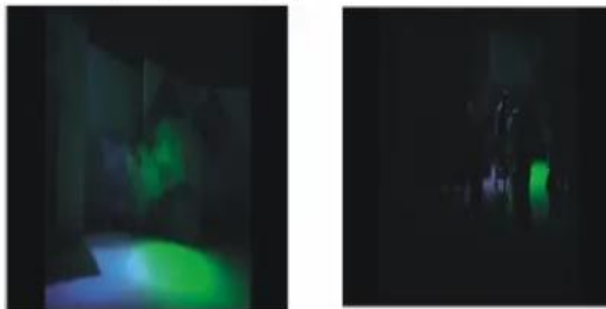


Fig. 6. Using light to project confusion

The mood in the above picture was created by fixing gels of different colours; purple, green, blue and yellow on the surface of the Fresnel lights position at the up-stage to produce a narrow beam of different band of colours and accompanied with smoke effect. This mood signifies disorderliness,

confusion and commotion. The mood and atmosphere of love was also projected through lighting. The projection of the symbol of love in theatre lighting is blue. This is usually applied when lovers are celebrating, curdling or rejoicing in the euphoria of their relationship. A narrow beam could be focused towards their direction with colour blue beam light. This can be seen in the picture below as light is used to establish the mood of love.



Fig. 7. Projection of love through lighting

Lighting was also used to project the imminent danger and war. This is projected through the placement of red gel on the PAR cans and follow spot. Example is shown below in fig. 40.



Fig. 8. Lighting is used to establish danger.

The function of light is limited to establishing mood alone, it also plays important role in reinforcing the story being presented on stage.

This explains how light is used to narrate and advance the storyline of a production. For example, light is used as a form of transition from one scene to another. Inherent in this performance light is used to explain night and day. When the gods are looking for a way out from one gulf to another, light is used to explain that they have spent days and night in a gulf trying to look for a way out. The pictures below explain this.



Fig. 9. Using light to project transition of day to night

Furthermore, light is used to narrate the predicament of the gods where properties could not be used to create the gulfs, in which the gods found themselves. Light was used to create the gulfs as it is shown in the picture below.



Fig. 10. Using light to create gulfs

In the above picture, a narrow beam is created with a follow spot light behind the gods (actors on stage) that represents a gulf where the gods are coming from while the circumference created in front of the gods represents another gulf, which the gods are making effort to transit into. But all effort was futile until when Ogun created a path way to their transition into the gulf. Looking at this picture, light has been used to tell the trial of the gods which was solved by Ogun the god of iron. Below is the picture of how Ogun create a way

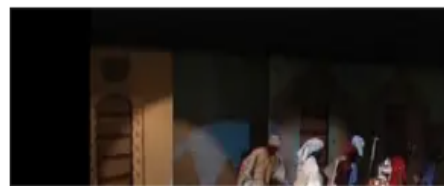


Fig. 11 Ogun has created a way into another gulf and they are rejoicing

iv. Composition

Lighting is used for composition in that the lighting designer used light to map out the acting areas and at the same time was used to direct the focus of the audience towards the stage area where action is taking place. In this dance theatre, the stage right is the king's palace; the left stage is Ogun's house, while the center stage is the village square. When actions are going on in these areas, the light will be positioned to that area and automatically the vision of the audience will be directed to that area that is lit. The application of light also guides the actors' movement on stage; any actor who moves beyond the light has entered into another locale. Light is used for composition. However, it is pertinent to note that light plays a significant role in theatrical performances because it is the determinant factor to seeing a performance

Challenges of Light the selected stage performances

In this 21st century, any theatre performance devoid of lighting will lose communication and interpretation. More so, when lighting is not properly and technically applied in a performance, the lighting designer will succeed in giving general illumination without details to advance the story line of

the performance. However, in the performance of Eda and Ogun Lakaaye, performed in the Performing Arts theatre, University of Ilorin. The major challenges in the productions are; problem of wrong focusing, misuse of light for specific functions, insufficiency of specific lanterns etc.

The problem of wrong focusing is so rampant in the production of Ogun Lakaaye and this distorted the lighting interpretation of the performance. There is a scene in the performance where the gods have successfully made a way out of the gulf and transited to another world. The application of light in that portion was supposed to be general illumination by flooding the stage with the PAR can lights and the 2k baby spot light. But all that is found on the stage is the beam light focus of ellipsoidal lantern in circles on one another. This did not compliment the actions on stage in that moment and this wrong focusing reoccurred severally in the performance. This is presented in the picture below..



Fig. 12. Wrong focusing of the ellipsoidal light.

Similarly, we can also state that the light is misused for a specific function. In the picture on the right above, we see the light designer is trying to achieve focus with the ellipsoidal lanterns and ends up in applying the ellipsoidal lamp at the apron making the message needed to be passed across with light, which is very complex for the audience to comprehend. Furthermore, in the left picture, the designer was trying to give a partial illumination to the stage right, but the ellipsoidal lamp's beam has focused on the left stage. Technically, it is assumed that action is going on in the left stage because the side is lit but there are no actors there. By so doing, there is misapplication of light for the performance.

The challenges discussed above can be attributed to insufficiency of some lanterns in the theatre. Apparently, the lanterns that are used for flood lighting, are limited. In view of this, some lanterns, which are used for focusing, were maneuvered to function as flood lighting. For example, there are three baby spot lights in the theatre which are used to flood the stage but it is ironical these lamp are not sufficient, that is why there is too much of shadow reflection on the stage. These shadows are caused by the beam generated from the bright lights (Fresnels, par cans and the follow spot light). However, efforts should be made at refocusing the lights in order to make do with the lighting instrument available in the theatre.

Findings and Recommendation

This research discovered that, lighting designers explorations are limited because the type of equipment used are out of date. Therefore, it is recommended in this research that the new inventions of light should be used in theatre. This research also discovered that theatre and stage light could now serve the purpose of set design, illumination, and effect creation, if facilities are available. Thus, this research recommends that led screen can be used to light, set and create effect spontaneously. This research also recommends that the light designer in theatre should be opened to extensive research on light aesthetics in theatre. Since light is beyond illumination in theatre, this research recommends that light analysis should be given a pertinent attention for the sake of detail interpretation and meaning. The conventional lighting technique adopted in the Nigerian theatre should be upgraded and be subjected to the creative intuition of the light designers. This will bring more innovation and discovery to lighting effects. Lighting designers should explore their creative mind to know how lighting effects can be created using some embellishments that can be used to create spectacles in theatre performance.

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