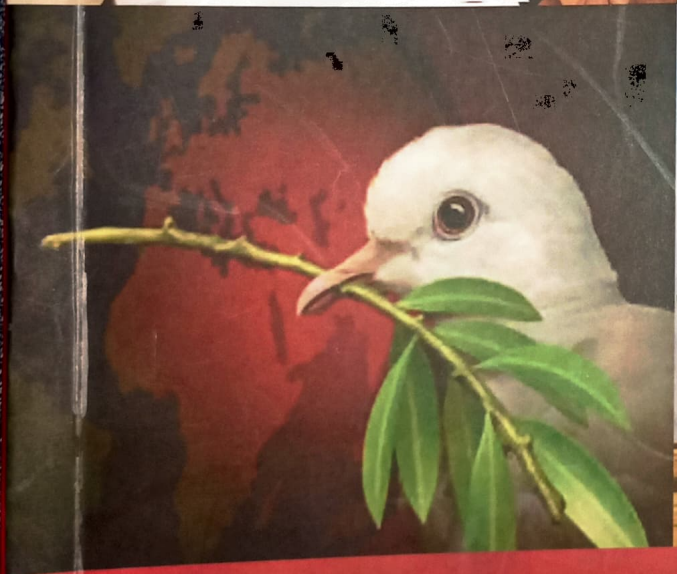


MUSINGS

ON COMMUNICATION AND PERFORMANCE FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT



Isaiah Bariki
Taofiq A. Alabi
Domwini D. Kuupole

MUSINGS ON COMMUNICATION AND PERFORMANCE FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

ARUND
TAYO SIMON

Isaiah Bariki
Taofiq A. Alabi
Domwini D. Kuupole

Copyright 2022

All Rights Reserved:

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing from the publishers and the editors.

ISBN: 978-978-8566-08-9

Published by
Department of English,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
&
Department of French,
University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

CONTENTS

Copyrights page	ii
Preface	iii
Contents	iv
 CHAPTER ONE Revitalisation of French Language Study in Nigeria for Regional Integration Afusat Sanni-Suleiman	 1
 CHAPTER TWO Applying Nehemiah's Biblical Leadership Principles in Entrenching Good Governance in Nigeria Olasupo Jacob Osaji	 14
 CHAPTER THREE Language and Gender in Buchi Emecheta's <i>The Joys of Motherhood</i> Adelaide Keudem Dongmo	 28
 CHAPTER FOUR Language Practice Strategies of Students Learning French at the University of Cape Coast Anthony Y. M. De-Souza	 38
 CHAPTER FIVE The Dynamics of War: Weapons of Engagement during the 1968/69 Peasant Uprising in South-Eastern Nigeria Abiodun S. Afolabi & Rasheed Onagun	 57
 CHAPTER SIX Celebration of Blackness: Igniting the Pride of Africa in Today's World Erica Kumi & Moussa Traoré	 72
 CHAPTER SEVEN The Imperceptibility of Theatre Performances in Ameliorating Depression Occasioned by Covid-19 Pandemic *Tayo Simeon Arinde	 83
 CHAPTER EIGHT Semiotic Analysis of Jesus' Ethno-Cultural Proverbial Language of Matthew 15: 21-28 in an African Setting Olatunde O. Ogunbiyi	 91

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE IMPERCEPTIBILITY OF THEATRE PERFORMANCES IN AMELIORATING DEPRESSION OCCASIONED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Tayo Simeon Arinde

Department of the Performing Arts,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Introduction

For hundreds of years that passed, the world has not witnessed a condition where all its citizens were forced to disengage from their daily economic, political or social activities as it was witnessed during the surge of Corona Virus pandemic (COVID-19) in the latter part of 2019 and early 2020. It was a situation where all human activities were paralysed and in some cases grounded to a halt. The Corona Virus pandemic, otherwise known as COVID-19, succeeded in humbling and submitting every human being by confining them to indoor activities. During the period, many who were diagnosed to have contracted the virus were ostracised from the public or isolated from people, including members of their households.

In other cases, for fear of being diagnosed for having COVID-19, illnesses that were hitherto freely announced and for which treatment sought were concealed. Close affinity, which was the hallmark of close relationship demonstrated by hugging and kissing suddenly became prohibited. The only permissible way of expressing pleasantries was through the use of symbolic/semiotic register of greetings expressed in the adoption of fist bumps, elbow rubs and hails across garden walls and other distance greeting styles. In their bid to curb the spread of the virus, governments and organisations in various countries of the world including the World Health Organisation came up with touchstones referred to as protocols. Some measures were made compulsory: constant washing of hands with soap, use of hand sanitisers, compulsory use of nose and mouth covers made of clothing materials and keeping of distance (also known as 'social distancing') at public gatherings (where the need to gather becomes absolutely necessary). Distribution of palliative materials also became a measure to ameliorate the effect of the pandemic on people who were left in a situation of protracted confinement.

As part of the measures to dissuade large gatherings, staff working in various organisations, including government ministries, parastatals and agencies were directed to be working from home. Later when it was observed that the pandemic was easing out, officers at the managerial levels (who were very few) were allowed to be coming to the office to work in obedience to a protocol measure that discouraged crowded gathering.

The above enumerated approaches were some of the measures adopted to keep in check the spread of the virus, which was spreading like wild fire in the harmattan period. No doubt, most of the measures were welcome and were seen as right measures in the right direction, directed at stemming the tide of the surge of the Corona virus (COVID-19).

• pandemic that took the world by storm. These precautionary measures to curb the spread of the virus notwithstanding, the pandemic left people with socio-psychological pains, as people who were hitherto active and mobile could no longer participate in their daily socio-economic, political and cultural routines and activities that they were used to.

The devastating effect occasioned by the compulsory lock-down brought depression to some people. Consequently, the recourse to phantom measures to counter the debilitating effects of the pandemic became absolutely necessary; at least the people had to get out of depression. What were the immediate measures that would bring this succour? A succour was found in theatrical performances which is what is underscored in this paper.

Consequent upon this, this paper presents an option of the theatre and explicates on the role it played in ameliorating the agony of the depression caused by solitary confinement occasioned by the pandemic. Theatre therefore provided the pleasure therapeutic medicine could not immediately provide.

Literature Review

Evolution of Corona Virus (COVID-19)

Not many people knew what the Corona virus otherwise referred to as Covid-19 was. Even some medical experts seemed not to understand the virus and its origin. It was later that the respected World Health Organisation (WHO), in one of its authoritative submissions, gave a clue that perhaps the virus came from a community in China:

On 31 December 2019, WHO was informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan City, China. A novel corona virus was identified as the cause by Chinese authorities on 7 January 2020 and was temporarily named “2019-nCoV”. Corona viruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. The new virus was subsequently named the “COVID-19 virus.” (www.euro.who.int/en 2019)

The World Health Organisation (WHO)’s report in 2019 put paid to insinuations as to what the virus is and where it was coming from. Although, there were arguments and counter arguments as to the authenticity of the information, WHO’s submissions were generally accepted due to the credibility it had enjoyed over the decades.

In view of the fact that it was described as a new “strain that has not been previously identified in humans”, rigorous efforts to find solution to it became the immediate concern of governments, medical experts and medical organisations. Subsequently, protocols were reeled out where it became an offence to be seen in public gatherings. Washing of hands and the use of sanitisers were encouraged just as prohibition of hugging, kissing and all forms of close interactions became a taboo. To worsen the situation, both victims and non-victims were “confined” to solitary confinement. While victims were taken to isolation centres for treatment, non-victims were prohibited from leaving their residences to anywhere, not even to the markets.

which is the only avenue through which households could stock their homes with food and other essential household items.

This was the situation that the Corona Virus subjected everybody to. The effects of the virus on the world was likened to the biblical enemy's siege on Samaria, which kept the citizens in a perpetual lock-down for years, to the extent that no one could either enter or exit Samaria. This condition the lepers in 2 Kings 7:4 aptly describes thus:

If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall idle there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

The perpetual lock-down of people, occasioned by the precautionary measures handed down to ameliorate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic made life boring as people who were ever mobile were made compulsorily immobile. Aside from the fear that anyone who went out could contract the virus, people had to contend with the medical challenges that immobility placed on them. Finding measures to counter these various challenges became a necessity. Hence, the need to make people who were hitherto lively and mobile to be psychologically tuned, removed from boredom and depression became necessary. In that direction, theatre came in handy. The questions would be: How? What was the relevance of the theatre? These questions may arise because theatre practice is not one of the medical profession, it neither diagnoses nor applies drugs on patients nor does it carry out any medical laboratory services. In reality, theatre does not come under medical profession, but its performances have been found to provide therapeutic relief, which has been found to warm into the psychological fibre of its 'patients' (audience). To those who do not really understand the concept of theatre, attempts will be made to illuminate on the concept. In this direction we shall examine the scholarly meaning of theatre and theatre performances. Attempt will also be made to illuminate on how theatre performance can positively affect the society and help it ameliorate the psychological pains that Corona Virus has put the people into.

What is Theatre?

Theatre, according to Wilson (2007, p.12), is "An art. It reflects life, selecting and focussing on part of the total picture, and this selectivity is a key principle in theatre... universal and has appeared wherever human society has developed." In another development, theatre is defined as "a collaborative art form which combines words, voice, movement and visual elements to express meaning...not only live, improvised and scripted work, but also dramatic forms such as film, television and other electronic media."(*portal.ct.gov.*)

The definition above is adopted in his paper to underscore the presentation of 'real or imagined event'. In life, it has been found that from narrated events, many lessons of life are learnt. Through that process, bottled emotions are uncorked, thereby providing a stress-free experience.

Theatre Performance

Wilson (2007, p.9) describes theatre performance, as a soothing phenomenon. He defines it as: "changes from moment to moment as the audience encounters series of shifting impression and stimuli...a kaleidoscopic adventure through which the audience passes, with each instant a direct immediate experience." Drawing from the above it would be seen that the role that theatre performances played in ameliorating the pains of depression during the COVID-19 pandemic era cannot be over emphasised.

Theatre and the Society

Scholarly contributions of the likes of Olu Obafemi, Femi Osofisan, Samuel L. Becker, Augusto Boal, Bakary Traore, Minneke Shipper, Ayo Akinwale to mention just a few, through their essays, plays and other write-ups, succinctly illuminate on theatre and the society. Makey puts the relationship more succinctly when he states that: "Theatre is surrounded by human relationships. It is set in an environment that is social, and it is presented in a social manner" (Mackey 1997, p. 208).

Kenneth Tynan, a critic in one of his famous quotes on theatre in 1966 submits that: "No theater could sanely flourish until there was an umbilical connection between what was happening on the stage and what was happening in the world." This underscores the symbiotic relationship between theatre and the society.

It is in the same vein that Becker (1966, p.126), in illuminating on theatre and its roles in the society, says: "it offers needed respite, a chance to laugh, and a chance to escape into the healthy fantasy...a guide to living." In underscoring the dependent quality of theatre and the society, Yerima (2015, p.33) submits pungently that:

The criticism theatre makes of society is sometimes bitter, most times too biting for society to accept, yet it is important that they coexist in order to stabilise society against its own excesses and in order for drama and the theatre to grow.

The ubiquitous symbiotic relationship between theatre and the society is underscored in the above quoted submissions. The submissions describe very concisely the entwined positive relationship between theatre and society and its unlimited roles. Hence, theatre cannot be separated from the society because it actually replicates the occurrence in the society.

Theatre in a Pandemic Period

Many forms of entertainment suffered serious setback during the COVID-19 pandemic. Theatre was one of such phenomenon as people that were theatre lovers were restricted from their usual entertainment spots. The pictorial illustration below reveals the situation that entertainment spots were during the pandemic era. The theatre and other relaxing spots were no go areas because of the restriction.



Theatre in a Pandemic (courtesy: Shutterstock.com)

How the Theatre Helped in Countering the Depression during COVID -19 Pandemic

As earlier observed, the resultant effect of the surge of COVID-19 rests on the fact that it kept everybody indoor, deprived men and women of engagement in most of their activities, hence, left the theatres empty as we see in the picture above. The continual incarceration of people was the cause of depression, which was more devastating than the disease itself, especially, for the majority of the populace that did not contract the virus. This was underscored by Lukas Richter and Heidinger (2021, p.1) who state that: "The Effect of COVID-19 illness in the Social Environment brought psychological burden in older adults." Carson et al., (2020; Entringer et al., 2020; Heidinger and Richter, 2020; Luchetti et al., 2020; Stolz et al., 2020; Krendl and Perry, 2021) also confirm that: "ever increasing problem of loneliness have been reported as by-products of COVID-19...as lifestyle changes have been previously linked to adverse mental health outcomes, affirming an increase in depression, anxiety and stress symptoms."

Understanding the word "depression" would make one to understand its devastating disposition. Deshpande et al (2014 p.1) did justice to this when they describe depression as "Complex interplay between mind, body, society, and culture". This was what many people went through during the pandemic lock-down era. No doubt, the debilitating effect of confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic era was not pleasant. Isolation may be good when one is incapacitated but when one is agile and active it is better imagined.

As mentioned earlier, theatre came in handy. It became a useful tool that provided an immediate psychological succour and by extension healing. It offered an immediate partial solution to solitary confinement which would have killed many people. This was made achievable through watching of films and home video films in form of dramatic sketches in animation forms, musical performances, dance performances, oratory and entertainment skits. Most of these theatrical/artistic performances, which were in animation forms were the available theatrical performances that were available since actors and performers who would be more than one person are prohibited from meeting. Interestingly, the animation form of theatrical presentations does not require human involvement but artistic invention in which experts turn series of photographs to movements.

Other ways through which some performances were made available to people indoor were through free on-line streaming channels, where some old performances were streamed

via You Tube channels and other media channels. These other forms of artistic presentation of performances also provided an immediate ameliorative succour, which stemmed the tide of depression that the perpetual lock-down, occasioned by COVID-19 had brought on the people.

Ameliorative succor could be sought in the following ways.

Transitory Relief

Wilson's description of theatre performance earlier (Wilson 2007, p.9) provided shows that theatre could provide a benefiting relief that reduces the pain that trails the depression occasioned by adhering to COVID-19 protocols; sit at home directive.

Instructional Relief

The Holy Bible, King James Version, in Hosea 4:6 states that "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge". Knowledge here is education. Prior to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, most people in the world population knew nothing about any virus known as Corona Virus. So its sudden surge took the world by surprise, and an immediate solution became a mirage. The unimaginable shock could not make immediate solution thinkable, hence, the agreement to adopt the unchallenged isolation proffered by government of various countries. The uncertainty, virtually made everyone to grope in the forest of confusion, and Theatre or Drama, which has been described as the conduit for education, came in handy. The role of theatre is captured by Osofisan (2001) cited in Yerima (2015, p.33). He describes theatre as: "...the most social of the arts, providing the site in which this inherent menace is most stringent." This in essence foreshadows the educative prowess of the theatre in a society. If theatre had not provided the needed education, perhaps people would have been in perpetual isolation.

Enlightenment Relief

Through the medium of the theatre, enlightenment was provided as to what corona Virus is and the danger that is associated with contacting the virus. Social lives by way of social gathering, the hug, the embrace, the kisses and all forms of body contact relationship were put in abeyance. Some of the Enlightenment in dramatic skits were produced in animation forms and watched in the comfort of peoples homes.

Entertainment Relief

Theatre, from the onset, has been known for being an entertainment tool, hence theatre scholars and enthusiasts have never ceased to amuse people using theatrical medium. Theatre practitioners have overcome the early stigmatization when they were referred to as social outcasts or drop-outs. Theatre performances, which are in various forms and shades – drama, dance, music, oratory, etc – have taken their rightful position as the major entertaining platforms that have been used as succour even in solitude. The case was not different during the era of lock-down caused by COVID-19 pandemic. Theatre became a major medium of entertainment that chased depression that was caused by the lock-down.

Therapeutic Relief

Arising from the enjoyment derived from watching theatrical presentations, joy returns, laughter is orchestrated and, in the process, depression is healed. This was one of the feat that theatre performances during the lock--down provided. Therapeutic succour was enjoyed by many. At least, those who were not healed outright enjoyed psychological relief from their exacerbated painful health conditions. Laughter is that which is frequently engaged when you watch theatre performances either on the television, stage or in cinema houses. It has been proved medically to be beneficial to one's health. *helpguide.org* submits that:

Laughter is strong medicine. It draws people together in ways that trigger healthy physical and emotional changes in the body. Laughter strengthens your immune system, boosts mood, diminishes pain, and protects you from the damaging effects of stress. Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Humour lightens your burdens, inspires hope, connects you to others, and keeps you grounded, focused, and alert. It also helps you release anger and forgive sooner.

In the past, many people paid attention to their daily work and never had time to relax. Many did not watch play performances on the television but watching theatre performances during the pandemic lock-down provided therapeutic succour.

Conclusion

This study employed descriptive and deductive approaches which put together theatre contributions in countering depression that was occasioned by compulsory ostracising of people during the lock-down. One would agree that theatre played significant role in reducing the effect of COVID -19 on people. It really confirms the fact that theatre is life and that life has continually provided for the benefit of mankind. Perhaps the devastating effect of COVID-19 would have been more grievous if theatre performances were not available on the screen in homes to provide the needed ameliorative succour that chased the monster called COVID-19 to the forest.

The paper further underscores that major way through which man can be comforted even in the condition of illness and ding-dong of life is for one to experience a stress-free life. At times, drugs may not provide the immediate healing magic. This perhaps is the reason why medical practitioners advise patients to purge themselves of every bottled psychological stress to enable the drugs work. It is this psychological therapy that the theatre provides, which has been found to be a potent ameliorative therapeutic support in cushioning the the psychological effect of corona virus on many people.

References

- Becker, S. L. (1966). The role of theatre in our society: Implications for school curricula. *The Speech Teacher*, 15:2, pp.126-131, DOI: [10.1080/03634526609377507](https://doi.org/10.1080/03634526609377507) downloaded from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03634526609377507?journalCode=reed19> on 6th July 2021
- Deshpande, S. S., Kalmegh, B., Patil, Ghate, P. N., Sarmukaddam, M. R., S., & Paralikar, V.P. (2014). Stresses and Disability in Depression across Gender. Downloaded from https://www.hindawi.com/journals/dit/2014/735307/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=HDW_MRKT_GBL_SUB_ADWO_PAI_DYNA_JOUR_X&gclid=Cj0KCQjwt-BhDIARIsAIPRQcLk_X4TVUx8805TP9FCfq9vkW_yWXwXTQw-AC5Wmozd9TQVF3IIElsaAqalEALw_wcB on 26/7/2021
- https://www.google.com/search?q=what+is+coronavirus&rlz=1C1RLNS_enNG899NG899&oq=what+is+cor&aqs
- <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>
- Kenneth T. (1966). Theatre and the society. Downloaded from (ivypanda.com/essays/theatre-and-society) (<https://ivypanda.com/essays/theatre-and-society-symbiotic-relationship/> on 17th August, 2022.
- Laughter is the Best Medicine downloaded from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/laughter-is-the-best-medicine.htm> on 3rd March, 2022.
- Mackey, S. (1997). *Practical Theatre: A Post-16 Approach*. Cheltenham: S. Thornes. Monster. Downloaded from https://www.google.com/search?q=what+is+a+monster&rlz=1C1RLNS_enNG899NG899&sxsrf on 25th September, 2021
- Richter, L. & Heidinger, T. (2021) Hitting Close to Home: The Effect of COVID-19 Illness in the Social Environment on Psychological Burden in Older Adults downloaded from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.737787/full> on 7th March, 2022
- Theatre download from <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Arts/Guide-to-K12-Program-Development-in-the-Arts/Theatre-Introduction-and-PRC.pdf?> on 1st June, 2022.
- Animation. Downloaded from <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-animation-definition/> on 27th September, 2021.
- Wilson, E. (2007). *The Theatre Experience*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc
- Yerima, A. (2015). Issues of Development in Contemporary Nigerian Drama and Theatre Practice. In A. Yerima, (Ed.) *Culture, Drama and National Ethos*. Ibadan: Ebony Books.