

INTEGRAL POSITION OF THEATRE PROFESSION IN A CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Effiong, Ekemini Akaninyene

Department of Theatre Arts Faculty of Arts
University of Uyo, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Theatre practitioners in almost all the eras have been demeaned by most who are “quicky”, shabby and jumpy in reasoning when they hear the sound of drums, and ululation that emanate from dancers in expression of their vigour and exhilaration. This quickness, shabbiness and jumpiness in judgment to only fragmentary dancing and drumming for no just cause, aside ignorance, seems to cause myopia in the sight of these ones. It is not only disheartening but surprising that even with the uniquely overwhelming effervescence and a plethora of entrepreneurial opportunities Theatre effuses and offers respectively, some are still misanthropic about her. This research is purposive in terms of enlightening individuals, non-governmental organization and the government on the need to render full and unreserved support to the Theatre through sponsorship since theatre has all the potentials and capacities, even the capabilities put together, to resuscitate our religious, social and most importantly, politico-economic system. One of the major findings of this research paper is that theatre practice has multi-functional entrepreneurial and developmental capacities in contemporary times, especially with the sophistication of technology which has come to stay in the Theatre. This research draw its facts richly from relevant journals and texts, reliable PDFs, participant-observation and interviews with theatre veteran(s). As such, Deconstruction, Readers’ response and Utilitarian theories are used to back up the research claims. This researcher therefore recommends that the government and the public in general should put all forms of sentiments and prejudices aside by empowering theatre practitioners and students of tertiary institutions financially, materially and technically nationwide and see whether this nation would remain as impoverished as it is in few years to come

KEYWORDS: Theatre practitioners, contemporary society

INTRODUCTION

Theatre practitioners have always been persecuted, bruised and almost crushed to extinction with various misconceptions, prejudices and confrontations by individuals, governments, cultures and even religions of various ages, but due to their effervescent, quintessential, sine qua non and integral position in discharging unique multifarious functions to the society, they have come to be impervious to these ills, thus becoming robust and sturdy each day in their apparent globally reckoned professionalism evidenced in economic, social, religious, educational and political spheres. This stance can be summarized in Lorca’s philosophical thrusts and ideological bents which are laden with apparent factual undercurrents and underpinnings about theatre as a profession as far back as 1982. He states that, “The theatre is one of the most useful and expressive instruments for a

country's edification, the barometer which registers its greatness or its decline...A nation which does not help and does not encourage its theatre is, if not dead, dying...(59). This postulation by Lorca implies that theatre profession is the foundation, strength and life of any society due to its accommodative capacities and effective capabilities to communicate development, orientate the brain retentive ability, expose one to philosophies, ideologies, theories, character's experiences for life-long applicability, carry people's ethos, truth and revolutionary aesthetics as core pathways from imbroglio, sharpen talents into skills (communication and leadership)/ self-employment, exude exuberant confidence and boldness, offer broad-based opportunistic thrusts and train people for citizenship, and national development

Theoretical Approaches Deployed in this Research

In the light of the aforesaid, first, this research exhaustively utilizes utilitarianism to back up its hypothesis. Utilitarian theory states that people tend to avoid pain and get attracted to pleasure. Human beings are moved by pleasure and seek after pleasure. This implies that people can pay much in order to obtain pleasure. Therefore, theatre is a platform or avenue that provides pleasure to people. People who market theatre have the opportunity of drawing people to patronize them thereby generating income for themselves or helping those in the theatre company to gain income. And when the money is generated, the destination of the earnings always go to the government's purse used for national development, hence the essentiality of Theatre to a nation's growth. Similarly, having read a myriad of materials to extract salient points, the researcher was strongly propelled by Rosenblatt's Readers' Response theory; utilizing both efferent and aesthetic ambiances. Through Rosenblatt's efferent, thorough meticulous "slow-motion" reading of relevant theatre materials was adopted. Similarly, Rosenblatt's aesthetic approach allowed the research to bring in observatories outside the limits of textualities. Also, bearing in mind that this is not the first time a research is conducted on the relevance of theatre, and that it would not appear as though nothing new would be stated here, this researcher found it fit to employ Derridean deconstruction, especially inferences from the concepts of nonclosure, or undecidability or what Wheeler calls, unloosening of the concept of meaning, and what Edward Said defines as the power of the text to burst through semantic horizons (Lentricchia, 172) boosted the premises of the research to veer in its "free world" voyage. Remarkably, whatever position would be reached in this research, the so-called conclusion will only open up ways for fresh scholarly horizons and discourses.

THE DISCOURSE

With strong regard to the gifting of theatre in terms of her broad-based opportunistic cum entrepreneurial thrusts in fostering national development, carnival attracts immigrants to our tourist sites while entertaining them as they pay to add value to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) index of the nation. This is worthy of mention. Carnivals are unarguably organized by theatre artists who are versatile in the arts. There can never be carnival if professionalism of theatre practitioners is not gleaned into an artistic ensemble. Columba's assertion proves this, that "the dazzling carnival celebration held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, draws tourists from around the world....The high point of

Rio's carnival is all contest among various samba schools that compete for the best costumes, floats, music and dancing as exemplified in the Nigerian Calabar International Carnival in the 21st century, Nigeria (West Africa) – Biggest African Street Party (120).”

Drawing from his wealth of experience, Columba confesses that the best costumes, floats, music and dancing (regarded by some as a job for lazy and lousy people - Thespians) were solely orchestrated by professional theatre artistes and these came together to form the high point of the show as evidenced in the just concluded Calabar International Carnival. Needless mentioning the monetary worth this carnival has attracted into the country through the influx of immigrants. Without relenting, he adds that “Carnival and processional arts as show business has been interesting for as long as there have been singers, dancers, musicians, fashion, technology, designers, performers and participating audiences always willing to pay to see near and to be a participant of the same time of the show (149).”

It is the spirit of teamwork combined with an array of artistes that makes carnival a show for the theatre profession. The drummers, singers, dancers, musicians, fashion designers, technologists and performers are got from theatre. One may wonder how technologists are from theatre. A precise answer is that in theatre there is a specialization called Theatre Design and Technology. This is a sub-discipline in theatre that trains technologists and any other technical hands. It, however, is not new because some years ago Adedeji had rightly avowed that “as a discipline the theatre relates to all the other arts by reaching out to and unifying them dynamically, it serves as a crucible of language, literature, philosophy, sociology, psychology and religion while at the same time, for performance, it presses science and technology into service (2).”

Apart from carnival and tourism which are gingered and given financial worth by theatre professionals, there are other forms of entertainment solely anchored by these wonderful professionals. In line with this, Neuwirth reveals the invaluable contributions of one of these by asserting that “certainly most people grew up addicted to animation, consumed by our passion for it. Clearly, we weren't alone. Aside from the odd curmudgeon or two out there, everyone adores cartoons. Most often, they are our first introduction to humour and satire and music – an inescapable part of modern pop culture that crosses boundaries of language, class, and generation. More than ever before, animation is appreciated by adults as well as kids....The fact is, there's been such a worldwide animation explosion in recent years....(xii)

While trying to establish how theatre uses animation (cartoons) to entertain and enlighten societies across borders, Bell-Gam seems to digress from animation but still on entertainment and enlightenment by buttressing on the relevance of the potentials of tourism and theatre by affirming that, “Essentially,...Tourism and Theatre are compatible business with great potentials for the development of Nigeria (99).” Even the mostly looked-down-upon dance during carnivals “serves a

vital function in human society by fostering the spirit of togetherness, causing people to have a deep sense of communication with each other (33).”

Aside dance, theatre also influences the world positively through entertainment and other instruments of various kinds. Among all these, it is true that technology has helped skyrocket the theatre through cartoons and films adored by almost everyone traversing language and class universally. In corroboration with Neuwirth, Johnson during an interview avers that,

“Theatre as a profession has enhanced the wellbeing of Nigerians by offering entertainment outlets to the citizenry. All work and no play, they say, makes Jack a dull boy. People need to relax especially in a country like ours that so many other things have plagued the system, Theatre offers a major lease, a major relaxation. Scores of Nigerians are able to manage stress by watching the movies put together by theatre artists professionally. Others pry into the themes projected through the screen acted out by persons who look like those watching and they glean lessons of life from there. Others have ways, suggestions, examples detailed out to them through performances and they draw life’s lessons that enable them to face the vicissitudes of life. Those are some other very great benefits that speak positively about development.”

Weighing the above assertion one would agree that there is a point of convergence in what Neuwirth and Johnson profess about Theatre. For instance, Neuwirth observes that everyone adores cartoons... first introduction to humour and Johnson, who is from entirely different geographical and cultural background, observes strongly the same thing, though in a different phrase logical construct, that theatre offers a major lease, a major relaxation. Scores of Nigerians are able to manage stress by watching the movies.... This corroboration is on the essentiality of theatre products on the welfare of the populace. On maintaining societal ethical decorum, Johnson expatiates Neuwirth’s phrase: cartoons... are our first introduction to ... satire....by saying, “Others pry into the themes projected through the screen acted out ...and they draw life’s lessons that enable them to face the vicissitudes of life.”(interview). Here theatre becomes a Bible performed and projected to the society for relational sanity.

Concerning employment which is one of the major contending issues in the world, Neuwirth points to the roles theatre personnel play in the society. He advances that without question, animation impacts on the nature of the workforce. And yet, animated feature films will continue to provide jobs not only for computer programmers, but for animators, designers, painters, writers, directors, producers, composers, editors, voice artists, and all the other human talent integral to the creative process....and it’s clear that cartoons will be around for a long, long time.(260)

Yes, it is incontrovertible that theatre will be around as long as human existence is in continuum, if cartoon that is just a trace segment of the theatre is said to last for a long, long time. This implies that the meaningfulness of man is not a possibility without fun and happiness. And in this context

cartoons exude entertainment plus enlightenment being the core essences of performances in theatre either on stage or screen.

In line with entertainment principles, the theatre artists use cartoons to make people have leisure and laugh over their sorrows, depressions and frustrations hence live long and happily – two of the greatest treasures in life. Being that theatre entertains and educates concurrently most times, it is very correct that theatre contributes to educational development. It is not gainsaying that theatre is an effective tool for teaching language. That is why Stewig views drama, one of the sub-genres of theatre as an integral part of the language arts and a means of teaching about language which provides a rationale for including it in the curriculum. Drama as an avenue to more effective teaching of language thus becomes a basic element in the elementary school (33).

It would be smart to deduce from the above quote, without any form of pretence and bias, that theatre energizes and activates the sinews, tendons and muscles of education and even go as far as giving fleshiness to education.

More defenses would be that the use of dramatics aids, enhances, and reinforces the learning experience for all students. This insightful experience allows the teacher to design activities tailored to the needs of the learners while providing a situation in which learning is a success. This is because dramatics allows for the utilization of intellectual and creative abilities by students in making learning pleasurable. By so doing, the educator brings new excitement to the classroom or media centre through dramatics. Thus, dramatization provides a bridge of relevance to the curriculum and encourages participation across possible communication barriers. No wonder in contemporary times it has become a tradition that in the literature, dramatization spans the curriculum, and its utilization in many fields reveals its essentiality and potency as an instructional tool. Goldberg confirms that if a viable theatre program could be thoroughly integrated with a liberalized school system, the gain might be viewed as significant for both the theatre artist and the educator. In parts of England, much of the Soviet Union. These programs are designed to increase the educational effectiveness of the school system and to contribute to the nurturance of a healthy artistic tradition in the community involved. The goals of such program are aesthetic values, pedagogical values and psychological values. (5)

England prioritizes theatre in the process of education. This researcher is not surprised with the above quote owing to the desire and the rate Nigerians and other Africans are barraging overseas for quality education. The reason is they have long adopted theatre which has given strength to their syllabus. Then how are we treating our theatre in this part of the world? When shall we realize in full the educational potency of theatre in Nigeria and give it complete support?

Pedagogically, it is worthy of note that two classes of information could be learned from good plays written by those with professional training. They are cultural learning and ethics learning.

Psychologically, the theatre, through role awareness and character identification, inculcate in anyone socialization skills. Involvement in quality play productions allows active participators to know a score of people they may never meet. This develops empathy in these ones; the genesis of social intelligence. Also, active and passive contact with theatre productions brings about personal maturity in people. For instance, by recognizing their current psychological crises in others, they can surmount whatever problems they come in contact with in life. This means that theatre is capable of stopping suicide amidst economic recession.

Still on employment perspective. Theatre Arts is one of the most viable of all the courses in the Humanities. It gives one total training which develops the mental capabilities to be acquainted with, and harness, several kinds of manual skills that are highly productive to the society due to their inherent entrepreneurial strengths and opportunities. According to Johnson,

“...the kind of training that we provide, is deliberately broad and extensive, in such a manner that it makes the students quite versatile and capable in different areas of the economy. Here for instance is a sample list of the several fields of specialization normally covered by our syllabus in Theatre Arts: Dramatic Literature and Theory, History and Sociology of Drama, Children’s Theatre and Creative Dramatics, The Media: TV, Radio and Film/ Video, Music and Sound Effects, Costumes Design and Construction, Set Design and Construction, Lighting Design and Construction, Makeup Design and Construction, Props Design and Construction, Playwriting and Criticism, Play Directing (for Stage, Film and Radio), Acting, Mime and Movement, Dance and Choreography, Publicity and Theatre Business Management, Stage Management (49).”

Could you tell us in which other department either in the Humanities or in the Sciences do we have such a wide diversity of specialization? Do not forget that it is because of the broad-based training that any student who is fortunate to study theatre is stuffed and loaded with a wide range of knowledge and of skills before and after graduation to either be an entrepreneur or work theatre-unrelated disciplines like Banking and insurance corporations, Radio, television and film production and marketing, Broadcasting or print journalism, Public relations organizations, Business Management, Teaching, Furniture Designing, Arts Administration, Fashion designing and modelling, Politics, Professional script-writing, Law and legal professions, Priesthood and evangelism.

Theatre discipline is a double dimensional moulder because she makes out of herself great artists and superlative intellectuals. For instance, Wole Soyinka is famous in this angle. You could imagine the scholastic, academic, economic and international reckoning he has attracted to the Nigeria society as a veteran Thespian, Theatre Arts Professor, globally acclaimed writer and above all, a Nobel Laureate of Literature. Do not forget that Soyinka is also a responsible citizen of Nigeria. This points to the fact that theatre discipline trains its students who are also members of the larger society to be responsible citizens in their various communities. It stamps in them a deep sense of selfhood. There is no gainsaying that theatre teachers inculcate in their students a capacity to be compassionate,

exercise candour, uphold integrity, discern rightly and be brave to voice out and act when and where necessary. This array of quintessential(s) of theatre is backed up as Osofisan objectifies that in Theatre we try to show the students exactly how the world is around them, with all its contradictions, all its cracks; its felicities and its pathos. And especially we try to sharpen their conscience against injustice and exploitation. We teach them how the world can change, perhaps just one little bit, if we refuse to shut our eyes to evil, if we do not allow ourselves to be cowed either by pain or intimidation, or discouraged by treachery and calumny. We teach the students that every individual matters; that all our actions however small, matter in the struggle against evil and the conquest of happiness. In brief, we teach our students the possibility of a humane world, provided we all combine and struggle to build it (110).

It is crystal clear that the extent at which morality, sanity and decorum are enjoyed in our societies is as a result of the untiring functioning of the theatre professionals. Of course, the societal decorum enjoyed so far is consequent upon the indoctrination of theatre artists, students and practitioners who live among us imparting and at the same time effusing these virtues that foster cooperation, conviviality, togetherness and peaceful coexistence. Theatre artists are always a happy people that joke and put smiles on other people's faces, hence long life for those living with them, since a merry heart is a healthy heart and a healthy heart sustains life. Theatre Arts attempts to make any society to be near idealistic, if not absolutely utopian. Theatre is one of the professions that subjects one to be in the search for, and fulfilment of, such a humanizing ideal of pedagogy and creativity. By virtue of doing this, theatre practice contributes active best to the nation's process of becoming.

Frankly, theatre is one of the best tools used in combatting acute mistrust which is a great obstacle to the forging of a national identity in Nigeria. And this is achieved in films churned out by our young producers. This is also feasible in strict adherence to the principle of collaboration during the laboratory stage (rehearsal) of the theatre production. This is practicable in bringing together disparate talents to arrive at a unified production. It makes possible a tradition of compelling collectivism. As such, it is responsible in discouraging these ones in theatre from self-centred orientations, learning how to align their personalities and individual passions to the whims and caprices of the society. For this reason, Osofisan summarizes that this, as you know, is the same as that of any programme of social mobilization, of citizenship; it is one of the reasons one can say without equivocation that the programme in theatre is, intrinsically, a valuable contribution to the programme of national development (112).

Interestingly, there is a much more direct programme within the exclusive reserve of theatre practice. This potent programme is the Theatre for Development (TfD). It is a project usually carried out by theatre students or practitioners in rural or peri-urban communities. They devise the strategy of discovering some problems of any community through subtle interrogation and observation, thus using theatrical approaches as well as dramatic methods of the people in enacting or dramatizing these problems for the community to develop positive attitude in solving them. Another benefit of

this project is that it opens way for intimacy by forging a new identity that enhances not only community relations, but also national cohesion. Anyanwu points to the fact that Theatre Arts as an academic discipline and profession is also in the marriage of collective parts which edifies the society and makes it reclaim itself whenever it hovers on the brink of forgetfulness by juggling society's memory through performance (70).

Theatre occupies a sine qua non position in contemporary times in that it deploys drama as its sub-genre in the resolution of conflict among disputing or even warring communities. To prove a point here, it would be an act of wisdom to let antecedence resonate itself through Soyinka's experience as narrated by Osofisan that Wole Soyinka's recent experience in Kingston, Jamaica is one remarkable instance of this. To the playwright's complete astonishment, the production of his play, *The Beatification of an Area Boy*, became the channel for bringing together the town's fractious young population. Let me quote for you this testimony in the playwright's own words: "Kingston," writes Soyinka, "is a violent city. The nature of the violence in Kingson differs, however from that of Lagos. Here, the area boys are the products of garrisons – as they are known locally – created and often maintained by politicians. The youths grow up in an atmosphere of mutual, predatory neighbourhood hostility. You do not stray from your own turf to another – the result can be fatal....Taking public transportation through other zones – as it is unavoidable – means one thing only: don't descend at the wrong bus stop!(114)"

Here the objective of Soyinka's hosts was to dismantle the "volatile casern mentality" among the youths by assembling performers from different areas of the city for the show. It was a huge success as the youths learnt to develop many of their previously latent abilities. "The greatest experience for all of them, however," records Soyinka, "has been to be able to do the impossible – go into the enemy camp, and perform to an enthusiastic audience....It was the first undertaking of their lives across zones, the first time they were able to see that their age-mates across the street did not hide devil's horns beneath their Rastafarian locks, that there was not a gun lurking behind every lamp post." "And this transformation that he projected has wrought in the lives of these youngsters, Soyinka is right to hope, may prove to be just the spur needed to provoke a re-thinking in the minds of the politicians, for them to "undo the evil they have done to these young lives (115)."

In the spirit of the foregoing, Osofisan reminds that "...in the Middle Ages in Europe, the Christians routinely banned the practice of theatre – until the priests discovered that they could use it to enhance their evangelism, and to propagate their faith, and so finally restored it(101)." The rate at which Christian doctrine is disseminated today owes credence to the instrumentality of the theatre. Do not forget Christianity is the reason the world is practically in peace. And theatre has really helped in reminding people of the Christian ideals through its play scripts, videos and stage performances. In this regard, Nollywood movies have really helped in proselytizing Christian ideals of peace to the extent that a country as tumultuous and volatile as Nigeria is still united.

On the preservation of oral tradition of any society, theatre occupies an integral position. If not for the capability of the theatre to sustain our folktales and stories, our forebears' tradition of sense of belonging and leisurely moments that foster tranquility would have since been forgot. Thank God for the creative vigilance of the theatre profession, where many of our ancient customs and practices have been repackaged for contemporary performance, and hence, for continued existence. This implies that without theatre there may be no meaningful survival of people on earth. Also, through festivals, carnivals and tourist shows, theatre artists can help preserve the society's memory of itself which is one of the most patriotic acts one can offer to one's nation. This is one of the many reasons theatre is quite essential to any healthy agenda of national development. In Osofisan's submission, it goes, "...in theatre arts...many of our ancient customs and practices have been repackaged for modern performance, and hence, for prolongation and survival (117)."

Thus the theatre arts makes anyone who gets in contact with it, either actively or passively, to be knowledgeable not only in his own culture, but in the cultures of other ethnic groups which make up the nation. Therefore, an experience with theatre either as an actor or audience member makes such a person a more rounded citizen, who abides by nationalistic ideals. For instance, most Nigerians are fond of referring to incidents in our plays and movies to illustrate models of conduct and morality that they wish to inculcate in others.

The students would have begun the process of their epistemological and philosophical maturation before graduation. Thus becoming fully prepared for the tumultuous adventure of a Nigerian citizenship.

Additionally, let us listen to Johnson, the very first Professor of Theatre Arts from Akwa Ibom State. With his wealth of experience, during an interview with him in his office, he says, "I would love to start from a rather holistic perspective, namely of education brokers in the world and in particular, Nigeria who do not fail to see the usefulness or signification or reward or developmental candour of Theatre Arts as a great profession without which the course would not have found its place in the curriculum of studies. In Nigeria alone out of about 170 universities, not less than 100 offer Theatre Arts. So, the brokers, the planners of education for national development in Nigeria must have known, seen, recognized experientially and provably that Theatre as a profession contributed a whole lot to national development. In fact, that not having a Theatre programme of study would be a misnomer, and it would negate developmental processes in the cultural and humanistic sector. That is talking generally."

He continues, "Now, Theatre Arts develops the individual for a start, and when you are talking about development, you are talking about human resource development. Primarily, theatre develops the individual creatively. Theatre gives a training possibility or a training capacity for individuals to develop their creative potentials in various areas. Every reasonable person knows that talent without training amounts to very little or nothing. You may be endowed by the Creator so much but it wouldn't take you far if you didn't sharpen that gifting with skills, and training does that. So, the

opportunity to bring about very creative resource persons in the society who would be able to eat from their creative abilities and then help others in their creative endeavours, is a major developmental stride that Theatre Arts as a profession has contributed to immensely.”

He added, “In particular terms, in our present economy, Theatre Artists under the umbrella of Nollywood Movies Industry have proved that the profession is economically viable. Currently, it is the second highest income earner for the Federal Republic, apart from settling several Nigerians. Not less than five million in a population of 170 ± are Theatre Artists in that economic sector of Nollywood who have jobs as actors, directors, editors, camera men, critics, costumiers and makeup artists, producers, Director of Photography (DOP), lighting engineers and designers, music composers, advertisers and marketers, you name them. And they are having food on their tables from that. More importantly, they are contributing great quota as tax payers into national coffers. I have already mentioned how it generates external reserves for the Federal Republic. That is a major plus in terms of economic development.”

In agreement with the above, Okhaku et al, while stating the potency of film in fostering national development, aver:

“In these days of economic depression...the need for alternative revenue sources has become imperative. Apart from Entertainment Tax, Value Added Tax (VAT), and sundry taxes from this sector, film is a veritable source of revenue earning both local and foreign exchange for the economy....Film helps in attitude change and encourages consonance....As a cultural agent, film has the capacity to expose the cultural heritage of Nigerians to Nigerians and to the international community...in turn contribute to the Gross National Product (GDP) of Nigeria aside from helping to stabilize the polity; they (the employed in Nollywood) are removed from the crime bracket foisted on us by the lack of jobs (235).”

Johnson furthers, “And so many have become graduates who now belong to the comity of literate persons through the outlet of the profession. And when you are talking of development you cannot but mention the literate population as a major factor that contributes to development as opposed to ignorance and illiteracy which are detrimental indices in the developmental curve in the economy. Many have had to start private establishments ...managing private enterprises profitably. A typical example is Real Brass. Now, Real Brass is a facility put together by an ex- Theatre Arts graduate of this Department. The first one-hundred-man brass band in the African continent, and he is doing well. And other students are studying that management’s corporation to learn how to be on their feet, to tap from their resource, and reserves of their creativity to making it. That is human development. And Real Brass has employed several other people apart from the hundred playing the instruments. There are other people. Real brass has about five buses and so on. Drivers, conductors and others in its employ who have food on their table, means of livelihood, pay school fees and so on. All these

account for developmental indices of a country. So those are some of the ways of proving that Theatre Arts is very very viable as a course for national development.”

Furthermore, with candour, Theatre Arts training exudes on anyone that comes in contact with her community development capacity, effective brain orientation, exposure to philosophy, ideology, theories, and characters' experiences for life-long applicability, capabilities to carry people's ethos, truth and revolutionary aesthetics from imbroglia, broad-scoped skills for self-employment, exuberant confidence, broad-based opportunistic thrusts, community and leadership skills. Little wonder that Professor Effiong Johnson was evidentially, Dean of Students Affairs, University of Uyo, Uyo, from 2006 to 2011, within which the University enjoyed a five-year crisis-free period and also won three recommendations from NYSC Directorate, Abuja, for strict compliance, error-free and unfailing mobilization exercises. Logically, it is said, if a man is faithful in little, he can be faithful in much. That implies that this theatre Genius who was excellently exemplary in leadership as Dean can be an exceptionally reasonable President of Nigeria that can, undoubtedly, rescue Nigeria from economic malaise. But who would vote for a Theatre Artist who is almost the only specialist with an all-rounded training to revitalize and diversify the Nigeria economy for prosperity? You may say he has not enough experience to become the President. Does a theatre artist like Johnson who is exposed to Civil Rights and Activism, Community Priorities and Environmental Problems, Tribal Jurisdiction and Conflict Resolution, Teacher Training and International Journalism and Non-violent Social Change in Washington D. C, Boulder Colorado, New Mexico, New York and Atlanta Georgia, U.S.A respectively, not qualified for a President?

Other proofs aimed at dislodging inconsequential misconceptions about theatre as well as stressing it as a broad-based opportunistic discipline for entrepreneurship and employment in most areas of endeavour locally, nationally and internationally are evidenced in these Thespians. Emeritus Professor Kalu Uka is the first (and African Black) to lecture in English Literature in University of Leeds, Yorkshire with huge remuneration (2). Professor Wole Soyinka is first and only-for-now Nobel Laureate in Literature in this part of the world. This academic achievement is not without financial attraction to Nigeria. Proudly Thespian! Dr. Reuben Abati was for many years Chief Editor of the Guardian Newspapers who later became Special Adviser to the President on Media, and a host of others. Theatre is overly developmentally encompassing!

CONCLUSION

A research of this nature is worth rounding up with the words of veteran; an authority in theatre. Below are the verbatim wordings of Professor Effiong Johnson.

“There are several graduates of theatre arts who work in the corporate affairs divisions of mega oil companies. They use their theatre skills in brokering truce and liaison between oil communities and the company and allow in the consequence, the much desired conviviality, mutuality and peace for the production of the national “cake” – the crude oil that has been the mainstay of Nigeria's

economy. Many others occupy front-desk jobs in banks and other financial institutions. Some others are in customer services adding impetus in dimensional capacities to economic growth and wellbeing of the nation. Many are in politics, several are in the ministries of education, communication, information, culture, local government affairs, government press, radio, TV houses, you name them. There is hardly any sector of the economy that a theatre artist of worth is not found, contributing meaningful quota.

Again, I reiterate, if it were not so, that is, if theatre studies were such a useless, non-rewarding course of buffooneries, the National Universities Commission (NUC) would not have accredited it as a must-study programme for Nigerian people. Oh me, what of America, Harvard University with the theatre programme there, Cambridge, and all the top-referenced schools which domicile the theatre programmes in their faculties? If there was nothing hyper-crucial the course contributed to the survival of self and the society, it would have missed out in the curricular.”

RECOMMENDATION

On purely entrepreneurial ambience Mrs. Emem Isong and Mr. Boniface Ebewo who are producer cum owner of film academy and CEO of Real Brass; Africa’s Largest-Single most glamorous ensemble respectively should suffice and send signals to the government of Nigeria that not lending support to theatre profession is the secret, though revealed now, behind the fall and collapse of Nigeria from Giant of Africa. It is against this backdrop that this research paper pleads with the Federal Government to give the Humanities equal treatment as they do to the Sciences, thus encouraging the Theatre to drag Nigeria from unemployment-plagued situation. For instance, if full support is given to the Nollywood industry, the survival of our wobbling economy would not be far reached.

WORKS CITED

Adedeji, Adeyinka. *The Theatre in an African University: Appearance and Reality*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1980.

Anyanwu, Chukwuma. *Theatre Arts as the Melting Pot of the Arts*. In “The Crab: Journal of Theatre and Media Arts by Emasealu, E (ed.)” Choba: Department of Theatre Arts, University of Port Harcourt, No.1/ June 2005.

Bell-Gam, Henry. *Tourism and Theatre Potentials in Rivers State, Nigeria*. In “The Crab: Journal of Theatre and Media Arts by Emasealu, E (ed.)” Choba: Department of Theatre Arts, University of Port Harcourt, No.1/ June 2005.

Columba, Apeh. *Sociology of Tourism, Carnival and Processional Arts in Nigeria*. Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 2017.

Gyapong, Tony. Dance in the Development of a Nation: A Study of the Arnold Udoka's Choreographic Works in the Context of Nigeria. In "The Crab: Journal of Theatre and Media Arts by Krama, Ilama (ed.)." Choba: Department of Theatre Arts, University of Port Harcourt, No. XI/ June 2016.

Interview with Professor Effiong Johnson on the Relevance of Theatre to the Society in His Office on Friday August 4, 2017.

Johnson, Effiong. Of Theatre Arts' Effervescence (and Infamy?) Dismantling the Grotesque from the Aesthetic. The 37th Inaugural Lecture of the University of Uyo. Uyo: Sam and Alkon Nig., 2014.

Goldberg, Moses. Theatre in Education: A Summary of Benefits. Canada: The Oryx Press, 1982.

Neuwirth, Allan. Makin' Toons: Inside the Most Popular Animated TV Shows and Movies. Canada: Allworth Press, 2003.

Okhakhu, Marcellinus et al. The Potency of Film in Fostering National Development. In "The Crab: Journal of Theatre and Media Arts by Emasealu, E (ed.)." Choba: Department of Theatre Arts, University of Port Harcourt, No.4/ June 2008.

Osofisan, Femi. Theatre in the Academe and the Question of National Development. In "Literature and the Pressures of Freedom: Essays, Speeches and Songs". Mushin, Concept Publications Ltd, 2001.

Stewig, John's Drama: Integral Part of the Language Arts. Learning through Dramatics: Ideas for Teachers and Librarians. Brizendine, Nancy and James Thomas (eds.) Canada: Oryx Press, 1982.

Wheeler, K. Romanticism, pragmatism and deconstruction. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.