

Crossroads of Culture: The African Storyteller and The Western Theatre (Drama) Actor, Director, Producer

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0197>

Published May 29, 2023

Citation: Owusu X A. and Koomson K. (2023) Crossroads of Culture: The African Storyteller and The Western Theatre (Drama) Actor, Director, Producer, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 4 (3),18-33

ABSTRACT: *The paper argues that in Africa, the storyteller discursively functions as an actor, director, a producer, and all. It investigates the point of emergence and the point of departure between the storyteller in Ghana and that of the Western theatre stage performer, director and producer. The study regards the storytelling art as a literary theory which is an intellectual knowledge paradigm grounded in values derived from indigenous cultural experiences of the storyteller. By analysing and drawing particular attention to roles of the storyteller, this article expresses perspectives, based upon the values of using all the necessary communication skills as a viable medium to spur people into action for self-actualisation. The paper attempts to show the strong intertextual and interconnection between both Ghanaian (African) theatre and the Western theatre experiences. The selected areas in the paper suggest direct and indirect identical traits and weighing strength of thoughts and practices of the storyteller's various roles, and also to fix those roles into various functions in the Western theatre. Implications are drawn on the basis of the critically examined experiences and through analysis of the utilisation of the oral Ghanaian (African) storytelling traditions as a methodological framework. This study, therefore, highlights the basic functions and roles in the Western theatres which the storyteller performs through the development of the dramatic storytelling theatre.*

KEYWORDS: culture: African storyteller, western theatre (drama), actor, director, producer

INTRODUCTION

There is some form of extent recognitions to which we can forcibly link the values of socio-cultural structure and values of the African practices (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005:1) like storytelling to that of Western plays (dramas) that are performed on stage before audience. Drama is, therefore, ‘the art of representing for the pleasure of other events that happened or that we imagine happening’ (Jacobus, 2001:1). After a hard day’s work, children and adults look forward to entertaining themselves through hearing of nice stories and songs. This paper attempts to bring out the elements that point out the emergence and the departure of the Ghanaian (African) storyteller’s assuming roles such as performer, director, producer, and all as being done by different personnel in the European theatre.

General Overview of the Ghanaian (African) Storytelling Tradition

The Ghanaian (African) storytelling tradition is the oldest dramatic ritual art form in almost all Ghanaian (African) cultures across the continent, and sitting around the fire in the calm night after a hard day’s work sets the tone for the enactment of the stories. It has been part of the seven major dramatic processes that (i) are verbally passed down as oral history; (ii) are orally passed down to the next generation as community’s folktale (traditional story, or legendary); (iii) are entertainment source for the people, (iv) teaches morals/lessons and instructs in proper conduct, (v) use beasts, plants and nature as characters, (vi) teach historical lessons, and (vii) engross audience participation to make the stories interesting and captivating through the audience’s attention and enthusiastic response.

Storytelling is [one of the most widely known African theatre, or drama] which has been and is still a ‘vehicle for oral artistic composition and transmission (Eldred et al., 1992:2). Wole Ogundele, in ‘Orality versus Literature in Mazisi Kunene’s *Emperor Shaka the Great*’ asserts that the performance in African setup is produced, transmitted and carried out on the anti-literary campaign and in the performance medium rather than in that of written text and structure (Eldred et al., 1992:9). Eldred Jones also asserts that ‘Drama similarly has its African roots, but the stage play, while being very African in material shows heavy influence from the Western theatre tradition’ (ibid, p.6). Storytelling or folktale (folk narrative) ‘is an art form that has been transmitted from antiquity to the present...in which ancient values and mores find expression and validation’ (Noss, 1970:41).

Storytelling, as often marked by dramatic embellishment, is a method of recording and expressing feelings, attitudes, and responses of one’s lived experiences and environment. Storytelling within the Ghanaian (African) culture is an important shared event with people sitting together, listening and even participating in accounts of past deeds, beliefs, taboos, and myths (Teach Africa, p. 1), codes, values of acceptable behaviour, upholding and preserving good social order (Tuwe, 2016:2). In explanation, the presentation of the tale is a dramatic performance by which the

performer is completely free to create and interpret the aesthetic principle underlying the performance of the tale with devices (Finnegan, 1970:315-380; Tuwe,2016:4).

For a narrator's creativity and his measured standard, the narration is joined in with singing, drumming, percussion instruments, clapping, and dancing, and the utilisation of proverbial songs to highlight the expression of the characters. A storyteller's tools are not just words to edutain the audience and to enhance the performance, but they are a combination of gestures, singing, facial expressions, riddles, proverbs and myths, body movements and acting to make stories memorable and interesting, and sometimes the use masks and costumes (Finnegan, 1970:386; Yeboah-Dankwa, 1988:36). A storyteller can perform epics that can be hours or even days long that relate history and genealogy, battles and political uprisings of a community.

Style and Structure of Storytelling Tradition (In Africa).

The story's structure illustrates its importance (Tuwe, 2016:4) to the storyteller who is a dramatic creator than a writer. Conventionally, there are the techniques and methods used by the playwright and director to create the desired stylistic effect and this has not excluded the African storyteller in any way. Within the Ghanaian (African) cultural setting, almost all the storytelling sessions have similar structures in their tales and the structure is divided into three major parts namely the story's organisation: the introduction (beginning), the body section (middle), and the conclusion (ending) (Tuwe, 2016: 4; Anyidoho, 1997:137; Ametewee, 1997:206; Kovey, 1998:8-19; Nyador, 2000:51-2).

In the beginning, after the narrator engages (addresses) the audience participation with the words 'Mise gli loo! = Listen to a story! ', the audience respond 'Gli neva' = Let the story come!' the storyteller sets the scene by introducing the characters through the interactions between the artist-audience relation (face-to-face encounter) with the following expressions 'Gli tso vuuduudu dādze 'A', 'B', 'D', etc, dzi!' = The story goes around to fall on 'X!', 'Y!', 'Z!' as the audience respond Wōdze edzi gbloo' = It heavily falls on them!' (Anyidoho, 1997:137; Ametewee, 1997:206; Kovey, 1998:8-19; Nyador, 2000:51-2). Among the Gbaya of Cameroun, the Narrator begins 'Great men, or young men, listen to a tale!' while the audience respond 'A tale for laughter, for laughter,' Listen to a tale, a tale for laughter' (Noss, 1970:42).

In the story's inner (middle) structure, among the Eves of West Africa, just as the glitola (narrator) and the glisela (audience, or listener) finish engaging themselves with the introduction of characters, the glitola proceeds the story proper with the defining plot structure and the conflict through the use of all sorts of techniques: gestures, proverbs, facial expressions, voice variation, dramatisation of the characters, and songs introduction (mmoguo among the Akans, or gliha or glimedeha among the Eves). This is another significant aspect of the narrative moment of the events' sequence. Two types of songs have been distinguished: the first usually performed by the storyteller and frequently joined in by the audience which is clearly integral to the plot, and the

second type serves an interlude which is introduced by an audience member according to the procedure (Anyidoho, 1997:138; Yeboah-Dankwa, 1988:33-4). This song interlude is quite often introduced at very critical moments in the tale when the narration is flagging.

The introducer has a particular significant relation in the artist-audience-art complex by announcing his or her presence in the enactment of the event then (Anyidoho, 1997:138; Yeboah-Dankwa, 1988:33-4). The introducer starts with ‘Gbe ma gbe mele etefe = That day I was there!’ as the narrator gives the introducer chance to in tune the song with the expression ‘Aha, neva míase! = Yes, let it come!’, and when the song is over, the song introducer gives the narrator the chance to continue with the expression ‘Kpɔ aɖe! = Watch your tongue!’. For example, in Zimbabwe, among the Eves of West Africa and the Gbaya of Cameroun, the audience perform a real dramatic play by joining the storyteller in signing, dancing and rhythmically shouting, in response (Kovey, 1998:8-19; Tuwe, 2016:4; Finnegan, 1970:315-88).

The Importance of Songs to The People

The song being an integral element of the tale encourages audience participation. The performer(s) use(s) songs to manipulate the audience’s reaction, but in the song, he invites the audience into full participation, participation which must be controlled if he is to be able to continue his tale. It is also through the song that the emotion of the tale most clearly comes into focus (Noss, 1970:44). The song may be used for comic relief, and may indicate passage of time or repeated action which also may remind the listener of what has happened, may suggest what will occur, and may indicate the height of triumph or the depths of fear and defeat. But above all, it draws the listener into the performance.

This same song interlude serves as a source of education. It is from the songs that one could understand what should and should not be done in a certain manner. It gives an opportunity to one to learn how to speak and dance in public. Mostly, children learn a lot from the adults during the storytelling session through the song interludes. Some later become great songsters, musicians, dancers and performers. It is also a way of controlling the behaviour of the people in a particular community. During this session, everyone learns one or two things from the gathering and this helps shape their lives. It is a source of reference point. When one forgets something and he just remembers the song in the narration, he quickly recollects all the matters that surround the circumstances (Kovey, 1998:19).

The story’s closure procedure contains different structured ending which differs from the beginning and the ending, and also emphasises a moral or final statement that is initially indicated in both (the) introduction and (the) body section. From among the Gbaya, there is a statement at the end that ‘My tale is set right under the kolo tree gbat!’ or ‘Strike the kolo tree with the boar spear rok’ (Noss, 1970:42). The narrator in Eves has it in this format ‘Esi megbɔna la, eye nyagãdeɖi aɖe tso blem eye nye hã metsɔ ble mì loo = On my way here, I met an old woman who

deceived me with it and I have come to deceive you with it' while the audience respond 'Yoo, dzenumè wò' or adzonume wò = Yoo, you have a spicy tongue' and the narrator ends it all with 'Yoo, adzo se to globoe mì = Yoo, you have a good ear listening container' (Anyidoho, 1997:137; Ametewee, 1997:206; Kovey, 1998:8-19; Nyador, 2000:51-2).

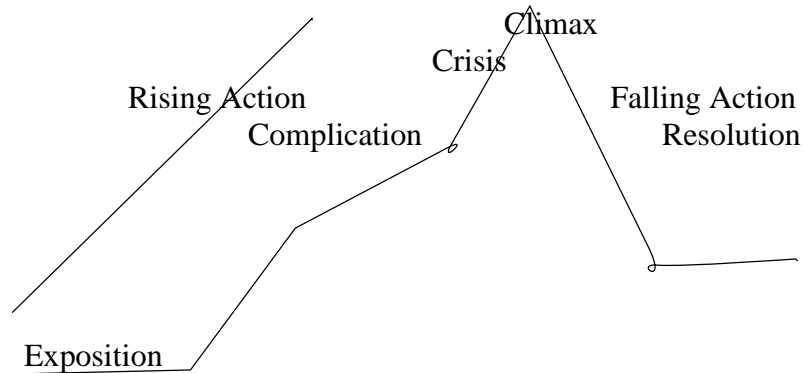
It is important to note that the narrator concludes with a reminder to the audience that they have just been deceived (Anyidoho, 1997:137). In telling the tale, in Eve setup, one does not give an endless tale. However, if the need be that for sake of time it is late in the night and they have to stop the tale or an urgency occurs that they have to quit the tale, the storyteller (glitola) uses this expression 'Glitakpo dzo dọ ave! = The headless tale runs into the forest!' (Nyador, 2000:51). The implication is that the tale continues till the end but not at that moment.

The Plot Structure of The Story

Aristotle defines plot as 'the arrangement of the incidents in a literary of art' (Ukala, 1992:63) and, considers six elements that are essential to good drama namely the Six Elements of Drama. These are: *plot* which he refers to as the action that tells the basic storyline and what happens in the play; *theme* which he obviously refers to as the meaning (the main idea, or lesson) to be learned from the play; *characters* whom he refers to as the people (sometimes animals, or ideas) the actors portray in the play who the move the actions in the plot forward; *dialogue* which he refers to as the words the playwright writes that the characters in the play speak to help move the play's actions along; *music/rhythm* often featured in drama, he refers it to the rhythm of the actors' rising voices as they speak; and *spectacle* which he refers to everything that the audience sees as they watch the play and it is the visual elements of a play: sets, costumes, special effects, etc. These elements are also not exceptional in the African storytelling dramas.

Aristotle, again, recognises two kinds of plots; a simple plot which has one continuous action directed to its events that are arranged in a way that could predict the end and without peripeteia which is 'a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to the rule of probability or necessity' (Ukala, 1992:63), and a complex plot which has a change in the action that is accompanied by peripeteia and/or recognition which suggests a change from ignorance to knowledge. There seems to be, in Ghanaian (African) tales, three kinds of plots: single plot which corresponds to simple plot; then there are double plots which corresponds to complex plot; and multiple plot though most African tales are of single plots.

A DIAGRAM OF THE PLOT STRUCTURE



In the plot structure, there is an *initial incident* and *exposition* which talk about ‘who, when, where and what’ part of the story as the events get the story unfolding; *preliminary event* which also portends whatever takes place before the actions of the story that is directly related to the story; *conflict* which explicitly identifies the internal and/or external struggle, clash, and fight between opposing forces, ideas, and interests which then create dramatic tension as the *rising action*: a series of events that follow the initial incident leads up to the dramatic climax that builds up; the *climax*: the turning point or high point of a story where events can go no farther; *falling action* is the series of events that follow the climax; and *denouement* or *resolution* which unravels that everything comes to equilibrium though not as things were before the conflict.

Sample Story

(From: Agbemabiese, 2007:6; Verbal African-Ewe Tales–Headless Crabs-online.)

Unbridled Friendship Causes Crab to Have No Head

N: Are you present?

A: Yes, we are.

N: You know how to tell stories, don’t you?

A: Yes, we do.

N: Then will you tell it for me to hear?

A: No.

N: Then what are you going to give me before I tell you a story? You children of today, you no longer respect, do you? Do you know you are no longer showing respect? Listen to the story! = Mise gli loo!

A: Let the story come! = Gli neva!

N: Listen to the story again! = Mise gli ake!

A: Let the story come! =Glia neva!

N: Before we start, we have to sing one song, Okay?

A: Yoo (*They clap*)

N: Okay let's have a song.

Note: (*Musical interlude with dancing*)

Chicken soup with porridge sweet,

People from Dahūme (Benin) are coming

Okra soup with porridge sweet,

Four o'clock people are coming

N: Yes! Let me tell you stories. Is it pleasing to you?

A: Yes!

N: Do you know why a crab has no head?

A: No

N: Story moves and lands on animals! = Gli tso uuuu dze lāwo dzi!

A: It lands on them! = Wò dze wo dzi zem!

N: It moves for long and lands on aquatic animals! = Wò dze tōme lāwo dzi!

A: It lands on them! = Wò dze wo dzi vlii!

N: It moves for long and lands on domestic animals! = Wò dze afeme lāwo dzi!

A: It lands on them! = Wò dze wo dzi gbloo!

N: Do you know what happened?

A: No

N: One day they were there. Every animal that existed did not have a head. They were there, headless. Why did animals not have a head? He tried. The grandfather of crab tried. He learnt carpentry. He was carving/making things. He was carving heads for every animal. As he was carving heads for every animal, he had to sell them. He took his child, he is respectful, he respected his grandfather very much. And he entrusted the heads to him

A: On that day, I was present.

N: Let it come for us to hear =Neva míase.

Note (*Musical interlude with dancing*)

Dead frog with a bloated back,

Broken legs and arms...

A: Look your tongue! (It's your turn)

N: On that day, you are grandfather crab. Then grandfather crab appointed Crab that he should be selling the heads to his peers. Then when every animal needs head he comes to Crab. However, Crab, Lobster, and Spider became very close friends. Crab helped his friends readily when they were in difficulty. One day Spider asked Crab to loan him his head. He agreed and Spider wore Crab's head to the chief's house when he was summoned by the chief to appear in a serious case. When the case was heard, Spider was found guilty and was to be beheaded. Spider knew very well that the head was not for him so he submitted himself and the head was cut. Crab waited indoors for Spider to bring the head back but he never came to inform him that the head was cut off at the chief's court. God empathized with Crab and gave him a mouth, teeth and a pair of claws to use in

defending himself. This is what an old woman deceived me with it when I was coming and I have also deceived you with it.

A: Yoo, you have a spicy tongue! = Yoo, dze nume wò!

N: Yoo, you have good ear listening container! = Yoo, dzee se to globoe mi!

N= Narrator; A= Audience

The Point of Convergence and Divergence: Audience Consideration

This is the group of people who watch the play. Many playwrights, directors and actors consider the audience to be the most important element of drama, as all of the effort put in to writing and producing a play is for the enjoyment of the audience. Audience participation is most often an important part of African storytelling and the audience is not captive and will not listen long to pure didacticism however instructive (Noss, p.41). The stories are told and exchanged in social gatherings. In some cases, at least, it is clear that certain categories of stories are designed primarily for children and are told to them either by other children or by the old women. This points out the rise of the question of the audiences for whom the stories are intended. It also lays emphasis on the point that certain stories are felt to be preserved for children and to be most suitably told by children and to them although adults know them and sometimes join in (Finnegan, 1976:376).

To be even more successful in the choice of appropriate form of story to tell, consideration is given to the (characteristics of) audience which enables the narrator to utilise the identified ways. This helps enhance the narrator's communicative capacities (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005:20). Another characteristic of the oral tradition which relates to the nature of performance is the involvement of the community in the process as well as criticism (Bodunde, 1992:24). Finnegan explains further that in the creative performance, members of the audience neither listen silently nor wait for the performer's invitation to join in. Instead, the audience breaks into the performance with their additions, questions and criticism (ibid, p.24-25). The criticism always comes out when the audience feel the narrator is hoaxing them or deceiving them.

Acting

The role of the folktale artist may be compared with that of the actor in a dramatic production (Noss, 1971:41). The narrator in telling the tale is a performer acting out before his audience an ancient play. The performer becomes the actor on stage as he begins the tale and the words of the ancestors with the link between past and present are found in the tale through the performer. Like the Gbaya tradition of the tale, everyone is a performer and once he mounts the stage he is responsible for all the aspects of performances and can exploit all the art forms; music, songs, dance, and ideophones, etc. to conventionally enhance his artistic delivery.

He is also likely to introduce his own favourite tricks of verbal style and presentation and to be influenced in his wording by the audience and occasion; thus, he will produce linguistic variations on the basic theme different from those of his fellows or even from his own on a different day or

occasion (Finnegan, 1976:386). The actions of a theatre performer in a professional sphere depend solely upon the source material which usually consists of a script filled with dialogue and stage directions written by the playwright which the performer is obligated to observe (Miller, 2000:16). He or she uses performance elements like (a) *acting* and *speaking style* which help him to use the facial expression and the body physical- the nonverbal tool - to convey mood, feeling, lines, and the personality of the character he plays all in accompaniment of voice and vocal expression to portray the character's roles; (b) *character motivation* which he has the reasons for a character's behaviour; an incentive and inducement for a character's further action; (c) *character's analysis* where he responds to dramatic art, the process of examining how the elements of drama –literary, technical, and performance –are used; (d) *empathy* where he has the capacity to relate to the feelings of the audience member when he is or not on stage; (e) *breath control* the situation of him properly making use of the lungs and diaphragm muscle for efficiently maximum capacity of breath for speaking; (f) *inflection* and *projection* the situation of him changing loudness pitch of the voice and how well the audience receive the voice; (g) *diction* and *language* which aim at the pronouncement of speech clarity in the drama by coining and phrasing selected words that suggest a class of character; (h) *gestures* where any movement of the actor's head, shoulder, arm, hand, leg, or foot conveys meaning; (i) *style* which is the shaping of dramatic material, settings, or costumes in a deliberately non-realistic manner; and (j) *monologue*, *soliloquy* and *suspense* where either a long or a short speech made by one actor who is alone on stage (a monologue may be delivered alone or in the presence of others) mix with feeling of uncertainty as to the outcome, used to build interest and excitement on the part of the audience. The storyteller utilises these skills that are vibrant and full of images and symbols through the language and the action as he imitates many characters in the story.

Directing

The 'director is responsible for getting the story and meaning of the script across to the audience clearly and powerfully. On stage, it is *always* the actor's responsibility to deliver the story and meaning' (Miller, 2000:14). The theatre director is the artistic manager and inspirational leader of the production team who ultimately co-ordinates the work of the actors, designers, and crew so that the production accurately expresses production concept through the director's vision, energy and ability to focus everyone else's efforts on the common goal; he is also the same person responsible for the unified creative interpretation of the script, creating a viable production concept, and directing the actors (Gillette, 2000:8 &565). The theatre director has so much power in the professional theatre, and the curious paradox is that, the playwright is also not actually seen on the stage but through the actors and the physical staging provided by the designers. However, the storyteller visibly appears and runs the performance with the obvious capacity of directly effecting coordination, rhythm, and mood on the stage before the audience.

In contrast to the professional director whose primary work is done through actors and designers who then transmit ideas and energies to the audience (Hodge & McLain, 2010:2), the storyteller

is communicator just as the director yet he does everything by himself. Though the director's ultimate responsibility is to touch and move the audiences with a play, the director cannot do so by himself or herself, rather, he or she communicates to the audiences how he or she thinks and feels through his cast and crews.

Producing

The role of the folktale artist may be compared with that of the actor in a dramatic production. But he is at the same time the producer, concerned not only with entertainment but also with interpretation (Noss, 1970:41). The producer is a person who puts a production together, or in the case of a non-profit company, the artistic director who selects the play to be presented, and then decides who will carry out each function: design, and all other elements (Wilson, 2011:144). Just as the producer is the ultimate authority in the organisational structure of a theatrical production (Gillette, 2000:7), the storyteller is the ultimate authority and the most influential when the platform is given to him to narrate the story to the audience.

Unlike the professional theatre producer who secures the rights to perform the play, hires the director, designers, actors, and crews; leases the theatre; and secures the financial backing for the play (ibid), the storyteller does not do any of the above roles specified since he is not into profit making organisation. It is noted that in African societies before the advent of Europeans, things are done in barter system than in monetary system. This, therefore, gives no room for box office during the performance of the tales.

The Ghanaian (African) Theatre Space

The Ghanaian (African) theatre and/or drama of storytelling is a way of communicating to the masses and is usually dismissed as inconsequential since it is an indigenous communication system than the Eurocentric mainstream which has theoretical and analytical in-depth discussions. The theatre scene in Africa is very complex due to the heterogenous nature of cultural traditions and the variety of historical factors that have shaped the function, form, and content of theatrical forms. The modern African theatre practice displays a complex mixture of coexistence of foreign, predominantly European dramatic genres and the indigenous dances, storytelling, miming and recitations. Theatre is here taken to include any performing art that represents symbolic images of life or artistic expressions that are in the form of action that can be danced, dramatised, mimed, narrated, recited or a combination of any of these. Each society has its own theatre whose characteristics are shaped by its specific socio-economic structure. Theatre is, after all, any art form where human beings perform both animate and inanimate objects as human beings, setting out, imitating, and representing humanness by using bodies, voices, intelligence, and spirit to another group of human beings who witness the event as audience.

In the performance elements, the primary ingredients of the drama are *characters* represented by players; *action* described by gestures and movements; *thought* implied by dialogue, words, and

action; *spectacle* represented by scenery, music, and costume; and finally, the *audiences* who respond to this complex mixture (Jacobus, 20001:1). The background to theatre in Africa is best understood by dividing theatre into two major categories: the theatre of the domination class, which is normally the minority, and that of the dominated majority. The theatre space used by the indigenous storytellers is either a circle (which the modern Western adopted as arena theatre today) where the narrators position themselves at the centre, and the semi-circle (the horse-shoe-like formation) where they position themselves at the centre of the audience as well.

Set

The theatrical equipment such as curtains, flats, backdrops, or platforms, used in a dramatic production to communicate environment are termed as scenery. Since there is no specific raised platform built for the performances in the African storytelling session, the used of flats, drapes, and other set building materials are not part of them hence no specific design is found at the background. They use trees usually as their background whenever they sit in horse-shoe-like formation (semicircle) or in a circle if they hold the performance on a durbar ground with the narrator positioning himself at the centre of the audience. The scenery is almost always described by the storyteller through ideophones as he continues to narrate the tale.

Lighting and Sound

Lighting is the placement, intensity, and colour which help communicate environment, mood, or feeling. Moon light, fire set by the people, lanterns, light lit in earthen bowls are the major sources of lights for the indigenous African storytelling seasons. With the use of lanterns and lights lit in earthen bowls, there is the provision of lighting areas which are located within the acting arena to facilitate creating a smooth wash of light. Just as the lighting designer is responsible for raising and lowering of the intensity of one or more lighting instruments to appear during production (Gillette, 2000:569), an individual among the audience is equally responsible for turning the lantern low or high or better still re-adjusting and repositioning the lights lit in the earthen bowls through his own observation or narrator's instruction.

In the Western stand point, there is the use of special light effects like the dimmer, the gels, the par cans, Fresnel, strobes, ultraviolet lamps, follow spots et cetera, with someone responsible for giving that effect in the well-structured house that had raised platform. On the other hand, 'the effects an audience hears during performance to communicate character, context, or environment is the use of sound through a style embroidered with ideophone' and this is one of the characteristics of an effective African storyteller (Finnegan, 1976:384-5). The use of raising and lowering of voices, ideophones, aero phones, gongs and drums, and naturally produced sounds like birds chirping, owls hooting, etc. are the major sound effects use in the performance of the storytelling session.

Unlike the Western ways of providing sounds scoring at background, in the storytelling session, there is no music effects tracks to be played at a low loudness level throughout scene(s) by the sound designer whose job is to record and playback all sound effects (Gillette, 2000:574). Though the indigenous African storytelling does not make use of these Western sound effects that make use of instruments which can record and playback the sounds during the performance, the aerophones which include horns, whistles, the bamboo flutes and bugles are most of the instruments used by the narrator and the participatory audience to provide the sound effects.

The ideophone may be used in the tale purely for description. It is through this which the listener sees, hears, or feels what is being described whether it is a sound, sensation, emotion, colour, texture, movement, state, quality, or anything else that is describable. Even if it cannot be described, there will be an ideophone to describe its state of indescribability. It may also be and occur as part of the plot, and the climax of the plot (Noss, 1970:45-6).

Costuming and Makeup

Costume is 'Anything worn onstage...whether it be layers of clothing or nothing at all' (Gillette, 2000:385). It could also be the physical representation of a person's dress worn before another person at a particular point in time. Makeup is a vital element in creating the total appearance of the character on the stage. Throughout central and western Africa, for instance, striking and imaginative costumes and masks are used in a variety of ceremonies (Wilson & Goldfarb, 2008:3-5). They often use percussion instruments, masks, and costumes to entertain while telling their stories. Costumes, wigs, and body paint are most often used to transform an actor into a character. During the storytelling session, sometimes the costumes are described by the performer. This happens when the performer switches mood and the story to suit the environment. Again, since they mostly are in their simple attires, they could not go home to pick the kind of costume before continuing the narration, unlike when they are costumed for the stage in European drama.

Using Properties

Properties (props) are such elements as furniture, lamps, pictures, tables, linens, bric-a-brac, and window drapes that provide the finished set with visual character (Gillette, 2000:12). Any article, except costume or scenery, used as part of a dramatic production; any moveable object that appears on stage during a performance is a property. These items are divided into three: set props, hand props, and decorative props. The set props are generally defined as larger movable items, not built into the set that are used in some way by the actors which could be furniture, floor lamps, rugs, stoves, tree stumps, swings, etc.

The hand props are referred to as small items that are handled or carried by the actors which could also be plates, cups, letters, books, fans, lanterns, etc. The decorative props are those that are used to enhance the setting visually but are not specifically touched by the actor (ibid, p.268-9). Out of these three categories of props use, the indigenous African storyteller makes use of the set props

and hand props. Because there is no raised platform that is built for performances, the storyteller does not make use of decorative props as done by the Western theatre practitioners.

The Choice of Story as The Play Script

Basically, the playwright, the director and the producer use a genre known as the type of play to produce a particular performance. There are different genres; comedy, tragedy, tragicomedy, farce, melodrama, mystery and historical play. In the African storytelling, the genre could be the folktales, narrative poeties, myths, historical genealogies, histories and historical events, epic and so on and so forth that the performer selects a high-quality story from. The script, as an overwhelming majority that theatrical production begins with, could not be the same always in the storytelling tradition.

Before [director is able to] committing himself or herself to directing any production, they must be fully conversant with the script which must be available to actors on a sign-out basis prior to auditions, (Stillings, 1997:11). Therefore, the director's primary tool which is the unique characteristic of the playwright's thought of making, the thing that differentiates the playwright's dream-flight from other writing (Hodge & McLain, 2010:5) is the improvisation that the writer shapes within the mind and the director takes into account not only vocal and visual instruments (the actors) but also the audience place to gather to hear and watch the story (ibid).

However, the folktales, narrative poeties, historical genealogies, histories and historical events, etc. are used by the storyteller as the script to narrate these stories through memorisation and recitation of the events to the audience. It is universally and cheaply accessible as it imposes no language problems to the host audience. It is largely interactive, utilising sense of sight and sound in face-to-face encounter hence maximising active participation of audience in the communication process. More so, the story is to provide teaching and initiation with the object of imparting traditional aesthetic, historical, technical, social, ethical and religious values as a legal code of sort which rests on the spoken words.

Casting

Storytelling session is highly infused with specified music, and cultivated conversation plays part in creating popular and highly valued occasions just as the evening wears on and the stories are delivered with more art and, relatively, more seriousness (Finnegan, 1976:374). When these stories are told in accordance with the local conventions about the suitable personnel and order—sometimes by just a few outstanding narrators, sometimes according to a rotation round each participant in turn, or sometimes by whoever has the story thrown on to him by the last teller, it would still be considered as the introduction of new cast on to the stage (ibid). However, because the indigenous storytelling tradition is not structured for profit making, there is no provision for auditioning before casting, and then followed by production conference which is the first production meeting after audition.

Another significant feature in storytelling is the introduction of cast onto the stage. The narrator is the first cast who interprets various roles on the stage. He can then invite the audience to join him on through the song interlude. He can, again, digress by introducing different cast to enact out some roles through the art of inter-play. All these are sources of casting among the storytelling session as a way of easily switching mood and atmosphere to suit the environment that he tells the story.

Rehearsal

This is a unique form of job orientation invented to avoid the embarrassment of on-the-job training in front of the audience. This rehearsal is supervised by the director of the production (Conte & Langley, 2007:60). Technical rehearsals are devoted to integrating the sets, props, lighting, and sound with the actors into the action of the play. Just as the indigenous performer memorises the whole tales just upon his ground of listening to the narration or singing the songs that accompanied the story, the Western performers and the directors go through a series of rehearsals: reading, blocking, line rehearsals, dress and technical, mock performance, and performance night alongside prompting just to help facilitate memorisation of the script. However, storytellers do not have specific time scheduled for rehearsing the stories, unlike the songs and music and dance. They only repeat words, phrases, gestures and verses or stanzas; the utilisation of repetition techniques makes it easy to understand and recall the stories from memory (Tuwe, 2016:3).

Blocking

Blocking is the movement of patterns, usually of actors on the stage (Gillette, 2000:4-5). Although the storyteller's position is the centre of the circle or horse-shoe-like arrangement of his sitting audience, he, however, moves from place to place through his imitating and mimicking action. This could also mean that s/he makes use of space and blocks himself or herself than positioning himself or herself at a particular place throughout the performance.

The Importance of Storytelling to The Audience

The function of storytelling has been identified as mediating and transmitting of knowledge and information across generations, conveying information to the younger generations about the culture, worldviews, morals and expectations, norms and values (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 20005:19-21) That is not the same as reading a story aloud or reciting a piece from memory (Tuwe, 2016:2). The storyteller creates a series of mental metaphors associated with words packed in forms, songs, music, dances, plays, dramas and poetry with certain musical instruments (ibid). These stories often have some important life's morals (lessons) to learn within, and often explain why nature is the way it is. The stories are largely orally-based and rooted in the local cultures that entertain, enlighten (or educate), and stress the moral values (Tuwe,2016:2-3; Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005:21; Ametewee, 1997:206).

Again, the stories serve the society as mobilising people's awareness of their own histories, magnifying past events and evoking deeds of illustrious ancestors (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 20005: 21) in which the ancestors become reference points to remind one another and to admonish them in terms of sanctioning and justifying the people.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it could be noted that the indigenous African storyteller and the art of storytelling can be compared to that of professional theatre presentation. This implies that the playwright fits the words and ideas together; the performers bring them to life; the director integrates the artistic elements; the producer or manager coordinates the business side of the production (Wilson, 2000:148) just as the African storyteller does it all by himself. Though it is seen he is as Jack of all trade, he is as well the master of them all. He puts all the separate parts together to become an artistic whole hence he provides a complete theatre experience.

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