

# Performing Accross the Sea: Yoruba Race in Global Space

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## Abstract

The impact of the staging environment on effectiveness of communication between the performer and the audience has remained contentious. The objective of this paper is to determine the effectiveness of plays about the Yorubas as presented elsewhere in the western world in projecting the Yoruba race. The paper is theoretically grounded on Richard Schechner's Performance theories and used the documentary approach to sociology of drama to contentanalyze two selected performances in Europe and America. Findings showed that plays with Yoruba socio-cultural background face challenges when being staged in Western world because of its length, cast strength and staging condition which lower their aesthetic values and affect audience interpretation. The paper concluded that utilizing African theatre presentation style could be effective when performing in a foreign land. It therefore recommended its adoption and that cultural promoters should be conversant with the peculiarities of productions that projects Yoruba socio-cultural world-view.

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**Index terms**— race, space, stage, yoruba, drama, performance, africa, directing, theatre, plays.

## 1 Introduction

his paper looks at what is performance, its spatial relationship as well as the differences in the staging condition of plays between its source and its destination. It x-rays plays written by Yoruba dramatists in South Western Nigeria with Yourba sociocultural background. It discusses common characteristics of these types of plays, their uniqueness in terms of staging environment as well as challenges of producing them in an environment different from their origins. It uses two plays as performed in Europe as examples of how staging environment could affect the presentation as well as the reception of such performances.

## 2 II.

## 3 Discussions

Schechener (1988:1-320), in his Performance Theory explains that performance is not only about what the performers do but the totality of communication that takes place between the performers and the audience. Everything that facilitates a two-way communication between the performer and the audience to ensure effective communication is performance. Performance is not determined by what the script or drama dictates alone. Thus the staging environment, the action, reaction and even inaction of the audience could be said to be performative in nature.

To Schechner, performance has to move from entertainment to efficacy and this could only be achieved through adequate participation of the audience. Schechner is aware of the limitation which theatre structure could place on communal dialogue between the performer and the audience. Hence the introduction of its environmental theatre which took performances out of the conventional staging environment and take it to the people where they are for effective interaction and participation. Schechner's Environmental theatre is performed on the streets, swimming pools, stock exchange building to mention just a few. This is in order to take the performance to

the people and make them active partaker in the process of entertainment and efficacy. In his presentations; performance spaces were totally rebuilt for each production and the audiences were motivated to play active role different from the usual roles they play in conventional theatre.

However, there is a slight contradiction between Schechner's theory and practice. In spite of the fact that he proposes and demonstrated active participation of the audience in his environmental theatre, he describes the audience as a passive agent in his performance model. It is this contradiction that forms its radical departure from African performance framework. In this framework, the audience is an active agent whose contribution is essential to the overall success of such performance. The performance also in most cases, meet the audience in their comfort zones and can take place anywhere without any structural limitation. Toeing this line means that we shall be concerned not only with the performers acts but also the contribution of the audience and the staging environment in facilitating effective communication between the two.

Enekwe 2008:1-16 identified many African dramatists, theorist and critics like Ogunba (1978), Obichina (1978), Oyinka (1978) and Okpewho (1979 who have voiced out their resentment to western exclusivist approach to definitions and concepts of drama and theatre which failed to take into account the various non-western mode of performance. He highlighted the roles of non-script, non-dramatic elements particularly the audience and performance space on overall African experience.

To an average audience, one performance is the same as the other performance of the same production. However, to key players in the theatre, the theatre critics as well as regular and informed theatre audience, the reverse is usually the case. That is why many critics and regular theatre audience would see the same production two or three nights within a run to be able to fully savor the theatrical juice being packaged for them. The main reason for watching the same production more than once is to see how various extraneous factors could play significant roles in the delivery of a theatrical menu.

Such extraneous factor could include the mood of the actors, the prevailing mood of the audience in the auditorium, the performance space, the performance of the technical crew and sometimes the weather condition. What this portends is the fact that a production running for three to five nights could be a conglomeration of three to five different theatrical experiences as no two performances could ever be the same. Theatre performance is temporal in nature and the same theatrical experience could not be accessed twice unless such performance is electronically mediated. However, the director through the rehearsal process try as much as possible to ensure that the differences in such theatrical experience is not that significant to the point that it would be so glaring to the audience. Thus he tries to put all machineries in motion to ensure that the basic essence of the play remains constant.

It is apposite to note that this need for consistency and protection of the play essence could be more challenging if the same play would be staged in two or more different locations. This is where the director is challenged to analyze both the potential audience and the staging environment of each of the locations where such productions would be staged. It is not likely that the staging conditions in two different theatres even if both of them are proscenium stage would be the same as the size of the acting area, the lighting condition, the exit points as well as the size of the auditorium may differ. Thus as the director takes his performance from one theatre to the other, he is faced with the task of reworking the play and redirecting the actors towards effective utilization of the available space to ensure that the play is not only well delivered but equally well received by the audience. This is so because the success of any production rests largely on how well the audience received the play. as demanded by Susan Benneth's reception theory.

In the same vein, a play written in a particular socio-cultural background which is different from the background of the destination audience could equally be very daunting for a director as he portrays the sociocultural background that may be relatively different from the reality that the audience members are familiar with. He is then faced with the task of not only adequately familiar with the socio-cultural background of the play but also the socio-cultural background of the audience and also creates a synergy between the two for the audience to be firmly at home with the content of the play and understand not only the text but also the subtext. This is not as easy as it sounds as some customs, traditions, and belief system could look out of place or out rightly unreasonable for somebody coming from a different social background entirely due to the relativity of culture (Blackburn 2011:1-43).

As we work towards universalism since the beginning of 20 th century in which the entire world is seen as a single unit with all the parts working and conforming to the principle of that unit. The unit where "globalization announces itself as a cultural ferment that spans the gamut of space and raids spatial cultural zones that hitherto were differentiated reified and ossified. It seduces or teases them out of their cocoons and executes miscegenation of antipodal cultures" (Tsaaior 2009:7-21). However, the uniqueness of each culture poses a very big threat to that concept as would be explained later. This paper carefully examines how change in space and change in environment has affected the delivery as well as the reception of plays written about the Yorubas and presented elsewhere in Western world and strives towards identifying the challenges and how such challenges could be addressed.

## 4 III. African Drama and Theatre Space

To the Afrocentrics, it is an outright fallacy to be using western parameter to define, discuss and analyze drama and theatre in Africa because African drama and theatre did not originate from Greece as widely articulated in

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the West. The Afrocentrics believe that drama and theatre predates our meeting with the western world and each prehistoric society has its own unique form of drama. Perhaps this explains why there are some significant differences in the form, content and structure of drama between Africa and the Western world. For instance, while theatre in the Western world favors a gulf between the performer and the audience, places more emphasis on the spoken word, often representational, with essentially passive audience, theatre in Africa is the theatre of the people for the people and by the people. There is no significant demarcation between the performer and the audience as the audience also participates actively in the performance process. It is a total theatre; a theatre of spectacles where singing, dancing and acrobatic display more often complement the action and spoken world.

In terms of the staging environment, western theatre is largely proscenium with a picture frame stage which expects the audience to peep-in; in order to enjoy the theatrical presentation. However, African theatre is usually staged in what is known as theatre in the round where the audience surrounds the performers who are usually in the middle. The closest it gets to the Western theatre is the thrust stage where the audience surrounds the performers from three angles. We can better appreciate the mode of presentation of plays set in Yoruba land by using the Ogunde theatre production style as a typical example:

It is deep-rooted in the traditional African festival theatre aesthetics. This form can be said to be socially functional because of the elements that it employs in its performance mode. The form gives room to the integration of the arts of the community as well as the people who created it. It is characterized by great festivity and celebrations that provide an avenue for the spirit of the ancestors to emerge and be re-enacted in masquerade performance form (Ugoli 2011:116).

This theatre of festivity and celebration is a total theatre consisting of not only drama but dance, music, chants and sometimes acrobatic display and stunts. There are instances where masquerades would also be part of the dramatic personae. The Yorubas are usually very elaborate in all their doings. When they are happy they express it in a very loud and plausible manner. They shout for joy, scream loud and clear to show their excitement and sometimes try one or two dance steps to articulate their moods. In the same vein, when they are struck with tragedy, they yell, cry and wail. They throw themselves up and down unto the ground rolling on the floor for the blind, the dumb and the deaf to identify what their emotional state is. Apart from that, everything to them is ceremony. That is why the Yorubas would say *Ojo gbogbo bi odun* (Always in a festive mood). If they are blessed with a child, had a good harvest, escape accident or being honored by their people they celebrate. Even when they are bereaved they still celebrate what many from outside the climes would call an irreparable loss. This celebration is not what you do alone with a bottle of Champaign under a candle light. It is a celebration with the people who troop in and out to felicitate with you. All these cultural indices are expected to be well articulated in any play that is projecting the Yorubas as they are.

It is regrettable however to note that most of our playwrights usually create their works with the conventional western theatrical space in mind. This is so because many of them only have Western theatre orientation. Each stage direction reveals that a proscenium stage is what the playwright operationalizes with, in the course of developing such play. Apart from that, the aural and aesthetic aspects of our traditional performances are subjugated to that of western production aesthetics. This perhaps explains why it is possible in some instances for an average western audience to be able to easily relate to such productions because of its preferred style. Many people believe that the only way to get wide acclaim and recognition is not by imitating how people in the west write their plays and use the same yardstick to create, transmit and evaluate plays that are meant to project the Yoruba worldview.

This 'copy-copy' approach is very evident in the ways many things are done while hiding under the garb of globalization. It is equally similar to what prompted Ishola 2010:102, to ask; "How do we explain our culpable indifference in the face of this metastatic infection of our linguistic and literary atmosphere by a foreign disease of mindless imitation and repetition? It is also apposite to note that majority of the plays written with Yoruba socio-cultural background are either adaptation of popular western plays ranging from the Classical Greek plays, to Shakespeare to Chekov to mention a few. This is tantamount to looking at the Yoruba world with western eyes.

The Yorubas have in their repository various myths, fables, music, chants, folklores and legends which have been passed down from generation to generation and could be equally adapted for theatrical presentation not only for preservation but also for articulating the cultural essence of the Yorubas through these performances, to the children that are fastly losing contact with Yoruba culture; and give them what can reconnect them to their roots. This becomes more significant if we note the fact that "performance is the means—perhaps the principal means—through which people come to understand their world, reinforce their view of it and transform it on both small scale and large scale". (Beeman 2012).

Many would also wonder whether watching a play that comes from a different socio-cultural background from yours should in any way affect your comprehension of such play. After all, there is nothing so unique to a particular culture that you cannot find its equivalent in your own culture. This school of thought believes that objects and phenomena may be different in terms of the name we call them and the purpose they serve from one society to another but they are essentially the same. Boundary is immaterial if it is only created for our administrative convenience and not for it to divide us or alter the way we perceive things. According to Leach 1976: 35 "In all human societies, the great majority of ceremonial occasions are 'rites of transition', which mark the crossing of boundaries between one social category and another: puberty ceremonies, weddings, funerals, initiation rites of

all kinds are the most obvious". Most of these rites are articulated from Yoruba world view through the plays but the way and manner through which such rites, practices and daily rituals are practiced in the western world seem different from the way they are practiced and articulated in Yoruba land. This invariably calls for a thorough understanding of how things are done among the Yorubas for the foreign audience to appreciate the essence of conflicts in such productions and justifications for their resolutions.

### IV. Preparing for International Tours

Performances that capture the true essence of Yorubas' ways of life as elaborated above usually require large cast. Thus, the cost of transporting a huge cast abroad would force the director to start reviewing and reworking the drama in order to cut cost. One of such exercise may be to make an individual play multiple roles, make sure that the actors could also double as dancers and musicians and so on. However, in spite of all these adjustment, there could still be many people on board due to areas requiring specialized skills which many people may not have. You may have a griot that can chant very well but cannot act. If his role as a griot is so essential in the play, then you would have to go with him without forcing him to play multiple roles. This is also peculiar to drummers as many of them may not necessarily be able to act.

Even when all the necessary cuttings have been done and the sponsor is able to fund the number of the people in the troupe, the next hurdle is at the embassy of the destination country. More often than not, the embassy staff is familiar with the minimalist approach of the whites to many things including play productions. He has seen so many solo performances and at most not more than ten people delivering a good theatrical menu. This officer would not understand why thirty-five people could be travelling to his country just to present a two hour stage drama. He then starts to query the relevance of each of the artistes. It has happened on many occasions that some members would not be granted visa because the white man does not understand how important such artist is to the whole ensemble.

V.

## 6 Preparation and Presentation

With the denial of visa to some of the troupe members, the director is faced with the task of reworking the play again in order to use what he has to deliver what he intends. It is apposite at this juncture to note that at each time the director tampers with the size of the troupe and try to manipulate such productions due to no fault of his, something is being missed. What would be delivered at the end of the day is not likely to be a holistic experience. Many things that add glamour and spectacles to the play might have been sacrificed along the line. A drum like the Agba drum which may sometimes be very significant might be left behind because of its monstrous size. The visual aesthetics of crowd scene is lost as such scenes become scanty. The duration of the play could equally suffer the surgical knife to appease the potential foreign audience. A typical example of how the original version of the same play could be manipulated to suit the peculiarity of the foreign space is presented below:

After obtaining their travel documents, there were only five nights left for the company to rehearse

Coping with this restriction of reducing the length of the play and going ahead with his half strength troupe, the director is saddled with the responsibility of adjusting to the staging environment in the destination country. Such theatres are mostly proscenium with very few thrust stages here and there. Many of such stages are designed in such a way that there is an invisible dividing line between the performers and the audience. The level of interaction between the performers and the audience is restricted to mere clapping at the end of the play. This may be alien to the cast that is hitherto familiar with loud and responsive audience who actively participate in the performance process with their comments, commendations, questions and encouragement which makes the process a shared experience. The absence of this active participation of the audience may affect the psyche of many performers and they may not be able to perform optimally.

Apart from that, in order to satisfy the peculiar needs of its audience, the director may make use of selectivity and emphasis selecting key areas that would be appealing to foreign audience and emphasizing them while at the same time reducing those areas that may not necessarily appeal to them even though such areas are equally significant to the narrative of the performance. This usually creates a gulf between the performance and the audience as the audience may not be able to logically fill in the gaps since they are not familiar with the environment where the play is coming from. Even though it is an essential part of the director's role to "give the audience a role in filling what's happening. That is, give them all the dots they need but don't connect all the dots for them" (Hauser&Russel 2003:10); their ability to connect the dots depends largely on their basic understanding of the socio-cultural environment of such plays.

It is a near impossibility to expect the audience to connect the dots in a vacuum. Also in many theatres, the length of the play that was initially performed for over two hours might be reduced to one hour or less as part of the theatre policy or as part of the guidelines guiding such festivals if the performance is for a theatre festival. All these point to the fact that presenting an authentic Yoruba worldview in a global space outside the country Oba Koso before their departure in September of 1964. The rehearsal's aim was 'to produce a version of Oba Koso that might be understood by a German audience that did not know Yoruba ?? (1994: 32). Ladipo recruited Beier and Georgina as guinea pigs to act as if they were the European audience, in order to assess whether the mood of the play could be comprehended by the European audience. The length of the play was condensed

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to seventy minutes to suit the European audience (see 32), in comparison to the usually much longer Nigerian version; sometimes up to two hours (Both emphasis mine) as revealed by Abiodun Duro-Ladipo ??Ogunjobi, 2007:105).

is bedeviled with so many challenges which reduce the quality of what is delivered to the audience. They inhibit the director's vision; affect the quality of performance from the cast and crew and ultimately what is delivered may not be as exciting and intriguing as the version that one could see at home where all the restrictions are absent.

The above scenario also calls to question the extent of freedom that a director has before he starts damaging another man's play. Is he at liberty to engage in this reductionist business at the detriment of the playwright's product? Will he be holistically projecting the playwright's idea and would the inability of the target audience to understand the play fully not be placed at his doorstep? Every director is faced with this challenge but the watchword is caution as Hauser & Reich (2003:9) warns that "You are not the parent of this child we call the play. You are present at its birth for clinical reasons, like a doctor or a midwife. Your job most of the time is simply to do no harm".

## 7 VI.

### Review of Selected Plays with Yoruba Socio-Cultural Background and their Performances

Having articulated the challenges that the director in particular and the entire troupe in general face whenever a play is taken outside the shore of Nigeria, let us now look at how such productions with all the challenges they faced before being staged fared with the audience. To achieve this we shall utilize the documentary approach to content-analyzed two plays with Yoruba sociological background. One of the plays is from the Yoruba traveling theatre tradition while the other is from the Nigeria literary drama scene. We shall be looking at the plays *Oba Koso* by Late Duro Ladipo and *Death and the King's Horseman* by Wole Soyinka. The choice of these two plays is borne out of the fact that their productions have been widely staged in different parts of the world and they have contributed significantly towards stimulating interests of people from other climes in learning more about the Yorubas.

In order to assess the level of the effectiveness of such performances, we shall analyze the thematic preoccupation of the play and how such performances project the trio of; race, the period and the milieu as expected by the literary sociologists using the documentary approach as propounded by Hippolyte Taine. According to Taine ??Bamidele 2003: 19); "documentary approach to sociology of literature and by inference drama becomes an effective instrument of socio-cultural analysis". We shall then look at some of the reviews of these plays by theatre critics to show whether adequate understanding of the three parameters highlighted above are articulated in the reviews. The choice of the theatre critics and their reviews is based on the fact that they are expected to be "informed audience" and if they found a performance wanting in terms of its ability to effectively reach out to the audience; it is most likely that an average audience who is not as informed would find such performance ineffectual.

## 8 VII. Documentary Reading of *Oba Koso* by Duro Ladipo

The play; *Oba Koso* is set in the pre-colonial Old Oyo Empire. It articulates the dignity and respects that the Yorubas have for their kings, premium placed on bravery; as your manhood depends on your level of bravery, and how cowardice is treated with utmost resentment. Such that can force an individual no matter how highly placed to commit suicide. It highlights the socio-cultural environment in which Sango lived during his life time. It is a society with very strong belief in the efficacy of supernatural forces and magic, a society where respect, regal and splendor are attached to royalty and a place where dance, music and chants play significant roles in socio-cultural and political lives of the people. The play was performed more than 2,000 times when Late Duro Ladipo was alive. This production; was performed at university theatres, marketplaces, schools, traditional Sango festivals, and palaces of Obas, and in particular, before two Alafins of Oyo? It was equally performed in fifteen foreign countries and won seven awards at international theatre and cultural festivals ??Ogunbiyi 1981: 345).

With that brief insight into the summary of the play as it relates to the period of the play, the race that gave birth to it and its socio-cultural environment, we will now take two reviews that articulated the experience of Duro Ladipo troupe while presenting this particular play which has been performed for more than 2,000 times with wide acclaim in Nigeria before the tour. Afterwards, we shall analyze *Death and the King's Horseman* and present another two reviews that highlight the exploits of the play in foreign land. Theatre audiences in Berlin were the best we ever experienced; their intelligent concentration and their enthusiastic participation carried Duro's performance to new heights. The hall was small and the platform low. The utter simplicity of the stage encouraged interaction between actors and audience ??Ogunjobi 2012:105).

Duro never experienced such an unfriendly atmosphere before or since. The audience was ice cold and audibly hostile. Maybe they were disappointed at seeing an African performance without bare tits because Keita Fadeba's 'Ballets Africain' had been there the week before" (1994: 41). Their performance was deliberately disrupted by those in charge of managing the stage. According to Beier, the lighting cues were not followed, they dropped the curtain before 33 ( C ) a scene came to an end and the set constructed specially for *Eda* crashed down. ??Ogunjobi 2012:111).

In the first review, the staging condition which promotes effective interaction between the performers and the audience was adjudged successful and well accepted by the audience. However, the second experience showed the failure of the exercise as effective communication could not be achieved due to many reasons. A stereotypic audience; a conventional theatre staging condition that creates a gulf between the performers and the audience as well as failure of the technical elements like lighting, set and curtains. This goes to show that for any African play to be successful with the audience, it must be performed in a staging environment similar to the African performance space. It is only then that the effective transfer of information and knowledge with regards the beauty of culture and ways of life of the Yorubas could be well articulated.

## 9 VIII.

### 10 Wole Soyinka's Death and the

King's Horseman

Like Duro Ladipo's play *Oba Koso*, the play *Death and the King's Horseman* is about the incidence that happened in Old Oyo Empire in 1946. However, unlike *Oba koso*, the event that happened in *Death and the King's Horseman* happened during the colonial era. At the demise of the then Alaafin of Oyo, his, horseman; Elesin has to commit suicide as tradition demands for him to accompany his former master on his heavenward journey. However, instead of carrying out his duty as custom and tradition demands, Elesin foot-dragged and in the process put the entire community into the danger of retribution for this affront on the gods as calamity dangles like the sword of Damocles on the entire community. The Colonial District Officer; Pilkings got wind of the situation, arrests and detain Elesin to prevent him from committing suicide. On realizing the extent of the calamities that would befall the kingdom due to his father's failure to accede to tradition and the shame it would bring into his lineage forever, his son, Olunde, who is a trained medical doctor commits suicide in his father's place. On learning of his son's death, Elesin eventually commits suicide thereby thwarting the efforts of Pilkings who in his attempts at preventing one suicide ended up with two suicides in his hands due to his interference in the customs and tradition that he knows next to nothing about.

### 11 The Reviews

In his script, and in Vreeke's staging, there is precious little doubt as to which side will win the ideological argument. Clearly Soyinka sees Yoruba values as much more civilized than those of the occupying British and he gives voice to the argument in many ways. What saves the evening from being a didactic bore (Emphasis mine) is the bright language that Soyinka gives to both sides of the arguments and the honesty which Vreeke has the cast display for each statement of values. (Hathaway, 2006) Set designer, Katrina Lindsay has done a truly phenomenal job with the set, which at one point make Elesin and his bride vanish from the stage. The intricate details and unique features (the actors playing furniture is ingenious) add a sense of marvel and mystery to the production but at the same time also distract you, as you stare in wonder at the beauty of it. (Emphasis mine) ??Williams, 2009) In the first review above, in spite of the effort of the dramatist as well as the performing troupe in presenting the authentic Yoruba world view, the audience undergoes what nearly ended up as an excruciating pain of watching 'a didactic bore' to use the reviewer's words. As I stated earlier on, that the western theatre is an aural theatre; where people go to the theatre to listen to rather than to see a show, it was only the beauty of the spoken words rather what it implies that caught the fancy of this reviewer and by inference the audience and prevented them from being another ice-cold and unfriendly audience. In the second review, the concentration of the reviewer was on the theatrical elements she could relate with from western theatre perspective. She is more preoccupied with the production style at the detriment of the essence of the play. Such an audience may not remember anything about the Yorubas shortly after that theatrical encounter. Apart from that, commendable as the use of visual and aural aesthetics in the play, the reviewer still found them distracting which mean that no matter how well they were employed, they did not succeed in articulating the playwright's message.

From all the four reviews that we presented above, what is glaring is the fact that it was only when the staging environment was similar to what is obtainable here in Africa that the two-way communication between the audience and the performer was achieved. It also showed that attempt at presenting the Yoruba worldview using western theat-ric presentation format may be counter-productive as elements packaged into such productions to enhance its quality may eventually become distractive and the Achilles' heel of such performances. It therefore means that as much as we try to please the potential foreign audience, it is apposite to demand for a staging environment which could promote effective interaction between the performers and the audience. Plays that project the Yoruba world view could only be effectively delivered when and if the audience is very responsive to every beat in such productions. When the audience responds to the call and response from the cast, when they commend an actor for performing brilliantly and show appreciation and the willingness to learn more about Yoruba world view, it is then that a successful engagement could be achieved. This is obviously poss-

## 12 ( C )

ible as experience with Schechner's environmental theatre has shown.

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## 13 IX.

## 14 Conclusion

In this paper we have illuminated the fact that no two theatrical experience is ever the same and that performing the same production in different locations expands the quantum of this difference. We also articulated the fact that presenting a play outside its socio-cultural background attracts many challenges that could even affect the quality and purpose of such presentation. We highlighted the various challenges that the director directing a play with Yoruba socio-cultural background usually faced while working on a theatrical piece to be performed in foreign land and how such director has to manipulate a lot of things due to circumstances beyond his control as well as the urge to spoon-feed the audience with a familiar formula. We traced the origin of the problem to the playwrights who usually write their plays with western theatre space in mind as this, we observed; reduce the aesthetic values of the play, the interaction between the performers and the audience and invariably reduce the amount of cultural enlightenment which is the ultimate in producing such work to such audience in the first place.

We also reviewed the staging environment of two of the most widely produced plays set in old Oyo empire as written by Wole Soyinka and Late Duro Ladipo and analyze the review of those productions as staged in different parts of the world. We identified the failure in most cases of such productions to effectively intimate the foreign audience about the Yoruba not due to the deficiency in the script but due to the staging environment, production style, a pre-emptive audience with stereotyped mind and the distraction which visual and aural effects place on such productions.

It is our opinion that, it is high time we realize that we should do our work by doing justice to the socio-cultural background which produces the drama to be presented and also be faithful to the playwright in delivering its baby without any accident. No matter how much we try to panel beat productions in order to satisfy the audience at the other end of the sea, those with preconceived notions would not changed their stands while those that are eager and willing to understand the dynamics of our culture, traditions and way of life would not only take pain to understand issues as clearly articulated in whatever form we chose but also attempt to learn more about the Yorubas outside the words and images presented in the plays. In as much as we could watch productions from other climes and try to make meaning out of it without such performers packaging such productions in accordance with our home grown performance space, then we should concentrate more on using our forms and structures to deliver our messages to the world without necessarily doing much damage not only to the work of the playwright but also to the socio-cultural world of the Yorubas that gave birth to such artistic endeavour. However, according to Soyinka's, 1990: 37 The serious divergences between a traditional African approach to drama and the European will not be found in lines of opposition between creative individualism and communal creativity, nor in the level of noise from the auditorium-this being the supposed gauge of audience-participation-at any given performance. They will be found more accurately in what is a recognizable Western cast of mind, a compartmentalizing habit of thought which periodically selects aspects of human emotion, phenomenal observations, metaphysical intuitions and even scientific deductions and turns them into separatist myths (or 'truths') sustained by a proliferating super-structure of presentation idioms, analogies and analytical modes. This stereotyped could be fought and reduced to the barest minimum if we continue to do things differently, perform our drama our own way and jettisoned the conventional western drama and theatre practice. This may not be a magic wand but through consistency, it would not be too long before we achieve our objectives and able to drive home our points before the audience no matter how prejudiced such an audience is.

If we want the foreign audience to be conscious of the existence of, and also appreciate authentic African performance mode, we must regularly put it into practice anytime we have the opportunity to do so. It is also imperative for playwrights to see things from an African eye while 'wrighting' their scripts instead of continually doing so through the western theatre framework. The future of our drama and theatre lies essentially on doing things our way and not minding the criticism. Sooner than expected, the entire world will accord our performance mode its desired respect but more importantly we will be able to show the world who we are and what make us such a happy, fun-loving and exciting people. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Performing Accross the Sea: Yoruba Race in Global Space



Figure 1:



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