

THE NATIONAL THEATRE AND THE SEARCH FOR A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY OF THE NIGERIAN NATION STATE

By

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Abstract

While the capacity of Nigerian art forms to promote national unity has been emphasized and acknowledged by scholars and critics, the part that The National Theatre of Nigeria specifically can play in this process has not received appropriate scholarly attention. Apart from newspaper articles, there is very little and no detailed study about the crucial role of The Nigerian National Theatre as space and place in promoting national unity. Hence, it is this gap in the knowledge production about the National Theatre that this study seeks to fill. The proposed study would be divided into seven (7) sections. The first section provides an overview of what the study is all about as well as the conversation into which it enters. The second section would be devoted to the conceptualization of the fundamental terminologies of the study. The study, for example, differentiates and at the same time establishes a confluence between the National Theatre as a structure, place, and space on one hand; and the National theatre as the performative acts of a nation on stage with an audience on the other. The need for this is to demonstrate how both the physical and imagined space are symbiotic and can together be exercises in nation-building. The third section, offers a brief explication of what Henri Lefebvre's theory of space is all about and its relevance to this critical intervention. The fourth section is a sort of background to the fundamental argument of the study; it underscores the urgent need for/of a collective identity in the face of national disintegration. But what nation in the face of disintegration is to be built-up? In what sense should Nigeria as a nation-state be understood? Is it in terms of the space it occupies in relation to boundary markers and cartographic placements or how the inhabitants of the space and placement see themselves? And if the latter is what is of utmost signification, how should the inhabitants see themselves? Answers to these questions dovetail into the fifth section entitled "The Vision Behind the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria." It is curious that it is the same Section of the Law that sets-up the National Theatre that also established the National Troupe of Nigeria. Accordingly, this section of the study argues that the vision behind the setting-up or establishment of the National Theatre as space and place, and the National theatre as performative gesture in the same spatio-temporal

articulation of the law is an enactment for a unitary/common purpose of national unity. Art as a performative gesture needs a space from which it could speak; and The Nigerian National Theatre as a structure is such a space. Conversely, space in isolation has no meaning without what inhabits or occupies it. It is, however, against the backdrop of this established vision as enunciated in section five that the sixth section entitled “The Role of the National Theatre in Nigeria’s Collective Identity” goes on to revisits in detail Henri Lefebvre’s theory of space to highlight “what has been” and “what should be” the role of The National Theatre. The seventh and final section is the “Conclusion,” which recaps and hammers on the arguments/findings of the study.

Introduction

There is no gain saying that since its establishment and construction, the National Theatre as a structure has been submerged in one controversy or another. These controversies have ranged from its architectural design; to it being a transposition of a Western model, and therefore a symbol of the Eurocentric enslavement of the Nigerian nation-state; to it being too gigantic an edifice; to its fittingness taking into account the Nigerian socioeconomic and sociocultural realities; to its management structure; and to whether it should be privatized or not as well as to whether it should be out rightly sold. In an interview with Demas Nwoko (a designer and theatre architect), for instance, he submits that “When the Federal Government set up a 29-member committee in 1973 on the National Theatre, there were a few Theatre practitioners who were not happy with the plans to go round certain countries in search of designs or designers” (D. Nwoko, Interview, 25th October, 2021). According to him, “I should have been allowed to design the National Theatre as I was the only Nigerian Designer/Architect who made a bid for its design” (D. Nwoko, Interview, 25th October, 2021). Having built his studio and house from traditional materials by using clay and laterite found around the site of his studio and house, Nwoko strongly felt that the National Theatre should have been built as a truly Nigerian architectural model. Thus, beyond being an expression of a personal loss, what characterizes Demas Nwoko’s submission as that of other theatre practitioners in Nigeria is that being an embodiment of the sociocultural practice of the Nigerian nation-state, the National Theatre should have been designed and built by indigenous brains and hands.

Another controversy around which the discourse of the National Theatre has revolved is its size, which is seen by theatre practitioners as not too fitting for theatre performance in Nigeria. For example, it has been argued that:

as grandiose as the NT is, it may not have fulfilled the basic functions for which it was meant, especially taking into consideration the foreign design of the theatre

and facilities that are not very adequate to the theatre and performance culture in Nigeria....the more grandiose the theatre is, the less theatre (performance) that takes place in the theatre (Oni 2017: 69).

It is controversies such as the foregoing and others (which would further be developed in this study) that has dictated most of the discussions concerning the National Theatre. The result being that the objective for its establishment and what it can achieve in the same regard has been neglected.

But appropriating Henri Lefebvre's theory of space that highlights how individual characters produce and reproduce their space, and are themselves products of the (re)produced space; this study examines the role of the Nigerian National Theatre in creating and sustaining what has been described as "a unitary collective" (Kuby 2015: 65) in the face of a Nigerian nation-state that is fragmented politically, religiously, tribally, and economically. A unitary collective is an articulation of the fact that persons making-up a nation-state recognize that though they are "internally homogeneous," they are also "externally bounded," thereby seeing themselves as persons "with common purposes" (Rogers Brubaker 2009: 28). This internal homogeneity in the real sense, however, might not even be the case. In the case of the Nigerian nation-state, for example, it is more of a people who are externally bounded together but who in reality are internally heterogeneous. In the case of Nigeria, therefore, a unitary collective is not aimed at destroying or rubbing out ethnic or regional cleavages or affiliation. Rather, it is geared towards making people think and act beyond their ethnic or regional interests. Hence, what this study examines is the role the National Theatre as space and place and as a performative gesture can play in engendering a situation and climate in which people belonging to the various ethnic and regional entities that make-up the Nigerian nation-state can begin to think and act beyond their primeval interests. In the words of Rogers Brubaker, it is to engender a situation in which people of different ethnic and regional entities can begin to act "with a common purpose."

The need for this has even become urgent just as it appears to have become undermined by the "complex regimes of presence and absence through digitization" (Knoblauch & Martina 2020: 264) following the COVID-19 pandemic-imposed restrictions in which stage characters now act their part virtually. The Theatre is no longer what it used to be, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. In the world of a new normal, a complex regime of presence and absence through digitization has been inaugurated. It is no longer unusual for the actors of a dramatic presentation to act their parts virtually with the performances on a virtual stage theatre being watched from the comfort of one's home. Thus, the actors/characters and audience to a theatre performance are simultaneously present and absent. They are physically absent while at the same time

being virtually present. They are physically distanced while being virtually tied and joined together. In a situation such as this, the begging question is - can the theatre as a space and place as well as a performative gesture play its role of engendering a unitary collective? The other engagement of this work, therefore, is whether the theatre can still fulfil its role of a unitary collective in the age of digitization particularly in Nigeria and Africa.

The role of art and the artist in any given society has been a subject of vigorous debate from the time of the classical period, which is regarded as the beginning of the history of literary theory and criticism. Intervening in the ancient quarrel instantiated and substantiated by Socrates as to which is more useful to society between the disciplines of philosophy and literature, Plato like his teacher (Socrates) takes his stand in support of philosophy over and above literature. Banishing artists and the arts from his ideal republic, Plato condemns art forms in their imitation for being thrice removed from reality, and for appealing to the emotions rather than the rationality of man. He (Plato) insists that what the poet/artist creates is untrue and a semblance of existence (Charles Kaplan and William Davis Anderson 2000:3). As noted by William Chase Greene (1918), Plato "fiercely criticizes poetry as a whole, and professes to banish the tribe of poets from his commonwealth; they are perverters of morality, mere imitators and deceivers, and their art is concerned with the world of appearance, not of reality" (1). From that time onward, the business of every critic, either consciously or unconsciously, is to respond to Plato's view of art and the artist. As Kaplan and Anderson (2000:1) have remarked, critics have written either "in support, refutation, or modification of Plato's views."

This debate still holds sway in the world of literary representation and criticism, but has taken a different dimension outside it, especially within the Nigerian socio-political, socioeconomic, and sociocultural environment. Indisputably, the current debate in Nigeria along the axis of the present framework is - which is more useful to the development of the Nigerian society between literature and science? Although this debate between the utilitarian value of literature in contrast to science has also been there from the time of the classical period when Plato also compares Homer and his followers on one hand as against the Pythagoreans on the other, it is undoubtedly more pronounced currently in Nigeria. And from the perspective of those in government and even from that of those at the helm of affairs of most institutions of higher learning, literature is accorded a second-class status in relation to science. It is perhaps deriving from this development and the misconception of those at the helm of affairs of the governance of the Nigerian nation-state that Taiwo Oladokun (2001:5) asserts that:

The crisis facing the humanistic arts in general is that many people do not readily find in them any obvious utilitarian justification as are readily found in scientific

arts. The question of relevance should, perhaps, be laid to rest for now borrowing from Brockett's view that what the spectator gleans from a work of arts (sic) depends in part upon his own background and his own sensitivity to emotions and ideas.

What Oladokun's assertion highlights is not the subordination of literature or art forms to philosophy, but its relegation in relation to the sciences. Generally, the misconception, especially in Nigeria, is that the arts is not as relevant as the sciences to the development of the society.

Yet, the essentiality of art forms in any given society is not in doubt. Commenting on Maria Edgeworth's artistic works, for example, John Ruskin asserts that "they contained more essential truths about Ireland than can be learned from any other source whatsoever" (cited in Eglantina Rempert 2018:6). It is in the same vein that in his study of Irish theatre, Rempert (2018) observes that critics are in agreement about "the central role" the arts can "play" in "any educational programme that aimed at elevating public taste in Ireland, and by doing so, enriching the quality of life of the majority of the Irish population" (5). The quality of life to which Rempert refers is the social formation and cultural well-being of the average Irish citizen in the face of British hegemony. Commenting on Maria Edgeworth's novel, *Ennui*, it is Rempert's (2018) view that "the characters of McLeod, Hardcastle and Lord Y – offer various alternative perspectives on the improvement of circumstances for Irish men, women, and children" (7). What Rempert notes, therefore, is the capacity of art forms to educate and conscientize citizens about their social and cultural affinity in the face of disintegration or that of "foreign aggression and domination."

Similarly, in her Sharmistha Saha (2018) argues that the emergence of an Indian nation was made possible with the emergence of an Indian theatre (v). Saha writes from the same standpoint of Rempert in terms of the essentiality of art forms in any given society. The only difference is that unlike Rempert who writes from **the** standpoint of the essentiality of theatre as contained in the cultural aesthetics of some individual writers in the formation of a social and cultural Irishness in the face of British hegemony, Saha writes of how Indian theatre in general contributed to the formation of a national identity of Indianness in the face of British colonial domination of India. What Saha's argument, therefore, articulates is how the Indian nationalism as is presently configured is entangled with the cultural practice of India as embodied in its theatre.

Juris Sileniesk, writing within the framework of the Nigerian sociocultural production, observes that “literary creativity has largely been the outcome of efforts among writers whose commitments, with the emergence of new geo-political realities, are directed toward the task of nation building, emancipation and accession to national consciousness” (cited in Umar-Buratai 2007:143). Silenik’s observation is the capacity of literary creativity, inclusive of Nigerian theatre practice, in promoting nation building and national consciousness. Also, writing about the Yoruba travelling theatre, Karin Barber observes that it “opens a window onto popular consciousness that is unique in its detail and clarity, revealing the anxieties, preoccupations and convictions that underpin ordinary people’s daily experience” (cited in Adelugba, Obafemi, and Adeyemi 2004:138). Likewise, acknowledging that literature, especially theatre/drama have roles to play in the social development of any society, Oladokun (2001) explains that “art is an organized expression of the world in which we live, a communication tool making possible a kind of psychic interaction between the artist and the people” (5). This psychic interaction between the artist and his audience is not just for the fun of it. Rather, it is to activate the conscience and sensibility of the audience. Writing almost in a similar vein, Rupert C. Lodge in his *Plato’s Theory of Arts* insists that the “art(ist) provides reinforcements for the attitudes considered right. He assists in developing the children into becoming good citizens and in some cases good leaders” (cited in Oladokun 2001:6). And commenting on this, Oladokun advises that “Artists should endeavour to discover in what ways, and to what extent art can be used to reinforce what the community regards as right” (2001:6). But the real issue at stake is not what the artist or art should do or accomplish, prompting the kind of advice that Oladokun offers. Instead, it is what the artist or art, most often than not, does and accomplishes.

Debatably, it is basically what any given society considers to be right and wrong or essential that almost every artistic production upholds. The quest for adventure and heroism that characterizes both the English and French medieval literature, for instance, is because it is what both societies hold to be of utmost importance at that period. Also, the Petrarchan courtly love in which a man falls in love with a woman and yet desist and refrain from having carnal knowledge of her which defines early English renaissance poetry is due to the value that the society as at then places on chastity and purity of emotional feelings towards the opposite sex. Thus, artistic productions at any given time in the history of literary development have been largely utilized to reinforce societal values and agenda. As Sylvian Levi (1890) cited in Saha (2018: 24) observes:

In Greece, the New Comedy flourished on the ruins of the ancient tragedy. In France, the tragedies of Corneille and Racine died with the regime which had nurtured them. A political, social and religious revolution gave birth to the

Romantic drama, which in its turn, made room for the Comedy of Manners. A common law seems to preside over the evolution of the dramatic art in all countries.

What Levi highlights is that, to a very large extent, every artistic work is an embodiment of the spirit of the age in which it is/was produced/written. As every society evolves, so does its artistic forms and presentations. The need for this evolution is not just to mirror society as it is, but also to portray the values of every given society.

The case is not any different in Nigeria/Africa where artistic productions are deployed to either ridicule dispositions and actions that are considered immoral or praise deeds that are viewed as moral and upright. Yet, while the capacity of Nigerian art forms to promote national unity has been emphasized and acknowledged by scholars and critics, the share that the Nigerian National Theatre as space and performance together can play in this process has not received appropriate scholarly attention. Apart from newspaper articles, there is very little and no detailed study about the crucial role of the Nigerian National Theatre as space and performance in promoting national unity. For instance, in an interview which the writer of this piece had with Demas Nwoko¹, what is uppermost to him (Nwoko) is not what the National Theatre can achieve in instituting and sustaining a collective identity. Rather, it is how the Federal Government missed out in realizing a truly Nigerian cultural edifice. Also, in an interview she granted Tofaratilge (a newspaper correspondent), Kesiena Obue² bemoans the neglect of the National Theatre complex. She argues that owing to the fact that “several great thespians cut their teeth in the profession at the National Theatre” and the fact that “It is a national heritage that we should always cherish,” it should not have been neglected (Tofaratilge 2019). Obue’s focus is not on the unifying role that the National Theatre complex can play in bringing people of different affiliations and orientations together, but on its unfortunate neglect.

In an article published by the *This Day* newspaper, the intervention of Adebayo Adebobi is not on the neglect of the National Theatre, but on the Federal Government concession of the edifice to private investors. Describing the National Theatre as the “beacon of cultural nationalism” in Nigeria, Adebobi asserts that “Until something concrete and long-lasting steps are taken to decide whether to be or not over the concession of the nation’s prime National Theatre, the dream, the predictions, will be a wild revelry and hope of a giant and vibrant entertainment industry will remain a dream” (Adebobi 2016). Although acknowledging how significant the National Theatre is, it is not in relation to how it can contribute to national unity. On the contrary, it is as regards its essentiality to a vibrant entertainment industry.

This, however, should not be taken to mean that no scholarly study has been carried out about the Nigerian National Theatre as space and performance or that the role it can play in promoting national unity and consciousness has not been acknowledged by scholars and critics. The issue is that in such studies, the focus is not really on how the Nigerian National Theatre as space/place and as performance can engender national unity. For instance, in his study of the Nigerian "National Troupe," which is seen in the present critical endeavour as a study of the Nigerian National Theatre as performance, Ahmed Yerima (2001) notes that "the National Troupe helps to celebrate Nigeria's cultural heritage and therefore re-awakens those social inter-relationships which unify the country" (194). But this is not an observation that he contextualizes within his study or dwelt on in detail. In fact, the observation was enacted towards the tail end of his paper entitled "Performance Company in a Modern African State: The Case of the National Troupe of Nigeria." It is, therefore, understandable that the unifying role of the Nigerian National Troupe is an observation he throws in the mix of the focus of his study, which is more on the historiography of the establishment of the National Troupe and how its management has so far fared.

It is the same phenomenon that characterized Jimmy Atte's (2001) study, which he simply entitled "The National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos." As can be seen, in contrast to Yerima who undertakes a study of the National Theatre as performance, Atte takes as the purview of his study the Nigerian National Theatre as space/place. But like Yerima, the focus of Atte's engagement is on the historiography of the edifice known as National Theatre, and not on the unifying role it has played or can play. Seeing the edifice known as the National Theatre as a national symbol and cenotaph, Atte remarks that "Probably the most important accomplishment of the Federal Government, under General Yakubu Gowon...in the promotion of arts and culture in Nigeria, was the design and construction of the National Theatre..." (144). Beyond seeing the National Theatre as an important gesture in the promotion of arts and culture, what engaged the attention of Atte is what prompted the conceptualization and construction of the National Theatre; how the government policy for its construction was implemented and by whom; its architectural design; its composition; its mission and statutory mandate; and its different management boards from the time it was formally declared open on September 30th, 1976 by General Olusegun Obasanjo, the then Head of State (Atte 2001: 146).

Another related study like that of Yerima and Atte is that of Duro Oni (2001). The essay, which is entitled "Evaluative Analysis of Theatre Groups and Performance Venues in Nigeria" examines "the art and practice of the theatre" from "the perspectives of design and technology," which according to Oni is commonly referred to as "technical theatre"

in Nigeria (163). Focusing more on “the impact that performance venues and facilities have on the art and practice of the theatre” in Nigeria (Duro Oni 2001: 163), Oni’s interrogation is on how “to achieve the unity of purpose which is mandatory in any performance” (163) rather than the prerequisite for the unity of the various federating units making up Nigeria that is needed for nation building or national transformation. It is, therefore, the gap in knowledge in the scholarship of the Nigerian National Theatre that this study seeks to fill by examining the role that the Nigerian National Theatre as space and performance can play in engendering a collective consciousness, which is essential in the task of national unity.

The National Theatre as Space and Performance

The study, however, employs some terms that need to be clarified in the sense in which they are being deployed. These terms are National Theatre, Collective Identity, and the Nigerian nation-state. The Nigerian nation-state is a country in West Africa that gained independence from the British in 1960. Thus, it is an Anglophone West African country. But what is of utmost importance in this study is not so much where the Nigerian nation-state is situated cartographically as its unique configuration. This is so because it is its unique configuration and its current political state that has informed this research. For example, in contrast to other Anglophone and Francophone West African countries, and even other countries on the African continent; Nigeria is a very unique country as it is a conglomeration of many nationalities with different languages and religious practices in one nation. What Rogers Brubaker (2009) notes about persons making-up a nation-state recognizing that though they are “internally homogeneous,” they are also “externally bounded,” thereby seeing themselves as persons “with common purposes” (28) does not really apply to the Nigerian situation. At the last count, it is estimated that Nigeria is made-up of over 450 ethnic groups with their own various languages and religious beliefs. Hence, the Nigerian nation-state is fragmented politically, religiously, tribally, and economically Dapo Adelugba, Olu Obafemi, and Sola Adeyemi (2004: 138) affirm this when they observe that “Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with one of the largest areas. It is a country of great diversity because of the many ethnic, linguistic and religious groups that live within its borders.” Beyond being populous and occupying the largest area, what is to be noted is that Nigeria is a country that is sharply divided along ethnic, religious, and linguistic axis.

Following the amalgamation of the different regions that make-up present day Nigeria in 1914, the general consensus has been that the British finagled people belonging to different ethnic nationalities together into what has been generally described as unholy matrimony. It is in a bid to find lasting solution to this company of strange bed fellows that Nigeria at its independence in 1960 adopted federalism – the thinking being that of fostering unity in diversity. Unfortunately, this dream of the founding fathers of the

Nigerian nation-state has remained a mirage. Instead of becoming more united, what has been witnessed over the years is further disintegration. The first crack in the wall that signifies this disintegration was the Nigerian/Biafran civil war of 1967 – 1970. Following the civil war and the lessons learnt thereof, it was expected that bridges would be built across ethnic and tribal lines so that the country would become truly united in the face of its apparent diversity. But this has not been the case, prompting the interrogation of this work as to the role the National Theatre of Nigeria as space and performance can play in fostering a collective identity.

No matter the meanings that have been provided, at the heart of “collective identity” is a shared belief of common purpose, common interests, and solidarities beyond the existence of different individuals and groups within a geographical and imagined space. Anushka D. Kapahi and Gabrielle Tanada (2018) explain that “Collective identity refers to a shared distinction amongst a group of people or community, which comes from the community’s culture, beliefs and aspirations” (2). Likewise, Charles Taylor insists that “it is the cultural collective identity of a community that provides the moral and social frameworks that people use to determine who they are, how they see others and how they act” (cited in Kapahi and Tanada 2018: 2). The collective identity of a people within a geographical and imagined space is, therefore, how they see themselves as against how they see others. It revolves around the firm belief of “us” versus/against “them.” Irrespective of their internal heterogeneity, a people with a collective identity have a binding and bounding character that distinguishes them from others.

Another fundamental term, in addition to “collective identity,” that needs to be explained is “National Theatre.” On the face value, it simply refers to the theatre of a nation. But this “theatre of a nation” can assume two different but interrelated meanings. The first is the aggregation of the performative acts of a nation on stage, while the second is the edifice or structure constructed for the display of the performative acts of a nation. In the latter regard, such edifice or structure becomes the culmination of the symbol of a nation’s art and culture. These two perspectives to the meaning of the term “theatre” have been provided or suggested by scholars and critics. For instance, Saha (2018: 20) points out that “the word ‘theatre’ in English is derived from the Greek word ‘theatron’ which basically signifies a space for the spectators or an auditorium.” This etymological explanation of the term “theatre” shows that in its original usage, it denotes the auditorium or space rather than the performance. Yet, in his praise of his friend (Lady Augusta Gregory who wrote plays for the stage in Ireland), George Bernard Shaw remarks that:

If ever there was a person doomed from the cradle to write for the stage, to break through every social obstacle to get to the stage, to refuse to do anything but writ

for the stage, nay, to invent and create a theatre if no theatre existed, that person is ... (cited in Rempport 2018: 1)

And commenting on this, Rempport (2018) notes that “Shaw’s admiration for Lady Gregory arose, in part, out of ...the social ideals that she brought to her work for the Irish Revival at the beginning of the twentieth century” (2). It is obvious that Shaw (even as explained by Rempport) did not employ the term “theatre” as space or auditorium, but as performance. It is Lady Gregory’s writing for the stage that is her major contribution to Irish theatre, and not the building or erection of any structure/edifice for performance. It is, however, in the foregoing two senses that the word has been applied or deployed that this work uses the term “theatre.” First as the space/auditorium, and second as performance in/within the space/auditorium. As a structure, however, it has been pointed out that:

The National Theatre in Lagos occupies an area 23,000 square meters built over a 1.1 million square meters of land in Iganmu, Mainland Lagos. Construction work on the theatre started in 1973 under the Bulgarian firm of Techno Exportroy. The theatre itself was modelled after the Palace of Culture and Sports in Varna, Bulgaria (Oni 2017:73 – 74).

Thus, the “Nigerian National Theatre” as used in this work refers to the structure/building/auditorium that goes by the same name in Iganmu, Lagos, and the performative acts of Nigerian dramatists on stage.

Although in her attempt to define theatre, Saha (2018: 4) asserts that “[i]t is not the stage, the lights and mise-en-scene but two people within a given spatio-temporal reality,” it can also be conversely argued that it is not just the two people on/within any given space. As valid as Saha’s assertion is, a constructed and known edifice and structure of a theatrical space makes and achieves better consciousness for the actors and audience in a way that Peter Brook’s³ understanding of theatre as “a man walking across an empty space with another watching” (cited in Saha 2018:4) cannot achieve.

In most studies, however, the term “Theatre” with its qualifier “National” or the single term “Theatre” in isolation are often employed to refer to the nature or complexion of the theatrical performance of a nation, and not the space or structure that is offered for such performances (Kurt Essien 2021; Sharmista Saha 2018; Ahmed Yerima 2006; Martin Banham 2004; Ayo Akinwale 2001). For instance, in his edited book *A History of Theatre in Africa*, Martin Banham uses the word “theatre” more as performance rather than space/place. By “African Theatre,” what he refers to or ask his contributors to write about is the history of the performative acts of their countries. For example, writing from the

perspective of the history of Nigerian theatre in their chapter contribution entitled “Anglophone West Africa: Nigeria,” Adelugba, Obafemi, and Adeyemi (2004) argue that while “tracing the historical development of Nigerian theatre is bound to be complex...an authentic historical study of Nigerian arts and of Nigerian theatre from the pre-colonial periods is (still) a feasible project” (138). Despite momentary references to spaces/places where performance have taken place over different periods in the evolution of theatre practice in the Nigerian nation-state, what really engaged their research was not the evolution of theatre auditoria in Nigeria, but the evolution of theatre as performative acts.

Also, when Ahmed Yerima (2006:39 – 66) remarks that “Soyinka, through his numerous essays, laid the intellectual basis for the future of play interpretation – or play directing in Nigerian theatre” (62), he employs the words “Nigerian theatre” to refer to theatre performance in Nigeria rather than the space/place known as the “Nigerian National Theatre.” This is also the understanding of Nigerian/National theatre that Kurt Essien (2021: 48 – 59) hints at in his comparative study of Nigerian and American theatres in which he compares and contrasts Obafemi’s and O’Neil’s dramaturgy as exemplifications of both national theatres. Undoubtedly, he does not write about the national theatres of both countries as space, but specifically about Nigerian and American national theatres as performative acts in Obafemi’s and O’Neil’s dramaturgy. It is this same perspective of national theatre that Ayo Akinwale (2000:24 - 31) enacts in his “The Nigerian Theatre and Economic Viability,” when he quipped that “[t]he Nigerian theatre has come of age. Its operations from 1945 to 1997 show that it has become an integral part of our society’s existence” (24). Akinwale is not, here, speaking in terms of the structure of the National Theatre in Lagos, Nigeria that came into being during FESTAC in 1977 neither is he speaking of any other structure that has been constructed or empty space that has been so named for performance in Nigeria between 1945 and 1997. On the contrary, he is speaking of the performative acts that have been put on display in Nigeria from 1945 to 1997.

But this study differentiates and at the same time establishes a confluence between The National Theatre as a structure, place, and space on one hand; and the National theatre as the performative acts of a nation on stage with an audience on the other. The need for this is to demonstrate how both the physical and imagined space are symbiotic and can together be exercises in nation-building. The theatre director, Peter Brooks in his book, *The Empty Space*, remarks: “I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across the empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and that is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged” (cited in Saha 2018:4). Similarly, latching on Marvin Carlson (2008), Saha remarks that theatre is the “use of drama and the auditorium

space” (12). Performance must take place in an empty space or in an auditorium for theatre to be realized. As Henri Lefebvre (1991) notes in his theory of space, “it seems to be well established that physical space has no ‘reality’ without the energy that is deployed within it” (13). There can be no disjunction, schism, or break between physical space, mental space and social space (Lefebvre 1991:14). The physical space becomes the containment of mental space (the knowledge or aesthetic vision behind any given performance on stage/physical space), and both gives birth to the social space (the knowledge derived from the expose of the performance within/on physical space).

Yerima (2006) insists that “theatre must go beyond the place or the play; it must also look at the collaborative process, the rhythm of creation which gives new knowledge and experience to the audience or spectator – and maybe invariably the response of the audience to the ideas thrown by the theatre as place and practice” (43). The theatre as place and practice must work hand-in-hand to provide the audience or spectators with new knowledge and experience. Thus, what Yerima, Lefebvre, Brooks and Saha `enunciate within the framework of the present study is that the National Theatre as structure, space and place in isolation amounts to nothing. It only comes alive with the performance in/within it. Within this frame of reference, therefore, the theatrical performance of a nation and the space where such is staged for the entertainment and education of the audience work hand in gloves in initiating and sustaining a collective identity that can spark off national unity.



Front/Day view of the Nigerian National Theatre



Aerial view of the Nigerian National Theatre



Night view of the Nigerian National Theatres

Henry Lefebvre's Theory of Space, and the National Theatre as Space and Performance

It is, however, with the appropriation of Henri Lefebvre's theory of space that highlights how individual characters produce and reproduce their space, and are themselves products of the (re)produced space that this study examines the role that The Nigerian National Theatre, as space and performance, can play in creating and sustaining what has been described as "a unitary collective" (Kuby 2015: 65). While mathematicians and philosophers have engaged with the concept of space long before Lefebvre's theorization, the missing link appears to be the dynamism that can be associated with the conceptualization of space. As Lefebvre (1991) observes: "We are forever hearing about the space of this and/or the space of that: about literary space, ideological spaces, the space of dream, psychoanalytic topologies, and so on and so forth" (3). But the problem as Lefebvre points out is that these different spaces are treated separately and in isolation without establishing the link between them. Seen as inextricably intertwined with each other or one another, and ultimately with social life, Lefebvre elevates the mathematical and philosophical conception of space in terms of its physicality and abstractness to a dynamic and complex phenomenon.

Lefebvre, for instance, asserts that there is no disjunction or schism between "ideal space" and "real space," which is "the space of social practice. In actuality each of these two kinds of space involves, underpins, and presupposes the other" (14). But these two kinds of space that presupposes each other within the framework of Lefebvre's theory are three connected and interrelated spaces that work together to produce, in the final analysis, two interrelated spaces. Arguing that his theory of space is a unitary theory which connects "fields which are apprehended separately," Lefebvre posits that his theory is first concerned with "the physical...secondly, the mental...and thirdly, the social" (11). The physical space is used for the enunciation of the mental space, and both tied together, are deployed to propagate social space/practice. In this wise, social space/practice informs the mental space on physical space; and mental space on physical space in turn reproduces social space/practice. It is the existing social life that informs what is put on stage just as what is put on stage reproduces social life. Lefebvre insists that:

When we evoke 'energy,' we must immediately note that energy has to be deployed within a space. When we evoke 'space,' we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to points and within a time frame. When we evoke 'time,' we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein: space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction, likewise energy and time. (12)

Performance, which is energy deployed within a space over a period of time, is determined by social life and in turn redefines social life. So, in Lefebvre's theory of space, physical space such as the Nigerian National Theatre is not just an empty structure or place. On the contrary, it is an active locus of social relations. It is a space or place of containment of performative acts owing to the existing status-quo of social relations, and both in turn influence, determine, and reproduce social relations.

Writing, though without being aware of it and not specifically about the Nigerian National Theatre, of how knowledge production on stage is the product of existing social relations, which in turn reproduces social relations; Aderemi Bamikunle (2000) observes that "Obafemi's plays are in fact very lively and 'entertaining,' composed of many crowd-pleasing elements such as songs, dances, chants, mimes, music, and proverbs." But that "these elements are made to serve his larger aim of liberation, generating 'knowledge of the problem, the exposing of which the playwright hopes will generate revolutionary anger in the audience, which will spread to a general public that will lead to action'" (cited in Essien 2021:56). It is the knowledge of the problem in the society (the social relations between the hegemonic political elites and the ordinary citizens) that informs what Obafemi as a playwright puts on stage, which in turn he (Obafemi) hopes would generate revolutionary anger (a reproduced social relation in which the ordinary citizens would revolt against the existing status quo of the hegemonic political elites). Yet, the revolutionary anger that the playwright hopes to generate, which he hopes will also spread to the general public is a collective action emanating from the collective identity of the audience and the actors on stage.

The Urgent Need for/of a Collective Identity in the Face of National Disintegration

The need for this collective identity, which the Nigerian National Theatre as space and performance engenders and which is essential in the task of achieving national unity has never been in doubt. This, as already indicated, is because of the peculiarity of the Nigerian nation-state. Although Nsemba Edward Lenshie (2014) points out that "The resurgence of old boundaries of ethnicity and religion has become a major challenge in many countries across the world" ...Nigeria with so many ethnic and sectional groups paint the picture of a potentially vulnerable society to conflicts" (154). While it is true that the conflicts between the different ethnic regions are largely due to the bringing together of strange bed-fellows, by the colonialists, within the same geographical space; the fact remains that the situation is becoming worse by the day. Thus, there is the urgent need of national unity presently than at any other period in the historiography of the Nigerian nation-state.

Arguably, since after the Nigerian/Biafran civil war, and the annulment of the June 12th, 1993 presidential election by General Ibrahim Babaginda on the 23rd of June 1993, there has been no other time in the history of the Nigerian nation-state that ethnic cleavage and affiliation as well as regional and tribal loyalty has been so sharpened and pronounced to a breaking point of the nation. Repeatedly, the general complain is the marginalization of one ethnic group or another. This is even more so as the Nigerian nation-state runs an economy of the distribution rather than the production of wealth. As a result, believing that they are being short-changed in the distribution of the nation's wealth, different regional and ethnic nationalities are demanding for their own separate republic. The demand for the Biafran, Oduduwa, and Niger Delta republic are examples of such in recent times. Simultaneously is the fact that Nigerians are first and foremost citizens of their ethnic, regional, and tribal enclave before being that of the Nigerian nation-state.

It is against this background of a nation fragmented politically, religiously, tribally, and economically that this study interrogates the crucial space and place of The National Theatre and the role it can play in forging and sustaining a collective national identity. But the collective identity of what nation is to be forged and sustained? In what sense should Nigeria as a nation-state be understood by its inhabitants? Is it in terms of the space it occupies in relation to boundary markers and cartographic placements or in terms of how the inhabitants of the space and placement see themselves? And if the latter is what is of utmost signification, how should the inhabitants see themselves? Sudipta Kaviraj, in his *The Imaginary Institution of India* (1992), explains that nationalism is "the presence of an idea of a determinate nation with clear boundaries, unambiguous principles of inclusion, established by a clear act of choice" (cited in Saha 2018:3). Explaining further, he asserts that "although for the British it was a map that defined India, the colonized 'Indians' needed more reasons to internally justify themselves" (cited in Saha 2018:3). In this wise, it is not just by living within the cartographic markers or boundaries that is called Nigeria that really makes one a citizen.

It is more the choice or feeling one has of being a Nigerian rather than being of another nation-state, and of being a Nigerian first and foremost over one's membership of an ethnic or tribal group. While the membership of being the nationality of the Nigerian nation-state is decided and determined in advance by one's parentage, the choice and feeling of commitment to be or not to be a Nigerian still lies in the hands of individual characters, especially when such individual characters come of age. Furthering his argument as to the basis on which the anticolonial enterprise can succeed in any given situation, Kaviraj cited in Saha (2018:4) posits that:

Unless the people who are subjected to colonialism are seen to engage in such an enterprise which – despite evident internal differences between periods, between

high and folk culture, between the great tradition and the small, between anti-colonialists and the nationalists, between the radicals and the conservatives – is still seen as one – as a single whole historical enterprise – its history cannot be written.

The history that Kaviraj speaks of is an anti-colonial history – one in which the colonized of any given nation would define themselves in contrast to the definition of the colonialists. But this cannot be achieved without all hands, irrespective of their ethnic or ideological orientation, being on deck. The implication of this is the need for Nigerians to rise above the cleavages of their different affiliations and ideological orientations.

The Vision Behind the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria

This, undoubtedly, is the vision behind the establishment of the National Troupe of Nigeria on one hand, and the conceptualization and construction of the edifice known simply as the National Theatre on the other. It is curious that it is at the same time in one breath, and the same Section of the Law, in the other, that legislates on the role of The National Theatre as space/edifice/structure, and the establishment of the National Troupe of Nigeria. Writing about the time period in which the building of the National Theatre was conceptualized, Jimmy F. Atte points out that “Hosting the World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, in 1977 (FESTAC’77), was the catalyst for the birth of the National Theatre, but the concrete arrangements for its establishment started in 1973 when the Federal Government appointed a 29 member Theatre Consultative Committee to advise on the concept and the organizational structure of a Theatre” (144 – 145). Writing in the same breath, but from the perspective of the establishment of the National Troupe, Yerima (2001) also points out that “The decision to establish a National Cultural Troupe, as this was the first name which later evolved into the National Troupe of Nigeria started as far back as 1973 when Nigeria was preparing to host the World Festival for Arts and Culture” (187). That the idea to build the National Theatre and establish the National Troupe happened at the same time in 1973, in preparation for FESTAC’ 77, is not mere coincidence.

As Yerima (2001) explains, culture is “an identity symbol among a people. This is why most countries have what is called a cultural policy. A cultural policy is usually an agreed and well-defined statement of how a country wants to understand and use its culture as a symbol of unity within the country” (186). In preparation for FESTAC’77 where countries are coming to showcase and thereby celebrate and eulogize their distinctive Black and African culture, there was the need for Nigeria to present a common front despite its diversified culture. It was, therefore, not surprising that the first set of casts that were recruited into the National Troupe, in preparation for FESTAC’ 77, were from different parts of the country.

But beyond the time factor, which establishes an intersection between the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria, is the fact that it is the same Section of the Law that legislates on their objectives. According to Ahmed Yerima (2001), for example, it is "Decree No. 47 of 19th November, 1991, titled the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria Board Decree 1991 (that) established the National Troupe as a parastatal" (191). Beyond showing how the National Troupe of Nigeria became a parastatal, what Yerima also succeeded in pointing out is that it is the same enactment of the law that outlines the objectives of both the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria. As he (Yerima) pointed out, part of the cultural policy of Nigeria states that "The state shall establish a National Troupe of Nigeria whose repertoire shall draw their materials from drama, dance and music." And that "The National Troupe of Nigeria shall be part of the National Theatre" (2001: 187). The aim and objectives of the National Theatre and the National Troupe are outlined in the law (Decree No. 47 of 19991) as follows (**see Appendix 1**):

- 1) There is hereby established a body to be known as the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria Board...which shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal and may be sued in its corporate name.
- 2) There shall be established under the general supervision of the Board
 - a) a National Theatre; and
 - b) a troupe to be known as the National Troupe of Nigeria
- 3) The objectives of the Board shall be to –
 - a) encourage the discovery and development of talents in the performing arts;
 - b) achieve high artistic productions specifically designed for national and international tours;
 - c) ensure that productions of the Troupe are geared towards national aspirations;
 - d) encourage the development of children's theatre;
 - e) ensure the preservation of the repertoire of the Troupe; and
 - f) ensure that the National Theatre is efficiently managed as a commercial concern

Thus, deriving from the legislation of the law, it is obvious that the vision behind the National Theatre as space and place, and the National theatre as performative gesture, as embodied in the establishment of the National Troupe, is an enactment for a unitary/common purpose of national unity. Art as a performative gesture needs a space from which it could speak; and it is this reality that undoubtedly informs the decision to make the National Troupe of Nigeria part of the Nigerian National Theatre.

The Role of the National Theatre as Space and Performance in Nigeria's Collective Identity

It is against the backdrop of the established vision behind the conflation of the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria as enunciated above that this section goes on to deploy Henri Lefebvre's theory of space to highlight "what has been" and "what should be" the role of The Nigerian National Theatre. As already established, this work employs "The Nigerian National Theatre" to refer to the edifice that goes by that name and the performative/dramatic acts of Nigeria on stage. Although the theatrical performance of a nation can take place in any given space in and outside the geographical boundary of a nation, and still enact and hold up its didactic message in terms of promoting the culture of a nation, but it does appear that such didactic message (especially in relation to the promotion of a nation's art and culture) is more pronounced when enacted in/within the walls of a nation's theatre.

This is what appears to make the National Theatre complex in Iganmu, Lagos, to be special among all other performance venues and facilities in Nigeria. It should be recalled that in his argument that his theory of space is a unitary theory which connects "fields which are apprehended separately," Lefebvre (1991) posits that his theory is first concerned with "the physical...secondly, the mental...and thirdly, the social" (11). Although all physical/empty space might be regarded as the same (especially within Peter Brook's assertion that all that is needed for theatre to take place is an empty space for someone to walk across while another is watching), the mental apprehension of one physical/empty space in contrast to another cannot be discountenanced. The mental apprehension of an actor acting on the stage of a university theatre as against on the stage of the Nigerian National Theatre cannot be the same. As Lefebvre (1991) insists "an already produced space can be decoded, can be *read*. Such a space implies a process of signification" (17). The "users and inhabitants" of a rural space are markedly different from the "users and inhabitants" of an urban space (Lefebvre 1991:17). In this way, the signification attached to the already produced physical space of the Nigerian National Theatre cannot be the same with that of other performance facilities.

The comprehension of what the Nigerian National Theatre stands for is not the same with what other performance facilities stand for. It cannot even be discountenanced, for example, that an actor might see his performance on the stage of the National Theatre as the culmination of his success on the stage of the university or State theatre. Put simply, just as university theatres and Art Council Halls (Oni 2001:176)⁴ are meant to be representational and reflective as well as be the symbol of the art and culture of the universities in which they are situated and the State (as federating units of the Nigerian nation-state) in which they are located respectively, so it is with the Nigerian National Theatre in relation to the Nigerian nation-state. The Nigerian National Theatre is the seat

of the nation's artistic and cultural productions. It is the face, pride, and symbol of theatre, and in fact of all cultural practices in Nigeria. As an edifice, it is the physical manifestation of theatre and cultural practice in Nigeria. Thus, it holds a unique place in the engendering and sustainability of a collective identity that is essential in achieving national unity.

It is apparently what the Nigerian National Theatre represents for the arts and culture of Nigeria that informs one of Wole Soyinka's numerous actions when it was put up for sale by the Federal Government. In his attempt to demonstrate that though Soyinka "lived on writing and talking," but believe more "in action," Yerima (2006) discloses that Femi Osofisan once told him that "one of Soyinka's strategies of fighting on behalf of the National Theatre and the artistes, was to premiere the play ("King Baabu") at the National Theatre, even if there was only one line of wall still standing" (41). The general criticism that greeted the planned sale of the Nigerian National Theatre was that as a national cenotaph, it cannot and should not be sold to private investors; and this is the argument that Wole Soyinka also buys into by resolving to premiere his play in the National Theatre, "even if there was only one line of wall still standing." While the message of the play would not be lost if premiered in any of the performance venues or facilities in Nigeria, staging it within the walls of the National Theatre appears to have a special appeal for Soyinka, and it can be expected to have a special appeal for the audience. Of course, this is because of what it represents physically and symbolically for Nigerian arts and culture.

Significant also in terms of the special place of the National Theatre among other performance venues and facilities in Nigeria is the rumination of Ahmed Yerima. Following his appointment as the Artistic Director of the National Troupe of Nigeria, Yerima (2006) in his ruminations, about the role Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan can play or has played in preventing the sale of the Nigerian National Theatre to private investors, lets out his quandary when he admits that "[t]he bigger question then came: was the National Theatre, Iganmu an 'abortion' or a mere 'prestige symbol'? Was it a creative theatre whose structure could control or even manipulate the artiste positively, or had Nigeria, in a rush, built a monster that was alien to our culture, too big to maintain, and too foreign to be artistically and culturally inspiring?" (42). The focus of this research work, as already stated, is not to join issues with Yerima and others like him as to whether the architectural design and structure of the Nigerian National Theatre, Iganmu, is foreign or well thought-out. There are those who have taken up and are still taking up this issue in their research. Rather, the point to be noted is that the Nigerian National Theatre as an edifice is supposedly the prestigious symbol of Nigeria's theatre/cultural practice. It is a space that is supposed to be artistically and culturally inspiring for the propagation of the rich Nigerian cultural heritage. It is against this framework that

Yerima even ruminates as to whether the architectural design and construction is alien to the Nigerian culture or is too foreign to be artistically and culturally inspiring to Nigerian artistic and cultural productions. As such, the National Theatre as an edifice is the symbol of the collective identity of the cultural and theatrical practice of Nigeria as a nation-state; and it is in this respect that it can play significant role with the performance in/inside it to engender national unity.

The symbiotic relationship between space and performance, and the resultant effect in terms of a collective identity or national unity has been noted and highlighted by critics and scholars. Although writing under a different circumstance, Zulu Sofola (1979) in her explanation of what theatre is, articulates the kind of collective identity that the conflation of the Nigerian National Theatre as space and as performance can stimulate. According to her:

Theatre is a medium of artistic expression mirrored in a dynamic living form. A metaphorical image of reality, it reflects the total cosmic, moral, and metaphysical order of life of the people. It is an arena where human beings are presented in a cosmic totality, acting and reacting to forces around them and within them, perceiving and being perceived by those interacting with them, and by those in the audience who experience with them the enigma that is the common lot of humanity. (Cited in Ayo Akinwale 2001: 24)

Here, Sofola is not just speaking of theatre as performance but also of theatre as space; for it is t/he space offered by theatre as place that opens up the arena for the interaction between actors on stage and members of the audience. And as Sofola explains, the interdependent relation between the Nigerian National Theatre as space and performance is very important because it creates a collective experience in which the common lot of humanity is laid bare between actors and the audience. The effect of such collective experience can be hazarded. Irrespective of the class, gender, religious, and ethnic affiliations of the members of the cast and the members of the audience, they have all become one under the rubric of their realization of their common lot as humans. Seeing themselves, first and foremost, as humans grappling with the same toil of the same existential reality of their society unequivocally neutralizes their ethnic affiliation as Hausas, Igbos, and Yorubas or as belonging to a majority or minority ethnic group; or as belonging to contrasting religious beliefs.

Writing almost in a similar vein like Sofola, but from a different perspective, Essien (2021: 48 - 59) also inadvertently conflates what the Nigerian National Theatre as space and as performance can achieve in bridging the ethnic walls that divide the Nigerian nation-state. In his comparative study of "American and Nigerian theatres," he shows the kind

of unity that can ensue thereof. As already indicated, though writing specifically from the perspective of performance rather than space, he nevertheless observes that:

Among the most persistent themes in his (Obafemi's) writing for the stage and study is that of 'demystification,' the stripping away of false values and traditions that serve to maintain the hegemony of a repressive and inequitable order: 'No more scapegoats, No more sacred cows,' the concluding titular chant of his 1999 play, sums up his artistic project, not only in those two aims explicitly named but also in the direct audience participation that the chant provokes in performance. Each play traces a movement from mythos, the realm of beliefs and traditions, to ethos, where those values are not so much discarded as tested for their usefulness in modelling a social order that is revolutionary rather than tragic. (Essien 2021:49)

While what Essien sets out to demonstrate is how Obafemi deploys his plays to deconstruct "culture's...mystifying, traditional elements" so as to reimagine "the possibility of actual social change" (2021:49), he nonetheless shows the evocative power of "the concluding titular chant" of Obafemi's play under analysis on the audience. It is noteworthy that what Essien analyzes is not Obafemi's play text of the title "No more Scapegoats, No more sacred cows," but the actual performance of the play on stage. Accordingly, Obafemi's play is theatre as performance, while the stage on which it is performed is theatre as space. And as can be seen, it is the symbiotic relations between theatre as space and theatre as performance that brought the audience together under one roof, which in turn engenders a collective identity that can result in national unity.

Essien even observes that it is with the staging of this play at Tennessee Tech University in the United States that white and African American actors for the first time acted together on stage in the history of the university. According to him, "but with some notable exceptions, productions at Tennessee Tech University had not featured African American, much less African, roles (sic) very prominently. It was, therefore, gratifying to see this fuller racial integration on our university stage, and equally gratifying to see those talented African American actors take up parts in subsequent theatre productions..." (Essien 2021:58). As a result of Obafemi's play on stage, white and African American actors, for the first time, became united on stage in Tennessee Tech University. The multiplier effect of such unity on stage in the university campus in general in terms of the kind of relationship that would ensue across racial lines and boundaries is better imagined. Remarkable, for instance, is the fact that the African American actors became recognized and appreciated by their white counterparts that they now "take up parts in subsequent theatre productions." (Essien 2021)

Yet, this collective identity and unity that is provoked among the actors and audience is not merely because they are all together under one roof, breathing the same air, and enjoying the same performance. Beyond all of this, within Obafemi's stage play under analysis, is the identity all members of the audience with the actors on stage assumed for themselves. By shouting "no more scapegoats, no more sacred cows," the audience together with the actors on stage identify themselves as "scapegoats" who have been oppressed and exploited by "sacred cows" - those who are at the helm of affairs of governance. Still, this identity that they claim for themselves is not so much as essential in itself as what it gestures. Notwithstanding the temporariness of the revolutionary stance advocated by the play, and the fact that the revolution dies on stage and is not taken outside the stage; that the audience as a unitary collective irrespective of their gender, class, and ethnic affiliations together with the actors on stage at the conclusion of the play shout the title of the play is a gesture that they are all one, have all spoken with one voice, and are tied together with the same mental disposition that "enough is a enough." As Essien (2021) observes, "the play makes clear that unlike the classical scapegoat that symbolically bears the weight of society's sins in isolation, in truth all are scapegoats who must participate in the purposeful disorder that is necessary to create fundamental peace" (57). It is this reinterpretation of the classical scapegoat that the actors and the audience together participate in by their vociferous chant of "no more scapegoat" at the end of Obafemi's play.

Of course, this gesture that is achieved and the evocative power of the concluding titular chant on the audience would not be possible with the reading of the text, but only with watching the play on stage. As Yerima (2006) argues "In order for theatre to effect or point towards a social change within the thinking or the consciousness of the audience, this tension ("the tension – one of understanding and of questioning between the actors on stage and the audience") must exist" (49 emphasis in the original). What Yerima's argument points to is that without the collaborative performance of the actors on stage and the audience, social transformation cannot take place. It is because the audience are watching Obafemi's play on stage that they are able to participate in the performance, and be affected by the performance. It is in this way, among others, that the Nigerian National Theatre as space and performance work hand in gloves to engender a collective identity, which is essential in achieving national unity.

As already underscored, this is the vision behind the conflation of the National Theatre and the National Troupe in the law establishing them. Although there was intense uproar when Ahmed Yerima was appointed to double as both the Director General and Chief Executive Officer of the National Theatre and the National Troupe by Ambassador Franklin Ogbuewu, the Minister of Culture and Tourism (Oni 2017: 79), the move appears to have been motivated by the spirit of the law, rather than the letter of the law.

While not holding brief for either the Minister or Ahmed Yerima, the move appeared to have been informed by the need to bring both establishments under one management umbrella to achieve their set objective of unifying the nation. Yerima (2001:194) notes that “the National Troupe helps to celebrate Nigeria’s cultural heritage and therefore re-awakens those social inter-relationships which unify the country”. This even becomes especially so with the conflation of the National Theatre (space) and the National Troupe (performance). Lefebvre (1991:12) insists that:

When we evoke ‘energy,’ we must immediately note that energy has to be deployed within a space. When we evoke ‘space,’ we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to points and within a time frame. When we evoke ‘time,’ we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein: space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction, likewise energy and time.

Performance, which is energy deployed within a space over a period of time, is determined by social life and in turn redefines social life. So, in Lefebvre’s theory of space, physical space such as the Nigerian National Theatre is not just an empty structure or place. On the contrary, it is an active locus of social relations. It is a space or place of containment of performative acts (the National Troupe in this instance) owing to the existing status-quo of social relations, and both in turn influence, determine, and reproduce social relations.

It is noteworthy that among the objectives of conflating the National Theatre and the National Troupe as outlined by the law establishing them is “to encourage the discovery and development of talents in the performing arts.” This was what happened prior to the establishment of the National Troupe of Nigeria. Hubert Ogunde, as the first Artistic Director/Consultant to the Troupe, was mandated to travel from one part of the country to another recruiting talents that would represent Nigeria, with a common cultural front. As reported, “Chief Ogunde was to...embark on what was later to be tagged ‘The Ososa Experiment.’ This later became the nucleus of the artists of the National Troupe of Nigeria. The objective of the Ososa Experiment was to prepare Nigeria’s representation for the Commonwealth Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland and to also convince Government that a group of artistes could be put together, organized and trained for the specific purpose of performance and future representations of Nigeria in both National and International engagements” (*The Guardian*, 19th January, 2020). Noteworthy about this development is that artistes from different ethnic and religious background came together as one to represent Nigeria.



The National Troupe as Nigerians (The Guardian January 19th, 2020)



The National Troupe in Performance (The Guardian January 19th, 2020)

In the same regard, was the arrangement for preparation that was put in place before the FESTAC Festival that took place from the 15th January – 12th February, 1977. Prior to FESTAC, the 1974/75 National Festival had been organized in Kaduna. The National Festival was a kind of dress rehearsal for the FESTAC festival, and it “was designed to bring out the best in Nigeria’s cultural heritage and provide a basis for selecting the

artistes to represent the country at FESTAC" (*FESTAC' 77 Report and Summary of Accounts* 9). As noted,

At the end of that Festival, some artistes and artworks were selected and entered for FESTAC. In order to present a virile contingent and ensure a high level of presentation, intensive rehearsals and reassessment of Nigeria's artistic efforts were considered imperative.... The National Participation Committee was consequently inaugurated in July, 1975 and charged with the responsibility for camping and grooming the artistes, and for the selection, collection, and recovery of artworks for the various exhibitions. Apart from the participants in the Durbar and Regatta, the Federal Military Government directed that not more than 1,500 Nigerian artistes and officials should represent Nigeria at the Festival. The artistes were to be camped in the Festival Town along Badagry Road. However, since the houses were not ready, they had to spend the period January 8th – 20th in the University of Lagos before they were transferred to the Festival Village... (*FESTAC'77 Report and Summary of Accounts* 10 emphasis in the original)

It did not matter which part of the country the actors and actresses were from. It did not matter the language they speak. It did not matter what their ideological or religious orientation was. They were all trained together. They all auditioned, rehearsed, and presented the same dance, music, and play irrespective of the extraction of the country that the dance, music, or play was from. For instance, one of the plays that was presented by the Nigerian contingent at the festival was *Langbodo*, which was staged at the National Theatre Main Hall on Sunday, 16th January, 1977 (see **Appendix 2**). Also presented at the Festival by Nigeria, for example, were films such as *SHEHU UMAR*, which was shown on the 17th of January, 1977 (see **Appendix 3**); *Overamen Nogbaisi*, which was presented on the 21st of January, 1977 (see **Appendix 4**); and *God Dance Man Dance* on the 25th of January, 1977 (see **Appendix 5**). As reflected in the Programme of Events, and as with the presentations of other participating countries, all these artistic presentations were presented not as a Yoruba, Hausa, or Benin plays but as Nigerian plays. Thus, the actors and actresses, rather than seeing themselves as belonging to their various tribes, saw themselves as Nigerians first and foremost. The authors of all the presentations as well were also Nigerians first, rather than belonging to their ethnic regions.

And the situation has not changed since after FESTAC'77 as the National Troupe in conjunction with the National Theatre has continued to rehearse and present dance, music, and plays that cut across the different regions of the country. The troupe has rehearsed and presented at the National Theatre artistic productions such as *The Trials of Oba Ovonranwen*, *Yemoja*, *Tafida*, and "The Kolanut Dance" (see **Appendix 6**). In his theory of space, Lefebvre (1991:27) holds that "What happens in space lends a miraculous quality to thought". He then adds that "a rough coincidence is assumed to exist between

social space on the one hand and mental space – the (topological) space of thoughts and utterances – on the other” (Lefebvre 1991:28). Just as the thoughts of individual characters influence their actions in a given physical/social space, so do their actions or inactions in a physical/social space influence their thoughts. It is the mental space of what is to be achieved that gave birth to the physical space of the planned camping and grooming of the artistes. And because of the social space of camping and grooming that has been provided for the artistes, a mental space of collective consciousness (thought) has been reproduced in which they see one another as having not different but a collective identity bound together by the same Nigerian cultural production(s).

It is for the same purpose of a collective identity that the National Theatre and the National Troupe has also been conflated, in the provision of the law, to achieve “high artistic productions specifically designed for national and international tours.” What is of utmost importance is not whether the artistic production is high or not. While not undermining high artistic productions, what appears to resonate in this second objective of the provision of the law is that the artistic productions should be designed for national and international tours. What this implies is that the production must truly be representative of Nigerian culture and art. It must be one that can be recognized both nationally and internationally, at first glance, as truly Nigerian. The FESTAC festival has come and gone. But the National Theatre in conjunction with the National Troupe are still expected to produce and present artistic productions designed for national and international tours. Although writing under a different circumstance, yet very much related, Lefebvre (1991:44) submits rhetorically that:

What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose Vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies? What would remain of a religious ideology...if it were not based on places and their names: church, confessional Altar, sanctuary, tabernacle? What would remain of the Church if there were no churches? The Christian ideology, carrier of a recognizable, if disregarded Judaism...has created the Spaces which guarantee that it endures?

Just as the church (as in the persons and their ideology) needs a space from which to speak (the Church as a structure), so does artistic performance (the National Troupe) need a space (the National Theatre) from which to speak. As Lefebvre (1991) again points out that “space embodies social relationships” (27). To be certain, all performance venues/facilities qualify for such a space/place from which the performance of the National Troupe can speak. But among all else of such spaces and places, the National Theatre is unique and first to the National Troupe.

The home of the National Troupe is the National Theatre, where they are expected to rehearse and fine tune their artistic productions. It is the National Theatre that is, then, the first and foremost physical space for the social relationship of the members of the National Troupe. Undoubtedly, therefore, as the cast of the National Troupe tour from one part of the country to another, their space and performance would become bound together just as members of the cast and the audience would bound together. As actors, dancers, and musicians of different ethnic cleavages and religious background travel on tour from one federating state to another of the country, and from one country to another; there is no equivocation that they would all be bound by one common purpose, which in turn would sustain a collective consciousness. The members of the audience, irrespective of their different affiliations, would also be bound with the performers. Not surprising, therefore, Lefebvre insists that “(Social) space is a (social) product” (1991:26). It is the social space of the national and international tours of the National Troupe, which in itself has been made possible by the social space of the National Theatre that engenders the social product of social relationships – first between members of the cast – and second between the cast and the audience. This is even applicable to the international tours of the National Troupe where the ovation that greets their performance can be interpreted as a kind of identification by an international audience with them and their performance.

However, the production of the National Troupe is not an end in itself. On the contrary, it should be a means to an end. As specified by the provision of the law, the production should be geared towards national aspirations. While the provision of the law under focus does not exactly specify what these national aspirations are, it stands to reason that within the framework of theatre practice it is the promotion of Nigeria’s cultural heritage; while outside it, it can be said to be the unity of the country, which repeatedly has been said to be non-negotiable. It is noteworthy that the National Troupe has been described as “Nigeria’s cultural ambassador” whose “primary function is to celebrate the cultural heritage of Nigeria through dance, music and drama” (*Programme Brochure of The Contest*)⁵. Of course, the celebration of the cultural heritage of Nigeria is not an end in itself. Rather, it is for the preservation of Nigeria’s cultural heritage, which in turn is for the purpose of promoting what unites the country more than what disintegrates it.

Recommendations

Thus, for the National Theatre to make significant impact in engendering a collective identity for the Nigerian Nation-State, the following recommendations are made:

1. It is critical for the National Theatre to be strategic in ensuring that it remains relevant to other sections of the country whose resources are pooled to keep it running. While the National Theatre's present Play Reading Series in several Nigerian tertiary institutions offering theatre arts is innovative and admirable, this

gesture should be extended to the 36 state councils of arts and culture to broaden the National Theatre's reach.

2. Likewise, the Play Reading Series of the National Theatre should be extended to selected secondary schools in the 36 state councils of arts and culture. Listening to the reading of the same play as a Nigerian cultural production will foster a kind of collective identity.
3. An Annual themed drama performance festival at the National Theatre that features troupes, council of arts and culture or performing arts departments from different parts of Nigeria is sacrosanct in creating a national framework for engendering a sense of collective identity of the Nigerian Nation-State.
4. Nigeria's National Theatre and National Troupe must be reawakened and made aware of their role in fostering a sense of national identity through the promotion of cultural values with quality performances and cultural displays. In order to do this, deliberate programmes aimed at fostering a collective consciousness among artists and the general public are essential.
5. The National Theatre in collaboration with the National Troupe should make it a point of duty to attend as many international festivals as possible so as to promote and at the same time celebrate Nigeria's rich cultural heritage.
6. In the current "complex regimes of presence and absence through digitization" (Knoblauch & Martina 2020: 264), the National Theatre can still remain relevant by digitizing its productions and uploading them on the digital space for the consumption of both a local and an international audience.
7. The private sector must be included in the effort to forge a common identity. This is because government funding alone is insufficient to meet the demands of communal awareness development. As a result, the National Theatre must explore alternate funding sources, such as partnerships with business sector organisations. Inadvertently, this will provide the National Theatre with much-needed funding, as well as the necessary conditions for inclusivity and collaborative creative activity in the pursuit of a shared identity.
8. The search for a collective identity necessitates strong leadership. When it comes to appointing who should lead the National Theatre, the emphasis should be on ability and expertise. If the National Theatre is to fulfil its role effectively, the

director must have a thorough understanding of the practise and administration of theatre. Professor Sunday Enessi Ododo's present leadership of the National Theatre is a testament to how competence and skill work together to deliver efficiency in the National Theatre's mandate.

Conclusion

It is, therefore, unequivocal that the Nigerian National Theatre as space and performance has a lot to contribute in engendering a collective consciousness that can spark off national unity. The first cause for this collective consciousness is the edifice itself, which serves the purpose of a communal space bringing people from all walks of life together under/within the same space. In this vein, the Nigerian National Theatre as space/place brings people of different ages, gender, ethnic cleavages, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, and socio-political and ideological orientation together. Notwithstanding the debate and counter debate that has trailed its architectural design as being a foreign transposition, the Nigerian National Theatre is truly a Nigerian edifice. The emblem that adorns its front view speaks volume than what artistic scholars and critics have allowed in their interventions. As the "world-famous 16th century Ivory Mask worn as a pectoral by Benin Kings on royal ceremonial occasions" (*FESTAC'77 Report and Summary of Accounts* 6), the edifice (as already underscored) represents and is symbolic of the culmination of Nigeria's cultural practice and heritage. Like Greek/European plays that have been given a Nigerian/African colouration by playwrights through adaptation, the edifice has also been given same by the emblem adorning it. Hence, rather than focusing on what is wrong with it, the concentration should be on what it can help to achieve; which in the present critical exercise is its capacity to engender a collective identity.

The second cause is the collective identity and unity that is provoked among the actors towards engendering collective consciousness. As already indicated, part of the objectives of the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria is to "achieve high artistic productions specifically designed for national and international tours" (Decree 47 of 1991). As actors, dancers, and musicians of different ethnic cleavages and religious background travel on tour from one federating state to another of the country, and from one country to another; there is no equivocation that they would all be bound by one common purpose, which in turn would sustain a collective identity. Most important is the emotions and psychological feelings they would all share as one in the process of their productions. Irrespective of the ethnic cleavage or region that such artistic production represents, it is no longer that of the ethnic region, but of Nigeria as a nation-state. For instance, as already pointed out, one of the plays that was presented by the Nigerian contingent at the FESTAC'77 Festival was *Langbodo*. Also presented at the Festival by Nigeria, for example, were films such as *SHEHU UMAR* and *Overamen Nogbaisi*. All these

presentations represent and were taken from different ethnic regions of Nigeria. Yet, they were all presented and accepted as Nigerian cultural productions.

The third cause is the participatory ambience that the Nigerian National Theatre as space and performance opens up for both the actors on stage and the audience. The significance of such interaction between the actors on stage and the audience is not merely because they are all together under one roof, breathing the same air, and enjoying the same performance. Beyond all of this, is the identity all members of the audience with the actors on stage assumed for themselves within the framework of different stage productions.

The fourth cause is the time the actors spend together in the auditioning, rehearsing, and presentation of the play on one hand, and the time the audience spend together in enjoying the edutainment of the stage production on the other. It should be recalled that among the objectives of the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria is to “encourage the development of children’s theatre.” The impact of such socialization on the psyche of the children as they grow up is better imagined. The effect of such socialization cannot also be underestimated for adult actors who spend time together auditioning, rehearsing, and presenting artistic performances. The only difference is that for the children, it is a case of starting early with a bright future of a unitary collective.

Thus, the present management of the National Theatre complex led by Prof. Enessi Ododo has to be eulogized for the week-long festival that was planned and executed in December 2020. The week-long festival was/is an appropriate response to the existing phenomenon in which the cinema and television are stealing theatre audience. The theatre that had been dead for years came alive, bringing people from different ethnic, religious, and ideological orientation together. During the week-long festival, with the most minimal security personnel on hand, no single fight or case of violence was witnessed. While this could be attributed to the festive mood of the audience, the different performances put on display and the collective identity they engendered also played significant roles. Yet, such week-long festival should not just be a December affair. It should be as regular as possible. For instance, it can be made a quarterly or bi-monthly event with the sole purpose of bringing people of different ethnic nationalities together to celebrate and uphold Nigeria’s rich cultural heritage. The more regular such events are, the more bridges are erected across ethnic, tribal, and religious lines.

Notes

- 1) Demas Nwoko who is now 86 years old is a theatre designer and architect. He was in the Government delegation to the Algiers Festival in 1969. He was also in the team to Dakar that produced *Danda*, starring Sonny Oti. Although neglected and ignored by the Federal Government in the design of the National Theatre, he went on to design the Benin Theatre, the scepter for his brother's coronation as the Obi of Idumoje Ugboko, and the Cultural Centre in Ibadan.
- 2) Kesiena Obue is a writer, Director and founder of Kessavier Vanille Productions. She has successfully staged plays such as "The Bling Lagosians"; "Moremi the Musical"; "Fela and the Kalakuta Queens"; "Wakaa the Musical"; and "Hertitude."
- 3) Peter Brook is a Theatre Director.
- 4) Duro Oni (2001) establishes that there are three types of Government Performance Venues and Facilities namely University theatres, Art Council Halls, and The National Theatre (176). Within this context, it stands to reason that the National Theatre is the culmination of all Government owned performance venues and facilities.
- 5) *The Contest* is a play written and directed by Mike Anyanwu. It was presented by the National Troupe of Nigeria at Cinema Hall II of the National Theatre from the 24th of December, 2010 to the 2nd of January, 2011.

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APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX I

Extraordinary



Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette

No. 64

Lagos - 19th November, 1991

Vol. 78

Government Notice No. 290

The following is published as Supplement to this Gazette

	Short Title	Page
Decree No. 47	National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria Board Decree 1991	A 335

Printed and Published by The Federal Government Press, Lagos, Nigeria.
FGPL 270/1291/12,000

Annual Subscription from 1st January, 1991 is Local : N400.00 Overseas : N450.00 (Surface Mail) N500.00 (Second Class Air Mail). Present issue (including Supplement) N5 per copy. Subscribers who wish to obtain Gazette after 1st January should apply to the Director, Federal Government Press, Lagos for amended Subscription.

(779)

APPENDIX 1A

APPENDIX 1A

A 335

Supplement to Official Gazette Extraordinary No. 64, Vol. 78, 19th November, 1991 Part—A

NATIONAL THEATRE AND THE NATIONAL TROUPE OF NIGERIA BOARD DECREE 1991



ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

Section

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE AND THE NATIONAL TROUPE OF NIGERIA BOARD

1. Establishment of the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria Board.
2. Objectives.
3. Membership of the Board.
4. Functions of the Board.
5. Removal from office of members of the Board.
6. Tenure of office.

APPOINTMENT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND OTHER STAFF OF THE BOARD.

7. Appointment of the General Manager of the National Theatre.
8. Appointment of the Artistic Director.

9. Appointment of other staff of National Theatre and the Troupe.
10. Pensions.

FINANCIAL PROVISIONS.

11. Establishment of the Fund by the Board.
12. Capital maintenance of the National Theatre.
13. Borrowing powers.
14. Accounts and audit.
15. Annual Report.

MISCELLANEOUS

16. Power of the Minister to give directives.
17. Regulations.
18. Interpretation.
19. Citation.

SCHEDULE

Decree No. 47

[29th October 1991]

Commence-
ment.

THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT hereby decrees as follows:—

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE AND THE NATIONAL TROUPE OF NIGERIA BOARD

1.—(1) There is hereby established a body to be known as the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria Board (hereafter in this Decree referred to as "the Board") which shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal and may sue and be sued in its corporate name.

Establish-
ment of the
National
Theatre and
the National
Troupe of
Nigeria
Board, e.c.

APPENDIX 1B

A 336

1991 No. 47

National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria Board

- (2) There shall be established under the general supervision of the Board—
- (a) a National Theatre ; and
 - (b) a troupe to be known as the National Troupe of Nigeria (hereafter in this Decree referred to as "the Troupe").
- Objectives. 2. The Objectives of the Board shall be to—
- (a) encourage the discovery and development of talents in the performing arts ;
 - (b) achieve high artistic productions specifically designed for national and international tours ;
 - (c) ensure that productions of the Troupe are geared towards national aspirations ;
 - (d) encourage the development of children's theatre ;
 - (e) ensure the preservation of the *repertoire* of the Troupe ; and
 - (f) ensure that the National Theatre is efficiently managed as a commercial concern.
- Membership of the Board. 3.—(1) The Board shall be generally responsible
3. The Board shall consist of—
- (a) a Chairman who shall be a well known Art Patron ;
 - (b) a representative of the Ministry of Culture and Social Welfare ;
 - (c) a representative of the National Council for Arts and Culture ;
 - (d) one representative of the universities ;
 - (e) the General Manager of the National Theatre ;
 - (f) the Artistic Director, National Troupe of Nigeria ; and
 - (g) six other persons chosen from persons with adequate qualifications and experience in the fields of arts, music and culture.
- (2) The appointment of the Chairman and members of the Board shall be by the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces on the recommendation of the Minister.
- (3) The supplementary provisions contained in the Schedule to this Decree shall have effect with respect to the proceedings of the Board and the other matters mentioned therein.
- Functions of the Board. 4. Without prejudice to the generality of section 2 of this Decree, it shall be the functions of the Board to be generally responsible for the policies and issue guidelines to the National Theatre and the Troupe and to—
- (a) define and monitor policies relating to the operations of the Troupe ;
 - (b) establish and maintain the Troupe and direct all such services as in the opinion of the Board are usually provided by national troupes to achieve the highest standard ;
 - (c) operate and artistically develop the Troupe as a performing body whose *repertoire* shall embrace drama, dance and music ;
 - (d) guide and give leadership to local efforts in artistic experimentation and strive to ensure that the Troupe is a centre of excellence ;
 - (e) impose scale of fees as may be regulated by the Board from time to time with the approval of the Minister, for services rendered by the Troupe ;

APPENDIX 2



FESTAC '77

15th January – 12th February
LAGOS AND KADUNA, NIGERIA.

**Report and
Summary of Accounts**

APPENDIX 2A

APPENDIX 2A

SUNDAY 16TH JANUARY 1977

VENUES	HOURS	DISCIPLINE	TITLE
NATIONAL THEATRE MAIN HALL	4-6 P.M.	DRAMA	LANGBODO (NIGERIA)
	8-11 P.M.	MUSIC	1-TRADITIONAL MUSIC (MOROCCO) 2-GHANA AGROMAMA MUSIC (GHANA) 3-DANCE OF EGYPT (EGYPT)
NATIONAL THEATRE CONFERENCE HALL			COLLOQUUM
			COLLOQUUM
NATIONAL THEATRE CINEMA HALL I	4-7 P.M.	CINEMA	1st FESTIVAL CULTURE PANAFRICAIN D'ALGERIA (ALGERIA)
	9-12 P.M.	CINEMA	KALA (SENEGAL)
NATIONAL THEATRE CINEMA HALL II	9-12 NOON	LITERATURE RECITAL	GAMBIA-CONGO-NIGERIA-U.S.A.-BARBADOS-U.K.-KENYA-SENEGAL-AUSTRALIA
	4-7 P.M.	CINEMA	1-2000 YEARS OF NIGERIAN ARTS 2-T.B. CAN BE CURED (NIGERIA)
NATIONAL STADIUM SPORTS HALL	9-12 P.M.	CINEMA	IF WISHES WERE HORSES (GUYANA) IMAASHOI OL'WAASAE (KENYA)
	4-6 P.M.	MUSIC	BIG GOLD SIX BAND (ZAMBIA)
TAFAWA BALEWA SQUARE	8-12 P.M.	MUSIC DANCE	1-OMO ALAKETU (BRAZIL) 2-DANSES TRADITIONNELLES (BURUNDI)
	4-6 P.M.	MUSIC	AFRO NATIONAL BAND (SLEONE)
NATIONAL STADIUM BASKET BALL	8-12 P.M.	DANCE	DANSE TRADITIONNELLE DU NIGER (NIGER) 2-SWAZI DANCE (SWAZILAND)
	8-11 P.M.	DRAMA	ETHIOPIA RISES (ETHIOPIA)

APPENDIX 3

APPENDIX 3

MONDAY 17TH JANUARY, 1977

VENUES	HOURS	DISCIPLINE	TITLE
NATIONAL THEATRE MAIN HALL	4-6 P.M.	DRAMA	THE DRUM (SOMALIA)
	8-11 P.M.	DANCE	1-BALLET DU SENEGAL (SENEGAL) 2-SUDAN FOLK TROUPE (SUDAN)
NATIONAL THEATRE CONFERENCE HALL			COLLOQUITIUM
			COLLOQUITIUM
NATIONAL THEATRE CINEMA HALL I	4-7 P.M.	CINEMA	FROM ROYUMA TO MAPUTO (MOZAMBIQUE)
	9-12 P.M.	CINEMA	1-POUSSE-POUSSE (CAMEROUN) 2-JEUX MEDITERRANEENS (ALGERIA)
NATIONAL THEATRE CINEMA HALL II	9-12 NOON		
	4-7 P.M.	CINEMA	1-ETHIOPIA RISES (ETHIOPIA) 2-THE NEW SCHOOL (CUBA)
	9-12 P.M.	CINEMA	1-SHEHU UMAR (NIGERIA) 2-ISLAND OF RAINBOWS (MAURITIUS)
NATIONAL STADIUM SPORTS HALL	4-6 P.M.	MUSIC	ENSEMBLE VOCAL ET INSTRUMENTAL (TOGO)
	8-12 P.M.	DANCE	1-TRADITIONAL DANCE (GABON) 2-NATIONAL DANCE TROUPE (TANZANIA)
TAFAWA BALEWA SQUARE	4-6 P.M.	MUSIC	GOLDEN SOUNDS (CAMEROUN)
	8-12 P.M.	DANCE	1-ENSEMBLE FOLKLORIQUE (BENIN) 2-TRADITIONAL DANCE (IVORY COAST)
NATIONAL STADIUM BASKET BALL	8-11 P.M.	DRAMA	

APPENDIX 4

FRIDAY 21ST JANUARY 1977

VENUES	HOURS	DISCIPLINE	TITLE
NATIONAL THEATRE MAIN HALL	4-6 P.M.	DRAMA	ON JOUE LA COMEDIE (TOGO)
	8-11 P.M.	DANCE	ELLIOT POMARE (USA) 2- GUYANA MUSIC (GUYANA)
NATIONAL THEATRE CONFERENCE HALL			C O L L O Q U I U M
			C O L L O Q U I U M
			1-A. LUTA CONTINUA 2- THE STRIKE 3- A SILENT RAP 4 EL HAJI MALIK ELSHABAZZ 5- FROM THESE ROOTS (USA)
NATIONAL THEATRE CINEMA HALL I	4-7 P.M.	CINEMA	OVERAMWEN NOGBAISI (NIGERIA)
	9-12 P.M.	CINEMA	SWAZILAND, CONGO, NIGERIA, CANADA, GRENADA, EGYPT, UGANDA, NIGER
	9-12 NOON	LITERATURE	
NATIONAL THEATRE CINEMA HALL II	4-7 P.M.	CINEMA	1-OURS TO BUILD 2- THIS IS GUYANA 3- WORLD OF THE CARIBBEAN (GUYANA)
	9-12 P.M.	CINEMA	1-CAR WASH 2- KWANZA (USA)
NATIONAL STADIUM SPORTS HALL	4-6 P.M.	MUSIC	1- RONALD INGRAHAM LOYENIA CAROLL SINGERS (U.S.A.)
	8-12 P.M.	DANCE	1-ETHIOPIAN FESTIVAL GROUP (ETHIOPIA) 2- DANCE OF TRINIDAD
TAFAWA BALEWA SQUARE	4-6 P.M.	MUSIC	ORCHESTRE NATIONAL DU ZAIRE (ZAIRE)
	8-12 P.M.	DANCE	1-HARAMBEE DANCERS (KENYA) 2- NIGERIA DANCE TROUPE (NIGERIA)
NATIONAL STADIUM BASKET BALL	8-12 P.M.	DRAMA	OLUYIMBA WA WANKOKO (UGANDA)
LAGOS CITY HALL	8-11 P.M.	POPULAR DRESSING	NIGERIA

APPENDIX 5

APPENDIX 5

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TUESDAY 25TH JANUARY 1977

VENUES	HOURS	DISCIPLINE	TITLES
NATIONAL THEATRE MAIN HALL	4- 6 P.M.	DRAMA	THE LOST FISHERMEN (GHANA)
	8-11 P.M.	DANCE	1- DANSES TRADITIONNELLES (COTE D'IVOIRE) 2- NATIONAL DANCE TROUPE (CUBA)
NATIONAL THEATRE CONFERENCE HALL			COLLOQUIUM
			COLLOQUIUM
NATIONAL THEATRE CINEMA HALL I	4- 7 P.M.	CINEMA	1- LE CORPS ET L'ESPRIT (CONGO) 2- DESERT WAR (LIBYA)
	9-12 P.M.	CINEMA	1- NJANGAAN (SENEGAL) 2- WAN PIPEL (SURINAM)
	9-12 NOON		
NATIONAL THEATRE CINEMA HALL II	4- 7 P.M.	CINEMA	1- GOD DANCE MAN DANCE (NIGERIA) 2- T.B. CAN BE CURED (NIGERIA)
	9-12 P.M.	CINEMA	1- THE MUMMY (EGYPT) 2- AL-SHAIMA (EGYPT)
	4- 6 P.M.	MUSIC	ENSEMBLE INSTRUMENTAL NATIONAL (NIGER)
NATIONAL STADIUM SPORTS HALL	8-12 P.M.	DANCE	1- TROUPE NATIONALE DE DANSE 2- DANSES TRADITIONNELLES (MADAGASCAR)
	4- 6 P.M.	MUSIC	MODERN POP ENSEMBLE (NIGERIA)
	8-12 P.M.	DANCE	1- ENSEMBLE DE BALLETS NATIONAUX (TOGO) 2- ENSEMBLE DE DANSE (SOMALIA)
NATIONAL STADIUM BASKET BALL	8-12 P.M.	DRAMA	MUZANG (ZAIRE)
LAGOS CITY HALL	8-11 P.M.	POPULAR DRESSING	SOMALIA - NAMIBIA - LIBYA - SWAZILAND

APPENDIX 6

DANCE



DRAMA



MUSIC



THE NATIONAL TROUPE OF NIGERIA

The National Troupe of Nigeria, a parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation is the apex performing arts institution in Nigeria. It was formally established in 1991 by Decree No 47, the same decree that established the National Theatre. The National Troupe is constituted by professional theatre administrators and artistes whose primary function is to celebrate the cultural heritage of Nigeria through dance, music and drama.

The National Troupe has since its formal establishment exhibited competence in packaging high artistic productions specifically designed for national and international consumption. The Troupe which has had a record of successful artistic outing both within and outside the country has toured Nigeria extensively toured countries in Africa, Europe the United States, and Asia. Indeed the qualities of the Troupe's theatrical presentations are evident in the scores of successes it has

recorded with well acclaimed productions and projects like 'The Trials of Oba Ovanranwen', 'Yemoja', which won the best drama prize at the 2002 Cervantino International Festival in Mexico, South America, 'Tafida', a play on the life and times of Shehu Musa Yar'Adua which was hailed as a master piece by Nigeria's former President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and 'The Kolanut Dance', the performance of which has received commendation severally.

Besides, the National Troupe has at various times been commissioned by the Federal Government to package national events like the cultural aspect of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which Nigeria hosted in 2003, the Presidential Inauguration performance (1999 to date) and the annual Abuja Carnival. Similarly a number of corporate bodies like the Chevron, NLNG, Texaco, Celtel, MTN have relied on the Troupes exhibited competence in packaging high artistic productions to multinational audiences.

The Troupe instituted a university circuit performance and a quarterly play reading session that have undoubtedly encouraged creativity in order to achieve excellence in the performing arts.

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APPENDIX
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