

## Securing the Future of Indigenous Dance in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The views of aesthetics in the context of African Indigenous dances have been a dialectic one when taking into consideration the socio-political, religious, environmental and economic changes that have hit the nation from pre-colonial periods to contemporary times. Indeed, dance before now was considered aesthetic only when it has satisfied one communal function or the other for both the 'seen' and 'unseen' audience due to the pre-colonial societal setup of Nigerian communities and their worldviews. Today, certain structures have been put in place that has questioned pre-colonial aesthetic values in dance wherein today's dance performances must appeal first to the eyes before its functionalities. The change put indigenous dance art in a disadvantaged position as the contemporary audience views them as archaic and other dance forms have invaded its space leading to the apathy shown to the art in contemporary times. This research paper adopts the content analysis design of the qualitative research method and hinges on the theory of Postmodernism, investigates the factors that necessitated the change and evolve strategies towards reclaiming audience appeal of indigenous dance art in contemporary Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Contemporary, Future, Indigenous Dance, Postmodernism, Nigeria*

### Introduction: Diachronic Overview of Indigenous Dance in Nigeria

Dance remains an integral part of performative cultures around the globe. Dance originated from the cultural patterns of the people and was made to serve one cultural purpose or the other. In the African case, Sunday-Kanu maintains that;

Traditional dance in Africa is born out of African culture. Therefore, every indigenous African dance is culturally patterned. The signifiers and symbolic body movements expressed by dancers are embedded in the cultural background and life experiences of the people. Thus, it goes beyond mere rhythmic movement of the body as is often defined. (57)

African dance goes beyond the manipulation of rhythm and body movements. It is a medium for the assessment and fulfillment of certain cosmic principles. Largely in African communities, dance forms the bridge through which the physical plane communicates with their cosmic hosts for continually improved survival conditions in the physical world. Nwafor observes, “Within traditional African culture, the act of a dance is most often linked to the relationship or bond between spiritual forces and the community.” (131) Communities, therefore “Relied on dance to ward off evil spirits, to ask the gods for prosperity, or to resolve conflict. Over the years dance has continued to serve these functions. For example, during farming and harvesting work, the singing, dancing, and clapping of hands entertains and motivates the hard-working farmers.” (130) In this sense, the aesthetics of the African dance is considered after its functionality is positively ascertained. This is to say that the indigenous African dance is only beautiful when it has fulfilled its rituo-cultural essence. This makes the dancer in the traditional African context more than just a performer as Onwuekwe avers;

In Africa, the dancer is more than a performer; the dancer is also a teacher, a historian, a social commentator, a celebrant, a spiritual medium, a healer, and a storyteller.... As part of a spiritual ritual, dance may be a symbolic form of communication with natural powers, or a trance-inducing movement enabling the dancer to communicate directly with the spirits. In some masked dances, the dancer assumes the temporal identity of a god or ... ancestral spirit. In many traditional rural societies, group dances mark rites of passage such as coming of age in which young men or women compete against each other in dance as part of their initiation into adulthood. (In Sunday-Kanu, 60-61)

African dance often has a strong narrative role through which onlookers can decode certain aspects of the community life. It reflects their views of life, their predominant vocation, and their socio-political and religious ideologies. In the words of Nzewi; “Through dance instrumentation, mime, visual arts, and music generally, theatre captures and codifies a community’s impressions of man and his universe. Igbo traditional theatre, therefore, constitutes a reliable vector of society’s historical, social and anthropological data. (130) A single theatrical performance to a great extent gives glaring and credible insights into the major aspects of the culture of a people. Nwafor agrees to this opinion when he states thus;

Dance does not merely form a part of community life; it represents and reinforces the community itself. Its structures reproduce the organization and the values of

community. For example, dances are often segregated by sex, reinforcing gender identities to children from a young age. Dance often expresses the categories that structure the community, including not only gender, but also kinship, age, status, and especially in modern cities, ethnicity. (130)

This position, therefore, places the functional values in African dances before its aesthetic values. Its functionality is majorly emphasized as dances are not just performed but geared towards one role or the other so much that even in the recreational events and dances, dance still serves communal functions that are pointers to the behavior, life, and culture of the people. Kansese agrees to this in his words:

Nigerian traditional dances have cultural undertones, which depict or demonstrate the life of the people. In fact, Nigerian traditional dance is not complete without the functions of such cultural nuances. These cultural nuances are pointers to the nature of Nigerian dance; they help us to characterize or describe the indigenous Nigerian dance in its proper perspective. The nature of Nigerian dance can therefore, be recognized through the cultural behaviors of the people which include spiritual, ceremonies, social, political, occupational, educational, entertainment and recreational behaviors of the people. All these are often displayed in the dance. (67-68)

The above also receive the validation of authorities in the Nigerian theatre such as Bakare, Clark, Enekwe, and Adedeji that there is nothing like dance for dances' sake in Nigeria. Dances are performed to fulfill one motive or the other while being aesthetic. The beauty of Nigerian dance for Enekwe:

Lies in its combination of Purposeful ... concern, its celebration, and reflection of communal life and virtue, its seeking to unite the dancer with the dance, its embodiment of the collective beliefs and symbols, which constitute both the structure and content of the art, and its ideal frankness and intensity of expression. (28)

In the above context, it follows that when these dances have not satisfied their performance reasons, their aesthetics are not recognized. After all, in the words of Martin as cited in Felix Begho “primitive, imitative dances are not originally planned to be watched by spectators, but only to control the actions of animals, spirits, gods, and enemies.” (78). On the other hand, in some cases, it also follows that when indigenous dances have not satisfied the expectations of both the seen and unseen audience, it is a pointer to the fact that certain cosmic laws have been breached and the communal essence tampered.

Dances in the pre-colonial era were accorded values that touch all spheres of life. Nigerians before now placed dance at the center of existence and viewed it as a medium towards consummating their communal patronage. The dancer then, in pre-colonial Nigeria is not seen as an artist but a representative of the community, standing in the gap for the community to express by way of placation, propitiation, and projection of communal images to both seen and unseen forces thereby, ensuring balance in the world they find themselves. The above view finds authority in the idea of Ojuade who maintains that “the survival (and indeed performance) of traditional dances is equally synonymous with the survival of life”. (54) Therefore dancing serves as a path towards survival and sustenance of communal identity, beliefs, and culture.

The contact with colonial masters and its consequent globalization ideologies heralded the dwindling standard of Nigerian indigenous dancing. No doubt, their contact saw the adulteration and extinction of certain indigenous functional dances in Nigeria, the introduction of alien dance forms on Nigerian soil, the dwindling interest, and the perceived demeaned perception of several Nigerian audiences in traditional dancing which threaten the survival of indigenous dance in present times. The introduction of new religion through the evangelization (Catholic and Pentecostalist Ideologies) and Islamization of Nigeria punctured the Pre-colonial positions of indigenous dances as anchored on rituals and religious activities. Emerging first as missionaries, the colonial masters campaigned against the traditional relevance of dances within the community leading to the extinction and unhealthy adulteration of several traditionally functional dances. The church made Nigerians believe their indigenous dances and cultural practices were lead ways to hell fire where their souls will perpetually suffer and gnash their teeth for all eternity. They viewed and termed our cultural practices as fetish and sinful and therefore revolted against our way of life. With the Pentecostalist ideology, they fought our tradition and cultural standards in all ramifications- family, worship, economy, and beliefs making Nigerians believe that they were sinful. The effects of the new religion on indigenous practices and dance art according to Osuagwu;

... made the desecration of traditional shrines, the vandalization of cultural objects, and the systematic burning of art works ... cultural property became the target of religious zealots.... the introduction of Islam also assaulted our traditional ethos and social values as it averse to representation art (575)

The above gives a clear-cut view on the extent to which the imposed religion punctured the traditional, belief, value, and culture system of pre-colonial Nigeria. As the new religion spread

across communities in Nigeria and gained followers, certain beliefs and values within the traditional setup were no longer followed leading to a division in the audience patronage and perception about indigenous dancing between the followers of the new religion and the adherents of the traditional cultures. Emeka Nwabueze gives authority to the effect of Colonialism on the appeal of indigenous culture in Nigeria using the Igbo example thus;

The colonial office, with the help of the military, carried out an expedition against the Ibini Ukpabi of Arochukwu in 1901, and against the Agbala of Awka two years later. The oracles were destroyed and heavy casualties inflicted on the defenders of the oracles. The leaders were arrested and publicly arrested ... this kind of destruction inflicted heavy losses ... on the part of the Igbos but also made them lose confidence in their respected ancestral spirits... thus the belief of even the most dedicated native began to decline (81-82)

Sequel to the above scenario, certain aspects of performative cultures like masquerade performances were eventually forced to gradually shed their efficacy and contents of its performance as the above source concludes that “stripping the performances of the objectionable functions meant puncturing the virtue of the ritual thus changing the intent of the performers and performance” (83). These changes in the cultural, political, religious, and economic situation of the country under colonialism led to the sweeping away of some indigenous patrons from the shrines and traditionally found spaces, into the churches, cinemas, and formal buildings.

As the aesthetic values in indigenous performative cultures received the heat of colonial politics with the new religion, the introduction of other dance forms, formal education, and media were employed to further do the damage of kicking traditionalism off-balance. The views about aesthetics turned as Nigerian audiences were swept from the traditional theatres into their homes, proscenium spaces, churches, and cinema to satisfy their aesthetic and entertainment cravings. These new outlets came with their aesthetic, which many Nigerian audiences imbibed and followed. Hence a new face of aesthetics was carved from the emerging theories like Postmodernism and formalism - the aesthetics of appreciating the form before its historical or indeed artistic intentions, especially in literature, theatre, and the media which today have further relegated the art of indigenous dancing as Onyemuchara Enyeribe quotes Arnold Udoka thus;

Our indigenous dance forms have been overpowered by superior technological media such as radio, television, and the newspapers. Other forms have taken the

shine of traditional forms as far as dance is concerned. These traditional forms have been banished by these technologies (234).

Indigenous dances were banished because of the new world order that places beauty at the forefront of aesthetics, which negates traditionalism. The result of these aesthetic twists was the apathy shown to indigenous forms and cultural values in the words of Osuagwu

There is a great apathy being shown by the youths to their cultural heritage. They have adopted inferiority complex towards traditional values and this has led them to abhor indigenous village based ceremonies such as masquerading, festivals, age-grade initiation among others that had in the past offered occasions for reconciliation and exchange of ideas. (575).

The apathy shown to traditionalism led audience members, many of whom have become contemporary in ideology and aesthetics, to regard the indigenous cultures as archaic and fetish, which therefore could no longer satisfy the world of today. The consequence of these perceptions was the relegation of indigenous dance forms in modern Nigeria. It is important, therefore, to note at this point that the alien inputs in the aesthetic face of indigenous theatre has challenged the sustenance of indigenous dance art and theatre since colonial periods which have made some indigenous dances become stale or perhaps lost in the sands of time. This perceived unfortunate scenario is why some scholarly works on traditional theatre have geared majorly towards the revival, reclamation, and sustenance of these indigenous theatre forms in contemporary times while other scholarly works speak to adjusting to change. The ideologies of these lines of thought which is discussed later in this work have affected the approach to the art of indigenous dancing in contemporary times. This this work takes its bearing, having done a diachronic assessment of indigenous dance, to look at what the future holds for indigenous dance given the present situation of the art and evolve strategies for revamping the patronage of indigenous dance art in Nigeria amidst these prevalent militant issues that are even more biting in postmodern periods.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper hinges on the theory of Postmodernism, which is a movement that developed in the mid to late 20th century across [philosophy](#), [arts](#), [architecture](#), and [criticism](#) which marked a departure from [modernism](#). While encompassing a broad range of ideas, Brian Duignan maintains that postmodernism is typically defined by an attitude of [skepticism](#), [irony](#) or distrust toward [grand narratives](#), [ideologies](#) and various tenets of [enlightenment rationality](#), including notions of [human](#)

[nature](#), [social progress](#), [objective reality](#) and [morality](#), [absolute truth](#), and [reason](#). (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism>; np)

It emphasizes that claims to knowledge, beauty, and truth are products of unique social, historical, or political [discourses](#) and interpretations, and are therefore contextual and constructed to varying degrees. Described by Nwosu as a “contemporary ism” (41), postmodernism suggests major changes in modernism like the negation of laid down principles and classifications in all aspects starting from architecture to performance arts. Starting with architecture, Emeka Nwabueze observes that postmodernism intruded into other forms and “led the way to the re-examination of the fundamentals of writing as exemplified in the works of Jacques Derrida and the theory of deconstruction” (135). Postmodernism speaks to a general cultural Phenomenon which has such features as the “challenging of conventions, the mixing of styles, tolerance of ambiguity, and emphasis on diversity acceptance (indeed celebration) of innovation and changes and stress on the constructedness of reality.” (2) Postmodernism breaks boundaries, reach out to contemporary conventions, and favor the melding of categories. Postmodernism carves its platform in the views of Ball and Brockett thus “... breaking the boundaries, by breaking down the performance art and multimedia, by breaking down the barriers between spectator and performance space as in environmental theatre, and by removing distinctions between audience and performers, as in happenings. (245). Postmodernism can thus be seen as today’s theatre because of its deliberate violation of differentiation and its openness to inputs of disparate regions and/or periods. Postmodernism ignored the previous distinction between popular and high culture and often intermingled them thereby revealing its eclectic and referential nature, which for Ball and Brockett is achieved through;

mingling elements from disparate styles, periods or cultures. Postmodernist architecture is recognizable in large part because of the combination within single building of various stylistic motifs and form from the past. The imitative use of prior forms is sometimes referred to as “pastiche” and it applies to texts as well spatial and visual forms. Postmodern pastiche evokes a form or text, stripped from its original context or function, and places it into a relation with other forms or other text. (245)

Postmodernism is, therefore, a concept where “everything is possible and nothing is certain” (Nwabueze, 135). This theory serves this work as it leads indigenous dance art towards yielding a



kind of aesthetic that is neither pre-colonial nor modern but a blend of both towards what can be seen as capable of meeting the taste of contemporary audience yet remaining indigenous or a step towards ensuring that “the past as the people’s cultural frame of reference, can remain compatible with the demands of the present, and possibly the future.” (Chinyowa, 285)

### **Reactions to Change within Nigerian Indigenous Dance Space**

The issues afore discussed on the changing face of aesthetics in indigenous dancing in Nigeria have stirred up academic debates and reactions. There are two schools of thought in the development and sustenance of the art form within Nigerian society. Some have advocated that indigenous dances continue to remain in their pure forms, maintain their approaches, and retain their ritual essence in contemporary performances for the audience. The other school supports the need to be aware of societal changes and to address such changes through art. Hence the two schools of thought in the development of indigenous dance in Nigeria according to Bakare are: “The Relativist School and The Advocators for Change”. (65) Dance practitioners, scholars, and social commentators of the Relativist school exhibit a devoted ardour to preserve the pureness of indigenous performances. They preach that indigenous dances are to be performed in their pure forms - unadulterated by significant influences from Western styles. Ahmed Yerima, a believer in this thought sees the contemporary nature of the Nigerian society and the western styles as a threat to the development of the art of indigenous dancing. In his words;

Another threat to the survival of traditional dance was that modern or city musicians and dancers wanted to tamper with the originality of the traditional dances. The dance steps of serious or ritual dances were diffused into suggestive sexual gesticulations.... Such attempts often distort or destroy the essence of the Africaness in traditional dances. (.219).

Deviations from the prescribed rules of the performance for the above source becomes a threat to the sustenance of the art of indigenous dancing and by extension, a distortion, or indeed a misrepresentation of both the spiritual and physical values and ethos of the community.

The Advocators of change are of the view that art must respond to societal changes and needs of a particular period and that art is given impetus by the nature of the society. In the words of Ojo Bakare Rasaki, a preacher of this thought “such practitioner is not ‘overtly engaged in spiritual efficacy but uses the dances that exist in his cultural background as raw materials and establishes linguistic property to express his purely creative thoughts’ (66). This thought gives direction to the



art of indigenous dancing within the constantly changing nature of the society, such that is always at par with the dynamics of the society as well as identifies and captures major trends of a given period yet remain indigenous in nature and scope. In other words, beyond entertainment, there is need now to find contemporary reasons to engage the indigenous dance forms; the need to recognize the new realities that hit our society and our current modus for survival and existence in contemporary times. As Deduced from Bakare above, dances within the community are viewed as raw materials, which can always be refined, recycled, and created to suit the aesthetic needs of the society as an art form.

### **Challenges and Patronage Revival Strategies for Nigerian Indigenous Dance**

The major issue that dwindle the patronage of indigenous dancing in contemporary Nigeria is not the advent of the media or the influx of several western dance forms and religions into Nigerian society but the inability of the indigenous dances to respond to the changes that come with these developments. These developments have turned the nature of the Nigerian audience into a contemporary Nigerian audience and have forced nearly all aspects of society (marriage, art, housing, economy, and political systems) to change from what the concepts, approaches, and structures used to be. Cores and mores of traditionalism are constantly questioned and in most cases, deliberately modified or jettisoned in contemporary times and today, for John Berger “many of these assumptions are no longer accord with the world as it is (the world-as-it-is is more than just pure objective fact, it includes consciousness.)” (11)

Following this thought, today’s Nigerian society, driven by the upsurge of technological, ideological, economic, environmental, and religious mutations has drifted far beyond the status-quo of pre-colonial assessments and templates. The solid nature of the African society in previous centuries is breaking and so are the ideologies that uphold the indigenous performative forms. In a more concise sense, Ziauddin Sardar who prefers to use qualify this period as ‘postnormal times’ submits that “all that we regard as normal is melting away right before us. The post-normal times attempts to make sense of a rapidly changing world, where uncertainty is the dominant theme”. (Sardar, 2019) The idea of variety becoming the spice of life, has taken center-stage leading arts and artists to continuously discover and rediscover new ways to package art. It is on this premise that this paper agrees with Apata that;

There is a new world order and with it a new arrangement of cultural and political contexts... the post-modern values in the society at large place dancers and indeed all artistes in a situation where their traditional art forms and values are no longer solely enough to support their work. The alternative is to allow cross-fertilization; this process reflects differently cultural backgrounds. However, the distinction between traditional and modern cultures is a tricky one. Though some dance genre may cling to their pure traditions, it is also a known fact that traditions always undergo metamorphosis (260)

Therefore, the problem basically, is not with the wine but with its container. The dwindling patronage in indigenous dance is not with the dances themselves but with the composition, packaging, and marketing of the indigenous dances. There is, therefore, a need to revive indigenous dance patronage through rebranding the form to meet contemporary needs yet remaining indigenous. This research work identifies some strategies below as key towards the revamping of the indigenous dance patronage in contemporary Nigeria.

First, choreographers of the indigenous dance forms should cut through the pre-colonial restrictions of the indigenous dance forms and adopt a postmodern approach to the art of indigenous dance creations. It behooves the choreographers to exhume the art of indigenous dancing from the confines of being viewed as archaic to a highly demanded art form in contemporary Nigeria. Art must respond to the issues of the period of its creation or be lost in the sands of time. The rebranding of the indigenous art form in contemporary times is highly recommended. This will be possible if the choreographers adopt approaches in movement, design, and choreography that can suit the aesthetic demands of the contemporary Nigerian society yet, remain traditional and by all means functional. In simple terms, upgrade the art of indigenous dancing to suit the contemporary nature of today's audience by being conscious changes in the belief, aesthetic, value, economic and political systems in the society, then carving the aesthetic and functionality of the indigenous dance form to reflect these changes. Movement is the raw material for dance creations. Therefore, rather than feel threatened by these alien dance forms, the choreographers can blend the movement materials of existing and 'alien' forms into the traditional medium. Patronage of indigenous dances will be revived only when its aesthetics are at par with that of the contemporary nature of the Nigerian audience; such that speaks to their sensibilities and ideologies about entertainment, beauty and art. What the West did to our indigenous dances via slave trade was to create forms with the movement materials under their indigenous rhythmic platform and then project it by attaching societal relevance to it. In other words, they indigenized

our movement patterns to serve the need of the continually evolving audience within a particular period. The varieties of dances emerging from the West were created from the need to serve one purpose or make one statement or the other in society which other forms are considered to have failed to achieve. The Nigerian choreographer should experiment with these forms under the indigenous platforms to revive the patronage of indigenous dance in a culturally threatened epoch like contemporary Nigeria. Syncretizing these forms under the traditional performance umbrella may lead to the emergence of new indigenous dance forms, which this researcher considers a healthy feat for the rapid growth and development of the indigenous dance locally and globally. In this case, the borrowing, modifications, and consequent indigenization of these alien movement materials will enhance the patronage of indigenous dances by giving them an aesthetic face that can stand contemporary times and taste. The media rules the society, therefore, rather than view the media as a threat to the mythogenic essence of indigenous dances, practitioners and critics of indigenous dance arts should encourage the whole adoption of the media if any meaningful revival or patronage can be achieved. Indigenous dances can regain patronage when they are fully projected through the various media platforms. Today, through the aid of the media, we see Nigerian dance artists who are good in several Western dance forms but have never crossed the shores of the country. Today through media outlets like the films, we can see the transition and evolution of the nature of dances in Bollywood and Hollywood especially in films like *Mard, Ter Mehr Baniyan, High School Musical, and You Got Served* among others. In the Nigerian case, when indigenous dances are done in films they are distastefully done, therefore, demeaning the interest in these indigenous forms. Indigenous dance practitioners should see the media as a laudable platform rather than a threat. Well-choreographed indigenous dances imbibing the trends of the moment can be uploaded to the internet and incorporated in both full-length films, short films, documentaries, and television programs to revamp and reclaim its patronage. The government has a role to play in the revival and sustenance of the patronage of the indigenous dance form. The government can enshrine dance into the curriculum of the primary and secondary schools where professionals can groom the younger generations on the meaning, roles, techniques, of several indigenous dance forms so that they grow to appreciate the art form no matter how contemporary the society goes. The Theatre Arts Departments of various higher institutions in the country also share in the revival campaign of indigenous dance art by restructuring the allocation, teaching, and learning process of dance courses in the department. The ratio of students who

specialize in dance and Choreography to students in other areas is nothing to write home about. Students tend to run away from the area due to the approach of the lecturers to the course. The number of dance students each graduating year shows the extent to which dance is relegated even as an area of specialization. In some universities, dance lectures are taught by lecturers who are not specialists in the area as Yeside add his voice to this sordid scenario when he states;

It is observed that though we have dance courses embedded in our curriculum, some lecturers are not doing justice to these courses by designing the best ways to teach. Due to the work load sometimes, dance lecturers abandon students to their fate and focus on theory alone. (398)

In most cases also, even when theory is taught by these lecturers who attempt to justify their position as lecturers, Nwaru observes thus;

In the attempt to justify their position as dance lecturers, they engage themselves in reading dance materials and topics like principles and elements of dance. Their teaching styles begins by explaining and describing what they read in dance books as they may not have enough experience in what they were teaching. Such so called dance lecturers normally end up in dividing the class into groups for practical presentations without aiding or teaching the students the practical aspects of the course. (86)

Therefore, there is a need to rework the allocation and teaching approach of dance courses in higher institutions to revive and sustain the interest of dance in the students who are believed to be tomorrow's Nigerian choreographers and dancers. Dance courses should be handled by professionals and in the case of none, the department can arrange for well-groomed performers and dance instructors from the State Councils for Arts and Culture or seasoned performers in private troupe in the state to match theory with praxis.

Lastly, there is a need for dance critics to channel scholarly energy towards theorizing and notating the various indigenous dance forms and techniques rather than just proving them to be semiotic and theatrical in their own light. The researcher acknowledges the efforts of a few scholars who have set the ball rolling in the area of notating some indigenous forms like Felix Akinsipe's *Stick Notation* (an experiment with the Bata dance) and Nwaru Christian's *Igbo Descriptive Notation* (an experiment using selected Igbo dances). Constant academic involvements and experiments in the area of packaging and documenting indigenous dance through notations will give the indigenous dance art a facelift in contemporary Nigeria.

## Conclusion

Like every other art around the world, Indigenous dances are windows to a people's heritage. However, they have to be performed per the changing nature of the world around it yet retaining its mien as indigenous because as the society changes, some approaches and perspectives tend to change as well given the prevailing social realities of a particular period. The changing nature of society in areas of politics, religion, economics, and culture will always breed new art. How appropriate are the various war dances in different Nigerian communities since there are no more wars to fight? However, while in performance these dances recount the community's achievements and historical antecedents within the periods when the thematic constructs of these dances were yet relevant to their social-cultural and cosmic essence. These dances can be restructured to suit contemporary audiences while retaining their values within the traditional art form. The audiences in today's Nigerian theatre are contemporary in nature and it is only worthwhile to carve the indigenous dance performances to meet their aesthetic standards and contemporary social realities while retaining its nature as a traditional form. Art fails or becomes stale when it fails to adjust, react, and identify with the popular taste. To regain the patronage of indigenous dance in contemporary times, therefore, we need to pull strings from postmodern thoughts to break the barriers that force contemporary indigenous dances to be performed according to the pre-colonial ideologies and realities. These dances should be opened up for contemporary innovations in line with the changing realities to meet the popular taste of contemporary Nigerian audiences while remaining traditional and indigenous in shape and form.

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