

THE BUSINESS OF THEATRE AND THE THEATRE OF BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

There is a strong operational common denominator between what can be called the Business of Theatre and The Theatre of Business. Both concepts are predicated on "the willing suspension of disbelief," or "make-believe," wherein impersonation is a key factor of production. Their relationship in terms of communication between the stage and the auditorium is inalienable and irreducible or sacrosanct. The actors and actresses on the stage communicate intimately, among themselves, for effective reach to, and among the audiences in the auditorium. The message is usually transmitted in form of education cum information through entertainments; via lively productions of plays that mirror human experiences; Individual and collective.

The main difference between the former and the latter is, arguably, the degree of emphasis with regards to the production targets. The business of theatre is concerned with the upliftment of humanistic essence; ethical, emotional and psychological elements through moralistic edification via cultural effluence, deemphasizing financial gains. The theatre of business does almost the same, more or less, with its stock-in-trade emphasizing application of business methods towards monetary profits maximization. Both of them operate on the maxim of *utile et dulce* (utility and entertainment). Both ideally shun entertainment-for-entertainment sake per se. In other words, the business of theatre emphasizes humanistic elements, while the theatre of business emphasizes monetary benefits predominantly. For instance, community and educational theatres belong to the business of theatre. Cultural productions of Shakespeare plays for cultural exchange or moral edification, for instance, can be regarded as the business of theatre. Some examples of the theatre of business include productions of the Stock-and-Resident Theatre, Repertory Theatre or those on Broadways and other commercial theatres with strict emphasis on box office profitability. Thus, the theatre of business are really commercial1yoriented, unlike the business of theatre

KEYWORDS: Humanistic essences, profit maximization, using business methods.

PREAMBLE

Historically, artistically and aesthetically, drama as theatre through the age has always operated on three main frameworks of education, information and through entertainments, which Horace summarized under the rubric of "Utile et Dulche"

DEFINITION

In terms of clarification, the business of theatre and theatre of business can both be engaged to satisfy the urge for entertainment wherein moral, ethical or cultural menus are disseminated for humanistic edification and other developmental imperatives, without emphasizing financial profit maximization essences of qualitative productions. In this regard, qualitative engagement in producing theatre with due emphasis on maximizing *dulche et utile* can be effected, disregarding theatre for theatre's sake. Arguably, the core of the Marxist theory of art, and by implication, that of theatre for theatre sake, is embedded in its perspective on the proletariat versus the bourgeois elements of arts in general. Raymond Williams (1977: 153ff) states this rather obliquely.

Art is not a special kind of object but one in which the aesthetic function, usually mixed with other functions, is dominant. Art with other things (...) gives aesthetic pleasure, but with these cannot be transliterated as a sense of beauty or a sense of perceived form since while these are central in the aesthetic function, they are historically variable.

Elaborating further, Williams asserts: "the aesthetic function is not an epiphenomenon of other functions, but a codeterminant of human reaction to reality." Quoting Bertolt Brecht, Louis Althusser (1962: 151) suggests that if the theatre's main object "were to be even a 'dialectical' commentary on the external self-recognition, and non-recognition, the spectator would already have known the tune, it is his own." On the other hand, "the theatre's object is to destroy the intangible image," so as "to set in motion the immobile, the external sphere of the illusory consciousness's mythical universe," the text is the development, the production of a new consciousness in the

audience. Arguably, therefore, in the Marxist perspective, the concept of art for art sake (theatre for theatre sake) is a moot point, albeit stressing its inalienable utilitarian function.

Here theatre is produced as communication medium targeted at intrinsic ends, for instance, generating stylized conflicts of necessary interests mediated through appropriate emotions, with vis-a-vis stylized solutions towards desired edification of human psyche for promotion of co-existential imperatives. On the contrary, the theatre of business could do all these, satisfying the same, more or less, intrinsic demands, but emphasizing adequate financial compensation and profit maximization. Here, there must be appropriate manipulation of monetary business methods of inputs and outputs accounts; stressing entrepreneurial venture capitals, commercializing on every aspect of the resources, human or material, applied.

It can be argued that even the theatre practices of directors such as Peter Brook, Tyrone Guthrie, Erwin Piscator Bertolt Brecht etc did not cater exclusively to the business of theatre, stressing only artistic products per se neither did real businessmen in the theatre (theatre of business) such as the Shubert Brothers, the Frohman Brothers, the Colly Cibbers or Earlangers engaged in theatre practices for commercial purposes, exclusive of artistic and artistic concerns. In other words, even though these men ran lucrative incorporated theatre business companies and syndicated playhouses in America and Europe, the essence of their successes can be measured by the degree of their relative fidelity to artistic tastes.

Even on amateur level, business of theatre must emphasize as much skills as can be unprofessionally effected, so as to attract the audience, stressing the maxim of "who pleases to live, must live to please." There is therefore no doubt also that the theatre of business is also practised amateurishly.

Unquestionably, perhaps, the validating vehicles through which the variety of theatrical communications can be effected are the cultural, political, psychological and other human variables which the theatre mirrors via the mediation of the willing suspension of disbelief between the ideally captive audience in the auditorium and the practitioners on the stage. The variability of communication applied in this mediation

exercise as to whether it is through live stage, video or celluloid film, media or through the electronic medium of television, as audio-visual or radio as audio-lingual medium could make all the difference in affirming or confirming Marshall McLuhan's assertion that the medium is the message. Historically, through the ages, histrionic sensibilities have always tried to keep faith, thematically and aesthetically with the mood of the clime, time and other elements which theatre mirrors, convexly or concavely; socio-politically, socio-culturally and psycho-socially. Phenomenologically or intuitively, human passions of love, hate, anger, pleasure etc. which Aristotle calls the emotions of pity and fear, pathos and sympathy, among others are the centre of histrionic sensibilities manipulated by the playwright to arrest the audiences vicarious participation; frowned upon by Bertolt Brecht in his own unrealizable concept of alienation effect of epic theatre.

Implicated, intimately, in the business of theatre or theatre of business as the stock in trade of the professionals at both categories or amateurs, are the two main dominant dramatic forms, neatly christened tragedy and comedy, which Aristotle and other masters have called mimesis or imitation of actions of varied personalities appropriately defined. At the epicenter of theatrical experience therefore are the respective tragic and comic effluences which the dramatists could dwell on, perhaps, predominantly to excite the vicarious participation of the target audience. It is worthwhile to quote the contrasting definitions of the two genres. Aristotle's classic definition of attic tragedy is that it is:

an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in form of action, not of narrative; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.

For comedy we deem it necessary to quote from the Anonymous, *The Tractatus Coislineanus* (Dukore 74: Page 65); that:

Comedy is an imitation of an action that is ludicrous and imperfect, of sufficient length, (in embellished language) the several kinds (of embellishment being found) in the (several) parts (of the play); (directly presented) by persons acting, and not (given) through narrative; through pleasure and laughter, effecting the purgation of the like emotions.

We have decided to quote these fully so as to comparatively juxtapose them with George Steiner's views (1961), with which we must disagree, unequivocally.

"All men", he broaches, "are aware of tragedy in life, but tragedy as a form of drama is not universal." He elaborates:

Oriental art knows violence, grief, and the stroke of the natural or contrived disasters; the Japanese theatre is full of ferocity and ceremonial death. But that representation of personal suffering and heroism which we call tragic drama is distinctive of the western tradition... This idea and the vision of man which it implies are Greek... (pp. 3 - 4).

The above assertion is Hitlerian, absolutist, myopic or short-sighted, racist, purist and outdated in that, the world east, west, north and south, 'irrespective of few very non-essential differences of race, religion and clime has, become much more understood now as sharing basically the same humanistic common denominators in terms of physiological and emotional make-ups, thanks to genotypical and DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) studies. For this, we must thank the breakthroughs in information and communication technology and the digital breaching of the ignorance void that hitherto precluded

humanity from neither knowing itself well nor his neighbours. This opinion is as revileable as the myopic mission toward decolonizing African Literature, (Chinweizu et al: 1980); or for that matter, the Senghorian defunct negritudist philosophy. Hugh Holman's assertion (1976:532) apparently tallies with the position of this writer when he says:

... clearly tragedy defies specific definition, each age producing works that speak in conventions and beliefs of the age the enduring sense that man seems to have of the tragic nature of his existence and of the grandeur of the human spirit in facing it.

The same is no less applicable to comedy in contrasting definition as profiled. With these arguable views of tragedy and comedy, including their tributaries such as tragic comedy, burlesque and travesty etc. as the meat, sinews and blood that sustain the practice of theatre as business or business of theatre, we must now proceed to tackle the nitty gritty of the stock-in-trade of those who please to live that must live to please, as focused in this discourse. It can hardly be over-emphasized that the tragic or comic and their tributaries are the irreducible and inalienable flavors that help to sustain the practice of theatre at its triple heritage delineated, and adumbrated in its sacrosanct relationships between the stage and the auditorium.

Critical Approach

There are, undoubtedly, various ways that one can discuss this all-embracing topic, the business of theatre and the theatre of business. Our approach here, however, stresses the historical, critical and theoretical review or the developmental, functional or utilitarian chronicle of theatrical practices worldwide, vis-a-vis the impacts of such practices on the immediate and extended target audiences. The resultant ideological colouration and reverberations would become an inalienable aspect of the discourse.

Terminology

The term theatre business can be adopted, thereafter, to cover both the business of theatre and the theatre of business. The production of plays, also called staging is the vital, most engaging and most tasking of theatre business whether it emphasizes the production targeted at revenue generation or profit motivation per se or just for multi-valent edification; not caring for the former, is a most collaborative enterprise. To bring out the best in such engagement, all personnel involved must be made to bring out the best in them aesthetically and artistically. Thus, the directors, actors, stage designers, including of carpentry, lighting, sounds, costumes etc. must give their best for a total good production to gain the accolade of the critics whose task is evaluational, judgmental and analytical, as the other audiences' ombudsmen or watchdogs against bad tastes. Such concerns guided the Greek or Hellenic producer as recorded (*Aspects of Drama*: 218 19ff):

... plays were put on chiefly during two holidays, the Lenaea (Feast of the Winepress) in January, and the Great (or Greater or City) Dionysia in March or April. The Lenaea was chiefly associated with comedy, the Great Dionysia with tragedy. At the latter, on each of the three mornings, a tragic dramatist presented three tragedies and one satyr play. The expenses were borne by a choragus, wealthy citizen ordered by the state to assume the financial burden.

Here, it can be seen that it is difficult to neatly separate the business of theatre from the theatre of business as profiled. For both were combined to effectively cater to the cherished cultural and religious interests of the community. We remember that while the tragedies staged were to honor Dionysus, a Greek nature god associated with spring, fertility and wine, comedies so presented were related to fertility rituals, celebrating regeneration, renewal and variety to

ridicule, for therapeutic purposes, those inclined to limiting life's abundance. For the Romans, noted for spectacular celebrations and enormous collective relaxation, the plays of their playwrights like the tragedies of Seneca and comedies of Plautus and Terence were performed first on the temporary stage in their circus Maximus and the Forum during their numerous holidays. Later in their permanent theatre, the Roman enormous audiences, ranging above 40,000 – 50,000 people reportedly gathered around orchestral vestige, sitting in a semi-circle, all to be raucously entertained for various reasons.

Medieval Taste

It is remarkable, and interesting so, that even though the christian church that held sway then vehemently opposed the Roman theatre and suppressed theatrical productions, seen as paganistic during the so-called Dark Ages, at the dawn of medieval era in the tenth century, it assumed ritualistic staging of playlets, celebrating the Easter liturgy dwelling on the life of Christ, using the *Quem Quaeritis* (whom seek ye?) through the instrumentality of multiple or simultaneous staging, wherein pageant wagons, called mansions, domes or houses were mostly featured. Then various guilds known as association of merchants and craftsmen would perform in what was called the craft cycles such as bakers in the Last Supper, the shipwrights as in Noah's Ark, or the plasterers symbolic of the creation of the world. Such Biblical plays represented episodes embedded in miracle plays on the lives of saints. Much later the morality plays, a medieval development came on stream and remained very popular into the sixteenth century. These plays were mostly allegorical, serenading aspects of cherished moral life, encapsulating characters such as Everyman, Good Deeds, Avarice, showing the intimate conflicts between good and evil, impatience and perseverance, wickedness and retribution etc., snugly dovetailing into the Renaissance period.

Renaissance

The Renaissance was the alleged revival or rebirth of learning and artistic discipline in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy and France, and in the sixteenth century in England ... (Syvan Barnet et al: 247ft) write:

In Italy, in the late fourteenth century, comedies were composed in Latin based on Roman models, early in the fifteenth century a dozen of Plautus plays, unknown for centuries were found, giving an impetus to the study of Roman comedy. In the middle and late fifteenth centuries, Plautus and Terence were performed, and from about 1500, these authors provided models for Italian comedies, such as Niccolo Machiavelli's *Mandragola* (C. 1515).

In this regard, we can recount that production-wise, Roman comedy exerted considerable influence on English Renaissance comedy, remarkably on Shakespeare's comedies such *The Comedy of Errors* (1950), *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Much Ado About Nothing* etc. It was then that Ben Jonson told his audience then and us now that "Comedy is a mirror of life." Jonson's *Vopone* and *Every Man Out of His Humour*, are reflections of this concept in theatre business. Among the Renaissance contributions to this business was its revival and reshaping of comedy as well as tragedy and other exercises of rediscovery of dynamic past. These motivated scholars; invention of the Italian operatic forms through which varied recapturings and adaptations of the Greek tragedy or comedy with their music ensemble and total theatre renditions, with lyrical and graceful performances were effected. Such enthusiastic reshaping or recreation often turned out to be burlesque or travesty of their originals. It was such recurrent theatre business that Shakespeare reportedly satirized when in *Hamlet* Act II: Scene ii, he said:

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral ...

Thus creating unlimited perversions of varied genres.

Responding to a question: "What is Shakespeare's tragic conception, or conception of tragedy?" or comic conception for that matter, one may add, A. C. Bradley (1976:11) opines that it should not be observed or imply here that Shakespeare himself ever asked or answer such question; nor that he reflected on the tragic aspects of life; that he framed a tragic conception; and perhaps less than like Aristotle or Corneille, "he had a theory of the kind of poetry called tragedy," nor of the kind of dramatic poem called comedy. However, it is remarkable to note that most comedies since the Renaissance are classified into roughly three sorts, namely the romantic comedies championed by Shakespeare's format of the world of *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Vice*, *The Tempest* or *The Taming of the Shrew* in their variously sobering and hilarious portrayals. The critical or satiric comedies include those of Moliere, where in the protagonist or antagonist such as Tartuff and Orgon are interfered with and ridiculed. We have also examples of rogue comedies like Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, Gogol's Government Inspector with their twentieth centuries models and adaptations such as Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* and Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin* among others. The vital aims of satiric comedies are targeted at medicinal or therapeutic purposes. Other forms of comedies are like Jonson's comedy of humors, with individual characters such as jealous husband or witless pendants. Other comic types that have continued to vivify or enliven theatre business through the ages, still variously emulated or modeled upon to this day include situational comedy, farce such as Wale Adenuga's *Papa Ajasco* or Olusola's *Village Headmaster*; or Zebrudaia and Samanja, all now defunct on Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Others, yet again, include slapsticks, low comedy, high comedy. We have also Restoration comedy of Jonson, *Comedy of Manners* which Sheridan's *The Rivals* or Godsmith's *She Stood to Conquer* typify are made very familiar by our school texts, from which contemporary models are in vogue to enliven the theatre business in various places around the world, on stage, screens, home videos and air waves or even on internet convergently. A number of formats are also modeled on sentimental comedies, or the fantastic comedies of Aristophanes as adapted, like Harry Hayare's *Mulkin Mata* from *Lysistrata*. Others, again, are modeled our *commedia d'arte*, farcical, burlesque or travesty of our political, religious personalities and socio-cultural situations or happenings, replicated in the mass-oriented Nigerian home video films. In the process, theatre business is enlivened from live stage to the electronic, celluloid and video-filmic media, as specifically viable theatre of business, along with our profile here, as would be elaborated later. These are all transcendence of the Hellenic, Romantic traditions or legacies of theatre business, from age to age.

Legacies

It is also unquestionable that the romantic legacies foreshadowed by Shakespeare in England, and his contemporaries like Lope de Vega, Calderon in Spanish theatre, by Goethe and Schiller and contemporaries, in Germanic Romantic theatre business provided the ammunitions for aggressive rebellions later by the empirical verification development of Ibsenist realism and Strindbergian naturalism to be discussed later. The well-made-play tradition of Eugene scribe and Victorien Sarde were parts of this shallow rooted, contrived and sentimental legacies of romantic theatre business, which was remarkably active and highly patronized in their respective ages, commercialized and vulgarized for financial purpose glamourizing, sensitizing or massaging the egos of the monarchies, through command

performances among other uses of theatre business via conflict-resolution metaphors.

Pre-modernist Taste

Traditionally, also, the romantic legacies of Richard Wagner's theoretical formulation of synthetic art or Gesamtkunstwerk, a concept of unified production, a union of drama and music, ideally a union of what Wagner called, "a blending of Shakespeare and Beethoven," is a production theory embraced by Adolph Appia, Gordon Craig etc. This arguable tradition of Wagner, according to Brockett and Findlay (1973: 28) "has been adopted by the symbolists, Artaudians and many others in the modern theatre era," who "have viewed the theatre as an instrument for the salvation of mankind."

It is remarkable to note also that Georg II, the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen and, his productions soon "became world-famous for its productions, which demonstrated forcefully the validity of Wagner's demand of Unity" The Meiningen's romantic realism manifested in authentic designs of costumes, settings and properties, innovative crowd controls, dictatorship of stage direction, among other pioneering roles made him the first modern theatre director and pacesetter in many ways. Famous theatre directors such as Henry Irving in British theatre, Otto Brahm in German theatres, August Daley in U.S.A. and Martin Reinhardt also of Germany, who became pioneers of romantic realism all followed on the legacies of Wagner's theoretical formulations practicalized by the Meiningen players.

Pioneers of Stage Lighting

Remarkably, also, kaleidoscopic developments in romantic realism apart from scientific realism of Ibsen and Strindbergian naturalism stimulated extensive technological research, and according to Brockett and Findlay, (1973: 48), leading to development of electricity as motive force. Consequently:

Electricity came into the theatre in the 1840s with the carbon arc, used to produce strong beams of light for special effects, but it was not until Edison introduced the incandescent lamp in 1879 that it became a major medium for stage lighting.

The following are significant signposts in the modernization of theatre business in terms of illumination of the stage and auditorium: David Belasco is credited as maintaining that the California theatre in San Francisco was first lighted in 1879. The Savoy Theatre in London was lighted fully by electricity in 1881, the Stadt Theatre in Brunn Austria in 1882; in Bijou Theatre in Boston in 1882, in the Residenz Theatre in Munich in 1883, and in Paris Opera House in 1886.

Remarkably, also, according to the same source:

The change from gas to electricity was rapid, especially after two disastrous fires attributed to gas - at the Opera Comique in Paris and the Exete Theatre in England - took hundreds of lives in 1887. By 1900 almost every major theatre in the world had changed to electricity... (48).

At this stage of theatrical technology in terms of electricity; scientific realism of Ibsen and Strindberg had evolved to decisively embrace symbolism and a prelude to expressionism respectively. Significantly, too, nonetheless, it can be asserted, that the use of electricity as a motive force was not fully exploited until the end of the nineteenth century. With the full realization of its potentials came the elevator stages among the democratization of other complex machinery. Unquestionably, all these developments contributed markedly to the sophistication of the business of theatre and the theatre of business as profiled earlier in this discourse. These successes/on the live stage, patronized by lively, supportive audiences, made theatre business consolidate, reverberatively, from continent to continent, region to region,

country to country and therefore culture to culture. In this way, theatre arts business as an institutional discipline became the legitimate mother of all media such as radio; films or cinema; silent and audio-visual; celluloid and "videomatic", including audio-linguals of the electronic media. The theatre provided the fundamental stylistics of stage productions, faithfully emulated by these dutiful artistic and aesthetic children, so well-fed with the breast-milk of their dedicated theatrical mother; with productional, representational, presentational stylistics transferred to the screens, audio-visual and audio-lingual. These positive multiplier effects, continue hence to make a lot of difference to informational and educational dissemination through entertainments as icings on the cake or sugar, as coat for varied therapeutic effects, thus provided as affirmed by the irrepressible Sigmund Freud. In this regard, the viability of theatre business or business of theatre can never be in doubt for the enterprising, adventurous and creative directors and their production teams, be it on the stage or screens of the visual or mind's eye. The new information technology and digital revolutions have, no doubt provided added boosters to the sustainability of this dynamic institution called theatre; or the stage, airwaves and internet etc. among other similar or varied frontiers waiting to be conquered through explorations, helping to breach the digital divides in all its ramifications.

Theatrical Tendencies

However, the recurrent ideological, ideational and philosophical implosions and explosions, exacerbated by the theatre's tendencies to rebel even against itself, theoretically and productionwise, stylistically, have made theatre business progress through Kaleidoscopic movements, within decades; especially after the first and second world wars. Thus, through anti-realistic perception of reality, theatre business has evolved and revolved, if fleetingly, to accommodate expressionism, surrealism/dadaism, theatre of cruelty and epic theatre, creating and sustaining pockets of loyalists, here and there, stylistically, ideologically or philosophically. These tendencies create Artaudians, Brechtians, Stanislavskians, among other modernists or postmodernists, with controversial retrospective exponents faithful to the Aristotelians, Horatians or Platonians among others.

Similarly, particularly after the Second World War, came the upsurge of the theatre of the absurd, with the dramatic efforts of Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet among others theoretically codified by a foremost critic and theoretician, Martin Esslin; dramatic and theoretical frameworks predicated on the inter-wars and post-wars disillusionments or frustrations and feelings of nihilism. Undoubtedly, these later developments can be regarded as the inclination of modernism in theatre business. They can be both profit-oriented and non profit-oriented engagements, with human edification through entertainments as ultimate or common denominational ideal, fully achievable or otherwise. Interestingly, if modernism in the theatre business encapsulates enlightenment; humanist rejection of tradition and authority in favor of reason and natural science, post-modernism adumbrates a rejection of the sovereign and autonomous individual with an emphasis on anarchic, collective, anonymous experience. Here as codified, collage diversity, the mystically unrepresentable Dionysian passions are the foci of attention. There is characteristically, also, the dissolution of distinctions, the merging of subject matter and object, the self among other considerations; a sacrosanct playful parody of western modernity and the so-called "John Wayne" individual and radical anarchist rejection of all attempts to define, reify or represent the human subject or essence. (Christopher Keep et al: *Electronic Labyrinth*, 1993 - 2000, unpaginated). Within all these intervening variables, theatre business codified into two main antagonistic profiles or paradigms, intuitively and phenomenologically, to wit the presentational and representational stylistic formats. Both theoretically and stylistically, the presentational is Brechtian, and anti-realistic or anti-illusionistic. On the other hand,

representational is realistic, illusionistic, emphatic and Stanislavskian system in the tradition of the Aristotelians. The Stanislavskian system and the Brechtian epic theatre predicated on alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) therefore have become the two main theatrical stylistic watershed alternatives available, for creative directors to offer appropriate theatrical menus or a carte to their audiences for sustainable theatre business.

Further revolts in the modernist or post-modernist theatrical productions, directorially, include that of Vselvold Meyerhold, a Stanislavskian disciple who broke faith with his master on the productional tradition of the Moscow Arts Theatre, committed to the projection of the Soviet Realism. Meyerhold in the words of Robert Cohn (459) "Began his theatre of 'biomechanical constructivism' (an acting method characterized by bold gestures and rapid, near acrobatic movement), in Moscow to combat the master's realism." With regards to Jerzy Grotowski, Cohen (299: 304) has recorded that he explored the world's cultural history or prehistory to create contemporary theatre works, making bold associations between ancient models and current icons, later "training an international group of performers in prehistoric performance techniques drawn largely from Asia, and Africa." Grotowski attempted to create what Cohen calls objective drama. This attempts to dissolve the unconsciously applied linguistic and cultural codes, separating human being from their true biological and spiritual selves. Grotowskian poor Theatre is a synergy of austere projection of Artaudian symbolization of Brechtian epic theatre, ritualistically adopted by Peter Brook in his mind-blowing performance of *Marat - Sade*. All these Kaleidoscopic developments of theatre business from pre-romantic to romantic and scientific realism, through, to the variety of anti-realism, including post-modernist perspectives make theatre business all the richer. They are all the more challenging and stimulating; thus consecrating, solemnizing and sanctifying, as it were, the irreplaceable, irreducible and inalienable relationship between the stage and the auditorium, the actor and the audiences in the live stage performance. This is evidently in comparison or juxtaposition with the less intimate electronic, celluloid or videomatic media of edification through entertainments. Unquestionably, theatre business as an institution of learning/entertainments, can in many ways, be, regarded as the most enduring initiator and facilitator of cultures for consolidation and institutionalization of multiculturalism. In this way, too, it can bridge the gulfs of understanding of other cultures. This function is expectedly effected through dimensional stylization on stage, screens, and airwaves; audio-visually and audio-lingually, leading on increasingly to communication convergence.

African Experience

For the purpose of relative brevity with regards to African experience in theatre; stage and screens, there is a need to delimit our focus here to the African theatre business since the colonial period, including theatre practices during independence struggles vis-à-vis the political flag independence in vogue. Within this relatively short period, African experience in theatre business has passed through its own Kaleidoscopic developments, garnering in the process theatrical practices, sometimes steeped in or showered or coloured with inherent or contemporary ideologies, interpretive philosophical relationalizations etc. Arguably, like its Euro-American inherent models, which African practitioners emulate or copy, or modify or adapt, African theatre business is anchored on *dulche et utile*. On this regard, African theatre business, inherently provides historiographic interests through histrionic stylizations, garnering inherent or appropriate contemporary ideological or philosophical colourations in the process, as broached earlier. With these aspects are other functional criteria or exigencies such as the artistic and aesthetic angles, which nourish the sociological, the political and the cultural imperatives. Dapo Adelugba (1972: ix) has stated the following among other assertions to buttress the points stated above, when he says: "... the Black African

Theatre attempts to establish... similarities between the ancient Greek and traditional African theatres..." The following points emphasized by Adelugba provide seminal influence: "... the Negro-African theatre is achieved through history... there is anthropological problem consisting of assessing which of the traits of African civilizations the theatre focused on." The Francophone African theatre can be deduced from the historical elements along with those that combine both African and French cultures. He concludes, here, that as far as the theatre is a constant feature of society, the study of its functions in such society is the most important aspect of theatre sociology (2). Reminding us further that "the subject of theatre is man," and thus "the reflection of the psychology and behaviour of man," he catalogues other aspects of these functions to include "religious beliefs, a resume of life and creatures and things, including dance, music etc. as microcosms of life," forming links "with the peasants, the family and cults, aiming to perpetuate the vitality of the community" (13).

He agreed with Leo Frobenius that ritual, the root of almost all drama and theatre is rooted in play, as man has instinctive feelings and desire to act, and play his part, a fount of all civilization, acting the play that expresses or manifests his life in tragic or comic experiences. Recounting that for Emmanuel Kant and Frederick Schiller, art is merely a game that is an end in itself, gratuitous, free and disinterested, an affirmation of art for arts's sake, he counterpointed this view, with the sociological view of R. Bastide that "art is never asocial because it always serves a particular group, no matter how restricted it may be" (16). In this regard, also, the African theatre's service in the ethnographic, is no less important than ascribing the birth of Greek theatre to the cult of Dionysus nor the European theatre, the Christian Mysteries, among others to human coexistential imperatives or contradictions. It is remarkable to note also as Adelugba appears to pontificate that:

Myths, legends, epic poem and stories correspond in Black Africa, to a summon of African wisdom. The theatre finds its subjects in mythologies, history and customs. Therein lies the ethnocentrism of the African people.

Considering the above as the major roots and ramifications of African theatre, retrospectively with introspective influences on the colonial and post-colonial, the African theatre, as Martin Banham et al (1976:1ff) stated, "is functional in the sense that it serves a purpose within communities and cultures that is much greater than simply that of entertainment or diversion."

It was on the dynamism and viability of such philosophical, ideological and socio-cultural framework and functionality that the theatrical professionalism and business acumen of artists like Hubert Ogunde, Kola Ogunmola and Duro Ladipo thrived from pre-independence Nigeria, for example to and beyond colonial era as viable enterprises. In the words of Banham, "many of Ogunde's plays combine simple moral stories with a real understanding of the grievances of ordinary people." He asserts that more than any other Nigerian playwright, Ogunde has captured and projected the feelings of the masses." His traveling Theatre company and Ladipo's National Theatre were two of the most well known of the Yoruba Opera groups. Ogunmola was the author-adaptor of the *Palm Wine Drinkard*, adapted from Amos Tutuola's novel of the same name. His death in 1972, according to Banham, "removed a man of extraordinary talent from the theatre scene." Ladipo of *Oba Ko So* (*The Kind Did Not Hang*) fame had other plays such as *Oba Moro* (*The Ghost Catcher*) and *Oba Waya* (*The King Is Dead*) to his credit; all dwelling on themes of Yoruba history (12 - 14). The viability of the troika's theatre business is vividly summarized by Banham:

the Yoruba Opera communicates through so many facets and different languages, with the acting and

music all making statements of importance and precision, so that the visual communication often breaks through the language barrier - a fact, it must be remembered, as vital within Nigeria, where Yoruba is only one of many languages, as it is outside (21 - 22).

With such background of great practitioners, as his predecessors and contemporaries, for sometimes, among other resources uniquely harnessed, Wole Soyinka, described by Banham as "the most widely known of the West African dramatists," now pioneer Nobel Laureate of Literature, could not but excel uniquely, in his chosen field. As Banham rightly summarized, "Satire is at the heart of Soyinka's theatre and is expressed not only verbally but also visually." Elaborating on this assertion, Eldred John asserts:

The essential ideas which emerge... are not especially African ideas although his characters and mannerisms are African. His concern is with man on earth. Man is dressed for the nonce in African dress and lives in the sun and tropical forest, but he represents the whole race. The duality of man's personality, his simultaneous capacity for creation and destruction which makes him almost at every moment a potential victim of his ingenuity, is a universal trait of homo sapiens who has been given by his creator the gift of free will... (African Theatre Today: 24).

The above longish quotation is justified in that, among other reasons, it is a most insightful summary of Soyinka's dramaturgy and dramatic world; ideologically, philosophically, metaphysically and socio-politically, with all its post-modernist essences and thrusts. Thus from the Jero plays through the Nigerian independence play, *A Dance of the Forest to Death* and the *King's Horseman* or *Madmen* and specialists as original plays, to the Bacchae of Euripides: A Communal Rite, through Opera Wonyosi and King Baabu as classic adaptations, the patterns of satiric and parodistic flows are biting and highly potentially therapeutic.

Thus, from the hilarious Brother Jero to the sardonistic Dr. Bero, grim Elesin Oba, the mesmeric Professor, pathetic Eman, roguist Captain Macheath, all down to Hitlerian King Baabu, as heroes or villains in their respective plays, along with the teams as epitomized, Jones elaborates that:

Soyinka sees society as being in continual need of salvation from itself. This act of salvation is not a mass act; it comes about, through the vision and dedication of individuals who doggedly pursue vision in spite of opposition, of the very society they seek to save. They frequently end up as the victims of the society which benefits from their vision. The salvation of the society then depends on the exercise of the individual will (African Theatre Today: 24).

Such summary themes and heroism or anti-heroism pervade all of Soyinka's plays, be it de-constructionist adaptation like King Baabu or the Beautification of Area boy, subtitled, A Lagosian Kaleidroscope, and their protagonists and antagonists. Such de-idealization and de-mythologization of themes and heroism are the characteristic main features of Femi Osofisan's dramaturgy and dramatic worldview. For instance, in an interview with this writer (Iji: 13 - 14), Osofisan states as follows among other assertions:

... I use a lot of Yoruba myths, but I do demythologize them; I want to rid them of the superstitions, and demystifying them, at the same time, not wanting to give any hint that we just came from Zero. We come from that world; that world of Ogun, Shango, Obatala and so on...

Summarily, Osofisan is a foremost Africanist-dramatist and theatre practitioner to the core; with very committed passion for pragmatic reorientation of the establishment status quo. His dramas are favourite menus for experimentalists, especially in schools and colleges, throughout Nigerian Universities Theatre Departments, among students, professional and amateur theatre business. Ideologically, among other philosophical paradigms, his plays are heavily flavoured with pragmatic Marxist socialism, pedagogic in favor of the oppressed, undoubtedly. In affirmation of this commitment, he has also stated: (Iji: 21 - 22):

The realist socialists who have proper attitudes do hardly get any attention on the contrary; because these other ones make so much noise. And these realist socialists are actually the ones I identify with; pragmatists, these are the kinds of people I handle in my plays ..

With a lot of satiric thrusts in the manner of Soyinka and Gogol or Gay or Voltaire or Aristophanes, Osofisan is a master of sardonic, grim and melodramatic humors; tragicomic here, farcical there, as exemplified in his *Midnight Hotel* or *Who's Afraid of Solarin* etc. A great original playwright, a consummate adaptor, a frontline critic, theorist, poet and essayist, Osofisan is a thought-provoking deconstructionist playwright-adaptor, as manifest in his *Another Raft* and *No More the Wasted Breed*; from J.P. Clark - Bekederemo's *The Raft* and Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* respectively. We can go on and on. His dramatic and theatrical endeavors have provided, no doubt, boundless materials for theatre business, not only on the stage, but also on the screens and airwaves for those who are enterprising enough in favor of the business of theatre and the theatre of business.

Undoubtedly, also, ala Rotimi whose "useful exfoliations," professional dramatic and theatrical exfoliations, unfolded, first, globally with his successful staging of the *Gods Are Not To Blame* (1974), an adaptation of Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* (485 BC) had a very successful reverberative theatre business career with variety of plays ranging from *The Gods...* to include the historiographic *Kurumi*, an account of a classic Yoruba internecine war also recorded by Wale Ogunyemi in the play titled *Kiriji War, If... A Tragedy of the Ruled* (1983), *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* (1974), all historicizations of actual events; *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* (1977), a hilarious comedy and *Holding Talks* (1979), all written in the flavor of the absurd and *Hopes of the Living Dead* (1988) predicated on communalism etc. It has been stated elsewhere (Iji: 1991, p. 14ft) that:

Rotimi has created characters that consistently command respect and hopes, irrespective of impending fatalities, or their own human frailties. Even though Rotimi's dramatic fare stresses the Nigerian problems and relevance in terms of locales, characterization, themes and values the fare is no less relevant to other non-Nigerian situations...

Rotimi's dramas and other theatre business, no doubt, like those of our foremost female dramatists such as Zulu Sofola in *The Wedlock of the Gods* or *The Sweet Trap* along with those of Tess Onwue, exemplified in the *Broken Calabash*, *Go Tell It To Women* and *Desert Encroaching*, to name only a few, are all plays that exude lively themes, plot formats, genres, among other histrionic sensibilities that lend each of them to presentational and representational elements that are potentially rich for stage, screens, airwaves and other performable qualities likely capable of stimulating both the business of theatre and theatre of business as periscoped by this endeavor.

This paper can still go on and on to profile other Nigerian dramatists, nay other African dramatists, whose dramatic fares and other theatrical landmarks have provided, and can continue to provide lively stageworthy menus. Such

menus is capable of stimulating the business of theatre and the theatre of business, sustainable to theatrical, professional business engagements. These could be mainly on the intellectual or ethical or moral, educational and informational criteria through entertainments, not stressing financial benefits or for doing the same, offering the same for strictly monetary objectives, perhaps, compromising standards in the process. Other highly gifted, Nigerian dramatists that can engage viable theatre business in these dimensional media paradigms include J.P. Clark – Bekeredemo of the Ozidi fame whose other lively dramas include *The Raft*, *Song A Goat*, *The Masquerade* and *The Girls At War* among others. Others again include the so-called new generational dramatists such as Chris Nwamuo of the *Squeeze and the Prisoners*, Ogonna Agu of *Dawn in the Academy* and *I Fear for Kathy*; or Effiong Johnson with his new stimulating plays such as *The Fight Has Just Started*, *Son of the Land*, and Ojo Rasaki with his mindblowing *The Gods Are To Blame*, *Drums of War* or *Rogbodiya*; or Iyowase Hayaire's Mulkin Mata from Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, or Ahmed Yerima's the silent Gods, *Yemoja*, the *Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, *Hard Ground*, *The Sisters* and *Attahiru* etc. This panorama or landscape of inexhaustible dramatic fares or stage worthy plays would continue to sustain the business of, theatre in all dimensions; stage, screens and airwaves or information superhighways to boot, with increasing media and communication convergence potentials, available later on internet; through the media of varied GSM (Global System of Telecommunication) handsets.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it has been established that ideally, there should be only a thin line between the two strands of theatre business, distinguishable into "The business of theatre" and "the theatre of business." As profiled, the business of theatre encapsulates intrinsic social, educational and humanistic motivations through artistic and aesthetic pleasures called entertainments as icings or honey-cones on the cake. Stephen Langley (1980:8ff) expresses this phenomenon aptly when he states:

New generations are measuring the quality of life according to the beauty and joy it contains as well as the material benefits. In search of a greater realization of life, more and more people are coming to understand - as some have always understood the humanizing force of the arts their ability to expand man's consciousness and sense of being human in a way that is both rewarding and penetrating ...

This assertion articulately shuns and detests any notion of theatre for theatre's sake or any vulgarization of theatrical productions for financial gains at the expense of artistic or aesthetic tastes that edify and humanize. On the other hand, the theatre of business as also profiled here encapsulates profit motivations, through the application of entrepreneurial know-how, toward maximizing financial gains. But here, again, even in Broadway, regarded as the culmination of theatre of business where financial motivations are mostly the ultimate, Langley rightly asserts that the theatrical producer, in whatever theatre business medium, and his backers need "psychic rewards resulting from acquaintanceships with interesting and celebrated or cultural rewards when the projects is artistically successful" (4). In other words, financial motivations as the main drives for the business of theatre should not vulgarize artistic and aesthetic tastes at the expense of cultural finesse or holistic psychic elements implicated, in terms of educational, moral or ethical edification in the information packaged.

In sum, however, the theatre of business profiled here includes the commercial theatre whose productions, reiteratingly, emphasize revenue rewards, profit maximization or optimization, as adequate material compensations for resource inputs, as entrepreneurial budgets that must be recouped, with adequate profits for sustainable business as

commercial enterprise ventures. A good example of commercial theatre are the so-called Stock and Resident Theatre, in the American nonmenclature. Stock theatres are the so-called summer and winter season productions that engage "Equity actors and Stocks." On the other hand, Resident theatre includes engagements that maintain permanent company of equity actors. Such actors perform a series of different plays in regulated sequence, as a legacy of the nineteenth century English and American stock companies of professional actors, engaged on repertory productions. In the words of Langley, theatres like the Tyrone Guthrie in Minneapolis and the Arena Stage in Washington D.C. do aim for higher artistic standards than the stock theatres." Other theatre business that engage in productions of serious nature are the so-called "dinner theatres, invariably less serious and more commercially oriented and may or may not employ equity actors." Notably, however, Langley emphasizes, "Summer and winter stock theatre as well as the dinner theatres are, for the most part, blatantly commercial." "Most," he concludes, "are operated by private corporation for private profit" (12-13). Other examples of such theatres, profit-oriented or non-profit oriented include the Comedie Francais, the Kabuki, Noh, varied groups established at Lincoln centre, Smithsonian Institutes, Shakespeare theatre, Goethe Institute etc. Here the emphasis is always on non-profit motivation, albeit commitment to productions that emphasize fidelity to cultures, period plays, cultural exchange; playing multi-leveled roles of cultural diplomacy, bridges across cultures vis-a-vis enhancement of good international or multicultural relationships. Here, the budgetary provisions are effected through consistent subventions, sponsorships, or endowments and tax-deductible policies etc.

Nearer home, institutions such as Muson Centre, Lagos, governmental ones such as various arts councils or councils for arts and cultures, National Theatre, Lagos and Abuja, subvented by government are always not adequately empowered by governments to perform effectively. The examples of the National Troupe of Nigeria (NTN) which we have discussed elsewhere along with the National Theatre, Iganmu Lagos, vis-a-vis the misplacement of priority and non-implementation of the more than twenty years National Endowment for the Arts (NEFA) are cases in point (see Iji: 2001: 115 -131, 149 - 156)

Other areas where idea-empowering theatre productions or business are common or institutionalized and self-explanatory are in the "Educative Motivation," "the Humanist Motivation" and "the community and Amateur theatres" and, "College Theatre," as Langley Captions them respectively. Here, again, depending on the idea motivating the business of theatre or theatre of business, the standards of artistic or aesthetic excellence may be dependent on the availability or otherwise of needed production funds, the talents and commitment of the production teams to achieve the educational, informational or other empowering potentials of theatre engagements (4 - 19).

It is remarkable to note that information and communication convergence has made very significant breakthroughs in theatre business via the instrumentality of the electronic media of television and radio, audio-visual media of celluloid and videomatic networking, and their increasing extensions, curtsey of the ever-improving and innovating wonders of the electronic and digital revolutions. These would soon democratize watching of our favourite theatrical shows through the mobile handsets and other upcoming wonders through nano-technology. The ever increasing competitions between the Broadways as the culmination of stage productions and the Hollywood, as that for the screen productions and disseminations, converging on the electronic media are further enhanced by satellite broadcasts. These are all, rapidly narrowing the width and length of the global village. In this regard, bridges against ignorance, courtesy of multiculturalism, among other dividends of exposure to theatre business are doing more good than harm in our conflictful world. In all, thank God that our Nollywood is springing up,

challenging the dominance of the Bollywood from the oriental world, and in many ways, both threatening the long dominance of the Hollywood. And since knowledge is power and the ideas spread by exposure to good theatre on stage, screens or airwaves, can be wealth, the more the space open for theatre business whether on stage or screens, the richer would the world be in all respects.

Endowing and Funding Arts and Culture: Nigeria's successive governments' refusals to endow the arts and culture, as recommended by the world Decade for Cultural Development (WDCD), since 1988 to date, is one of the most indelible indictments against all Nigeria's leaders from Babangida through Abacha/Abubakar to Obasanjo, and perhaps beyond.

As discussed elsewhere, it is therefore, incumbent on the captains of industries, upstream and downstream sectors of our petroleum industries, inclusive, banks, boards, parastatals, private companies and corporations etc, to take up the challenges, as it is done in developed economies, of funding the arts and culture for effective regular productions and performances of valuable plays, and other cultural activities. Such endeavours would help to sustainably develop, reactivate, refine or renovate; to consolidate towards building up or rebuilding Nigeria's heritage through arts and culture for posterity. Such culture of fundings, sponsorships and endowments could be legislated on, and made tax-deductible, in favor of such sectors, private or public. This is where the examples of Mike Adenuga in his support of sports and other events come handy. As recorded in the Guardian (16/05/05:47):

Last year, Globacom committed over ₦500 million in infrastructure deployment. And direct sponsorship of 8th All African Games held in Nigeria. The company spent over a ₦100 million to sponsor the Super Eagles in 2004.

In the same vein, it will also soon sponsor the female football to take it to a greater height. Similarly, last year, the company was in the vanguard of the attempts to reduce unemployment and create jobs, partnering with many states and federal government's agencies like NDDC and NAPEP, among other efforts. Other companies like Celtel, MTN and MTEL are also helping out in these and other avenues of sponsorships. Why not increasingly so in favor of the arts and cultures, which could durably help to develop and build human characters vis-a-vis the cultivation of durable role models, among other priceless roles? Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and knock and the door shall be open onto you, it is well-known.

It is therefore great challenge for the theatre business practitioners that they should formulate appropriate proposals, sourcing for funds towards productions and performances of stimulating plays along socio-cultural, socio-political and psycho-social relevances, and such efforts can hardly fail. The National Troupe of Nigeria (NTN), among other daring artistes have started deriving great dividends from such ventures, as testified by their recent trips to the United States of America, with the new productions of Rotimi's *the Gods Are Not to Blame*. Unquestionably, sustainable sponsorships and other forms of endowments are a sine qua non for the realization of excellence and sustenance of excellence in both the business of theatre or theatre of Business. For nothing ventured, nothing gained, we must remember.

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