

# THE SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERDEPENDENCE OF THEATRE AND SOCIETY AND NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC RECESSION

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## **Abstract**

*Tracing the origin of theatre, it is a priori knowledge that theatre started after society began to exist, during the pre-historic times, a period when man learnt to survive by making nature work for him. Man engaged then, in performative mimesis through story-telling, dance, re-enactment, music, and drumming, for his sustenance and survival. The human society has since then, served as an indispensable platform for the theatre to thrive having been the primary platform and source from which the theatre derives its essence, sustenance and livelihood. Conversely, the society does also have ways in which it depends immensely on the theatre for its socio-cultural, political and economic viability and sustenance. This paper interrogates the existing argument on the socio-cultural and economic interdependence of theatre and society, and hopefully, provides a balance in the argument of which determines the existence and sustenance of the other. Conclusions are reached in the end, on ways in which society can leverage on the creative socio-cultural and economic dynamics of the theatre especially in ameliorating the banes of recession. Focused group discussions, case study analysis, review of relevant literature, especially play texts, and participant observation methods were largely relied on, and data collected were subjected to content analysis. Although usually unfairly dismissed as a mere courtesan entertainment parasite in its relationship with society, the theatre however is actually a quintessential interdependent ally of society and do possess socio-cultural and economic potentialities that can help salvage society's recessed economy.*

## **Introduction**

Theatre can be defined as the art or medium of expression through which a specific message – entertaining or functional – is deliberately orchestrated before a viewing or participative audience, through the imitation of an object, animal, person or abstract phenomenon. Inferring from this definition, the operating word that makes theatre all the time, differentiating it from the other arts – still or performing – is the 'imitation' act. This is traceable in the main, to its origin way back to the pre-historic times, a period during which the primitive man engaged in performative activities such as story-telling, mime, dance, re-enactment, music, and drumming, in his attempt to survive and make nature work for him.

Bakare Traore avers that, “religious belief was an essential part of life in Black Africa” (13). So, the African, due to their religious beliefs established a functional link between them and the gods, spirits and the ancestors. They engaged in religious performative activities which enabled them to easily identify with the cosmic forces and natural elements like the sun, moon, stars, lightning, thunder, seasons and seasonal changes. The primitive African at those initial stages of human existence engaged in ritualistic re-enactment of real life situations such as the waging of war against enemies, celebrating war victories, preparing for hunting expeditions and even food gathering and crop harvesting processes. Gradually, as civilisation progressed, these performative activities which were expressed through story-telling dramatisation, music, dance, mime and drumming, became more organised and integrated into the entire communal life of the pre-civilisation. African traditional, and socio-cultural entity. According to Fasuyi, the Nigerian arts and cultural activities were closely interwoven with the social life of the kingdoms under the traditional rulers who were not only political heads but also spiritual leaders (or priests) of the people (17).

At this initial extremely sacred level, theatre in Africa, was essentially functional, though also communally entertaining. However, with time, the public performances began to get more organised and more secularised. A typical example is the seasonal Egungun Cult festival of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The festival was initially essentially ritualistic as well as culturally entertaining in structure. But again, with time, the ritual festival eventually gave birth to the first organised traditional performing arts company which became known as the Yoruba Traditional Traveling Theatre or the Alarinjo Traveling Theatre (Brockett 635). The account of the theatre origin from the West shares similarities with that of the African origins in that it is also traceable to having an intertwined off-shoot from rituals and religious observances. From the early pre-Greek classical age to the medieval period, theatre, society and religion have always been interdependent. The origin of the theatre is most widely accepted as arising out of myth and ritual. Greece, historically described as the root of the Western tradition, was critical to providing a broader culture of theatrical performances, which include religious festivals such as celebrating Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility. Performers wore costumes and masks to represent and re-enact certain mythical or supernatural forces. Then in Ancient Egypt also, are the Passion plays, which happened to be one of the reportedly earliest recorded quasi-theatrical events which date back to 2000BC. The story of the god, Osiris was usually ceremonially performed annually at festivals throughout the Egyptian civilisation, establishing what an enduring relationship between theatre and religion became (Akande 1).

### **The Interdependent Relationship between the Theatre and Society**

Society began when man began to exist, when man began to multiply and found the need to interact with one another, depend on one another, communicate with one another, associate with one another, have expectations from one another, collaborate and even engage in one form of conflict, or the other. The term, ‘society’, is derived from the Latin word, *socius*, which means, association or companionship. Society, to that extent, suggests a large group of individual who are associated together on some

common grounds. According to Farooq, the individual is the basis of society in that the interactions of the individuals give birth to group while the social groups, in interacting with each other and developing relationship eventually grows into society (1).

The *Cambridge Dictionary* describes society as, “a large group of people who live together in an organised way, making decisions about how to do things, and sharing the work that needs to be done. All the people in a country, or in several similar countries, can be referred to as a society”. It will also be instructive to add the descriptions of the *Wikipedia Dictionary*, presenting society as,

a group of people involved in persistent social interaction or a large social grouping sharing the same geographical or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Societies are characterised by patterns of role-playing relationships between individuals who share a distinctive culture and institution; a given society may be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent members (en.wikipedia.org).

Against this background, it is evident that society derives its essence and meaning from the level of inter-individual/intergroup interactions and the relationship derivable as a result of a bonding that exists within the groupings of individuals. According to *Wikipedia*, “insofar as it is ‘collaborative’ a society can enable its members to benefit in ways that would not otherwise be possible on an individual basis; both individual and social (common) benefits can thus be distinguished, or in many cases found to overlap” (en.wikipedia.org). A society can also consist of like-minded people governed by their own norms and values within a dominant, larger society. This is what is sometimes referred to as a subculture within the larger societal configuration.

Now, in the course of the origination of society and the intermingling of the individuals that made up the early societies, there happened to have also been the evolution of theatre and theatrical activities in the interactiveness that occurred between the social components that existed, such as the mimetic acts, religious observances, story-telling dramatisation and transactional interactions. However, the story of the origin of man as well as that of the theatre, (whether against the background of that of the Western version, or the African), leaves a mind-boggling question as to which then, really gives essence to the other between society and theatre. The early societies derived their meaning and survival through the art of mimesis and other theatrical activities. In the very everyday activities of man living out his daily chore, he naturally acted, imitated and dramatised the unseen supernatural forces, gods, ancestors, the weather and seasonal conditions, animals, persons – living and dead – and even objects; he mimed his way through, told and dramatised his stories and experiences.

The performing arts, according to Costa, “are inherently social arts and do provide a necessary opportunity to develop the skills of socialisation and communication required by a healthy democracy”. He emphasises that cultural activities and the performing arts specifically, uniquely serve as a meeting place, a site for the formation of a shared communal identity as, ‘the public’ (www.theguardian.com). This is where

society begins but found its meaning and essence through the theatre without which there really would not have been a meaningful society. In other words, the meaningfulness of society resides in role-playing and the mimetic interactions of the individuals that make up the society.

The various artists of the theatre namely, the playwright, the actor, the artistic director, the costumier, the light and set technicians, the make-up artist, all generally represent on the stage, a manifestation of their imagination of the real social issues that pervades their immediate or distant societies. It is apparent therefore that the creative raw materials of the artist are derivable solely from the society. Even the very canvas of the painter, the textile materials used by the costumier, the stage used by the actors, the actors themselves as deployed by the artistic director to carry out the physical expression of his inner concepts of the plays' plot on stage are all social phenomena obtained from the larger society. The playwrights draw their ideas, inspirations, subject matters and themes from their social experiences, as well as also eventually depending on the same society for their audiences and feedback, for their works to have any essence or meaning. This underpins the popular theatre axiom, which says: "the audience makes the play".

Ngugi Wa Thiongo also says in his *Homecoming* essays, that, "literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society (iv). He states further that, "the relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and new-colonialism" (viii). Every aspect of the social life, including the issues that constitute relationships between social beings and their ecological environment are raw materials for the artist to reconstruct their imaginations around: divorce, religious harmony or conflict, insurgencies, political instability, starvation, unemployment, the hunger for peace and societal harmony, the undying quest for an egalitarian society. politics, religion, economics, culture, traditions, beliefs, ethnicity and diversity, academic freedom, liberty, gender issues, justice, equity, truth, deception, themes from the real world to the ethereal, from the *nuomena* to the phenomena world, from the concrete to the abstract, all constitute the subliminal, subconscious conjectural warehouse of the theatre artists as well as being products of society.

### **The Theatre as the Conscience of Society**

Over the years, the theatre has initiated remarkable socio-political impacts on society at a magnitude that no other discipline could have. The Nigerian Theatre for example, has always been a pictorial self-examining and pedagogically dialogical avenue through which people weighed the performances of the ruling class. It has since remained a tool for appraising or condemning the class. It is also a means of mobilising the people to support or reject a particular government. Theatre practitioners have refused to bulge in their objective as well as subjective but radical reactions to unsavoury political realities.

Hubert Ogunde is one of the earliest theatre pioneers in Nigeria whose theatrical activities made so much change impact on the society. His responses to the social

conditions in the Nigerian state through his popular travelling theatre of the 1940s were evidently radically outspoken. He was renowned for his caustic satirical sketches with which he toured the country, and even into Ghana, the then Gold Coast. Most of his works caused both the colonial and the neo-colonial government a lot of concerns. His radical conscientisation of the Nigerian government and society in general was established throughout the nation by his timely play *Strike and Hunger*, performed in 1946. The production of *Strike and Hunger* on his first and only night in Jos lasted only half an hour way through when a constable entered the stage through the dressing room and arrested Ogunde. The hall was suddenly besieged by about forty other police constables scattering the audience, and arresting five other members of Ogunde's cast (Ogunbiyi 298). Many of Ogunde's early plays were attacks on colonialism, while those of his later works were focused essentially on political themes deplored interparty strife and government corruption within Nigeria. Yoruba theatre became secularised and even commercialised through his careful blending of astute political or social satire with elements of music hall routines and slapstick (Ohenhen, "Trends..." 7).

Femi Osofisan, a most renowned second generation Nigerian dramatist, had grown up witnessing many changes and challenges in his native Yoruba farming village in Western Nigeria. These memories went a long way in impacting on his dramaturgy as a playwright, artistic director and dramatist. His theatre, as reflected in his works, were largely influenced by the social indices of his background as illustrated, for example in his *The Chattering and the Song*, *Red Runs the Freedom Road*, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, *Once Upon Four Robbers*, and *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*. Osofisan exhibits a critical perspective, towards the exploitation, poverty, pseudo nationalism, and self-aggrandising disposition of the political class. According to Awodiya, Osofisan is not just a provincial writer by also informed or inspired by the culture and social events from various parts of Nigeria. Muiyiwa Awodiya cites *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* as,

a play that illustrates the triumph of young love over social divisions, commemorating issues in the Nigerian Civil war, while *Midnight Hotel* satirises the political and religious profligacy of Nigerians especially during the civilian government of Shehu Shagari between 1976 and 1983 (61).

Another instructive reference to the conscientisation of society by the theatre is the theatre of Ngugi wa Thiongo. Ngugi effectively deployed the creative raw materials derived, especially from his immediate society, which were essentially the prevailing social conditions in the post-colonial and neo-colonial Kenya, produced works that made so much impact on the masses and on the government, so much so that the government claimed to have been 'embarrassed and upset' to the point of actually imposing an out-rightly ban on the works. For example, when the first production of *I Will Marry When I Want*, in Limuru in the Gikuyu language as, *Ngashika Ndeenda*, the play was immediately banned and Ngugi himself interned. *I Will Marry When I Want* largely and unreservedly exposes the condition of abject poverty to which the peasants

have been consigned by the imperialists and neo-colonialists. Kigunda and his wife, Wangeci, are very hard-working natives who slave for their opportunistic fellow blacks like the Kiois and the Ikuas who readily stepped into the shoes of the colonialists. The exploitative tendencies of the bourgeoisie of the Kenyan neo-colonial society are clearly brought to bear in Gicaamba's bitter narration. These peasants, having worked and sweated savagely, are given mere peanuts-worth of wages while the rest of the result of their sweat is sent to the imperialist nations such as Japan, America and Britain. The helpless peasants are dispossessed of their landed properties for token amounts or nothing at all, and any protest was summarily squashed. In Kigunda, the hope for the oppressed persons almost fizzles out as he allows himself to be bamboozled by the oppressors and the petit-bourgeois religious fanatics. But in Gicaamba, there is hope as all his actions and words tend to generate rage and provoke a mass cause action.

So, the theatre artists, through their works, are able to define a conception of art, and a robust romance between the artist and his society as inevitable. The likes of the contemporary European, African and African-American dramatists and ideological thinkers like Karl Marx, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, and Amiri Baraka, believe that the artist must be committed to deploying his art to addressing the socio-political issues of his day, and so his art must be functional, committed, didactic and dialogically pedagogical in content, form and style. To that extent, the artist, his art and the society must be intertwined by way of dialogically impacting one another.

### **The Socio-Economic Relevance of the Theatre to a Recessed Economy**

What relevance can the theatre contribute to society? Why should the citizenry value the theatre, and make time and space for it within their lives, patronise, sponsor or support it in any way? Why should democratic governments and their machineries be expected to invest in it or even pay due attention to it in their policy formulations and implementations? These are the questions that have bothered the minds of scholars, practitioners and other stakeholders of the arts and culture, especially the performing arts genre over the years. Even more particularly, are the expressed doubts about the socio-economic values the theatre has to offer society that necessitate a concerted reciprocal investment in it by society. When the relationship between the theatre and society is well horned, there are immense socio-economic benefits that accrue to the society through the engagement of the arts of the theatre.

There is no doubt that the Nigerian economy is presently going through a recession as portrayed by a number of economic indicators. Barclays Ayakoroma identifies some key indicators identified by analysts that affirm that the Nigerian state is still in a recession. These include:

- a) Massive job losses in banks and financial institutions;
- b) Inability of State governments to pay workers' salaries;
- c) Federal Government borrowing to fund annual budget;
- d) Nigerian companies recording massive losses;
- e) Foreign airlines exiting from the country's
- f) Aviation market due to unfavourable business climate;

- g) The nation's currency, naira, plummeting in the foreign exchange market; and
- h) Drastic cut or outright shut-down of oil production ([www.nico.gov.ng](http://www.nico.gov.ng)).

Thus, it goes without saying that the recession situation in Nigeria is evident. Most African and other developing countries of the world identify with this recessed economic situation. Incidentally, this state of recession goes a long way in adversely affecting the health of the activities and operations of the theatre in their various host societies. Nonetheless, the theatre in the Nigerian societies and other parts of the world still have many ways contribute immensely to the alleviation of the socio-economic pains of recession regardless of its enormous economic constraints.

In most part of the world, such as, South Africa, Argentina, Bosnia and Northern Ireland, growing prominence is being given to the contributions made by the performing arts and cultural activities to processes of peace building and reconciliation. According to Meersman, most of these societies, “find the artistic activities a necessary leverage in trying to work through difficult and divisive pasts” ([www.critical-stages.org](http://www.critical-stages.org)). They readily are turning to the restorative and therapeutic power of drama, music, film and literature to break down walls of silence and bitterness about atrocities of war and intertribal conflicts, to allow victims to share their stories of suffering, and to rekindle the ability to imagine again. The therapeutic value of the live-performing arts in releasing and purging powerful emotions previously repressed is also increasingly becoming apparent and has played significant roles in these conflict resolutions and reconciliation projects.

In another vein, the theatre itself relies on the synergy of various artists of the theatre namely the playwright, the director, the actors and actresses, stagecraft artists, the theatre managers and crew, to make theatre happen. Then for a performance to happen, about a hundred to a thousand or more people need to gather in one place for a couple of hours, and share together in witnessing and contemplating an event, like a ‘slice of life’ cut out and placed on stage, that may be beautiful, funny, moving, thought-provoking, or hopefully at least diverting. And in an age when most of our communication happens in front of a screen, theatre as in ‘live-stage’ gathering function of theatre is, in and of itself, something that matters. The following are more socio-economic values the performing arts and culture contributes to the alleviation of the critical conditions of a society's recessed economy.

- a) ***Entrepreneurship and Employment Opportunities:*** The arts and culture industries go a long way in creating employment and various forms of economically gainful occupation and career for a larger segment of the Nigerian community namely, school leavers, graduates, retirees, entrepreneurs. A teaming chunk of these population earn their living as actors and actresses, dancers, musicians, film producers arts company directors and producers, technical and lighting designers, broadcasters, journalists; copy writers, artisans; costume and make-up artists; camera personnel; photographers; architects; playwrights and script writers, film/stage directors, stand-up comedians, professional masters of ceremonies, show business presenters, models, and so on. The performing arts and culture indeed, are

increasingly finding a route to the global market, which is leading to radical transformations in the way people create, consume and enjoy cultural products. The creative arts and culture industry has, as much as any other industries in the world economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, become a great potential for entrepreneurship, wealth and job creation and in fact, employability opportunities (Ohenhen, “Entrepreneurship...” 233). According to Brown, “entrepreneurship in the creative industry sector has been recognised as a distinctive and increasingly important area of a nation’s economy” (6). Performing arts and culture organisations are fundamentally (consciously or unconsciously), founded on the principles of innovation and entrepreneurship in that their origin is rooted in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. The operators and stakeholders in the creative arts and culture in Africa only need to take full advantage of these endless economic opportunities. Most of the developed and even some developing countries of the world are already doing this. For example, South Africa is increasingly beginning to focus on cultural and creative industries as potential contributors to economic growth and job creation. According to Snowball, “South Africa did its first cultural and creative industries mapping study in 2014. Though not yet publicly available online, the interim report showed that the industries had created between 162,809 and 192,410 jobs, about 1.08% to 1.28% of employment in the country, and that they contribute 2.9% to South Africa’s total GDP” (www.theconversation.com). Meanwhile, it is also reported that the total jobs in the UK cultural sector as at 2015 was 642,000, which had grown by 17.8 per cent since 2011; and that the estimated number of UK jobs specifically in music, theatre and the visual arts as at 2015 was 291,000 (www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk). This is apparently an enormous to contributions from the arts to society’s economic development and resuscitation where required.

- b) ***Enabling the Weak Economy of Host Communities:*** The dis-accentuated nature of the arts and culture sub-sector can benefit the corporate and individual citizenry of the host communities considered to be lacking in economic strength. For example, when a carnival is hosted by a State government in an erstwhile not-too-popular or an initially economically and socially disadvantaged community, the economy of such a community suddenly becomes strengthened with the corresponding stimulation of economic activities that arises from and/or around the carnival event (Ohenhen, “Arts and Culture...” 152). Also, a number of influential or now affluent artists and artistes who are typically well-connected in their local communities who, when linked with either NGOs or with even entrepreneurship opportunities both inside and beyond their immediate local environment offers numerous valuable economic development possibilities. Again, cases in point are the immeasurable economic and social activity-spin-offs in the immediate communities surrounding state-organised carnival events in Nigeria. Performing Arts and Cultural organisations and practitioners in the UK are reported to have

contributed £27bn to the UK economy in 2015, a 15 per cent increase on the previous year. This represents the fastest growth of any of the sectors covered by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (cultural, digital, the wider creative industries, gambling, sport, telecoms and tourism ([www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk](http://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk))).

- c) ***Democratic, Dialogical and Social Reconstruction Platform:*** Theatre provides models for a kind of public discourse that lies at the heart of democratic life, and builds our skills for listening to different sides of a conversation or argument. It makes it possible for members of society, through the audience, to empathise with the struggles of their fellow human beings regardless of whatever their views may be. When a play is watched, the consequences of unresolved conflicts therein are usually apparent, and what happens when they get resolved. The faculty of the audience for imagining the outcomes of various choices they might make in their personal lives and their political lives also get sensitised hence in repressive societies, theatre has often been aligned with the movement toward openness and freedom and also serving as a means of self-expression and empowerment by people facing hostile political or social circumstances. In South Africa and East Africa for example, theatre, through the drama of the likes of Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Athol Fugard, Mukotani Rugeyendo, played a critical role in the struggle against apartheid, colonialism and neo-colonialism. For example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* is a creative reconstruction of the heroic role played by the legendary Dedan Kimathi, the leader of the Mau Mau movement in Kenya. Through mime and flashback, it equally shows the historic contributions of the Kenyan peasants and workers when they rose against the British colonialists to regain their lost lands and achieve political independence. The Tiv people in Nigeria used the traditional Kwagh-Hir puppet and masquerade theatre to voice opposition against the political victimisation during the 1960s. The works of Hubert Ogunde are satires that deal with topical issues in Nigerian politics. One of such works, *Yoruba Ronu* (Yoruba Think), sheds light on the crisis in the Western Region during the 1965 elections, which eventually culminated into the 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1966 bloody coup. Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to blame* is a Nigerian adaptation of the *Oedipus* theme in which Rotimi uses the metaphor of communal dispute, self-love and ethnic pride to symbolise the problems that culminated in the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970.
- d) ***Education and Literacy Platform:*** Both the making of theatre as the artists and attending the theatre as the audience, contribute to education and literacy. Re-enacting, or watching the characters talk back and forth in the theatre is tricky; it requires sharp attention, quick mental shifts, and nimble language skills. It teaches us about human motivation and psychology. In classical or historical plays such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*; William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Ola Rotimi's *Kurumi* and *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*, for example, we get lessons in leadership, politics and government. Then in more contemporary plays

like Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, and Ahmed Yerima's *The Sisters* and *Pari*, society learns about people and cultures in different parts of either its host country or other countries. Making plays together as cast, crew or audience also draws every stakeholder out of their shells and helps them learn to socialise in a productive and healthy way.

- e) ***Invigorates the Life of its Host Communities:*** The theatre as an industry contributes to the social life as well as plays a special role in the revitalisation of neglected neighbourhoods. This is evidenced in the social recreation and activities that spring up in theatre immediate host-environments, especially during seasonal productions. The environments of the National Arts Theatres in Lagos, Accra, and Nairobi and indeed any other country in the world where the National Theatre is alive and functioning, are usually a hub-nub of such socio-economic activities during one form of performing arts festival or social event or the other. The artistes, artists, crew and then, audiences attracted by singular events do stimulate commercial activities for other businesses in the environment. For example, a consecutive number of night runs of a play production in a performing arts house will complementarily create business of food vendors, fashion shops, arts and craft shops, bookshops, and other petty shop retailers. By this, the larger purpose of state economy-boosting is achieved.

This is also reported to be the case in the role that the Studio Theatre played along the 14<sup>th</sup> Street corridor, or Shakespeare Theatre along Seventh Street, or Woolly in both these neighbourhoods, or Gala Hispanic Theatre in Columbia Heights, the Atlas along H Street, or the new Arena Stage along the waterfront (Shalwitz, [www.theatrewashington.org](http://www.theatrewashington.org)).

As each of these theatres opened, new audiences started flooding in, new restaurants opened, jobs were created, the city improved the sidewalks, and neighbourhoods that were once grim and forbidding became vibrant hubs of activity. And this pattern has been repeated in cities around the world.

- f) ***Value Addition to the Quality of Life:*** The theatre helps to infuse into society an enhanced state of well-being and quality of life through the enrichment of local infrastructural amenities such as theatres, cinema houses, amusement parks, club houses, tourist centres and other refreshment and entertainment centres. These go a long way in the attraction of young and upwardly mobile professional workforce to the communities where they are available. The culture industries no doubt play a critical role in the said attraction and retention of this key segment of the population. The performing arts and culture sector of Great Britain for example is reported to contribute an important benefit on the health and well-being of the British society. Those who had attended the theatres or some cultural festival or event in the

preceding 12 months were, according to report, 60 per cent more likely to report good health, and theatre-goers were 25 per cent more likely to report being in health than the average. People valued being in the audience for the arts at about £2,000 per year, which is higher than sport ([www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk](http://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk)).

- g) ***Platform for Social Enlightenment:*** Theatre is a virile tool used to sensitise the society on matters that affect them on daily basis. These include matters of family planning/child-spacing, conduction of census, campaign against sale and distribution of fake and illegal drugs, HIV/AIDS and other STDs, abortions, child abuse/neglect etc. Drama, as one of the core genres of literature, is the mirror of any society because it documents what is happening and throws it back at the same society.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The theatre is unique in its nature in that it constitutes one sub-sector that cuts across the economic, political, social, cultural and technological fabrics of society. It serves as a cross-road of the arts, business and technology in that, in the process of its creation, there are usually manifestations of a bit of various sectors therein: design, stage craft, ICT, creativity, architecture and so on. The live-performing arts communities continue to enjoy some philanthropic supports and patronage across the world, though its fortunes have no doubt, been largely affected by the on-going economic recession in the world today.

Market fluctuations, disinvestment in the cultural sector and declines in charitable donations, reluctance by partnership investments in the arts for fear of likely low returns, or no returns on investments, government policy and budget formulation and implementation marginalisation of the performing arts and culture sub-sector, have hurt endowments, leading to reductions in private sector funding, patronage and sponsorship as well. Evidently, the economics of the performing arts environment do adversely affect the arts. The economic system exerts its ripple effects as constantly and tirelessly as gravity affects the natural world. So, the peculiarities of any particular economic system ultimately mould the arts and the society they reflect. Howbeit, the socio-cultural and economic benefits accruing from the interdependent relationship between the theatre and society especially as discussed above have not been suppressible. This goes to further accentuate the interdependent nexus between the theatre and its host societies.

The society and culture within which the artists grow up is also a part and parcel of the artists themselves. To that extent, the theatre becomes a visible demonstration and outward realisation of our culture. The arts of the theatre imitates, replicates as well as interprets cultural beliefs and traditional ethos, ideals and changes so desired by the artists. This brings about an inseparable and almost undistinguishable intertwine between the theatre and society.

Theatre, Mackey says, “is the most social of the arts in that social relationships in action are not only demonstrated on stage and in the audience, but also in the relationship between what is happening on the stage and the audience” (208). As matter

of fact, all the relationships that exist in society are usually experienced by the audience, as it all play out in front of them. The audience literarily see themselves being played out on stage. The audience each time, is either relating to the actions on stage because it tells them about themselves or paints for them a utopia they will like to attain. For the survival and fulfilment of both therefore, a socio-cultural and economic interdependence between theatre and society becomes a given.

Theatre started when society deployed theatrical activities to enable them survive and sustain their existence meaningfully. Whereas, theatre also wholesomely depended on the society for its creative raw materials as well as for its audience which actually becomes a determine factor the theatre's completeness. To conclude therefore that they both need each other for their survival and for their meaningfulness is a statement a priori and hardly requires any further justification.

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