

## Editorial

There is clear evidence of querying identity, resistance, and elements of theatre within the papers in this volume. Recognizing connections between dance, drama, music (song), ritual and context, and the use of language in African performance, we trace them where they transport us – from Sunday Ododo's *Facekuerade* Ekuechi festival, to Kennedy Chinyowa's post-apartheid University students' dramas, to Charles Nwadigwe's dance compositions from Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa, to Viola Karungi's Kinyankore Folk Poetry performance, and finally to Anwar Abdalla's meta-theatre as a strategy of resistance.

Ideas and characters originate from the performance environment. Similar to the tradition of *abadongo* in Uganda, each word, song, movement and comment is intended to entertain, question, and impart knowledge through connecting place, scene, action, character and narrative in new ways. Performances juxtapose and draw parallels between past and contemporary themes (events) as Nwadigwe suggests here, to expand the capacity of querying more creatively and critically.

In 'Body, Space and Technology: Interrogating Unconventionality in Postmodern African Dance Theatre', Nwadigwe interrogates the use of new multimedia technologies in the performance of contemporary dance forms in Africa, and how the trend is reshaping the practice of choreography in Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa. He concludes that the use of modern technology could be instrumental to the growth and popularity of dance among the youth.

The other papers in this issue follow similar routes, querying, interrogating and reflecting in contrasting ways, various aspects of performances, concepts and topical issues addressing the complex relationship between performance and society. How we relate to, and interpret, the performance experience artists present to us is central to African theatre because it underlines the role of the audience as active participants in the theatrical encounter.

The need for performances to address the present as well as the past is emphasised by Kennedy Chinyowa in his study of dramatic performances carried out at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

In 'Un-performing Racial and Ethnic Prejudice in Tertiary Institutional Spaces in South Africa', Chinyowa queries the kind of memory that originates from the admixture of different racial and ethnic experiences created by the apartheid system in a formerly 'white' institution. He wonders whether such memories are disruptive or conducive to learning and concludes that, in the same way that identities are 'performed', memories can be 'unperformed' through embodied modes of representation, especially interactive drama which disrupts the past and enables the students to question and interrogate present knowledge.

Karungi's paper on South-Western Uganda's performances provides a basic examination of the performing process of *ebyevugo*, a participatory oral art between the performer and the audience, which has changed because of modernization in the staging process, which now isolates the performer from the audience. In contrast, the staging process, rather than create a distance between the performer and the audience in Ekuechi performance, fosters a situation the performer interacts with the audience as the basis of performance. Ekuechi festival of the Ebirá people in Nigeria, according to Sunny Ododo in his paper for this issue, is a 'ritualization' anchored around ancestral celebration and interaction. This involves performances by maskless performers who are still ritually referred to as masquerades, or in Ododo's coinage, *facekuerade*, a word that describes the maskless Eku. In spite of the lack of a mask, Ododo maintains that the spiritual essence of the masquerade character is not devalued.

The last paper in this edition look at individual playwrights and their dramatic ideology. Abdalla's 'Acting as Survival: The Plays of Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona' analyses the use of acting and meta-theatre as a strategy of resistance to apartheid and as a means of survival in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*.

In various ways, the papers in this special issue, concerned with 'querying' African performance, show the significance of the changing relationship between performance and audience; audience, artist and space; and the need for performances to address the present.