

## A Toast to Dapo Adelugba at Seventy

Duro Oni

*Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, Nigeria*

My first contact with Prof. Dapo Adelugba was in the very early 70s as a young student in the Department of Theatre Arts at Ibadan, which had just graduated from the then School of Drama. He certainly was not the 'Baba' that is being celebrated now but a dashing young 'Uncle D' who was the favourite of the lecturers. He took us out regularly on social outings and the price we had to pay, sometimes, was pushing his green Volkswagen car back to campus! Somehow, the car didn't seem to start after a few drinks!

He was certainly the quintessential lecturer of directing, acting, dramatic literature and criticism. His skills of directing were manifest early when, in 1971, he directed the J.M. Synge plays, *The Tinkers Wedding* and *Riders to the Sea*, and the epic production of Wale Ogunyemi's *Kiriiji* with a cast that included Tunde Oloyede (Fabunmi), Niyi Osundare (Aduloju) and myself as Ogunmodede (who had to ride a live horse on stage!).

Professor Adelugba's contemporaries at Ibadan, over the four decades that he spent there, included Professors Geoffrey Axworthy (late), Wole Soyinka, Joel Adedeji (late), Martin Banham, Demas Nwoko, Dexter Lyndersay (late) Funmilayo Ajayi (nee Sowunmi), Bayo Oduneye, Femi Osofisan, Dr. Esohe Omoregie and Dr. Sunbo Marinho (late). Others have included Dr. Bode Sowande, Drs. Jide Malomo and Femi Fatoba (both late) and a host of others; Drs Lanrele Bamidele, Matthew Umukoro, Hyginus Ekwuazi, Remi Adedokun and Chukwuma Okoye are still with the department. There are of course others too numerous to mention in this brief tribute.

On a professional level, Prof. Adelugba directed *Langbodo*, Nigeria's drama entry for the FESTAC '77, with a cast of about two hundred actors drawn from all over Nigeria. To date, that production remains a textbook exercise on how plays should be directed. Sam Loco Efe, as the young

Akara Ogun, cut his acting teeth in the production. In the mid-90s, Uncle D also directed the NIB/Citibank production of J. P. Clark's *Ozidi*.

I recall a personal encounter with Uncle D., the kolanut-chewing, gala-eating and coke-drinking professor of theatre arts, when, in 1984, I went to his residence at the University of Ibadan campus to inform him of my wedding arrangements. I knocked on the door and the unmistakable soft voice asked me to come in, which I did. The only problem was that I could not find Uncle D in the room! He was sitting behind piles of books, projects, dissertations and theses that filled his living room!

Trying to recall the number of students that have passed through Dapo Adelugba would be an uphill task. He meant different things to many of us, but we all agree that he was an articulate and brilliant lecturer, kind-hearted and jovial. On occasions he will run into a student who graduated several years earlier and remind him of an outstanding assignment yet to be submitted.

To date he is known to have supervised the largest number of PhDs at Ibadan University. In addition, he has sat on innumerable Theatre Arts professors' interview panels. We all owe him a debt of gratitude. And all of us, his former students and colleagues, are united in the celebration of a theatre icon.

Following his retirement, the workaholic Uncle D, or shall we join the younger generation and say 'Baba D', has relocated to the Department of Drama and Theatre of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria to continue his work with post-graduate students, while still maintaining his active link with the International Theatre Institute in Paris, the International Federation for Theatre Research, Helsinki and the African Theatre Association in England.