

Introduction

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Dapo Adelugba retired as professor of theatre at the University of Ibadan in 2004 after forty years on the staff of the Department of Theatre Arts, a few years before his 70th birthday. This issue of *African Performance Review* (APR) is devoted to writings dedicated to the professor.

The essays mainly focus on the work of Adelugba at Ibadan or related scholarship such as the work of Wole Soyinka, the 1986 Literature Nobel laureate, who was Adelugba's research emphasis, and the subject of postcolonial performances. There are also interviews that introduce us to Professor Adelugba's contributions to theatre development in Nigeria, and the theory and practice of contemporary Nigerian drama and theatre in general, including aspects of performance studies. In addition, there are tributes from colleagues of the professor such as Martin Banham, Gareth Griffiths, Biodun Jeyifo and Duro Oni.

While the tributes and interviews are all about Adelugba, as expected, the essays are more diversified, covering postcolonial performances, audience responses to theatrical engagements, and the position of Adelugba in the development of Nigerian theatre. Chukwuma Okoye uses the cultural and socio-political perspectives of the performances of two Nigerian troupes to re-define postcolonial African theatre. Postcolonial perspectives, he argues, should be distilled from the performances of contemporary African theatre, as they reflect the legacies of European imperialism and colonialism, and the people's responses to the various heritages that inform or influence their performances. Chris Dunton suggests, in his contribution, a re-direction in critical appreciation of theatre in African studies. The route from research to practice should not be a linear one and practice itself should not be an exclusive exercise appraisal, but should be inspired by the example of Dapo Adelugba's work on *Kiriji* and *Langbodo*; the collaboration between the researcher and

the practitioner should be one in which they are mutually and symbiotically dependent on each other. He further asserts that rather than writing about productions, theatre practitioners ought to pursue Adelugba's format of producing plays in a research environment, fostering a critical space for postmodernist appreciation of those productions. Dunton states that 'research *leads* primarily to new understandings about practice' and a script can be a basis for creative responses as well as additional stimulus to weld practice and research together.

Yerima's focus is on Adelugba's work in instigating and defining an ideologically meaningful theatre practice that expresses its universality by being generally relevant to its immediate audience, whose experiences and cultures it articulates. Adelugba's teaching, writing and working habits, according to Yerima, have continued to engage with this practice ethos. While Yerima avers that Adelugba pursues an ideological theatre practice, Anyanwu sees Adelugba as an ideological symbol that embodies a concept of intellectual freedom and mentorship, transcending normal or accepted forms of collaboration among scholars, and empowering generations of Nigerian theatre scholars. Linking and comparing his capacity for generating academic and scholarly success to the industrial success that arose out of Bangladeshi Mohammad Yunus' rural development projects through micro-financing, Anyanwu suggests that Adelugba's paternalistic contributions to the Nigerian academy reflects positively on the younger generation of scholars.

Few surveys are commissioned or conducted on the reception of African plays among Western audiences, especially in the years following the severance of colonial umbilical cord between African countries and the colonial masters. This is what makes Bernth Lindfors paper important. In 1966, after a dramatic reading of Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Audience Research Department conducted a survey among audience who had listened to all or most of the broadcast. The respondents rated the play better than average among the programmes aired in the first half of 1966, as Lindfors states in his paper. Lindfors also provides some background information on the reception of African plays, playwrights and producers in the UK in the early 1960s, especially of the works of Wole Soyinka and Athol Fugard.

There are four interviews – three conducted with Adelugba and one with Wole Soyinka in which the latter expounded on the esteem and influence of Adelugba on his (Soyinka's) work and the Nigerian theatre. Dapo Adelugba is regarded as one of the foremost Nigerian theatre directors, with major nationally commissioned productions. He directed *Langbodo*, Nigeria's entry to the second Black and African Festival of Arts

and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977, for instance, and J. P. Clark-Bekederemo's *Ozidi* in 2000. While Adelugba has written extensively on his perspectives regarding some of the productions he has directed, he has rarely expressed his directorial positions or motivations. In the conversation with AbdulRasheed Adeoye, Adelugba expatiates on his directorial approach, his techniques, organisational attitude to productions, his post-production rites and his relationship to his performers.

While the papers in this edition provide an understanding of the scholarship of Adelugba, they further serve to shed more light on areas of Nigerian theatre, which are not often written about, such as play direction, and the development of new forms of popular performances.