

The Artist as Educator: the Oeuvre of Jean-Pierre Guingané

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Introduction

Jean-Pierre Guingané (1947-2011) was the doyen of theatre in Burkina Faso. During more than three decades he was undoubtedly the Burkinabè theatre practitioner who left his mark on the theatre of his country and on francophone Africa by his eclecticism and by his effort for the advent of a strong African theatre. Not only was he a reputed theatre scholar, professor at the University of Ouagadougou, but an internationally renowned and prolific playwright who excelled in different forms of theatre. He was himself an actor and he had his own theatre group, Le Théâtre de la Fraternité, which staged, among others, his own plays. He was vice-president of the International Theatre Institute (ITI) and, in 1996 he founded the Espace Culturel Gambidi, a cultural centre in Ouagadougou which is home to one of the few West African acting schools.

The following article will discuss the importance of theatre in francophone Burkina Faso with regard to the heritage Jean-Pierre Guingané has left behind. We will therefore focus on the following interrelated topics: the plays Jean-Pierre Guingané has written since the 1980s, the idea of theatre which went along with these plays and his creation of a specific form of theatre for development, *debate theatre*. His numerous plays also give a good insight into the issues which have preoccupied Burkinabè theatre for the last thirty years.

Literary Plays and Education

In an article published in 2003 on the situation of theatre in Burkina Faso, Guingané claimed that “the playwright wants himself to be an educator”

(Guingané, 2003: 1993). This remark made with respect to the playwrights of the 1970s and 1980s is certainly true for Guingané himself, as, for example, the prefaces to his plays show. If we look at his oeuvre, it consists of three different kinds of plays: political drama in an Aristotelian way, mimetic of reality, with occasional epic interludes like flashbacks; *théâtre débat* (debate theatre), a theatre which is set to engage the audience in discussion at the end of the play and which focuses on topical issues like good governance, female participation in politics, health; and *conte théâtralisé*, dramatized tales, plays which are structured according to traditional tales and in which the impact of the narrative frame is particularly strong.¹ The idea with debate theatre and dramatized tales was to go back to an African style of narrating and to perpetuate this tradition. In contrast to the traditional oral narrator, who tells his tale on his own, the tale is now being dramatized instead of told. Although it is possible to pinpoint these different kinds of plays, there are crossovers between them. Thus, for example, the narrator appears in different kinds of plays and with similar phrases: the announcement to tell a tale is followed by the audience reaction "it's a lie", "but tell it to us anyway" (Guingané, 1996b: 24f).

Guingané's intention to make the audience conscious of political and societal wrongs is visible in all his plays, be they Aristotelian drama or debate theatre. Thus, in *Le Fou, The Madman* (Guingané, 1986), a father becomes so desperate in trying to procure a place in primary school for his only son that he eventually shoots the director of the school and the friend who had promised to help him if properly bribed. The lack of state schools, the need for an education to get ahead and the issue of corruption are interwoven issues in the play. The play received the first prize at the "Semaine Nationale de la Culture" (SNC) in 1984, during Thomas Sankara's "Révolution Démocratique et Populaire". The young revolutionaries, who, at the end of the play, provide for the child's place in school, could be seen as such followers of the democratic revolution.²

Guingané's next play, *Le cri de l'espoir, The Cry of Hope* (1991), another laureate, now at the "Semaine Nationale de la Culture" in 1990, attacks totalitarian practices in so-called democratic countries. This is a constant theme in Guingané's plays and he puts stress on different issues. Here, he exposes the mass-mediatization of leadership which wants to turn radio and film into subservient tools of state propaganda. Thus, one of the characters, a World War II veteran, is even reminded of Nazi propaganda when he perceives that on the radio they don't speak anymore but shout. The independent filmmaker Zida gives in to his wife's request to demand financial aid for his film. This leads to the sexual harassment of his wife by the cabinet director and, eventually, to the harassment of Zida, who is

almost beaten to death. Zida's film, however, has meanwhile been realized with external funding. The ending is thoroughly grotesque: Zida receives the first prize at Venice film festival and the minister informs the cabinet director of this success just after Zida's near murder. The play highlights the pitfalls of corruption and the narrow-mindedness of functionaries who will rather follow their own petty interests than support the good of the state.

La Musaraigne (1992), *The Shrew* (Guingané, 1997), Guingané's next regular play, continues the exploration of the grotesque.³ Due to a contract with the devil in the guise of an old man, the emperor of the fictive country of Yakoungou maintains power. The devil's contribution to this power, however, is a giant, ill-smelling shrew, which has its place next to the emperor at receptions. All enemies of the emperor die a mysterious death: they turn into a shrew and then die. A conspiracy of the emperor's advisors is already on its way when the shrew suddenly disappears, taking along a magic ring which had secured the emperor's power. Suddenly the emperor turns towards his wife again, whom he hasn't seen in three years. When she becomes suspicious of this sudden display of affection, her servant tells her the story of the devil's contract. She then kills her husband with her own hands and lays open the conspiracy. Although her own death is part of the contract, she saves the country, appoints a reliable, upright person as head of the state and is eventually saved herself by her loving maid servant.

In contrast to the other two plays, Guingané includes the fantastic in this play. In his preface, he situates it in actual state practices. "We have an occult side in this play which we find in most African state powers. It makes their political acts get out of any kind of rational analysis" (Guingané, 1997: viii).⁴

The giant shrew emphasizes the theatricality of the work of art as well as of imperial politics. Masks worn by the mouse actor and by the audience at the ceremony in order to be protected against the shrew's odour and the exaggerated ceremony itself highlight the court ceremony as theatrical spectacle. In how far the display of power depends on performance is already stressed in the first tableau. Here, the foreign visitor receives elaborate instructions in how to dress and behave at court.

La Musaraigne creates a powerful image of a false, "smelly" acquisition of power. In trading his right to be with his wife for power, the emperor signs a topical devil's pact. Yet, as in several other plays by Guingané, woman eventually takes center stage and saves the country.

Guingané's crossovers between the individual genres of theatre are manifest in these early years of his career. *La Musaraigne* continues the exploration of the function of animal characters which he had started in

La Savane en Transe, The Savannah in Trance (Guingané, 1996a). The latter is a debate-theatre play which focuses on the trajectory of Watila, a young lion-human. His journey leads him through villages where power is abused and where war breaks out for no reason. Eventually, it is due to the white man's threat to attack his father's kingdom that he returns home. His next to last words are: "But there isn't a just or an unjust war. Every war is bad. That is what I want you to understand and to transmit to the generations to come" (Guingané, 1996a: 86).⁵

Guingané's early plays treat the topic of mal-governance, yet the plays around 1990 turn to the issue of war. While *La Savane en Transe*, with its human and animal characters, addresses a young audience, *Les lignes de la main*, [*The lines in our palms*] (Guingané, 1996b), is decidedly a play for adults. Brought about by the 1992 news of the beginning crisis in Rwanda (see Guingané, 1996b: ix f.), the play puts forward how two friendly peoples turn into mortal enemies, by outside intrusion as well as by greed and conceitedness.

Les Lignes de la Main is an interesting case in point for Guingané's formal experiments. It consists of a prologue, Zotar – "a strange character, at the same time narrator and agent" (Guingané, 1996b: xiii),⁶ a frame narrative and another intra-diegetic narrator, the grandfather, who tells the tale the audience then sees in tableau two and three. The frame, however, isn't entirely closed at the end. Zotar reappears and the radio broadcasts news from the war in the fictive land of Moutangou. We see several groups discuss the radio news, among them students, who pinpoint the motives of such wars: capitalist exploitation which rather causes war than pays for the natural resources it wants to acquire;⁷ the white "arsonist" who has brought the war about as well as the club of business men who only fear an UN-intervention. The groups gathered round the radio are scattered all over the audience and thus breach the divide between stage and audience. While the news still maintains the plot line, the reality referred to appears in the countries mentioned at the end of each sound bite: Salvador, Angola, Liberia. They are the civil war hotspots around 1990.

Zotar, the narrator, eventually closes the play on a hopeful note. Again it is woman on who hope rests: be it the female child character, Zaza or "the woman who consecrates her life to the education of war orphans" (Guingané, 1996b: 80). The play ends with the plea: "you, too, be a light of peace...", whereupon a candle is given to each spectator on their departure.⁸

Guingané maintains the parergonal structure of the play yet doesn't close the intra-diegetic village frame. This first tableau paints a scene of rather peaceful family conversation which is only slightly disturbed by

the fact that the father has lent money to a friend and is not certain to get his money back. The grandfather, carrier of the ancestors' wisdom and stories, tells two tales. One is the tale of the time when all human beings were gods, the other the tale of Moutangou. He tells the tale of Moutangou to an adult audience, the other he specifically addresses at his young female grandchild, Safi. It provides the key to the following plot. In it he recounts how man's divinity is buried in himself. It is children like Safi who have access to this divinity and who are more than sensitive to today's troubles.⁹ In maintaining this sensitive child character in the person of Zaza in the meta-diegetic plot, Guingané emphasizes the role of woman in society. Here she is full of reason and love and thus crucial to the well-being of society.

The problem in this frame narrative remains unresolved. Unlike Bertolt Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1949), the tale doesn't resolve a problem in the intra-diegetic world of the play. Keeping the world of Moutangou twice removed – by Zotar and the grandfather – instead the play alerts the audience to today's hotspots which it nevertheless keeps at a distance. The intrusion of this belligerent world into the audience by way of radio voices thus vies with fictional distancing.

While *Le cri de l'espoir* and *La Musaraigne* realize their project of audience enlightenment by a straightforward three or four-tableaux structure and a plot on one fictional level, *La Savane en Transe* and *Les Lignes de la Main* use the narrative frame described. In an interview in 1990, Guingané explains why he had started to deploy narrators in his plays:

Since 1984, we have been taking another way, marked by researching a theatre inspired by our cultural traditions. Our research led us to conceive of our productions in the form of tales as they are being told in the villages. This made it necessary to do away with the divide between stage and audience and to work on the acting, since now the actor is seen from all sides and dresses and undresses in front of the public. (Guingané 1990: 78)¹⁰

Guingané's theatre aesthetics thus draws on traditional narrating style. By revitalizing structures which have been in the process of vanishing, the theatre wants to become a substitute for the moral education given by traditional tales:

It's a heavy responsibility given to us as artists: we have to fill the television screen and the radio waves with tales which are adapted to a new context, to the taste of the day. We have the duty to know how to talk to young people about this world into which they are thrown.¹¹ (Guingané, 1996b: ix)

Guingané's third form of theatre, the "conte théâtralisé", follows logically from this turn to tradition. Here, the importance of the narrator increases, sometimes to such an extent that no characters are necessary, sometimes in a mixture of lengthy frame and dramatized intra-diegetic tale, as in *Le Baobab Merveilleux, The Marvellous Baobab* (Guingané, 2007).

Guingané's intention to educate his audience can be seen in all of his plays. He devised one kind of play, however, with the idea of education specifically in mind: debate theatre. It became his form of theatre of social intervention. After having treated his literary plays, we will now take a look at Guingané's theatre for development.

Theatre as a Tool for Social Change: The Example of Debate Theatre

During the 1980s, theatre in Burkina Faso saw the advent of new dramatic forms. They were inspired by indigenous African practices as well as by Augusto Boal's theatre of the oppressed. Known as "theatre for social intervention" or "theatre for development", this kind of theatre contains the sub-genres, théâtre forum (forum theatre), "théâtre utile" (useful theatre) and "théâtre débat" (debate theatre). It is a theatre developed in order to respond to urgent social, political and economic questions.

Facing pressing issues of health, hygiene, education, preservation of the environment, peace and human rights, it seemed necessary to develop a theatre which answers to this situation. Theatre practitioners thus devised theatre-for-development. The result of this process was a new aesthetics of theatre. Its elements are: a poor theatre, a kit production, a tale which makes a strong impression, a production which can be adapted to the audience of the performance and the performance space and no barrier between stage and audience. Taken together, it is a theatre which works according to the following guidelines:

- a) a message which brings about a positive change in behaviour;
- b) performances which are anchored in African cultures and which answer to the needs and the taste of the population at whom the performance is directed;
- c) a scenography which is adapted to the necessary mobility of the performance and allows for the stage design to be mounted at every place and at all times.

The "théâtre-débat" is one of the most successful forms of theatre of social intervention. It was devised and realized by Jean-Pierre Guingané at the beginning of the 1980s. The history of debate theatre is

intermingled with the history of Le Théâtre de la Fraternité, the theatre company Jean-Pierre Guingané founded in 1975. One of its key aims was “to research forms of theatricality in traditional rituals and customs with regard to their use for a modern, authentically African theatre” (Théâtre de la Fraternité, 1975: n.p.).¹² In debate theatre this aim comes into its own. Guingané is correct in claiming that

the experience of so-called theatre for development or theatre for social intervention in Africa has not always come from Latin America, as one is likely to believe. In Burkina Faso, for example, it was the clerks of the ministry of agriculture who were part of a project of agricultural development on a national scale. About 1975, they forged theatre for development as a communication tool with the rural population in the wake of this project. (Guingané, 1999: 14)¹³

Debate theatre was born at the beginning of the 1980s. It has been inspired by three sources: the performance of the traditional “griot”, the experience of rural theatre as developed by the peasants in 1975 in Burkina Faso and the theatre of the oppressed.

The first debate-theatre play, entitled *Thérèse Baba*, was produced by the Théâtre de la Fraternité in 1983. It was performed in all towns with pre-school children. There followed another twenty plays, among them *Papa, oublie-moi* in 1989 (Guingané, 1990), *La Grossesse de Koudbi* (Guingané, 1996c) in 1991, *Sauvons Noglem* in 1992 or else *L'Intolérance Ravageuse*, the last play, created in 2010.¹⁴ These various plays were touring the towns and villages of Burkina Faso. A version of the theatre of social intervention play, *Trois soeurs dans la souffrance*, was successfully presented at the 2006 World Congress of the International Theatre Institute (ITI) at Manila (Philippines).

What is debate theatre?

Debate theatre aims at achieving a considerable change of behaviour in a specific social group with regards to a specific problem. This change is to be brought about in short or medium term. It is an interactive theatre which obliges the audience to take part in the performance by uttering their opinion. The artists are catalysers and the final decision is taken by the audience.

Debate-theatre plays aren't improvised; they are productions which start with a written text. The production deploys the following scheme: once a topic is proposed, the socio-cultural milieu is researched; the play text is then devised by a playwright and the play is staged. The

production is followed by thematic as well as aesthetic corrections with regard to the production partners and to the language and symbols deployed. It is then tried and tested on the public and possible addressees. After that, the production is put into definitive shape and performance tours are organized.

The plays are written in French, but in a French which is simple, clear and accessible enough to be understood by those who received their schooling in French. The language is simple, but not simplistic, and the clarity of style differs from the easiness of colloquial style. It's a language which avoids any pedantry as well as stylistic ambiguities in order to fulfil its true task of communication. Jean-Pierre Guingané knew how to balance language subtleties and the constraints of communication in the right way. Generally, debate-theatre plays which are put on stage are adaptations into the national languages of the public envisaged rather than literal translations.

This kind of theatre touches a heteroclitic public which consists above all of adolescents and women of all ages. This is due to the fact that these social groups are the hungriest for information, the most curious and the best equipped to integrate social change. These three groups are characterized as follows: 1) at the spectacles, women are the group most present; regularly, they occupy the first rows and they participate in the performance. They come from all social classes (peasants, traders, civil servants). They are the best support for the case in question; 2) People of old age, men or women, are generally placed in the rear rows. These men and women intervene in the debates in order to support the idea of change or in order to question change and to defend the traditions under attack. Heated debates follow in which the women intervene in order to defend the desired changes. Theatre thus offers them the possibility to confront the men and to express their points of view in public. They would not have defended their points of view under different circumstances. The young population is the most active and the busiest. Sometimes, in debate, they perceive the issues as the expression of an intergenerational conflict. They are peasants, civil servants, pupils or students who have come out of the same surroundings.

How is a debate theatre production realized?

A debate theatre performance always contains three parts (prologue, fable and epilogue) and is realized in five steps plus a prelude:

The prelude: calling and warming up

By music, the actors invite the audience to the playing ground and they make them put their daily work aside in order to participate in the performance. The play begins with a prologue which is a kind of exposition.

1st Step: the prologue: the introductory scene with Joé the artist

Every debate-theatre play begins with a realistic scene which takes place as in real life (a christening, a marriage, a market scene etc.) This scene is disturbed by a serious incident (an unexpected situation) which makes Joé the artist appear, an atypical character with the traits of the enlightened fool. To the actors he suggests playing a fable whose aim is to indicate possible solutions to the problem which has just arisen in the everyday scene. Joé the artist informs the actors that his story will be told in a debate-theatre way. He tells them the content of the story in brief outline and distributes the parts with some trouble. After some hesitation, they all accept and go behind the scene in order to return in costume.

After the prologue, the story proper begins. It is conceived as a flashback of something Joé the artist has lived through and which is now being enacted.

2nd Step: the fable

The actors pass from the realistic scene to the fable which will treat the subject evoked. The topic is being treated in such a way that it pushes the audience to the point where it feels concerned by the problem discussed. The fable is written with the intention to provoke, to incite the reaction of the public. The character traits are exaggerated in order to push the audience in the direction of critical questions and action. This nourishes the debate at the end of the fable. A debate-theatre play is just like the true play Antonin Artaud emphasizes, a play which

knocks over the senses' rest, frees the repressed unconscious, pushes towards a virtual revolution and one which, moreover, can only achieve its full potential if it remains virtual. It imposes on the assembled group an heroic and exigent attitude.

(Artaud, 1989: 40f)¹⁵

At the end of the fable, Joé the artist comes back to conclude his fable and to bring about the debate. This phase of debate is called the epilogue.

3rd Step: the epilogue

Without monopolizing speech, Joé comments on how these characters who carried key messages behaved. Then he starts a discussion. He reminds the audience that what they saw was the story of an experience undergone at another place. He asks the audience to tell him what this experience could teach him; how it could help him deal with the problems which he encounters here and now. In this way, he starts a discussion which either he will moderate or hand-over to another member of the group.

4th Step: the debates

Joé the artist or any other actor can lead the discussion. Its principle is to give over the right to speak to the audience after every intervention. The actors don't tell the audience how to behave. It is the task of the audience to discuss these problems in order to find solutions which are appropriate for the community. The artist animator only moderates the discussion.

The word is then passed on to a specialist, like e.g. experts for health, hygiene, education, and to local representatives like mayors, consultants, heads of associations. They then have to answer to certain specific key concerns which have arisen during the discussion. The session always closes by inviting the public to continue the exchange of ideas on the issues raised at home, at the market place, and at work, for the discussion cannot be exhausted in one single encounter.

5th Step: the repetition of one or several scenes of the play

One or several scenes of the play can be repeated in order to provide for a better understanding of the action. This repetition is taken over by the actors, who are entirely responsible for the performance. The performance is the result of professional work, not of improvisation. In debate theatre the entire performance rests with the actors and is preconceived in writing. Therefore, it differs fundamentally from forum theatre, which invites the audience to come on stage and to correct the characters' bad habits and attitudes through their own acting.

Joé the artist: an emblematic character in the debate-theatre plays by Guingané

Joé the artist is a character who can't be pigeon-holed, "a strange character on appearance, he is a bum or a kind of inoffensive fool" (Guingané,

1999: 16).¹⁶ His behaviour and his dress are atypical and he surprises the audience by the lucidity of his mind. He is the only character who doesn't get in the lure of false truths or prejudices which block the soul and confuse judgement. Joé the artist is like the fool at the royal court who enjoys complete freedom of speech and opinion. He is also the traditional "griot"-narrator who has full power to preserve collective memory. Finally, he is the mediator of the community, who apparently matters little but to whom in fact a lot of attention is paid. Joé the artist is a character who has travelled a lot. This is the secret of his never-ending experience.

Omnipresent in all debate-theatre plays, he is also in charge of speech. As author of the fable which constitutes the heart of the play he is the only character who communicates with the audience outside of the fable and stays himself. His a-temporal character is reassuring and turns him into an archetype and the emblematic character of debate theatre.

The Aesthetics of Debate Theatre

For Jean-Pierre Guingané,

there isn't any theatre which isn't related to development, or even more, which isn't made for development, if we consider that every form of theatre addresses itself to the intelligence of its audience and that, man, is the first motor of all development worthy of that name. (Guingané, 1999: 14)¹⁷

Therefore, his theatre includes drama as well as theatricalized tales. With debate theatre, however, Guingané decided to go beyond current theatre practices in order to develop a tool for change which is closer to the people. In this way, he quickly liberated himself from the constraints of theatre halls and occidental scenographies. Instead he proposed a dispositive theatre style which is more practical and more pragmatic. Its characteristic traits can be summarized as follows: the play text as the basis for creation, a play which is suited for adaptations into the national languages, performances which consist of flexible elements and a public which is sure to appear.

Debate theatre always begins with a written text. As the Beninese scholar Pierre Médéhouégnon writes, "the other manifest concern in the text and performances of debate theatre is [...] the will to anchor them in African performance traditions" (Médéhouégnon, 2010: 343). This is confirmed by Babou Eric Benon, who emphasizes that these plays are created "from local and indigenous theatre aesthetics, which serve a

popular and participatory theatre" (Benon, quoted after Médéhouégnon, 2010: 343).¹⁸

Debate theatre is a form of popular theatre which lives up to the popular theatre as described by Romain Rolland. For him, popular theatre needs to fulfil three conditions: it needs to be a form of recreation, a form of theatre which provides the worker, exhausted from his day's work, with a physical and moral rest. Therefore it needs to raise laughter, to create moral peace and to make way for dreams. It needs to be a source of energy which supports and exalts the soul; it needs to be light for intelligence: "it has to radiate light in the terrible brain of man which is full of shadows, full of folds, full of monsters" (Rolland, 1979: 175).¹⁹

Debate theatre fulfils these three conditions. The plays are conceived as satirical or humorous and they are taken on by professional actors. These actors play with determination and zeal and the issue discussed is directed at a positive change of attitude by way of a transformation of mentalities. Debate theatre possesses a methodology of its own, the play and its production are anchored in a specific socio-cultural milieu.

Debate theatre has managed to harmoniously blend symbols and other forms of aesthetic representations of African cultures with modern forms of theatre. It's a popular theatre, devised for and distributed among a large public. This popular character derives from the topics treated, the way they are treated, the aims of debate theatre, the adaptable language of the performance, the theatre techniques, and the accessibility of performance locations. Debate theatre also includes laughter. Laughter is used in order to make the message pass; in such a way as traditional African societies use satire; it allows them to treat all kinds of issues without putting off minds and customs.

All debate-theatre plays have their structure in common. They are created from modules, the words and expressions are adapted to the situation, psychology and social roles determine the characters. They want to make the spectators interrogate their situation and raise their critical awareness.

Debate theatre is "art put at the service of social and economic development. It cannot and must not be an instrument of propaganda, emptied out of any aesthetic concern, because it is by its capacity to excite dreams and hope that theatre nourishes and raises man" (Guingané, 1992: n.p.).²⁰ Therefore, the need for quality is Guingané's credo, as much with regard to aesthetics as with regard to the truthfulness of the information transmitted. Yet, it is just theatre-for-development plays which run certain risks. Generally, they are ordered by developmental organizations. They want the theatre groups to raise consciousness on specific questions which can be related to social, political, economic or cultural issues. This

status of creation on demand has sometimes led to questioning the aesthetics of these works. But for the promoters of this art, theatre of social intervention must not be a kind of lesser theatre and the artistic quality has to be a permanent exigency in the process of creation. It is artistic quality which helps to bring forth the message (Guingané, 1999). Debate theatre is an art for use which avoids distorting theatre aesthetics. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to underline the fact that this kind of theatre runs the risk of distortion. It is thus important to avoid certain pitfalls which could put its efficacy at risk. The first is to attribute to theatre a role which is not its own. For example, to believe that theatre is a magic solution to a society's problems. As writes Pierre Voltz: "art as 'miracle' isn't a reality. Its simple existence or the simple contact with it doesn't necessarily bring about positive effects. To believe in it means to make oneself guilty of 'charlatanism.'" (Voltz, 1991: 93)²¹ The second danger is to fall into the pit of easiness by believing that it suffices to mount a production and to raise a debate at the end of the performance to create a debate-theatre play. On this matter, Jean-Pierre Guingané, who was fully aware of this type of risk, recalled that

there is only one danger which, [to] our opinion, is lurking in theatre for social intervention. It's the only kind of theatre which easily receives funding because it doesn't pass through state institutions. Some audiences in the villages don't demand a high quality product. We have to fear that companies which are artistically weak are being elected for campaigns which are then badly prepared and which are reduced to a didacticism without artistic value. This would be a serious misdevelopment, for the African theatre as well as for the public." (Guingané, 1999: 17)²²

Conclusion

As can be seen from his writings, for Jean-Pierre Guingané, education meant aesthetic education. The artist as educator raised the aesthetic sensibility of his audience as well as his or her social and political awareness. Evidently, Guingané was astutely conscious of the fact that different forms of theatre can be used for different purposes and with different audiences. While the topics may have changed over the course of 30 years – new issues like AIDS, decentralization, an altered understanding of woman's role in society came about, for example – Guingané pursued his aesthetic quest, which brings together occidental drama and African performance traditions, unflinchingly.

Notes

- 1 On “conte théâtralisé” see Médéhouégnon 2010: 221f.
- 2 Sid-Lamine Salouka sees *Le Fou* as the realization of the transitory moment in Burkinabè history, when the Third Republic was replaced by Thomas Sankara’s “Révolution Démocratique et Populaire” (Salouka, 2011). Salouka thus emphasizes just this transition rather than the exact political order of regimes which followed between 1980 and 1983 in the aftermath of the end of the Third Republic.
- 3 This play also won the first prize at the SNC in 1992.
- 4 “Nous y avons ce côté occulte de la plupart des pouvoirs politiques africains qui fait que leurs actes échappent à toute analyse rationnelle.” (Guingané, 1997: viii).
- 5 “Mais il n’existe pas de guerre juste et de guerre injuste. Vous venez d’en faire l’expérience. Toute guerre est mauvaise. C’est ce que je vous demande de comprendre et de transmettre aux générations futures.” (Guingané, 1996a: 86).
Even though *La savane en transe* carries the subtitle “pièce de théâtre-débat en trois tableaux”, it works differently from the debate-theatre plays the second part of this article describes. This might be due to the intended audience of young people. On *La savane en transe* see also Médéhouégnon 2010.
- 6 “personnage étrange à la fois conteur et acteur” (Guingané, 1996b: xiii).
- 7 On this issue also see Aimé Césaire, *Une saison au Congo* (1966), which discusses the murder of Patrice Lumumba with respect to the capitalist and neo-colonialist strategy to retain the province of Katanga, Democratic Republic of Congo.
- 8 The two quotes are: “cette femme qui consacre sa vie à l’éducation des orphelins de guerre ...”; “Vous aussi, soyez lumière de paix...” (Guingané, 1996b: 80).
- 9 “vous savez, une enfant d’une aussi grande sensibilité ne peut qu’être perturbée par tous ces problèmes que nous vivons aujourd’hui.” (Guingané, 1996b: 28).

- ¹⁰ "Depuis 1984, nous avons pris une autre option, marquée par la recherche d'un théâtre inspiré de nos traditions culturelles. Notre recherche nous a conduit à penser nos spectacles sous forme de contes tels qu'ils sont racontés dans nos villages. Cela nécessitait un travail sur l'éclatement de l'espace et sur le jeu du comédien qui est vu sous tous les angles et qui s'habille et se déshabille devant le public." (Benon, 1990: 78)
- ¹¹ "C'est là une grosse responsabilité qui est laissée aux artistes que nous sommes: nous devons remplir l'écran de la télévision et les ondes de la radio de contes nouveaux adaptés au nouveau contexte, au goût du jour. Nous avons le devoir de savoir parler aux jeunes, du monde dans lequel ils se trouvent plongés." (Guingané, 1996b: ix).
- ¹² "rechercher les formes de théâtralités dans les rites et coutumes traditionnels en vue de leur exploitation pour un théâtre moderne, authentiquement africain" (Théâtre de la Fraternité, 1975: n.p.)
- ¹³ "L'expérience du théâtre dit de développement ou d'intervention sociale, en Afrique, n'est pas toujours venue de l'Amérique latine comme on a souvent tendance à le croire...Au Burkina Faso, par exemple, ce sont des agents du Ministère de l'Agriculture, impliqués dans un projet de développement agro-économique d'envergure nationale qui, vers 1975, se sont forgés cet outil de communication avec les populations paysannes." (Guingané, 1999: 14).
- ¹⁴ Plays without bibliographical information are unpublished manuscripts.
- ¹⁵ "bouscule le repos des sens, libère l'inconscient comprimé, pousse à une sorte de révolte virtuelle et qui d'ailleurs ne peut avoir tout son prix que si elle demeure virtuelle, impose aux collectivités rassemblées une attitude héroïque et difficile." (Artaud, 1989: 40)
- ¹⁶ "un personnage étrange, à l'apparence, il est un clochard ou une sorte de fou inoffensif" (Guingané, 1999: 16).
- ¹⁷ "il n'existe pas de théâtre qui n'ait pas de rapport avec le développement, pour ne pas dire qui ne soit pas pour le développement si l'on considère que toute forme de théâtre s'adresse prioritairement à l'intelligence de son public et que l'homme est le premier moteur de tout développement digne de ce nom" (Guingané, 1999: 14).
- ¹⁸ The two quotations are: "l'autre souci manifeste dans les textes et les spectacles de théâtre-débats, est...la volonté d'ancrage dans les traditions africaines

du spectacle" (Médéhouégnon, 2010 : 343); "à partir des esthétiques théâtrales locales, endogènes pour les mettre au service d'un théâtre populaire, participatif" (Benon, quoted after Médéhouégnon, 2010: 343).

- ¹⁹ "il doit contribuer à répandre le jour dans le terrible cerveau humain plein d'ombres, plein de replis, plein de monstres". (Rolland, 1979: 175)
- ²⁰ "l'art mis au service du développement social et économique. Il ne peut et ne doit pas être un instrument de propagande dépouillé de toute préoccupation esthétique car c'est par sa capacité à susciter le rêve et l'espoir que le théâtre nourrit et grandit l'homme". (Guingané, 1992: n.p)
- ²¹ "l'art comme 'miracle' n'est pas une réalité. Sa simple existence ou son simple contact ne produit pas forcément des effets positifs. Y croire, c'est faire preuve de 'charlatanisme'". (Voltz, 1991: 93)
- ²² "un seul danger guette le théâtre d'intervention sociale à notre avis. C'est la seule forme de théâtre qui obtient aisément les financements puisqu'il ne passe pas par les institutions étatiques. Certains publics de brousse se montrent peu exigeants pour la qualité des prestations. Il est à craindre que des groupes artistiquement faibles se fassent élire pour des campagnes mal préparées qui se réduiraient à un didactisme qui n'aurait rien d'artistique. Ce serait grave et pour le théâtre africain et pour le public." (Guingané, 1999: 17)

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