

Editorial Introduction

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This volume of the *African Performance Review* is a unique one, and this is because of two reasons. The first is because the volume signifies an administrative and publishing readjustment with regards to our numbering. Thus, although last number was Vol. 7 Number 2 (2013), the present volume is Vol. 8 Number 1 (2016). The numbering means that subscribers have not lost any issue as continuity has been maintained; the change only brings us up to date in our timeline.

More significant though is that the papers in this issue complement the theme of the AfTA 2016 conference at the University of Abuja, "Paradigm Shifts in African Theatre and Performance", and mostly focus on African performance pedagogy, performance processes as well as performers and audiences, places of performance in Africa and the African diaspora. *African Performance Review*, as the journal of the African Theatre Association (AfTA), is dedicated to publishing, disseminating and encouraging high quality research and information on theatres and performance in Africa and the African Diaspora. Since its inception in 2006 and maiden edition in 2007, the journal has been fulfilling this role, looking at performances and developments in theatre practice and scholarship in Africa and the diaspora, but this is the first edition that will contextually look at Francophone West African stage productions and the challenges they face. Thus, in "Contemporary West African Monodrama and its Stage Productions: A Challenge", Annette Bühler-Dietrich of the *Université de Ouagadougou* examines some current mono-dramatic aesthetic experiments in performances from Burkina Faso, the landlocked West African country. Bühler-Dietrich discusses the tendencies of monodramas to be

confessional or reflective, more than is possible or realised in traditional drama formats. She uses the work of the Ivorian playwright, Koffi Kwahulé, and Burkinabè playwright, Aristide Tarnagda, to analyse the performance and reception of these productions.

The next essay in this volume – “The Research, Development and Production History of *The Robben Island Shakespeare*” – is a report (and a commentary) by Matthew Hahn on a two-week interactive theatre workshop held with students from the South West Gauteng College, Soweto, South Africa, to examine ethical leadership based on the annotations by South African leaders in a copy of William Shakespeare’s *Complete Works*. The leaders were prisoners in Robben Island between 1963 and 1990, and most of them chose a scene or speech in Shakespeare’s plays to express their ideological or philosophical stance during the period of Apartheid. The workshop concluded with a performance of the monologues. Hahn’s essay examines and reflects on the annotations as meta-commentary on the current socio-political situation in South Africa.

Samuel Kasule in “Re-imagining Bertolt Brecht, Redefining British Theatre: Oladipo Agboluaje’s *Mother Courage*” examines how Oladipo Agboluaje’s post-colonial reworking of *Mother Courage* inherits Brechtian characters and themes, in spite of being located within the West African cultural and geographical context. In the 2004 text, Agboluaje interrogates the concerns and influences of the conflict, corruption, ethnic violence, migration, and the politics of establishing and running non-governmental organisations in war-torn Liberia and Sierra Leone. In “Legislative Gossip as Theatre: Odeli and Abule of Ibaji of East-central Nigeria”, Ameh Akoh discusses the concept of legislative gossip in masquerade performances as a ritualistic mode of societal cleansing among the Ibaji people of the Nigerian middle-belt region. Locating the study within contemporary performative theories and finding support for the practice in other masquerade performances, Akoh concludes that the masquerade culture as theatre among the Ibaji people is a form of cultural expression and communal action.

The coda to the volume is a review of the book, *African Theatre: 13* (November 2014) guest-edited by Kimani Njogu and which focuses on Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and Wole Soyinka.