
The Director's craft in the Nigerian Educational Theatre: A Study of Henry Leopold Bell-Gam's Directorial Approach

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ABSTRACT: Directing involves the art and craft of coordinating the artistic and non-artistic personnel in a production in order to creatively and effectively communicate to the audience the intended meaning of a play. Dramatists, actors, and theatre managers have all attempted to direct or manage the process of coordinating play production over the years, but it wasn't until 1874 that the Duke of Saxe Meiningen entered the picture and assumed official responsibility as a director in guiding the affairs of the stage business as we now know it. In this study, the directing style of South South Nigerian educational theater director Henry Leopold Bell-Gam is evaluated. Henry Leopold Bell-Gam directed plays on stage (land) and in the water, according to the study, which used the qualitative research methodology with a focus on the literary/analytical, historical, and sociological methods. The Laissez-Faire method is used by Henry Leopold Bell-Gam to direct his plays. He employs the laissez-faire method, which allows the actors to be at ease so that their greatest work may shine in a production. The study found that in the course of employing or performing his directorial responsibilities, he runs into a number of difficulties, including insecurity in the aquatic environment and scheduling conflicts. The study makes several recommendations, including the need for more research in the field of directing with regard to educational theatre directors in Nigerian universities, the need for scholars to consider Henry Leopold Bell-Gam's works as viable ones that will inspire further scholarly investigation, and the need for the government to encourage, support, and fund aquatic productions as a means of socio-cultural integration, tourism attraction, and economic boost, particularly for people.

KEYWORDS: Directing, theatre, educational theatre, aquatic, laissez-faire

INTRODUCTION

Every worthwhile project that is conducted by an individual or group of individuals for the benefit of a community or society needs to be well planned out in order to guarantee the best possible outcome. In addition to its capacity for amusement, creativity, knowledge, instruction, and education, theatre as an art form is also a collaborative art that necessitates planning in order to accomplish its goals. As a collaborative art form, it is expected that the director and various actors will collaborate to reach a fair

conclusion that will please the audience. Indicators that the theatre industry is not a one-man show include the playwright's conception of the story as it appears in the script or as an improvised idea, and the director's interpretation of it while working with other theatre personnel, including the actors, set designers, makeup and costume designers, sound and lighting designers, and others. By collaborating with other staff members to realize his or her creative vision, the director is responsible for balancing the various facets of the play production. The director must be able to clearly articulate their artistic vision and style to the group they are in charge of, ensure that everyone contributes to the maximum extent possible given their abilities and resources, be shrewd in how they assign tasks, have the ability to negotiate and compensate, and comprehend the importance of communicating with the group on a regular basis (Foster, 2003, p.79-80). When it comes to the play production process, the director does not operate in a vacuum. A director is more than just the boss who plays chess by moving the pawns around. Every component of the theater's raw creative energy must be refined and channeled by the director in order to be transformed into a meaningful art form. Utmost people participating in the project are brought together by the director, who motivates them to give their all in order to produce an exciting work of art (Davey, 2019, p.1).

The director is the individual who works most closely with the actors in staging a performance since they not only direct the actors but also plan all of the creative elements. The director has the primary responsibility for a production's overall tone, pacing, and aesthetic appeal. The director must have a strong sense of organization and aesthetic sensibility throughout the entire process (Wilson and Goldfarb, 2002, p. 60). In order to meaningfully offer his or her creative thoughts and input to the audience while carrying out his or her artistic duties in packaging a performance, the director interacts with other theatre collaborators. Brockett and Ball (2004) agree that a theatre director cannot realize his or her artistic vision on their own. They also point out that, while directors are ultimately responsible for the artistic aspects of productions, they rely on playwrights and producers to get the necessary funding. Utilizing the resources (money, space, and staff) that the producer provides, the director collaborates with the actors, designers, and other creative personnel to turn the playwright's script into a tangible stage reality (Brockett and Ball, 2004, p.315). As a creative artist, a director can also rely on improvisation of ideas that can be developed and packaged for the audience's delight in the absence of a script from the playwright.

RESEARCH METHOD

The literary/analytical, historical, and sociological research methodologies will be highlighted in this study, which will use the qualitative method of inquiry. While descriptive research initially describes the features of a population or event, qualitative research then probes deeper to determine why the characteristics exist and what impact they have (Sam Ukala, 2016, p.9). In order to delve deeper into a topic and identify trends in attitudes and beliefs, qualitative research is also done (Susan E. Defranzo, 2020, p. 1). Through the use of statistical, mathematical, or numerical data, or computational methods, quantitative research examines social processes (Sam Ukala, 2016, p.10). Textbooks, periodicals, published and unpublished works on the subject of the theatrical director, directing, and directorial approach were all cited in the course of this study. The researcher also spoke with the director who was the subject of the investigation.

Theoretical Framework

Some directors have made attempts over the years to develop or define theories, methodologies, or approaches to directing their plays. This has been the case since the time of George II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen (1826–1914), who opened the way for the professional theatre director. Chris Nwamuo (1985) notes that contemporary playwrights often consider Gordon Craig's theory, the laissez-faire theory, and the via-media theory as the three main directing theories (p.168). The Laissez-Faire theory, which Henry Leopold Bell-Gam used to guide his plays, will serve as the theoretical foundation of this study. According to the laissez-faire approach, the director "should not exploit his cast as outlets for his own thwarted impulses as an actor or need to be significant."

According to the Laissez-faire idea, the director's primary responsibility is to facilitate the actor's expression by simply identifying him and putting him at ease during rehearsal (Nwamuo, as cited in Ejeke, 2012 p. 5). The director of the educational theater must also be a teacher in addition to being an artistic creator. This entails, to the greatest extent feasible, explaining to the actors the reasoning behind the directives he gives them in order for them to learn and develop in addition to producing a specific performance (Sievers, as cited in Ejeke, 2012, p. 5). This entails, to the greatest extent feasible, explaining to the actors the reasoning behind the directives he gives them in order for them to learn and develop in addition to producing a specific performance (Sievers, as cited in Ejeke, 2012, p. 5).

LITERATURE REVIEW**Directing: A Concise Discussion**

The term "directing" refers to a vast phenomenon that encompasses music, film, theater, radio, and other kinds of art, leading to a variety of definitions. When it comes to theater, directing essentially has to do with the art and craft of putting together the contributions of the many creative and non-artistic personnel in a theatrical production for the audience's delight. To put it as succinctly as possible, theatre directing is the skill of balancing the contributions of the numerous artistic personnels in a theatrical production. The various artistic contributions can be seen in the following areas: playwriting, acting, set design and construction, lighting, costume design, make-up, stage props, and sound effects. It is entirely up to the director to decide what to accept or reject from these theater professionals in order to make the playwright's work understandable (Oga, 2007, p. 88). According to Johnson (2003), directing is a mentally tasking, creative theatrical stage activity that entails overseeing artists and creative tools in order to purposefully shape a perceived vision into its most beautiful form (p. 57). It is obvious from the foregoing that the process of staging a play requires a team effort, with the director directing the production. According to Babalola (2017), a large number of academics, including Dean and Carra (1980), Umukoro (2002), Brockett and Ball (2004), Felner and Orenstein (2006), and Felner (2013), view directing as the art of coordinating all the activities that ultimately lead to the production of a play and a director as the superhuman who offers a unified artistic interpretation of a specific play for a specific audience (p. 440). A director's ability to creatively and interpretively combine the efforts of the various theatre collaborators in a production to create a unified aesthetic experience, which is a scintillating play interpretation on stage

in front of an audience in a specific location and time, is a requirement for the profession of directing (Mark and Emasealu, 2018, p. 6).

In Ancient Greece, the cradle of European drama, the writer was largely in charge of the play's staging. In those days, actors were typically semi-professionals, and Aeschylus himself performed in his plays, educated the chorus, wrote the music and the dances, and oversaw every aspect of the performance. The significance of the playwright-director is denoted by the label *didaskalos*, which is Greek for "teacher," as he was the instructor of actors via the production process and audiences through the use of the finished performance (Kansese, 2012, p. 73). It is safe to assume that someone has been in charge of the general rehearsal process for every play that has ever reached the stage ever since Aeschylus oversaw the staging of his tragedies at the Athenian festivals (Braun, 1982, p. 7). In the history of theatre, the position of director is a comparatively recent development. Theatrical companies were run by actor/managers who would play the principal roles and would arrange the other players around the stage in such a way as to not take focus until the 19th century (Hurwitz, 2018, p.2). Johnson (2003) notes that plays have always been "steered" toward their trajectory from the very beginning of theatre in Ancient Greece, which supports the perspectives of Kansese, Braun, Hurwitz, Brockett, and Hildy. This suggests that the play has always required some sort of "directing" in order to achieve its purpose and be judged to have been performed effectively. The course of the play was "guarded" by prominent actors, theatre directors, and even playwrights, according to historical records (Johnson, 2003, p.53).

Actors and playwrights have existed for a very long period. The invention of stage directors is recent. Only in the last part of the nineteenth century did the stage director achieve recognition as a standalone theatre artist. Although theatre continued to thrive without a director, performances lacked the cohesiveness that modern audiences have come to expect. The ancient Greeks set the historical examples that eventually resulted in the development of the modern director. Greek classical period playwrights oversaw the staging of the plays. The writers staged the chorus, teaching them movement and directing their speaking and singing, as well as reading the plays to the actors and possibly explaining challenging portions. Aeschylus was well known for having his plays produced. Roman authors like Plautus and Terrence were among those to continue the producing heritage (Patterson, 2022, p.237-238).

The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen entered the scene and brought illumination to the art of Directing as we know it today. Attempts were made to coordinate people (both artistic and non-artistic) for the purpose of play production in all theatre epochs, from the Greek, Roman, Medieval, and Renaissance eras. However, the person in charge of piloting the affairs of the stage business has never been addressed officially as the director. Some claim that the position of theatre director did not exist until George II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, resolved to provide his court theatre in Germany the best possible productions in 1874. To produce a seamless whole, he oversaw every component, paid close attention to the little things, and made an effort to be historically accurate.

Wilson and Goldfarb (2002, p.60).

The famous George II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen (1826–1914), affectionately known as "the theatre Duke," is credited with pioneering the profession of theatre direction, according to T. Cole and H.K.

Chinoy (22–23); O. G. Brockett (474–6); and V. M. Roberts (344–5). Since T. Cole and H. K. Chinoy 'brought this unknown troop to Berlin to exhibit the unusual capabilities of a director's theatre,' according to the Duke, on May 1, 1874, this day has acquired historical significance (22). The Duke's Meiningen players, according to O. G. Brockett, "attained pictorial illusionism which excelled all previous standards because of its unprecedented authenticity." T. Cole and H. K. Chinoy have outlined the various factors that contributed to the success of the company as "intensive rehearsals, disciplined integrated acting, and historically accurate sets and costumes" (T. Cole, H. K. Chinoy, O. G. Brockett and V. M. Roberts, as cited in Emasealu, 2010, p. 46 – 47). The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen's action heralded the advent of the professional theatre director. Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874–1940), Orson Wells (1915–1985), Peter Brook (1925–), Peter Hall (1930–2017), Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956), Ingmar Bergman (1918–2007), John Barton (1928–2018), Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), Augusto Boal (1931–2009), Roger Planchon (1931–2009), Jerzy Grotowski (1933–1999), Lev Dodin(1944–), Frank Castorf(1951–), Romeo Castellucci(1960–), Simon McBurney(1957–), Hubert Ogunde(1916–1990), Ola Rotimi(1938–2000), Dapo Adelugba(1939–2014), Femi Osofisan(1946–), Sam Ukala(1948–2021), Emmanuel Emasealu(1956–), Henry Leopold Bell-Gam(1950–), Effiong Johnson(1959–), Odiri Solomon Ejeke(1965–), Etop Akwang(1962–), among others have in one way or the other contributed to the art of theatre directing.

The Educational Theatre: A brief Comment

The theatre found in educational institutions is referred to as educational theatre. Any theater that is supported by a school qualifies (Langley, 1974, p. 161). However, some academics believe the idea goes farther than merely placing a theater in a school. As the name suggests, it is a method of influencing public opinion through the theatrical arts. The theatre has acted as a teacher to the population, imparting much social, educational, economic, and political behaviour across time. The scope of educational theatre is restricted mostly due to a lack of knowledge among the general public of the discipline's breadth, depth, and instructional potential. It is important to remember that educational theatre should be viewed as a tool for social integration rather than just a technique to teach pupils about theatre arts or other disciplines (2018; Ebohon, p. 420). Therefore, educational theater is defined as "any work of art, experience, demonstrated or performed either on stage or in classroom under the supervision of the teachers and through the assistance of students and actions, it conveys a message to an audience for the purpose of education, entertainment, and information,"(Fowowe and Adeleke as cited in Ebohon, 2018, p. 420). The history of educational theatre may be traced back to the Renaissance, when academies were established for various fields of research and human training. You may think of the Renaissance as intellectuals' endeavour to research and advance the materialistic and secular. Since drama and theater were among the antiques resurrected at this time, educational theatre may be considered to have its origins in this era through both the resurrection of ancient concepts and new ways of thinking (Olufemi, 2016, p. 4).

Educational theatre is a creative process that attempts to maximize each person's potential, including their creativity, and to increase their awareness of the community and culture they live in (Ebohon, 2018, p. 422). The educational theatre is in charge of discovering and developing the abilities that will one day lead to careers as professionals. This is due to the fact that the current professionals were once amateurs or students learning the ins and outs of theatre. The purpose of educational theatre is to educate, entertain, and inform those who work in academic settings. Universities, institutions of education, polytechnics, and

secondary schools all provide educational theatre. Although educational theatre has many diverse functions, one of its main goals is to impart knowledge.

The roots of educational or literary play in Nigeria may be linked to individuals like Ogunde, Ogunmola, etc., as well as writers like Henshaw, Soyinka, and other colleagues who can be regarded as products of the University College, Ibadan, Drama Department. The University of Ibadan is where university theatre originated since, in addition to being the first university in Nigeria, it also had the first theatre department, which is the foundation of university drama and what we have now at other institutions in Nigeria (Olufemi, 2018, p. 8).

Henry Leopold Bell-Gam: A Biographical Sketch

Henry Leopold Bell-Gam was born on September 8, 1950, in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area, Rivers State. He is a Nigerian theatre director, educator, dramatist, and consultant. He had his basic education at Saint George's School in Egwanga, Opobo from 1957 to 1963, and his intermediate education took place from 1963 to 1973 at Wilcox Comprehensive Secondary School in Aba, Regina Coeli College in Essene, and the Anglican Grammar School in Port Harcourt. He traveled abroad to study Theatre Arts as a result of his thirst for knowledge. He finished his French language preparatory studies at the Université de Paris in Vincennes, France, in 1974. He earned his Diploma in the Science and Technique of the Theatre between 1975 and 1977, as well as a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Master of Arts (M.A.), and PhD in Traditional Theatre Directing with a concentration on stage and aquatic performance. He worked as a Theatre technician when he was in France. In addition to the aforementioned, he received certificates from the University of Port Harcourt in Rivers State, Nigeria, in fundraising fundamentals and advanced digital appreciation. He worked as an Assistant Lecturer in the Theatre Arts Department at the University of Jos in Plateau State during his time serving in the NYSC. In 1980, he additionally provided Basic French (Part-Time) teaching at the Nigeria Institute of Administrative Studies in Jos. In 1981, he worked for a brief while as a cultural officer at the National Theatre in Iganmu, Lagos, under the Federal Department of Culture. In 1982, he began working as a Lecturer II at the University of Port Harcourt's Creative Arts Department. In 2005, Rivers State University's University of Port Harcourt hired Henry Leopold Bell-Gam as a professor of Theatre Arts (Directing). He has held a number of positions both inside and outside the University of Port Harcourt. He has authored several plays, local and international journal papers, as well as book chapters. He has participated in and directed more than forty (40) plays. Some of these include *Whispers of the gods* by St. Remy Asiegbu, *Agudu* by Tumbara Zubai, *Ube Republic* by Henry Bell-Gam, *Ughelli Cobra* by Chief Ideozu, *Our Wife Forever* by Julie Okoh, the International Tour of *Orukoro* Fertility Dance Drama at the world universities Games and Cultural Festival in Sheffield, England, and *Austerity* by Julie Okoh.

As a specialist in Theatre Directing for Aquatic performances, he has worked on a variety of Aquatic performances, including the Boat Regatta exhibition for the 1991 greeting of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, the heir to the British throne. He coordinated a Boat Regatta exhibition in honor of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, among others, in 2000 as part of a command performance for the greeting of President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and the then-Nigerian Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida, in Rivers State. He belongs to the Association of Nigerian Authors, the International Theatre Institute Paris/Nigeria,

the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists, the Arts Council of the African Association (ACAA) U.S.A., and other organizations.

Henry Leopold Bell-Gam's Laissez-Faire Approach

The method the director uses in his production is referred to as the directorial approach. Bell Gam (2007) distinguishes between presentational style and representational methods. As opposed to the other extreme of representation, which aims to create the appearance of reality, presentational is the idea and practice of theatre as an openly theatrical and fictitious presentation (Obuh as cited in Bell Gam, 2007, p. 86). Obuh's perspective is consistent with Frederick Durrenmatt's (1976) observation that modern theatre has two aspects: on the one hand, a museum, and on the other, a place of experimentation (Durrenmatt, as cited in Johnson, 2001, p. 121). The Laissez Faire method of directing, used by Henry Leopold Bell-Gam, will be examined throughout this study. With almost thirty years of experience as an educational theatre director in South South Nigeria, Henry Leopold Bell-Gam is a professor of theatre directing. When he thinks about the play he wants to direct, he often takes into account or has two main audiences in mind. The student audience is the first, and the audience beyond the university's setting or community is the second. Plays written for the students, in Bell Gam's opinion, represent both the department's ideology and the basic moral principles of the students. The social and political events and developments in society are used to amuse an audience outside the university community (Personal Statement, 2022, p.1).

Before he commits to directing a play in a production, the first thing he does is decide and select the plays for a specific audience by taking into account the cultural context of the play, the language of the characters, the funds and facilities that are available for the production, the number of characters, the play's thematic content, the length of the rehearsal process, the actors' availability, and a thorough analysis of the play. He proceeds to the second phase by seeking for finances after passing through the first phase by taking into consideration the aforementioned items/issues. Bell-Gam often does not begin planning for a production without creating a budget and making sure there is sufficient funding. This is true since he is a skilled fundraiser in addition to being a theatre director. Over the years, he has had great success as a director in the educational theatre by involving the Vice Chancellor in procuring or finding money from both inside and outside the University. He draws up the production budget, uses it to get the required money, and then holds a meeting of the production team, including the stage manager, business manager, technical director, etc. He then explains his purpose and gives them the screenplays, asking them to quickly submit their production budget and estimate (usually two weeks). The cast for the production is then chosen after moving on to advertisement and audition. After assembling the required ensemble, he starts a few days of play readings with the whole cast, including the production team. He starts stage rehearsals in the sixth stage, which last at least forty (40) days at three (3) hours every day.

Director Henry Leopold Bell-Gam is referred to as an "aquatic director" since he has directed plays both on land and in water. In addition to performing plays on the sea, he has also created methods for doing so. He views the sea itself as a canvas on which he may showcase his creative talent. He says the fleet, coastline, and floating stage are present on the water stage. When questioned about his directorial technique and if he uses the laissez-faire method, Bell-Gam says:

Before I start production, everybody must relax, everybody must think. We must sit down and analyze the play, know the given circumstances, the dialogue, the idea of the play, and all that. All that has to be taken into consideration before I start. And let me tell you, directing has no single method. Every director has his own style and I as a director I developed this system of relaxing my actors, making them partake in the experiment and by so doing I am able to appeal to the audience. The audience are relaxed, the audience infact hails my actors because I make them work and bring out the meaning of the play, the main idea of the play, the dramatic content of the play that is my own style of directing...Yes, a Laissez-Faire, I mentioned it to you, I allow my actors, Laissez-Faire is a French word. Allow them to do it, let them do it. You see I don't bully my actors as some directors do. I have seen a director that carried a bucket of water and poured on actors, I don't do that. I make sure my actors are relaxed all the time and they give me the best. That's my style. (Bell-Gam Interview, May, 2022).

In other words, Bell-Gam encourages his performers to use their imaginations when playing out their parts. By fostering a laid-back and supportive environment that brings out the best in his performers, he provides them the chance to realize their full potential. He teaches his actors the fundamentals of stage movement while giving them the chance to explore and absorb the characters they are portraying. In rehearsals and on performance night, the performers perform better when they are at ease because they are more focused, deliver their lines well, internalize and interpret their characters, and, most importantly, perform better overall. However, it can be challenging to maintain calm on stage, deliver lines well, and perform better when an actor is nervous. He supports the idea of using a double cast for a certain role because it forces or motivates the performers to be serious, pay attention, and put in extra effort. This is true because anything may happen when only one cast member is portraying a certain role, especially a key role. When an actor arrives late or decides not to perform, it can cause unneeded stress for the director since they feel like a celebrity or a god. This is especially true on the day of the performance. But each actor will sit up and be dedicated if there are other actors competing for a certain role. This is significant because at a theatre, the performance must go on, and when one actor is absent on the day of the performance, the total performance may suffer since there will be no one to fill in the gaps. As a director, he makes an effort to assist the actor in comprehending the parts they are portraying by acting out those roles for them on stage. When an actor does the erroneous blocking during a rehearsal, the director stops the actor, performs the blocking, and instructs the actor to repeat the action. The actor may perform at his or her best by doing this.

Bell-Gam uses what can be called a "group research pattern" to assist the cast and crew in comprehending and interpreting the play's content. After briefly dividing the entire cast and crew into small study groups, he conducts a "Question and Answer" session that encourages additional discussions of the play's nature and concept (Obomanu, 2006, p.44). During the question-and-answer period, the cast and crew get clarity about the play to assist them in realizing their roles and contributions to the show. He moves on to technical rehearsals when he is completely happy with the dress rehearsals to give the show its last polish and synchronize it before the performance. Every essential change is performed at this point in regards to every component of the process. On the performers, the costumes and makeup are tried, together with the music and sound, the set, the lighting, the props, and other elements to see how they work with the overall mood of the performance. Before he can comfortably sit in the theatre to watch the play, he inspects the

theatre auditorium and the box office to make sure all the performers are in good standing and punctual throughout production. At this point, he unwinds in the theater, and the stage manager, who plans the production's actions, takes over. He has a great compensation package for his cast and crew in his shows, in addition to enabling the performers to perform to the best of their abilities. He claims:

I don't use actors without paying them well. Before I produce any play, I will make sure I raise the funds. I will make sure I raise enough funds. For example I took the University of Port Harcourt Theatre Troupe to Sheffield singlehandedly; the University did not give me one kobo. I raised all the funds for flight tickets, hotel accommodation in London, in Sheffield and all that. So it's my style not all directors do that (Bell-Gam, Interview, May 2022).

As an aquatic director, he has directed various plays on water. He makes sure that his performers must be able to swim as a major criterion for being offered a role in his aquatic productions because the atmosphere for performance is on water. His productions, which are aquatic in character, are performed in the mornings from 7:00am to 10:00am since it is thought that the water is often calm at this time of day and anything outside of this can be unexpected. As a director, Bell-Gam fosters a warm environment for his performers to flourish and give their all in his shows by enabling them to unwind, reflect, and be inventive. For many years, he has used the laissez-faire method in his creations. He explains clearly that:

Infact, since 1978. I was assistant lecturer at University of Jos in 1978. You know when I started directing plays so it's been a long time. So, I have retired now, I am just trying to settle down as a retiree (Interview, May, 2022).

In order to portray the rich cultu

ral heritage of the riverine people, particularly of his ethnic nationality, the Opobo people of Rivers State, Bell-Gam uses song, dance, movements, spectacle, costumes, and other means of expression. This is because he has a deep understanding of cultural values.

Below are Extract of Henry Leopold Bell-Gam



1. Carnival Production, Rivers State, 1991



2. **Fertility Dances in Orukoro, 1991, Sheffield, England. Represented Africa in World Universities Sports and Cultural Festival**



3. **Professor Henry L. Bell-Gam in Performance with a Hig Priest “Oru” in his play Orukoro, 1993**



4. *Orukoro Fertility Dance Drama. Ph City, 1995*



5. Igbuduogu, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, River State, 1993



6. *No Sacrifice, no marriage, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, River State*

Challenges Encountered by Henry Leopold Bell-Gam

When performing his duties as a director of educational theatre, Henry Leopold Bell-Gam encounters a variety of difficulties. He has faced a variety of difficulties when performing in the water and on stage, such as being attacked by hoodlums on the water, which causes anxiety among the cast and crew. When a situation is tense, this can have an impact on how performers perform. As a director, Bell-Gam also had a boat crash into the sea during a performance, but he was able to control the situation with the help of a diver. As far as aquatic performances are concerned, the cast and crew's safety is crucial. Because of this, performing on the water is difficult and demanding. Due to his understanding of the underwater environment, he always moves with divers throughout his rehearsals and performances to ensure the safety of his cast and crew. In addition to making sure his actors and actresses do outstanding work, the director of a play also has the duty to watch out for their safety over the course of rehearsing and performing the play. He typically performs his plays in the mornings due to the requirements of aquatic performance. Because of the demanding performing environment and the high degree of technical requirements for directing, he does not employ lighting in his work as an aquatic director. He depends on natural sunlight as source of illumination for his aquatic performances. He has faced difficulties as a director when working on productions, including finding funding, assembling the necessary cast and crew, dealing with the performers during rehearsals, and having double casts for plays.

CONCLUSION

When Georg II, the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen entered the scene in 1874 to provide clarity to the art of directing as we know it today, the role of the person in charge of controlling the activities of the theatre business had never been addressed in writing. Henry Leopold Bell-Gam's directing style was used as a case study in this study to analyze the director's craft in the Nigerian Educational Theatre. The educational theatre, which was also emphasized in this study, is a theater that is located in a school with the intention of identifying and developing potential performers who will later go on to pursue careers in the performing arts. The research concentrated on Henry Leopold Bell-Gam, a director of educational theatre at South South Nigerian Universities who has employed the Laissez-Faire method to direct his plays throughout the years. Bell-Gam is skilled in both the land-based stage and the watery environment. He employs the Laissez-Faire method of directing, letting his performers unwind in order to bring out their best in performances. This is accomplished during rehearsals when he lets his performers interpret the parts for themselves and intervenes when necessary to ensure that they are acting in accordance with his vision. In addition to being a theatrical director, he also works as a fundraiser to make sure there are enough finances for his performances since he thinks it is important to provide his performers with excellent welfare benefits. Because he incorporates music, proverbs, dance, song, rituals, costumes, and other elements to depict his surroundings, particularly that of the riverine people of Opobo in Rivers State, his works capture the whole aesthetics of theatre.

Recommendations

Based on the research's findings, the researcher believes it appropriate to offer the following suggestions: the government should support the funding of theaters in Nigerian institutions that offer theatre arts/performing arts as a discipline in order to inspire students to pursue theatre directing; more research

in the field of aquatic theatre directing should be encouraged; and the government should support and fund aquatic theatre productions.

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