

# JOURNAL OF AFRICAN ARTS & CULTURE

## Editors

Professor Mary Dzansi-McPalm, PhD  
Professor C.W.K. Mireku, PhD  
Professor Eric Akrofi, PhD

Patrique deGraft-Yankson, PhD  
Ebenezer Acquah, PhD

<https://jaac-sca.org>

ISSN 2637-3610

Volume 2 Issue 1

September 01, 2018

## Modes and significance of casting in the Nigerian theatre: Bolanle Austin-Peters' 'Saro' and Felix Okolo's 'The Walking Stick' in perspective

<sup>1</sup> Emoruwa, Felix Damilola

<sup>2</sup> Morgan, Toyosi Abiola

Creative Arts Department  
University of Lagos

<sup>1</sup> emofad@yahoo.co.uk

<sup>2</sup> tejumadeabiola@yahoo.com

Citation: Damilola, E. F. & Abiola, M. T. (2018). Modes and significance of casting in the Nigerian theatre: Bolanle Austin-Peters' 'Saro' and Felix Okolo's 'The Walking Stick' in perspective. *Journal of African Arts & Culture*, 2(1), 65-80.

### Abstract



The concept of role-playing; auditions and the selection of artiste to play a part in a script is an exclusive decision making privilege reserved for a would-be producer, director, choreographer and or musicologist before a theatre production can be said to have taken place. However, poor or wrong casting has often been the bane of most highly speculated and perhaps well funded theatre productions in the past. In Nigeria for instance, this kind of artistic and managerial deficiency has often lead to decline in the patronage of the theatre. Unfortunately, there are little or no academic awareness in this direction. To bridge this gap therefore, this article takes a look

at the casting modes and parameters employed in two selected productions in Nigeria with a special interest in analyzing the effects and significances of the choices made to the overall aesthetic contexts of the productions. The study is therefore highly qualitative and analytical as well as qualitative in nature. The study highlights factors ranging from height, skin color, diction, level of education, gender, age, star-profile, professionalism, shape/bodily size, artiste fee, budget, performance venue, etc, as common determining indices for the selection of actors in most Nigerian play productions. It cautioned against director's personal desires and ambition as it reiterates that

**Keywords:** Theatre Casting, Stage Productions, Aesthetics, Artistic License, Theatre Management

## Introduction

---

A play production is normally a relayed fictional or actual occurrence that is artistically composed and aesthetically couched to communicate a thematic thrust in a recognizable plot structure that is done in the best possible mode that suits a targeted audience. Thus, there is a galaxy of careful planning and deliberate decision making moments vis-a-vis 'professional' compromises, sacrifices and evaluations throughout the gamut of pre-production, production and the post production phases of a would be performance in order to ensure or earn appreciable ratings and acceptance.

In all of these, right or wrong choices in casting is generally believed to be a major factor in testing the proficiency of a director as well as serving as a strong determinant in forecasting the fate of a production even before it is performed. Casting in the theatre has thus become a crucial aspect of the pre-performance phase which largely determines the success or otherwise of a would-be theatre production. Caldarone affirms that casting "is where you start and where you finish ...if you get the casting right, you've got the heart and soul of the production right" (cited in Catliff, 2013, p.6), while McClanaghan on the other hand stresses that casting consists of

"...a lot more than spending days, if not weeks, preparing and organizing the numerous types of skilled talent. It requires determining, sorting and maintaining the specific logistics for each of the role to be cast, scheduling and manning each actor with the necessary elements

required to prepare and to deliver their best. It demands securing the appropriate staff and location needed for a smooth audition, while professionally corralling an army of appropriate actors needed for each of the given roles. When done well, casting sets the production in motion and fleshes out the many ways the production can play out based on the sum of the parts" (Catliff, 2013, p.1).

## **Casting: A contextual enquiry**

---

Catliff and Granville (2013, p.1) opine that casting has been around for as long as there have been productions to cast, "whether or not the early producers picked from people they knew, or rang up a friend to see if they were free, the process of casting was underway. This is because while 'casting' is a noun which stands for the process, "cast" (verb) on the other hand defines what the process does/is about. Hence, from the Greeks to the Mystery plays to radio and the Lumiere Brothers, there was a decision about who was going to play what. And that is casting" Catliff (2013, p.4). The *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* (2010, p.219) defines casting as "the process of choosing actors for a play, film or movie". While Catliff and Granville (2013, p.1) sees it clearly as "a process of researching and searching to find the right actor for the plot". As Wilson also argues, casting is "obviously derived from the phrase "casting a mold", the word casting in the theatre thus means fitting performers into roles. Generally speaking therefore, this implies that directors attempt to put performers into the roles for which they are best suited insofar as their personalities and physical characteristics are concerned" Wilson (2008, p.130). Casting begins the moment a director or producer picks up a script to read for a production. The kind of actors s/he wants comes to play in his head based on the features of the characters. It is the first process of a long process before the night when the curtains open for a production. Hence, the definition of the word reveals its usage over time.

Though modes and approach or techniques may differ, casting simply entails the selection of the actors for a play production and by extension nonetheless, one of the contention in this article is that casting may even be extended to the process of choosing crew for a production. This foregrounds the methodology adopted by either the producer or an appointed artistic director in harvesting a team of production crew whose areas of expertise compliments one another technically, socially, psychologically and professionally to disagree in order to agree on basic principles that will see to the devising of an artistic product.

## **Casting and the theatre: A panoramic overview**

---

Evolutionarily, various periods in the theatre history has helped to document the place and modes of casting that are prevalent in different ways more so because the word was not in vogue than as it does now. For instance, during the Greek era, there was rigidity in the casting of the performers as there was restriction to certain age, sex and class requirements of the performers as at that time. The position of the first actor Thespis who was credited with the discovery of drama was that of a self-casting mode for a production, this time not by the playwright or director. After the first actor, the second actor was introduced by Aeschylus and the trend was consolidated by Sophocles and Euripides with the addition of third and more actors. Hence, the performers in the Greek theatre were subsequently divided into four categories: actors, chorus, supernumeraries, and musicians. According to (Brockett & Robert 2004, p. 62) "all were male". During this era also, the author or playwright performed the multifaceted role during the Greek period, from acting in their own plays, directing their plays, carrying the major financial burden of the play to casting the actors for the productions. They usually applied for their plays to be produced at the festival, while the committee made up of government officials were delegated to select the plays to be presented for the Festival of Dionysus. The first set of cast directors were usually the playwrights.

The Roman period witnessed a contract pact with the state of affairs that led to the creation of a kind of troupe or guild by professionals called "Artists of Dionysus". This guild cut across various members of the theatre profession, "among its members' poets (dramatic, epic, and lyric), actors, chorus members, musicians, and costumers-all personnel needed to produce plays and to give recitations at festivals" (Brockett & Robert, 2004, p.39). Hence during the Roman era, the actors were chosen or destined to the doom of acrobatic display and fate. It was the period when slaves were used for gladiatorial contests and fight in which the concept was reality and not realism. "The Romans seem to have taken delight in the game of life and death in which at least one member of each pair was doomed unless he won the crowd's favor" (Brockett & Robert, 2004, p.53).

During the medieval period, there was eradication of life actors who were replaced with puppets, which became the principal theatrical form in areas where performances were formerly seen in great classical, Hellenistic, and Greco-Roman theatre. "Shadow puppetry, imported from Persia or Turkey" (Brockett & Hildy, 2003, p.609) whereby casting of actors switched to casting of still characters with stylized features that will aid the dramatic displays to be showcased by the puppet masters, a save method of practicing at that time.

Over the centuries, different forms of casting have been adopted by directors, from type-casting, cross-gender casting, non-traditional casting, to interracial casting. It is however considerable to start with cross-gender casting, since its practice started since the Greek period when men played the role of women during performances. The rigidity of actors' selection extended to gender preferences during the Classical and Elizabethan era. According to Hornby (1989, p.2), "Playing the opposite sex is as old as theatre. Male actors played women in ancient Greece and Rome, in Elizabethan England, Mandarin China. Traditional Japanese theatre had all-male companies; even today, some Japanese still believe that only a man can embody ideal of pure femininity of the Onnagata role in kabuki".

Apprenticeship was another method of casting during the Elizabethan era. Brockett narrates that,

"Companies were further augmented by four to six boys apprenticed to well-established adult actors. Apprenticeship could last from three to twelve years. ...The apprentices lived with their masters, who trained, fed, and clothed them. The masters were paid by the company for the boys' services. Some of the apprentices went on to become adult actors, but many followed other professions upon reaching maturity" (2003, p.117).

Type-casting is another form of casting in the theatre, and according to Catliff and Granville (2013, p.1), hence, to cast an actor to type, means to cast them in a type of role that they are known for playing. Therefore, Wilson asserts that "when a performer closely resembles in real life the character to be enacted, this is known as type casting" (1991, p.130). Mora (2005, p.77) captures this more succinctly that, often, "Playwrights normally had a particular cast in mind as they wrote...". This view, in practical term is generating a subtle controversy among directors as either condition the mind to look for the stereotypical type cast or to be open minded to explore and discover newer possible means of playing the role.

Also, there is the non-traditional casting defined as the "casting of ethnic, female, or disabled actors in roles where race, ethnicity, gender or physical capability are not necessary to the characters' or play's development" (Deboo 2017, p.1). The abolition of traditional casting and the advocate for non-traditional casting also known as color-blind casting is yet another area of interest. There are four types of non-traditional casting including; Societal casting, which means ethnic and female actors are cast in roles they perform in society as a whole. Conceptual casting which is when an ethnic

actor is cast in a role to give the play greater resonance while the Cross-cultural casting is when the entire world of the play is translated to a different culture. All these modes are expected to be arrived at based on what Caird (2010, pp.128-136) calls the five reasons for casting an actor based essentially on craft and instinct;

1. the actor must be “right” for the part (a factor that is determined by age and physical appearance among other considerations).
2. the actor must be ready or willing to play the role.
3. the actor must be able to play the part, in terms of vocal, physical, intellectual, and emotional stability on her/his part.
4. s/he must be a good mix with others; and
5. s/he must be liked by the director/ choreographer or musicologist.

## **Casting: The Nigerian theatre experience**

---

Prior to the contemporary Nigerian theatre praxis, indigenous theatre traditions and traditional rituals and festivals of the people also emphasizes casting for the various role playing sessions and segmented functionaries that cumulates into the event proper. Casting in this form may take months, years and stages to complete with different layers of endorsements of age grade or family unit categories, elders, gods, king etc. In discussing the casting trends in Nigerian theatre therefore, it is essential to give a review of the Nigerian theatre itself.

Ogunbiyi (1981, p.3) clarifies that the fundamental root of the Nigerian theatre could be found in numerous religious rituals and festivals that exist in many Nigerian communities. He further declares that Nigeria theatre and drama originated with the Nigerian himself, embodying his first preoccupations, his first struggles, successes, setbacks and all, because drama arose out of fundamental human needs in the dawn of civilization and has continued to express those needs ever since. With the advent of the School of Dramatic Arts in the University of Ibadan coupled with the activities of the University of Ibadan Dramatic Society and the founding of the Mbari Centre in Ibadan between 1958-1965, the formal approach to theatre productions clowned from the classical western orientation was born and thus also was the casting requirements and modes befitting of it. The tradition was popularized by activities within and around the then built Glover Memorial Hall (1899) which was dedicated to Western concerts and entertainment (Oni 89), and the National theatre (1976), Pec Repertory Theatre Onikan and others as well as the spread of second and thereafter third generation Nigerian University which invariably has escalated into several state and private universities and higher institutions of learning for theatre and its related subjects overtime. The adopted

mode of casting for productions in all these mentioned remained relatively same.

Nonetheless, Ogunde's experience of theatre practice along with his contemporaries like Duro Ladipo, and Moses Olaiya reveals that due to socio-cultural and economic reasons a new approach to casting emerged leading to troupe formation (whether by marriage or by apprenticeship). The troupe mentality entails that you can only cast from amongst the members in your harem of artistes. The method of continuous casting in Ogunde theatre was biologically dependent as his children from his actress-wives were automatically introduced into the troupe to strengthen, increase and continue the lineage of the theatre party. Although casting continues to evolve after Ogunde, theatre companies usually send out a notice for an intending production through actors' agents, theatre friends and partners, newspapers and recently through social media platform. This mode favor the table casting approach but sometimes serves as a platform for people to secretly fight for roles during the course of rehearsals and thus challenging the former cast to an artistic duel.

The success of this mode at the Ogunde Dance troupe at Ososa was however a contrast to what obtains in Ogunde's adopted selection mode for recruiting artistes for the National Troupe of Nigeria when he had the chance. Travelling from state to state within the regions in Nigeria then, an open audition was publicly advertised stating the areas of need for all and sundry. The success of this approach was significantly evidenced in the rich harvest of artistic potentials in the casts that made the final list which in itself took months to conclude.

### **Felix Okolo's "The Walking Stick" and Bolanle Austen-Peter's "Saro": A peep into the casting approaches**

---

#### **A. The Walking Stick by Felix Okolo**

Felix Okolo's "The Walking Stick" is an experimental total theatre package with complex plot structure with a necessity for a unique casting approach based on the intentionally formatted multiple role playing technique ascribed to the seven man cast of the play. The characters are patterned after the seven notes in a musical tonic sofa; "Do" for Dowelegbo, "Re" for "Remi", "Mi" for "Millie", "Fa" for "Fatimo", "So" for "Sodesu", "La" for "Lateef", and "Ti" for "Tira". By all standards, it is a play whose sociology eclectically bothers on an inter-twining mirroring effect of incest, drug abuse and addiction, child neglect, sex hawking, bad governance, and senseless gambling in a country like Nigeria in specific terms. In full, the title is revealing of the core message of the play "Do not make drugs your walking stick". It was written as well as first directed by Felix Okolo under

the auspices of his Tempo Production Company. Subsequently, it has been directed by Felix Emoruwa in 1997 (as his undergraduate play project at the University of Ilorin) and later in 2015 (as convocation play production for the University of Lagos). This article shall discuss comparatively the performance of "the Walking Stick" as directed by Felix Emoruwa in 1996 and 2015 editions respectively on the one hand and then move on to examine that of Bolanle Austin-Peter's "Saro" on the other.

By virtue of the kind of play "the Walking Stick" is, criteria for casting was dynamic as getting an all-round artiste that is proficiently endowed in singing, acting, dance, pantomimic dramatizations with sufficient good health becomes expedient. For ease of reference, we shall refer to casting in the "Walking Stick" for 1997 as Case 1 while that of 2015 shall be Case 2 respectively. This is because the parameter and casting for both cases differ even though the same play was involved. We need to remember that in Case 1, the motivation for performance was for academic purposes as a final year special project. This implies that there were very strict rules to follow such as;

- a. the financial base for the group was limited as it was restricted to the amount contributed by the five member crew appointed for my group by the Department. With a contribution of N10,000.00 each, our capital budget was N50,000.00 only with some assistance from some quarters that were not financially based such as getting a set of "Badagry drums" from Ivory Ambassador in Lagos for the duration of the rehearsals and performance of the play, some costumes were also gotten from Akis and Ivory dance troupes etc.
- b. the group had a period of four weeks to rehearse and in each week, only three days which also must be for two hours per day (since rehearsal can only start after the day's lectures between 4pm-6pm, 6pm-8pm, 8pm-10pm per day). This is because there were other eight constituted groups that must also work on their own chosen plays for the same exam (the best that could be done outside this rehearsal schedule was pocket rehearsals),
- c. under the policy of "Train the Younger Ones", the final year students of the Department were exempted from being members of cast as they were all busy minding their own problems as crew members in their various assigned groups. This meant that the cast can only be from among 100 level students to 300 levels if from the department and from any other students outside the department or faculty.
- d. Construction of a functional casino, 3 or 4 different types of masquerades, 7 identical pieces of masks (known as dead/ family masks In the script), a bridge



like set unit that must dominate the entire up stage area under which the other smaller set units like the casino, bar, Fatimo's kiosk, and others, were all further challenges. Others were inadequate and non-permanent rehearsal spaces, inadequate drums and non-existence of the required set of drums in the department, insufficient lighting facilities beyond about 3 functional Fresnel and 1 halogen lanterns and an improvised dimmer board etc. All these and many more were problems the group had identified at the pre-performance stages.

The group knew that all the above problems could only be alleviated with the choices we made with our casting prowess. Since the students could not afford the high technical requirements, the group devised a situation where most of the technical areas were taken over in dance and choreography. Hence, the total number of cast we had were 36, where almost all the roles in the play were tripled cast, while the others play human props, human set units all in an interpretative but aesthetically arrived-at dancing experiences. Unlike a situation where actors are made to read excerpts from the script, the technique employed entails having people come on stage and based on their built, sex and any other small considerations in their physiognomy, we set situations for them to see how they can interpret or fit in. Meaning that since a lot of improvisation and creativity is required if the play must match the heavy demands of aesthetic *cum* artistic exploits that were integrally devised along with the formation of the script (hence its seven man actors demand), this choice became the most plausible approach.

### **Casting criterions in Okolo's the "Walking Stick"**

---

The crew could not make a table casting an option because we were aware that all the other groups doing plays like *Twingle Twangle: The Twining Twinning Tale* by Femi Osofisan, *Obaluaye* by Wale Ogunbiyi, *Midnight Blackout* by Femi Osofisan among others, would be gunning for the same fairly good hands and that will eventually put us on the table of negotiations which may or may not favour us. At best, it meant that we would be forced to share some actors thus over working such actors as well as hampering our chances at getting our supposed full house no matter how considerate we tried to be with our rehearsal schedule. Hence, the group resolved to go for novices (people with little or no experiences) in the theatre but basic talents of singing, innovations, discipline and interest or willingness (passion) to want to belong in them.

Based on the above-mentioned information, the group considered the following criteria and invariably, they helped to serve as manual at arriving at who we eventually picked amongst the lots that came for our open call for audition. Singing parts, flexibility,

improvisational skills, stunt ability, diction, stage presence, height and weight for some specific roles like Fatimo and Millie (to play grandmother and daughter respectively). Stamina (since the play was meant to be an energy sapping, fast paced play without any black out from its beginning to the end), discipline and willingness to learn were also considered.

In *Case 2* situation, there were several factors that were different and thus, the director had some measure of freedom to choose from. While under case 1, the director operated as a student whose operations are guided by a lot of 'ethical' dos and don'ts while in *case 2*, he operated as a lecturer doing a University assignment. What might be considered a limitation in the *case 2* situation was the fact that the University was to sponsor the show even though the money would be received within three days to the production. That will only be a percentage of it while the rest of the money gets to you long after the performance, a far limiting factor than when there are no sponsors based on the fact that a whole lot of things would not be met no matter how desirous they are towards bettering the production.

Now bearing in mind that the play is not in any way sponsored outside the budgets of the University convocation planning committee is the problem. A way out may be for sponsorship outside the University coffers to compliment whatever the university may be willing to commit. Incessant strike in the university and no definite date of performance in sight can be tiring as well as frustrating. This is coupled with the fact that most of the cast being students are often compelled to work under very harsh conditions ranging from being; sent out of hostels when there is strike, caught in-between lectures and rehearsals, getting threatened by lecturers who are not part of the crew, meeting deadlines for the submission of assignments and seminars among others.

Sticking to the seven man cast was the quest here as well as the required number of three drummers and a pianist. Age, sex, height, physical built, diction, flexibility, stage presence, creativity and originality were considered significant in the criterion used in choosing the cast. Again, it was pointless asking the intending actors to read from the script because the script itself is not a conventional type where lines and actions follow the law of logic. The highly experimental script can at best be auditioned for by texting the ability of the actor to align with the conjured world painted by the director who calls out situations for the supposed actor.

The concept of table casting may work here though because the director knew most of the students pretty well as their lecturer, their abilities and to a large extent potentials. However, he had to rely on open audition especially from students from the Creative

Arts Department, the Arts Faculty and the University in general. He was tempted to extend the call to professional artistes in and around the Lagos metropolis, however, he had a strong conviction within me that it would be an avenue to teach and train the students in this new theatre approach different from the conventions and styles their syllabuses may permit before they graduate.

At the end, the director came up with a set of cast that were relatively good and malleable for the task ahead which turned out highly commendable and appreciated at the end of the performance.

#### B. "Saro"

Bolanle Austin-Peter's production of Saro the musical was a 100-man cast and crew production that toured different parts of Nigeria and the United Kingdom in 2016 and 2017 respectively. The repertory came out of Terra Culture Centre, which was originally built as recreation centre containing a restaurant and bar, art works exhibition place and a book shop where people come to eat and drink, and conduct social meetings. The first Saro was staged at the Oriental Hall in 2013.

### **Casting techniques as used**

---

Bolanle Austin Peters Production is known to adopt the following range of casting Techniques from;

- i. the usual method of Open audition to lobbying-casting by friends and families of the theatre house. Every now and then, the repertory organizes cattle call via social media, requesting for talented actors and actresses to come out for audition, stating the title of the play, venue and time of the audition. This auditions are usually chaotic, as many actors and actresses always turn out en masse for the audition and from discussions with past audition participants, the audition usually lasts up to late hours in the evening due to the large crowd turnout to the venue.
- ii. The repertory adopts type-casting as their major method of auditioning. The producer always has a particular picture of what, who and how the characters ought to be. This usually leads to several days and months of looking for that particular person to fit into the character as envisioned in the producer, and then later director's mind. There is the question of "is the person right for the role?" and that question is all it takes to type-cast actor. When there is a particular person that comes to mind when thinking of some characters, the director is therefore type-casting that actor.

It is evident that Versatility is another technique considered in casting. Casting for a musical indirectly emphasizes that, the actor must be able to sing, dance and act. And these traits are evident in the cast of BAP's productions, as many of the actors can sing and dance excellently well. The actors were also invited for casting based on their ability to sing and dance. For instance, the character of Tosan, in the musical *Wakaa*, not only did the director type-cast the actor Patrick Diabua as the protagonist, he was called back for his ability to sing and act very well.

- iii. Celebrity-casting is another technique used by the producer and director of the show. During the staging of the first *Saro* in the year 2013, the Drama director and Artistic director were Kenneth Uphopho and Makinde Adeniran respectively. Bolanle Austen-Peters, played the role of an executive producer and a producer. However, she invited some celebrities to feature in the first staging of *Saro* the musical. A typical example was the casting of Dakore Egbeson-Akande in the production. There are other celebrities that have featured in the other productions in the later years.

Based on the interview we had with the director, it was gathered that 'Open audition' method was favoured by Bolanle Austen-Peters Productions, however, past directors and other members of the team contradicts this assertion, and many other techniques used by the director were exposed.

There are other performance factors that affect casting choices, these ranges from:

- The kind of performance also determines the type of actors to be considered for a production. Take for instance, *Saro: the Musical* performance demands the dancing abilities from the cast to be able to perform dynamic and energy sapping traditional and contemporary movements as evident in the *Africalypso* scene.
- It is no doubt that voice and speech is an integral part of skills expected of actors and actresses. Even during the Greek period, "the Greeks seem to have placed considerable emphasis on the voice, for they judged actors above all by beauty of vocal tone and ability to adapt manner of speaking to mood and character" (Brockett & Hildy 2003, p.22)
- However, Austin Peters extends more into the personal carriage and 'sophisticated-ness' of this actors based on the audience factor of her performances. The main actors in BAP performances, especially the ladies are

usually returnees from theatre academies in the Western countries, who are known to have certain characteristics of finesse and etiquettes placing them amongst the upper class in the societies. Some of BAP's actors are actually from same upper class of the society. For example, Dolapo Oni, who played the role of Cassandra in *Wakaa*. The Musical belongs to the upper class and married to the son of the Late Ooni of Ife, Oba Sijuade. Adesua Etomi who played the role of Rume in the *First Saro*, is a returnee from the United Kingdom. However, the role of dancers as minor characters is mostly open to cattle call auditions and general casting.

Styles of directing, determines type of actors and crew to be selected in a particular production. Observing the two productions, *Saro* and *Wakaa*, the director adopts the Western Opera method of Musical, juxtaposing it with Ogunde's operatic Yoruba style, and rounding it up with African Total Theatre, therefore making the directorial style eclectic. Since her form of theatre is Musical and not literary drama, it is only accepted to adopt eclecticism in the area of directing. Wilson posits that, musical theatre is

“„one of the many strands in contemporary theatre. Two words that characterize today's theatre is diversity and eclecticism: diversity because the type of theatre available to audiences is so wide-ranging; and eclecticism because contemporary theatre embraces such a wide variety of events” (Wilson, 2008, p.410).

## **Converging the highlights and recommendations there-in**

---

From the interview conducted, it was discovered that the director Kenneth Uphopho had to leave the production after the *Saro 2* because of her constant interference as a producer, forcing many of her ideologies and her perception of what her belief of what theatre should represent her cast and crew. Secondly, due to this hole, the director's interpretation is always on spectacle, and not the artistic factor of drama. For instance, the role of Cassandra is disjointed and misfit to be called good casting as a result of some cogent traits and interpretations. Cassandra is a wannabe in the United Kingdom that sent a picture of a white man to Rex, in Lagos, and on getting to the airport Rex discovered that Cassandra was not who she said she was. Expectedly, the more shocking factor will be to cast somebody that is fat, speaks fake accents (to reveal that she arrived for greener pastures later in years), and her apartment and surrounding should reflect lower class in the society. But instead, Dolapo Oni was cast for that role, she is slim, sexually appealing, speaks good British accent and lives in a well furnished apartment in the U.K. Therefore, this led to a disparity in the conflict that emanated from

Rex finding out that Cassandra is no white lady. Though, Cassandra is not white but she is good-looking, has a British passport, and he would have gotten what he wants, which is the British Passport. But instead they kept fighting, but there was actually no strong conflict to defend the interpretations on stage. Consequently, the issue of bad casting led to an incident while in London, for Wakaa. According to an interview, Dolapo Oni could not make it for the London edition, and the director started looking for somebody that to play the role exactly like Dolapo Oni, and this created a challenge during the production, because the artistic interpretation of her role was wrong from the beginning. There were lines contradictions, the lines are not interwoven and does not support the disagreement between the two characters, therefore it was obvious that the producer and director, Austen-Peters cast the role of Cassandra, based on spectacle, and audience appeal to her target audience, who are members of the upper class in the society.

Not only did the director place emphasis on the spectacle rather than the message, the depiction of reality was blurred. There is always a disconnection between the drama and the dance. She is eclectic in nature, and since she is in charge of the artistic creation, in terms of costumes, she tends toward realism and naturalism. In terms of directing style, there is interplay between realism, minimalism and representation. Her uniformity for the characters on stage, also alters realism, and doesn't fall under the convention of even supernumeraries in the theatre. This is because she (Austin Peters) is deeply involved in costumes at the detriment of the portrayal of the character, proper representation of the characters is being sacrificed because of the spectacle. All these affected the choices and considerations for the characters that were selected for the production.

Concerning the "Walking Stick", it was apparent that the casting was right judging by the fact the performance was adjudged wonderful by the panel of examiners and eventually won the Best play for the year, best play with the best Box office returns, the Best Director, Best Choreographer and a couple of other awards totaling seven in number. Looking back now, one can only wonder if all that would have been made possible if the casts had been chosen wrongly.

Whereas, we have attempted to chronicle some of the popular casting modes and techniques adopted by most Nigerian artistic directors, choreographers in the course of evolving a production, it is nonetheless important to note that the list itself can hardly be exhausted. The earlier we started paying more attention to the essence and consequences of casting modes and choices in our reviews of such performances, the earlier we will be improving the standards of productions done in and around the country.

## References

---

- Brockett, O. & Hildy, F. (2003). *History of the theatre*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Brockett, O. & Robert, B. (2004). *The essential theatre*. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Caird, J. (2010). *Theatre Craft: A director's practical companion from A to Z*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.
- Catliff, S. & Granville, J. (2013). *The casting handbook: For film and theatre makers*. New York: Routledge.
- Clark, E. (1980). *Hubert Ogunde: The making of the Nigerian theatre*. London. Oxford University Press.
- Deboo, A. (1990). The Non-Traditional Casting Project Continues into the '90s. *TDR* 34(4), 188 –191.
- Horby, R. (1998). Interracial casting. *The Hudson Reviews*. 42(3), 459 – 66.
- Hornby, A. S. (2010). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (International Student's Edition) (8<sup>th</sup> ed). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hornby, R. (1996). Cross-gender casting. *The Hudson Review*, 48(4), 641 – 648.
- Mora, M. J. (2005). Type-casting in the restoration theatre: Dryden's All for Love. *Atlantis 1677-1704*, 227(2), 75 – 86.
- Ogunbiyi, Y. (1981). *Drama and theatre in Nigeria: A critical source book*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine.
- Okolo, F. (1994). "The Walking Stick". A play Performed as a Final Year Project Production by Students of Performing Arts, and directed by Emoruwa Felix at the Africa Hall, University of Ilorin in 1996.
- Okolo, F. (1994). "The Walking Stick". A play Performed as Convocation Play for University of Lagos and Directed by Emoruwa Felix in 2015.
- Saro 1. By Bolanle Austine-Peters. Perf. Bolanle Austen-Peters Productions. Oriental Hotel, Lagos, December 2013. DVD.
- Saro 2. By Bolanle Austine-Peters. Perf. Bolanle Austen-Peters Productions. Muson Centre, Lagos, December 2014. DVD.
- Wilson, E. (2008). *The Theatre Experience*. New York: Mcgraw-Hill Companies.

## About the authors

---

Emoruwa Felix Damilola is a senior lecturer at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. He is a versatile theatre practitioner with numerous national and international artistic and scholarly credits in playwriting, directing, acting, choreography, dance ethnography and the technical theatre respectively.

Morgan Toyosi Abiola on the other hand is a graduate of theatre arts at the Creative Arts Department of the University of Lagos in 2015 and has since been retained by the institution as a teaching staff. She has also obtained her Master's degree from the same institution in 2016. Toyosi is currently embarking on her Ph.D.