

## Adolphe Appia's Directorial Concepts as Footnote for Performing African Postmodernism

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### ABSTRACT

Theatre directing in the real sense of it is a modern theatre concept influenced by interplay of nineteenth and twentieth centuries' societal and theatrical forces. Hence, Periodization motivates new directing theories that modify existing practices. Postmodernism as an era is gradually gaining prominence in Africa but approaches and theories that condition the performance of African postmodernism are still embryonic. Consequently, problem of study is lack of theorization of African postmodern theatre directing. Theorization of African postmodern theatre directing through appropriation of Adolphe Appia's directorial concepts is attempted. Objectives include evolving African postmodern play production approaches and weaving African postmodern theatre directing into utilization of prevalent electronic postmodern performance culture. Compatibility of Appia's directorial theory with African postmodern directing is examined and appropriated using Whitmore's postmodern theory as framework. Qualitative research method was adopted. Findings indicated that, Appia's theory is capable of providing footnote for African postmodern directorial theory. Comparative, but intercultural directorial approaches for performing African postmodernism is recommended.

### INTRODUCTION

Victorianism captures the earliest theatrical forms; while Modernism as a periodic and philosophical ismprecedes postmodernism. Modernism changed the outlook of the theatre and interplayed with societal forces to produce innovations in Theory and Criticism, Playwriting, Acting, Scenography and especially Theatre Directing. Dated around late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, modernism produced new directing theories and modified prevalent approaches to play production. Hence:

The period was one of great performers, from Garrick to Bernhardt; of smaller, more numerous theatres and growing audiences; and of the introduction of foot lights, box sets, and historical accuracy in costume and setting. It is important in the history of the theatre (Otto Reinert xviii).

Thus, the impact of periodic isms like Victorianism, Modernism, and Postmodernism across major world theatres of European, American, Asian and African regions cannot be ignored in comparative analysis of major developments in these regions. For instance, the

influence of Western modernism on African modernism is not in doubt. Western modernism is a rugged ism apart from producing notable Theorists, Playwrights, Directors and Designers in the West; it also influenced evolution of both African modernism and postmodernism. Directing as a modern theatre concept is traced to the experiments of Duke of Saxe Meinienigen. The Duke was a Russian director who assembled armature actors and turned them into superstars through strenuous rehearsals and training. He also influenced other modern directors like: Adolphe Appia, Constantine Stanislavsky, Nemivorich Danchenko, Antoine Artaud and so on.

Adolphe Appia was to a large extent influenced by Wagnerian ideals, eventually, he became one of the most popular modern directors. Appia's interest in the actor, space, lighting and music makes his directorial theory unique. However, in its uniqueness, the theory shows some semblance with emerging African postmodern theatre's directorial concepts. Therefore, the focus of this paper is on Appia and his directorial concepts, as they relate to African postmodern theatre with emphasis on directing African postmodernism.

African theatre like the Western theatre has passed through eras and periods beginning from the traditional, modern and eventually the controversial postmodern era. However, unlike the Western theatre, Directing as an art of the theatre in traditional African theatre; which is the oldest form of theatre in Africa is not distinct from the entire ensemble theatrical process. This is because traditional African theatre adopts a holistic approach that takes into consideration man's primordial education that bifurcates into cultic and secular educations.

Hence, evolutionary trends in African drama and theatre provide strong indicators that what is referred to today as modern African theatre is a product of interplay of several forces and paradigm shifts. Chukwuma Okoye posits that;

African theatre, practitioners have created, and continue to create telling and widely acknowledged theatrical forms and narratives, and demonstrated their absolutely unpretentious and unprogrammable syncretist and popular traditions. Although working somewhat within the Western paradigm, most of these practitioners continuously incorporate indigenous and popular forms of performances, and often engage with social and political critique (20).

The emergence of the electronic culture during the modern theatre further widened the creative canvas for the African theatre practitioner for more creative experimentations. However, African theatre practitioners' inability to fully explore alongside its experimentations the emergent electronic culture in Africa gave modernism the impetus to overstay its welcome. Postmodern theatre practice thrives more with the electronic culture for its pastiche and meta-narrative approach of fragmentations and mediations. Dearth of postmodern theories that can inject new blood into the peoples' art is another factor to contend with. Consequently, as the West transitioned from modernism to postmodernism, Africa is still grappling with the problems of modern to postmodern transition. Changes introduced by the electronic culture especially the proliferation of electronic media that requires digital directing are yet to be harnessed through the praxis of postmodernism. Therefore, this study attempts an appropriation of Western postmodernism through the nexus of electronic culture for the purpose of directing African postmodernism.

## AFRICAN POSTMODERN THEATRE DIRECTING AND THE ELECTRONIC CULTURE

Directing is an area in African theatre that still requires exploration, especially postmodern directing. Though, modern African theatre put African theatre on the global map because of its achievements in the area of playwriting, acting and so on, the pioneer artists documented very little in the area of directing. Worst still, the epileptic development and skepticism that characterize postmodernism in Africa has not helped the theorization and maturation of African postmodern theatre directing. Hence, there is need for the exploration of African postmodern theatre directing in this study. The first issue that quickly comes to mind in this section of the study is that the paper presupposes acceptance of a controversial postmodernism in Africa. Justification of this supposition is however hinged on Mark Fortier's discourse on postmodernism where he says:

... if postmodernism is the condition of contemporary culture, all culture produced in our time is by definition postmodern. To try and single out (any more than provisionally) certain works for stylistic reasons as postmodern while ignoring others is empirically unsound and limiting (120).

The earliest beginning of Western postmodernism was in form of individual reactions against Euro-American modernism; literally, it could be interpreted as a movement after modernism especially with organized philosophies that championed the end of modernism. Postmodernism as a contemporary ism, is not limited to philosophical movements. It cuts across Architecture, Music and Dance, Graphic Arts, Literature and literary theory. Clive Beck says, "It's a general cultural phenomenon." He posits that postmodernism; "Have such features as the challenging of conventions, the mixing of styles, tolerance of ambiguity, and emphasis on diversity, acceptance (indeed celebration) of innovation and change and stress on the constructedness of reality" (2).

Hence, postmodernism could be said to mean post World War II intellectual and cultural summersault, lacking hierarchical or organized conventions and methodological approaches. Postmodernism's creative methodology embodies pastiche, contradiction; as well as end of an era and the beginning of another just like

the “post” in post-colonialism, post-structuralism and post colonialism. Therefore, there will be no post colonialism without colonialism or postmodernism devoid of modernism. Thus, post-modernism is a frantic but determined effort to end the impact of the grand narratives, and domineering monocultural tendencies of modernism which in itself fragmented until it outlived itself.

Though African postmodernism is to be appropriated from Western postmodernism, it has divergent points with Western postmodernism. For instance, Afro postmodernism, does not recognize the debunking of truth, complete discarding of text and communal perception of events. Even within the context of Western postmodernist, we still record divergences in the perception and presentation of postmodernism by individual theorists. For instance, Peter Brook recognizes “Franco-American postmodernism” (20). Patricia Waugh in her own proposition also talks about “Eagleton’s postmodernism . . . and Lyotard’s postmodernism, as the disruptive element in modernism . . .” (40). There is need for Africa to be part of this effort to end modernism that subjugated and almost eroded Africanism and Orientalism by embracing African postmodernism. Unfortunately, African postmodernism is suffering rejection and condemnation at present, partly because it is seen strictly by its critics as a Western concept and partly because of its newness to Africa. The issue of origin, as criterion for rejection or acceptances of postmodernism by African theatre practitioners sounds segregational, because universal adoption, acceptance or rejection of theories and theatrical traditions is a theoretical and polemic process that does not rely on sentiments. Theatre historians reveal that, the Renaissance movement which spread like bush fire started in Italy and spread to other parts of the world. Modernism started in France and spread to other parts of the world. Postmodernism also started in Europe and should not be rejected by African scholars because it started from the West. However, skepticism due to its relative newness is not out of place because African modernism and even Western postmodernism suffered the same rejection at inception.

Postmodernism favours the paradigm shift to performance and performance theory rather than the traditional interpretation and criticism of text and literature that dominated Victorianism and early modernism. Contrary to the master

narrative tenets of modernism, postmodernism in its meta-narrative technique favours parody, pastiche of media (stage and electronic) and recognition of the little in the other. African modernism’s literary careerism tendency is bereft of essential survivalist and self-sustainability potentials as portrayed in their failure to induce a vibrant live theatre in contemporary Africa. Thus, upon the foundation of coeternity of reality and mediated reality achieved through the electronic culture the directorial concepts of African postmodern theatre emerged.

Jon Whitmore’s postmodern directing theory favours the above experimentation, hence, the study is directly hinged on Jon Whitmore’s *Directing Postmodern Theatre: Shaping signification in Performance*. Postmodernism offers the contemporary director large space to operate, there is however a continuous expansion of this spatial phenomenon by electronic culture; leaving limitless creative horizon for the postmodern director. This space and the apparatus therein become instruments of communication to the postmodern director. According to Whitmore, the reason for creating and presenting theatre is to communicate meanings. These meanings can result in experiences for spectators ranging from sheer joy profound emotional stimulation to spiritual awakening to intellectual discovery. Understanding how meanings are communicated to and assembled by spectators can be of enormous help to the director as he works to translate his individual vision of a theatre production into a living, three-dimensional work of art. Theatre in the postmodern sense of it is here defined in its broadest context as encompassing circus, street theatre, improvised performance, and the production of a playscript. Whitmore reveals that the;

Twentieth-century theatre and its critical analysis have most notably focused on the performance of playscripts. Many directors, designers, and performers (some past, many current), however, are challenging the centrality and sacredness of playscripts (or at least the dialogue therein contained). These theatre artists have concluded that the spoken word-does not always need to be the central force of a performance. They may use playscripts, new and old, as a place to begin a production, but they do not feel

compelled to treat the playscript as a sacred altar to be devoutly worshiped. Instead, these artists are deconstructing playscripts in order to speak more directly to the contemporary audience; or they are finding highly innovative ways of presenting unaltered scripts in altered environments, styles, and aesthetic contexts; or they are working with playwrights or performers to develop scripts through the rehearsal process, rather than the other way round (1).

Postmodernism still uses performative approaches of constructivism and deconstructivism not only because they are immediate predecessors of postmodernism, but because they favour experimentation and techniques that are electronic culture friendly. Some theatre artists are ignoring playscripts altogether; they are developing performances through experimentation with objects, visual images, soundscapes, improvisation, or bits and pieces of disjointed language or information. This meta-narrative approach of postmodernism; casts doubt on group and colonial mentality but heighten the acceptance of individual truth. Though, Africa believes in communal truth, the trend justifies postmodernism's inducement of alien cultures as seen in Pentecostalism and the atricalized begging cultures in Nigeria.

Whitmore insists that the language of the theatre has to be reinvented as the people of the Wooster Group are doing. The Wooster Group is speaking the language that the theatre will speak fifteen to twenty years from now. I'm talking about the vocabulary of stage language, of what a set looks like, how lighting behaves, how sound works, how video works. How they combine to create a total work of art. Quoting Peter Sellars, Whitmore states that: The notion that a piece is made of all those various elements is very important, and in the Group's work is the first time that I've seen all of those elements combined in a really sophisticated way to create this *Gesamtkunstwerk*, where the text is as important as the video image is as important, as the sound, and nothing has dominance although the words are very powerful, They are inventing the only vocabulary that can deal with the material of the last twenty years once we understand the strangeness (2).

According to Whitmore;

Some theatre productions are becoming richer and more dense as a result of the revolutionary development of theatre technology (computers, lasers, digital sound, video walls) and the accelerated evolution of theatre directors who now more fully understand that performances communicate on multiple levels simultaneously. The new directing approach in which visual and aural elements often take centre stage (while linguistic elements are either nonexistent or diminished in importance) creates a vibrant and sonorous environment in which more complex meanings are communicated (2).

The underutilization of the electronic culture because of the literariness of African modernism has impaired this paradigm shift towards postmodern directing mainly because it has not been theorized in Africa. Its theorization therefore should not be oblivious of the contemporary African directors' aspiration towards paradoxical, pastiche and electronic based performances that are purely postmodern. Thus, Whitmore's theory becomes in this study the link between Appia's directorial theory and African Theatre directorial concepts.

### PRODUCTION CONCEPTS OF AFRICAN THEATER

Discourse on production concepts of African theatre and Appia's directorial concepts will help the appropriation process. Hence, in this segment of the study, these two production concepts are reviewed before the appropriation. Traditional African theatre marks the beginning of African theatre; its production concepts combine with that of modern African theatre to produce unique and distinctive production concepts which are vital to the successful staging of African performances. These production concepts may or may not be the same as the western theater production concepts that condition Appia's theory. For instance, symbolism is a major production concept of African theatre; especially in the use of mask, which is a communicative medium between the actor and the audience. Body make-up, dance and mime are highly stylized and symbolic in African performances. Hence, long before Ionesco and Maeterlinck started the symbolic movement, symbolism has been a production concept of the African theatre.



African theatre operates a form of cooperate directing because of the specialized and intricate areas in presenting African drama example, a divination scene or a scene on witchcraft. The use of music and dance has remained part and parcel of traditional African theatre production techniques. Meki Nzewi maintains that; "Stage presentations not structured to, sequenced by, vected through, or tipped with music and dance or stylized movement is alien to the inherent (African) theatre sensibilities" (433).

African theatre also uses the mask Idiom, make-up, the narrator as well as improvisation. Moreover, the directors utilize long rehearsals that last between one to six months during moonlight nights in traditional theatre performances. The theatre conventions and concepts of both traditional and modern African theatre can only be understood and admired against African historical and cultural background.

### ADOLPHE APPIA'S DIRECTORIAL THEORY

Having presented a general overview of African theatre and its production concepts, it becomes obvious to look at Adolphe Appia's directorial theory, his production concepts and techniques before appropriating them as footnote for directing African theatre. Adolphe Appia (1862-1928) was a French Swiss artist who took his inspiration from Wagner and conceived his own remarkable theatre based on the musical form. As a director, designer and theoretician he was greatly inspired and influenced by Wagnerian ideals. Appia was of the opinion that music is the condition to which the other arts aspired. Appia worked in Vienna and Dresden. He studied the use of three level scenery and lighting to complement three dimensional actors on stage. Appia insists that, painted scenery appears fake on stage. Therefore he proposed a "musical" stage design which would lift the theatre above the Victorian age and see it through to visual symbolism which would express the inner qualities of a play in the modern theatre. Appia's directorial and production concepts are: Three dimensional scenery, Emphasis on the Actor, Lighting and the actor, Reality in acting and scenery, The use of functional music, Flexibility in acting and staging, Integrated aesthetic and artistic production.

According to Appia, the earlier scene painted diminished the world to the size of the stage. Appia shows in his three dimensional scenery; how to expand the stage to become the world.

Appia maintains that "the old immobile foot lights, wings and boarder lights with shadows painted on a canvass had to go" (149). Appia sees the actor as the essential element of the theatre, he goes further to say; "So it is the actor who is the essential factor in staging; it is he whom we come to see, it is from him that we expect the emotions and it is for this emotion that we have come" (142).

On lighting and the actor, Appia proposed "free system of lighting from above which will throw the actor's shadows vividly upon the stage" (145). Thus, Appia eliminated scenic realism and invented rhythms and patterns more appropriate to the rendering of the actor's and the playwright's inner dreams. Appia's aesthetic principles are contained in some of his great works like: *Staging Wagnerian Plays* (1895) and *Music and the Art of the Theatre* (1899). He proposed reality in acting and scenery in these works and goes further to say that, "we must imitate reality as faithfully as possible."

The musical form was Appia's ideal performance. He does not separate music and performance. Thus he says: "the object of music should also be the object of the idea". The idea he maintains should be expressed in the actor's movement, controlled by the discipline of music" Therefore he believes in the "stylizing power of music on stage productions." (Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, 145-146). Appia in his production concepts proposes flexibility in acting, and staging, therefore he believes in, "transforming our rigid and conventional staging into living, flexible and artistic material, suitable for any dramatic creation whatever" (Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, 145).

The production concepts of Adolphe Appia can be said to crystallize into integrated aesthetic and artistic production. He does not believe in isolation of acting and scenery in a theatrical production, Appia opines that: "It is not by developing in isolation the play of those two kinds of illusions - as is done on all our stages - that we shall obtain an integrated and artistic performance." He concludes that:

The two basic conditions for an artistic presentation of the human body on stage are lighting that brings out its plausibility and a harmonizing with the setting which brings out its attitudes and movements (Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, 139).

Appia's theories and innovative works contributed immensely to the emergence of Western modernism's directorial concepts. Hence, discussion on modern theatre directing cannot be complete without reference to Adolphe Appia.

### ADOLPHE APPIA'S THEORY AS A FOOTNOTE FOR AFRICAN POSTMODERN DIRECTORIAL THEORY

Appia bestrides Victorianism and Modernism as his works run through the end of the Victorian theatre to the beginning of the Modern theatre. However, the relevance of Appia's directorial theory to postmodern directing is not in doubt, especially in the area of lighting, music and the actor. The new media addressed by Jon Whitmore in his postmodern directing depends on lighting which Appia emphasized. Hence, the two theories provide the nexus for adaptation and appropriation of Western directorial theories for the evolution of African postmodern theatre directing in this study. Adaptation and appropriation are known and popular creative techniques in African theatre practice. According to Julie Sanders; "Adaptation and Appropriation are, endlessly and wonderfully about seeing things come back to us in as many forms as possible" (160).

Therefore, adaptation stands out as one of the dominant and most influential theatrical techniques adopted by modern African artists for creation and recreation of literary and theatrical forms. Looking at the role of adaptation in the evolutionary process of modern African theatre, one may be tempted to conclude that like the neoclassicists; achievements of modern African dramatists are achievements in adaptation. Adaptation is the transformation of a work of art into another form or medium or translocation of literary materials from one geo-enclave to another. The meaning of adaptation in the theatre is influenced by the meaning of the root word adaptation in the biological sciences. It is among biological terms that enable survival of organisms during adverse conditions in their environments. The importation of this term into the humanities accounts for the survival of variety of literary materials in the arts especially theatre. Linda Hutcheon posits that; "... adaptation is actually very difficult to define... because we use the same word for the process and the product." (15) Hutcheon invariably, divides the process of defining and understanding adaptation as a dramatic

technique into two: as a process or product. Furthermore, she informs that: "As a product, an adaptation can be given a formal definition, but as a process- of creation and of reception- other aspects of *what is to be adapted, who is the adapter, why the adaptation, how to adapt, where the adaptation is taking place, and when the adaptation is taking place* have to be considered (15- 16). Furthermore, Hutcheon posits that, the process of literary adaptation involves; "... a process of creation, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then recreation; this has been called both appropriation and salvaging, depending on your perspective." (8) Modern African artists including third generation Nigerian playwrights like Femi Osofisan, Emeka Nwabueze, Sam Ukala and so on also portray in some of their plays that adaptation involves reformatting, reinterpretation, translocation, recreation and even some kind of appropriation. Live theatre in Nigeria needs salvaging and appropriation of postmodernism for the revival of public performance in Nigeria.

Though adaptation is more embracive than appropriation, the two terms are not antipodal since adaptation process does not preclude appropriation. Literary or theatrical appropriation in the context of this study is seen as the replication of what exists in any environment, genre or medium in another geographical location, genre or medium. Adaptation and appropriation are important creative techniques utilized by modern and postmodern African artists in their creative enterprises even though there are litany of criticisms against adaptation and appropriation, thus they constitute topical critical issues in African theatre practice. Glaringly in African theatre practice and creative writing discourse; originality, fidelity, coherence, retention of meaning constitute arguments against most adapted African works weather they are plays, theories or productions. The pertinent impression that most of the movements that characterized modernism do not have their strands in Africa fueled the skepticism that heralded the adoption of adaptation and appropriation techniques by African artists. Therefore, adapting and appropriating the trappings of these foreign movements and models to Africa made some critics label such literary products as inferior. The quality of some of the adapted or appropriated African works like Wole Soyinka's *Bacchae of Euripides*, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* Osofisan's

*Tegoni* and a host of others debunk appendage of inferiority on these products and reveal that the products compete with Western and Oriental plays.

Barthes' postulation on adaptation debunks any inferiority appendage to adapted works, he posits that; "any text is an inter-text" (39). Barthes strongly asserts that, the works of previous and surrounding cultures were always present in contemporary theatres. Julie Sanders makes it much clearer below when she insists that; "Literary texts are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature. But they are also built from systems, codes, and traditions derived from companion art forms" (3).

These postulations are the primordial praxis that forms the basis of the significance and objectives of this paper. Thus, the paper seeks to debunk biased and negative idiosyncrasies as well as inferiority complexes, skepticism and subjugation surrounding appropriations and adaptations in African theatre practice. There is no doubt that, the two theatrical techniques are both interpretative and creative techniques for interrogating existing materials and are therefore appropriate for this study that involves both reformatting and translocation. Moreover, their usage and applications are not peculiar to Africa; it cuts across epochs in global theatre history as reflected in some Western and Oriental theatrical practices. Therefore the researcher insists that cultural structures are often replicable or obtainable in different geographical locations therefore, if a particular culture is quick to record in its structures other cultures or appropriating it in a locality with similar structures; it does not question originality, subjugate or make inferior such theatrical products. Rather, it is an effort towards inter-culturization through comparative analysis.

Hence, this paper through qualitative method of research and theoretical premise of Jon Whitmore portray how Appia's directorial theory provided footnote for theorizing African postmodern directing for the revival of the declining live theatre in Africa.

Adolphe Appia in his books laid down the foundation of modern stage practice; he supplied the aesthetic principles for the modern designer in the Western theatre, Appia aimed at combining those arts of the stage which are usually regarded as separate. He assigned the role of unifying all the arts of the theatre to the

director. This he achieved through the musical concept. Semblance of Appia's directorial concepts to African theatre directing in terms of presentation and performative techniques especially functions of space, music and emphasis on the actor is interesting.

Major divergent areas between the two production concepts are in the area of visual symbolism in terms of scenery, mask, make-up and costumes. There are sharp differences in these areas; African staging techniques show scenic symbolism; the actor moves with scenery on his body, so there is mobile and symbolic scenery. Though there are elements of three dimension scenery in African staging techniques. African shrines and arenas are dominant staging venues, the carved figures decorating the shrines and arenas are also three dimensional sceneries. The "Ikoro" and other metal and wooden gongs are all three dimensional sceneries, since there are little or no scenic paintings, scenery like in Appia's production concepts are three dimensional.

African theatre operates with both cooperate and dictatorial directors, while Appia proposes a single director. Though Appia propounded the concept of "a single artist controlling the interaction of light, music and movement" he does not see this role which he assigned to the director as "despotic" since he refers to the director as "the leader of an orchestra", he inadvertently recognizes the importance of cooperate directing which is a major feature of African theatre.

Similarly, the use of music is vital in both African and Appia's theatre, while Appia talks of the stylizing power of music; Nzewi proposes the functional nature of music in African performances. Therefore, music is a major feature of both African theatre and Appia's staging techniques. Moreover, in African satire and lampoon performances music is the "object of the idea." Music controls actors' movements in African performances as proposed by Adolphe Appia in his directorial theory. Hence, when one watches an African performance and imagines the unifying role of music in the ensemble, one begins to wonder if Appia borrowed his musical concept from Africa; because music, dance and the performer (actor) are essentials of performance in African theatre.

The use of the mask idiom and the narrator are other remarkable differences; between African staging techniques and Appia's. It is not that Appia ruled out the use of mask and the narrator

but they did not receive emphasis in his directorial concept. In African theatre the mask Idiom creates metaphysical aesthetics while the narrator is an actor; his role is between the archetypal characters and the participating audience which is also part of the theatrical action.

Both concepts are realistic in nature and can be said to belong to the realistic directing style which Appia did not oppose. Appia affirms in his techniques that, "we must imitate reality as faithfully as possible". The African directorial concept is a middle course between reality and symbolism, hence, there are attempts to capture reality in the use of cooperate directors who may be real diviners in the arts of divination; while the use of mask is a symbolization of the dual worlds of the ancestors and the unborn as well as their inhabitants. Like the Western realists, African realistic directors make apparent decadent symbols come to life. Light is not completely missing in African theatre directing, what is obtainable is the use of natural light: sunlight or moonlight which serve the purpose of illumination. Artificial lighting sources like bonfire and local lamps are also used for illumination. Thus, Appia and African theatres' directing approaches aim at naturalness and reality in directing, acting and scenery.

Flexibility in acting and staging proposed by Appia is also obtainable in African theatre directing. It suits the African arena or  $\frac{3}{4}$  stages and can easily be realized through African staging techniques. Performance venues in African theatre are arena or thrust like stages or theatres in the round; processions are easily realized. Though proscenium forms emerged with African modernism to limit this flexibility, they are mainly seen at the educational institutions. Flexibility in the actor's movement on the African stage is controlled by the use of functional music and dance. The specious arena stages make room for unrestricted movement and audience interaction which results to mutual experiencing between the performers and the audience. Hence, this flexibility in African performance breeds bilateral exchange of feelings which Appia also achieved in his staging techniques.

Integrated aesthetic and artistic production proposed by Appia is also achieved in African theatre directing through music and dance. Similarly, African performances are total and integrated artistic and aesthetic productions. The above comparative analysis reveal that Appia's

theory though a modern theatre theory has convergent and divergent points with African theatre production concepts, both has postmodern potentials if purged of Euro-American modernism's master-narratives. The purging process requires multicultural theorization of African postmodern theatre directing carried out by the researcher under the next sub-head. Hence, Whitmore's postmodern theory provides the nexus for this polemic analogy aspiring towards a multicultural but postmodern merger appropriation.

### AFRICAN POSTMODERN DIRECTORIAL THEORY

Using Appia's theory as a footnote and Whitmore's theory as a theoretical premise, the researcher through appropriation proposed the following: as conventions and performative techniques of African postmodern directing.

- Non compartmentalization of Occidental, Oriental and Afro-drama and theatre conventions.
- Unification of traditional, classical, popular and folkloric theatre aesthetics.
- Use of symbolic, metaphoric, ironical, mythopoetic and vernacular languages.
- Combination of conservatism and experimental styles.
- Unification of the stage and electronic media in a single production
- Use of mono scene, application of causal and fragmented plots.
- Adoption of total theatre's processional, multiple presentations and spontaneity.
- Revival of myth, carnivalesque, folkloric and minstrel procession and mobility.
- Use of sporadic action and pastiche techniques.
- Utilization of diffused concept of African heroism.
- Use of chaotic formations and contrast variables.
- Aspiration towards creativity and subordination of conventional authenticity.
- Emphasis on dualities and vicissitudes of life.

World theatre had known regional dichotomy from the beginnings of organized society, to the contemporary theatre. Monoculturalism created gulfs and provided fertile grounds for racism to



thrive. Consequently, dichotomies of race, religious crises and power play by 'strong men' have been part of the predicament of man since the emergence of the organized society; but never has it been so fierce, wild, and as confrontational as it has been in the present society. They are the bane of Africa, the Arab world, the Eastern block and the West. These chaotic traits and unrests are wide spread now and are tearing nations apart. In fact the entire global community is sitting on top of a time bomb, and hence its life span is at the mercy of a foreshadowed catastrophic explosion. Afro postmodernism is on a rescue mission to salvage the world with its multicultural performance forms. Patrice Pavis says that, intercultural theatre creates hybrid forms drawing upon a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas. The hybridization is very often such that the original forms can no longer be distinguished (8).

Afro postmodern directing aspires towards building bridges across these gulfs through a global intercultural crusade that harmonizes "Afro-Occi-Asian" theatre conventions and evolve multicultural forms that show peaceful co-existence of Blacks, Coloured's and Whites as well as admixtures of traditional, Christian, Moslem and Hindu worships in a single performance. This practice also injects vibrancy into live performances to enhance the revival of the live theatre in Africa. Performative techniques of African theatre directing should emphasize the unification of literary, popular and folkloric theatre aesthetics in a single performance. Developmental trend and historical periodization of the Nigerian theatre reflect these differentiations which erect rigid walls that hamper fluidity in creativity. For instance, the dialogic nature of the literary theatre has not encouraged maximum utilization of mime, metaphorical, ironical, mythopoetic and vernacular languages by the Afro postmodern artist. These theatrical devices are more economical, less verbal and embody strong actor- audience communicative codes. They help the director put the message of the play across.

Conservatism preserves dignity, while experimentation opens new horizons: both are important creative tools, but if used singly, they could lead to polarization. Hence both should be combined to retain aspects of the old used in creating the new. Rules fetter creativity; revolts break conventions but yet create conventions.

Aristotle created conventions for Classicism and the Classical theatre's conventions provided point of departure for modernism thus ushering in new conventions. Similarly, formism is but an assemblage of forms, while free-formism does not recognize forms. It discards conventions to create conventions but within the fluidity of creative freedom and directorial license. The outcome is that techniques are intermingled to present scenes from stage performances and electronic media in causal plots or fragmented plots in a single play or performance. It is also expected that the dramatist structures his texts with the intent of making them amenable to total theatre's processional, multiple scenes presentations, spontaneity and eventual merger of stage and screen. Processions are cherished for their spiritual munificence, multiple presentations, accommodates conglomeration of genres; while spontaneity accords to the actor personal initiative skills, improvisation and creative ingenuity, stage and screen merger break barriers and expand patronage requisite for the revival of the live theatre.

Mobility is the magic word of the revival strategy- A mobile Afro postmodern theatre hinged on carnivalesque and minstrel mobility blended with performative techniques of the Pulpitic and Beggars' theatres should be the Afro postmodernist practitioner's magic wand

Afro postmodernism's presentations dwell on conglomeration of genres with major plot, sub plots, main dramatic actions and shreds of actions in order to accommodate all, some actions are intermittently, presented sporadically, amidst linear and causal actions.

Characters share the burden of dramatic actions evenly in a diffused concept of Afro heroism manner so that each character carries a reasonable percentage of the burden of the dramatic action of the performance without necessarily shading the importance of other characters. The chaotic nature of African societies and her characteristic contrast variables of good and evil, progress and retrogression are emphasized in Afro postmodern performances.

Creativity is the focus of African postmodern theatre; therefore, it glorifies individual, collective and communal creativity. It is important to note that creativity here is governed by the free creative spirit and devoid of conventional authenticity that fetter experimentations. The postmodern creative spirit emphasizes the dualities and vicissitudes of life prevalent in the creator's environment.

Sometimes a whole lot of actions are presented in a mono scene, simultaneous or tripartite staging.

Theatre is an eclectic and dynamic art; however its eclecticism and dynamism are conditioned by societal forces. For instance, Soyinka's *Myth, Literature and the African World* that emphasizes procreation, reincarnation and ancestral worship; dominated modern African theatre practice because, it was compatible with the societal forces of the period. Moreover, Africa was still in search of an identity and no critic could have questioned the centrality of Soyinka's adjudicatory icons to modern African literary postulations. However the impact of Western and Eastern religions, civilization, science, technology and industrialization in Africa, have brought enormous pressure on the relevance of Soyinka's adjudicatory icons to the existential essence of many Africans in a contemporary African society fragmented and balkanized by colonial and post-colonial maladies. How many African Christians believe in ancestral worship and reincarnation now? Soyinka's modern African theory served the demands of its time and supported a personality theatre that is now in conflict with interculturalism. Afro postmodern directing theory rooted in Appia's theory and hinged on Whitmore's theory, transcends borders and is therefore a hybrid. It breaks bounds and builds bridges across gulfs, steps, over mountains and is capable of dropping rafts into seas to enable its aesthetics and spectacles float from shore to shore. In the words of Jean-F Lyotard, Postmodernist aesthetics radically rejects: "Mimesis, organic unity, consensus; it offers multiple perspectives which ostentatiously and dramatically refuse to coalesce or resolve into some transcendent or more profound whole" (27).

The African Postmodern directing theory is performance oriented and embodies multiple perspectives which the Igbo egalitarian worldview offers the contemporary global society ridden at present with crises of terrorism, economic recession political quagmires, religious fanaticism and racial discrimination all induced by mono-culturalism. Igbo hospitality, nationalism, itinerancy and dynamism are panaceas for the multicultural experiment.

Therefore, a periodic exploration of the Igbo worldview buttresses the need for plays written to capture positive and negative but unfalsified images of a suffering society, portraying in the

process familiar and unfamiliar situations to the audience. Familiarity which is presenting what the audiences already have knowledge of establishes the pedestrian from which the audience rides to popular understanding of situations until unfamiliarity gestalts their individual ego and opens up a wider horizon capable of postmodern thought.

The need for a postmodern theory or performances is based on either the absence of African postmodern theories or the weaknesses of the existing theories. It is to cater for weak groups, communities, who are marginalized or subjugated, but optimistic of a collective change of fortune. African postmodernism's meta-narratives are compatible with experimentation and individual perception of truth.

### CONCLUSION

Appia in his outstanding production techniques is among those who laid down the foundation for the modern theatre stage practice through concretization of Wagnarian ideals. However, his staging techniques were boosted by the use of electricity and the type of theatre architecture of his time. While some of his techniques can be realized in African staging, most of the African directorial concepts cannot be actualized on the western theatre architecture.

The study however reveals the adaptation of Appia's production techniques for the evolution of African postmodern theatre directing theory that can support the production of African plays since Appia's directorial concepts are similar to what we have in traditional theatre production concepts except a few like Appia's "light on the actor techniques" which Whitmore's theory helped us to appropriate.

Summarily, western theatre architecture influenced Appia's production concepts and is therefore responsible for the divergences between the two theories studied. Therefore, Appia's theories like African postmodern theatre directing emphasise actor and acting as well as dialogue and lighting as source of illumination.

The researcher therefore recommends that: the present African society requires a theatre architecture where African production concepts can be realized.

However, because of the unique nature of African theatre, the use of lighting aesthetics, symbolism, music and dance coupled with the

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use of mask, and make-up should be blended and intermingled comparatively for the intercultural postmodern theory that was evolved.

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