

The Role of *Afrika Kreative Dance Company* in the Structuring of Nigerian Contemporary Dance

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Abstract: Nigerian choreographers have not been able to establish a unanimous Nigerian contemporary dance convention (like traditional dance) since its inception in the 1950s. While Hebert Ogunde and his contemporaries from the 1950s relied on the folk era syndrome to structure their dances, the Usman Abubakar and contemporaries from the 1990s to the present are relying on complex concepts and the application of the computer and mix media technologies. Kariamu Welsh's 'Umfundalai' and Rudolf Laban's 'choreology' are adopted as theoretical frameworks. The paper evaluates the contribution of *Afrika Kreative Dance Company* under the control of Usman Abubakar in the forging of the structure of Nigerian Contemporary Dance. Two major dance pieces by the *Afrika Kreative Dance Company*, *Oju* and *Night* were investigated as videotexts in addition to the peripheral treatment of a few other dances by the same Company. Results shows that the structure of *Afrika Kreative Dance Company*, in spite of being heavily influenced by indigenous philosophical Nigerian themes and dance idioms is characterised by specialised movements that are methodical and leisurely. The structure of the Nigerian Contemporary Dance is therefore dependent on free personal dance creations, but strictly guided by Nigerian or indigenous philosophical themes and dance idioms.

Keywords: Contemporary, Folk, Mix-media, Idioms, Choreology.

I. INTRODUCTION

The structure of Nigerian Contemporary Dance began to evolve since the 1950s, especially with 'Ogunde Concert Party' (Clark, 1980) where Hubert Ogunde used dance performances to spice up his plays. These dances were called 'opening and closing glees' (Clark, 1980). This was the case until in 1966 when Ogunde formed his all inclusive dance company which produced dances form indigenous and exotic idioms.

Before the arrival or awareness of contemporary dance, dances were done mainly from the indigenous backgrounds. However, these traditional dances began to receive exotic influences with the colonisation of Africa. Ogunde, also under the influence of Western culture recreated traditional dances. This period was particularly called the folk era because of the secularisation of ritual and traditional concepts. The main artistes of this period in addition to Hubert Ogunde were Duro Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola and Oyin Adejobi, Obotunde Ijimere and John Ekwere. Thus, traditional dances, which were initially done in their traditional environment such as the villages began to move to other venues, like the cities mainly for capitalist interest.

While Hubert Ogunde blazed the trail of Nigerian Contemporary Dance in the cities, Peggy Harper, who from the early 1960s contributed her quota in the structuring of Nigerian Contemporary Dance in the universities (Yerima, 2005), first the University of Ibadan and then the University of Ife. Although her dances were kinetic and aesthetic, she depended on traditional dances and traditional idioms. Academicians such as Peter Badejo, Odukwai Segfyi, Felix Begho, Folabo Ajayi, Fidelma Okwesa, Georgina Gore and Emeka Nwabuoko all gained under the tutelage of Peggy Harper. These are known as the first generation of Nigerian Contemporary Dance artistes. The second generation who learnt under them include Amutu Braide, Chuks Okoye, Ojo Bakare, Chris Ugolo, Zulu Adigwe, Moji Bamtefa Liz Hammond, Bola Eberighas, and Anold Udoka. Although these choreographers still relied on indigenous dance patterns and idioms, they became more experimental by creating new dance patterns.

It was not until the 1990s that Nigerian Contemporary Dance began to have a twist to its foundational structure laid by Hubert Ogunde in the cities and Peggy Harper in the universities, particularly the ones she had her influence such as the University of Ibadan and the University of Ife (now the Obafemi Awolowo University). This was the period when France, in cultural exchange with Nigeria introduced her contemporary dance technique to Nigerian dance enthusiasts. Dance artistes such as Abdul Onibasa now Christopher Emmanuel, Dayo Liadi, Usman Abubakar, Abel Utuedor, Bayo Ogunriade, Esther Olaniyan now Esther Abubakar and Faith Benson were the first set to benefit from this technique. The structure of Nigerian Contemporary Dance changed immensely during this period with the application of bodily movements such as athletic movements and pedestrian movements. However, in spite of these exotic bodily movements, the indigenous dance idioms were still used as sources to strengthen themes or motifs.

Admittedly, the structure of Nigerian Contemporary Dance accommodates the admixture of indigenous and foreign dance idioms; nevertheless, different choreographers, especially Usman Abubakar and his contemporaries as mentioned above have come up with different choreographic approaches thereby making their choreographic structures unique. *Afrika Kreative Dance Company's* approach and role in the structuring of Nigerian Contemporary Dance, under the leadership of Usman Abubakar is hereby analysed. Basically, *Oju* and *Night* are the two dances used as case studies; nonetheless, other dances such as *Flesh and Blood*, *Shadow and Behind the Mask* are also briefly mentioned.

II. AFRIKAN KREATIVE DANCE IN THE STRUCTURING OF NIGERIAN CONTEMPORARY DANCE

Abubakar Usman was born in the early '70s in Kano. He began to dance mainly hip-hop when he was in the primary school in the '80s. Dance for him then was more of a hobby than a vocation. It was when he joined the Kano State Council for Arts and Culture that he began to look at dance more as a career by engaging in traditional dance side by side hip-hop.

In 1989 Abubakar joined the National Troupe of Nigeria when Hubert Ogunde was in charge and became grounded in various Nigerian dances patterns. He was still in the National Troupe when the French Cultural Centre organised a workshop and a cultural exchange programme between Nigeria and France in 1994. He was one of the successful artistes at the workshop to be invited and trained. His achievement earned him a scholarship to study contemporary dance at the Centre Choreographique National de Nantes in France under Claude Brumachon and later at Jant-Bi Company in Senegal under Germaine Acogny.

Koffi Koko who was a choreographer from the Republic of Benin was a strong source of inspiration to Abubakar as he began to find his footing in the contemporary dance realm. His father equally inspired him mainly in African philosophy and African world view. This is why his dances, in spite of his hip-hop beginning is rooted in African philosophy.

This study is guided by two theories: *Umfundalai* propounded by Kariamu Welsh and *choreology* developed by Rudolf Laban. Usman Abubakar dance technique is essentially influenced by these two theories. Whereas as 'umfundalai' describes Usman Abubakar's interest in the indigenous African movement technique, 'choreology' expounds his deployment of two concepts: *eukinetics*; which deals with movement dynamics and *choreuticss*; that is the dancer's use of space. According to Kariamu Welsh (as reported by Kemal Nance, 2017) "Umfundalai is a contemporary African dance technique that comprises its movement vocabulary from dance traditions throughout the Diaspora." Monica Frichtel says that Umfundalai means "essence" or "essential" in Kiswahili (par. 1).

Kariamu Welsh is obviously aware of the existence of African dancers performing outside the continent. Her call therefore is for these dancers, in whatever genre of dance they do to be mindful of their African identity which should be observed as the essence of their performance. Usman Abubakar has not lost focus on this essence as his dance expressions, in spite of their exoticness are persistently being influenced by the indigenous dance movement technique.

On the other hand, Rudolf Laban's choreology is made up of two concepts: 'eukinetics' and 'choreutics.' Rudolph Kansese expresses that *eukinetics*

...is the study of rhythm, phrasing and dynamics...Eukinetics can also be described as *effort* which reveals the dancer's qualitative application of energy, the expression of colour, texture, inner attitude and emotions. Effort, which is essentially composed of motion or movement, is used as a functional (bodily) expressive tool by the dancer to situate himself or herself within the performance space(2015).

The choreographer or dancer uses effort or *eukinetics* in four different ways or channels, these include: *weight*, *space*, *time* and *flow*. These channels are seen as motion qualities which describe the nature of the movements employed by the dancer from time to time in the course of a dance piece which takes place within a given space called *choreutics*. Rudolph Kansese (2015) expounds on the use of these channels by expressing that

...weight application can either be *strong*, whereby the dancer stands his or her ground, or *light*, whereby he or she overcomes his or her weight. In considering *space*, the dancer takes cognisance of his or her dance space and then applies the appropriate motion, according to his or her creative desire. He or she can decide to make the movement *direct*, by concentrating on that particular space or *indirect*, by opening up and make use of more space as possible. *Time* is a motion factor of decision. Decision about when to move and the qualities of movement required. If the dancer's movement decision is *sudden* or *quick*, then the movement quality becomes urgent or hurried. If, on the other hand, the decision is *sustained*, then movement becomes leisurely, prolonged and lingers. The *flow* motion factor is about the continuity or progression of movement. The quality of movement here can be characterised as *free*, meaning that the movement is fluid, or *bound*, indicating that movement is not smooth but is interrupted or rigid. These four motion factors are made manifest by the dancer within a given space, the space here is what is called *choreutics*.

A. A STUDY OF OJU

Indigenous names in Nigeria are most of the time functional and laden with meaning. Oju in Yoruba dialect simply means 'eye'. The eye in Abubakar's dance is not the conventional eye in the anatomy of a living creature; its usage is philosophical. The eye is the metaphysical sight or spiritual (essence) that links the past with the present and the future. The past represents the ancestors who during their lifetime possess the philosophy of existence. Unfortunately, they died without divulging these secrets to the present generation. Man therefore feels enslaved due to lack of wisdom and philosophy.



Fig 1: Man enslaved before gaining wisdom from the ancestors (*Oju* video)

Succour however comes his way with the visit of the ancestors draped in white apron (as seen in the Fig1). They provide him with the invaluable light and insight which, metaphorically, is the *Eye* or *Oju*. In other words, the eye is the metaphysical foresight with which man can discern existence in its present state and possibly know what the future holds for him.

In observing the dance from its opening, where the dancers stretch out on the stage floor and executing slow body movements is likened to an African ritual or religious observation where initiates are engrossed in spiritual invocation. An experience like this marks the beginning of almost every ritual festival in Africa where initiates appeal to the deities by soliciting their support for the success of the festival. These recumbent dancers' bodies are seen as such. The squatting and kneeling positions of the female dancer, accompanied by fixated deliberate movement gives a feeling of a chief priestess in the act of sacrifice or plea to a deity.

There is a transition from this floor or low level movement to when the dancers get on their feet and in synchronism, move languorously to the stormy sound effect which is to signify a state of trance. The initiates or dancers in our case are seen possessed by the relevant deities or spirits. This means that the deity or deities have accepted the sacrifice and have made themselves present at the ceremony by allowing the dancers to embody them. Afrika Kreative Dance Company's adoption of the African ritual concept is an indication of its unmitigated reliance on African technique which serves as fulcrum from whence all the movements emanate from. Incidentally, various traditional movements are highlighted in the dance which makes the performance more of a celebration of different Nigerian (African) dances.



Fig 2: This movement in trance is adopted from the traditional Swange pattern of movement (*Oju* video)

Most of the movements does not synchronise with music. Music and sound are used to intensify the mood of the dance. However, there is a section which is purely in line with traditional African expression where dancing, instrumentation and singing are synchronised.

The visual aesthetics created in *Oju* is not exclusively intended to enhance beauty on stage but to emphasis and intensify theme. The application of such theatrical elements such as the moon created with light on the cyclorama, the spots, the oil lamps used as set and hand props, the white sheets used as costume, the hanging ropes used as set and props and lastly the powder used to simulate dust are all intended to help the audience contemFigon the various movements expressed in the dance.

Moonlight in Nigeria is an ideal period for storytelling. It is customary to see children get together in the evenings to listen to stories especially from elders. It is on this note that the dance can be considered as a moonlight folktale with the choreographer as the storyteller. In addition to this, the simulated moonlight interprets the period of the dance which is at night where only the initiates are expected as participants. The dance can be rightly called an event because it represents a particular episode in the life of a people.

The three spotlights lit as the performance opens reveal three individuals. The one in the middle is lit with more intensity than the other two. The choreographer's reason here is to highlight the performer in the middle over the other two; to reveal his hopeless state because the ancestors did not bequeath any legacy or divulge the secret of life when they departed earth. The two performers dimly lit on either side of the mid spot represents vestiges of the ancestors who are being invoked to rescue man from his problems and earthly challenges.

Oil lamps are used to signify the material link between the spiritual world and the physical; the ancestor and man and the past with the present. The lamps which glow with light is the gift of philosophy from the ancestors to man. It is expected to guide him through his journey on earth since life is a journey.

The white sheets as costumes create the characterisation of ancestors in communion with the corporeal. It provides us with the concept of masquerade in African theatre. Incidentally, masquerade is used to emphasise the visit of the ancestors to the physical world.

The appearance of the hanging ropes is the consummation of the spiritual link with humanity which directly comes from the sky. The contemporary man is seen absorbing the full essence of this supernatural gift which climaxes with the tossing of powdery substance into the air. The powdery dust indicates the full reception of wisdom (the light) from the spiritual world; an incident which with the support of floodlight transforms the stage into a bright setting.



Fig 3: The casting of powder for utilitarian stage effect (Oju video)

B. A STUDY OF NIGHT

Night is the interaction and conflict between the physical and the spiritual world. The supernatural world which is made more effective here at night reveals the power of a spiritual entity to manipulate the existence of the corporeal being. The man is seen as a tool at the mercy of a supernatural being who uses him for his entertainment.

Another angle to the explanation of this dance is the issue of man's inhumanity to man. This can be clarified from the two major settings in the dance; a man in his home and a sorcerer far away in his abode. The sorcerer has magical powers to encroach on the life of the man and uses him for his pleasure.

The structure of *Night* is both literal and abstract. There is a deliberate attempt by the choreographer to narrate a story where two dancers engage in dramatic interactions and conflict. The two dancers, Abubakar (as sorcerer) and Okon (as victim) have to rely more on their African dance idiomatic experience; an experience which has structured their bodies over the years. It is from this indigenous dance sense (motifs) that personal choreographies are exhibited.



Fig 4: Expressive interaction and conflict (*Night* video)

The opening of the dance reveals the dramatic movement of the sorcerer (handling props made up of a long stick and a broom) to and fro a bench which he occasionally lays on and later runs around. The reason for this is to establish his nature as a sorcerer ready to use his mysterious powers. In the other scene, that is simultaneously set with that of the sorcerer establishes the man in his home who remains still on his chair and slowly moves towards his left with a strange countenance of someone who is being summoned spiritually from an unknown source.

His deportment from his sitting position to when he begins to move around the home is that of a man who appears lost and bewildered. The state of his dance movement before he comes face to face with the sorcerer is that of uncertainty and apprehension. The man's direct contact with the sorcerer moves the dance to another level where he suffers agony under the weight and machination of the sorcerer. The sorcerer rides the man like a horse and smiles on as he inflicts pain on his victim.

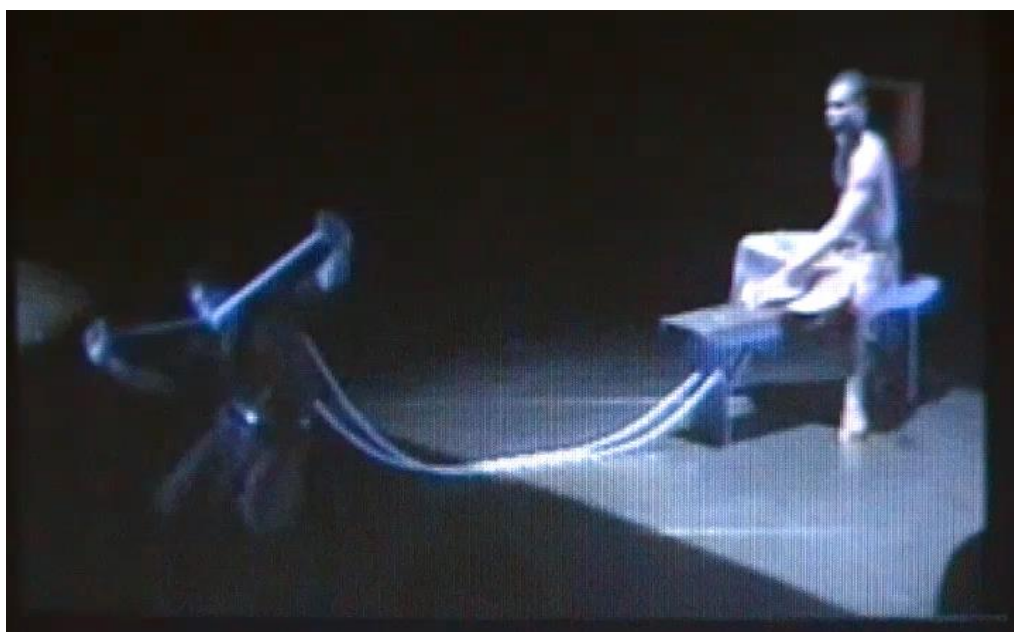


Fig 5: Sorcerer rides his victim (*Oju* video)

When the man finally becomes liberated, we are introduced to another level where he celebrates his victory in exhilarating movement gestures. Movements like the nodding of the head to imply his state of composure, the raising of his right hand as a sign of victory coupled with a broad smile clearly state the man's triumph over his tormentor. Other movements accomplished are twirling on the stage floor, on the bench and pirouetting with the pole as if dancing with a partner. However, the man's moment of exhilaration is short lived as the sorcerer repossesses the man's consciousness and together they execute synchronised dance steps.



Fig 6: Sorcerer repossesses man with his charm (*Oju* video).

Set and props are used in *Night* to achieve its dramatic purpose and to ensure that the subject of the dance is deliberately communicated and understood by the audience. The simultaneous setting of the home and the shrine helps the audience to vividly interpret the scenarios as the events unfolds.

Light is used to enhance the perception of the scenes. The man's home is lit in bright spotlight while that of the sorcerer is reddish which indicates a sense of abnormality. This can be interpreted as a state of danger which is not favourable to the man's existence or well being. This negative circumstance is confirmed when the man becomes haunted by the sorcerer.

Music is used as a functional tool where occurrences in various scenes are enhanced by appropriate musical accompaniment. With the employment of the appropriate music and sound effects, dance movements and moods are interpreted.

III. EVALUATION OF AFRIKA KREATIVE PERFORMANCE STRUCTURE

The composition of Abubakar's dances is mainly based on philosophical and spiritual themes; themes that affect the existence of humanity in general. This thematic direction of his creations is somewhat inspired by some communal and philosophical stories he got from his father and environment while growing up. The employment of traditional concepts with regard to music, costume and props is aimed at demonstrating the national identity of the choreographer which is Nigeria. However, this is sparsely done because he is more interested in making his theme universal, so his stories are developed to support this global enquiry.

Some philosophical titles that are universal in nature in his dance projects generally include *Flesh* and *Blood* which reveals that a living being is composed of the elements of flesh and blood. *Shadow* emphasises that every man will be judged by his actions which include those done in the open and in secret. No matter how hard man tries to conceal his actions, he would always be exposed by his shadow. *In Behind the Mask*, man is born into the world that ordinarily appears to be an easy place to be and survive, but, in spite of the beautiful picture of the world, there are numerous challenges, obstacles and problems which man comes in contact with in the course of his existence. *Night* showcases the life of man being manoeuvred by different forces at night. Night which is the time man is expected to rest after toiling all day is incidentally marked with chaos and restlessness. Man cannot find peace even when he is asleep.



Fig 7: Man being tormented at night, by forces beyond his comprehension (*Night* video).

Another way Afrika Kreative Dance Company makes use of theme is through the employment of indigenous dance motifs and patterns with which some of the dance contents are well communicated to the audience. Dance motifs such as atilogwu, swange and bata dance patterns are used not only to aid communication but to also intensify the Nigerian identity of the contemporary dance piece. The application of these different African dance idioms or patterns reveals the promotion of the *unfundalai* dance technique propounded and developed by Kariamuwelsh.

Abubakar does not speak of a personal technique; rather movements are accomplished with the aim of achieving a broad sense of communication. This is done by moving the instrument with subtlety. The body executes mainly courteous and rigorous movements without showing signs of struggle. Dancers move along the natural alignment of their instruments without coercion but with such ease to demonstrate their ability and flexibility of their bodies. The discipline accorded every dance movement reflects the confidence, skill and maturity of the dancers. The dancers mastery in the art of body movement is sometimes displayed in short acrobatic phrases where the only female dancer in the company, Esther equally participates with virile vigour. This is to demonstrate the equality of the sexes.

Dance phrases are designed and packaged to achieve various objectives. Some of these objectives are exhibited in clear imageries; sometimes they are even dramatic to express such elements as humour, joy, fear, anxiety, and anger. The dramatic essence here is an obvious display of the significance of images to the average Nigerian or African who during verbal communication employs gestures to complement speech. Dance is therefore seen here as a reflection of life which communicates through symbols.

Dance movements are executed in accordance with Rudolf Laban's method of *eukinetics*, which is a branch of choreology. The dancers deploy the four principles of the *eukinetics* movement dynamics which are *weight*, *space*, *time* and *flow*. The dancers may not be very conscious of using them to coordinate the movements, but they can be perceived in the dances and used to analyse the dances produced by the Company. In the application of *weight*, the choreographer, in his awareness of his African background make use of more ground movements or dances that are earth bound. In this case, the application of force to achieve these movements are higher and numerous than the infrequent floating movements which include acrobatic jumps. In the use of *space*, dancers spend more time concentrating movement in their personal spaces than moving around. The reason is that the choreographer is very conscious of passing philosophical themes to the spectators and this can be achieved more with movements that cover less ground at a time. This does not mean that the dancers avoid other spaces apart from their personal spaces. They use other spaces as well though, but not as much as their personal spaces.

Due to the desire of making the dance messages understood by the audience, the Afrikan Kreative Dance Company concentrates more on fluid and flowing movement. This explains why, in the application of the principle of *time*, the movement dynamic is more sustained with the use of quick and sudden movements.

Since dances are designed to communicate ideas to the audience, music is contrived as a complementary art. It helps to intensify the mood of the dance piece by arousing the perception of the audience. Music becomes more of a complementary art, especially in the scenes that have strong expressive movements. A good example is experienced in *Night* where there is a conflict between good and evil. The audience is moved to feel pity for the character 'man' when he is being tormented by the evil character. The soulful song from a female vocalist helps to intensify the mood of the movement of the suffering man enslaved by the powers of the unseen creatures of the night. There is however a change of tune when the man breaks loose with a mid tempo rhythm accompanying his movements.

The employment of sound effects is also geared towards creating different moods. Moments when sound effects are used as well as when movement is done to silence are often loaded with important ideas or meanings. Times like these appear to beckon to the audience to pay special attention to details revealed in the different transitions. Periods of silence also provide room for the body (particularly the feet) to generate sound when they come in contact with the stage floor through sliding, pulling, stamping, jumping and landing.

In addition to the rendition of songs, Afrika Kreative Dance Company also makes use of radio or vocal commentary sounds which may run at different pitches. Commentaries are mostly dramatic to express different emotions such as anxiety, fear and exhilaration. All these emotions are effectively interpreted with relevant dance steps and movements.

Costumes are used mainly to impose aesthetic value on the dance and sometimes to interpret movements. In addition, costumes are also used as casual or pedestrian wears. Dancers can put on jeans or trousers, T-shirts or singlets, and where applicable, stockings for their legs.

Men do not use makeup except for the female dancers who sparingly apply cosmetics to the face. However, makeup is sometimes elaborately emphasised for the purpose of character interpretation. Such is the case with the dance piece titled *Shadow* where Abubakar used theatrical cosmetics to alter his look in order to emphasise the character – Shadow



Fig 8: Abubakar with elaborate facial and body makeup (*Shadow*)

Props to the Afrika Kreative Dance Company are very essential because of their interpretative value. This is why relevant props that help in interpreting the dance are always used. The company sometimes depend on the device of graphical representation in order to drive home its point of view. This is why essential props and other relevant arts of the theatre are creatively utilised as vital complements to the dance. This does not mean that the Company is always dependent on interpretative props and other arts of the theatre to achieve its dances. Performances are still done without them. In this case, that is when interpretative materials are avoided; attention is entirely placed on the aesthetic movement or kinesis of the body. However since the company is always conscious of enlightening its spectators with its philosophical themes, it engages these arts in order to achieve plausible communication. The *Oju* dance is a good example.

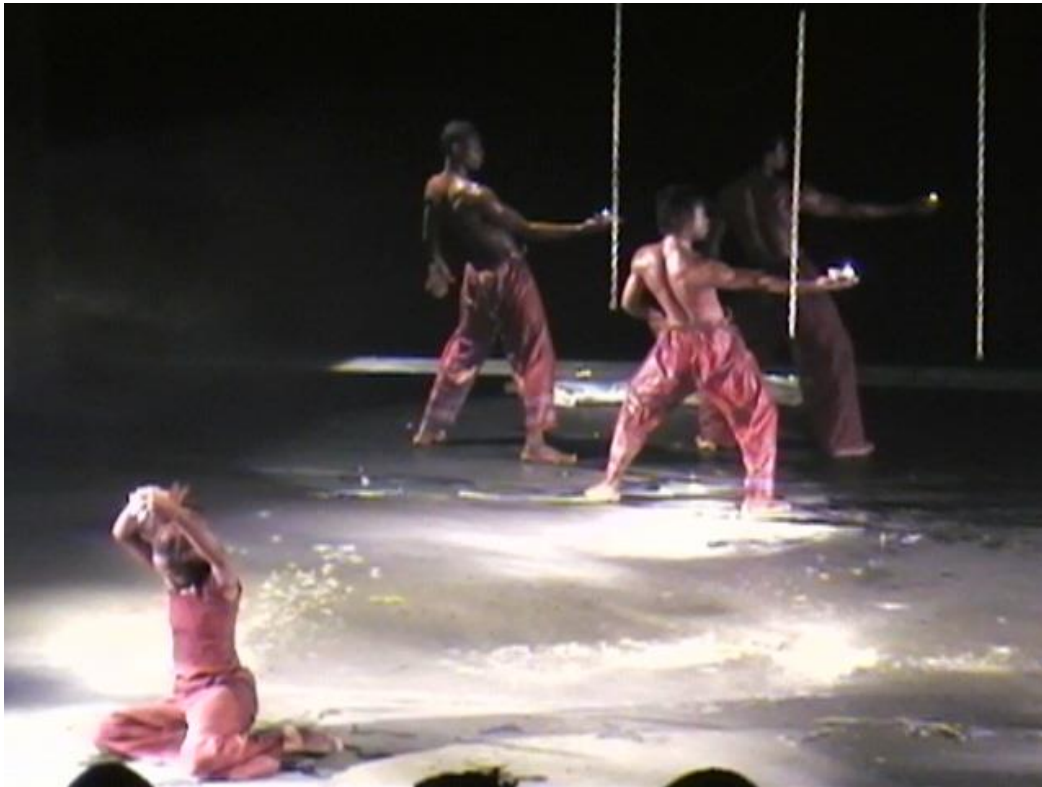


Fig 9: The symbolic importance of the materials deployed (*Oju* video).

In the “*Oju*” dance above, the company makes use of symbolic materials. The oil-lamps in the right hands of the dancers are used to represent divinity. They signify the spiritual eye of the body which Abubakar refers to as the *third eye*. This third eye is the eye of the soul which animates the body into action. It is the vital force of the being which leads him or her on towards achieving his or her goal(s) in life. The hanging ropes which are sometimes manipulated as props symbolise the pathway from earth to the divine or heaven.

The dance, “*Night*” has three characteristic scenes: the home where the man resides, the world of darkness similar to an open field where different spiritual forces operate and the secret abode of a particular nocturnal spiritual being or sorcerer. The home which is lit with a spotlight brings out a definite impression of a living room with a table and two chairs. The open field is in semi-darkness except for the reddish light that reveals the sorcerer’s home. This characteristic light is used to simulate the gloominess of the incorporeal world. The light which illuminates the home of the nocturnal being from behind is covered by a long translucent material from where he performs his evil machinations. One can observe that the use of light, apart from the main purpose of illumination, is manipulated to intensify as well as emphasis different moods in the performance.

The manipulation of light to achieve different purposes is always done with aesthetic interest in mind. The design of shapes with light in addition to the general lighting plot always give a sense of a captivating scenario when beheld at the same time. For instance, in the performance of “*Oju*”, the aesthetic view, such as the simulated moonlight, the three spots, the illumination of the female dancer, the candle lights and the oil-lamps all provide a sense of enchantment on the spectators.

The use of sets is not common except in a few cases where significant locales are established for emphasis. The important thing here is to impose décor that can be deciphered as well as interpret the plot of the dance. However, the application of décor such as a bench, chairs, and table are not only used to establish locales, they are also used as functional materials, to aid and extend body movements, meaning that they are put into locomotive movement during the course of the dance.

Afrika Kreative Dance Company does not limit itself to the proscenium stage alone to perform. Any stage structure is applicable and anywhere is considered appropriate for its dance expression. Unconventional spaces afford Abubakar the opportunity to improvise and make creative use of the available materials around. Moments like these are highly experimental where dance phrases unfold spontaneously with a sense of purpose and will.



Fig 10: Abubakar demonstrates in an open space (AKCD Archives).

Generally, in its contribution towards the structuring of Nigerian Contemporary Dance, Afrika Kreative Dance Company, under the choreographic direction of its founder, Usman Abubakar did not deviate from the foundational structure laid down by Hubert Ogunde and his contemporaries whereby indigenous dance patterns and idioms were adopted side by side exotic dance concepts and expressions. The Ogunde period was described as the folk era because of the secularisation of religious, ritual and traditional materials used in the dance. Usman Abubakar has equally emphasised the use religious or ritual materials to structure dance. These ritual or religious or traditional materials or concepts are perceived in the content of the dance piece, the application of indigenous dance steps and localism of the dance idioms.

Indigenous materials are to a large extent adopted to demonstrate the potency of the native wisdom or philosophy of the African elders who, through different expressive modes such as folklore, anecdotes, wise sayings and proverbs interact with themselves and the young ones with the purpose of developing the society according to customary norms. Afrika Kreative dance structure is carefully woven around these native philosophical concepts. Nevertheless, in spite of the indigenous nature of the philosophy, it is done in a way to incorporate global appeal. This is one of the hallmarks of Nigerian Contemporary Dance whereby indigenous materials are depended upon to transmit messages contained in the dance to the spectator.

There is always a strong desire to communicate different concepts to the spectator so that they can have a good reason to contemplate on the dance during the performance and after. This means that movements can be literal for the audience to understand. However, movements are not always literal in the true sense of the word but can as well be figurative or non-literal with the purpose of tasking the imagination of the spectators to make meaning out of what they see.

Movements are mostly accomplished in an unhurried manner in such a way that the dynamics are fluid and smooth. Even where there are jerky or highly energetic dance movements, they are not done to have sharp and unconnected contradiction to the dance performance. Rather such movements are still done with a sense of ease so that they can be well accommodated within the deliberate characteristic mien of the Company, and such is the case with a many Nigerian Contemporary Dances which are particular about expressing concrete ideas.

IV. CONCLUSION

Nigerian Contemporary Dance has been evolving since the days of Hubert Ogunde when dancers displayed pure bodily movements to the accompaniment of corresponding music played by live musicians. Today, Nigerian Contemporary Dance has joined the global trend of the new media experience. Digital and computer technologies are also used to simulate dance movements, electronic music and sound effects created, especially on the compact disk and deployment of different state of the art lights are used to package dances. The dances are also not always done in synchrony with the music. In fact, music is no longer seen as always influential in deciding the dance movements. In other words, dance can be done alone without waiting to be influenced by music.

Finally, as made evident by the Afrika Kreative Dance Company, Nigerian Contemporary Dance is grounded in indigenous dance patterns and African cultural idioms which are influenced by personal creative movements as well as exotic dance concepts.

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