

A CRITIQUE ON THE ORIGIN OF DRAMA AND THEATRE; AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS OF KALU UKA.

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INTRODUCTION.

In Africa, Theatre is as old as man, starting from the traditions done by our parents, especially our mothers, when they would sing for their children songs, tell folktales, dance and so on. These are parts of theatrical performances which has been in existence, since time immemorial.

One cannot do away with theatre in Africa, because they both work hand in hand, and they are both fundamental to the development of society and the world at large.

THE CRITIQUE AND KALU UKA'S CONTRIBUTIONS.

Research has proven that the origin of drama and theatre in Africa sprang up from traditional African festivals, rituals, ceremonies, folklore, and storytelling, within the circle of the years/seasons. These include the worship of diverse beings and natural forces, the performance of rituals within the festivals, the singing of folk songs, dancing, masking, masquerades, and the costuming and decorations of the human body.

The Anthropologists also suggest that theatre is the enactment of stories by players(actors) that exist in every culture at all times, and the activities, which are primaevial, vary only in form and the extent of interviewing of genres.

This theory or notion about the origin of drama and theatre in Africa is wrong because traditional African festivals and rituals cannot be called drama because they are not textual or literalized. With this, I can say that the definition of drama and ritual stated above is wrong.

"Drama refers to displays of actions to an audience in which there is an imitation of events in the real or supernatural forces".

"Ritual refers to an action which is undertaken to give homage to, obtain assistance from, or in some way intercede with supernatural forces".

To attest to this fact is that many forms of ritual, dance, and other performing arts such as acrobatics, mine dramatized narratives, which are not drama or theatre.

According to P.A. Ogundeji's essay on "Functions and Forms of Traditional Theatre Practice In Nigeria", he says; some earlier scholars have described African traditional performances as "Pre

- drama or Embryonic drama" that contains only "dramatic and quasi-dramatic features" (Mahood 1966, Beier 1967, Finnegan 1970, Echeruo 1973, De Graft 1976).

Some of the reasons usually given by these scholars include the absence of plot, role-play, proper organisation of the performance and that "... they are not meant as entertainment not have produced a professional class of actors" (Beier 1967:243). The reason for this is because African drama and theatre are full of improvised scenarios.

It is said that oral tradition does not suggest a non-textual tradition, but a tradition of rapture on which early texts were documented and preservation of early texts, which shouldn't have different stories concerning the origin of a particular village or town.

Moreover, it was not until, Wole Soyinka, the first African Playwright, though a Nigerian and Hubert Ogunde, the first Playwright in Nigeria, were able to write their plays that we can say that, African theatre and drama started.

Among the contributions made by Kalu Uka on the origin of drama and theatre, is that he insists that, it is in play and not religion that the origins of drama and theatre can be found. To buttress his argument, he proceeds to use the explication of the "Games theory".

Nevertheless, in the games theory, Uka conceives human existence as a game and society as "One Big Games Village". In essence, Uka insist that theatre is a game, it is a play, and all humans are somehow engaged in and are bound to play the game. From the role-play enactments of children playing in the sand to the big roles of parents playing their parts in their various jobs and professions. Etc.

All is a game; playing roles, and assuming characters. Indeed, when scholars of International Politics and Diplomacy speak of the "Games Theory" and associated concepts such as the "Zero-Sum-Game". They are merely affirming that politics is a game, a game of wits, of numbers, survival, and life.

Theatre is a depiction of life, it is therefore a quintessential game. Kalu Uka expatiates that drama begins, derives from, and enlarges into the game that is human societies. All games have rules, the audience comes to the theatre and is ready to play by the rules. They occupy their own space, are aware of the space reserved for performers, and are ready to suspend their disbelief to enjoy and appreciate the play or theatrical event.

Kalu Uka, also contends that creation is the domain of God, the creator who imbues man with the creative impulse, was the one that made it, created it, set up the society, and put the light of knowledge and skills in it. He contends that creativity is innate, God-given and therefore an expression of the inner instinct.

The Philosophical canon underlying Uka's logic of creation and creativity is;

- A) An acceptance that God is the supreme creator and the master Artist.

- B) A recognition that humans are creations of God and can only "express" or "create" what God has already put in them.

This second canon of Uka's leads us to classical Plato's distrust for the creative artist, whose work is perceived as mere photocopies of a copy and therefore fit for banishment from the ideal Republic.

Although, creativity is the heart and soul of theatre, which requires discipline, patience, time, and planning. And it must be nurtured to complete its gestation period.

Kalu Uka explains that the obvious neglect of the arts in Nigeria arises from the "popular" but erroneous weighing of needs on the scale of social utility. He maintains that the apparent lack of understanding of the "intangible, spiritual, non-material, but still vital existence of theatre arts, is responsible for the neglect and poor funding of the arts in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION.

Finally, Kalu Uka evaluates the development of theatre practice in Nigeria and recognizes that the status and profession of the actor have improved considerably. He notes the positive impact of experimentation in the development of theatre, especially in the area of production. He observes that as theatre practitioners continue to improve in arts, the audience remains apathetic.

Uka concludes that communication is the essence of theatre, creation and creativity in the relevance of each artist. He admonishes theatre audiences to see theatre not as a simple desire to relax from the cares, tensions and worries of a challenging world, but as a desire to be renewed through the exciting insights and provocative perceptions of significant topics which is the soul of entertainment. He calls on the audience to seize their rights as the beneficiaries of the theatrical event and offer creative criticisms that could enhance theatre practice and creativity in general.

WORK CITED.

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