

https://dspace.org/

Unheard, theatrically speaking : does the integration of physical theatre and folk media in theatre for development enhance or inhibit communication in community interventions? A case study on Seka Theatre Troupe

Banda, Benne E.

2013-06-06
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/12770

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Contents

Title Page i
Plagiarism Declaration ii
Acknowledgements iii
Dedication v
Abstract vi
List of Abbreviations vii
Appendices viii
List of Photos ix
CHAPTER ONE: THIS RESEARCH 3
1.0 Introduction 3
1.1 Background to the Study 4
1.1.1 Concepts, Terms and Terminologies 5
1.2 Problem Statement 6
1.3 Research Question 7
1.4 Research Objectives 7
1.5 Rationale 7
1.5.1 Motivation 9
1.6 Research Methodology 10
1.6.1 Semi Structured Interviews 12
1.6.2 Sampling 13
1.7 Limitation of the Research 15
CHAPTER TWO: THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND SEKA'S HISTORY 16
2.0 Introduction 16
2.1 Theatre for Development in Zambia: Abridged History 16
2.2 Environment and Nature Conservation: Theatre Campaigns 23
2.3 SEKA Theatre Troupe: It's Abridged History & Work 25
2.3.1 SEKA - Guiding Principle 26
2.3.2 SEKA - Theatre for Development Approach 26
2.3.2 SEKA - Interventions and Performances 28
2.3.3 SEKA – Community and Artistic Training 31
2.3.4 SEKA - Publications 32

2.4 Conclusion..... 32
CHAPTER THREE: AESTHETICS IN THEATRE PERFORMANCE..... 34
3.0 Introduction..... 34
3.1 Traditional & Cultural Arts Aesthetics..... 34
3.1.1 Traditional and Cultural Performance Forms..... 38
3.1.2 SEKA: Access to Folk Art Forms and Traditional Media..... 43
3.2 Visual Aesthetics and Theatre Performances..... 43
3.3 Elements of Physical Theatre..... 47
3.3.1 The Buckland Physical Theatre Vocabulary..... 48
3.4 Elements of Protest Theatre..... 49
3.4.1 Ellenbogen Protest Theatre Practice..... 50
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS..... 52
4.0 Introduction..... 52
4.1 Analysis of SEKA Theatre-making Techniques..... 52
4.1.1 Kusanga Synopsis..... 52
4.1.2 Sankhani Moyo Synopsis..... 53
4.1.3 Analysis of Kusanga & Sankhani Moyo Performance Designs..... 53
4.2 Merging Protest and Physical Theatre Elements in SEKA's Practice..... 55
4.2.1 Analysis of 'Talking Heads' Vs SEKA Performances..... 57
4.3 Analysis of SEKA Interventions Techniques..... 58
4.3.1 Non-threatening communication techniques..... 58
4.3.2 Participation..... 58
4.4 Conclusion..... 58
CHAPTER FIVE:CONCLUSION..... 60
5.0 Introduction..... 60
5.1 Native Cultural Expressions in Theatre-making Techniques..... 60
5.2 SEKA's Integrative Theatre-making Practice..... 61
5.2.1 Why Not Traditional Forms..... 62
5.3 The Funding and Political Environment..... 64
5.4 Conclusion..... 66
5.5 Recommendations..... 68
5.6 Further Research..... 69
BIBLIOGRAPHY71

APPENDIX 1a Sample of Respondents' Data Sheet /Release Form 75
APPENDIX 1b. Sample of Respondents' Data Sheet /Release Form 76
APPENDIX 2 a. Questionnaire for Practitioners 77
APPENDIX 2 b. Questions for Audience Members 79
APPENDIX 2 c. Questionnaire for SEKA Members 80
APPENDIX 2 d. Miranda Guhrs-Rashid Guhrs Response to Questionnaire 81
APPENDIX 3 a. The Honey Bagger Image 84
APPENDIX 3b. The Elephant Image 85
APPENDIX 3 c SEKA's Shelter 86
APPENDIX 3 d. The Baboons Image 87
APPENDIX 3 e. Pre performance Image 88

CHAPTER ONE: THIS RESEARCH

1.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the background to, and essence of the research; what necessitated it, what it hopes to contribute to the academic and non-academic realms of theatre-making; the

parameters within which it was conducted and how it was executed. It also articulates the rationale and motivation behind the research question and objectives. Basically, this chapter introduces this research.

1.1 Background to the Study

Popular theatre from which Theatre for Development stems draws tenets of its theatre practice from traditional popular cultural practices, folk art and media. Zambia is a composite of 72 indigenous tribal groupings and each one is endowed with colourful native cultural art-forms that inform populace. It is a country that boasts a cross-section of performance arts such as *Nyau* and *Makishi* masquerade dances endowed with various symbolic paraphernalia, and traditional ceremonies namely *Umutomboko* of the Lunda, *Nc'wala* of the Ngoni, *Kuomboka* of the Lozi, *Malaila* of the Kunda, *Lwiindi lwa ba Silombe-lombe* of the Toka-Leya and *Ukusefya pa Ng'wena* of the Bemba, to mention a few. The wide array of indigenous cultural practices which traditional art-forms and folk media boast of, offer arts practitioners a robust base of the native cultures' creative expressions.

Despite the proliferation of intertribal marriages, arising from Kenneth Kaunda's nationalistic 'One Zambia One Nation' motto, traditional arts and folk media elements in cultural ceremonies and rituals' practices have remained fairly intact in their tribal homelands, as evidenced in a publication of Zambian ceremonies titled '*Ceremony! Celebrating Zambia's Cultural Heritage*' (2006).

In urban areas though, the authenticity of some of these traditional cultural practices suffered a setback, firstly due to

- the cross-pollination of indigenous cultures and compromised traditional expressions among the job-seeking migrants forced to live together in township clusters, especially in mining towns, where they sought employment
- intertribal and later interracial marriages during the Kaunda led national unity building political strategy which saw youths getting employment and government postings to areas away from their home districts
- the emergence of and exposure to the mass-media propagated western and eastern cultural and religious influences

These factors created a fertile platform for the precipitation of new urban cultures which are mostly devoid of the authenticity of indigenous traditional cultural practices. This putrefaction of

indigenous cultures is evident among both mainstream and community theatre practitioners who are mostly resident in the urban areas, in the design of their plays. And these are the artistes that are actively contributing to educating, entertaining, and informing communities through drama performances and community interventions.

Trends in theatre for development in Zambia have indicated a drastic reduction in the integration of folk art, cultural expression and performance styles and use of traditional media, hence registering low authenticity and creativity in theatre - an arts practice that is universally based on the 'show to tell' principle.

In most Zambian TfD plays high theatricality has given way to 'talking heads', with some arts practitioners blaming implementing agencies, and sometimes funders, as major contributors to the deteriorating quality of their creativity. This is attributed to the rigidity of non-theatre savvy personnel manning implementing agencies whose call is the final say in the design and creative processes of message-specific community interventions developed to work in health, environmental, human rights and other areas of human concern deserving intervention through theatre.

1.1.1 Concepts, Terms and Terminologies

For purposes of this research it is prudent to stipulate the parameters of usage of the key concepts, terms and terminologies.

High Theatricality: Highly energetic, action oriented, physically challenging, visually exciting performance or theatrical spectacle

Physical Theatre: the use of actors' bodies to make images; a performance vocabulary expressed through actors' movement, dance, gait, mime – sometimes with simple props etc; performance with minimal verbal speech

Message-based/Talking heads Approach: A theatre presentation which is devoid of dramatic action and highly dependent on verbally spoken message delivery; also referred to as pamphlet performance

Folk media - the traditional media of a particular community or nation created and used by common folk for communication from time immemorial

Culture: Culture norms traditions that govern a group of people

Cultural Art: Artistic creations born out of cultural practices aimed at communicating a group's/community's values and beliefs systems

Visual Aesthetics: Visually appealing designs comprised of images, crafts and colours

Community theatre: Theatrical performance made for a community that may be performed by community members, professionals, or collaboration between community members and professional theatre artists.

Ritual: collective memories encoded into actions to help people deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies and desires that trouble, exceed, or violate the norms of daily life.

1.2 Problem Statement

Zambia played a strong and important role in the origins of Theatre for Development in the 1970s. It is lamentable that its TfD practice standards seem to have gone into a decline. 80 per cent of its current TfD interventions are noteworthy only for their diminished theatricality. Contemporary TfD practitioners in Zambia seem to have abandoned a 'show to tell' approach, storytelling through visual illustration and performativity, and have become 'talking heads' - delivering messages that the donor requires them to deliver as obedient servants rather than agents of change.

Motivated by a frustration in my own practice as a theatre worker in Zambia, this research is a search for a solution - a search for a 'living theatre', (Brook, 1968) one that speaks to its audience in a way that creates dialogue rather than one-way messaging. Luckily, the landscape is not totally barren. SEKA, a theatre company based in Eastern Zambia has adopted a more charged approach with performances that are visually alive, physical and consultative.

SEKA has been in existence since 2001, originating out of a regional capacity-building initiative called Report-back Africa. Funded by the World Bank, administered by Harare-based NGO Africa Resources Trust (ART) and under the creative leadership of Theatre for Africa (TfA).The project involved training two representatives from all SADC countries to use theatre as a means to promote community based conservation and environmental awareness. SEKA is one of the few legacies of the project to sustain itself - long after the initiative closed.

By critically examining SEKA as a case study I hope to shed light on the impact of integrating physical theatre, folk media and traditional cultural artistic expressions into theatre for development community interventions. And, why there is such a dearth of creativity in the TfD sector in Zambia in general? By examining an apparent ‘success story’, try to determine what

are the conditions needed for highly theatrical and effectively impactful performances to flourish.

This research seeks to establish what impact the integration of physical theatre and folk media into theatre for development has on its communication capacity in community interventions; whether or not it enhances or inhibits communication.

In the process, the research is hoped to excavate the reasons for the deterioration of the aesthetic quality and value of theatre for development in Zambia amidst its visually and physically robust cultural expressions and traditional performances borne in rituals and ceremonies. Can Zambian theatre-making be salvaged from the stagnation it is trapped in?

1.3 Research Question

What impact does the integration of physical theatre and folk media have in theatre for development; does it enhance or inhibit communication in community interventions?

To effectively decipher the above stated question, the research will explore the following:

- What is the contribution of folk art, traditional culture and cultural performances to the visual aesthetics and theatricality of a theatre for development performance?
- Has SEKA effectively integrated physical theatre techniques, folk arts, traditional and cultural practices into its community theatre practice?
- Why have most Zambian Theatre for Development practitioners ignored the theatricality in the traditional cultural practices and settled for the 'talking-heads' mode in their theatre practice?

1.4 Research Objectives

This research was undertaken to

i) Evaluate the impact and contribution of folk media and an array of other cultural practices to the visual aesthetics and theatricality of a TfD performance.

ii) Articulate the reasons and validity for the use of some rituals and elements of folk media and not the others; what prohibitions, causes and effects of these prohibitions are?

1.5 Rationale

Primary among the reasons for undertaking this research is to gain an understanding of the power of colour, image and cultural artifacts at the disposal of theatre-makers within their folk art and traditional media vicinity. It is to challenge Zambian theatre practitioners to decipher the

potential within these elements and their possible use in making worthwhile, engaging and creative performances. Hopefully it will heighten the approach towards a more fully realized aesthetic in performing arts.

As long as Zambian artistes do not take on challenging performance works, it will be very difficult to grow the practice as well as the industry into an admissible stable creative, entertainment and economic activity that will earn the nation any recognition among the world's cache of creative minds. In the same vein TfD impact on the target communities will continue reaping poorer results.

In the face of the growing means of communication through the arts, the Zambian creative industry, especially in the theatre arts, inclusive of both mainstream and Theatre for Development, there seems to be a recession in the creativity and growth of expressive vocabulary in performance. It has become challenging to work in the theatre realm or even compare favourably internationally when one assesses the dynamic configurations of new theatre work which encompasses physical theatre, movement, dance, drama and visual as well as audio aesthetics to stage multi-media productions. There seems to be a critical limitation among Zambian theatre practitioners to undertake highly creative and competitive work, even forty years after independence.

This research will shed light on why there is such a dearth of creativity in the TfD sector lately, and to try to understand the fear that most Zambian thespians, both community (TfD) and mainstream, have of the power of folk culture, symbolism and rituals. It will help to decipher the reasons that discourage the exploration of these art forms that can enhance performance arts in communicating challenging aspects of our lives to the audiences, as well as the theatre arts practitioners in an engaging and creative way for the growth of the practice.

On one hand, the formal academic and scholarly contribution in the arts is lacking immensely but on the other, there is abundant resources and knowledge in the tribal communities readily available for exploration, exploitation and articulation into viable performance works of art. What is hindering that innovation?

This research will endeavour to contribute to the academic writings interrogating the divide that exists between cultural media practices and the performance arts realm for purposes of justifying the need to borrow from the traditional sphere the tenets of communication that are creative, exciting and viable.

The research will document SEKA's theatre model, its strengths and shortcomings in achieving its objectives of serving the communities with correct and well placed passion, knowledge and commitment for positive impact. It will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of Theatre for Development in Zambia.

1.5.1 Motivation

The motivation of this research is borne in my experience as a theatre worker of many years, involved in the field of performance and seeing Zambian theatre-making losing its theatricality in the name of enhancing messaging in community interventions.

SEKA on the other hand, has devised a performance model that has earned it the creative recognition and performance eloquence within the last ten years. Why have other Zambian theatre directors, both community and mainstream, not identified the winning formula[1] over the last forty years and counting? What is the fear inherent in the other Zambian theatre arts practitioners that blinds them from recognizing the efficiency in communication inspired by traditional and cultural art forms, visual aesthetics and physical theatre?

In the Southern African region, and especially in the mainstream theatre and dance realm, physical theatre, movement and heightened theatricality have grown immensely, exploring various subjects and challenging theatre-makers to develop novel and highly theatrical vocabularies.

In most instances, theatre has taken on more 'doing' than 'verbally telling' and exploited local cultural practices, artifacts, gestures and movements inherent in people's traditional everyday lives. But, why have most Zambian TfD practitioners ignored the colour and theatricality readily available in the indigenous traditional cultural practices?

As a theatre practitioner, I note that other than a few productions by groups such as SEKA, Barefeet and Amaombe, both community as well as mainstream, that have made admissible impact in both content and theatricality, a number Zambian shows, such as Tagwamo's theatre performances, have been devoid of strong visual aesthetics, heightened theatricality and engaging choreography reducing their productions to 'talking heads' with very short lifespans. Can the distance between the performance artistes and the wealthy traditional cultural

[1] SEKA Theatre Troupe is Ngoma Award winner for the Best Community Theatre Play 2007. The Ngoma awards are Zambia's most prestigious in the arts.

expressions be bridged in an effort to harness and infuse more creativity and value in our work? Can an investigation into SEKA's model offer the sought answers?

1.6 Research Methodology

As a theatre practitioner undertaking ethnographic research on the receding theatricality due to reduced integration of folk media and traditional art in Theatre for Development, I subscribe to Norman Denzin's contention that challenges the ideas of theory-free or value-free knowledge and research (Denzin, 2003). Previously, if the researcher expressed their own attitude, preconceptions, or value-laden opinion in their research findings, it was deemed inappropriate. Denzin contends that 'every interview and ethnography features the beliefs and biases of the researcher, so the best that can be done is to come forth with them, and view them as clearly as possible.' (Denzin, 2003)

In trying to decipher the reasoning behind decline in high theatricality in performances, it must be understood that focus is set with a bias to my expectations of what makes good engaging and effective theatre. My bias dwells on the belief that messaging must not cripple the theatricality of a performance; that in fact, audiences learn more from heightened theatrical performances because the spectacle that lasts longer in the mind has more impact on the audience.

To research the growing distance between most TfD practitioners and the traditional art forms and folk media, in a country with a robust cache of the native creativity, ethnography's capability to provide a formidable tool for qualitative research while acknowledging the researcher's standpoint adds to the motivation and justification to use it. As Denzin states:

'It is proper for the ethnographer-as-performer, as cultural critic, to take a side, because this is what politically engaged theatre does.' (Denzin, 2003).

The exercise in transparency is vital in defining the basis of interpretation though it defies the 'normal' or previously acceptable doctrines of neutrality in research. It is also relevant in the creation of novel frameworks of thought as it clearly foregrounds the researcher's personal beliefs and values. Performance ethnography is a qualitative research method that "explores how social communities are sustained and their values expressed and sometimes changed through performative practices such as rituals, ceremonies, rites of cultural practice, and oral history" (Goffman, 1959). Performance ethnography accords the researcher an opportunity to interact with a particular moment of lived experience of the people being researched and seeing them in their performative contexts.

This research sourced the bulk of its data from audiences watching SEKA performances on three separate occasions. These audiences were the target recipients of the messages contained in the dramatic performances that SEKA undertook. The theatre-makers and the actors also contributed to the data sourcing through being observed in their rehearsals and through daily informal interactive discussions as well as structured interviews on the elements and choice of techniques employed in their theatre-making and production design.

Taking an ethnographic research approach offered this scholar/researcher the opportunity to explore how integrating folk media, traditional art-forms and physical theatre into community theatre practices contributes or takes away from the effectiveness of TfD interventions. It also accorded the artistes a chance to evaluate and speak about their own work's impact on the communities they engage with.

Performance Ethnography is deemed as a valuable approach on qualitative research which connects performance narratives with research. It gives 'life to people in context, makes embodied practices meaningful, and generates analysis for seeing the conditions that make the socially taken-for-granted [issues] visible as a process.' (Warren, 2006)

This was a predominantly qualitative research focusing on how the audiences' reaction to a performance determines its 'appreciation and emotional fulfillment' obtained from the ingredients that make up the drama. The evaluative method of theatre's potential to change people is not as empirically provable as in science experiments, but through expressed views and responses to set questions, it is possible to determine the qualitative impact of a performance piece.

Geber defines qualitative research method as "a process of inquiry with a goal of understanding a social or human problem from multiple perspectives, conducted in a natural setting with a goal of building a complex and holistic picture of the phenomenon" (Geber, 2008).

The research was undertaken through the analysis of theatre-making techniques utilized on two plays namely *Kusanga* (In the Bush) and *Sankhani Moyo* (Choose Life). The storylines and origins of both plays were discussed through interviews with the creator/director of both shows – Miranda Guhrs-Rashid.

The research mainly evaluated three categories of audiences namely:

i) The typically rural, mostly illiterate senior villagers whose exposure to theatre practices and performance is mostly restricted to their own traditional ceremonies, cultural and ritual practices and some SEKA performances

ii) The young to middle-aged fairly literate villagers with a higher level of exposure to theatre both in their traditional as well as conventional settings other than the villages where this intervention was conducted. These came with some experience of other formats of theatrical performances against which to compare what they were offered by SEKA.

iii) The articulate tour operators in and foreign tourists to South Luangwa National Park where SEKA operates, also exposed to other theatre shows in venues across the world that, though not drama-trained, were enlightened enough to make comparatively viable analysis of SEKA's presentation with other works seen elsewhere.

Finally, the research explored contextual notions of TfD academics and practitioners, physical theatre, movement and dance exponents through informal interviews and desk research. It is prudent to mention here that in undertaking this research, as a theatre practitioner, aspects of auto-ethnography were expedient in the analysis of the obtained data especially that the research findings are not totally value free.

1.6.1 Semi Structured Interviews

Open-ended questions allowed for the interviewees to freely express their assessment of the impact of these interventions. Semi-structured interviews with theatre practitioners also added value to this research. More information on SEKA's work was gathered from project reports, other publications in their custody, and SEKA educational theatre as well as the Kapani lodge websites. (www.seka-educational-theatre.com)

Prepared questions only served as prompts mainly to stimulate further discussion. O'Leary (2004) asserts that the questions in a semi-structured interview may start out fixed but there is freedom to pursue other interesting concepts that may develop in the interview. In this case, semi-structured interviews allowed for the exploration of more complex issues related to the research.

Though the interview questions were in English, in most instances translation was required into Kunda - the local language also spoken by the researcher hailing from Mfuwe.

The traditional interview structure where the interviewer takes on a role of moral authority is not an appropriate stance in an ethnographic research situation. It was the reflexive dialogic interview in which every question was an invitation to tell a story that provided a more appropriate model, as it allows for a more fluid exchange of information and attempts to diffuse the power relations implicit in the old-style researcher-subject model. (Denzin, 2003) This performative interview format aims at recapturing memories of lived experiences because it is inherently dramaturgical and elicits narratives of the self.

However, the major challenge encountered in the process of this research was the insecurity bred by the political dispensation at the time because a few weeks earlier, in an immediate past tripartite election where the Patriotic Front (PF) won the Presidential election, a Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) candidate was voted in as Member of Parliament for this constituency. The people in this constituency felt heavy surveillance by the losing PF candidate and his cohorts whose party was now in power. Respondents were hence suspicious of being singled out to be interviewed separately. It took concerted effort, with minimal success, to convince anyone of them to do a recorded discussion despite assurances that the research was an academic and scholarly undertaking.

It is in environments that are politically charged, such as these, that SEKA endeavours to mitigate conflicts through its community interventions that accords audiences platforms to dialogue and emerge with solutions to their conflicts. SEKA's action research methodology may have recorded success before, but not during this intervention.

1.6.2 Sampling

Sampling is defined as 'how you go about finding a fair section of the people or items to research', (Munro & Munro, 2003) In this research, SEKA theatre troupe is the main sample. It is among the few community theatre entities in Zambia such as Barefeet and Kamoto Community Arts that utilize heightened theatricality and visual aesthetics in their community intervention work.

Some mainstream and TfD theatre-makers and directors are part of the second sample. This unit was for a more concerted look at their experiences in theatre-making and its challenges in Zambia.

The third part of the sample was the target audience, as listed earlier, categorized in three, namely:

1. The mostly illiterate senior villagers
2. The younger fairly literate villagers, and
3. Articulate tourists to and tour operators in South Luangwa,

The fourth part of the sample included academics limited to theatre-making, physical theatre and applied theatre lecturers, some of whom are also practitioners that have researched performance, TfD and communication. I interrogated their work in community theatre interventions, their choice of creative decisions and the basis of those choices in theatre-making. These were vital to check my assumption that the lack of formal arts education in the Zambian academic circles contributed to the reduced initiative to employ these cultural art forms in the creation of new and vibrant theatre work and understanding of TfD's current state in Zambia.

Respondents were interviewed depending on their availability, their own freewill and willingness to share their experiences.

The timing of this research was crucial given the activity schedule and fluidity of SEKA which operates in a rural community whose mainstay is agriculture. The targeted audiences are usually busy in the fields in the planting season. And tourist lodges and safari camps too are closed because the roads in the area become impassable during the rainy season.

October was the initial target for the research fieldwork but that got derailed due to logistical and scheduling constraints. It was only undertaken in November, hence the initial sample of other TfD practitioners changed during the actual research for reasons of availability. The sample had to fit within the research timeframe despite the variance of its make-up.

Another aspect found wanting among most TfD practitioners was record keeping. Most of them do not have copies of the monitoring and evaluation reports for the interventions they undertook to avail this researcher formidable evidence of the impact of their work.

The research mostly considered SEKA's creative decisions and choice of folk art and traditional media elements integrated from the cultural practices of the Kunda people and tracked the effectiveness in communicating desired messages. Then impact of their interventions was evaluated by undertaking an ethnographic survey among the owners of the traditional cultural practices SEKA uses.

Therefore, the research's proficiency was fairly compromised.

1.7 Limitation of the Research

The intention of this research was not to interrogate physical theatre, movement or dance as stand-alone practices in performance but as they relate to the theatre-making of TfD productions. Physical theatre is a whole performance field in its own right and it would require a dedicated study to decipher. But elements of movement and physical expression are part of the high theatricality espoused in performances both for aesthetic purposes as well as being an expressive performance and choreography vocabulary used to communicate pertinent messages in the subtlety of its composition. While it remains appealing to the eye, it carries a visually cognitive message that remains imprinted on the mind of audience members.

CHAPTER TWO: THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND SEKA'S HISTORY

2.0 Introduction

This chapter frames the context of Theatre for Development by outlining the abridged history of Theatre for Development and giving a perspective of how it took root in Zambia. It then narrows down to theatre for nature and environment conservation from where SEKA theatre troupe emerged. It deals with SEKA's origins and history, its works and some major projects undertaken.

2.1 Theatre for Development in Zambia: Abridged History

Theatre for Development, initially called Popular Theatre in the 1970s, emerged in Zambia propelled by the enthusiasm of expatriate University of Zambia (UNZA) lecturers - Michael Etherton and Andrew Horn, both affiliated to UNZA's English Department since the 60s. Etherton was influenced by the work of Canadian-born Botswana-based educationist Ross Kidd who was undertaking an experimental project called 'Laedza Batanani' - a non-formal education project which attempted to follow a Freirian model in Botswana. It was 'an attempt to use drama and other performance forms, combined with discussion as a vehicle for community education.' (C. P. Epskamp, Kees Epskamp 2006)

Etherton's interest, like that of Kidd, was to utilize the universities as sites to experiment and research a variety of theatre models. Etherton went on to experiment with the pseudo-participatory nature of the Kidd-led Laedza Batanani theatre model which allows the involvement of villagers as actors, audience, and discussion members without allowing control over the process and direction of change, when he moved to Ahmadu Bello University. .

Etherton went on to apply variations to that theatre intervention model and further engage and collaborate with theatre workers such as Dickson Mwansa and Mapopa Mtonga, who was also linked to Tikwiza theatre and UNZA's Chikwakwa Theatre. Tikwiza emphasized indigenous and symbolic theatre techniques in its work.

Chikwakwa was a theatrical movement prompted by the 'Drama Department of the University of Zambia as a result of its resolve to be of service to society.' (Epskamp. 160/1) Chikwakwa was not only aiming at taking theatre to the people but also researching and stimulating indigenous performing arts.

Popular theatre practice's experimental models quickly gained momentum and recognition in Zambia by private initiatives such as aid and development organisations working in the health,

adult education and agricultural sectors, which supported the hosting of the Chalimbana Workshop of 1979 held 30 km east of Lusaka. (Epskamp, 2006)

This workshop, involved five neighbouring communities of Chalimbana, coming together with cultural and development workers and dramatists from Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana and Lesotho to develop a set of plays on subjects proposed by the villagers.

Among the objectives of the workshop was to demonstrate the impact of popular theatre as a means of adult education and development. This workshop enabled participants to collect and combine their skills for practical work in planning, organizing and evaluating development-oriented theatre programmes in rural districts. (Epskamp, 2006)

Etherton, together with Horn, left Zambia for their involvement in the UNZA student demonstrations of 1971. Etherton moved to Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria where he continued to share his experiences and expertise experimenting with a development communication model that begins at the base of society. (Kerr, 2004)

Gradually, Popular Theatre grew as part of a social movement into many parts of Africa and the developing world under different names such as Theatre for Community Animation, Theatre for Integrated Rural Development and Theatre for Development because it was being prevalently used to support developmental work covering health, water and agriculture (Abah, 1997). It was regarded as and called popular theatre because it mainly rode on the back of popular arts - song, idiom, puppetry, dance and storytelling – the vital elements of folk/traditional media - to deliver the desired messages.

Since its initial years, TfD has developed from merely playing the social function of 'keeping in touch with the community' for Africans (Kerr 1995) to being a vital communication, education and social science research tool utilising specialist formats and modes such as Participatory Action Research (PAR), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). In Zambia it has become 'a major tool for investigating and disseminating information and organizing people in matters of development' (Mwansa, 2009) and individual as well as community empowerment.

Theatre for Development techniques, methodologies and elements have been extensively utilized in the various other interventions encompassing human rights, labour and community disputes, including corporate image and team building, environment and nature conservation. Most of the TfD models are applicable in diverse situations of oppression, disempowerment and other forms

of injustices that require mitigation in the format espoused by the tenets of Paulo Freire (1978) and Augusto Boal's (1979) work around poetics and theatre of the oppressed theories.

Folk stories, songs and idioms hold a lot of power in framing a community's values and laying the parameters of expectations for a good and law abiding citizen. They are intricately woven with local wisdom and are evidence of the community's desire to address their plight, provide checks and balances and find solutions through creating the awareness required for making informed decisions in life. It is therefore the creative and artistic skill of a TfD practitioner to recognise the plasticity and capability of the chosen medium - stories, songs and dances - that requires sharpening to effectively imbed development messages and newly conjured content into them. Parallels can be drawn to raise attention, for instance, to initiatives that can empower and propel a community to success even through dilemma folk stories told around the fireside.

Formats such as dilemma folktales pose a dilemma situation to encourage the listeners to discuss, decipher and devise the best and most plausible ending from which others can also learn. These are often open ended tales offering multiple endings and the audience is left with the task to own the solution to the dilemma. Kebaabetswe, as quoted by Dickson Mwansa, attests that it is at that point that the community starts to enjoy and exercise power in their own lives.

'Power begins when one gains the confidence and ability to analyse their own social and economic situation, articulate challenges, propose possible [solutions] …[f]urther, empowerment requires recognition of structural barriers and making efforts to change such barriers (Kebaabetswe at al 2002:517).' (http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/pdf/Mwansa.pdf accessed on January 14, 2012)

Unfortunately, vividly evident in this process of growth and deeper integration of theatre into development work in Zambia, the use and exploitation of popular arts elements has been notably diminishing from the theatre-making practice. The theatricality drawn from the use of popular arts, enhanced by colourful traditional visual aesthetics, has receded and theatre performance has seemingly dammed into a spoken -message transmission mode. It has become more popular to 'speak the message verbally' than theatrically 'saying it through performed actions.'

Three highly rated contributing factors identified as responsible for the receding theatricality in TfD practice in Zambia are:

i) Who Pays the Piper Calls the Tune

Project implementers, mainly development aid agencies and NGOs such as Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia (PPAZ) or Society For Family Health (SFH) and sometimes funders too, demand for a specific design or means to deliver their desired message. In an anti-malaria Insecticide Treated Mosquito Net Distribution project undertaken in Samfya, under Zambia Integrated Health Project (ZIHP) in conjunction with Ministry of Health between 2001/2 we were given a framework of how to undertake the awareness project in the fishing camps around Lake Bangweulu. The ZIHP team in charge of the PowerNET/PowerCHEM project was comprised of communication specialists who could not entrust our theatrical team with the design of the workshop plans to use for forum theatre interventions. In as much as it may not be claimed that the misuse of Mosquito Nets was because of the poor communication strategy, when we returned for further evaluation of the impact of the intervention in Samfya district, it was discovered that the nets were being used for fishing. The ZIHP communication specialists involved were adamant against engaging theatre methods to deliver the desired message. ZIHP had little exposure to and minimal confidence in TfD methodologies, let alone in theatrical interventions as proven effective channels of communication. They could not appreciate the efficacy, capability and capacity of a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process or any Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) methodologies of TfD designed around a theatrical intervention.

Yelesani Zulu, from Chipata Jungle Theatre also confirmed in an interview that development project implementors such as ZIHP did the baseline survey, designed a project plan and contracted a theatre group such as Chipata Jungle Theatre to perform.

> Initially we were used as bait for the audiences; just a community mobilization tool. What mattered to them at first was whether the group had its own instruments and enough songs and dances from the area they were going to work in. We would play the drums while driving around in the back of a Landcruiser to attract attention. We worked like publicity posters announcing where the show was going to be.' (Yelesani Zulu, 2011)

Chipata Jungle Theatre was contracted to perform urban versions of traditional dances and comic skits that were attractive and entertaining enough to hold the audience. The implementing agency then used its peer educators to engage with the audiences while the performers' role turned into that of chaperoning the crowd and maintaining order. Mostly, performances were devoid of

content on the subject matter, lest they misinformed the community, the implementers feared. Being a city based group of grade 7 and grade 9 school drop-outs, Chipata Jungle was restricted to working in the urban projects as their repertoire did not include any authentic songs and dances from any specific tribal areas out in the provinces.

Twesheko Travelling Theatre in Luapula worked similarly to Chipata Jungle Theatre. They too were restricted to Luapula because they were more articulate with the dances, songs, idioms and practices of their area. They had perfected their repertoire of traditional dances though they were struggling with the dramatic side of their performances; relying more on ill-structured comic sketches.

When they stared integrating HIV/AIDS and development messages into their sketches, their NGO partners started exercising control, not only of the content but of their presentation style too; urging them to focus more on the message. Paradoxically, these are entities that insisted on the theatre groups being drama experts.

Both Chipata Jungle and Twesheko Travelling theatres succumbed to the caprices of the funders and implementing agencies such as Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia (PPAZ) and Society For Family Health (SFH), to share their information with the target communities and compromised their folk theatrical antics to take on the verbose 'talking heads' performance models in their community interventions, in order to stay in business. The project managers and implementers demanded message delivery with clarity through speech, as the ultimate way of delivering the intended information to the audiences.

Since the advent of HIV in the early 80s, the prevalence of these demands by those in control of the money and the inability to defend the theatrical repertoire and vital elements of the practice by the hired groups corroded the growth and articulate integration of folk art and culturally expressive aspects of performance into their work. The situation stifled the survival of high theatricality ambitions of most Zambian TfD practitioners. It has become a norm to see community theatre shows in Zambia reduced to loquacious 'talking heads' presentations.

Our Cultural Media and Arts Development (CULTMEDIA) research team was also confronted by a funding agency and its local representatives, in Nchelenge when conducting a baseline survey for an action research undertaking in the mid-90s when Zambia was planning to implement a fishing ban. CULTMEDIA, in a planning session, proposed the use of physical theatre techniques in a site specific piece deriving colourful movements, dances and costumes

from the elements of the Umutomboko ceremony in eliciting local people's views on the regulating of fishing in Lake Mweru. That was met with objection, not only for fear of offending Mwata Kazembe or sacrilegiously trespassing in a religious site, but also that there was a risk of 'the people not fully engaging and digesting the seriousness of the problem at hand because it the message would be drowned in the comical theatrics.'

They demanded that the message should be packaged in a simpler 'pamphlet style' presentation that would end with a focus group discussion facilitated by the implementing agency personnel. Evidently, they did not appreciate the power of performance and its ability to deliver.

ii) Racing Against Time

In the advent of HIV and AIDS, the urgency to maximize outreach in the shortest possible time negatively impacted the quality of theatre-making for the community interventions. There was minimal financial and intellectual investment into the scripting, rehearsal and production aspects of play used in the interventions. What became primary was the rapid turn-around of plays and performances than their theatrical quality. Chimba Chanda of defunct Tigwilizane Theatre attested:

> It was a matter of turning up with a play in a language of the target community. There was no time to rehearse or think about anything else, just do the storyline and take it to them. (Chimba Chanda, 2011)

There were more resources assigned to the administrative teams than there were to the theatrical production costs. The local implementing agencies' personnel were said to have been paid exorbitant allowances compared to the contracted theatre practitioners, without regard of what resultant impact the interventions had.

The resultant impact of this 'race against time' scheme not only killed the drive among the theatre-makers to do creative work but may have also taken away from the intended purpose of the interventions. Most community based NGO's subsequently failed to survive after failing to account for their funds at the end of their cycle. With the demise of such NGOs, Community based organisations and implementing agencies, so did theatre groups.

iii) Talent Without Skill

Lack of formal training in theatre and dramatic arts disabled theatre practitioners such as Chipata Jungle and Twesheko Community theatres to convince the funders and implementing agencies on the viability and capacity of theatre to deliver in various formats. They did not have foolproof

models and proven intervention examples to back their claims. They had not developed concrete evaluation models either. So, they were without an option but to take whatever was offered to have some work for an income.

The Zambian theatre scenario, both mainstream and TfD, has been characterized by a weak academic base which is incapable of buttressing the immense talent with appropriate skills to strive through challenging times with a consistent battalion of arts practitioners. There is never a shortage of talented people to participate in theatrical projects in community interventions but, evidently they are only there while they look for real jobs. Only a handful have survived the scathing challenges of the theatre industry in Zambia.

'How long can I be waiting in the wings to be told that I have a real job and can live on it?' asked Agnes Mulimbika when she got a role in a Zambian television soap opera. Agnes had been on a number of TfD and mainstream theatre projects but she never felt secure enough. What is easy to notice though, is what is also glaringly present in most Zambian theatre practitioners; their dire inability to pursue arts academics at a professional level. If they could, that insecurity would probably have no place among them.

This is where SEKA has an edge over a lot of Zambian groups because it is founded on an artistic leadership with a professional base of academic training. It invests in both the theatre-making practice and every opportunity to learn and gain from productive exposure.

> As we went on however, we drew ideas from other productions and companies, like traveling to see the Lion King, as well as seeing productions at festivals etc. We try and evolve and incorporate new ideas all the time. (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

Hence, there are still too few TfD/community theatre groups, such as SEKA, that integrate the use of physical theatre and elements of folk media and visual aesthetics in their practice. SEKA insists that those are aspects of theatre-making and performance that consolidate their messaging in the community interventions they undertake.

However, lately TfD in Zambia has gained a number of trained and dedicated actor/facilitators, streamlined its methodologies and approaches. Groups such as Kamoto Community Arts has three Witwatersrand University graduates in Applied Theatre and Theatre for Development namely George Chamoto Daka, Mary Manzole and Philip Kaluba; Soweto Theatre has Richard Mwanza; Women in Theatre has Tutu Malamamfumu and Irene Maboshe who runs a private Applied Theatre consultancy. It is upon these few practitioners that hope is being built to salvage

the lost treasure borne in the folk media and visual aesthetics that can contribute to high theatricality and forceful performances to reckon with.

2.2 Environment and Nature Conservation: Theatre Campaigns

In 1996 Theatre for Africa (TfA) presented a vibrant blend of physical and musical theatre titled *Guardians of Eden* commissioned by the Southern African Sustainable Use Group (SASUG) at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress (WCC) in Montreal, Canada. SASUG's objective was to articulate southern Africa's sustainable use position projected in the Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) concepts. This intervention and the process that followed led to the emergence of the southern African regional initiative and theatrical movement from which SEKA was born.

Nicholas Ellenbogen, founder of TfA, who has trained practitioners around Southern Africa working in conservation of natural resources through boundary breaking performances staged in unconventional conditions and spaces states that:

> In Africa theatre is everywhere, indoors and outdoors, day and night, under trees, in houses, with drums and stories, everyone joins in; it is highly energetic: drama, mime, dance, poetry, song, drumming, acrobatics'. (http://www.capetown.at/letters/ellenb.htm)

Despite *Guardians of Eden* being a 'side-event' at the IUCN congress, it took centre-stage and dominated discussions as one of the most popular events there. The performance captured both the practical struggle of people living in proximity to protected game sanctuaries, as well as the intellectual premise behind CBNRM policies. It gave a voice and added a human face to environment and nature conservation. *Guardians of Eden*'s impact on the WCC led to congress' adoption of several progressive resolutions on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Theatre's contribution to articulating the community concerns and raising awareness amongst implementing agencies, donors and policy-makers at such a high profile event validated its own value in providing a mechanism to communicate community perspectives. It raised its stakes of appreciation and validity as a proficient tool of communication.

Such appreciation – coinciding with increased international awareness about the need for, and difficulties associated with ensuring that community perspectives were considered in the policy making process – proved to be the catalyst for further utilization of theatrical interventions as a tool for public participation.

Key individuals within the CBNRM movement recognised the role of theatre in the effective dissemination of its policies and strategies and implementation of its programmes among the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, namely: Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SADC countries were signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Acknowledging the necessity to foster collaboration among SADC countries, the signed convention also necessitated uniformity in their approach to natural resources management and serving of the eco-system. A regional initiative was hence launched through the Community Outreach Programme (COP). This was, as stated earlier, collaboration between Africa Resources Trust (ART) – providing the technical support, and Theatre for Africa – providing the creative input. COP could only benefit the ecosystem more efficiently and cost-effectively through exchanging information and best practices across its catchment by ensuring that consistent messages were being developed for, and disseminated to all. The emphasis was on "bottom-up" messaging rather than "top-down".

To achieve that, in the COP project conceptualisation phase, the design team visited each SADC country, identifying appropriate local implementation partner institutions which were vital in developing the details and designing project implementing activities for each respective participating country. A local NGO as lead partner, a local theatre group and a relevant government Ministry were the most sought after and critical ingredients for this initiative to bear required results. Each country then contributed two individuals from among its theatre workers to COP's required core team of 'actor-facilitators'. From Zambia Miranda Guhrs-Rashid and Msatero Tembo got onto the project.

TfA and ART conducted an intensive four months' training for this team of 14 to enhance their acting, facilitating and directing skills. They also received intensive training in facilitation and community extension skills from CBNRM trainers in Namibia. These 'actor-facilitators' represent a unique contribution that the Community Outreach Programme has made to CBNRM. They are professionally trained actors, who are also experienced and knowledgeable in CBNRM issues as well as expert facilitators.

As part of the four months training, they produced and internationally toured *A Light in the Night of President Khaya Afrikha*. In the typical TfA style, the play exhibited uncanny physical theatre elements, high theatricality, imagery merged with visual aesthetics and story-telling. Miranda

Guhrs-Rashid and Msatero Tembo from Zambia were among the 14 graduates of TfA performing in this show.

2.3 SEKA Theatre Troupe: It's Abridged History & Work

SEKA is a Theatre for Development troupe born out of an initiative to use theatre in addressing environmental and nature conservation issues. It is a troupe based in Mfuwe, South Luangwa National Park, a wildlife sanctuary and game management area, locally called Malambo, in the Eastern Province of Zambia. SEKA, which means laugh in Kunda, is an acronym for Sensitising and Entertaining through Kunda Arts. The troupe comprises of a diverse group of people, mainly drawn from villages in and around the game management area for whom living with wild animals is a daily reality. (www.normancarrsafaris.com).

> 'Seka was born out of a southern African regional programme, We were trained by Theatre for Africa, a South African company that uses minimalist physical theatre techniques to great success.' (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

SEKA has grown to become a popular entity of TfD artistes who create theatre to address pressing issues in their community.

In the late 90s, a World Bank funded Report Back Africa (RBA) project drew two performance artistes from each of the seven Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries to undertake a Community Outreach Project (COP) specialised training programme. The programme was focused on action research and other theatre-based research techniques under TfA in Cape Town. COP challenged and mandated each country team of actor-facilitators to establish a theatre company in their own country that would farther the conservation concerns, interests and policies of CBNRM programme.

Upon returning to Zambia, after graduating from their four months training in Cape Town, Miranda Guhrs-Rashid and Msatero Tembo formed SEKA Theatre Troupe in 2001.

Rhodes University trained Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, who grew up in Mfuwe, is the main trainer. She is bred of a conservationist grandfather - Norman Carr – who is among the earliest settlers in South Luangwa, and her parents, Vic and Pam Guhrs, who are both visual artistes.

Miranda Guhrs-Rashid works in close consultancy with Tamara Guhrs-Schultz, her sister. Tamara is a theatre practitioner who specialises in writing, design and facilitation, among other creative work. She also comes from a strong physical theatre and visual aesthetics background in performance, having obtained her Master of Arts in Dramatic Arts on the *Chewa* performance

practice, the *Gule wa Mkulu*, or *Nyau* masquerades from Rhodes University. She writes plays and contributes artistic and research guidance to SEKA.

And Msatero, drawing experience from his prior exposure to a combination of protest and physical theatre with an extremely demanding creative edge and apprenticeship work with TfA under the directorship of Ellenbogen, he made the perfect half of the Zambian team to have a platform at home to practice his acquired skills; including those from the regional training programme.

Msatero, also a full-fledged TfD actor, trainer and director, had worked in theatre for development for over fifteen years within which time he toured Europe and America with various theatre productions. He was also instrumental in all of SEKA's work until his death in 2010.

Miranda and Msatero's exposure to physical theatre and its benefits gave SEKA the advantage of starting on a stricter physical theatre performance format that emphasized a highly stylized and heightened theatre-making process.

The troupe, whose primary goal is to create a visual spectacle that contains educational messages employs a vibrant blend of visual aesthetics and cultural media namely puppetry, traditional objects, song, dance, storytelling to physical theatre to enhance the messaging in its effort of effective communication through theatre performances. (www.seka-educational-theatre.com).

2.3.1 SEKA - Guiding Principle

SEKA's guiding philosophy lies in the belief that laughter is a way to make intimidating issues more manageable and "a well-conceived theatre piece can do in 15 minutes what 3000 hectares of flipcharts cannot achieve. Educational theatre does not need to patronize, over simplify or lecture its audience.

Communities, no matter how poor, marginalised or dispossessed, comprise of people. These people are capable of generating their own solutions. They have a voice, (it just needs to reach the right people). They have solutions (they just need to be heard). People are the agents of their own change. Culture is a critical aspect of any development programme. Human beings and bio-diversity can co-exist peacefully. (www.seka.educational.com)

2.3.2 SEKA - Theatre for Development Approach

Action research is SEKA's preferred research methodology because it simultaneously assists in practical problem-solving and expands scientific knowledge, as well as enhances the

competencies of the respective actors. The problematic social situation gets performed collaboratively in an immediate setting using data feedback in a cyclical process aiming at its increased understanding, including the understanding of change processes in social systems. Its undertaken within a mutually acceptable ethical framework. Miranda Guhrs-Rashid usually leads these projects.

SEKA advantage is that its artistes are part of the community they operate in. Auto-ethnography contributes to their research work fairly immensely, according to Bernard Banda, one of the SEKA's leading actors. Most times SEKA assigns the artistes to specific areas within the community to live among the people and collect ethnographic data which they come to collate, discuss and analyse to identify the community's feelings on an issue and how best it can be tackled.

SEKA uses action research and awareness performances to raise awareness within the community on the issues affecting them. By living in the targeted areas for a length of time, the actor-researchers are able to fully understand the issues at stake before creating interactive plays to address these issues. The participatory nature of the performances allows SEKA to verify their findings in addition to encouraging the audience to take ownership of their issues as well as to suggest and implement the solutions to these concerns. Miranda Guhrs-Rashid notes that:

SEKA has a reputation amongst people in its areas of operation for bringing a sense of fun to the serious issues that people face. The fun is not just for its own sake - it enables people to feel more empowered to take on the issues that face them. The troupe has tackled the problems of elephants raiding gardens, HIV/AIDS education, children's rights, litter and natural resource management, among others. Each performance leads to action - as people discuss solutions to the challenges raised, and draw up plans to make change happen.

Denzin encourages transforming field notes into a performed text; tying the idea of the cultural text (in the sense of Geertz) into an anthropological and ethnographic performance though his outlook is that 'culture is the performance of the text, where the text might be something else that lies underneath'. The culture is not a static text, but the ongoing process and performance which gains meaning when it is enacted. In practice SEKA has encompassed two to three combinations of ethnographic approach namely:

a) Traditional ethnography which tries to define a culture to increase the cultural knowledge and awareness of the audience

b) Performance ethnography which performs rituals of everyday life and uses the idea of performance both as a method for practice and as a means for understanding, and
c) Autoethnography which entails that the researcher includes personal autobiographical accounts into the research.

The processes that SEKA employs are guided by the needs of the community, rather than imposing an outside agenda. The questions asked in the processes are of authority: Whose story is this? Who has authority over it? Who does the telling? The stories are treated in a way that they are liminal, open, and unresolved, so that they would not be presented as complete or answered. This two way communication allows the content of the development programmes to be shaped according to the people's needs.

'When used effectively, theatre stimulates action rather than allowing debate to stagnate at a 'talk-shop' level', said Miranda Guhrs-Rashid.

2.3.2 SEKA - Interventions and Performances

As a TfD entity SEKA has defined its area of work to include community interventions addressing issues of concern firstly among the people of the community within which it operates before widening the scope to aspects outside its local parameters. As it is based in a wildlife sanctuary, and it came into being out of a Community Outreach Programme's environment and nature conservation awareness raising campaign, SEKA's primary work is focussed on saving the ecosystem and mitigation of wildlife and human conflicts.

In this realm it has undertaken the land use planning intervention which ran from 2001 to 2003, funded by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in conjunction with the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA). It used TfD to research and elicit people's views on the sensitive and highly politicised land use in the Game Management Area of the South Luangwa National Park. SEKA helped to raise people's awareness on Land Use Planning and through a play, took the people's concerns and views to the annual key stakeholder meeting.

Owing to the impact of the Land Use Planning intervention, SEKA was commissioned by Mid-Zambezi Elephant Project (MZEP) to create a play on the concept of using chilly-peppers to deter elephants from villages and crops. It was also funded by WWF. The project ran from June 2002 to December 2005.

In similar lines SEKA performed *Kusanga* and *Horn of Sorrow* to highlight the plight of wildlife and initiate concern and action from the human populace resident in and out of the game management areas.

1. **Kusanga Performances - Wildlife and Human Conflict**

a) *Problem:* Poaching and indiscriminate abuse of wildlife and natural resources

Solution: Controlled hunting and appreciation of wildlife; mitigated relationship between wildlife and the human community. (www.seka-educational-theatre.com)

2. **Sankhani Moyo Performances – HIV and AIDS Interventions**

SEKA's operations are not limited to these predetermined parameters of natural resource and wildlife conservation; HIV/AIDS is a grave cross-cutting concern and SEKA delves into work addressing the spread of the scourge for its community and beyond. This affliction is a concern for everyone interested in the wellbeing of the community they are working in. SEKA has exploited the opportunity of being the only theatre entity based in South Luangwa to tackle the HIV/AIDS fight head-on with a play titled *Sankhani Moyo*.

a) *Problem:* Uncombated Spread of HIV & fear of testing

Solution: People taking the initiative to test and know their status and hopefully making the first move towards a more responsible lifestyle. Performances recorded some of the highest responses. By the end of the initial run of the interventions more than ten audience members turned up for HIV testing, attesting to the impact the shows had on them.

The play urges the community to test for HIV and be able to make informed decisions on their lives and the future of their families. *Sankhani Moyo* has been performed in most of the lodges and villages and around the country and in festivals for more than four years.

3. **Anti-Litter Campaign**

Problem: Increased Litter in the Chiefdom

Solution: The community implemented the indiscriminate use of litter bins and embarked on the regular clean-up campaigns.

This project is among the most successful interventions to date for SEKA. It came in late 2006 when SEKA was approached by Chief Kakumbi to undertake an Anti-Litter Campaign within the South Luangwa area. SEKA was commissioned to create a play to tackle the increasing litter problem in the chiefdom. With funding sourced from National Breweries, SEKA researched and

created a play which initially ran ten shows to over 3,600 people. The project which started February in South Luangwa went on through to March.

Its success led to a wider programme, where a new play was developed and performed country wide to more than 11,200 people from August until November 2007. Various solutions, from litter bins to clean up campaigns have since been implemented.

4. Best Choice Practices

Among numerous other projects SEKA has included issues concerning the rights of children and their wellbeing. It undertook Best Practice and Reclaim projects, sub-contracted by American Institutes of Research (AIR), in both Zambia and Mozambique respectively.

SEKA used its TfD methodologies - action research, participatory theatre, and special groups training to conduct community mobilization. It also undertook the baseline, mid-term and final surveys to gauge community awareness on the benefits of education and the negative consequences of child labour. In the research SEKA surveyed knowledge levels of government policies and laws pertaining to education and child labour.

Activities included creating and performing participatory awareness raising dramas; training field workers and special groups; developing a two year radio programme; and supervising community and school awareness raising activities.

During research SEKA worked with the social, economic and cultural reasons for the child labour, people's perceptions and suggested interventions. The identified issues were then woven into the plays, used in interventions. Some of the solutions to the challenges were:

a) *Problem:* Lack of Teachers' Houses and Classroom Blocks.

Solution: Community members built classroom blocks and teachers houses (they moulded the bricks, ferried the sand and other building materials)

b) *Problem:* Children finding Cattle Herding more Interesting than School.

Solution: Parents came up with a duty roster for herding the cattle to allow the children to go to school. Children herded cattle on the weekends. Parents built 'play parks' in the schools using natural materials to make school more enticing for the children.

c) *Problem:* Early pregnancies – Under-age Girls Getting Pregnant

Solution: We collaborated with the Community's initiation teachers to add an HIV component to the initiations processes. The content of the initiation teachings are sometimes explicit, leading to

children wanting to experiment sexually at an early age. These workshops were conducted in a very sensitive manner and with great success.

A tailor-made play titled *Njala* which told the heroic journey of a subsistence farmer from Malambo is another production which has been seen internationally, says the SEKA website. The farmer rises to the challenge of voicing the concerns of his community attracting the attention of IUCN Environment Centre, the community kraal and the forestry programme of the congress. They took part in discussions for 'local voices global choices' and got nominated for the prestigious Equator Initiative Awards.

Njala and another play called Nsendamila both used a range of traditional media and folk art in theatre-making techniques, from traditional song, dance and storytelling to puppetry.

5. International Collaborations

In conjunction with Sovanna Phum, a Cambodian theatre Company, SEKA and various southern African artists under the name of KampuchAfrique performed for the World Conservation Congress in Bangkok.

This brought together a unique blend of Asian and African artistic traditions, telling the story of their communities and delivering a message to the Congress on their behalf through song, dance, storytelling, humour and music.

Being part of the bigger whole, as mandated by COP and SADC on the concerted unified regional approach to saving the ecosystem, SEKA has also undertaken international collaborations researches, trainings, and tours to international environmental conferences, the World Summit for Sustainable Development and other festivals around the world.

2.3.3 SEKA – Community and Artistic Training

In the decade of its existence SEKA has provided training to theatre groups that need artistic and administration capacity development. For instance, it trained a local theatre company in Mozambique on action research, participatory drama and awareness raising performance methodologies in relation to child labour and education issues. It led the creation of codes of conduct for actors and guidelines for how to conduct performances, action research and script framework.

SEKA has also trained groups from Zambia, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon, for instance, on how to use theatre to introduce the chilly- pepper farming concept to

deter elephants from food fields and human dwellings in the Mid-Zambezi Elephant Project. The developed play was used as a training piece for the groups.

As part of its community development work, SEKA has conducted and facilitated community workshops on a lot of developmental issues. Its problem-solving work has contributed to the creation of a 'democratic space' in policy-making processes. Applying the action research and consultative methodology at village level is best illustrated by the activities it has conducted in communities that needed capacity building in conflict resolutions and resource management.

SEKA has also not neglected its own need to remain current and continue developing new work and refining its vocabulary in the ever-changing performance arts industry. In an advertisement on its website, SEKA generously offers opportunities for other TfD practitioners to work and share their skills with them through production based training. This helps to develop their performance and theatre-making skills.

The website challenges both local and international practitioners to 'offer and experience working in a challenging environment on issues that maybe novel to them in its Artist in residence programme.'(www.seka-educational-theatre.com)

SEKA engages the expertise of musical directors, choreographers, designers, fundraisers and production managers among others and its actors have been gaining exposure and skills through such an Artist in Residence training programme and seeing other productions such as the Lion King. The troupe members have been trained to care about the natural resources that surround them, to pass on messages about conservation and to believe in educating their peers on how best to learn from and conserve wildlife.

> So originally we drew from our experience from there. As we went on however, we drew ideas from other productions and companies, like traveling to see the Lion King, as well as seeing productions at festivals etc. We try and evolve and incorporate new ideas all the time. (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid 2011)

2.3.4 SEKA - Publications

In 2006/7 SEKA undertook a research for a book on traditional Zambian ceremonies, documenting the colourful cultural ceremonies that Zambia boasts of.

2.4 Conclusion

There is a marked decline in the integration of folk media, cultural and traditional practices into theatre for development in Zambia. The decline evidently started after with the emergence of

HIV/AIDS campaigns using theatre. In addressing other health, rights, environmental and agricultural aspects that need to be redressed, cultural popular arts in theatre-making got very simplistic and minimal.

However, SEKA's TfD practice in developing theatre-based research methodologies, community interventions, communication and entertainment using a merger of diverse performance vocabularies is indicative that with creative guidance and research, theatre practitioners have potential to develop novel, creative and effective performance skills.

CHAPTER THREE: AESTHETICS IN THEATRE PERFORMANCE

3.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to articulate how folk art, traditional media and cultural practices – simply put, popular arts - contribute to the aesthetic value of performance arts.

> Aesthetics is variously defined as beauty in appearance (Lavie & Tractinsky 2004), visual appeal (Lindgaard & Dudek 2003), an experience (Ramachandran & Blakeslee 1998), an attitude (Cupchik 1993), a property of objects (Porteous 1996), a response or a judgment (Hassenzahl 2004a;2004b), and a process (Langer 1967).

The chapter interrogates aesthetics in theatre-making, the limits and risks these present to arts practitioners and whether or not their integration inhibits or enhances communication of the desired message to the target communities.

Several of the questions stemming from the research question, and in trying to achieve the objectives of this research, are also addressed.

The chapter also interrogates theatre-making techniques of SEKA and what sets it apart and unique from most Zambian theatre groups and companies; its use of physical theatre and visual aesthetics drawn from folk art, traditional media and cultural practices.

3.1 Traditional & Cultural Arts Aesthetics

Aesthetics vary across places and communities. Paraphernalia, ranging from flywhisks to calabashes and beads all add to visual aesthetics which are specific to particular groups in performance. Folk creative minds design their colour, body antics and verbal expressions laden by messages and inert meanings that are culturally specific and intricately imbedded.

Among the Chewa people for instance, the *chinamwali* (puberty initiation) rhythm on the drum is intricately different from the *mbiya yo do-oka* (funeral masquerade) rhythm of the *Gule wa'mkulu*. The composition of the body movement; the colour of costumes and even the vocal tones of the accompanying songs have evident disparity.

What the women put together rhythmically in *chinamwali* speaks cultural congruence with what the men create in *mbiya yo do-oka*. These aesthetics are important for Chewa identity and ritual performances but they can be harnessed and creatively applied to TfD or conventional theatre practices.

Theatre, a collaborative form of fine art which uses live performers to present the experience of a real or imagined event before a live audience in a specific place, is aimed at creating a spectacle.

That is how best it communicates this experience to the audience through a combination of gesture, speech, song, music or dance. Elements of choreography, costumes design and stagecraft are used to enhance the physicality, presence and immediacy of the experience. Theatre - absurdism to realism, musicals to pantomimes, Greek to African genres, conventional to TfD - its essence is to use its varied aesthetics to communicate to its audiences through the majority of senses it can appeal to.

Cultural arts and traditional practices are embellished with symbols, both in speech and paraphernalia, which are specific to each tribe or community. In rites of passage, religious rites and any other which a community conjures, such elements as idioms, chants, music and songs are some of the folk media used to communicate messages among themselves or to the deity being addressed.

Theatre for Development - which mainly draws from folk art, cultural expressions and traditional media - also uses a selection of techniques of street theatre. It takes in liturgical, mystery and masquerades.

Making theatre is about creating a spectacle through which a story would be told. Theatre itself is a culmination of several strands of performing arts and it includes visual arts such as painting, set designing and building, mask and costume making and lighting, as well as literary arts. In different theatre genres, from Aristotelian to Brechtian, mainstream or conventional to applied theatre - different approaches have been developed to create a visually, emotionally and mentally captivating spectacle of one type or other.

The contribution of folk media, traditional arts and cultural performances to the visual aesthetics and theatricality of TfD theatre-making is immense. They not only exhibit and locate the identity of a work of art but also draw proximity of the product to the consumer.

In a similar way, traditional cultural performances and practices enrich a work of art by adding a blend of visual aesthetic and expression unique to a particular people and place. The advantage of exploiting traditional media and performance language in the delivery of development messages is 'their ability to attract people who might not ordinarily attend an educational meeting. With skill, new content might be added to the old forms which are already familiar and dear to the people' as their 'appeal has historically been both functional and aesthetic.

Whether of roughly-hewn folk origins or of classically rigid moulds, they have always served to entertain, [to] educate, [and] to reinforce existing ideas or ideologies or to change existing values and attitudes.' (http://laico.org/v2020resource/files/folk_media.htm accessed on Dec. 20, 2012). Typical among traditional media forms are work-songs that exist in most rural communities that depend thoroughly on their hands to go about their daily chores such as cultivation of fields, hunting, carving and construction. Pounding songs are common among women who handwork pestles and mortars to prepare their millet or cornmeal. The rhythmic sound of the pounding pestle hitting the dried maize or millet in the mortar is often characterized with accompaniment of song. Where three or four women are at work, their voices will blend in song interspaced with the drum-like thuds of pounding and percussion sounds of crashing grain accentuated by heavy breathing; the content of the songs will address a cross-section of ills afflicting their community and advice addressed to culprits and on issues of undesired lifestyles. These can either be of their fellow women or lambasting the uncouthness or laziness of some menfolk. For example:

Kanchito kamuli Jima x 2	(piece jobs in Jima)
Nkangati aitile neo, mwana wangu eya ee	(Is that what you'd invite me to live on?)
Kabulangeti nikamo x 2	(With just a single blanket)
Nkangati aitile neo, mwana wangu eya ee	(Is that what you'd invite me to live on?)

Such is an example of popular pounding songs among the Kunda people of South Luangwa which encourages the menfolk to garner adequate resources before they can contemplate about getting married or inviting a wife from the village to join them in the city. The intricacy of the rhythm and the creatively conjured humour in the lyrics, as well as the message carried in the metaphors accounts for the songs' popularity among people of all ages.

The menfolk too, have equally hilarious work songs that warn against women of incredulous habits that often, when married, lead to a lifetime of misery and eventual heartbreak.

Such traditional songs are highly popular, especially among the rural dwellers all across the country, and they are also readily transferable and applicable in TfD plays and interventions because folk media are personal forms of entertainment and communication and they are about human and social relationships. This is important because behaviour change is most easily brought about by personal interaction.

These forms of art are a part of the way of life of a community and provide acceptable means of bringing development issues into the community in its own-terms. (Vision 20/20) Hence they are capable of reaching intimate spaces within social groups, thus making use of already established communication networks in the audience.

Ellenbogen of Theatre for Africa (TfA) explains that theatre in Africa is not about seats and tickets and quiet audiences because performance is everywhere and interactively communal.

> In Africa theatre is everywhere, indoors and outdoors, day and night, under trees, in houses, with drums and stories, everyone joins in, it is highly energetic: drama, mime, dance, poetry, song, drumming [and] acrobatics. Performance is at the heart of African cultures and it is also intended to raise issues and stimulate debate. (Ellenbogen, 2010)

As Ellenbogen states, events in most African communities are marked by and centred around performance of rituals from birth, through to puberty, in work and in marriage, up to death. Different rituals performed by different players are part of rites of passage, religious, healing and divination rites. It is also worth noting that even the preparation of food and its eating are all ritualized undertakings. Richard Schechner states that:

> Performance – whether in the performing arts, sports, popular music, or everyday life – consist of ritualized gestures and sounds. Even when we think we're being spontaneous and original, most of what we do and utter has been done and said before – by us even… In fact, one definition of performance is : Ritualised behaviour conditioned and/or permeated by play. (Schechner, 2003)

From the above assertion it is evident that crossing from a traditional performative state into a TfD mode in working with the community is highly viable, especially when utilising traditional and cultural media forms to communicate as performances consist of twice behaved, coded, transmittable behaviours 'generated by interactions between ritual and play' (Schechner, 2003) Zakes Mda in his study on the efficacy of theatre in development communication, analysed TfD based on the model undertaken by Marotholi Travelling Theatre in Lesotho and acknowledged the effectiveness of popular theatre in 'mobilization, conscientisation, creation of two way processes, promotion of decision making, creation of inter-group and inter-settlement solidarity as well as revitalization of people's own forms of cultural expression.' (Mda, 1993)

Popular theatre therefore is an avenue that enhanced cultural and traditional expressions and accorded people the freedom to express themselves in more creative verbal and non-verbal

modes. It addressed the sought needs more directly in a familiar language that appealed to the community. The use of dilemma folktales farther offered an opportunity for multiple endings which are essential for raising discussions in focus groups or feedback session because the people can then state their preferred ending and why.

As a theatrical intervention model, Mda also acknowledges the TfD concept as a 'more democratic medium, capable of integrating indigenous and popular systems of communication' (Mda, 1993). As it benefits from the combination of dramatic, theatrical, communication and education elements, TfD is more articulate in effecting the change or according the target community an opportunity to make informed decisions on the challenges they were facing. Being close to people at the local level, these channels are potentially useful in the service of social concerns, as determined by local, provincial or national authorities themselves. They are, moreover, abundantly present in areas where mass media technology has not been fully or effectively developed to capture sustained interest at local, provincial or national levels. (Vision 20/20)

3.1.1 Traditional and Cultural Performance Forms

'Performances mark identities, bend time, reshape and adorn the body and tell stories' (Schechner, 2003) and these are performances by people playing roles bestowed on them in the communities by the societies they live in. In communities such as Mfuwe, where SEKA operates, people take on extra roles in addition to being parents and siblings such as being in the chief's governance and tradition advisory council, religious leadership other roles include those in charge of puberty rites and funeral rites. These are all aimed at achieving particular purposes or fulfilling specific functions that shape and determine the parameters within which their community exists.

Erving Goffman posits that performances are "restored behaviours" because they are routines and actions that have been rehearsed for presentation. In defining performance, Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, says it is 'all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. Taking a participant and his performance as a basic point of reference, we may refer to those who contribute to the other performances as the audience, observers, or co-participants.'

So, based on Goffman, it can be stated that ritual, cultural practices and traditional ceremonies are among the bedrock of performance in Zambian arts because 'defining social role as the

enactment of rights and duties attached to a given status, we can say that a social role will involve one or more parts and that each of these different parts may be presented by the performer on a series of occasions to the same kinds of audiences or to an audience of the same persons.' (Goffman, 1959)

So, everyday life, just like art, involves lifelong training in a community's cultural practices and behaviours that form part of every individual's performance.

Ritual hence falls in the category of 'twice-behaved behaviours' - the trained for and rehearsed actions. Ritual characterizes and marks most rites of passage at different stages of most people's lives from conception to birth, to coming of age, marriage and right through to death. Ritual is defined as collective memories encoded into actions to help people deal with difficult transitions, ambivalent relationships, hierarchies and desires that trouble, exceed, or violate the norms of daily life. In other words, ritual is an avenue through which people transform into a second reality temporarily or permanently.

Ritual that permanently transforms an individual or group of people is called rite of passage; such as initiations, funerals and weddings. Some rituals are performed in private, others in public, some by select individuals, others by whole groups. Ritual may be fulfilling a social, religious or cultural role.

Every tribal grouping in Zambia has traditional rituals, cultural practices and ceremonies performed to commemorate their various calendar events, perform rites of passage ranging from religious purposes such as libation for thanksgiving or appeasement of the deities to traditional requirements like the installation of a new chief or indeed6 interment after their demise.

Most of these rituals are characterized by folk art and traditional media namely song, dance, poetry and ceremonial practices that use artifacts, symbols and paraphernalia that are either exclusive for those purposes or generically functional for everyday use.

> We're always aware of cultural factors when creating new plays. We incorporate local songs, drumming and dance forms into our plays, adding that extra layer of substance. However we're always careful that we are respectful of the cultural norms of the area; the songs we use are not, for example, initiation songs and the costumes, while being simple and effective are not offensive. (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

Evidence of the existence of these rituals and ceremonies, masquerades and paraphernalia can be experienced in the various ceremonies such as puberty rites called *chisungu* among the Nsenga

and Kunda and *chinamwali* among the Chewa people of Eastern province; *Umutomboko* traditional ceremony celebrating conquest among the Lunda people of Luapula, *Nc'wala* and *Kulamba* ceremonies of thanks-giving among the Ngoni and Chewa of Eastern province, *Kuomboka* ceremony of shifting from Limulunga in the valley to Lealui, the drier higher land by the Litunga of the Lozi in Western province, *Lwiindi lwa ba Silombe-lombe* the rainmaking ceremony among the Toka –Leya of the Southern province and *Ukusefya pa Ng'wena*, a ceremony commemorating the settling in their current locality of the Bemba people in Northern province.

Notably, popular masquerade dances such as *Gule wa Mkulu* and *Makishi,* whose dancers are adorned in colourful costumes and paraphernalia also have very spiritual connotations to their practice and artifacts. Schechner states that 'Most people equate ritual with religion, and with the sacred. In religion, ritual gives form to the sacred, communicates doctrine, opens pathways to the supernatural and molds individuals into communities'.

The theatricality borne in the *Gule wa Mkulu* and *Makishi* dances, the energy and choreography exhibited in both *Mganda,* also called *Mbeni* in Malawi, and *Vimbuza*, a dance mainly performed in a state of spiritual possession among the Tumbuka, all integrate the colourful visual aesthetics and intriguing physical acrobatics that have iearned these performances accolades and applause by both local and international audiences.

Traditional ceremonies such as *Umutomboko, Lwiindi lwa ba Silombelombe* and *Kulamba* have large sections of their proceedings dedicated to the performance of spiritual rites led by the tribal high priest. Only a select few participate in these sections of the ceremonies that take place in seclusion and in secluded sacred places. Chants and praise poetry, songs and dances, pouring of libation, burning of incense and offering of prayers are all conducted in the proceedings. General celebratory activities then follow for everybody in the chiefdom to participate.

It is imperative for the theatre-maker to understand the context of the community they are working in and asking: Is the form of the proposed medium flexible enough to incorporate a sufficiently broad range of content materials?

> We are obviously sensitive towards some cultural practices, such as initiations and so on. We are careful not to plough into some cultural issues that are secret or sensitive. We also avoid all kinds of cultural stereotyping. (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid 2011)

There are some obvious strict rules around some traditional practices that thrive on their mysterious being. They cannot be demystified and expected to leave the community values intact. Meanwhile they also offer artistic value to a performance as it brings the believability of the show to a vivid height lest the audience dismisses the performance as an unworthy engagement.

That is where SEKA has the advantage in drawing its actors from the area they operate in and invest in a worthwhile research to double check the limits and possible offence their tampering with the parameters of the ritual will raise.

> This is easy to do when the actors are from the area where we are working but it is another reason why the period of research is so important – especially if we are in an area we are unfamiliar with. (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

This is further consolidated by the amount of theatre-making techniques applied to the traditional medium selected for use. SEKA is influenced and rooted in culture but is not directly using the forms. It is interpreting them into admissible creative and artistic presentations that speak honestly to the practice without scathing its cultural values. This comes with knowing what mediums are adaptable to carry new messages and sometimes be used for purposes of demystification.

This is where most Zambian theatre practitioners – both conventional and TfD – meet their waterloo because of lack of research skills and creative capacity to work with the abundant resources available to them in the folk media and cultural realm. They scarcely engage with the extent of plasticity a medium can offer in supporting specific novel or behaviour changing messages without distorting its initial purpose.

Examination of religious or social functions attributed to the medium should be made so as not to distort its special role. In some, cases, examination may reveal such use to be unacceptable. However, it has been found that religious themes can be interpreted in modern context, providing impetus for social change.

Despite a strong cultural use of masks in masquerade dances and traditional rituals, Zambia is devoid of theatre that uses such elements of expression in its artistic circles. It may be out of respect for that specific realm of cultural expression and desire not to putrefy the practice and its social cultural value but there are potent artistically fitting gems that are left untapped in the process.

> However in some projects we have been asked, by the community to target special groups such as Gule wa Mkulu or women initiators. This is usually done in special groups training and the content and means of going about it comes from the people themselves; nothing is imposed. (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

In adapting some of the performed rituals into artistic performance, extra care must be taken because that might be culturally offensive or sacrilegious to the target audience.

This wide array of rituals and cultural practices offers arts practitioners a robust base of the native cultural media's creative expressions. Unfortunately, there are not that many TfD and mainstream theatre practitioners that have taken a deliberate interest in integrating that vibrancy into their theatre-making work.

Much wonder is what would happen if SEKA were to perform among the Chewa, whose sacredness of *Gule wam'kulu* is held in very high esteem? SEKA's portrayal of animals such as chipembere – the warthog, or njobvu – the elephant, which are among the masquerades of the *Gule wam'kulu* would perhaps create be sacrilegious. Among the Kunda of Mfuwe, though, *Gule wam'kulu* does not hold any religious or taboo elements that can be deemed sacrilegious among them.

Living in the city, as most Zambian theatre workers do, is still not an excuse for their work to be devoid of the traditional cultural attributes because despite a growing number of cross-tribal marriages, especially in urban areas, the use of cultural media elements in traditional ceremonies, rituals and cultural practices has remained fairly undiluted in their tribal homelands, as evidenced in a publication of Zambian ceremonies titled '*Ceremony! Celebrating Zambia's Cultural Heritage.*'(2006)

This research acknowledges the dangers of crossing into the offensive realm with the integration of some cultural and traditional practices into the artistic performativity. But it still dwells on the contribution of the popular arts to theatre practices that grew past the limitations of the local village communities to international platforms, carrying with it the voice of the marginalized.

This research focuses on the various attributes that come with African living – arts, rituals, crafts and other cultural practices that speak to communication capabilities innate amongst its people, variant as they may seem.

3.1.2 SEKA: Access to Folk Art Forms and Traditional Media

Folk media are important personal forms of communication and entertainment. This is important because behavioural change is mostly brought about by personal interaction. Folk media is capable of reaching intimate social groups, thus making use of already established communication networks in the audience.

Miranda Guhrs-Rashid stated the motivation behind the work of SEKA as:

> We believe in changing circumstances by changing minds and changing minds through the arts - theatre and stories in particular. We use theatre as an interactive research tool, which can be used to identify and channel information from communities to government, development organizations, and other decision-making bodies. A combination of action research and participatory theatre is used to sensitise and educate communities on various important social and environmental issues. In addition, we raise awareness and provide the catalyst for community mobilisation. We use theatre to generate debate within communities and amongst stakeholders in the targeted areas.' (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

The passion expressed through the artistes' commitment to doing this work among the villagers around the game management area, the lodges and safari camps exhibits their care about the natural resources that surround them; passing on messages about conservation. These art-forms are already a part of their lifestyle as a community and provide acceptable means of communicating development issues on their own-terms. The artistes provide information sharing platforms for their peers about how best to learn from and conserve wildlife. Also of high priority among their common themes is HIV/Aids awareness.

3.2 Visual Aesthetics and Theatre Performances

Folk media – a community's traditional media created and used by common folk for communication from time immemorial, contributes immensely to the visual aesthetics and theatricality of a performance.

> Folk media is based on sound, image and sign language (gestures and symbols). These exist in the form of traditional music, drama, dance and puppetry, with unique features in every society, race and region. Various religious and linguistic groups may have different folk media. These prosper from the cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions; an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, behavior,

religious practice or a social custom. (http://www.scribd.com/doc/25704319/Folk-Traditional-Media)

Information, Education and Communication resource on Vision 2020 e-resource, lists traditional forms of media as:

> … [t]he classification covering the performing and the visual arts included - music, song, drama, skits, puppet shows , poetry, speech, sounds, gesture, gossip, jokes, proverbs, paintings, certain printed literature, sculpture, handicrafts, costuming, patterning and colouring of material and use of head-gear. Symbolic meanings may often be an important consideration in use of any one or combination of these forms of expression and therefore the thought-processes behind selection of forms [are] assumed [to be of] significance. (http://laico.org/v2020resource/files/folk_media.htm accessed on Dec. 20, 2012)

Puppets, motifs and symbols all comprise part of visual folk art that vests performances with visual aesthetics. Traditional media are more commonly accepted channels of communication drawn from local people because of their use of familiar traditional forms of expression which are local to their settings - such as Mfuwe, where SEKA operates. The paraphernalia drawn from the local environment in the making of theatre by SEKA plays a vital role that contributes to the stylistic presentation that defines their identity. The traditional handicrafts and other articles used as props and costumes add aesthetic value to their performances.

Professor of Psychology, Gitte Lindgaard writes in an article titled *Aesthetics, Visual Appeal, Usability and User Satisfaction: What Do the User's Eyes Tell the User's Brain?* that:

> … aesthetics is seen to have something to do with pleasure and harmony which human beings are capable of experiencing. The wide variety of definitions testifies to the complexity of the concept, which has not deterred researchers from working in this still rather nebulous and evasive area. (Vol. 5, No. 1, 2007)

The value derived from integrating paintings, sculptures, motifs and symbols contributes immensely to the appeal in SEKA's theatrical work. The colour brought about by the paraphernalia and the intricate use of physical body images, both individual and group formations, blends into a spectacular sight which is a fairly intriguing and uncommon theatrical vocabulary. The ability to blend these folk media elements with simple but effective handicrafts

and props to churn out eye-catching performances has made SEKA an attractive performance group, both at home and abroad.

In a performance *of Sankhani Moyo* staged in Kalimi Village in Chief Kakumbi's area in Mfuwe, even SEKA's stage setup ritual kept the audience intrigued. Systematically, under cover of song, they unpacked props and costumes from the Toyota Landcruiser parked away from the performance area and like ants walked back and forth carrying props and paraphernalia and setting them in a semi-circle.

They brought out reed-mats, baskets, dishes, hand-worked water pump, a long plank set upside-down, a wedding dress and other costumes. All the time the audience hummed along to the *'Mpeni Mbembe Tiyalaule'* tune which loosely translates to 'Give me the Licence to Perform'. And the audience, by joining in the singing along offers the license and warms up to engaging with what is on offer from the SEKA performers.

Then in marched the cast in character as game rangers on a morning parade to the applause of the audience. A few call and response chants from the leader of the rangers further established the locality of the play and audience members started naming the Zambia Wildlife Agency (ZAWA) camps in the area and employees they know.

Kelvin Mandola, one of SEKA's actors, pointed out his use of a flowing gown and an orange girdle to represent a priest conducting a wedding ceremony between a bride, in a wedding dress and the groom in a suit. These are costumes that are easy to put on and take off because the marriage scene is fairly short and comically performed. The bride's grandmother, played by a male actor, just drapes on a piece of cloth called *'chitenje'* (a light cotton cloth) wrapped around his waist and a *'doukkie'* (a cloth for the head) , accompanied by a series of ululation sounds to a wedding song, represented a celebratory mood. The groom's uncle clad in a jacket and miming the consumption of some traditional beer and dancing around completed the picture of a typical marital event with blessings of both sides.

SEKA has taken diligent advantage of the existence of traditional gestures, paintings, sculptures, handicrafts, costumes and symbols within the Mfuwe area and incorporated them into their theatre-making. As Mandola, put it in an interview:

> These traditional handicrafts and songs help us to tell our stories because people easily recognise and understand them without us having to provide explanations of what they are or what they mean. (Kelvin Mandola, 2011)

So, traditional media and folk art can be regarded to be just as vital as other commonly accepted channels of communication.

In the performance of *Kusanga* (In the Bush) at Kanyantha Village an audience member said she was particularly fascinated by the use of a stick which was a whip used in fending off the invading baboons as well as the dogs tail in the hunting scene. Similarly the reeds that were water were also the bush thickets through which the girl and her uncle traversed in the forest. The impact of these multi-functional items from folk art is much deeper because the appeal is at personal level and is readily available for all age groups. The proximity of the origins of the items to the community struck an affinity with the audience. The change of function of props in performance to represent numerous simple unrelated things created humour, amazement and an appealing visual impact. That, combined with images such as that of a man riding a bicycle formed from three other people to leave a nagging wife, heightens the aesthetic effect and theatricality of a show. It is also easy to see that these media are comparatively cheap.

As Miranda Guhrs-Rashid (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid Guhrs, 2011) pointed out, 'playing a little dangerously' and being daring by the cast, fascinates the audience quite much. Aesthetics are characterized by sensitivity to beauty or visual appeal; the appreciation of good taste as framed in notions of aesthetic faculties; the artistic sensibility tailored around a set of principles which are not devoid of personal values and feelings based on an outward appearance, style or behaviour. As Lindgaard puts it, 'a group or culture can acquire certain aesthetic tastes that may be deemed standard based on an existence of considered rational knowledge, ethics, doctrines, principles and communal philosophy.' SEKA endeavours to achieve an awing appeal in its audiences by integrating visually challenging images with as much ease as they can with the hope that the audiences will go away remembering the messages that came along with the images they saw.

Lindgaard's research suggests that the relative appeal of visual stimuli is closely related to both user satisfaction and perceived usability. It also suggests that judgments of visual appeal and satisfaction may, at least in some contexts, depend heavily on the first impression of such stimuli and on the emotion they evoke in the user. In this case the user being the audience.

Here, the research supports findings and subsequent theory of Berlyne (1971;1972) which Lindgaard refers to in Definitions and Theories of Aesthetics that, 'Berlyne's research showed consistently that moderate complexity was preferred over simple or extremely complex stimuli.

Theoretically, this was interpreted to mean that, beyond a certain level of complexity, the subject's arousal level would be located on the downwards slope of the inverted-U curve that characterizes the arousal function, at a point at which the experience increased in unpleasantness hand in hand with increasing complexity.

Audiences who see an extremely complex show express some unexplained displeasure and although the criteria by which people judge visual appeal, user satisfaction and trustworthiness are still unclear, perceived usability appears to be related to the detection of stumbling blocks in the processing of what they saw.

3.3 Elements of Physical Theatre

An actor's body is as important a tool as every other aspect that contributes to telling a story through performance. As Grotowski (1975) says, '[t]he actor makes a total gift of himself' when they have to let go of their being, the egotism and self-consciousness, and they transition to take up a role of a character who is far from them. '…[T]he integration of all the actor's psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and his instinct, springing forth in a sort of translumination'(Grotowski, 1975) is what accords the performance that aesthetic value that the spectator's eye picks up.

The image in performance comprised of the gestures the limbs proffer, the expression the face carries and the emotion in the eyes usually account for how much attention an audience member will expend on the action and subsequently the story being told in a show.

Among the leading lights in mime, movement and storytelling by imagery and physical theatre vocabulary is Andrew Buckland, who is a physical theatre actor, director, writer and professor at Rhodes University, under whose tutelage both Miranda Guhrs-Rashid and Tamara were.

Rhodes which has a strong inclination towards physical theatre in its curriculum, founded on Gary Gordon's notion of the 'imaginative, thinking and articulate performer', inspired Miranda Guhrs-Rashid to practically consolidate and apply her skills and capacity in a project for the benefit of the environment and nature conservation.

In exploring the basic attributes of physical theatre that grow the aesthetic value of a drama performance in both TfD and conventional realms requires a closer look at the work of practitioners of the Buckland calibre and other exponents of physical theatre.

3.3.1 The Buckland Physical Theatre Vocabulary

In a workshop during the 2011 Applied Drama Conference hosted by Drama for Life in a presentation called *Different Ways of Eating Chicken* Andrew Buckland emphasised the importance of building on the everyday habits and activities of the performer to achieve convincingly repetitive movements and vary their dynamics dependent on frequency, speed and other viewpoints in respect of spatial relationship, gesture, shape and kinesthetic response. It is on these viewpoints that Anne Boggart bases her Viewpoints Directing techniques.

Physical theatre requires imagination, improvisation and sincerity in articulation of movement, composition of image and creation of desired perception. It is a theatre of ideas and a theatre of action. It incorporates the conceptual, experiential and creative processes to conjure new vocabulary that is wholly dependent on the body's capacity to express.

SEKA thrives on some of these scarce techniques because its artistic leadership draws its training from a combination of Buckland and Ellenbogen, proponents of high theatricality shows that strongly dependent on using the body as the primary tool of performance and they are both renowned for using theatre as the vehicle of choice in dealing with critical and incisive issues. Buckland who has mastered the art of physical theatre integrates in his classes some technical training elements of ballet complemented by Ashtanga Yoga, mime and contact work to strengthen and extend the performers' physicality. He employs 'a dynamic and exciting combination of visual comedy, sophisticated political satire, clowning, physical theatre, mime and an explosive performance style,'

He has work that is synonymous with 'provocative, entertaining and stimulating theatre' mainly in the mime field. His influence in the theatre courses at Rhodes University is visibly evident in its graduates. And Miranda Guhrs-Rashid is one such product who has gone on to practice that theatre genre.

The cost effective nature of physical theatre is due to the minimal props, small cast playing multiple roles which can deliver a performance on an unimaginable scale. But what captivates the audience and packs the impact is how the actor demonstrates the awareness of their body, the daring antics that the brain conjures and coordinates beyond what is perceived to be the normal human agility and its attention to detail. Detail is Buckland's strength in building performance.

3.4 Elements of Protest Theatre

Protest theatre emerged in South Africa as a theatre genre used in the struggle against apartheid - an oppressive era perpetrated by a white minority regime against the black majority. Among the leading lights of the protest brand of theatre are Percy Mtwa, Barney Simon, John Kani, Mbongeni Ngema, Athol Fugard and Winston Ntshona to mention a few. The South African protest theatre brand is influenced by Peter Brook's Theatre of the Empty Space and Jerzy Grotowski's Towards a Poor Theatre (1968) concepts.

> Theatre emanated from the unions, from the Black Consciousness movement, from the collaborative efforts of Fugard, Kani and Ntshona, from [Gibson] Kente, and from a multitude of university and fringe groups … [who] sought to "promote self-determination, self realisation and self-support [through] theatre arts". (http://www.southafrica.info/about/arts/615854.htm#ixzz1lbvs49yj accessed Feb 4 2012)

Protest theatre exponent John Kani's assertion, is stated in the History of South African theatre, as a tool against Apartheid:

'… as repression grew and the voices of political activists were increasingly silenced, theatre became an important means of voicing the protests that were banned from the streets and political platforms of the country,' said Kani, in discussion with Ariel Dorfman and Nadime Gordimer, during the Eighth Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture discussion forum at Witwatersrand University in 2011.

This theatre genre was mainly characterized by its small cast and minimalist set based on Peter Brooks' 'theatre of the empty space' concept. SEKA too, has a small cast which plays multiple roles in the plays using costume pieces and props to represent specific characters in each performance.

This small and light production concept enabled easier mobility of the shows both to escape the oppressive regime's police dragnets that clamped down on dissenting voices as well as to reach the critical masses in need of motivation to stand up against the oppressor in their localities. These places, mostly in the townships, had neither theatre halls nor legal performance spaces, so theatre productions had to be designed so loosely and adapted to site specific shows depending on where they were being staged. As a TfD entity, SEKA's productions are designed on a similar concept of fluidity though its protest is against environmental abuse.

That South African era boasted of plays in the lines of Woza Albert!, The Island, Asinamali, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, and BOPA by a clique of radical thespians who devised a form of township theatre to raise black consciousness among the oppressed and to fight the political and social injustices of racism perpetrated by the apartheid regime.

'Protest theatre relays messages to docile societies urging them to embark on new ideals that would eventually remove the burdensome albatross of silence,' states the Rooftop theatre website. Rooftop, led by Daves Guzha, is one of the protest theatre producing entities in Zimbabwe, renowned for its staging of radical plays such as Rags and Garbage, Ganyau Express, Super Patriots and Morons, Ivhu Vs the State, and The Coup. The incisive and uncompromising tone of these productions have every now and then led to arrests of cast and crew by the Zimbabwean state police.

So protest theatre, not only propagated an agenda against apartheid, but it also developed a performance vocabulary which has been so significantly incorporated into the theatremaking practice that has made protest theatre a full-fledged genre.

Elements of protest theatre include small energetic casts whose acts exploit physical comedy, minimal sets – mainly of a tea-chest box or two, a clothes rail and handy multiple-use props. Protest theatre speaks unreservedly against oppression and calls its audiences to action.

3.4.1 Ellenbogen Protest Theatre Practice

Nicholas Ellenbogen started Theatre for Africa in 1989 to exemplify African arts. He has trained and established more than 70 theatre groups around Southern Africa working in conservation of natural resources. He merges protest and physical theatre, visual aesthetics to create high theatricality in his theatre-making; and trains performers to operate in unconventional spaces. Ellenbogen is a renowned conservation campaigner through theatrical productions; highly renowned among them are *Horn of Sorrow* and *Guardians of Eden*.

Horn of Sorrow dealt with the plight of the Black Rhino, when it was close to extinction in 1987. It dealt with the dangers that lurk in the African bush that threaten the survival of endangered species.

Guardians of Eden revolves around rural Africans who seek to chart their survival among wildlife in the face of a dynamic world. It is 'a heart-warming, hand clapping, toe tapping play' (Jodie Lightfoot, 1996) told through song, humour, dance and physical theatre evoking sorrow and laughter while seeking to enlighten Western audiences which give grants without respect for

local traditions. It enlightens them to their part and responsibility in Africa's present state while providing challenging insights into the constructs of African cultures.

Both *Horn of Sorrow* and *Guardians of Eden* travelled the world focusing raising awareness and calling people to action on environment and nature conservation. This work had a significant impact on the international regulation of the ivory trade. The success of TfA came to the attention of the Ford Foundation, World Bank and the WWF. But Ellenbogen wanted to bring conservation debates back to Africa, to communities living in ecologically sensitive areas around wildlife reserves, especially that the cultural imperialism responsible for the destruction of habitat were elements he encountered in the region while on research.

So TfA backed by funding from The Ford Foundation, World Bank and the WWF toured with *Guardians of Eden* – lauded to be a powerful play espousing a mix of words, dance, mime and song. It also ran in Mfuwe among other rural communities in the southern African region.

TfD practitioners graduating from TfA training earned local respect and trust, as they collected information and identified key local CBNRM issues for dramatization which they endeavoured to imbed into their eye-catching performance forms for their interventions. They also effectively explored the issues after plays and helped plan implementation and follow-up actions.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the research findings on the integration of traditional media, folk-art and physical theatre into Theatre for Development community interventions. It starts with looking at the two productions used in the case study namely *Kusanga* and *Sankhani Moyo*. It looks at theatre-making techniques, how the two productions are designed and how they have been received by the three categories of audiences they were performed to. The methodological approach was qualitative. The presentation of this data covers a triangulation of three communities – the typically rural, the rural but fairly exposed and those who have been exposed to a broader range of theatrical experience. Most of the rural and fairly exposed have encountered SEKA's performances before, whereas most of the tourists who had been exposed to other theatrical performances internationally had never witnessed SEKA's work prior to this occasion. Apart from the data that was collected from these audiences, complementary data was also captured from TfD, physical and conventional theatre practitioners and academics to give a well-balanced analytical review. The qualitative responses were presented thematically. The analysis actively responds to the question: Has SEKA effectively integrated physical theatre techniques, folk arts, traditional and cultural practices into its theatre practice? What has worked in this endeavour, and what has not?

4.1 Analysis of SEKA Theatre-making Techniques

SEKA undertook three interventions using two productions for purposes of this research. Two interventions were with performances of *Kusanga* (In the Bush) and one with performance of *Sankhani Moyo*. Each of the two productions was scheduled to do one village and one lodge intervention. The two productions were the ones on SEKA's performance circuit at the time of the research.

4.1.1 Kusanga Synopsis

Kusanga (In the Bush) revolves around a girl who desires to leave her village to start a new life in the city because she thinks the rural set-up she lives in has too little to offer. But when she informs her uncle about her intention to leave for the city, he takes this opportunity to share with her the beauty and privilege lain in the flora and fauna of the sanctuary they live in. As they traverse the wild-side of their abode, they encounter an array of wild animals and birds which

teach them wisdom of nature. The uncle introduces her to numerous plants and their uses in supporting human life.

After the insightful orientation which the girl goes through as she grows both in intellect and age, she gets the revelation that she was the most eligible heir to the Kunda throne. This meant that part of her duties were to oversee and safeguard the Chiefdom's flora and fauna as the God-given natural wealth of her people.

When she is finally crowned Chieftainess, there is absolute joy and celebration in the chiefdom.

4.1.2 Sankhani Moyo Synopsis

Sankani Moyo (Choose Life) is a story about a game ranger called Alidon Zulu who weds a village beauty called Lute to the jubilation of his workmates for such a profound decision. The whole community breaks into a joyous celebration at the wedding. Words of wisdom from the family are shared at the ceremony where wedding vows and promises are made. Alidon and Lute commit to a life of monogamy.

However, Alidon continues seeing his previous girlfriend, a widow called Vida with whom he continues to have unprotected sex. Every flimsy misunderstanding with his wife is an excuse for him to leave home and find solace in Vida's arms. Unfortunately Vida, who is also a 'shebeen queen' - peddling in illicit beer - is also seeing another man; a rich man, by local standards. Lute finds out about Vida, she forces her husband to go for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) where they are both pronounced HIV+. Having been given the 'dos and don'ts' of positive living they go back home to continue their lives.

Unfortunately Alidon fails to comply with the doctor's orders; he misses his drugs, continues drinking and seeing Vida, who also continues her other relationships. Alidon's marriage breaks down despite several efforts to salvage it; so he ends up with Vida, in his very sick state. There is a mistaken belief that Alidon had been bewitched because of living above par. Alidon dies, leaving both Vida and Lute with a son each.

4.1.3 Analysis of Kusanga & Sankhani Moyo Performance Designs

Both performances started with a series of local songs and dances to the beating of the drums to announce the presence of SEKA in the locality. With song and dance, the audiences thronged to the venue where the group had set up for the performance. After about thirty minutes of the interactive priming session, the assigned performer facilitator introduced SEKA and the production they were about to see.

Each one employed a call and response technique which is commonly used in the village to call for attention during storytelling sessions around a fire in the evening. The audience jostled to participate and after they were all ready to engage with the performance, the facilitator urged them to be attentive as they would be required to participate in a discussion after seeing the show. The interactive nature of the facilitators encouraged the audience to pay particular attention to subtle aspects of the shows as they were of interest for the purposes of discussion. Kusanga's delivery technique is of minimal dialogue between the Girl, who later becomes the Chieftainess, and her Uncle, who grooms her into the worthy heir to the throne. A few minutes into the opening, the show thrusts a strong image of human/animal conflict; with a group of baboons attacking a maize field. The scene is characterized by baboons' homing grunts and the villagers haunting screams of desperation. Throughout the show the actors use their bodies to create images of all sorts of animals: elephant, warthog, dog, honey-badger, fish eagle, and stork. The cast used hand-woven reed articles such as fishing baskets and round-mats to create an elephant represented by a trunk, tusks and big ears, for instance. The audience seemed captivated in the technique of forming the various animals and they competed in identifying them by the performed characteristics.

It is the physical theatre techniques that employ body shapes and movement to make expressive forms in a bid to tell a recognizable story. But would an audience just disperse after an engaging performance? Or would it desire to engage further with the content in the presented piece? A few would have left if they were not expecting more entertainment after the performance. Some stayed because they wanted to speak out on the message the show was dealing with and engaging with the performers for answers they sought.

Would only seeing the show in a TfD community intervention be satisfactory enough to impart all the desired lessons without need for consolidation of perceptions raised? Did the audience know what the shows were all about? Notably, most of the audience members in the village performances were mesmerized by the intricacy of the images and the dexterity exhibited by the performers. They spoke about that with very little reference to the meaning of the play, if any. In the discussion facilitated after the show, no one raised any questions on any part of the play that they may have not understood.

But the questions at the Kwalata Safari lodge performance were mainly for clarifications on a few cultural aspects than the content or performance vocabulary. Perhaps it is because SEKA

regularly performs for tourists visiting the national parks both in Zambia and Tanzania and has honed their performance vocabulary articulately. Kapani website describes their shows thus: '… their plays are a riotous mixture of local song and dance combined with magical props, satirical humour and amazing impressions of the birds, beasts, tourists and other strange creatures found in these wildlife areas.' (http://www.kapani.com)

SEKA documents, photographs and maintains local culture, respecting and understanding that traditional values are the glue of society.

4.2 Merging Protest and Physical Theatre Elements in SEKA's Practice

A close scrutiny of SEKA's theatre-making and performance genre reveals a strong blend of two elements namely Physical and Protest theatre. And both of them are not accidentally borne in SEKA's practice because, with the Miranda and Msatero combination at the helm of SEKA's administrative and artistic leadership, it is almost automatic that the troupe is exposed to physical and protest theatre techniques that other Zambian theatre groups scarcely speak of. The challenge on the physical fitness of SEKA members and the daring antics that physical theatre demands of them has made them stand-out both in their community and among other practitioners.

These are the skills which Ellenbogen espouses in his work from the days of 'struggle theatre' and the multi-racial productions devised against the oppressive apartheid regime. The blending of protest and physical theatre, with the use of simple multi-purpose props are the elements passed on to most TfA trained practitioners such as SEKA.

Miranda Guhrs-Rashid also stated her attraction to the physical theatre genre:

> I've always been attracted to theatre that uses simple yet clever props and images. In addition to drawing crowds and making the plays visually entertaining, physical theatre (the use of actors' bodies to make images, simple props etc) is a cheap, portable and effective way of getting the message across. (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

Kani, in summing the role of protest theatre in influencing history, stated during the 2011 Mandela Annual Lecture discussion that 'Art must always be the watchdog; art must always be the conscience'.

In the post-apartheid era, art still plays the role of being the watchdog and the conscience that provokes minds towards a new type of oppression and abuse. The winning formula of protest theatre is in use to unshackle a different type of oppression from the yoke of a new exploitation.

Theatre for Africa (TfA)'s model of addressing the unfair exploitation of natural resources is what SEKA is employing to salvage the flora and fauna of Africa's eco-system. SEKA's minimalist style of performance is derived via TfA from the protest theatre strand that developed in South African townships under the apartheid regime.

Township theatre developed in the backstreets of poor black neighbourhoods without adequate resources to stage shows with a mise-en-scene that is flamboyant. It literally depended on the actor's body as the instrument of expression – supplying the body to create a performance vocabulary through movement, images and sound, yet only supported with minimal props and costumes to tell the full story.

The integration of the physical, vocal, mental and emotional resources of the actor to create visual comedy through mime and clowning is what SEKA has also delved into.

> 'The [physical theatre] style that we use adds an element of excitement and sometimes danger to the performances which seems to excite audiences!' (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

Whereas beer crates and tea-chest boxes were a common feature on stage, from the late 70s into the 80s, as sets in the protest theatre shows, in the theatre for conservation, it's the simple multi-purpose eco-friendly props that are the preferred alternative, used integratively with other everyday use paraphernalia.

> The troupe, whose primary goal is to create a visual spectacle [of a highly stylized and heightened theatre show] that contains educational messages employs a vibrant blend of visual aesthetics and cultural media namely puppetry, traditional objects, song, dance, storytelling and physical theatre to enhance the educational messaging in its effort of effective communication through theatre performances. (www.sekatheatre.com).

Among the founders of the Market theatre in Johannesburg is Ellenbogen, who was also among the proponents of the protest theatre which is credited for using incisive satire and creative license underground to steer up the ire of the oppressed in the township right up to awakening the international community.

The similarity between protest theatre and theatre for nature and environmental conservation does not end on the desire to speak truth to power and the usage of physical theatre techniques, but also thrives on the minimalist concept that enables mobility of the production. It is also

characterized by a small cast and crew that resort to playing multiple roles. The cast sometimes doubles as crew.

SEKA's composition, work ethic and practices attest to the protest theatre framework and parameters while its interventions are modeled on TfD concepts of research and community engagement. The mobility, in the South African case, was for both purposes of evading the wrath of the disconcerted authority of the apartheid era. Meeting the need to reach more audiences equally applies in the theatre for environment and nature conservation while still speaking truth to power along the way around the world.

However, 'this re-cycling of protest style performance strategies may achieve its power because of the way it speaks about [environmental] conditions …' (Miki Flockemann, 2011)

The essence of the TFA genre of theatre-making is to give visual and oral expression to injustice through intellectually and socially urgency-triggering and highly stimulating shows aimed at evoking awareness of the issues in the public or for all who are observing the theatre performance.

The Arts is one of the mediums at our disposal to make people aware of political, social and environmental issues and serves as a platform to advocate these issues. (Vision20/20)

I concur with Nadine Gordimer's point of view during the discussion forum with Dorfman and Kani when she said,

> 'We are now looking to theatre as a new means to rouse people to think about who we are, and where we come from… [m]aybe theatre is more accessible and is a more natural way of talking to one another.' (Gordimer, 2010)

This democratic tendency is what Mda refers to, as well.

4.2.1 Analysis of 'Talking Heads' Vs SEKA Performances

Drawing from the lack of high theatricality in most Zambian TfD performances in community interventions, it is a foregone conclusion that whereas the messages are built into the drama fairly tightly, it is uncertain that they will have lasting impact as the target communities find other more interesting engagements.

i) Advantages of Talking Heads

The major reason why 'talking heads' is a highly preffered performance style for the TfD practitioners is the turn-around period said Mwila Mumba of Msaibale Theatre who was also concurred by Yelesani Zulu of Chipata Jungle theatre.

ii) Disadvantages of Talking heads

Talking - heads lack intricate, eye-catching and engaging technicalities of performance.' That is as good as listening to radio claimed Kalonje Ndhlovu of Lusaka playhouse. Ndhlovu attributes the decline of high theatricality to 'sheer laziness' of the theatre-makers. 'Talent is readily available but the crews are lacking in motivation and creativity,' he said.

4.3 Analysis of SEKA Interventions Techniques

SEKA's distinctive use of action research and participatory dramas sensitise communities on important social, cultural and economic issues and motivates communities to develop locally based initiatives that are sustainable. Key target groups are identified for special training on sensitive issues. Communities are further mobilized and empowered through the sharing of the action research findings to stakeholders. SEKA ensures communities are able to take appropriate actions and encourages them to become effective change agents by disseminating information on government policies and procedures.

4.3.1 Non-threatening communication techniques

Theatre has the additional advantage of being an immediate form of communication, which addresses problems in an integrated manner. The audience is engaged emotionally and mentally, and the use of humour and other dramatic devices encourage participants to speak without the inhibitions which formal meetings or other communication systems perpetuate.

4.3.2 Participation

SEKA is committed to interactive discussion within the communities that is capable of changing attitudes and generating change.

> To create messages does not mean merely to respond to messages created by external agents about innovations, but to initiate the process of communication, so that the most disadvantaged members in the community, involved in the culture of silence, can express their political, social and economic needs. (Zakes Mda).

SEKA's intensive research and participatory method allows people to take ownership of their problems as well as the solutions to these issues.

4.4 Conclusion

As Miranda Guhrs-Rashid notes on the community's response to SEKA's work, especially its high theatricality and performance style, she says:

> Yes, the cultural elements give people a sense of ownership – it is not a completely foreign 'mzungu intervention' and the physicality of the drama draws big crowds and keeps them coming back for more!

As their website states, 'SEKA's unique brand of puppetry, physical and visual theatre has enchanted audiences in local villages and at international environmental conferences alike.'

> People in the cities, even urban based artistes, underrate our performance capacity and the power of our type of theatre. For them a group from South Luangwa can only stage a 'rural-grade' show not worth seeing. (Kelvin Mandola, Interview 2011)

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

The essence of this research is to establish what impact the integration of physical theatre and folk media has in theatre for development; does it enhance or inhibit communication in community interventions?

In analyzing the findings, the contribution of folk art, traditional culture and cultural performances to the visual aesthetics and theatricality of a theatre for development performance was scrutinised. SEKA's practice was also interrogated for effective integration of physical theatre techniques, folk arts, traditional and cultural practices into its theatre-making. The research also revealed reasons why most Zambian theatre, let alone TfD, practitioners ignore the theatricality contained in the robust cultural, traditional and physical performance practices borne in rituals and visually colourful ceremonies; only to settle for the 'talking-heads' mode in their theatre practice. This is the practice which this researcher regards as the deterioration of performance aesthetic quality and value of theatrical practice in TfD in Zambia. Can the Zambian theatre-making practice, as a whole, be salvaged?

This chapter will endeavour to conclude on the various aspects raised in the research.

5.1 Native Cultural Expressions in Theatre-making Techniques

Folk art, traditional culture and cultural performances in their various artistic expressions contribute immensely to the visual aesthetics and theatricality of a theatre performance. They are all ingredients that high theatricality is comprised of.

Starting from the masquerade performances, colours, images and energy of the likes of mwana-puo in the Luvale's Makishi arena to that of mbiya yo do-oka in the Chewa's Kulamba ceremony, it is evident that the aesthetic value which makes these events memorable is high. High theatricality attracts audiences and the spectacle created in the performance remains vividly imprinted on their minds. Agnes 'anyaNgoza' Mumba saw *Guardians of Eden* when it toured Mfuwe and has also previously seen SEKA's *Kusanga* and saw *Sankhani Moyo* in this intervention and remembers the issues they raised and the gist of the dramas she saw, though she remembered the images much more.

Zephania Sakala and his group of school going teenagers, who have had an opportunity to see other plays in the urban and peri-urban secondary schools they go to, acknowledged the marked

difference in SEKA's brand of theatre after seeing *Kusanga* in the Kanyantha village performance, even though they were mainly comparing with conventional or proscenium arch style of performances.

In the Kwalata Safari Camp performance of *Kusanga*, the majority of the audience reiterated the impact of the show's images created from 'simple articles with multiple uses' as Sarge Kwalata pointed out.

" The portrayal of babboons by adding a tree-fibre tail was really fascinating and obviously there was no spectacular lighting to enhance the magic of vision but that is what made the performance so close to real. There are no fancy lights in the bush!" Sarge Kwalata said, adding, "The creativity, the speed, the funny moments can match any professional show I have seen in Lusaka or on West-end, without the lights ofcourse…"

Kamoto Community Arts, for instance, has a dance wing called Zuba ni Moto which specializes in cultural dances embellished with contemporary choreography. While Kamoto taps into cultural expressions that include gule wam'kulu in modern settings, it has confined that practice to the initiated so as not to be offensive to the tenets of traditional taboos.

At least, SEKA, the case study group and their counterparts – Kamoto Community Arts have been able to work with the consultative approach, and like Barefeet – are daring enough to work with the visually alive and physically charged performance model too.

5.2 SEKA's Integrative Theatre-making Practice

This research concludes that despite SEKA's few flaws in their interpretative eloquence, it has effectively integrated physical theatre techniques, folk arts, traditional and cultural practices into its community theatre practice.

In most of the community intervention projects that SEKA has undertaken, marked success has been recorded and aspects of sustainability have been evident. Their performance prowess, their articulation of theatre for development processes as they should be, have all earned them respect trust and friends in the communities they have worked and in the development world; and without doubt, seen them travel across the world sharing their skills and good work with fellow thespians and the general public.

SEKA has been very careful to steer away from utilizing raw traditional forms but have not feared to apply their creative minds in creating the safe performative distance in undertakings which have sensitive connotations such as initiation and puberty rites. Such rites and some

recommended modern practices have thin permeable lines of offense and need to be dealt with very carefully.

Despite a strong cultural use of masks in masquerade dances and traditional rituals, Zambia is devoid of theatre that extensively uses such elements of expression in its artistic circles. It may be out of respect for that specific realm of cultural expression and desire not to putrefy the practice and its social cultural value, but there are potent artistically fitting gems that are left untapped in the process.

> However in some projects we have been asked, by the community to target special groups such as gule wam'kulu or women initiators. This is usually done in special groups training and the content and means of going about it comes from the people themselves; nothing is imposed. (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

5.2.1 Why Not Traditional Forms

In defining what traditional forms are, I hereby state that the term takes two meanings:

1. Being the traditional cultural forms of practice such as healing rituals, dances and burials conducted to function for the purposes that a community developed them such as libation for appeasing the ancestral spirits in a religious practice.
2. Being what are deemed traditional performance forms of drama/theatre that have been developed over the years devoid of embellishments that are coming into the realm of theatre such as multimedia or hybrid performance modes.

It is imperative for the theatre-maker to understand the context of the community they are working in and asking: Is the form of the proposed traditional medium flexible enough to incorporate a sufficiently broad range of content materials? SEKA meticulously sifts through these cultural practices to identify elements of discomfort contained therein and devise means of working around them as Sara Mwanza, an actress with SEKA and Miranda Guhrs-Rashid explained .

In my assertion, as a practitioner and researcher, there are some obvious strict rules around some traditional practices that thrive on their mysterious being. They cannot be demystified and expected to leave the community values intact. Meanwhile they also offer artistic value to a performance as it brings the believability of the show to a vivid height lest the audience dismisses the performance as an unworthy engagement. It requires creativity and skill to be able

to devise scenes in a performance that will carry a metaphoric representation without losing the essence of the message contained therein.

That is where SEKA has the advantage in drawing its actors from the area they operate in and invest in a worthwhile research to double check the limits and possible offence their tampering with the parameters of the ritual will raise. It also gives the team an upper-hand in working through the idioms, stories, songs and dances that are derived from the community itself to carry the message back into their being.

> This is easy to do when the actors are from the area where we are working but it is another reason why the period of research is so important – especially if we are in an area we are unfamiliar with. (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid 2011)

This is further consolidated by the calibre and quality of theatre-making techniques applied to the traditional medium selected for use. SEKA is influenced and rooted in culture but it can be noted that it is not directly using the forms. It is interpreting them into admissible creative and artistic presentations that speak honestly to the practice without scathing its essence and cultural values. This comes with knowing what mediums are adaptable to carry new messages and if they can also be used for purposes of demystification where need arises.

This is where most Zambian theatre practitioners – both conventional and TfD – meet their waterloo because of lack of research skills and creative capacity to work with the abundant resources available to them in the folk media and cultural realm. They scarcely engage with the extent of plasticity a medium can offer in supporting specific novel or behaviour changing messages without distorting its initial purpose.

Examination of religious or social functions attributed to the medium should be made so as not to distort its special role. In some, cases, examination may reveal such use to be unacceptable. However, it has been found that religious themes can be interpreted in modern context, providing impetus for social change. (Vision 20/20)

Zambia is endowed with a multiplicity of more than 60 tribal groupings and each one prides itself with a colourful traditional cultural practice that is identified as unique to it. These include rites of passage such as birth, puberty, marriage and death. Each of these come with ceremonies partaken of by the appointed members of the tribe such as the birth attendants who perform the delivery and announce the arrival of the newly born or the traditional counselors who see to the appropriate transition process into adulthood for a boy or girl that attains puberty. Among the

Kunda people, just as it is among a lot others, some of the rituals and practices are private whereas others are public. Some have both private aspects as well as public ones. Performances of rituals that are religious for instance, have both exclusively private acts and others that allow the public to be present. In adapting some of the performed rituals into the artistically performative space, extra care must be taken because that might be culturally offensive or sacrilegious to the target audience. Miranda Guhrs-Rashid best summarises what Sara and Bernard Banda explained as part of their theatre-making process as follows:

> We're always aware of cultural factors when creating new plays. We incorporate local songs, drumming and dance forms into our plays, adding that extra layer of substance. However we're always careful that we are respectful of the cultural norms of the area; the songs we use are not, for example, initiation songs and the costumes, while being simple and effective [we] are not offensive. (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

So whereas it could be deemed fine for outsiders to imbed some extremities in terms of dress and vulgar sounding language in performance as art, communities can be highly sensitive towards their own participation in such deeds as Miranda Guhrs-Rashid pointed out on account of the costumes used in TfA's *Guardians of Eden*.

> When we first started auditioning actors in Mfuwe, we met with some resistance – especially from some of the women – as all they all remembered of a (fantastic) performance of Guardians of Eden by Theatre for Africa where the costumes [which] were 'skin tight' shorts. It seems the costumes were the main thing that people remembered! (Miranda Guhrs-Rashid, 2011)

5.3 The Funding and Political Environment

One major reason why there is dearth of creativity in TfD in Zambia is that most TfD practitioners ignore the theatricality in the traditional cultural practices to settle for the 'talking-heads' mode in their theatre practice. Most artistes are culprits of wanton uninspired attitudes, especially in the exploration of boundary breaking innovations in their theatre-making. There are very few TfD, and even mainstream, artistes whose schedules include research in local creative work such as folktales, traditional poetry or folk songs, let alone attending traditional ceremonies and re-learning what various rituals, artifacts and practices are all about.

There are very few groups in Zambia such as Kamoto Community Arts, Soweto Theatre and SEKA, which are endowed with theatre practitioners with adequate skills in fulfilling a full

research process inclusive of creative, evaluation and report-back work. Hence, most theatre practitioners in Zambia are contracted for specific segments in projects undertaken by implementing agencies. In other words most of them are 'brief-case' entities contracted on piece-job basis and put together ad-hoc style.

Other than who one knows in the implementing agency, or how much of the funds are expected back to the officer-in-charge of such projects - the politics of funding have immensely crippled the creative process of practitioners, without a doubt. The turnover concept which puts more money in the pockets of the officer of the implementing agency at the expense of the creative product leaves the theatre-maker without enough time nor funds to expend their creativity on a commissioned piece of work for community consumption.

Having interrogated an array of respondents – from theatre-makers to consumers, from academics to performers, to decipher the reasons for the decline in creativity and integration of folk art, traditional media and visual aesthetics in the TfD productions, it is clear that there is lack of exposure:

1. to creative techniques required to interpret the native creative expressions into works of performance art
2. to other works of art that have successfully integrated folk and cultural aesthetic aspects into their performances
3. to skills, through education that can help wider thinking around boundary pushing techniques in creative arts
4. to adequate time and resources to effectively engage with the creation of the product

Accusations and suspicions between the funders of these theatre initiatives and the implementing organizations are also so rife that projects are made so short, in a bid to curtail abuse of resources through well-orchestrated dubious schemes.

In the TfD circles, performers flock from one project to the next based on the pay-cheque and their proficiency in churning out message-packed storylines devoid of visual aesthetics or high theatricality. This is because they are usually contracted at short notice to tackle particular community ills. The theatre-making process has inadequate time and the theatre-makers' cannot be part of the research and intervention design.

This lack of cohesion between the theatre entity and the implementing agency often neither leaves the theatre-makers without adequate time to engage substantially with the project at hand

nor funds to initiate their own projects for sustainability afterwards. In retrospect, theatre entities do not remain intact after severance of their relationship with an entity because they were germinated specifically for that project.

To appreciate challenges around drama initiatives in Zambia requires an understanding of history and power relations in the funding politics of TfD. Most drama and theatre initiatives, like many development projects in Africa, tend to collapse with 'almost the same astonishing regularity' (Ferguson, 1990) is how Ferguson describes the way 'rural development' interventions failed in Lesotho. Arguments to explain their collapse range from political, historical, social, and cultural to economic.

Whose agenda is it anyway? That is the question well-meaning and professional TfD practitioners have to grapple with in every project they embark on; right from tendering for the job through to the design of the research, the intervention and the evaluation. The question of project ownership in TfD is a major factor and source of conflict when it comes to the selection of programmes to undertake in a community.

Another reason for the decline of creativity in the TfD sector in Zambia is the marked divide between traditional cultural dance and theatre acting. Most theatre practitioners have worked exclusive of their counterparts in cultural or even contemporary dance and even worked further away from visual artistes. It is also pertinent to mention that roles of various theatre-making specialists are largely ignored – especially choreographers, set designers and music directors. Whereas, TfD is nourished by popular arts within the community, fair working knowledge of the practicality of the various theatre-making aspects that make up a performance is worthwhile. This lack of exploratory interest in pushing creative boundaries is hence fairly evident in the final work put out for public consumption.

Another setback evident on the Zambian theatre scenario is that actors are mostly part-time performers without a consistent actors' regimen to keep them physically and mentally in shape and that has been identified as part of the reason why shows, in the mainstream circles, take nine to twelve weeks in rehearsal and sometimes do not even see the light of day.

5.4 Conclusion

Conclusively, the integration of Physical Theatre and Folk Media in Theatre for Development enhance, more than inhibit, communication in community interventions. Through the case study,

integrating physical theatre techniques, folk media and cultural and traditional ritual practices into TfD worked as an effective communication mode. Definitely, just as Miranda Guhrs-Rashid stated, it was evidently proven through the three strata of the sampled audiences. Through a study of SEKA and interrogation of physical theatre practitioners as well as academics, it is noted that it is not only taxing for the theatre-makers and the performers but it is also paramount for them to master and articulate that performance vocabulary for effective communication.

This research demonstrated the expanse of neglected elements that would enhance the nature of theatre performance in Zambia and challenged the limited growth and creativity that seems to be dogging practitioners in TfD. It unearthed the limiting aspects that have immensely held down creativity; from the funders' lack of theatrical know-how and understanding of what communication through theatre entails to the practitioners' laziness of tackling the essence of theatre and it's challenging theatre-making work.

Zambia, as a country with a vast array of tribal, cultural and traditional practices, is endowed with a diversity of rituals and traditional cultural ceremonies that can feed into the cache of artistic expression of the Zambian thespians. Of course, these are not without their taboos but the creative minds must also endeavour to articulate what is predominantly encased in vestiges of taboos and sacredness without committing sacrilege. My preliminary investigations on the taboos inherent in the traditional practices that might be contributing to the artistes' apprehensions and fears of integrating such expressions in their work reveals that the low skills capacity to admissibly interpret these realities is the main hurdle.

The basic creative streak lain in 'doing' in TfD that has seemingly grown in other practitioners worldwide, but not among Zambians. SEKA is among the few troupes that have dared to engage with a theatre genre that is different from the practices embarked upon and preferred by most Zambian groups and gone on to succeed in the practice, maintaining their aesthetics and effectively delivering the desired messages to the community.

It has benefitted from the curiousity and practice embodied in the extensive experimentally developed vocabulary of movement, body shape and visual aesthetics that has given them local and international appeal.

It may also be prudent to mention here that in this realm of work, it is only Barefeet of Lusaka which has also incorporated gymnastics and semi-circus techniques into their performances.

In conclusion, one significant aspect to note with the Zambian situation is that all this contribution is despite Zambia being without a consolidated formal performing arts education programme, industry, or government portfolio at ministerial level - forty-five years after independence.

Can the Zambian theatre-making practice be salvaged and got back to practicing a living theatre endowed with all the vibrant colour and high energy that makes TfD the spectacle it's supposed be without losing out on the central message it is built to deliver in a way that creates dialogue? Can this declining situation in which wallows most theatre groups, companies and practitioners be rectified?

5.5 Recommendations

1 Establish an education curriculum for performing arts because education is as important an element in the arts as it is in every sphere of life to unlock exploratory human and creative intuitions. Artistes need to pursue academic persuasions that will help in safely articulating traditional and cultural rituals and expressions without offending custodians of the practices for the benefit of the arts, the community where they are being practiced, posterity as well as nationals and the world at large.

2. In the face of limited education opportunities for creative arts in Zambia it is the onus of the performance artist to endeavour to grow their skill by making individual and collective efforts to gain exposure to creative techniques required to interpret the native creative expressions into works of performance art. The spirit of conquest in the arena of performance demands more than just the offerings of talent. Progression and growth demands skills to apply the dynamic theatre-making devices everyday work.

3. Establish a ministry of Arts and Culture to help consolidate the arts as an industry with a recognised labour sector able to sustain a livelihood. That way people will work with a more focused approach to the arts.

4. A radical change of attitude towards folk art, traditional and cultural performances as part of the basis of contemporary performance will accord the creative artistes a chance to conjure novel expressions that can successfully integrate folk and cultural aesthetics. Recognition and integration of other art-forms and validation of their authentic value as native means of expression will open doors for cross-pollination of ideas for better work.

5. Co-productions across practitioners of different arts disciplines can help widen the thinking around boundary-pushing techniques in creative arts.

6. The theatre practitioners must be encouraged to raise their exploratory interest in pushing creative boundaries; to integrate research in local creative work such as folktales, traditional poetry, folk songs and traditional ceremonies.

7. Artistes ought to learn the rules before they can endeavour to bend them to suit specific genres or styles of the stories being told. Gaining fair working knowledge of the practicality of the various theatre-making aspects that make a performance is worthwhile venture for Zambian theatre workers.

8. There must be a shift in the working paradigm of project implementing agencies to give the Zambian theatre scenario a more stable operational basis that will encourage thespians to keep a healthy consistent work ethic and commitment to the practice. That way, more can be gained starting from the TfD practitioner, in terms of undertaking a full-scale intervention inclusive of research and creative processes, evaluation and report-back work. TfD can then re-gain its profile of impactful and engaging theatrical experiences.

9. Give TfD a professional approach to community work

Being among the first to be independent, Zambia's progression on the arts front has been really disappointing. Not to have a fully-fledged arts industry, with a school and ministry of arts almost half century after independence is a sure source of worry.

Compared to the region, Zambia has had very few international accolades in terms of awards and high level international tours, collaborations, co-productions and guest appearances. As a theatre practitioner who has had a fair share of the limelight, working in projects mandated to work with and in cultural and traditional realms, I was challenged to interrogate the context of the practice to ascertain the shortcomings and where the mechanism in the practice stalls.

5.6 Further Research

Research into how to establish a stable arts industry and making the arts a sustainable economic sector of Zambia would be a way to build on the findings of this research. How have other countries put together stable industries in the face of tough economic times?

What has the lack of formal education in the arts from primary to tertiary level done to the growth of the vocabulary of theatrical expression? What has the Zambian performing artiste based their growth on in terms of skills development and out of the box articulation of their

practice in the face of on-going boundary breaking innovations in the creative industry worldwide?

These and many more questions need to be addressed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abah, S.O. (1997). *Performing Life: Case Studies in the Practice of Theatre for Development*. Zaria: Shekut Books

Ajzen, I. and Fishbein M. (1980*). Belief, Attitude, Intension and Behavoiur: An Introduction to Theory and Research.* Englewood, N.J: Prince Hall

Andersen, Peter (2007). *Nonverbal Communication: Forms and Functions* (2nd ed.) Waveland Press.

Bacon, Wallace A. (1960). *The Dangerous Shores: From Elocution to Interpretation*. Quarterly Journal of Speech 46, 148-52.

Boal, A. (2001) *Hamlet and the Baker's Son: My Life in Theatre and Politics*. London: Routledge.

Boal, A. (2006). *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*. London: Routledge

Boal, A. (1992). *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. London: Routledge (Second Edition 2002)

Boal, A. (1979*). Theatre of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto Press

Boal, A. (1995). The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy. London: Routledge

Boal, A. (1998). *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*. London: Routledge

Byam, Dale L. (1999). *Community in motion: theatre for development in Africa*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group

Cole, M. (1962). *A Conception of Culture for a Communication Theory of the Mind*. San Diego: University of California Press

Conquergood, Dwight. (1991): *Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics*. Communication Monographs, 58 179 -94.

Corey, Frederick C. (1996). *Performing Sexualities in an Irish Pub. Text and Performance* Quarterly 16: 146-60

Denzin Norman K. (2003). *Performance ethnography: critical pedagogy and the politics of culture.* London: Sage Publication

Ellenbogen, N. (2010)

Epskamp, Kees (1989). *Theatre in Search of Social Change. The Relative Significance of Different Theatrical Approaches.* CESO Paperback No. 7. The Hague, Netherlands: CESO

Etherton , M. (1982). *The Development of African Drama*. London: Hutchinson

Eyoh, N (1997). And the Hammock Lingers on: Whither Theatre for Development. In Werner Mauch and Uta Papen (Eds). *Making a Difference: Innovations in Adult Education*. Frankfurt Main: Peter Lang.

Ferguson, (1990). *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development,' Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Fine, Elizabeth C. (2003). *Soulstepping: African American Step Shows*. Urbana: U of Illinois P,

Frank, E. (1994*). Intrapersonal communication: different voices, different minds.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Freire, P. (1978). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin

Fuoss, Kirk W. (1997). *Striking Performances/Performing Strikes.* Jackson: UP of Mississippi,

George J. Watson (1983). *Drama: An Introduction* (London: Macmillan)

Gitte Lindgaard : (2007) Aesthetics, Visual Appeal, Usability and User Satisfaction: What Do the User's Eyes Tell the User's Brain? *Australian Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society* Vol. 5, No. 1, pp: 1-14

Goffman, Erving (1959) in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

Gordimer, N. (2011) *Eighth Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture Discussion*. Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand

Grotowski, J. (1968). *Towards a Poor Theatre*. New York, Simon and Shuster

Guhrs-Rashid, M. (2011), Attached Questionnaire and Answers

Hanna, Judith L. (1987). *To Dance Is Human: A Theory of Nonverbal Communication.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hargie, O. & Dickson, D. (2004). *Skilled Interpersonal Communication: Research, Theory and Practice*. Hove: Routledge.

Heath, Robert Lawrence & Bryat Jennings (2000*). Human Communication Theory and Research: Concepts, Contexts, and Challenges.* London: Routledge

Johnson, E. Patrick. (2003) *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP.

Johnson, J. R. (1994). *Intrapersonal Spoken Language: An Attribute of Extrapersonal Competency*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

John Keefe and Simon D. Murray (2007). *Physical Theatres: A Critical Reader*. New York: Routledge

Kavanagh, R. M (1997). *Making People's Theatre*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Kebaabetswe , P. and Noor, K.F.(2002). Behaviour Change: Goal and Means. In Max Essex, Souleymane Mboup, Phyllis J.Kanki, Richard G. Marlink and Sheila D.Tlou. (eds.). *Aids in Africa*. New York: Kluwer Academic and Plenum Publishers.

Kerr,David (1995). *African Popular Theatre from Pre-Colonial Times to the Present Day. Studies in African Literature*. James Currey, London.

Kerr, D. (1998). *Dance Media Entertainment and Popular Theatre in South East Africa*. Bayreuth African Studies 34, Bayreuth

Kidd, R (1993). *Drama for Women's Empowerment: Report on Training Workshops and Field Experiments in the Gambia. Foundation for International Training (Toronto) and Women in Development Project* (Banjul, Gambia)

Kidd, R (2002). *Strategy and Workplan for Designing Trainer's Guide (Toolkit) on HIV/AIDS Stigma. Academy for Educational Development and International Centre for Research on Women*. Washington.

Knapp, Mark L., & Hall, Judith A. (2007). *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*. (5th ed.) Wadsworth: Thomas Learning

Lindgaard, Gitte. (2007) Aesthetics, Visual Appeal, Usability and User Satisfaction: What Do the User's Eyes Tell the User's Brain? *Australian Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society Vol. 5, No. 1, 2007, pp: 1-14:*

Matusse, R. (1999). *Past, Roles and Development of Theatre Arts in SADC*. Gaborone: SADC

Mda, Z. (1993). *When People Play People: Development Communication through Theatre*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press

Munro, A & Munro, M.(2003). *Research Methodology Supplement* .Faculty at Tshwane University of technology, Pretoria Campus: South Africa.

Murray, S. (2002). *Tout Bouge: Jacques Lecoq, Modern Mime and Zero Body: A Pedagogy for the Creative Actor*. London. Routledge Harwood

Mlamah-Thomas,D. H. (1989). *Innovative Community Theatre for Integrated Rural Development in Sierra Leone: The Telu Workshop Experience*. Ifda Dossier70 march/April

Mlama, Penina (1991). *Culture and Development: The Popular Theatre Approach in Africa*. Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala20

Mwansa, D and Bergman, P (2003). *Drama in HIV/AIDS Prevention: Some Strengths and Weaknesses: A Study in Botswana, Tanzania, South Africa, Kenya Ethiopia and Uganda*. Stockholm: Swedish International Development Aid

Mwansa, D.M. (1990). *Popular Theatre: African-American-Asian-Caribbean-European Networking for Social Change*. Toronto: International Council for Adult Education.

Mwansa, D.M.(1991). Popular Theatre in Africa: Definitions, Focuses and Lessons. *Journal of the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education*. 5(3), 25-39.

O'Leary, Z. (2004). *The Essential Guide to Doing Research*. London: Sage Publications

Paulo Mefalopulos and Chris Kamlongera (2004). *Participatory Communication Strategy Design: A Handbook*. Rome: SADC Centre of Communications for Development

Peter Thomson & Glendyr Sacks (eds.). (1994). *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*. Cambridge: CUP

Republic of Zambia (2003). *Zambia: Millennium Goals*. Lusaka: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and UNDP

Schechner, R. (2003). Performance Theory, New York: Routledge

Warren, John T. (2006). Introduction: Performance Ethnography: *A TPQ Symposium, Text and Performance* Quarterly, 26:4, 317-319)

Warren, John T. (2003). *Performing Purity: Pedagogy, Whiteness, and the Reconstitution of Power*. New York: Peter Lang, 2003.

White, C. (2009). *Directors and Designers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Williams, R. (1973). *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*. Harmondsworth: Penguin

Internet Resources

"Definition of Drama." 123HelpMe.com. 09 Dec 2011
http://www.123HelpMe.com/view.asp?id=100068

http://thesisnotes.com/category/research-topic/

http://www.icosilune.com/2009/02/norman-denzin-performance-ethnography/

http://laico.org/v2020resource/files/folk_media.htm

http://www.seka-educational-theatre.com

http://www.kapani.com

www.seka-educational-theatre.com

APPENDIX 1a Sample of Respondents' Data Sheet /Release Form

RESEARCHER: Benne E. Banda Student No. 473701

FULL NAME: …….

NATIONAL IDENTITY NUMBER/NRC: ……..

AGE AS AT PREVIOUS BIRTHDAY: …….

ADDRESS: ……..……

……..……

……

……..….

I, the undersigned whose details are listed above, participate in this interview of my own free will with the understanding that:

1. It is in aid of academic research for a Master of Arts Dramatic Arts Degree at University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
2. I have not been bribed to participate in this research
3. My responses, opinions and comments recorded in this research interview are mine
4. Information collected through this interview will be stored safely and used for research purposes only
5. By signing hereunder I give consent to the Researcher to use the information collected

Signed (Respondent) ……..... Date: ……

Signed (Researcher) …….. Date: ……

APPENDIX 1b. Sample of Respondents' Data Sheet /Release Form

RESEARCHER: Benne E. Banda Student No. 473701

FULL NAME: ……..…….

FULL NAME OF GUARDIAN: ……

NATIONAL IDENTITY NUMBER/NRC: ……..……..

AGE AS AT PREVIOUS BIRTHDAY: ……...…….

ADDRESS: ……...……..……

……..……

……

……...….

I, the undersigned whose details are listed above, as authorized guardian of the underage interviewee, give consent for him/her to participate in this interview of his/her own free will with the understanding that:

6. It is in aid of academic research for a Master of Arts Dramatic Arts Degree at University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
7. I, nor s/he, have not been bribed to participate in this research
8. His/Her responses, opinions and comments recorded in this research interview are his/her's.
9. Information collected through this interview will be stored safely and used for research purposes only
10. By signing hereunder I give consent to the Researcher to use the information collected

Signed (Respondent) ……..... Date: ……

Signed (Researcher) …….. Date: ……

APPENDIX 2 a. Questionnaire for Practitioners

Why have most Zambian Theatre for Development practitioners ignored all the colour and theatricality in the traditional cultural practices and settled for the 'talking-heads' mode in their theatre practice? This will be to decipher why most Zambian community theatre troupes have steered away from engaging with high theatricality and visual aesthetics in their productions; why they opt for 'talking heads'?

a. What theatre techniques do you mostly use in your theatre-making?

b. What theatre-making techniques have you experimented with?

c. What has worked better and why?

d. What is your preferred mode of messaging in community interventions, and why?

e. Does integration of cultural practices and folk media in theatre for development inhibit or enhance communication and messaging?

f. Why have you avoided integrating folk media and cultural practices in your theatre-making?

g. What do you consider to be High theatricality performances?

h. How much do funding agencies contribute in determining the theatre-making techniques process and design of final performance product?

APPENDIX 2 b. Questions for Audience Members

Is integrating physical theatre, traditional and cultural practices and folk media into community theatre working as an effective communication mode among audiences? If so, why? If not, why not? This is to investigate the impact of SEKA's theatre model to communicate its intended messages to target communities and the effectiveness of high theatricality among community theatre audiences in interventions

a. What makes you want to watch SEKA's performances?

b. How do you feel after watching SEKA's performances?

c. What is your interpretation of the play you have just watched?

d. Do you understand the messages in the performances?

e. What did you not understand in the play and why?

f. Did you identify any traditional and cultural elements in the performances?

g. If these plays did not have the visual aesthetics, would you understand them better?

h. Can SEKA improve its way of delivering the messages? If so , how?

APPENDIX 2 c. Questionnaire for SEKA Members

How did SEKA come to integrate physical theatre techniques, folk media and cultural practices elements into its theatre practice? This is to investigate SEKA's Theatre-making techniques, its history and development process.

a. What physical theatre techniques does SEKA use and where are they drawn from?

b. What led to SEKA's integration of physical theatre in its performances?

c. What folk media and cultural elements does SEKA include in its theatre-making?

d. What are the advantages SEKA finds in using physical theatre, folk media and cultural elements in message creation and delivery?

e. Does SEKA consider the integration of physical theatre, folk media and cultural elements to be a catalyst in message delivery in Theatre for Development?

f. What other performance forms are SEKA's audiences exposed to?

APPENDIX 2 d. Miranda Guhrs-Rashid Guhrs Response to Questionnaire

a. What is your process in researching and creating the plays?

We usually spend a period of time prior to creating any play researching the issues, talking to people on the ground in the target area, gathering stories and real life situations, observing people, how they act, their physical surroundings (to help with images later) etc, as well as reading up on the 'issues' and main points that need to come across. This ensures that the storyline - as well as having the information that needs to be imparted - is human and interesting and people can relate to it.

To begin with the actors and director/scriptwriter workshop ideas for the storyline and images to incorporate and then usually the director/scriptwriter will tie together all these threads to make a cohesive story.

b. What theatre techniques do you mostly use in your theatre-making?

Physical theatre, mime, improv, simple props that can do many things, workshop process for creation

c. What theatre-making techniques have you experimented with?

Puppetry, Forum Theatre (a little), Radio dramas, Currently (with our group in Tanzania) we are about to start experimenting with Invisible Theatre and Forum Theatre across the country

d. What has worked better and why?

Generally what works for us is a combination of scripted performance with an element of audience participation. The extent of audience participation varies from project to project. We also feel that the research period beforehand is crucial.

We try to keep the script fairly tight, but it is not scripted per se, there is an element of improvisation in all our plays. So the images and scenes are fairly structured but within that structure the actors are free to improvise to an extent.

This methodology that we use allows for audience participation which encourages them to take ownership of the issues and the solutions to these issues. The vibrancy, local song and dance forms, humour and visual elements draws in big crowds and is entertaining as well as educational. Our plays are layered so that they resonate with different members of the audience, the old woman, the child, the schoolteacher.

e. What is your preferred mode of messaging in community interventions, and why?

The physical theatre with interaction with the audience seems to work very well, drawing in big crowds, speaking to all sectors of society, including those that cannot read and write. If done correctly substantive outcomes and plans of action can come from the performances, although these often require follow up.

f. Does integration of cultural practices and folk media in theatre for development inhibit or enhance communication and messaging?

Definitely enhance! People often join in the songs and feel a sense of ownership when we integrate cultural practices and folk media in our plays.

g. What folk media and cultural practices have you avoided from integrating in your theatre-making?

We are obviously sensitive towards some cultural practices, such as initiations and so on. We are careful not to plough into some cultural issues that are secret or sensitive. We also avoid all kinds of cultural stereotyping. This is easy to do when the actors are form the area where we are working but is another reason why the period of research is so important – especially if we are in an area we are unfamiliar with.

However in some projects we have been asked, by the community to target special groups such as gule wamkulu or women initiators. This is usually done in special groups training and the content and means of going about it comes from the people themselves; nothing is imposed.

h. What do you consider to be High theatricality performances?

I feel that as long as the script is good and the actors enjoy the performance and have high energy, the play will be a success.

i. How much influence do funding agencies have in determining the theatre-making techniques and design you use and final performance product?

Funding agencies have influence over content but generally, in our experience, the theatre making aspect of it is left to us, and we can usually manage to make dry issues exciting.

j. What physical theatre techniques does SEKA use and where are they drawn from?

Seka was born out of a regional southern African programme and we were trained by Theatre for Africa, a South Africa company that uses minimalist physical theatre techniques to great success. So originally we drew from our experience from there (as well as Msatero having worked with them prior to this and Miranda Guhrs-Rashid having a drama degree from a university that emphasized heavily on physical theatre). As we went on however, we drew ideas from other

productions and companies, like traveling to see the Lion King, as well as seeing productions at festivals etc. We try and evolve and incorporate new ideas all the time.

k. What led to SEKA's integration of physical theatre in its performances?

I've always been attracted to theatre that uses simple yet clever props and images. In addition to drawing crowds and making the plays visually entertaining, physical theatre (the use of actors' bodies to make images, simple props etc) is a cheap, portable and effective way of getting the message across. The style that we use adds an element of excitement and sometimes danger to the performances which seems to excite audiences!

l. What folk media and cultural elements does SEKA include in its theatre-making?

We're always aware of cultural factors when creating new plays. We incorporate local songs, drumming and dance forms into our plays, adding that extra layer of substance. However we're always careful that we are respectful of the cultural norms of the area; the songs we use are not, for example, initiation songs and the costumes, while being simple and effective are not offensive. When we first started auditioning actors in Mfuwe we met with some resistance – especially from some of the women – as all they all remembered of a (fantastic) performance of Guardians of Eden by Theatre for Africa where the costumes where 'skin tight' shorts. It seems the costumes were the main thing that people remembered!

m. What are the advantages SEKA finds in using physical theatre, folk media and cultural elements in message creation and delivery?

Draws crowds, interesting, People know the songs and often join in

n. Does SEKA consider the integration of physical theatre, folk media and cultural elements to be a catalyst in message delivery in Theatre for Development?

Yes the cultural elements gives people a sense of ownership – it is not a completely foreign 'mzungu intervention' and the physicality of the drama draws big crowds and keeps them coming back for more!

o. What other performance forms are SEKA's actors exposed to?

puppetry, lion king, other performances at festivals.

APPENDIX 3 a. The Honey Bagger Image



SEKA at Work – Meeting the Honey bagger

APPENDIX 3b. The Elephant Image



SEKA at Work: The Elephant raids the Village in KUSANGA

APPENDIX 3 c SEKA's Shelter



SEKA's Shelter & Rehearsal Space

APPENDIX 3 d. The Baboons Image



SEKA at Work: Baboons Raid a Maize Field in KUSANGA

APPENDIX 3 e. Pre performance Image



SEKA at Work: Sams Engaging with the Audience