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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

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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

By

BENNE E. BANDA

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, WITS SCHOOL OF ARTS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS IN DRAMATIC ARTS DEGREE BY COURSEWORK AND RESEARCH REPORT

UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I, Benne Erastor Banda hereby declare that this research document is the result of my own work and that I have not submitted it previously at any other tertiary institution. This is in fulfillment of a Masters of Arts in Dramatic Arts degree by course work and research.

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…….…… ……..……

Signature Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

This fruit of perseverance yielded after a torrent of blood sweat and tears is dedicated to my wife who held fort, shed tears and waited patiently for the two long years.

Naomi Banda nee Chirwa, this is for you!

ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken in Mfuwe, the South Luangwa Game Management area in the Eastern province of Zambia, to interrogate the declining integration of folk art, traditional media and visual aesthetics in Theatre for Development (TfD). SEKA Theatre Troupe was the entity under the microscope in this ethnographic research process conducted through Theatre for Development performances.

The lamentable decline in the use of the abundant traditional cultural resources in the TfD practice in Zambia has led to the flourishing of a loquacious top-down message delivery system in an era where the artistes are no longer an authoritarian all-knowledgeable spoon-feeding entity. The performance artiste must be a change agent who facilitates new thinking through the practice of an empowering living theatre as espoused by theatre performance gurus such as Peter Brook and Augusto Boal.

The survival and prosperity of the Zambian cultural heritage is at stake in face of a western cultural onslaught proficiently facilitated through the multi-pronged approach of the international media. The artiste is the bastion of hope that buffers the intensity of such cultural onslaught. The robust cache of traditional intellect is being sidelined to the periphery of a people's lives, in the traditional homelands where it is flaunted as tourist attractions instead of being a cherished and nurtured way of life.

This study's findings give pointers to solutions to heal the heartrending growing gap between the Zambian performing artistes, especially in TfD, and the vibrant local cultural forms of expression. It foregrounds how important it is to salvage the remaining precious gems of Zambian indigenous heritage for posterity as well as prosperity.

All hope is not lost yet, as demonstrated by SEKA Theatre Troupe, which has daringly chosen to embark on the less popular Theatre for Development genre among Zambian Community /TfD practitioners. SEKA, through integration of popular arts and cultural practices has taken the rural voice of the common man in the wilderness of South Luangwa Game Management area and made it heard in the corridors of policy makers internationally; be it on the HIV and AIDS scourge or championing the restoration of the world's ecosystems or even their mainstay – mitigating the wildlife and human conflict through theatre in Mfuwe.

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

TfD : Theatre for Development

TfA ; Theatre for Africa

SEKA : Sensitizing and Entertaining through Kunda Arts

HIV : Human Immuno-deficiency Virus

AIDS : Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome

PRA : Participatory Rural Appraisal

RRA : Rapid Rural Appraisal

AIR : American Institutes of Research

COP : Community Outreach Programme

WWF : World Wildlife Fund

WCC : World Conservation Congress

SADC : Southern African Development Community

SADCC: Southern African Development Community Countries

IUCN : International Union of Conservation of Nature

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