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ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN AFRICA WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO SOUTH AFRICA AND ZIMBABWE: FORMULATING THE THEORY OF AFROSCENOLOGY

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How can artistic research offer the opportunity to create knowledge based on African practice and produced from the African context? This presentation will delineate seven approaches to artistic research and argue for decolonial imperatives.

Artistic research can be understood in seven different but related ways. The object of study can be the work of art resulting in an intellectual output such as a journal article. In the field of applied theatre, a problem may exist in society, for example, HIV/AIDS, trauma, etc. A work of art may be created to engage with this problem. The process of art-making becomes a method, resulting in a performance/published play text. Here, the theatre-maker is both a creator and a researcher. On another level, an artistic researcher may create work to develop new techniques and processes. They may also develop new technologies for use by artists or even new methods of research. Since all practice either follows an existing theory or proposes a new one, artistic research has the potential to propose and advance new theories. In this article, I argue that arts researchers in African theatre have been developing new techniques and processes since 1939, based on African performance modes and their creative recombination with multinational influences to create work that is unique to the African continent. I have called this creative theory "Afroscenology." I see artistic research as offering the opportunity to create knowledge based on African practice and produced from our local context. This paper will delineate these seven approaches to artistic research. Since the other six approaches are relatively well known, I will spend a little more time explicating how artistic research can lead to the invention of a new theory, in this case, Afroscenology.

The context of artistic research

Artistic practice is as old as humankind. When climbing the rocks, kopjes, hills, and mountains of Southern Africa, one is intrigued by the Khoi and San paintings, the oldest painted 73 000 years ago. One would say the same thing about other, less enduring, artistic forms such as dance, song/music, ritual theatre, ceremonies, social drama, and cultural performance. When the first drama departments, at least in Southern Africa, were established from 1942 through to the early 2000s, artistic practice (not research) was the norm. Most of the 11 drama departments in South Africa offered full diploma and degree courses, following the North American or British models of combining theoretical study with practical training based on established Russian or western versions of performer/actor training. Creative practice could be built into a course or would have a life of its own through extra-curricular productions run by lecturer-directors using students and university infrastructure for the realisation of a creative output. Although there was substantial research toward realising the output, the theatrical production would not be recognised as research unless the lecturer-director wrote an article published in a recognised journal, book or conference proceedings on some aspects of the performance.

The fight for recognition of artistic practice as research began in the 1980s when the South African Department of Education (as it was then called) introduced a new funding regime where public universities would receive state subsidy based on the quantum of traditional research, as well as doctoral and master's graduates. The state did not recognise creative output as research. At least in South Africa, where the number of theatre departments and staff is higher than that of Zimbabwe, these departments used their numerical advantage to influence policy on artistic research. By the late 1990s, some South African universities established internal recognition systems for creative outputs and allowed artistic researchers to advance their careers based on recognition of their creative outputs as research. Around the same time,

artistic research had become a well-established approach as a method of enquiry in the UK, Australia, Canada, and Scandinavia.[1]

In Zimbabwe, without any pressure from artistic researchers, the few universities (Midlands State University, University of Zimbabwe, and Great Zimbabwe University) offering drama/theatre/performance, created staffing and promotion ordinances that recognised creative output as research. They would reward artistic researchers if their creative output displayed "originality and innovation in contribution to issues of culture, of creative arts, writing, architectural design, etc."[2] Regrettably, no one has ever been promoted based on artistic research as the staffing and promotions committees are dominated by academics who are not artistic researchers and are biased towards *scripto-centrism*. The advocacy prevalent in South Africa may, one day, shift attitudes towards artistic research in Zimbabwe.

Despite the strong artistic research advocacy present in South Africa, the government did not change the policy on research until 2017. Not all policies on what constituted research included artistic research as a form of knowing. The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) was, however, warming up to the idea of artistic research by 2001 when it acknowledged the fragility of all proceeding policies on research, which were biased against certain disciplines in the arts and humanities. The South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DOHET) finally incorporated recommendations of the NPHE and various documents developed by academics at various forums on the subject of artistic research. DOHET developed a new document called "Policy on the Evaluation of Creative Outputs and Innovations" produced by South African Public Higher Education Institutions (2017). This document created six subfields from which artistic research would be assessed and rewarded; Fine Arts and Visual Arts, Music, Theatre/Performance/Dance, Design, Film and Television, and Literary Arts. It also provided criteria for assessing artistic research output and the processes that artist-researchers would follow in submitting that research for government subsidy.

After establishing this context, it is necessary to describe the various approaches to how academics carry out artistic research in South Africa and Zimbabwe, and motivations for such ways of doing research. My experience in artistic research has taught me that it may take any of the following dimensions.

Artistic research may involve the accumulation of data that confirms an existing theory. This is the place of workshop theatre, variously called devised theatre, collaborative theatre, or radical theatre. The artist-researcher may work from an existing archive, such as the Magnet Theatre's history plays, which rely on memory sites in Cape Town, such as District Six Museum, graveyards, or the Bleek-Lloyd archive, containing Khoisan stories. Magnet Theatre selects the material and subjects it to various playmaking processes with the result of a theatrical output. Workshop theatre may depend on the living archive: people who were actually present during the unfolding of a unique historical moment, for example, the liberation war of Zimbabwe. Based on individual experiences, the artist-researcher selects the material. Zambuko Theatre created frontline theatre based on the experiences of war collaborators who had become students shortly after the war. Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production (ZIMFEP) war plays such as *Takaitora neRopa* (Won by Blood) were created by demobilised soldiers under the directorship of artist-researchers, Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ and Kimani Gecau. It is possible that the artist-researcher will follow a pre-existing performance theory in realising the performance. It may also be possible that the artist-researcher will propose a new performance/

emplotment/acting theory. It is not an "either/or" situation. Both old and new theories may inhabit the same performance.

Related to the aforementioned approach is the application of an existing theory to facts, plays, performances, etc. In this approach, the work already exists in written form as a musical score, a play, dance notation, a literary work, etc. The artist-researcher chooses, again, an already existing theory to apply to the work. This type of artistic research has always been the norm in the western-influenced academy. An artist-researcher would choose a realist play and deploy realism in transforming the play into a performance. The designers would be guided by the same theory in the construction of sets, costumes, musical, and lighting scores. An acting method designed for realism—the psycho-technique, or its western variations—would be used to guide the performers in researching and constructing characters. Of late, a new generation of artist-researchers has emerged, who seek the death of the playwright, replacing them with the auteur director. This artist-researcher deploys postmodernism as a method of emplotment, where they build a performance text from several sources. The resultant creative output privileges the body over text, exuding a visual dramaturgy. Mncedisi Shabangu, Mandla Mbothwe, Mark Fleishman, and Prince Lamla are South African examples that come to mind.

Artistic research may involve the generation of new theory and its empirical testing. The nexus between performance practice and performance theory, especially in Africa, necessitates that every innovative, practical approach in performance preparation, presentation, and training leads to a theory of performance. South African performance practices are thoroughly under-theorised. Some South African theatre-makers have been creating work that is peculiar to their location: making it different from global trends. The 1980s up to the present moment produced work that was uniquely South African with a particular identity of its own as opposed to doing theatre originating from elsewhere in South Africa. A number of these performance forms were appropriated by postliberation theatre-makers to create work and a form of performance practice uniquely South African. Yet the theory of this theatre-making is barely visible. I have in mind the performance practices of Gibson Kente, Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa, Barney Simon, Fleishman (Magnet Theatre), and Shabangu, in South Africa, to mention but a few. The performance practices developed by these practitioners have revolutionised and expanded our understanding of acting and actor training. The global theory of the actor can, thus, no longer fully explain the developments in Southern African performance. In actor training, there is an overreliance on global notions of acting based on prominent western/eastern theatre innovators and theorists like Konstantin Stanislavski, Anton Chekhov, and Stanford Meisner. Today, we find out that decolonial discourses are frustrated with the lack of (Southern) African knowledges of performer training. I shall return to this point shortly.

The generation of new methods for dealing with problems in the discipline or in practice—artistic research—has helped us to create a method of research called Practice as Research. This method is defined as "research that is carried out through or by means of performance, using methodologies and specific methods familiar to performance practitioners, and where the output is at least in part, if not entirely, presented through performance."[3]

Temple Hauptfleisch has added three more approaches to artistic research, which I wish to summarise here. He calls the first artistic research approach "a study undertaken through/by means of the arts."[4] This is the orthodox tradition where the play/production and its associated assemblage like design, performance, lighting, sound,

dance, etc. are taken as the object of study to produce journal articles, collections, monographs, and conference papers. The second approach is one that Hauptfleisch calls arts research as "a study undertaken *through/by means of* the arts."[5] Here, the process of creative writing, painting, choreography, directing, designing, filmmaking, digital coding, curating, for example, is seen as research. The artist is making discoveries (philosophical thought) as they create and make them known to the audience/analyst. The creative output is the research. The third approach, according to Hauptfleisch, is "arts research as the development of *new technologies and instruments* for use by artists."[6] This is related to the approach of developing new theories, techniques, and processes that I mentioned, except that, here, a tangible scientific product is the outcome. This may be a new light, new paint, new instrument, for example, of a musical nature. A colleague in the Music Department at Wits University manufactured a new guitar, for instance, and that became part of their doctoral thesis.[7] The invention is usually then patented.

Framing the research

Not all creative activity and practice, even of the highest quality, constitute research. However, creative activity can be distinguished from creative research even if the output resembles each other. Creative activity becomes research when it has been framed as research. Therefore, a framing document should be constructed. The reviewer uses the framing document to evaluate the creative work. In other words, the artist-researcher is helping the reviewer to read their work according to their own criteria. Examples of the questions that reviewers may pose while reading/watching your work may include:

- How does the theatre piece/process relate to the framing?
- Does the theatre piece contribute to current practice or propose something novel? If so, how and to what extent?
- What is the theatre-maker's personal signature/contribution relative to the context? Quality is not the only criterion, but one of the indices of evaluation.

Jon Whitmore has introduced an interesting concept of framing systems.[8] He argues that audience members or theatre analysts bring the totality of their experiences to watch theatre and may experience it according to their horizon of expectation. In order to guide the analyst, the artist-researcher should put framing systems in place, and he suggests some of the following:

- Aesthetic Framing: This involves a production concept and how it inspired other creative processes.
- Production Framing: This involves an element of intellectual involvement, which may take the form of literary/performance analysis, something normally covered in a press release.
- Physical Framing: This includes digital drawings of the set, models, sketches, costume, pictures, etc.
- Intellectual, Historical, and Social Framing: This can be fulfilled by providing a statement of intent outlining the problem or question to be addressed; the researcher contextualises the enquiry. What place does the creative practice occupy in the stylistics, politics, the body of theory, and the researcher's own previous work? Awareness of other theatre-makers' work in the same domain is critical. Positioning

the researcher's previous work (where it exists), reputation, and performance style is recommended. State the niche that the new work occupies in the scheme of things.

Towards the theory of Afroscenology

I now return to artistic research that leads to the generation of a new theory. This nexus between performance practice and performance theory in Africa and the Diaspora needs to be theorised. Every innovative practical approach in performance preparation, presentation, and training leads to a theory of performance. While, in the past, alternative modes of theatre analysis, theatre-making/writing, performer training, and performance were not recognised by the dominant western knowledge system, Richard Schechner began theorising Performance Studies in his important book, *Performance Theory*. In 1995, French scholar, Jean-Marie Pradier, coined the term "ethnoscenology" to describe modes of performance originating from outside North America and Europe or the West.[9] This theory or field of study opens up the generation of new terminology to describe and analyse performances that originate from other continents, where western models would not suffice as tools of analysis or creativity. While I recognise the good intentions of Pradier and his theory of ethnoscenology, scholars who have deployed this theory, such as Patrice Pavis,[10] and including those who have deployed Schechner's performance theory, have taken these theories to mean the study of Latin American and Asian performances. As with many other books written from a western perspective, Africa is missing from the map, despite its various performances that have taken place since time immemorial. The underlying assumption is that there is nothing worthy of studying from Africa. A source of irritation is reading any book on performance studies/theatre studies; case studies from Africa are missing. Take, for instance, Meyer-Dinkgräfe's *Approaches to Acting: Past and Present* (2001). It delves into the origins of acting and its evolution in the West from Greece and Rome through the Middle Ages and renaissance periods. Acting developed from declamatory to *commedia dell'arte*, melodramatic acting, and realistic/psychological acting styles. Meyer-Dinkgräfe delineates the challenges to realism by means of expressionist modes of acting, leading to immediacy and presence associated with postdramatic theatre.[11] From the middle of the book, Meyer-Dinkgräfe diverts to what he calls non-western (itself a problematic term) approaches to acting. The case studies cover India, Japan, China, Islamic countries, and then forges a technique he calls intercultural theatre based on the works of western directors like Peter Brook, who went to the East to harvest stories and techniques to create work such as *The Mahabharata* (1989). Africa is missing.

It has become necessary that researchers from the African continent, or whoever is interested in the study of African performances, do something to fill this lacuna. African arts researchers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Credo Mutwa, Herbert Dhlomo, Kente, Ngema, Fatima Dike, Mtwa and, of late, younger theatre-makers like Mbothwe and Shabangu have been creating work and writing or talking about it. When we look back in relation to the present, we find out particular characteristics of this work that point to a common artistic practice. Since most, if not all, theory comes from practice, I am advancing the theory of Afroscenology to explain, describe, make, and analyse work that has emerged in Africa. Since this is a neologism, I need to spend a little bit more time explaining the theory before I refer to specific case studies.

The term Afroscenology is formed from three lexical items; "Afro-", "scene" and "-logy." The first lexical item is the root word for Africa from which several words can be formed, such as Africanity, Afrocentricity, Africanism, Afro-hair, or Afro-currency.

"Afro-" denotes a deep interest in Africa and a rootedness in the continent and its epistemes. "Scene" has Greco-Roman origins. The Greek word is "*skene*," which means tent or stage, and the Latin version is "*scena*" meaning the same thing. The English version, "scene," has several meanings that, in play, denotes an action that happens at the same place and time. Outside art, it means a place, activity, or in crime, a place where an unpleasant event happened. From this word, various English words are formed, such as scenery, scenario, and scenic. All these words project objects that can be seen: whether as art or in their natural environments, or a sequence of events that build a narrative of a specific nature. Thus, in western culture, the art of building sets and costumes for performances is called scenography. The lexical item "-logy" does not exist on its own. It is a suffix normally used in English to form new terminologies that refer to a field of study, a branch of knowledge, bodies of knowledge, or names of sciences. It comes from the Greek word "*logos*," which means the word or explanation, account, or narrative. Examples of English words formed from *logos* are logic, dialogue, monologue, all of which have something to do with the word. When a new theory or branch of knowledge emerges to warrant further research, English forms new words by adding "-logy" to the field, meaning "study of," for example psychology, sociology, cosmology, and so on.

The complete word, "*scenology*," does not currently exist in the English dictionary, and I am using it here to describe an emerging body of knowledge that is rooted in Africa and the Diaspora around the notion of African performance practice. "Afroscenology" refers to performance practices developed by African practitioners and Africanists, which respond to the African playing cultures by incorporating their performance traditions, forming work that is unique to Africa and its Diaspora. The description of this work through its theoretical tenets provides grounds for the formulation of a theory, which I have called "Afroscenology." Afroscenology is not only a theory, but a mode of thought and action, a body of knowledge that is still growing, which seeks to document, conceptualise, analyse the ways African practitioners and Africanists write, perform, creatively make, direct, design, and vocalise their work. The training of performers and writers already exists in the various theatre companies in Africa, which specialise in community and workshop theatre. This knowledge has not yet fully percolated into African university curricula. Afroscenology, as a branch of knowledge, seeks to expand the domain of performer training by tapping into this tacit knowledge, which currently resides in various theatre companies, and formalise it through documentation and teaching in the formal education sector.

This is not just a pipe dream; at the University of the Witwatersrand, under the programme of decolonisation, I have overseen a rapid process of changing the training of performers in the Department of Theatre and Performance by incorporating African modes of performance, which fellow colleagues currently call black aesthetics. We have made several changes to the naming of courses and the content subsumed in those courses. We changed from "dramatic art" to "theatre and performance," and dropped acting from our vocabulary. We replaced this with performance practice for Years 1 and 2, and performance studies for Years 3 and 4. The various changes that have taken place under my stewardship will be a lengthy discussion for another paper. Suffice it to say, a number of colleagues who worked in the workshop theatre tradition have now joined the university and are developing a performing and writing training curriculum, which they are using in the studios. This material and the discoveries they are making in the studios have become the subject of research for their higher degrees.

Some examples of arts research in pursuit of an african aesthetic

Before the phase of arts research began in Africa, theatre-makers responded to colonial models in a variety of ways, which Frantz Fanon called a literature of assimilation to the metropolis models, followed by a literature of just before the battle, which told African stories in borrowed western aesthetics, and, finally, a literature of combat that fought western models, both aesthetically and in terms of content.[12] After these three phases, African scholars began a new phase of researching and experimentation through creative practice to establish a national theatre aesthetic or an African one. The first recorded arts research was by Herbert Dhlomo, who wrote a number of plays and theorised his practice. After studying the various performance modes of the Zulu, he called this African theatre "*izibongelo*," which he defined as "all forms of tribal dramatic art."[13]

In 1960, a new political and cultural movement called the Black Consciousness Movement emerged and began a theatre programme in 1972, which Steve Biko, the think tank of the movement, called "Black theatre."[14] The aesthetics of theatre can be picked from a number of plays that were written and performed under its banner, such as Mthuli ka Shezi's *Shanti* (1981). Its focus was not so much the form but the message. Mafika Gwala, another active theorist of the Black theatre movement, described the aesthetic as African national theatre.[15] What is significant here is the desire to create a continental aesthetic that would carry the weight and depth of African experiences. The Ghanaian arts researcher, Mohammed Ben Abdallah calls this African aesthetic in the Akan language "*Abibigoro*," meaning "black theatre or theatre of African people."[16] Black theatre scholars who described the same theatre used either terms: black theatre or African theatre. What is clear from the above descriptive epithets is an attempt since 1939 to describe and name the African aesthetic.

In 1976, wa Thiong'o together with Gecau and wa Mĩrĩĩ, at the prompting by the Kamiriithu community, started an arts research project by the same name, Kamiriithu theatre. They worked with untrained villagers and workers to create a workshop play called *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I Will Marry When I Want) (1977). After the project, wa Thiong'o reflected thereon based on what he had learnt from the villagers, who he saw as the custodians of his mother tongue, Gikuyu, and African culture. *Ngaahika Ndeenda* was an example of African theatre and wa Thiong'o began to theorise his practice using the term "African theatre" to describe his aesthetic. The tenets of this theatre resonate with Efua Sutherland's *Anansegoro* (loosely translated as "Spider" play), epitomised by her production, *Marriage of Anansewa* (1975). In this play, she demonstrates how the African storytelling tradition can be used as a technique to write and perform an African play. All the aforementioned descriptors speak to a common aesthetic developed at different times across the African continent. Based on their artistic practice, they have argued that this form may be deployed in theatre-making in Africa, and have demonstrated its applicability and efficacy in their respective plays. I want to posit this form as the first tenets of Afroscenology. However, in as much as it is an alternative to western theatre, it does not necessarily negate any useful elements from the western tradition, albeit they may never take the dominant position in the hierarchy of signs.

In African art, the storytelling tradition has not only influenced African theatre, but African novels and films. For much of African theatre that subscribes to the basic tenets of Afroscenology, the "opening" is characterised by a common quality: *nhanganyaya/ukuvula* (Shona and Nguni, respectively). Sam Ukala has called the beginning, the "law of opening."[17] The storyteller/*sarungano* (Shona), who may be played by one person or shared by several people, enters the space and introduces the

story by telling it to the audience and introducing the other characters. In Abdallah's *The Slaves* (2005), for example, the storytellers/*sarungano* are played by a group of people: a search party pursuing captured slaves. They perform a poetry of abuse at the audience. When the *sarungano* is played by several people, the style of performance becomes what is called, in Swahili, a "*ngonjera*." The various plays mentioned here deploy the *ngonjera* performance technique, which the western gaze may read as a chorus. However, in the African sense, the *sarungano* take turns to deliver the narrative, and sometimes take the lines together in choral chants.

In my artistic research, I tested this theory through staging the classic play, *Oedipus Rex* (c. 429 BC), which I adapted to *Vumani Oedipus* (2015). I used a group of praise singers, termed in Nguni, "*izimbongi*," to introduce the story by singing a song of suffering. The king's chief of staff, *ndunankulu*, also played the part of the *sarungano* by addressing the king and the audience, explaining why they were gathered and what the state needed to do. The combination of *izimbongi* and *ndunankulu* provided a pivotal vehicle to deliver the story and add commentary from time to time. Dike deploys the same technique in her play, *Sacrifice for Kreli* (1978) when a group of male *izimbongi* deliver praises to King Kreli, according to Xhosa custom, and provide commentary on the behaviour of men who occupied two different ideological positions: surrendering to the British or fighting them.

This theoretical tenet is not only applicable to African generated play texts but, like any other theory, can be deployed to any play text. The artist-researcher who put it to test several times, Abdallah, concluded that the *ngonjera* technique "is a tool of the director. I see myself taking any play, written … and doing it in the *abibigoro* style [Afroscenology style] without changing the play, talk about the author and then the play begins. Then, at certain points, he cuts into the action and comments on it."[18]

The second theoretical tenet of Afroscenology is *visiosonic* dramaturgy. The neologism suggests a combination that is visual and auditory. All over the African continent, song and dance form an integral part of social life and playing culture. Arts researchers like Dike, wa Thiong'o, Abdallah, and Stephen Chifunyise have reached one conclusion: that work deploying the theory of Afroscenology will have song and dance (*nziyo/ingoma* and *kudzana/shibilika*; in Shona and Zulu, respectively). In a typical western play deploying the six elements of Aristotle's dramatic theory,[19] language with pleasurable accessories (*lexis*) will be a key component. Language will subsume elements like poetic language, emotion, diction, silence, beats, thoughts, units, and subtext. While Africanists and African theatre-makers may choose to use language in their performances, which may or may not have some of the Aristotelian elements, the Afroscenological near equivalent of language is broader than that provided by Aristotle. wa Thiong'o has called this category "the language of African theatre," which subsumes song, dance, and mime.[20] These three languages of African theatre, in the case of wa Thiong'o et al.'s *Maitu Njugira* (Mother Sing for Me; 1982), were more dominant than the spoken word (*lexis*) as he asserts, "dance, mime, song were more dominant than words in telling the story of repression and resistance. The visual and sound images carried the burden of the narrative and the analysis."[21]

Chifunyise, theorising on what called "national theatre," a form of new theatre that he wanted the newly independent Zimbabwe to adopt in 1980, makes a number of interesting observations about the place of song and dance. In this regard, Chifunyise proposes two ways of creating theatre. The first proposal is centred on appropriating the western dramaturgical frame and then grafting it with African texts. Here, the theatre-maker takes recourse to making theatre following a linear plot but

incorporates song and dance at strategic points as summarised in Chifunyise's training manual.[22]

- In every break in the play
- At change of scenes/acts
- To create an atmosphere/location/cultural environment or indicate progression of time
- To bring life into the play
- To explain or expand the theme of the play/to remind the audience of the message/hidden theme
- To involve or awaken the audience
- To begin or end the play/rejuvenate it/help to create impact

In this approach, the matrix of performance is western, and indigenous texts are inscribed within that matrix, and they alter the western dramaturgical frame while indigenous texts are themselves equally altered.

Chifunyise's second proposal may aptly be described as "de-dramatisation" of theatre, in the sense that he attempts to move away from the primacy of the written text, implying the death of the playwright and the ascendancy of the director in the creative process, to a type of theatre that utilises the body as the nucleus of performance or, as he puts it, as "the most critical tool in creating theatre."[23] Chifunyise describes this theatre as "dance-drama," although the term itself is a misnomer in the sense that, in actual performance of this theatre, drama is almost dead. Dialogue is minimal, and where it is used, it is not intended to be constructed around the Aristotelian notion of plot. Instead, the theatre-maker creates a performance through dance, song, music, mime, chants, ululation, recitals, and movement.[24] According to Chifunyise, the theatre-maker could bring traditional songs, dances and ceremonies, rallies, recitals, and festivals to the stage as they are, and then rearrange them for coherence and order. This seems to resonate with the Caribbean theatre of exuberance or theatre of assimilation proposed by Errol Hill.[25] Since Chifunyise believes in the functionality of theatre and its ideological impact, he proposes that the songs and dances chosen by the theatre-maker should depict the interests of peasants and workers. Alternatively, Chifunyise proposes that the songs and dances could be used out of their original contexts by changing the words and inscribing new ones to an existing melody.[26] The traditional dances could be re-choreographed to suit the new needs of the director.

Related to the elements of song and dance is mime. What I seek to establish is to foreground mime as a tenet of Afroscenology. This kind of mime is not to be confused with the western tradition associated with Jacques Lecoq. This mime is different and is called *kuyedzesera/ukunyenyeza* in Zimbabwe and South Africa, respectively. These words mean to try to be someone or something in the absence of the object or person. This "attempt to be" is not limited to physical means, but incorporates sound action produced by the human body. Thus, the body is capable of performing or expressing anything. Based on the duality of the process, which is both physical and aural, I would call the technique *Afrosonic* mime to distinguish it from the classical mime.

Take, for instance, the performance of Dike's *Sacrifice for Kreli* (1976). King Kreli is planning a sacrifice to his ancestors to ascertain whether he should go back to Bomvanaland (a land now conquered and taken over by the British) to fight the British or to bring the Galeka women and children to the valley to stay with their families, as

opposed to being the subjects of the British. Fourteen men performed the ritual. It involved standing around a kraal (mimed) and identifying an acceptable bull amongst a big herd of cattle (mimed). The performers drive the herd by way of producing bellowing sounds, whistling, shouting, and talking to animals. The herd is mimed through sounds. In its 1976 run, Rob Amato, the producer and co-director with Makwedini Mtsaka, remembers the mime as follows,

> … and at the end of the first act there are fourteen people bringing the imaginary beast in, which always got ovations. There are fourteen people in a coordinated mime, which was rehearsed with me being the bull, and they would bring me down, while I put all the resistance I could muster, just to get the right muscular tensions of the act. Five men at each of my arms, and of course, I would go down … Anywhere, they put it to the ground, and it falls with a great thump as it lands, and this is done by an actor, you know. You've got so many actors that you don't know who's doing the sound effects. Then the king passes the spear between the bull's legs and up and down the body, and then stabs it and one of the actor's cues—you can't tell which, they're all bending down holding this thing, kneeling and holding it, and there is a lot of noise.[27]

Read together with the stage directions in the play, the fourteen performers together try to create an atmosphere and ambience to convince the audience that they are driving a herd of cattle through human and animal sounds, and, of course, using their hands to suggest whips and spears. They do not try to be animals, but they produce sounds that create an atmosphere for suspending disbelief. Since mime is not scripted, there is a greater tendency for the eleatory technique to be used, which Ukala calls "free enactment."[28] Ukala uses this epithet to describe the ability of the performer to imitate actions and speech of a character or non-human object without being fully psychological. It also involves the element of bifurcation: the ability to play multiple characters by shifting from one to the other in quick succession, including playing inanimate objects. While this is rehearsed, the performance changes each night depending on the activities of the assemblage. The subject of *Afrosonic* mime is an essay-length discussion on its own; here, I just want to demonstrate how it works in the context of Afroscenology theory.

Why artistic research in Africa?

Michel Foucault argues that power does not weaken and vanish.[29] It can retreat, but it has the propensity to re-organise its forces and reinvent itself in another form, pursuing the same objectives. Within the Postcolony, the lost power can be channelled more rigorously in the academy and the field of artistic production. Coloniality is an invisible power structure that sustains colonialism and its unequal relations of exploitation and domination even after the end of colonialism. Within the academy, there is cognitive domination, which ensures that inequality reproduces itself. The modes of knowledge production and dissemination in South African, historically white, universities are largely Eurocentric.

- The curriculum will prescribe more western plays for staging, studying, and criticism than African ones.
- The training of performers will use western methods (e.g., the psycho-technique and its various versions like Chekhov, Mesmer, Alexander, Strasberg, Grotowski, Spolin, Mamet, etc.) and, as an afterthought, one Asian technique and side-lined African performer training methods.

▶ The curriculum may privilege western theatre history and theatre innovators and neglect African theatre history.
▶ The curriculum may chronologically study western theories; naturalism, realism, modernism (symbolism, Dadaism, futurism, epic, expressionism, etc.) postmodernism, etc., and neglect African ones; Negritudism, Pan-Africanism, Afrocentricity, Afro-futurism, Afroscenology, Womanism (an African version of feminism), etc.
▶ Ali Mazrui has called this "Euro-heroism" by which he means "the tendency toward giving disproportionate attention to European and western achievements in arts."[30]
▶"Euro-exclusivity." In terms of knowledge production, disproportionate space is given to the western side of theatre history and, in the case of South Africa, white theatre history and the role whites have played in advancing South African theatre.

The armed struggle was the first phase of decolonisation. In almost all postcolonies, students were the first to reject a colonial curriculum: Zimbabwe in the 1980s, Kenya in the late 1960s, and South Africa from 2015. I put it to you that artistic research has the potential to decolonise the curriculum in Africa. Emanating from the seven approaches to artistic research, the following can be achieved:

▶ Production of new plays/performances from the African context that may be used by students and researchers for their courses and research.
▶ Production of new performer training methods and techniques that speak to the African context; e.g. Afroscenology, Afro-futurism. The world may benefit from Africa.
▶ Challenging the *logos*. The western academy has always worshipped positivist ways of producing episteme while at the same time demeaning knowledge gained through making, performing, and creating. Arts research challenges the dictatorship of *logos* and privileges embodied ways of knowing a major—paradigm shift.

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Notes

1 Fleischman, 'The Difference of Performance as Research'.
2 MSU Ordinance, 5.
3 Fleishmann, 'The Difference of Performance as Research', 28.
4 Hauptfleisch, 'Artistic Outputs, Arts Research and the Rating of the Theatre Practitioner as Researcher', 19; emphasis in original.
5 Hauptfleisch, 'Artistic Outputs, Arts Research and the Rating of the Theatre Practitioner as Researcher', 19; emphasis in original.
6 Hauptfleisch, 'Artistic Outputs, Arts Research and the Rating of the Theatre Practitioner as Researcher', 20; emphasis in original.
7 Crossley, 'The Cyber-Guitar System'.
8 Whitmore, *Directing Postmodern Theater*.
9 Pradier, 'Ethnoscenology: The Flesh Is Spirit'.
10 Pavis, *Analyzing Performance*.
11 Meyer-Dinkgräfe, *Approaches to Acting*.
12 Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*.
13 Dhlomo, 'Nature and Variety of Tribal Drama', 48.
14 Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 96.
15 Gwala, 'Towards a National Theatre'.
16 Asiedu, 'Mohammed Ben Abdallah's Search for an African Aesthetic in the Theatre', 371.
17 Ukala, 'Folkism'.
18 Quoted in Asiedu, 'Mohammed Ben Abdallah's Search for an African Aesthetic in the Theatre', 372.
19 Plot, character, thought, language, melody (rhythm), and spectacle.
20 wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*.
21 wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, 58.
22 Chifunyise, 'Dance Drama', 35.
23 Chifunyise, 'Foreword', viii.
24 Chifunyise, 'Dance Drama', 36.
25 Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*, 44.
26 Chifunyise, 'Dance Drama', 36–7.
27 Interview published in Solberg, *Alternative Theatre in South Africa*, 60.
28 Ukala, 'Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle in Dramaturgy'.
29 Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.
30 Mazrui, 'Foreword', xi.

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