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CONTEMPORARY VISUAL PRACTICE AND ESTABLISHED CONVENTIONS IN ZIMBABWEAN THEATRE * A DOCUMENTATION AND ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

This study documents and analyzes the state of contemporary visual practice in Zimbabwean theatre with regards to the conventions that are currently dominant. I propose that the "contemporary" practice is one that has taken root since 1980 when the country attained political independence. The term "visual practice" refers to the construction of the spectacle, that is the visual treatment accorded to a production in providing what the audience sees on stage.

The study considers the established and customary treatment of the performer and the performance space in Zimbabwe as developed through time and accepted by the people of the country as a way in which the meaning of the dramatic text is articulated to give aesthetic pleasure to the audience. In Zimbabwean theatre the spectacle can be a bare or minimally dressed stage where dialogue and body movement suggest the context of the dramatic world. The relationship between visuality and orality is central to this notion and I propose identifying the ways in which the spectacle is constructed both in terms of mise en scene and how the dramatic world is suggested in the audience's imagination through verbal invocation. This acknowledged, there is a clearly developed set of visual practices and traditions in Zimbabwean theatre. This study attempts to define and account for the range of styles and variables within this theatre in terms of the ideological objectives of the practitioners in relation to the available resources of personnel, finance, time and technical facilities.

Gordon Craig argues that the art of theatre is:

> neither acting nor the play, it is not scene nor dance, but it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed (Craig, 1968: 113).

Thus, everything that is on stage is not autonomous but exists reciprocally and integrally. For the purposes of this study, however, the visual elements of theatre are identified and studied discretely, these being: the nature and identity of the performance space, the adoption of costumes and make-up, the performers' use of gesture, mime and movement and the use of personal props and finally scenery and lighting.

The form of the stage and the elements of stagecraft are significant ways and means of bringing the dramatic text to the audience. This is of particular interest to me because it demands a rigorous and sustained focus on a select and specific area of performance. Being a Staff Development Fellow with the University of Zimbabwe this topic necessitates my engagement in the theoretical considerations of questions of performance style and its relationship to dramaturgy, the creative application of the styles and the technical assimilation of elements of stagecraft. This study is equally prompted by the recognition of a need for a proper and systematic documentation and analysis of performances in Zimbabwe since this area of study has remained largely unexplored. It is my contention that the specificity of this study will promote more rigorous interrogation, understanding and development of the current theatre practices for students, scholars and theatre audiences in Zimbabwe.

Prior to 1980, the documentation of colonial theatre and dramaturgy consisted the main body of texts on Zimbabwean theatre,[1] while after this period there has been a growth of an appreciative

[1]The Rhodesian National Arts Foundation commissioned George Maxwell Jackson to compile a book on the state of the arts in what was then Rhodesia. This book was published in 1974 under the title The Land is Bright. It embraces a wide range of artistic practices, ranging from sculpture, literature, music to theatre in accordance with its brief. In relation to the performing arts the activities of the Reps Theatre and its

body of literature, mainly theses analyzing the traditional theatre. These post-independence theses have however tended to analyze traditional theatre of the pre-colonial period or, alternatively, have been literary studies of Shona and Ndebele plays. Significantly no attempts have been made, to date, to identify and account for the visual practices and traditions of performance. Arguably, the locus of critical attention and scholastic documentation is on the literary product of the dramatic text (script) while the performance "text" (theatre practice) has received little critical attention. The seeming lack of specific focus on the visual elements of the production and the lack of specialist stage designers may lead to the assumption of the attitude that there is no need to examine this minimalist style of performance, what Jerzy Grotowski calls "poor theatre". I intend to argue that this minimalism is intrinsic to the aesthetic of contemporary Zimbabwean theatre.

The performance style and concerns of the Reps Theatre are important to this study in that they demonstrate different notions of the construction of the spectacle from the rest of the Zimbabwean theatre. Cary documents that George Barnes' joining the Reps as Stage Manager in 1936 enforced pre-held notions of illusionistic theatre. Cary asserts,

> To Barney [Barnes] the stage was something special, something removed from the workaday world, and any attempt to bring the two together as one was abhorrent to him (Cary, 1975: 55).

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sister companies are comprehensively documented, but little coverage is given to indigenous people's theatre.

Robert Cary published The Story of Reps in 1975, chronicling the formation, history and styles of operation of the Salisbury Repertory Players (Reps). It is immediately apparent to the reader of this chronicle that the Reps maintains the objective of keeping close to the Nineteenth Century European proscenium arch tradition with its illusionistic style of presentation and its attendant performance conventions complete with the box set tradition. For instance Reps' first full length production, The Admirable Crichton, presented on June 25 and 26, 1931, had four scenes of which three were drawing and living rooms. The profit made from this production was immediately channelled towards purchasing a set of black curtains, borders, battens and footlights (Cary, 1975: 41) so that the conventional pre-requisites of illusionistic staging would be available

In displaying this disposition, Barnes was vigorously upholding and advancing the notions and practices of the "home counties" from his specific position as Stage Manager. Performers were castigated for wandering in their costume round the front-of-house toilets and for joining friends after a show still wearing stage make-up. Barnes was thus controlling the practice of creating and preserving "a sense of 'magic'" which "the unexpected impact of everyday life can destroy [...] in a second" (Ibid: 54-55).

A brief review of post-independence theses and books reveals an altogether different perspective and preoccupation from those advanced by the Reps. Zimbabwean Theatre: A Study of Shona and English Plays, written by Ranga M. Zinyemba (1986), deals with dramatic techniques, themes and relevance, as well as the roots of Zimbabwean theatre and its dramaturgy, asserting that these developed from traditional live performances like ritual ceremonies, communal secular observances and Christian influences. Zinyemba's introduction focuses on the rituals, which he argues were performed from the birth of a child through his or her life with the most elaborate of these being performed during funerals and "post-funeral occasions". The study is, however, concerned with the thematic and structural analysis of the dramatic text, and does not extend to theatrical performance practices with the attendant conventions and visual treatments intrinsically connected to the dramaturgical developments.

B.R. Batidzirai, in his M.A. thesis presented at the University of Zimbabwe in 1990 entitled "The Role of Post-Independence Theatre in the National Development With Specific Reference to Harare Theatre Groups", studies the use of theatre as a tool for development. From a Marxist perspective on cultural production he addresses the pre-colonial practices as transmitters of

society's values while detailing colonial practices as strategies adopted in the ideological and political interests of colonial imperialism. The suppression and control of the indigenous Zimbabwean cultural values was accompanied by the corresponding inculcation of colonial values and attitudes: Christian missionaries discouraged traditional religion and cultural forms labelling them heathen and primitive, while promoting canonical English texts and locally written plays meant to instil English colonial values and attitudes.[1] Whilst performance styles and presentation modes are not his focus, Batidzirai argues that the production of English plays resulted in the copying of English techniques in the presentation of the performances, thus extending his focus further towards this particular field of study.

Batidzirai also argues that structures like the Reps Theatre were established as colonial culture "service stations" where theatre performances tended to be commercial, emphasizing entertainment, rather than addressing social and political issues. This theatre practice continues to exist side by side with the dominant practice in Zimbabwe: "Theatre trends in Zimbabwe have to a large extent been shaped by the colonial experience" (Batidzirai, 1990: 34). The colonial shaping and influence should not be taken, however, to mean that Zimbabwean theatre is modelled along colonial theatre lines because the theatre has developed its features coming from its past in a synthesis of both the pre-colonial cultural performances and colonial theatre practice.

Batidzirai also documents and analyzes the operations of the two theatre organizations then in

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[1]Batidzirai does not provide examples of the local plays inculcating colonial values but, however, provides examples of local films like Mataka, Tiki and Benzi Goes to Town as negatively portraying Africans "as thieves, liars, servants, dirty and stupid" (Batidzirai, 1990: 33).

Zimbabwe at the time, the National Theatre Organization (N.T.O.) and Zimbabwe Association of Community Based Theatre (Z.A.C.T.). He argues that N.T.O. champions colonial theatre, pointing to policies and language use control of the National Theatre Festival and the National High Schools Theatre Festival in support of his claim. The emphasis in such festivals is on colonial setting, lighting, costume and make-up, sound and sound effects. The technical resources assuming the status of necessary performance adjuncts, Batidzirai argues, can be afforded by former whites only schools. This excludes 80% of the schools and, thus, the festival "cannot qualify as a national festival when it is done by a minority" (Ibid: 53). His criticism of this emphasis on the importance of stagecraft in colonial theatre is to substantiate the bias evident in theatre competitions where colonial theatre is privileged by its access to techniques which isolate the majority people's expressive forms in which they do not have equal access to finance and specialist personnel and are rooted in an entirely different tradition of performance. Z.A.C.T., Batidzirai asserts, celebrates the adoption of traditional cultural performance forms and represents the democratic theatre movement championing the interests of workers and peasants. A detailed analysis of the visual style of the majority people's theatre is, however, beyond the ambit of his study.

In his M.A. thesis entitled "Art and Ideology in Performing Arts: The Case of the Traditional Shona Theatre and the Colonial Film in Zimbabwe" presented at Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria, in 1992, Silas T. Taviringana gives an incisive analysis of traditional Shona theatre in which he broadly categorizes the practices into "children's theatre" involving child games, "adults' theatre" involving ritual ceremonies and the "theatre of orature" involving story-telling (Taviringana, 1992: 74). He emphasizes the communal nature of the performances and argues that in the case of child games, the games were "a form of a training school in which the spirit of

collectivity, socialization and solidarity was inculcated [sic] into the youths" (Ibid: 81), as well as fostering important cultural values in the participants. I propose to extend Taviringana's study of the pre-colonial performances arguing, as he does, that they are important influences on contemporary theatre, in that they underpin the visual practices and conventions of the theatre and that the performer's body rather than external adjuncts is central to the visual presentation.

The research methodology adopted is multi-faceted, incorporating Observation, Interview and Content Analysis Methods. Data obtained from both primary and secondary sources will be analyzed in order to explain the occurrence of certain phenomena. Theatre personnel, particularly those who are responsible for productions and sites cited in this study have been interviewed to establish their modus operandi and guiding principles. These interviews were semi-structured in order to allow a free-wheeling quality even though the interviews were based on the use of an interview guide. Visits to the performance sites involved examining the building or space and seeing performances. The appendices at the end of this study document much of the technical data and specifications, and in themselves constitute the beginnings of a systematic documentation of performance sites currently in use in Zimbabwe.

Even such a precisely circumscribed research project as this study of the prevalent visual practice in Zimbabwean theatre is too broad if it entertains the ambition of covering the whole country and requires further delimitation. The critical areas of investigation are consequently restricted as follows: the works of the University of Zimbabwe, Amakhosi Theatre Productions and Zambuko/Izibuko Theatre because they have arguably set trends in the country to the extent that any documentation and analysis of theatre activities in Zimbabwe not incorporating these groups would be an incomplete exercise. They are also important in that they have consistently produced

works over a sustained period from 1980 (Amakhosi) and 1985 to the present in the case of the other two groups thereby substantiating my claims of their centrality. Batanai Dance Group and Cam and Motor Primary School are included in the study because their practices are equally representative of contemporary Zimbabwean theatre but differ significantly from the operations of the aforementioned groups.

The first chapter is devoted to a survey of pre-colonial performances that arguably influence contemporary styles of presentation. From this, the second chapter has the study intensifying its focus on documentation and analysis of performance sites currently in use in Zimbabwean theatre in relation to selected theories of theatre architecture and its usage, in order to examine the proposition that the performance space itself impacts on the style of the productions it contains. The study closes further in the third chapter on the performer in the space, analyzing his/her primary resources. The fourth chapter focuses on the physical environment of the performer. The conclusion argues that contemporary Zimbabwean theatre visual practice is a synthesis of pre-colonial and colonial practices where traditional cultural forms are selected, reworked and re-interpreted to give a uniquely Zimbabwean tradition.

Although the concepts underpinning this study are grounded alongside the phenomena they explain, the concept of "theatre", however, requires immediate clarification because it is central to the study. According to Yuri Borev,

> Theatre is an art that presents the world aesthetically through dramatic action performed by actors before spectators. The basis of theatre is dramaturgy [...] The synthetic nature of theatrical art makes it a collective art involving the efforts of the playwright, director, set designer, composer and actor (Borev, 1985: 256).

Borev maintains that an important aspect of theatre is that it is a "creative act" where the image is

created "before the eyes of the spectators" (Ibid: 257). His definition significantly incorporates aesthetic qualities of the performance and emphasizes the visuality of the presentation. The definition is, however, broad enough to encompass a range of genres and stylistic treatments but it is useful in that theatre is understood to be inherently visual.

Richard Schechner crucially argues that a separation between the audience and the performers is necessary if a performance is to be regarded as theatre. He demonstrates this with an analysis of the Ninth Century Mass concluding that, "Theatre comes into existence when a separation occurs between audience and performers" (Schechner: 1976: 211). He also argues that function distinguishes the genres of performance from each other, postulating that:

> Whether one calls a specific performance ritual or theatre depends on the degree to which the performance tends toward efficacy or entertainment (Ibid: 207).

From Borev and Schechner's definitions, I propose a concept of theatre that is produced to entertain, its construction offers aesthetic considerations to recipients and its participants, who are the audience and the performers present in the same space at the same time.

Borev and Schechner postulate that in theatre the narrative is presented in ostended form: it is enacted. This understanding is important to this study in determining what constitutes "Zimbabwean theatre". The dramaturgy and script of necessity need to be "local", not "imported", or at least they should be local adaptations of an "imported text".

In the introduction of his study Zinyemba anecdotally and deliberately defines Zimbabwean theatre via negativa. He quotes one Judith Jenkinsen:

> As a post-Independent immigrant to this country I have been very much impressed by the quality and variety of theatre in this country. Not only the range of entertainment provided - from Gilbert and Sullivan to Dario Fo - but also the quality of the acting, the magnificent sets, the costumes compare very favourably not only with provincial repertory theatre in England but also with much that is provided in the West End of London. That was one of the things I thought I would most miss when I left and it has not proved to be so (Jenkinsen as cited in Zinyemba, 1986: 7).

Zinyemba critiques both the 1985 National Theatre Festival and The Northern Suburbs News (May 1985) for identifying performances of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, The Playboy of the Western World, The Golden Masque of Agamemnom and Anna's Room as "local productions".[1] He concludes,

> One cannot be any further away from Africa, let alone Zimbabwe, than by watching these plays featured in the so-called "National Theatre Festival" (Zinyemba, 1986: 8).

[1]It is not my aim to address the script and dramaturgy but implications here are that the style of presentation equally demonstrates wholesale importation and owes little or nothing to visual traditions in Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER ONE

EVOCATION: REVISITING THE PAST

> all art bears the imprint of its historical epoch, but [...] great art is that in which this imprint is mostly deeply marked (Matisse as cited in Eagleton, 1976: 3).[1]

A study of the various activities influencing a particular theatre tradition is faced with the problematic question of what constitutes "performance". Cultural studies in the anthropological, psychological and sociological disciplines, together with avant-garde theatre practices have adopted the term "performance" for different activities: the term is potentially so broad in application that all human, animal and even machine activity can be deemed a performance. Marvin Carlson (1996), in an inter-disciplinary overview, posits that people can legitimately talk of "theatrical performance", "social performance", "ethnographic or anthropological performance" and "linguistic performance". Oscar G. Brockett (1995) argues from an anthropological standpoint that performance (what he terms "performative activity") encompasses activities like theatre, "political campaigns, holiday celebrations, sports events, religious ceremonies, and children's make-believe [...] dances and rituals [...]" (Brockett, 1995: 1). Schechner argues from a sociological perspective that,

> Theater is only one node on a continuum that reaches from the ritualization of

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[1]Henri Matisse here argues that a work of art's form, style and meaning is a product of its context. Equally important in addressing the question of presentation style are the received historical practices that give rise to those currently prevalent: contemporary performance practices are partly shaped by those that precede them. I would propose that the background of contemporary Zimbabwean theatre constitutes more than conventionally understood "theatre" practice and is extended to include a broad range of cultural performances and events.

> animals (including humans) through performances in everyday life - greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on through to play, sports, theater, dance, ceremonies, rites, and performances of great magnitude (Schechner, 1988: xiii).

The term "performance" has also gained popularity and usage in referring to modern performance studies and has been appropriated in particular by the category of self proclaimed "performance artists". Carlson describes performance art as a form in which the practitioners do not rely on presenting scripted characters by other artists, but rely on the presentation of their own bodies, autobiographies and specific experiences which they display for audiences in a space appropriate to the ideas of the work, a practice thus constituting an intersection of visual arts and more conventional theatre forms.

Carlson analyzes the various applications and uses of "performance" arguing that in one sense the term involves "the display of skills" such as when people act out improvised or scripted events for some other people to see. An equally common usage of the term denotes a display of skill "but less of particular skills than of a recognized and culturally coded pattern of behaviour", as in "theatre and other role playing, trances, shamanism, rituals" (Schechner as cited in Carlson, 1996: 4-5). While the first usage of the term refers to the enacting or practising of activities in a specific event, the second sense refers to the existing of these activities as autonomous genres. Yet another understanding of the term carries altogether different connotations: "the general success of activity in light of some standard of achievement that may not itself be precisely articulated" such as when speaking of someone's sexual performance or a child's performance in school, where the task of judging or evaluating the success of the performance rests on its observer rather than performer. This results in the term also being applicable to non-human activity like the performance of brands of automobiles, or of chemicals or metals under certain conditions (Carlson,

1996: 5). The first two notions relate directly to the performers' engagement with a theatrical language while the connotations of judgement and evaluation implied in the third make it less appropriate to this study.

Carlson argues that the central notions constituting a performance in the theatrical sense are "the double consciousness" on the part of the performer, not the external observation:

> all performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action (Bauman as cited in Carlson, 1996: 5);

and that the performance is always for someone, an audience "that recognizes and validates it as a performance even when, as is occasionally the case, that audience is the self" (Carlson, 1996: 5-6). I would argue that this understanding of what constitutes performance is particularly important in approaching pre-colonial performances in Zimbabwe where the distinction between the broader definition of performance and the specific quality of theatrical performance is less clear particularly since the audience is arguably an "active participant".[1]

In this study the term "performance" will be used to refer to rituals, traditional dances, story-telling, children's games and the Pungwe tradition in Zimbabwe. What is of importance to this

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[1]Brockett finds it problematic to separate "theatre" from other performance genres like rituals, arguing that both theatre and ritual include elements of entertainment and provide a source of pleasure through theatrical spectacle. He, however, argues that the distinction between these genres lies ultimately on their perceived functions (Brockett, 1995: 5). Schechner also argues that the context of the event determines whether it is "theatre" or "ritual":

> A performance is called theater or ritual because of where it is performed, by whom, and under what circumstances. If the performance's purpose is to effect transformation - to be efficacious - [...] the performance is a ritual (Schechner, 1988: 120).

study, however, is not whether a particular performance can be called theatre or not, but the fact that a broad range of performance practices have significantly influenced the way contemporary theatre has evolved particularly in relation to the presentation styles and how this is received by the audience.

The analysis of these performance practices can best be undertaken if there is a knowledge of the operation of power and power structures in influencing cultural activities within societies. The Marxist cultural theorist Raymond Williams provides incisive definitions and key concepts which serve as crucial terms adopted in this study. He defines "hegemony" as essentially political rule or domination of one country by another, or of one social class by another. Social processes are related to specific power distribution and influences, making their understanding rest on their organization by "specific and dominant meanings and values" (Williams, 1977: 109). The hegemony imposes its ideology on a subordinate class's otherwise different consciousness, which it has to struggle to sustain. Thus, its practices become the main and formal practices within that socio-political setting. British colonial rule and its attendant ideology was established in Zimbabwe in 1890. In the case of cultural pursuits in general, and theatre in particular, the European "model" became the dominant theatrical form and pre-colonial performances (such as those identified in this chapter) became part of the subjugated people's culture. These then may be defined as "alternative" and "counter-hegemonic" processes which remain significant persistent elements in society. They are not only important in themselves but as indicators of what the hegemonic process works to control. They are significant to the extent that the decisive hegemonic function "is to control or transform or even incorporate them" (Williams, 1977: 113).

Williams recognizes that a study of the hegemonic process can only be effective if it considers the fact that there are historically varied and variable elements. The process has "stages", "variations" and "internal dynamic relations". Within these stages there is the existence of the "residual" and the "emergent" practices which are significant both in themselves and in what they reveal of the characteristics of the "dominant" practice. The "residual" elements are features of the past which are still present, but their place in the contemporary cultural process is "profoundly variable" (Ibid: 122). Effectively formed in the past, residual practices are still active, not only as an element of the past, but of the present. These can be distinguished from the "archaic" practices which are wholly recognizable as elements of the past to be observed, examined and revived. The residual practices may have an alternative or even oppositional relation with the dominant practices. In the Zimbabwean situation, ritual performances, children's games, traditional dances and story telling became predominantly residual practices alternative to the hegemonic colonial theatre tradition.

In contrast to the "residual" are the "emergent" elements in a society. These, Williams defines as the new meanings, values, practices and relationships which are being continually created (Williams, 1977: 123). They depend crucially on adapting to new forms which are consistent with new societal needs and aspirations. These emergent elements in the Zimbabwean context are typified by the Pungwe during the liberation struggle from 1963 to 1979. In terms of contemporary theatre, Pungwe performances have already receded to what might be considered residual status in that the need for these as forms of revolutionary mobilization arose during the liberation struggle and the objective of the struggle has been achieved.

I propose to identify two key concepts crucial and common to a range of pre-colonial performance practices: the interactive audience-performer relationship and the role of fetish objects. The

understanding of the instrumental role and impact of these concepts on visual consideration in traditional performances is crucial to my later analysis of Zimbabwean theatre styles.

Taviringana argues that the distinguishing feature of all African traditional performances is their participatory nature, making performances "festivals for all". The interplay between the audience and the performers allows for a constant resetting of roles whereby at one moment an individual is a performer and at another he becomes an audience member. The interconnectibility of the audience and performers is actually a social expression of the people's world view,

> for in the early rituals, who could say they were "attending" a ritual and [were] not a part of it. Such a person would be most probably seized as a witch who is for his own purposes trying to subvert the effectiveness of the ceremony (McLaren, undated: 86).

Robert McLaren is explaining the phenomenon of active participation and presence demanded by a ritual with a view to advancing this as a model for contemporary theatre. The communal nature of the people's way of life is intrinsic to the form and style of performances generated. Fundamental to this is a collaborative and collective consciousness shared by the performer and "audience" rather than the valorization of the individual either as performer or audience member. Thus, the communal nature of the people's way of life is intrinsic to the form and style of performances generated.

The European understanding of the binary relationship of the active performer and the passive audience as in the "Fourth wall" theatre tradition is completely foreign to this concept of performance. In the activity of story-telling the Sarungano (story-teller) is inextricably linked to the audience: Ruth Finnegan argues that the audience is "often directly involved in the actualization and creation of a piece of oral literature" (Finnegan, 1970: 10). The conventions of the

performance demand that the Sarungano is delicately receptive to the audience's responses. Finnegan argues,

> Sometimes he [oral artist] chooses to involve his listeners directly, as in story-telling situations where it is common for the narrator to open with a formula which explicitly arouses his audience's attention; he also often expects them to participate actively in the narration and, in particular, to join in the choruses of songs which he introduces into the narrative (Ibid: 10).

Crucially, this impacts on spatial configuration, dramaturgical form and treatment of the narrative.

Fetishism involves the confounding of a force, desire or object with the material sign which represents it. The signifier and the signified are conflated and the referent is displaced completely by its sign. The fetish object may be divorced from its natural circumstances and, without any necessary analogy or aesthetic consideration given to its appearance: it obtains power and significance beyond its objective capabilities. David Simpson postulates that fetish objects are revered as and for themselves, aesthetic considerations or the visual appearance of the fetish object itself are secondary to the power, spirit or magic it embodies. He argues,

> Roughly speaking, fetishism occurs when the mind ceases to realize that it has itself created the outward images or things to which it subsequently posits itself as in some sort of subservient relation (Simpson, 1982: xiii).

Human aspirations or motives are portrayed in an objective form in the containing space or body of the fetish object.

In the traditional performances there is an indistinguishable performer-audience relationship and the substitution of material objects by fetish ones. The study of the performances will reveal how these concepts influence contemporary theatre practice.

1.1 Ritual Performances

Kurova guva is an expiation ceremony done in order to ensure that a deceased adult's spirit is cleansed of any blemishes. The performance takes place at specially chosen venues, with the first "stage" at the deceased's grave. The performance space is surrounded by trees both marking the graveyard and providing a natural focus to the area used. A single branch from one of the trees is dragged home by an elder, symbolically bringing the spirit of the dead back to his home to the key communal living area, the kitchen. The action then shifts to the cattle pen where the conferring of the name of the deceased on a selected bull concludes the ritual performance.

The grave, the tree branch, the kitchen and the beast are crucial stages and instruments of the performance. The grave is the physical home of the deceased from whence he is to be taken to reside at his family home where he will help protect the family. In the course of the ritual, the grave becomes more than the physical home of the deceased, even more than a symbol of him, but becomes the deceased himself as demonstrated in understanding that pouring traditional beer onto the head of the tomb is taken to be the sharing of the beer with the deceased. This action is performed with due reverence and seriousness. The branch is also treated with a reverence suggesting its power not as a signifier but rather as a fetish of the deceased. The deceased is finally placed in the kitchen where he will reside forever as a potent protective force. At the conclusion of the ritual the branch may be removed, suggesting its function as fetish is temporary, but the permanent presence of the spirit is ensured in the commissioning of the name of the deceased on the bull. Once named, the bull is respected as the father of the family of the deceased. If it has to be slaughtered then a ceremony has to be conducted first to remove the person in it and vest this person or spirit on another bull. Thus, the grave, the branch and the bull are fetishized, and are

centres around which the performance revolves in material terms. The ritual is constructed around these specific objects or "props" and crucially it is their function rather than their visual appeal that is significant. This begins to suggest that Zimbabwean theatre may rely on similarly held beliefs and practices.

In spatial terms the ritual might be identified as "processional" incorporating multiple "scenic" units in the appropriate sequence: the cemetery, kitchen and cattle pen. Each of these scenic locales has the relevant object providing the symbolic visual focus without any major alteration in the appearance of the space occupied equally by all participants in the ritual.

More pertinent to the study of the comic funeral performance[1] of the Shona people is the use of costume. Varoora (daughters-in-law) and vanasahwira (customary friends) dress up in the real clothes of the deceased to dramatise the person's life. The use of the deceased's personal clothes is deemed to transform the wearer into the deceased through the concept of sympathetic magic. Thus, there is a process of "making alike" but this is effected via fetish processes rather than any attempt at literal physical verisimilitude.

Taviringana mentions an incident one of his informers, Mr. Peter Chinouya, narrated to him. He says that an old man died in the informant's village in Buhera District and was to be buried at a nearby hill. The deceased was always seen wearing a khaki coat in his lifetime. He was also

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[1]Taviringana comprehensively details the performance and argues that the purpose of the dramatization is to lighten up the situation for the members of the bereaved family, who are bound to feel the loss of the deceased more keenly. The comic performance diverts attention from the grief to the entertainment (Taviringana, 1992: 90).

always seen holding a beer jug in his left hand and a walking stick in his right. At the funeral a muroora (daughter-in-law) took the khaki coat, the jug and the walking stick and sneaked up the hill unnoticed. She came back wearing the coat and imitating the deceased's gait.

> It became so realistic (more so because the performer was just as thin and short as the deceased) that some mourners "almost broke their legs running away", mesmerised by the "resurrection" (Taviringana, 1992: 88-89).

Wearing the clothes of the deceased and imitating his gait and mannerisms is a way in which the people control and contain his spirit. Although visual likeness is not aimed for, its adoption in this instance actively disrupts the ritual and establishes the comedy of the performance.

1.2 Traditional Dances

Nowhere in pre-colonial performances is there a more evident and spectacular use of striking costume, "make-up" and mask than in traditional dances. Where masks are used, there is fetishization which can best be understood in the context of animism. Brockett and F.M. Whiting are summarized in an undated Theatre Arts Department, University of Zimbabwe, compilation entitled "History of Theatre" arguing that early man believed that everything was possessed by a spirit. The death of an animal would make its spirit wander about in various forms. In an attempt to control such spirits, masks were invented. Thus, the mask became a fetish through which man harnessed and controlled the spirits to suit his needs.

Anthropological cultural studies and performance theories both draw similar conclusions regarding the function of the mask as a symbol of transformed identity. Briefly it functions on two levels: firstly, the mask takes away the known person, it hides the performer; secondly, it transforms the wearer into some other identity (Southern, 1964: 29). It is on this second level whereby the wearer of a mask is "animated by the spirits which are derived from the myths" associated with the masks (Schechner, 1988: 46) that the mask is most powerful. The use of masks can be found in Nyau masquerades, which are originally funeral dance cults among the Chewa people from Malawi and Zambia now mostly settled in mining and commercial farming regions throughout Zimbabwe.

The masquerades are seen as ancestral and animal visitations to the living. The need to conceal the performer is deemed so significant that the whole body is concealed by costume and make-up supplementing the mask. Traditional figures in the masquerades are identified by particular masks and the characters are named according to the spirits embodied in the masks. The characters or roles are stereotyped: examples of these include the Simon and Maria masks, where the different performers are costumed in modern clothes, representing colonial conquest. As fetish objects, the masks do not represent or contain the spirits but are the spirits. Unmasked men enter the "backstage area" in the dense bush forming the background of the dancing arena but from there they emerge as spirits after assuming their disguises. The disguise asserts the identity and reality of the spirit to the extent that without it, the Nyau cult is threatened. This is best understood by the illustrated conviction among participants that the spirit is regarded as having been "murdered" if an outsider violates the magic of the ritual by unmasking a masquerader. Disguise is a crucial element in the Nyau cult because of the mysticism around the cult where no uninitiated person is allowed to recognize the person behind the mask. The "make-up" or body paint is mud and ash which is applied to all the parts of the body not covered in mask. The costumes are mud covered rags,

chicken feathers, maize cob and other plant leaves, sacks and fibres around the waist, knees, ankles, upper arms and elbows.

In his article on Nyau masquerades in Malawi entitled "Performance of Gule Wamkulu", S.T. Mvula argues that in the dances the rhythmic body movements correspond with the drumming, facial expressions and the costumes "blend[ing] to contribute to the beauty and the semantic content of the song and the performance" (Mvula, 1990: 92), thus building up the aesthetic of the performance. Again, there is an emphasis on the participant's personal resources, his body and transformed appearance, performance skills, but significantly no major transformation of the performance site or space itself.

The masqueraders roam the streets carrying axes and whips. People follow them until they gather around the dance arena which is the cult's appointed ritual space in front of the cult house which becomes a background to the performance. Alternatively the performance is conducted at a deceased member's house. The performance arena is a circle formed by the drummers and the singing "audience". Thus, the configuration of people in the space constitutes the chief spatial delimitations and scenic elements in the "staging". Behind the drummers forming a "backdrop" is a dense bush which serves to construct a "backstage area" during performances, and serves as a "cult house" at all other times. The use of the natural bush increases the mysticism of the cult since only the initiated cult members are allowed to penetrate its depths at any moment. Although this suggests a strict demarcation of appropriate spaces for the cult members and the "audience" in the performance, this separation is not enforced beyond this. The audience is allowed to be part of the world constructed through the performance by singing refrains and generating a rhythmic accompaniment by clapping hands but is not allowed to be part of the preparation for the

construction of that world.

In traditional Ndebele war dances praise chanting is followed by war antics with foot-stamping and jumps in which dancers brandish spears, shields and clubs. The dances were originally performed by regiments before their commanders, or before the king. Today, the dances survive among Ndebele dance clubs and associations. In the contemporary urban setting the civilian variety of the war dances is the isitshikitsha dance, a dance of entertainment. The dancers wear amabhetshu (animal skins), indlukula (head-rings), iwisa (ankle pads), leg rattles and beads. The leg rattles intensify the sound of rhythm of the foot stamping. Men generally dance costumed in the traditional warrior's ensemble complete with ostrich feathers on their heads.

Traditional dances as social events take place wherever community members gather for a social function, for instance rituals, funerals, festivals, kingship ceremonies, or for leisure. The dances are part of the traditional life institution hence their performance can be in any space where collective activity can take place. The uniform pattern of the costumes reflect the collectivity and communal solidarity that characterize a people's life outlook and social harmony.

1.3 Story-Telling

Traditional story-telling relies on the spoken word to convey the narrative: the visual world is proclaimed, described and further suggested by the vocal inflection and emphasis accompanied by appropriate gestural expressions. It is only in the mind of the listener that the visual world of the

narrative is constructed or imagined. Crucially, oral evocation dominates over any concern with literal presentation.[1] In order to make the story as vivid as possible to the infant audiences, the Sarungano has to use a repertoire of gestures and physical expressions to supplement his voice. Thus, in the oral tradition of story-telling the theatrical language dependent on elements like costume, scenery and props in their physical form remain outside the performance.[2]

Finnegan argues that expressiveness of tone, gestures, facial expressions and dramatic use of pause and rhythm are some of the elements of the story-telling tradition that contribute to its

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[1]Of equal importance, theatrically, is the reliance on the aural rather than visual codes of the performance establishing a practice not dependent on concrete actualization or even ostension but with a set of criteria for excellence lodged in the acoustic text incorporating rhythm, pitch, intonation and vocal timbre among other acoustic elements. These are however not part of this study because they are not used to evoke the "picture" suggested by the dramatic narrative.

[2]The practice of performing a story can be demonstrated in the Shona story of the mother who entrusted her children to hare while she went to work in the fields. The story starts:

Sarungano: Ngano ngano ngano [literally: story story story].
Audience: Ngano.
Sarungano: Paivapo [Once upon a time].
Audience: Dzepfunde.
Sarungano: Panga pane vamwe mai ... [There was a certain mother ...].

Typically, Shona stories start this way as a conventional means of engaging the participants from the everyday world into the world of the fairy tales, thus "framing" the narrative orally.

Later on in the story there is a song by both the Sarungano and the audience in which the mother is urging hare to bring back her children. The Sarungano plays the mother, calling the hare, while the audience plays the hare, answering back:

Sarungano: Tsuro-we Tsuro-we Tsuro-we [Hare]
Audience: Njara kunjanja.
Sarungano: Uya nevana zuva ravira Tsuro-we [Come with the children the sun has set, Hare].
Audience: Njara kunjanja.

This narrative story clearly demonstrates the inextricable link between the audience and the performer.

realization as performance. This view is shared by Mineke Schipper (1982) who argues that story-telling is made into a performance by the manner in which the story-teller displays his skill in presenting the subject matter to the audience. The Sarungano's enactment is important because he engages in an effort to recreate the original work he is narrating.

Significantly, the oral narrative with its complete independence from physical or material illustration of either the environment or scenic world of the narrative opens up the scope of the fiction to epic proportions. There is no limit to the places the personae can go or the scenes that the Sarungano can depict. In the imagined world there are no boundaries, or pauses for change of setting in literal physical terms. The narrator is free to move rapidly over large periods of time, and space: equally he is not confined to a chronologically linear narrative and goes back into the past, the present and forward into the future. The story-telling tradition with its epic scale is arguably a narrative foundation for dramatic works which equally resist the constraints of boundaries in space and time and demand an appropriate staging style: multiple staging.

1.4 Children's Games

In their games children engage in role playing activities appropriate to their socialization into society: the children learn the duties and responsibilities they are expected to play when they grow up and have their own families. The games are both a recreational source of entertainment and a serious form of instruction for the participants.

Julian Hilton (1987) argues that what the play of children and theatrical performance have in common is an imaginative construction of a possible world. Further, the imitative instinct, which is so crucial to the actor's performance as an individual is induced into the children when they play their games. The important role of mimesis in children's games is also realized by Ann M. Shaw who argues that the symbolic nature of children's behaviour

> often takes the form of overt imitation of experiences and behaving as if the child were the person, thing, or in the circumstance imagined[1] (Shaw, 1975: 79).

Mahumbwe (playing house) is performed during harvest period to portray positive aspects of family life. It is imperative to recognize that the term Mahumbwe derives from the verb umba, meaning build, reinforcing through the name the concepts embodied in the game. The game relies on the use of found objects which are understood to function symbolically, analogous representation not being a pre-requisite. The nature of the objects used and the ages of the participants result in two variations of the game. Between the ages of twelve and fourteen, boys and girls are considered old enough to play father and mother using real objects, while those between five and eight become their children. Girls collect millet from the fields and fetch water. They are given pots, meat and vegetables by their mothers. They make sadza (stiff porridge) and muriwo (relish). Two plates are prepared, one for the "father" and the other for the "mother" and "children" (Gelfand, 1978: 23).

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[1]Children's performance in games yet again links the broader cultural practices and specific category of theatrical performance. This is arguably true of any culture, but specific games (Chidhange Chidhange and Mahumbwe) can be used in the Zimbabwean context to address the way they impact on visual style in Zimbabwean theatre.

Children under the age of eleven are engaged in Matakanana (literally mud, but also used interchangeably with the term "Mahumbwe") where they do not use any real utensils and provisions. They construct their own props for the game improvising with found objects like tins, sticks, soil and tree leaves. Houses are "constructed" using lines drawn on the ground. The lines are essentially the ground plan of the "house", so in the performance this diagrammatic delineation represents the real house. In this case no-one is allowed to go into another "room" by crossing over the lines: they have to go through the marked "door". Spoken declarations can also accompany entrances and exits and this is taken to be the execution of the said actions. In the enactment of cooking the food, soil is mixed with a little water to make "sadza". Adding a little soil to water colours the water brown and produces "tea". Usually there is no fire but small sticks under the tin suffice for a cooking place. The "cooked" stuff is not eaten but the "family" pretends to eat by miming the action.

In Chidhange Chidhange a mother, children and hyena are regarded as the roles of the game. The "mother" gives advice to her "children" before she goes away to work. The "children" are told not to respond to the tricks the hyena employs to steal them. The mother gives them "food" through miming and leaves. The hyena comes and tries all sorts of tricks to tempt the children, even imitating the mother's voice so that the children think it is their mother. The hyena can claim any child who has laughed at its antics or who accepts its food. What is interesting in terms of performance is the playing of the hyena role by one of the children. The child is simply called a hyena and from that moment is taken as such without any expectation of even imitating the gait of a real hyena, let alone any transformation of appearance.

In Chidhange Chidhange there is no audience as such, although adults can watch and correct mistakes from a distance thereby taking in the role of an intrusive audience and director. Where some of the children form the audience, they are at liberty to change roles with those who at some times are performers. The performance takes place in a circle with "spectators" in a ring around the performers who can fall back into the ring and become audience members while they are replaced as performers by those who had been watching. The children who would have been caught by the hyena then step outside the inner circle and watch the others still in the game. They wait for all the other "children" to be caught by the hyena. This completes the game.

The visual style of performance of the games relies on improvised props and verbal declarations triggering imaginative construction of the fictive world and on the performer's body rather than on verisimilitude. The continuous flux between the audience and performer roles entrenched in the children's games, the rituals, traditional dances and story-telling establishes a convention of an actively participative audience which I will argue is intrinsic to contemporary Zimbabwean theatre rather than the "foreign" disciplining into a "passive" silent presence in a darkened auditorium as practised in colonial theatre.

1.5 Colonial Theatre

McLaren provides a satirical definition, critiquing the limitations and appropriateness of the colonial theatre practice when he says,

> Theatre is what is done on a raised stage under a roof between moments when the curtains (TABS) are drawn to conceal or change the furniture etc on stage (SET). It consists of saying words (DIALOGUE) and walking about, sitting down,

> getting up, coming in and going out (BLOCKING). The actors must talk loudly so that the audience can hear them (PROJECTION) and never turn their backs on the audience or stand in front of each other (MASKING) (McLaren, undated: 12).

This all takes place in a single specifically designated purpose-built performance site where a curtain underlines the clear distinction between performers and the audience. Augusto Boal (1985) argues that such rigorous demarcations of the fixed spaces of the performers and the audience, also indicated by the darkening of the auditorium, approximate the rigorous demarcations of the socially stratified society, thereby immobilizing society by perpetuating the status quo.

The objectives here are clear: the colonists intended to assert and maintain the cultural traditions of the West. Preben Kaarsholm argues that there was a quest among whites to repress or escape the "Africanness" of experience in Rhodesia. He cites C.T.C. Taylor,

> The pattern was one of almost surrealistic European-ness, of an acute keenness to imitate or reproduce the latest or at least recent fashion in London West End theatre and thereby to reinforce in audiences a conviction, not perhaps that they were not in Africa, but that Africa was a continent of ultimate emptiness and extreme primitivity into which colonial civilization had to be filled (Taylor as cited in Kaarsholm, 1990: 248).

By the 1950s the settlers had established theatre societies and held annual festivals adjudicated by theatre artists from South Africa and England "so that the local standards may be correctly assessed" (Jackson, 1974: 118). Groups performed their plays which were, needless to say, Eurocentric in character, content and form. Before the experts left they tutored students on theatre. Thus, the training would ensure that people kept on course with the performance styles overseas.

The colonial government organized festivals for black Zimbabweans performing non-political performances. Mining companies also encouraged work in the arts through their social welfare departments leading to the establishment of such organizations as Torwood African Society, Wankie Dramatic and Choral Society and Kamative African Players, the Mukadota Family and others formed independent of corporative and welfare institutions. There was a disparity between colonial theatre and these groups' performances in terms of style of presentation, context, material and conventions of attendance and performance. In articulating the way in which the early urban groups operated, Kaarsholm argues that it is important to consider the role of beer drinking. Beer drinking is an integral facet of cultural and social life of the African societies in Zimbabwe. The people traditionally engage in communal drinking as part of thanksgiving, reward, reconciliation, ritual cleansing, honour, binding people together and entertainment. The people gather to drink and engage in performances. In "beer houses" or shebeens, musical performances are an important feature of relaxed social drinking. The shebeens used to featured regular live music in the form of solo and duo guitarists in order to stimulate business, giving rise to omasiganda or itinerant musicians. Traditional dances were also featured in beer gardens as part of the social programme.

Apart from beer drinking places, the performances were also featured in other public places. John White, an itinerant box guitarist, used to stage his shows in trains en route to Salisbury, Bulawayo and Johannesburg in South Africa. Although almost all the groups and individuals were itinerant, their main venue in Salisbury was Mai Musodzi Hall. Thus, although initially the performances were not confined to any built performance site, the building of "theatre houses" in the colonial theatre tradition influenced indigenous performance practitioners such that they began to view a built site as a requirement for their performances even though they still performed anywhere people

could gather as an audience. Unlike in the divided space of the colonial model where there is a bar, foyer, auditorium and stage separated from each other, the public places featured the performers and the audience in the same space thereby containing "stage", "auditorium", and "bar" (in the case of shebeens) in the same room.

A brief look at Safirio Madzikatire's Mukadota Family will reveal some of the operations of early Zimbabwean theatre groups under colonialism. Owen Seda details the operations of the Mukadota Family in a paper presented to the University of Zimbabwe in September 1994 entitled "The Forgotten Icon - The Emergency and Development of Safirio Madzikatire's Theatre".

Seda argues that the Mukadota Family thrived at a time when there were virtually no structures provided by the colonial government to cater for indigenous black performing arts. The development of the drama in the form of situational comedy constitutes a response to the need by popular audiences to have light entertainment for diversion from colonial life styles. There were, strictly speaking, no make-up or costume departments. Where necessary, specialised costumes were kept by the group. Safirio Madzikatire himself had his costume highly exaggerated in terms of fit and colour. This costume was regular and would be changed only when he made concerted efforts at being civil. His exaggerated costume was appropriate to his role as the comic focus. Stage properties, including musical instruments for the group, tended to be very simple and easily transportable or improvised in situ.

1.6 Pungwe Performances

Pungwe performances liberated the theatre, in the same way that the war liberated the oppressed people, by "pulling down the walls" and making the audience perform with the main aim of changing the passive "spectators" into subjects transforming the dramatic as well as the revolutionary action. Kaarsholm argues that when the African people were severed from their traditional roots they did not completely lose contact with their traditions: from 1964 there were Youth Clubs directed at re-traditionalization of the arts and the 1970s saw an active period for the reassertion of African cultural identity. This was a starting point for Pungwe performances. An attempted marginalization and manipulation of black African cultures within the hegemony had the effect on African nationalist organizations of prompting them to dedicate themselves to a promotion of "original", "self-reliant" and "authentic" African cultures. The aim was to reconstruct the proud, pre-colonial cultural tradition that was under threat from settler domination. There was to be a "mental decolonization" and breaking away from "cultural imperialism" and the recreation of a confident sense of African self-hood that Frantz Fanon expounded in a speech "On National Culture" in 1959:

> African culture would take on "substance", gain new vigour and experience a renaissance away from mere folklore through being incorporated into the people's struggle for freedom (Fanon as cited in Kaarsholm, 1990: 254).

The guerillas found that "cultural liberation is an essential condition for political liberation" (Ngugi, 1981: 11). They adopted traditional performance forms to the new needs of the struggle.

A Pungwe was a gathering in an open, highly participatory format allowing spontaneous contributions of songs, dances, sketches, speeches and other performances by anyone or any

group. Everyone was encouraged to join in the songs and dances: as such the productions were collective. Villagers and fighters acted out and danced their commitments and built up morale through this collective performance practice. In war camps comrades improvised plays depicting Zimbabwe's history of struggle. They also composed songs and poems reflecting the nature and aims of the liberation struggle and in doing so the performance played a major role in the ideological training of the freedom fighters in Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. This helped to build morale in the camps. Dzingai Mutumbuka says,

> After one Rhodesian attack we didn't have any huts or any cover. Our clothes had been destroyed, our books, everything. I remember one night it was raining non-stop and these kids were lying under the trees, drenched, but they were singing, and they kept on singing [...].[1]

This theatre rendered itself possible at any place or at any time making it, like other performances seen, not to rely on restructured spaces but on the performer's body in a neutral space unaided by external adjuncts.

The contemporary theatre tradition is one that is preceded by this variety of performances more comprehensively documented elsewhere. The theatrical and performative elements in these performances impact on contemporary theatre practice.

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[1]Mutumbuka is a former freedom fighter and the first Minister of Education and Culture in Zimbabwe. He is here cited in Martin and Johnson, 1981: 278.

CHAPTER TWO

SITES OF PERFORMANCE

In this study of contemporary Zimbabwean theatre, it is imperative to analyze the interface between performance style and its spatial context and framing. The term "performance site" is posited as an essential alternative to the orthodox term "theatre" because of the colloquial understanding of "theatre" to connote a purpose-built structure, which further implies a traditional European proscenium arch stage and auditorium. This set of connotations and assumptions limits both the understanding of the range of performance practices together with their performance sites and would exclude significant cases from this study. In the contemporary Zimbabwean theatre with its origins in pre-colonial practices as argued in the preceding chapter, it is crucial to address a performance tradition which is altogether different from the traditional European one, and the concomitant use of a broad range of public spaces as arenas for performance.

The rationale of addressing the phenomenology of the performance space is motivated by the theories advanced by Carlson, Richard Southern and Keir Elam that the "framing" of the event is a significant factor in determining the ideological and aesthetic expectations of the audience. Carlson (1989) postulates that a performance site comprises both the inner frame of the activity, that is the stage and the auditorium, and the outer frame or general areas around this space, these being

access routes, facade, foyer, box office and even the geographical positioning of the performance site. His proposition emphasizes the equal impact of both the inner and outer frames in informing on the theatre activity within that space which is held to be an example of that society's culture and ideology. The positioning and accessibility of performance sites are in themselves significant factors in generating social and cultural meanings guiding the audience's perception of the event taking place at the site and orientating the receptivity (Carlson, 1989: 2). It is important to address the question of accessibility in determining who the performance site accommodates as its patrons, that is, whether it is inclusive or exclusive to particular classes or sections of the society: for instance, the location of Reps Theatre in Avondale, a former whites only suburb in Harare, immediately suggests exclusivity and elitism.

In order to define what constitutes the architectural structure of the theatre in the broadest sense, Southern documents and analyzes different historical models in a cross-cultural survey. Significantly, his task is to encompass a broad range of models within one definition and still retain a clear sense of what is specific and unique to the identity of a theatre. He identifies six salient features that together create and constitute the structure that Carlson defines as the "inner frame". The features are: the "place of entrance", the "background", a visible performance space which may be a raised stage, a "dressing room", "property store" and "some means to act above" (Southern, 1964: 156-59).[1] These features are present in a broad range of theatrical models: for instance, an "entrance" can be indicated through the use of either architectural or scenic solutions. Southern's criterion is useful and merits detailing because it opens up an understanding of both the specific form of the inner frame and its reciprocal relation to a specific performance and scenic

[1]Significantly, Southern omits technical resources such as lighting grid, fly gallery and trap doors as features specific to the structural definition of theatre.

tradition.

The "background" plays the crucial function of containing the performance by acting as a physical boundary against the potential intrusion of "the outside world". It both delimits the performance space in the vertical dimension and serves simultaneously to highlight the audience's attention on the performer in the foreground. In an outdoor space the background is even more crucial than in indoor spaces precisely because there is nothing to confine the audience's focus against the visual surroundings. This background may be a wall of a building, a hedge, a tent or even a tree which confines the audience's attention within the limits of its canopy. The crucial distinction here is between utilizing a selected background from available resources, whether a natural setting or the chance availability of an architectural landscape or whether a temporary landscape is constructed only for the purposes of the performance.

The visibility of the performer is facilitated by either a raised stage or a raked auditorium which addresses the consideration of optimal sightlines in the vertical plane. The stage and auditorium are locked into a reciprocal relationship whereby a raised stage may accommodate a flattened viewing space at a lower level without hindering visibility and equally a raked auditorium may facilitate visibility of the performer on an unraised stage. There are, however, instances where both the performers and the audience are on the same level thereby "deframing" the theatre event with the result that it is perceived as part of everyday events taking place everywhere. This practice is of importance to this study in that it is in line with the efforts of some specific practitioners in Zimbabwe to demystify the theatre event by bringing the performers and the audience into one continuous spatial area.

Carlson argues that the "backstage" area provides "a tangible sign for the hidden 'other' world of the actor" (Carlson, 1989: 131). The assumption underpinning the importance of the backstage area is that the performer uses it to change or assume his persona and prepare for an entrance to the stage as well as stowing other aids to the performance, like furniture and properties. Erving Goffman argues that the suppressed facts of the production are housed in the backstage, a place where "illusions and impressions are openly constructed" though hidden on the stage (Goffman, 1969: 97). The backstage area is symbolically situated at one end of the stage, off the auditorium, implying that the two worlds in theatre, that is that of the performer (housed in the backstage) and the audience (housed in the auditorium), stand in opposition and are brought together in a revelation of the hidden performance on stage.

Although Southern's definition of the "theatre" demands the incorporation of these features that characterize diverse models of the "organized stage", differences among theatre traditions emerge in the way in which the features are incorporated or, significantly, in forms of theatre that challenge conventions of use resulting in differences in performance styles. Cases of conventional and alternative use of the features will be used in this thesis to inform the analysis of performance sites and their customary use.

Current Zimbabwean theatre takes place in two broadly defined categories: the first is the obvious purpose-built sites and the second is the category of found spaces. Within the found spaces category further categorization is possible between the multi-purpose community halls and outdoor spaces. These categories signal crucial divergences in what they facilitate and promote in terms of performance style through their identities and more particularly with specific theatrical uses.

According to Bim Mason (1992) purpose-built sites provide a supportive environment to performances in both material and physical terms. In particular this is in regard to resources and funding since the sites have a single designated function allowing for specialist departments broken into units within the building. These support areas include dressing rooms, wings and workshops which are used to aid the performers in the preparation for the performance and facilitates more ambitious staging strategies. This is potentially enhanced by technical installations or specialist facilities in the inner frame.

Mason adds that in a purpose-built structure there is a partitioning or structuring of space felt by an audience entering from the outside world mainly because expectations of behaviour come to be associated with particular places. Although some sites may not offer a fixed or permanent physical separation of the stage and the auditorium, the partitioning is promoted by the discrepant roles of audience members and performers. These divisions can, however, be blurred if the reorganization of the space is a conscious disruption of the common use through a production style adopted by a particular director.[1]

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[1]This technique was adopted in the University of Zimbabwe productions Watch Me Fly, directed by McLaren in 1988, and Waiting for Lefty, written by Clifford Odets and first presented in New York in 1935, but here collectively directed by students under McLaren and performed in 1994, and Zambuko/Izibuko's Samora Continua and Katshaa! In these productions the proscenium arch stage was cut off by house tabs and performers sat in, entered and exited through the auditorium. There were no "orthodox" or formal entrances and exits, thereby facilitating the creation of an informality that allowed the performers and the audience to intermingle. For instance in Waiting for Lefty Tom Clayton sat in the auditorium, commenting and gesturing as if he was an audience member, before entering the raised stage. When he was chased away he ran through the auditorium. Zisorembudzi addressed the audience and performers in the auditorium. When a call for the strike was made, actors on stage entered the auditorium to mingle with the audience as if to drive home the view that the strike was for everyone to join, as Zisorembudzi pleaded to the

The notion of found spaces is oppositional to that of purpose-built sites: found spaces being those which are not originally purposely designed.[1] The use of found spaces has implications of alternative practice contesting the "orthodoxy" of purpose-built sites. Iain Macintosh says that little or nothing at all would be done to found spaces to make them purpose-built structures. His definition specifically excludes those spaces which are built for something else and are later converted into permanent single purpose performance sites. This is particularly important in Zimbabwean theatre where performances take place wherever there is a space to contain the performer and the audience. In Zimbabwe (at the time of writing) there is no prevalent tradition of permanently transformed single purpose sites, leaving community halls and outdoor spaces as cases of temporary performance use of unconverted found spaces.

In his study of street theatre and other outdoor performances, Mason argues that the most important aspect of outdoor sites is not that there is no roof above them but that they move away from the predetermined structure of a purpose-built site. The distinctions between the performer and the audience and between the performance itself and the larger social event become blurred, thereby setting new relationships which, in Zimbabwean theatre, are an adoption of the social intercourse that exists in pre-colonial performance forms. Direct and implied interaction between the performer and the audience is possible because there is no fixed and clearly defined spatial

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audience: "Fight with us for [what is] right".

In Samora Continua the audience was asked to stand up and join the singing of the national anthem. There was a song in honour of Samora Machel and the narrator announced: "Comrades, this was Samora's most favourite song. He sang it when he came here at Rufaro [Stadium]. Let us all sing the song". The use of the auditorium as part of the stage facilitated a highly participatory audience role.

[1]Any use of found spaces, as established in my readings, is seen in a binary relationship with purpose-built sites.

arrangement. The performance style that is facilitated by such conditions is one that makes theatre a conscious public dialogue since there is no "wall" separating the performers and the general public. In these spaces costumes can be put on in front of the audience, thereby reinforcing the notion of the performance as part of the everyday life. Mason argues that performances held in outdoor spaces depend on the use of physical skills and simple objects, thereby establishing a more direct and honest relationship between the performer and the audience, since the mechanics of staging the production cannot be fully hidden. He says that although the transient nature of these performance spaces does not allow for a reliance in sets and stage lighting, there is a reliance on the construction of the visual image through physical skills and improvisation (Mason, 1992: 11).[1] The use of the spaces on a temporary basis influences the performance style in that there is an elimination of redundant elements. The use of primary resources, rather than secondary ones, becomes a prerequisite.

The form of a performance space as encompassing either a closed or an open stage has assumptions attached to it in its usage and what it facilitates. Southern calls an open stage one that projects boldly forward from its background and is open to the audience on three sides. The audience members on one side can see others on the other side, thereby reminding each other of the theatricality of the experience they are encountering. The stage and the auditorium are within the same structural space, making theatre a consciously collective experience where both the

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[1]Mason's argument presupposes that an outdoor space is always crowded, has several other visual images around it and that performances in such spaces are always spontaneous, making use of the space as it is. Spaces may, however, be restructured in order to facilitate the staging of performances either for that time only or for a given period where the restructuring stays intact for the whole duration of the performances.

performers and the audience have a communal identity. A closed stage is characterized by rigorous demarcations of the division between the stage and the auditorium, thereby isolating the audience from the performer. Goffman argues that restrictions placed upon contact, that is the maintenance of social distance, provide a way of generating and sustaining awe in the audience. This has the potential to hold the audience in a state of mystification with regards to the performance (Goffman, 1969: 59). This mysticism is effective when the performers and means of creating the performance are concealed and kept secret, making the performers a kind of a secret society. The closed stage is specifically designed for this purpose where the secretive society of the performer can be maintained by the non-acknowledgement of the "other", that is the audience, which would breed familiarity of the two groups.[1]

The identity of a space facilitates the creation of either a sociofugal or a sociopetal feeling in the space. A sociofugal space keeps people apart. Each audience member has his own individual seat and "relative immunity from physical contact with his fellows (and even from seeing them)" (Elam, 1980: 64). A sociofugal space results in a personal perception and response, rather than a social one. Elam argues that even if the audience surrenders its individuality by being part of a single architectural unit of the auditorium, sociofugality is still maintained because each audience member has his own "well-marked private space". Thus, sociofugal spaces introduce "privacy" within an experience which is originally a social one (Ibid: 64-65). As this study will show, the notion of privacy and personal space is oppositional to the notion of communality where all take part as one collective body. In a sociopetal space people are brought together. The audience functions as a

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[1]Southern argues that the development of the proscenium arch wall with its elaborate frame is a structural solution to this objective of "hiding", concealing or masking the mechanisms of constructing the scenic illusion.

unit with a unified response to the performance. The feeling that results is one that is communal or social.

A sociopetal space facilitates informality in that it maximizes its ever-shifting spatial units. This shifting is in relation to the proximity and distance between a performer and another performer, performer and audience, and audience and audience in their interplay (Elam, 1980: 63). The ever-shifting relations between the performers and the audience as promoted by the ever-changing spatial relationship between the stage and the auditorium imply that all in life can be changed. It shows, as Boal argues, that man himself is the ultimate maker of his reality by being an agent of change in society. By changing and manipulating his environment man can change his life, which is presented on stage not as fixed but alterable. This change is brought by the people as a whole, not their leaders, hence both the performers and the audience actively participate in the theatre event. This was a typical feature of revolutionary theatre as exemplified in Zimbabwe by the Pungwe practice.

In a formal space the theatre event is not constructed collaboratively by the performers and the audience but presented as bounded and complete: an exclusive "stage world" with audiences scaled off in the auditorium. Boal sees this as a feature of bourgeois theatre reflecting bourgeois ideology which presents the world as an already complete world with no room for change (Boal, 1985: 142). The whole concept of Boal's performance model links with the concept of sociopetality in that it breaks down conventional barriers.

The identity and organization of the different categories of space and the usage they promote, together with the visual styles borne out of such usages informs the study of the performance sites

in Zimbabwe theatre. The sites to be analyzed are the Reps Theatre, Alfred Beit Hall (University of Zimbabwe), Township Square Cultural Centre, Stanley Hall and Harare Gardens.

2.1 Purpose-built Performance Sites

Reps Theatre, Alfred Beit Hall (University of Zimbabwe) and Township Square Cultural Centre are the representative purpose-built sites to be studied in this category. While the Reps Theatre provides an example of a well funded site making it part of a privileged elitist theatre tradition, together with other sites like Rainbow Theatre in Harare, Charles Austin Theatre in Masvingo, Campbell Theatre in Kadoma, Courtaud Theatre in Mutare and Bulawayo Theatre, Alfred Beit Hall (like Girls' High School Beit Hall) presents an example of a purpose-built performance site preferred by alternative theatre groups in Zimbabwe. Township Square Cultural Centre is an altogether different architectural model. Its design is consciously rooted in a revivalist tradition in that it is structured around the use of public arenas as performance spaces in pre-colonial performances, thereby offering an alternative tradition of purpose-built performance sites in Zimbabwe. Also important is that it was built in the post-liberation era where practitioners find it imperative to reorientate themselves by engaging in cultural practices and values of their heritage.

2.1.1 Reps Theatre

The Reps Theatre was built in 1959 and is owned and run by Repertory Players, a theatre club formed in 1931. It operates as an amateur club with a combination of professionals and volunteer members. Architecturally, it has a conventional proscenium arch with the equipment and in-house facilities that are consistent with an "international" model of an early Twentieth Century "theatre". For a detailed specification of the facilities see Appendix A. Figures 1 and 2 show the Reps Theatre interior and stage floor plan respectively. The specialized costume and stage lighting separate the performers from the audience in that they bracket off or "frame" the theatre event from everyday events. Figures 3 and 4 show part of the lighting equipment at Reps Theatre. The separation permeates all aspects of the operations at Reps: even the theatre practitioners themselves are set apart from each other, as shown by the different specialized departments, for instance wardrobe, administrative, artistic, technical and general workers, each group with its own rigid and formal classification and roles. The personnel are not controlled by unions in their duties but are guided by operating guidelines set by the club. Each department has an overseer who co-ordinates its activities together with his assistants.

One specific detail of sociofugality at Reps Theatre is embedded in the use of its two bars, one bar operates on daily basis and is open to members of the club and the other is for cast after performances. Thus, even in the bar we see the perpetuation of the mystique of separation of the audience and the performers which is initiated by the proscenium arch tradition.

Sophie Hobbs (1994) argues that a performance site's perception by the public is compounded by the artistic policy and vision of the theatre management. The Repertory Players' Mission Statement is: "To further interest in all matters pertaining to theatre in Harare and elsewhere" (Interview with Mr. John Ward, 14 August 1996). As implied in the Mission Statement, Reps Theatre does not set out to discriminate against black theatre companies or patrons. However, few companies and patrons think of ever making use of this performance site because they associate it with a perpetuation of British colonial culture in Zimbabwe.[1]

The availability of a maintained proscenium arch and individual seats in the inner frame and a rigidly enforced backstage area and separate bars for performers and for audiences reflect the nature of the theatre event promoted where the performers are set aside from the rest of the people, thereby not projecting theatre as a social event, a feature otherwise typical of Zimbabwean theatre. Thus, the Reps Theatre is a clearly fixed space identified as a theatre model guided by conventions of the mainstream English theatre tradition from which it takes.

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[1]Batidzirai argues that the Reps Theatre is not easily accessible to the majority theatre lovers because it dishes "a theatre menu" which is irrelevant to the majority of the people in Harare (Batidzirai, 1990: 61). It is a place where there is an emphasis on light commercial entertainment: for instance in 1995 the Reps Theatre produced The Gingerbread Man and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs among others. The type of performances that are presented are steeped in European traditions and this isolates the black audiences. As Batidzirai argues, such performances have no relevance to Zimbabwe's developmental needs.

2.1.2 Alfred Beit Hall (University of Zimbabwe)

The Alfred Beit Hall at the University of Zimbabwe was opened in February 1958. It is run by the Theatre Arts Department. Figures 5 and 6 show the site's interior and stage floor plan respectively. The siting of the Alfred Beit Hall at a university (see Figure 7), links it to the perception of the place as a bastion of knowledge and academic excellence. Theatre practitioners based at this site see themselves as a vanguard community with "progressive" ideas to be tested and promoted. This gives rise to a situation where the theatre that is found there becomes experimental. For instance there are theatre practitioners and academics like McLaren declaring:

> Thus our two major challenges at the University of Zimbabwe are to develop cultural activity and orient it firmly in an independent, indigenous and democratic direction (The Faculty of Arts Drama, 1986: iii).

The inner frame of the Alfred Beit Hall includes a proscenium stage with an apron. The specifications and facilities are shown in Appendix B. To date, in accordance with the visions of different directors making use of the Alfred Beit Hall, the proscenium arch stage is always restructured so that the performance space is perceived as starting from the proscenium arch into the auditorium in order to escape the formal and fixed spatial delimitations of the proscenium stage.

As it has no rehearsal rooms, it means that there is no secluded or isolated space where rehearsals can take place. This implies a use of generally "public" spaces like the auditorium, the stage itself or even the foyer where those passing by get a glimpse, or even sit and watch what is happening. This situation has occasioned such statements like,

> As one passes the [Alfred] Beit Hall there are always people gathered outside. Frequently there are sounds of drums from inside. That is the Department of Theatre Arts in action (University of Zimbabwe Newsletter, 22 August 1994: 3).

This promotes a secularization of the site and the theatre events taking place there. That awe, wonder, reverence and mysticism shrouding a secretive society disappears. When the time for a performance comes, the audience treats the performance just like one of the events taking place everyday around them. The casual nature of the university student audiences is clearly evident: audience members wander in and out to buy beer anytime they want during the performance. They even bring plates of food to eat during performances and comment on the proceedings on stage. They join in the theatre event by answering rhetoric questions asked on stage, cheering and robustly laughing. Such informality clearly "deframes" the theatre event assimilating it with other daily activities.

The same goes with the non-availability of a workshop implying that there is nothing "outside of this world" which is under construction in the workshop, the performance itself is the real construction which will be done in full view of the audience. Even the costumes are supplied by those who use them and for this reason there is no need for a specialist wardrobe. In rare cases where the performers cannot supply the required costume items, the costumes can be hired. The department has no fixed budgets for both the running of the site and for the productions mounted there: the maintenance of features such as the fly gallery, lighting control system and dressing rooms becomes a non-priority (see Figure 8).

2.1.3 Township Square Cultural Centre

The Township Square Cultural Centre is a theatre complex being built by Amakhosi Theatre Productions in Makokoba Township, Bulawayo. It is still under construction, although it was officially opened on the 25th of March, 1995. The main stage has been completed. Figures 9 and 10 show the site's amphitheatre diagram and stage floor plan respectively. The facilities and specifications are listed in Appendix C. The outer frame includes a bar and restaurant which are open to the public and operate everyday. Some traditional artifacts like sculptures, drums, traditional trays and pots are sold at this centre to create an African atmosphere.

The Mission Statement of Amakhosi Theatre Productions is to entertain and to inform. In building the performance site in the way they did, the Amakhosi aim to facilitate indigenous Zimbabwean performance styles through architecture. The provision of an open-air amphitheatre (Figure 11) as the main performance space is consistent with Amakhosi Theatre Productions' stated mission of facilitating the promotion of Zimbabwean indigenous performance styles through the nature of the performance space. A way of achieving this mission is to promote the use of open stages. An auditorium of 1 200 does not generally facilitate and maintain intimacy of the performers and the audience, and the audience members themselves. Here it is the structure, rather than the size, which determines the audience members' own position to other audience members and to the performers. A space such as an amphitheatre with its circular auditorium facilitates an intimate relationship, more so if there are no individual seats but a continuous staggered terrain. The backstage area is accessible to members of the audience as well as the performers. This is mainly achieved by having common toilets for both the audience and the performers during or after productions. Whereas, in general, the backstage area is a place where the performer "can reliably

expect that no member of the audience will intrude" (Goffman, 1969: 98), at the Township Square Cultural Centre the presence of the audience in the backstage area is not seen as an intrusion but part of the ongoing theatre event. Since in an "orthodox" arrangement the "vital secrets" of a performance are visible in the backstage area, its openness to audience members implies that either there are no secrets to be hidden or the secrets are consciously demystified as part of the performance process.

There is a synthesis of all aspects of production in the operations of the theatre practitioners at this site. Although teams are set to have overall charges of particular operations, the teams are not separate entities but share responsibilities. For instance the stage design is presided over by a technical team of six. All these are also performers who, like any other performer in this company, work as crew members when not involved as performers in a particular production.

The centre is also used for weddings, parties and disco shows which make it a busy communal place, a people's place, one that Amakhosi Theatre Productions Director Cont Mhlanga describes as "a place with a soul" (Discussion with Mhlanga, 20 August 1996).

There is a striking contrast in the use of space at this site and at the Reps Theatre, particularly in the uses of the bars. At the Township Square Cultural Centre the bar patrons become rehearsal critics as well. As they drink and eat, they watch the rehearsals taking place on the main stage. Even though they may not be formally asked to contribute to the play making process, they are involved to the extent that they become party to the process, thereby demystifying the whole theatre event. The theatre event, with the audience unroofed in the amphitheatre and the lighting grid hanging above the stage (see Figure 12), becomes somewhat like an informal event

emphasizing the social rather than the individual response. The use of space at this site reinforces the already held notions that theatre is a social event where all contribute. The numerous activities joined together maintain, reinforce and emphasize the social aspect held in esteem in Zimbabwean theatre, as passed on from traditional performance forms.

Arguably, the Township Square Cultural Centre is a post colonial model as vested in its architectural structure, artistic policy and use. It would be interesting to note if this is the path that contemporary Zimbabwean theatre is charting and whether this will precipitate a new direction in performance style.

2.2 Found Spaces

The majority people in Zimbabwe do not use purpose-built sites for theatre performances. McLaren mourns,

> Whereas the European settlers and administrators built theatres for themselves in most of the countries they colonized, such facilities were virtually never provided for the indigenous population. In many countries after independence these theatres remained in the hands of the settler or ex-patriate community [...] Thus in the colonial period and even now after independence the masses of the population either perform in halls belonging to churches, schools or municipalities or they perform outdoors in any convenient space (McLaren, undated: 83).

With the non-availability of purpose-built sites for the majority people, a pattern became established that most theatre groups use found spaces for their performances. With the attainment of independence in 1980 the government had a number of priorities like addressing colonial

imbalances in education and health sectors, for instance resulting in free education and medical care in the first ten years of independence. This left the building of theatre sites with modern facilities a non-priority for the government. In such circumstances, there were no immediate changes in the provision of performance sites. Thus, the majority of "poor theatre" companies continued to use found spaces more so when they either did not have money to hire such places like the Reps Theatre or they found it very easy to perform in community halls and outdoor spaces which are easily accessible to the black majority.

2.2.1 Community Halls

In this study Stanley Hall in Bulawayo is used as a representative of community halls as theatre performance sites because it is typical of other community halls in the country, but more specifically because it has been the home of one of the leading theatre companies in Zimbabwe, Amakhosi Theatre Productions. Kaarsholm, in a seminar paper "Si Ye Pambile - Which Way Forward?: Urban Development, Culture and Politics in Bulawayo from the 1960s to the 1990s" presented in January 1993, gives an in-depth study of the Bulawayo Council's policies on general amenities. His findings are not peculiar to Bulawayo, but form part of the general programme of municipal councils throughout the country in building structures for entertainment, recreation and social activities for the African masses. Kaarsholm quotes Eric Gargett that the municipal council was guided by a policy of "Mass recreation and public entertainment" in order "to ease the transition to a Western way of life" for African residents in Bulawayo (Gargett as cited in Kaarsholm, 1993: 7). He also quotes Hugh Ashton, the Director of Bulawayo's African

Administration Department from 1949, that the main programme was to prevent "the disintegrative forces" of urban life caused by the abrupt change of the people from their communal homes to urban areas and to ease of tensions caused by urban surroundings and industrial experiences (Ashton as cited in Kaarsholm, Ibid: 7). It was, in fact, meant to channel the people's energies and frustrations away from criminal and from political activities.

Thus, the building of community halls was a way of exerting political, psychological and physical control on the people's social activities. In such circumstances, building a site with technical facilities for one or a few activities, like theatre, would not be in the interest of the municipal councils because it would be limiting the number of activities that could take place there. The councils would be best served by building general structures which would either be adaptable or usable to almost any social activity. This resulted in the community halls having the barest of technical facilities.

2.2.1.1 Stanley Hall

Stanley Hall was built as part of a larger Stanley Square in Makokoba Township by the Bulawayo Municipal Council in 1936 to provide a venue for cultural activities and to stimulate participation in civil affairs by accommodating meetings of associations of the township population (Kaarsholm, 1993: 10). Figure 13 shows the situation of Stanley Hall. The now Bulawayo City Council's mission statement for such places like Stanley Hall is to provide an efficient community service in terms of recreation and entertainment, especially in the Western suburbs (Interview with Mr.

Phunyuka Ndhlovu, 21 August 1996). Film shows, karate, boxing and wresting contests, weddings, burial societies, church, and political meetings, sporting and gym activities all take place at the Stanley Square (see Figure 14), making it one of the busiest social places in Bulawayo. Figures 15 and 16 show the Stanley Hall interior and stage floor plan respectively.

The building of Stanley Hall in Makokoba Township, the oldest African residential location in Bulawayo, is not without relevance to the activities, especially theatre, that take place there. The area was built to house the African labour force and it grew into an overcrowded and densely populated location. It is also one of the poorest places in terms of its inhabitants' social standings and the amenities provided for them by the municipal council. For inhabitants of such a location to have fully supported the community hall by attending activities it housed, there was need for lower charges. This was effectively achieved by limiting budgets to a minimum by not installing expensive equipment like stage lighting and fly facilities which were, in any case, temporarily installed and removed to make way for other activities. The use of expensively constructed sets was also be minimized. The result was the adoption of a performance style which employed minimalist sets and seldom relied on technical resources to facilitate transformations or scene changes. The facilities and specifications of the Stanley Hall are detailed in Appendix D.

The Stanley Hall is highly accessible to the general public because, apart from its being in an overcrowded and densely populated location, it is adjacent to the city centre and is along the main road. This accessibility also extends to theatre groups in using the site. There is no restriction at Stanley Hall as to who can use this site for performances, as well as who patronizes it. Upcoming but financially unstable groups are encouraged to further their activities by being offered free access to the site for rehearsals.

The popularity of the Stanley Hall as a social activity centre can be demonstrated by the increased audience attendance necessitating the seating capacity from 350 to 500 between 1993 and 1994. The seats are benches arranged in rows, thus more people than the stated capacity can be accommodated. The use of benches results in the promotion of a feeling of sociopetality because audience members have no demarcated seats which separate them from each other.

The non-availability of theatre technical facilities means that groups have to construct their own on a temporary basis if they so require, as does Amakhosi Theatre Productions when it performs at this hall. The everyday ordinary house lighting available is so rudimentary that there is no need for the City Council to employ specialist lighting personnel. It is only for activities like disco and cinema shows that equipment is supplied and operated by the council personnel.

The diversity and frequency of activities taking place at Stanley Hall do not allow for one group to spend a long time at the site. For instance in their early days the Amakhosi had the use of the hall on the condition that there was no any other booking which would bring more revenue to the council. This resulted in the group being prevented from using the hall one night in March 1980 when the N.T.O. booked the venue for its workshops (The Beginning, undated: 6). Thus, the length of a production season at the hall is short in order to allow for the multi-purpose function of the venue to continue.

Such a site as Stanley Hall best serves its community by providing a large variety of leisure and social activities to a wide community's citizenry. There are no culturally and geographically imposed restrictions on the use of the spaces for the majority Zimbabweans. Even though the technical facilities are limited, the spaces are used all the same because, as Southern (1964) and

Peter Arnott (1989) say, the prerequisites for a theatre event to take place are space, the performer and the audience.

2.2.2 Outdoor Spaces

Open air spaces provide the most basic of the requirements in which a theatre event takes place: namely an undemarcated space where a performer performs before an audience. Except in the rare instances where the space has been restructured, there is no reliance on technical facilities like lighting, a suspension grid or other facilities which allow for theatrical tricks to be employed.

Boal argues that originally theatre was people freely singing in the open air, with the performance created by the people for themselves. It was a celebration where all freely participated. Current divisions in theatre where "some persons will go to the stage and only they will be able to act; the rest will remain seated, receptive, passive" are a creation of the aristocracy (Boal, 1985: ix). One way of breaking the barriers created by the hegemony is through the use of unbound outdoor spaces like the Harare Gardens

2.2.2.1 Harare Gardens

Harare Gardens is a public park which is accessible to all members of the society. The space has a history of use for various social occasions and, hence, has for the audience a broad set of

expectations. Installing permanent theatre facilities may not be in the interest of other social activities there, consequently the use of the space for theatre activities becomes either spontaneous or temporarily prepared for the occasion. This affects the fundamental organization of the space.

The adaptation of a background is very crucial at this site since it is an outdoor space with a variety of seemingly unrelated structures and activities. In this situation the director has to choose whether to isolate the chance elements or to make use of them as part of the performance. For instance in productions Taneta and a Chinyambera dance performed in August 1996 during the Zimbabwe International Book Fair in the park, there was no attempt to create even a temporary background which would last the duration of the productions. Both productions made use of other activities' physical structures like exhibition tents and huts already situated in the background (see Figures 17 and 18). Thus, there was virtually no distinction between the performance and the other events which surrounded it. The gathering of the performers and their attraction of the audience resulted in the forming of a circle in the open ground defining the performance space (see Figure 19). As the audience members stood in a naturally formed circle they became very close to each other, promoting a shared experience, thus sociopetality, in the theatre event. Southern argues,

> The circle is the natural shape that an audience takes up when it assembles round an open space to watch the action of a group of players. It is the gathering-round of a crowd to look at an incident; nothing more formal or more regular than that (Southern, 1964; 57).

Schechner argues that the formation of a circle is the simplest arrangement of a performance in an open area where the audience views the performance in the centre from all sides. Schechner exemplifies this by citing the occurrence of an accident in an urban area and the crowd gathering to see what has happened. Naturally, the crowd forms a circle around the event, observe, discuss

then move on (Schechner, 1977: 112-13).

The accessibility of the theatre event in Harare Gardens has implications on the audience perception of the productions. Being in a park, the theatre becomes,

> a mere incident in a walk through the town: the attractions of the High-Street, the presence of shops and restaurants, and the nearby bus-station will facilitate the living integration of the performing arts into urban life (Hainaux and Bonnat, 1973: 10).

This demystifies theatre into an ordinary encounter and promotes an interactive relationship between the performer and the audience where the latter takes a direct participatory role.

Contemporary Zimbabwean theatre, thus, makes use of a broad range of performance sites from purpose-built to found spaces. The adoption of these spaces facilitates the perception of theatre as an everyday event linked with other daily activities, unlike in colonial theatre as evidenced in the case of the Reps Theatre. The prevalent organization and adoption of the sites of performance result in an informal use of space where the arrangements of space use are flexible and the resultant relationship between the audience and the performer is interactive. This also results in a feeling of sociopetality being achieved in the social event of theatre. The spaces provided by these sites lead to a performance style not reliant on technical facilities and, thus, facilitating the performer's use of his primary resources, a subject covered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

TRANSFORMING THE PHYSICAL BODY: THE PERFORMER AND HIS PRIMARY RESOURCES[1]

3.1 The Performer's Transformation Into A Fictional Persona

The performer's primary resources are a necessarily immediate area of investigation central to any consideration of the style and convention adopted in the creation and presentation of spectacle[2] in

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[1]Southern argues that the performer's primary resources are those which are immediate to him and these are his voice, gesture, appearance (costume and mask) and his instruments (props and drums).

[2]The term "spectacle" is loaded with assumptions and connotations which make it impossible to use without defining its application. In this thesis "spectacle" refers to the visual aspects of the production, in a particular sense which Lynda Hart and Heffner et al clarify as follows: Hart argues that the term spectacle derives from the Latin word spectare, which means "to behold" (Hart (ed), 1989: 1). She also argues that "theatre" comes from theoria, "a looking at" or a speculation, concluding that spectacle is, thus, the root of theatre (Ibid: 2). Heffner et al argue that spectacle refers to "the visual element - the settings, the costume, the lighting, the make-up, and the pantomimic action of the characters" and concludes that "Any movement or physical action of a character on the stage is spectacle" (Heffner et al, 1973: 92). Heffner et al also argue that this use of the term spectacle need not necessarily imply "spectacular", which

that costume and make-up transform a performer into a "persona" while gesture, mime and movement suggest the dramatic or fictional world through kinetic imagery which may or may not be supplemented by the presence of personal props. The transformation of the performer through what he wears and carries together with his body movement is a major pre-occupation in the Zimbabwean theatre precisely because the body itself is readily available as the dynamic, active and primary tool of the dramatist, and is the locus of audience attention. I will argue that a theatrical tradition has been established which presupposes that it is not essential to rely on lavish or extreme secondary embellishments extraneous to the performer, and that the more broadly understood "spectacular" style of staging is not characteristic for a number of reasons.

The visual conventions of Zimbabwean theatre rely largely on the audience engagement at the level of augmenting the actual given image: the audience is presented with the performer in costume performing in a relatively empty space. It is axiomatic to the dramatic and theatrical form of representation that the performer, as the locus of dramatic action, is crucially visually transformed into a fictional character, both in terms of assuming a role and "becoming" or presenting a legible spectacle. Southern argues that costume "especially serves to establish the character of his [performer] role, and to lift him from a person to the player of a person" (Southern, 1964: 131). Diana Devlin also argues that the disguise "helps to establish the most basic theatrical convention which says; `I am here, but not as myself alone'" (Devlin, 1989: 81). The clothing of the

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refers to the highly elaborate and lavish style of representation. This assertion is important to adopt and apply to the study of Zimbabwean theatre because what the audience sees is a stylized or partial presentation focusing on the performer's body, thereby making the adoption of the term "spectacle" in the first sense the appropriate one in this study.

performer is, thus, important in that it facilitates the transformation of the performer from a person into a dramatic character as may be established in the appropriateness of the clothing to the role.

The incorporation of everyday items in the task of costuming and equipping the performer together with the tendency to stylization and simplification in the performer's appearance is clearly a viable strategy in a context where financial and material resources are limited. In accounting for the practices adopted it would, however, be reductionist to assume that the lack of resources is the sole reason underpinning this minimalist style of "costuming" and equipping the performer. Equally, notions of Grotowskian "Poor Theatre" and other western alternatives emerging as reactions to the excesses of Nineteenth Century Realism are not seminal influences on theatre in Zimbabwe and would be entirely inappropriate assumptions on which to base an analysis. I propose rather to address the emerging dramaturgy and African social customs and traditions to account for this phenomenon.

Clearly in the case of traditional rituals and dances still in practice in Zimbabwe, like Nyau masquerades, the mask and costume facilitate the performers' change from being their individual, or personal, selves into spiritual beings. The mask and costume, together with the vocabulary of gesture and movement are the sources of spectacle, so too in the contemporary theatre the use of contemporary clothing as costume is crucial to establishing theatrical framing and proclaiming the transformed identity of the wearer albeit in terms of social role within the urban context.

The social custom where old people can discuss issues, objects or people in the ostended mode by substituting the referent with anything at hand, however unrelated, and saying, "Let us say this is ...", thereby linking the signifier and the signified through oral intervention, is also an important

influence to the presentation of the spectacle. This customary presentation is also prevalent in child games where infants use found objects like tins, sticks, soil and leafs as pots, cooking sticks, mealie-meal and plates respectively.

The emphasis on the sociological aspects of character in a theatrical representation is a dominant practice and outweighs the consideration of individual "psychological" and emotional identity. Obvious examples of this are professional occupations indicated visually by costuming the performers in the uniforms that belong to these services. The professional identity can also be so securely anchored in a particular item of dress or accessory that in many instances only a partial, or synecdochal, adoption of the full uniform is necessary, like the wearing of a police hat to indicate a policeman in Samora Continua. The occupations are indicated by the costumes which become "job descriptions" for the performers who wear them. In exceptional cases the costumes may display personal identity through visual clues of self presentation. Hainaux and Bonnat (1964) postulate that in this way the costume operates like a symbol showing evidence of specific personalization, providing a visual construction of idiosyncratic features, as to uniforms which function to group personae into types. Significantly in both cases, in the Zimbabwean practice, the audience is being asked to see and read the actor as actor, playing a theatrical part, and to celebrate this depiction. This convention is a fundamental challenge to where there is a conflation of character and actor, (the style of illusionism).

Elam quotes Honzl in that:

> any stage vehicle can stand, in principle, for any signified class of phenomena: there are no absolutely fixed representational relations. The dramatic scene for instance, is not always figured analogically through spatial, architectural or pictorial means, but may be indicated gesturally (as in mime), through verbal indications or other acoustic means (Honzl as cited in Elam, 1980: 13).

The notion of analogical representation is crucial to this study via negativa. Analogical representation refers to a lifelike representation or verisimilitude as in high naturalism. Roland Barthes (1990) argues that in analogical representation the relationship between the signified and the signifier is not arbitrary. The process aims in effect at a replication of the referent in the interests of constructing something "natural" or given rather than obviously constructed. It is of significance to note that the Zimbabwean theatre tradition favours the use of natural signs rather than artificial ones although there are significant cases where artificial signs are preferred, such as when objects are consciously constructed for the stage.[1] Zimbabwean theatre adopts styles ranging from a minimalist to iconic representation but does not employ analogical representation. This range makes it useful to examine Charles S. Peirce's three-tier system of sign typology vocabulary in the classification of the theatrical signs as "iconic", "indexical" and "symbolic". Signs are read through socially constructed shared meanings, thereby making their adoption in this study appropriate to address the paradox of the spectacle created by the use of everyday and found garments and accessories rather than custom designed and specially manufactured stage costumes.

An icon represents its object "mainly by similarity" between the sign and what it signifies. Anything is an icon of another if it is like that thing and used as a sign of it. For instance a mother and a prostitute are iconically depicted by dressing them through socially codified means, that is by way of social stereotypes. In traditional Zimbabwean culture a mother conventionally dresses by covering her body from the waist downwards in a cloth and her hair with a doek to denote that she

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[1]Elam cites Tadeusz Kowzan's classification of signs which places the signs as being either natural or artificial. Natural signs are those whereby the signifier and the signified "are bound in a direct cause-and-effect relationship" determined by "strictly physical laws". Artificial signs are depandent on the intervention of human volition in signalling purposes (Kowzan as cited in Elam, p20).

is married. These social conventions are so firmly entrenched that they provide an immediate emblem of identity for the individual in the social context. So, one finds that in the theatre, these social conventions are rigidly adhered to, acting as powerful denotations of social role, immediately recognized or understood at the level of iconic depiction. The mother in Watch Me Fly had her body covered from the waiste downwards, wrapped in a chitenje cloth and her hair was covered with a doek. The covering of heads and wearing of clothes of prescribed length covering knees by Mama Moyo and Dudu in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again is another example of explicit iconic depiction of marital status and role.

In sharp contrast to this, prostitutes on stage are routinely presented in mini skirts, trousers and excessively "smart" clothes that foreground the wearer. Again, observance of social custom prescribes the identity of the wearer: mini skirts are strictly taboo in traditional Zimbabwean society because they display the women's thighs, while the way that jeans and trousers draw attention to the physical attributes and body form of the wearer is equally prohibited. These garments in themselves inscribe women as sexually available and who signal, by their body adornment and decoration, their social role. Social mores, moral codes and a clear pattern of gender roles are thus inscribed to codes of dress and particular styles of adornment. Again this provides a point of entry by which to understand apparent costuming in Zimbabwean theatre which adheres closely to these social conventions of everyday dress. The prostitutes in the beer hall in Watch Me Fly were aptly costumed in mini skirts and trousers to denote quite categorically their roles as prostitutes. The "costumes" were augmented by facial cosmetics: traditional Zimbabwean culture regards the use of cosmetics with apprehension because the wearer is assumed to be offering herself to the male gaze through this ornamentation and display, thereby advertising herself as a commodity. Inevitably theatre capitalizes on this social perception and performers

playing prostitutes exaggerate the application of the cosmetics, as was seen in Who is Afraid of Nzarayebani? where Everjoy, the Town Clerk, was elaborately made up with blush and lipstick. Later in the play it was established that Everjoy's husband died of AIDS and, more problematically, she was ready to entertain Lazarus in a hotel for a night. These bold icons and stereotypes clearly demonstrate the representation of cultural ideals that prevailing ideology both perpetuates and reinforces.

An index as a sign refers to the referent that it denotes by being affected by it. The indexical sign and its referent are causally connected physically through contiguity. The whole notion of spectacle facilitated by kinetic imagery is rooted in index signs because gestures ranging from mime to more choreographed "dance" movements, suggest the dramatic environment for the audiences who are accustomed to, and are literate in, reading these gestures. For instance the "construction" of an office and the presence of an office cabinet with files in it in Nansi LeNdoda was done through mimetic action. The audience understood firstly the implied presence of the office cabinet but more importantly the sense of the particular office in which the scene took place was suggested through the action and the costume of a black two-piece suit (indicating an executive person) worn by Shasha. A walking stick in Watch Me Fly indexically stood for a hoe both through its intrinsic shape and mimetic use. It is imperative to note that a hoe is a readily available everyday object, yet a stick replaces it in this play. One must, then, read the significance of the choice not to use the real object and understand that the substitute serves the function and is the preferred choice.

A symbol allows a relationship between the sign and the signified which is conventional and unmotivated in that there is no similitude or physical connection existing between the two (Elam,

1980: 21-22). In theatrical terms this could be interpreted as meaning that the spectacle is also facilitated by stage objects which do not bear any physical resemblance to those for which they stand. In Hoyaya Ho a vest, which is an undergarment, was taken to represent the AIDS virus. The character Aids took out the vest from a plastic bag and proclaimed that it was his H.I.V. which would put people to extinction. The choice of the vest as a symbol for the virus is appropriate in that for the audience to appreciate fully how the virus is transmitted, it has to be symbolised by a visual object, otherwise this invisible phenomenon would not be understood as clearly. Sakhile accepted the vest, symbolically showing her sexual contact with the character Aids, and she was later diagnosed H.I.V. positive.

The study will proceed by way of analyzing the transformation of the performer into character through the simple use of everyday clothing before considering the creation of visually recognizable social stereotypes through the clothing. The study then focuses on the creation of spectacle through the performing body, both static and dynamic, and through the physical objects carried by the performer.

3.2 Everyday Costume And Dress

Ted Polhemus (1993) argues that costume expresses where an individual is located sociologically, for instance in a particular village, in the working class or in the category of widows. A particular people's clothing becomes a costume where the people who live their lives in ways they have always done, embedded in tradition, express that tradition through their dress codes. The dress

forms thus mark the social contexts of the people and these are influenced by the type of social category and the way in which the costume wearers want to be understood. Polhemus cites the cases of a pop singer or a salesman who benefits from dressing in clothes advertising a "with it" approach to life, while a lawyer, judge, professor, nurse, priest, doctor or butcher "would be hampered by such a presentation of self" (Polhemus, 1993: 129). The dressing in of a "timeless" costume by such people identifies their professions and immediately links them to the long traditions of their costumes, thereby increasing their own personal authority. Polhemus argues,

> all social groups are inherently conservative and use some "timeless", traditional style of adornment and/or dress ("our costume") to deny the possibility of change and thereby preserve the status quo (Ibid: 129).

The costumes are thus symbols of social identity and social rootedness.

Polhemus notes the increasing incidence of people wearing "costumes" in everyday life particularly in a post-modern plural context where affiliation and membership of a particular sub-culture is a readily observable phenomenon. This argument is very important in the appreciation of the costume tradition in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre where there is no observable difference between stage costume and everyday clothing and where the identity and membership of a group is more crucial than the proclamation of individual identity. The costumes arise from the dress forms marking the boundaries of small scale communities providing a focus of group identity for those residing in these communities. Each group is represented by a distinctive costume style.

The choice of the costumes is influenced by dramaturgical imperatives. The influence of dramaturgy and the roles actors are required to portray in contemporary Zimbabwean dramatic scripts emphasize characters as representatives of certain groups of occupations. The texts focus

on social types rather than the psychological make-up of individuals hence the costuming is also reflective of social type. Zimbabwean plays are usually contemporary in theme, making it a natural choice to use everyday clothing. Everyday subjects are dealt with and the spectacle constructed in the presentation of the subject also adopts everyday objects and accessories The style adopted after these considerations become one akin to the style of social realism where images adopted fit naturally into the system of everyday experiences, values and concepts of the particular society at the time.

The theme of dramatic shift in the social circumstances of a character is a leit motif in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre and this is articulated in the costumes. This is aptly illustrated in Dapulap where Xola goes to Johannesburg and comes back wearing a viscose shirt, matching trousers and a cap as indices of his newly gained status and change of fortune. Further illustrations of this phenomenon where the costume is a rhetoric device operating literally as a material form of changed econemic status exist in Nansi LeNdoda, Watch Me Fly and Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again.[1]

[1]In Nansi LeNdoda Zibusiso finds employment upon coming to town from his rural home. The dramatic shift in social status is indicated by the wearing of a new costume of a two-piece suit from his patched trousers and old T-shirt. His uncle Shasha is arrested and there is a marked decline in stature from being Personnel Manager to a prisoner. His costume consequently changes from his executive suit to prison khaki uniforms. In Watch Me Fly Norah changes from being a prostitute to a mother, in the event also changing her costume from jean trousers to a full length dress and doek to indicate that she is now a married woman. In Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again Tshova George Brown's transformation out of politics after he is toppled by non other than his second wife, Dudu, is also reflected through his change of costume.

Devlin (1989: 80) argues that the use of the performer's ordinary clothing is not a practice in which the performer is perceived to be without costume but rather establishes a simple costume convention that does not aim to distinguish the performers from the audience but links the two as part of the same reality. This practice is perhaps rooted in other reasons but the net result weakens the distinction between the performer and the audience by blurring it. This costuming strategy where there is no difference between the audience and the performers interface with the identity and organization of space leading to an interactive audience-performer relationship (see Figure 19). This is, then, a coincidental but welcome correlation of the performers' costumes and the audiences' clothes.

In traditional dance performances there is a prevalent use of folk costume, for instance kilts, animal skins and ostrich feathers, and contemporary clothing aimed at imitating traditional material and styles.[1] This practice grounds the performances in the traditional ethnic idiom in which the dances are steeped. The adoption of the costumes in the form of the traditional dressing establishes the community of the wearers as "a community which sought to buttress itself against destabilizing change by means of a steady-state perception of time and by means of an unchanging and 'timeless' costume which was an expression of this perception of time and history" (Polhemus, 1993: 123). By creating an impression of the maintenance of the status quo the costume helps traditional societies to frustrate the threat of change by denying it its reality. The case of Zimbabwean history

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[1] In Stitsha and Hoyaya Ho traditional dance scenes are performed in java print skirts and blouses that give an impression of items of traditional ethnic clothing. The colour range of the java print gives the costume a unity of theme and pattern and also unifies the performers as one group.

The Batanai Dance Group, a traditional dance troupe, appropriately uses traditional clothing in particular animal hides and feathers as a proclamation and promotion of ethnic identity as can be seen in their Chinyambera dance production at the Harare Gardens in August 1996.

provides an illustration of clinging to what Polhemus terms "folk costume" in order to stop societal change by denying its existence. Traditional society leaders like spirit mediums, traditional healers and military chiefs perceived a threat in modernization hastened by colonialism because it spelt their political and consequent economic demise. The change of dressing codes became an obvious manifestation of the change. To counter this change they clung to their social function dresses to the extent that in contemporary everyday life spirit mediums and traditional healers are always dressed in the timeless costumes associated with them since timely immemorial. Theatre has adopted this practice such that these figures are always costumed in traditional dress forms, for instance the bogus healer Skokombia and spirit mediums in Tsinzinai Titadze, the healer in Taneta and the ethnic dancers in Batanai Dance Company productions (see Figures 20 and 21).

In the productions Stitsha, Hoyaya Ho, Dapulap and the Chinyambera, the depiction of social or collective identity significantly overshadows the dramatic and theatrical necessity for personal and psychological identity.[1] This is attributable to directorial vision and a concomitant ideology: that of collective identity echoing traditional life's communal existence or, as in the case of Katshaa!, a vision which is explicitly collectivist and Marxist.[2]

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[1]In Dapulap the performers are costumed in black T-shirts and trousers which enhance the performers' body movement in the production. In Katshaa! the performers wear shirts with a map of Africa and a gun drawn in it and the name of the production written on the chest. The visual symbols imply the political and military themes and suggest the revolution advocated by the play. The shirts are in different colours but retain a unity through the applied symbols.

[2]Robert McLaren, a founder member of the group Zambuko/Izibuko, explains that the group is ideologically rooted in Marxism in its productions, particularly Katshaa! and Samora Continua.

The adoption of everyday clothing is a consistent practice with the identity of the spaces used and the lighting strategies adopted. Relatively small open stages facilitating an intimate audience-performer relationship imply that the audience members do not lose any detail of the costume and the performer's facial features. Any exaggeration of the costume and make-up for the purposes of avoiding any loss of detail that might be caused by distance or multidirectional lighting would be irrelevant because these are not dominant practices in the theatre. The way lighting is used does not cause any loss of detail of the costume and the flattening of the face due to the intensity and control in direction and colour of the light.[1]

In relation to financial resources and prioritization of available finance, many contemporary Zimbabwean theatre groups cannot afford specialist expenditure on costume, as can be demonstrated in the case of Amakhosi Theatre Productions in 1982:

> the group had nothing but themselves - no costumes to suit particular episodes, no money to hire halls and transport, nothing to resemble a theatre group while on stage. So they became resourceful and agreed among themselves that each member brings [his] own costumes and items that suited particular scenes and episodes. If one acted a part that required a bottle, a suit, a book one had to find it (The Beginning: 3).

There is no division of labour where specialists cater for specific departments, for instance a costume and wardrobe department, while others cater for a props department as with the colonial theatre practice in Zimbabwe.

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[1]The question of the lighting practices adopted in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre is considered in the next chapter on 4.2.

The layering of the garments and accessories is such that synecdochal strategies in costuming is the prevalent practice. Synecdoche involves the substitution of "a part for the whole" (Elam, 1980: 28). Elam argues that the partial replacement of a part for the whole is crucial in dramatic representation. This argument is important in Zimbabwean theatre where, it has been already established, analogical representation concomitant to the illusionistic "slice of life" style is not the conventional method adopted. The favoured practice of synecdochic costuming evokes a response to bold improvised strategies which the audience enjoys recognizing and so "fills in the gaps". This synecdochic depiction also relates to the stylized presentation of the settings.[1] Several cases illustrate this: the different police forces uniforms in Hopes of the Living Dead, Who is Afraid of Nzarayebani?, Dapulap and Nansi LeNdoda; and the medical profession uniforms in Waiting for Lefty, Who is Afraid of Nzarayebani? and Hoyaya Ho.[2]

Professional occupation (and its visual indices) is closely related to the socio-economic status of the character. This relationship is also adopted in theatre and can be seen in Who is Afraid of Nzarayebani? where city officials are dressed as executives[3] who occupy the upper class in the city.

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[1]The question of the settings is considered in the next chapter.

[2]In Hopes of the Living Dead the Superintendent of police wears what appears to be the full uniform but is actually partial uniform because the thick police boots, the coat of arms and rank indicator are missing. The Riot Policemen only have riot helmets complemented by other police uniforms although not actually the ones worn by the riot force. Nurses are partially clothed in their uniforms, with epaulettes but without stockings, brown shoes and badges as would be the case with full uniforms. The medical staff in Waiting for Lefty wear white dustcoats, as does Dr. Benjamin who also wears operating gloves to point to him as a surgeon. The medical officer who conducts AIDS tests in "Blood Testing" in Hoyaya Ho is clothed in a white dust coat.

[3]The male officials are clothed in three-piece suits and neck-ties while their female counterparts have necklaces,

The middle social class is represented by the Mayor's spies, Fuza and Mfoyi, and security personnel. They wear safari suits, shorts and security uniforms respectively. These link the officials and the ordinary working class citizens of the city, those who wear casual and torn clothes, thereby visually depicting the social stratification of the society.

The sociological stereotyping characteristic of costumes is emphasized by the grouping of characters through what they wear. In Watch Me Fly government officials are juxtaposed to the struggling masses in order to show an inequitable distribution of the country's wealth. In Dapulap the same performers are used as the policemen of South Africa and of Zimbabwe but are identifiable by the audiences as having different nationalities through their costumes.[1] In Hopes of the Living Dead characters are grouped through the use of make-up which is realistically done to portray the wounds characteristic of lepers. The lepers have whitened faces and legs to indicate the nature of leprosy as a disease which whitens the skin. Others have black spots on their skins to indicate where the leprosy has eaten through. The make-up and the costumes link to denote disorder. While the make-up is realistically done to appear like actual skin colour and bruises, the tattered and disorderly costume symbolically indicates the condition of the lepers and a diseased

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earrings and styled hair, and they constantly change their clothes. The affluent women are also presented as such through their make-up, as in the case of the Mayor's wife and daughter.

[1]In Watch Me Fly the government officials have three-piece suits while the masses are dressed in torn clothes. In Dapulap the South Africans' uniforms have a lighter tone of blue and police caps while the Zimbabweans have dark blue shirts and police hats In the same play a prison warder is distinguished from the policemen by wearing khakis, while the policemen are in blue. The warder is distinguishable from the prisoners by appearing in a short trousers while the latter are in long trousers, both wearing khakis. The warder's uniform is well tucked in and the shirt collar is neatly done while the prisoners have undone collars and shirts hanging out. The two groups are further distinguished by making the warder appear in a police cap and boots while the prisoners are barefooted.

society. In Who is Afraid of Nzarayebani? make-up is also used to group characters. The geriatric city ruling class is portrayed with stylized make-up of whitened hair. It is imperative that this geriatric nature of the city ruling class be emphasised because it forms part of the thematic concerns of the production, that the situation in the city is deteriorating because the old generation is refusing to make way for the young. The grouping of characters together with sketching the differences boldly helps the audiences to identify the central social and political message.

Even though the costuming practice in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre clearly places emphasis on communal and collective issues, some exceptional cases exist where the costuming does serve to depict individual character traits. This can be demonstrated by Liza in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again where the lady is a medical doctor from America and there is need to distinguish her from the rest of Tshovha George's wives (see Figure 22).

The need for the individual foregrounding of Liza comes from the fact that the two groups of wives inhabit different worlds in terms of cultural background hence their outlooks on life and ways of being in the world are radically different. In the same play Sekuru Mustapha is individualized by the indication of his advanced age through stylized make-up of whitened hair.[1]

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[1]Also in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again Tshovha George Brown is a former soldier in the Second World War and he is always wearing an army beret. Comrade Hondo, an ex-combatant in Watch Me Fly, wears a "sting" khaki shirt as used during the war in Zimbabwe. Samora Machel in Samora Continua is unmistakably identifiable by his army cap and beard. In Hopes of the Living Dead all the patients are lepers yet each has his own story to tell. The individual lepers stand each one for himself with their different circumstances, a situation which often creates rifts and tensions among them as each one believes his leprosy is the "better type".

The clothing of a performer in a specific way helps the audience to identify particular characters in the same way that idiosyncratic mannerisms of particular individuals are part of the individual's identity.

The stylization of the costumes and their being everyday clothes tends to be effective in establishing the roles of the performers rather than in providing consciously increased visual pleasure for the audiences. The pleasure that is derived is from the recognition of the familiar and the everyday which provides dramatic meaning: arguably this is at the core of the aesthetics being defined. The appeal functions primarily on the level of making meaning rather than being directed at concerns of visual display prompting sensory perception and gratification. I intend to propose that the body in motion is the central source of spectacle and develop the argument that this is central to the style of performance conventions of Zimbabwean theatre as the core content of both the remainder of this chapter and the chapter on stage scenery.

3.3 Kinetic Imagery

Kinetic imagery involves the construction of the spectacle through body motion forms like gesture, mime and movement. Keir Elam calls the science of studying the body in motion as a communicative medium "kinesics". He asserts that its most distinguished practitioner, anthropologist Ray L. Bidwhistell, argues that each culture selects a "strictly limited number of pertinent units of movement" from an immense stock of potential material (Bidwhistell as cited in

Elam, 1980: 70).[1] This helps establish that each culture develops its own range of body expression which may not, or need not, be the same with other people's. Contemporary Zimbabwean theatre has developed its own conventions embedded in body expression understandable to its audience as a means of presenting a spectacle. The study focuses on how the expression facilitates the development of a specific visual style and how imagery suggesting the scenic environment of the dramatic action is presented through this use of the performer's body. Elam argues that movement is continuous and open to analysis "only through the overall syntactic patterns of a [...] stretch of kinesic behaviour" (Elam, 1980: 71). A gesture cannot exist as a discrete and well-marked or unbound item to be given meaning on its own. It cannot be separated from the general continuum of the action on stage. This study, thus, does not focus on individual gestures and what they denote in isolation but on the overall spectacle that evolves from the body in continuous motion. The study focus is not on the individual features of realistic bodily expression like the face (particularly eyes and mouth), hands and fingers, and the legs, indicating the inner person of the performer but the effect created by the overall spectacle facilitated by the heightened and exaggerated mimetic action of these features.

The use of kinetic imagery in suggesting the scenic environment is prevalent on a bare stage: the performer acts "as if" the scenic objects were present on stage. Through the use of the performer's body as he mimes the action the audience is asked to read the absent objects in the mimetic action.[2]

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[1]This argument can best be understood when considered in the same light with studies on language acquisition which establish that each culture selects pertinent sounds it organizes into a language from a broad range of human sounds.

[2]A bus in Samora Continua is presented by making the actors squat in a line and the driver positioning his hands forward as if holding a steering wheel. The driver also makes engine sounds with his mouth to present a moving bus. He also mimes changing gears, while passengers shake their bodies. Movement

The kinetic imagery either replaces the scenic and vestimentary spectacle by representing absent visual elements or complements the available elements by accompanying them. To substitute components of the scene the performer conveys the actions which would be necessitated by such a scenery were it physically present as discussed in earlier examples. Thus, a performer mimes doing the actions which he would do in such an environment. The audience may be aided in interpreting the spectacle by the dialogue on stage. This is the case in the musical play Hoyaya Ho where movement is used to depict the physical environment where Sakhile acquires AIDS, her medical test, Georgina's affair with Far and the gangsters' operations at a disco show, hospital and street. Elam argues that the body acquires representational powers which make it something other than itself. He calls the kinetic components of performance "the most dynamic aspects of theatrical discourse" (Elam, 1980: 69). This is the most salient characteristic of production in Zimbabwean theatre where there are numerous and short scenes which would have to be changed continuously to set the different scenes. With the use of the dynamic kinetic imagery, particularly on a bare stage, the scenes easily change in the audience's imagination.[1]

The construction of the spectacle through kinetic imagery is also done for heightened aesthetic pleasure: the mimetic action imparts increased visual pleasure to the audiences. This can be illustrated in the case of the Amakhosi productions Nansi LeNdoda and Dapulap where the audience takes part in deciphering the exaggerated mimetic actions into a coherent spectacle. The audience is excited by the stylization and exaggeration of the action thereby attaching aesthetic

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sets the battles on stage as freedom fighters infiltrate and conquer Portuguese strongholds.

[1]This question of bare staging and multiple short scenes is addressed in the following chapter.

value to the mimetic actions suggesting the spectacle.[1] The excitement comes from the realization that scenic locales impossible to construct on stage under the adopted convention have been "brought" there through the transformation of the performer's body. It would be impossible to place cars, bushes and wild animals on stage in practical terms under the performance convention adopted in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre. The performer's body is transformed to become something else in the construction of the spectacle which the audience does not reject but accepts because of the convention of the theatre which allows the performer to become something else through gesture, mime and movement.

3.4 Physical Objects[2]

Elam argues: "Certain stereotyped roles may be so strongly associated with a particular property that the two become synonymous" (Elam, 1980: 28). Elam's assertion is important in the presentation of the spectacle in that the physical objects on the performer's person can be made

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[1]Zibusiso pretends to kick car tyres to check pressure as he waits for Nosizwe. The opening of the car doors and their closing, fastening of seat belts and Nosizwe's arm resting on an imaginary window, the shaking of her body as if in a real car, and the paying of entrance fees at a night club are all mimed in an exaggerated way.

The long trip by foot to Johannesburg is stylistically mimed in slow motion. The travellers mime removing sweat, trying to jump, reap open and climb the border fence. At the top of the imaginary fence their mime unmistakably shows that they are balancing on the fence. The movement stops when they encounter policemen on the other side of the fence, marking the premature end of the journey.

[2]The physical objects carried on the performer's person are personal props. These exclude stage props like furniture which, for the purposes of this study, will be confined to scenery.

symbolic or stereotypical so that they visually suggest a particular phenomenon. The physical objects become an extension of the performer, visually suggesting the identity and role of the one who carries them. They may replace certain actions so that the wielding of the objects point to the actions associated with them: for instance a murder can be symbolised by the mere wielding of a knife. The study of the visual presentation through physical objects will follow a pattern where there is an interrogation of the nature of the objects and their visual operations in denoting a "stood for" spectacle.

It is imperative to determine the manner in which the physical objects appear on stage, that is whether they are the everyday objects or their substitutes, thus operating either as icons, symbols or indices of the objects they refer to. There is a prevalent use of everyday objects operating as iconic signs standing for their class of objects on stage, as can be seen in the prevalence of domestic goods (plates, cups, tumblers and brooms) in the productions cited in this study.[1] As with costumes, the attractive option for the performers is to find the everyday objects rather than make their own. There are significant exceptions where substitutes for the real objects are preferred. These provide insight into the principles of selecting and choosing the appropriate object. Improvised objects bearing obvious physical resemblance to the objects they stand for, that is symbolic substitutes, are also crucial in the depiction of a spectacle. As in the case of toys, in a theatre with limited financial resources the adoption of improvised objects and conventional substitutes is a likely option where the real objects are not accessible. For instance a sheet of paper

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[1]For instance Thuli's parents in Stitsha drink tea and this is shown by cups and a tea pot in a tray. Soft drinks are offered in tumblers and cups at Thuli's birthday party. In Nansi LeNdoda Nosizwe Halimani's father carries a cup to suggest he is drinking tea.

or an envelop can indicate a letter or report.[1]

Substitute objects like bought or improvised toys are used where safety concerns or accessibility preclude the use of real objects. In the case of guns, it is illegal to carry, possess or own a gun without a licence for whatever reason. Even if the person to carry the gun on stage may be licensed, it is illegal to carry the weapon where public lives have the slightest chance of being endangered, such as in a theatre house. Provisions, however, exist for the clearance of activities after undergoing a very strenuous process should it be extremely necessary. The theatre personnel rather choose to use toy or improvised guns than go through the rigorous process, although Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again uses a real but antique rifle.[2]

The conventions guiding the selection of the physical objects on stage result in the adoption of simple everyday objects and their substitute made ones. The everyday objects are easily available

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[1]The Post Master in Who is Afraid of Nzarayebani? has a paper he says is a letter addressed to one Tapfumanei. In Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again Polycarp has a khaki envelop with a paper in it which is a letter for his master. Tshovha George reads from a large volume book he calls The Koran, so does Malam in Hopes of the Living Dead. In Hoyaya Ho Sakhile's AIDS test results are in the form of a certificate which is, in actual fact, a blank paper. Shadreck's school results slip in Watch Me Fly is actually a small paper while other sheets of paper stand for application forms and school certificates. In Samora Continua and Watch Me Fly a gun is suggested by stylized wood carvings of a gun's exterior features.

[2]The gun was made available for the production by the Department of Economic History at the University on the understanding that it will not be used or carried outside the university. The gun is used for academic purposes as an illustration of early colonial rifles. Despite the use of this gun in Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again, the prevalent tradition remains that of the use of bought or improvized toys as in Dapulap (carried by the prison warder), Katshaa! and Samora Continua.

and the made ones can be improvised without using strenuous financial resources to equip the performer in his appearance which facilitates a stage spectacle.

The association of physical objects and stereotyped roles making the two synonymous imply that the objects reflect social types as in the case with costumes. Social stereotypes like old age and sex affiliations and professional stereotypes like medical and police personnel are easily recognizable for their roles by the audiences through the physical objects they carry.[1] Here the social conventions operative in the society are also adhered to in the theatre thereby linking the stage to the everyday life. For instance in traditional Zimbabwean society sweeping is a duty reserved for women. The theatre also follows this convention to the extent that when audiences see characters carrying these domestic implements they understand that they are women.

The performer's appearance is the main focus of attention in the presentation of the performance. The spectacle is constructed through the performer and what he carries, transforming simple objects and his body into something else. This strategy calls for an active audience participation as the audience takes part in the reading of absent objects and environments. The effect of this

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[1]In Samora Continua an old man is seen by his walking stick, so are the beads he wears and wooden chair he walks around with denoting the old rural man. The old man in Watch Me Fly is also identifiable with his walking stick and old hat. Traditional sweeping implements are used to identify personae as male or female.

Dr. Ndonda in Who is Afraid of Nzarayebani?, Dr. Benjamin in Waiting For Lefty and the matron of Mutare General Hospital in Hopes of the Living Dead are presented as medical practitioners through the carrying of stethoscopes. The carrying of button sticks, whistles and guns present the characters as police details. In Nansi LeNdoda the image of the button stick as signifying "police" is symbolically shown by making the stick drop down as a policeman who holds it accepts a bribe not to arrest Shasha and Zibusiso.

practice is that there is no marked distinction between the audiences and the performers, a characteristic feature of the pre-colonial performances. The transformations of simple objects and the performer's body into something else the audiences accept through the convention of the suspension of disbelief where objects are taken to be what they are not in practical terms mean that the audience is asked to read the actor as actor, playing a theatrical part. There is a celebration of the theatricality of the performance without the illusionistic pretence that the performance is a slice of life on stage.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PERFORMER'S EXTERNAL RESOURCES[1]

This study addresses the scenic styles and practices constituting the performer's external environment in Zimbabwean theatre via the European paradigm of illusionism (or the representational style) and its opposite, the theatrical (or presentational) mode of staging. Aston and Savona (1991; 146-48) identify the different levels on which scenery functions as follows: the spectacle may serve to operate on one or four of four levels: these being functionalistic, sociometric, atmospheric and symbolic. Briefly, they expand them as follows: when its operation is functionalistic, the primary demand for such a spectacle is a practical one in that the scenery allows certain actions to happen by lending itself accessible to use by the performers

[1]The visible presence of the performer is augmented by the treatment of what Southern calls secondary or external resources of scenery and lighting. Southern (1964: 21) argues that these are later accretions to the concept of theatre in its development and are constituted by elements outside the performer's immediate primary resources. Significantly, he acknowledges that forms of theatre can and do exist independently of these features which he concludes are not basic necessities of theatre but are additional to the primary resources of the performer in a "neutral" space, and are key elements in denoting particular visual styles.

As a sociometric operation, the spectacle constructs the social milieu of the dramatic text and action, and simultaneously facilitates the depiction of rank and social status of the characters. On the atmospheric level, the spectacle evokes emotional responses via appropriate images. When it operates on the symbolic level it works as a metaphorical condensation of the ideological and thematic preoccupations of the dramatic text as a visual metaphor operating "as a device wherewith both to counterpoint the play's narrative line and to foreground its ideological concerns" (Aston and Savona, 1991: 150). Another dimension can be added to Aston and Savona's levels of operation: arguably this being the decorative function.[1] I propose this in order to include the performance practice where scenic elements not essential to the dramatic action are however incorporated in the interest of heightened spectacle and visual stimulation. For instance, in Hoyaya Ho the backdrop is painted, together with the rostrum and sound monitors, in a recurrent pattern that appears to have no any other function except to artistically decorate the production background in order to aesthetically excite the audiences.

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[1]In an article "Decor: No, Scene Design: Yes", Bonnat highlights the commonsense bourgeois assumptions regarding the decorative scenic treatment of the stage. Although it is not a pre-occupation in Zimbabwean theatre, the notion of stage "decor" is important to this study as a counterpoint to the prevalent functionalist, sociometric and symbolic operations of the spectacle. Scenic decoration implies a static picture of a dressed up and adorned stage. This makes the seemingly static elements, like furniture, to stand independent of the dynamic ones, the performer, and these stand side by side competing for the audience's attention. But the scenery is an environment, rather than a decorative background, where the performer's movements and actions are constantly defining and redefining the spatial configurations. The stage is, thus, a space and should not be perceived as a picture (Appen as cited in Hainaux and Bonnat, 1973: 12-13). The adoption of the decorative operation of the spectacle would be inappropriate in Zimbabwean theatre where the focus is the performer in the environment.

The distinction between the styles of "illusionistic representation" and "theatrical presentation" provide the broad definitions within which a range of different scenic practices can be understood. Brockett (1995), and Brockett and Lindlay (1990) provide detailed and comprehensive studies of the development of these styles in European theatre.[1] Southern provides a step by step analysis of the development of the theatre of "illusionism" and concludes with a significant proposal that the term refers not only to the style of the presentation but is integral to a set of conventions attached to a theatre practice: the term "illusion" implies that the passive audience in a darkened auditorium is not watching a theatre production in a "theatre". He argues that this practice is a corollary of the specific architectural development of the proscenium arch theatre because this conceals "how it is done" (Southern, 1964: 150). The secrets of the stage machinery and trick effects are deliberately and artfully concealed so that the performance appears as if it is a real life occurrence so denying the fundamental consciousness of theatrical construction. Southern insists, "scenic illusion consisted in giving the impression that one was looking at a living, or moving, picture" (Southern, 1964: 258), even as one looked at painted canvas. In the European theatre tradition as documented by Southern there is a sustained attempt to present the audience with an increasingly "authentic" replication of the real world initially via the scene a l'italienne system employing the devices of perspective and ultimately via three dimensional setting of the box set. Such a presentation style would constitute a direct contradiction of prevalent traditional cultural practices such as rituals, traditional dances, oral narratives and the Pungwe in the presentation of the spectacle. I have already argued how the practices underpin the contemporary performance practices by giving rise to the use of open stages and the active participatory role and awareness of

[1]These are documented elsewhere and are beyond the scope of this study which presupposes familiarity of the "realism" and "naturalism" genres and styles attendant on them.

presence accorded to the audience. Since colonial influences, however, impinge on the Zimbabwean theatre practice, this uniquely European paradigm is a crucial consideration in the theatre.

In defining the "theatrical" style I would assert that it aims at reinterpreting or presenting reality on stage through adopting a conscious presentational mode based on the notion that the event is a consciously created cultural and social practice. This is mainly achieved through an unquestionable acknowledgement of a performer as acting a part: the premise is that the performer is not impersonating and reproducing reality but rather is acknowledged as presenting and interpreting it. In this context the performer as an artist is recognized as creating, rather than implicitly embodying another being on a theatrical platform in which there is no attempt to reproduce the environment. As a brief survey and analysis of current productions will attest, the spectacle supports this approach through a celebration of its own "artifice" albeit through a number of stylistic variants, ranging from bare staging to neo-Brechian and multiple staging strategies.

The study of scenic styles invariably leads to the question of the relationship between the style and the performance space. Southern (1964: 40-41) argues that a closed stage, as typified by a proscenium arch stage, houses the performers and the audience in two different rooms with the audience peeping through an opening into the "other" space. This distances the audience from the performance and discourages its participation, thereby mystifying the construction of the dramatic world. The need to conceal the way in which effects are created, to hide scenery awaiting scene changes and performers awaiting entrances, necessitates the separation of the audience and the performers. This use of space is conducive to the visual style of "illusionism".

The "theatrical" style is uniquely appropriate to the open stage where there is an intimacy of the audience and performers which is emphasised by the spatial continuity of the performance space and auditorium, and by the absence of physical barriers or illumination separating the performers from the audience. It is difficult to achieve an "illusion" in an open stage where the audience is constantly reminded that it is watching a theatre event because of the multi-directional view: audience members are seated on various sides of the performance space and constantly see each other as a "background" to the performance. Professional designers and academics are pursuing this question of the influence of a theatre space on the performance style.[1]

Brecht's concept of "epic theatre" merits detailing as a specific paradigm of theatrical staging, but specifically because of the apparent conscious adoption of this style in Zimbabwean theatre, particularly in Zambuko/Izibuko productions. Epic theatre adopts the use of screen projection, the chorus, narrator and placards in order for the events of the production to be reported or narrated to the audience in a way that becomes instructive and a commentary of the social relations evident in the events depicted. The projected screen is conventionally incorporated as part of the setting, and functions by adding statistical material and documents as scenic background authenticating the narration of events. The use of the chorus helps to "supplement and vivify the action on the stage" (Brecht, 1964: 79). The chief purpose and intention of this is in the interest of achieving an "Alienation effect" for both the performers and the audience. The Alienation effect is a technique of taking subject-matter and presenting it as striking, calling for explanation, and not taken for granted as being "just natural". The objective of this 'effect' is to encourage the audience

[1]William Condee details these debates in an article "Visualising the Stage: A Comparison of Proscenium (Illusionistic) and Open (Presentational) Stages." IN Theatre Design and Technology Winter 1995. 9-15.

member to be alert to ideological perspectives inscribed in both the work and culture and then to criticize constructively from a social point of view. Dramaturgy and performance technique require that the performers should not be absorbed by their roles but should remain detached from the character they play. The audience is able to form an opinion of the subject-matter because its engagement and focus is not exclusively directed towards empathy with the individual psychological subject and emotional tensions. The action can break at any time to facilitate "analysis" via the choruses, thereby breaking the "fourth wall" convention. The scenery tells the audience it is in a "theatre" rather than voyeur to a "slice of life". Brecht argues, "The best thing is to show the machinery, the ropes and the flies" (Brecht, 1964: 233). The source of lighting can also be made visible thereby preventing illusionism by suggesting that preparations and arrangements have been made for a rehearsed social event. The theatre event is projected as a created reality resulting from conscious artistic choices. The cultural practice thus parallels Marxist theories of culture as constructed not natural, man-made and hence changeable, not inevitable, given or immutable.

The concept of Brecht's epic theatre, the operational levels of scenery as they bear on the scenic styles of "illusionism" and "theatricalism" and the type of performance spaces adopted offer a crucial entry point to the study of the scenic conventions and styles practised in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre. The study will proceed by way of accounting for the "theatrical" staging technique adopted in Zimbabwean theatre then focus on the stylistic variants consistent with the staging mode, these being "the empty space", the neo-Brechtian and the multiple staging strategies as well as considering the attempts that have been made towards the illusionistic style. It then concludes with a study of the lighting techniques adopted.

4.1 Adoption of the Theatrical Style

The adoption of the theatrical style of staging in Zimbabwean theatre is attributable to the established conventions, directorial vision and, finally, partially emerges as a strategy that may be perceived as a rational response to available resources of the theatre and the prioritization of expenditure and budget allocations of theatre companies. I will argue that, whereas the tradition of the proscenium arch and attendant illusionistic practices was introduced to Zimbabwean theatre through British colonial culture, the theatrical or presentational mode of staging was always integral to traditional Zimbabwean performances. In both the traditional and the contemporary performances the performers are not motivated by a need to depict a reproduced environment for the action. As already seen in the preceding chapter, the performer is the primary visual element on stage and the audience is engaged in a creative collaboration with the performers in the realization of the dramatic world being evoked on stage. The audience is accorded an active role in the process of generating and visualizing the imagined world of the fiction thereby becoming active participants in the performance in much the same way as Shakespeare's audience is exhorted by the Chorus of Henry V to imagine the spatial and temporal dimensions of the world of the play through dialogue.[1]

The theatrical style of staging also interfaces with the directorial vision in that in a post colonial climate there is an imperative to chronicle the country's cultural heritage by making use of traditional techniques like songs, traditional dances, mime and story-telling modes in order to

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[1]The Chorus pleads to the audience:
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings
(Shakespeare, 1975: 489).

create a performance style that can be called Zimbabwean, modelled by the country's past traditions. This comes out of a conscious effort to present alternatives to colonial theatre practices.[1]

Significantly, there are no specialist stage designers for most of the theatre groups. The groups rely on what the director suggests and what the performers can find from their personal belongings and/or borrow, with very little bought or made for each specific production. The performers also have to act as crew responsible for finding, constructing and striking sets both before and after performances. They are required to balance the demands of concentrating on performing and augmenting their own productions through scenic elements with the effective result that they resort to functionalist sets incorporating the bare necessities without which the production would not effectively proceed. The manpower and time resources are more productively focused on the performance itself rather than on supplementing or extending beyond the performer.

A clear indication of priorities of performance is the distribution of existing resources at the level of financial expenditure. Productions are often staged without a specific budget allocation to scenic elements and where, in rare cases[2], there is a provision for this, it is often a very low percentage of the full production budget. Where the personnel and financial resources are limited, the

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[1]The question of the ideological imperatives guiding the directorial vision is treated in detail in the conclusion of this thesis.

[2]For instance the staging budget for Amakhosi Theatre Productions' Somcance in 1995 was Z$2000,00. This is the first production by Amakhosi to be granted a specific staging budget (Interview with Mr. Pedzisai Sithole, 4 January 1996). All other earlier productions like Stitsha, Dapulap, Nansi LeNdoda and Hoyaya Ho had no formal allocation of funds for scenic considerations.

preoccupation with the aesthetics of visual style is subsidiary to the imperative to perform.

Pursuing the logistics as a factor in determining production style, at the level of scenery, most of the theatre groups in Zimbabwe are travelling troupes who are not confined to performing at one place: their existence is dependant on mobility. With the exception of the University of Zimbabwe's Theatre Arts Department, all other groups in this study have to travel in search of an audience. Most perform on a schedule of a single performance in each town and the next day they travel, most frequently dependent on public transport facilities like buses and trains. This necessarily limits what is elected to transport to augment performances. In this context, restraint and minimalism may be construed as a practical necessity in response to the material conditions of making work and economic survival.

The effect of the itinerant nature of the theatre groups on staging style can be demonstrated by a look at the sets used by the different groups. The Theatre Arts Department is a resident group at the University of Zimbabwe's Alfred Beit Hall. The performances are held for academic purposes rather than generating income through travelling. As will be seen, this group provides a model of contemporary Zimbabwean theatre's movement towards scenic illusion. In contrast the other groups, for example Zambuko/Izibuko and Amakhosi Theatre Productions, are travelling groups, even though Amakhosi is now resident in its own performance site. The itinerant groups mostly use minimal "sets" which are easily transportable and readily adaptable to any venue.

4.1.1 The "Empty Space"

The performer most frequently finds him or herself as the sole source of spectacle in a bare stage without any surround except the neutral space. The spectacle of a performer on a bare stage does not impoverish a production because, as Jerzy Grotowski pronounces from his Theatre Laboratory:

> By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor - spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion (Grotowski, 1968: 19).

Grotowski's "Poor Theatre" actively celebrates the unique phenomenon of theatre in its most austere form, a minimalist use of "scenic" or technical resources precisely to enhance the communion between the performer and the audience.

The "empty space" strategy further accounts for the primacy of the performer in the theatrical space. Diana Devlin argues that the performer uses his powers to awaken the audience's imagination:

> The more the actors take on the role of story-tellers, the more vividly they can conjure up in the mind's eye, either through their words or their actions, the environment in which the story takes place. This art can be exerted immediately, at any time and in any space (Devlin, 1989: 136).

Several plays provide examples of the productions adopting this austere visual style. The plays Dapulap, Hoyaya Ho, Stitsha and Nansi LeNdoda, written and directed by Cont Mhlanga and produced by Amakhosi Theatre Productions, were "designed" by a "technical team" consisting of Pedzisai Sithole, Dumisani Sibanda and Simbarashe Mugadza. They were first performed at

Stanley Hall and since then have been performed on annual basis at the company's Inxusa Festival. Dapulap, first performed in 1992, traces the lives of street vendors who find themselves harassed by the police and decide to illegally go to South Africa in search of the elusive fortune.[1] Despite the specific localization and designation of the "urban area" upstage, there are no subsequent scene changes in this play: performers simply move downstage to dissociate the scene and action from the static elements upstage thereby marking the space's identity through the dramatic action and dialogue. The neutral downstage space variously becomes a forest between Zimbabwe and South Africa, a court of law and a jail as the action unfolds.

Hoyaya Ho was first performed in 1993 as part of an AIDS Awareness Campaign. It is a musical play dealing with how AIDS is transmitted from one person to another. It uses a completely bare stage, an unstructured empty space bonded in one dimension by a painted backcloth. The only visual elements on stage are the painted backcloth and drums mounted on rostrum for increased visibility.

Stitsha was first performed in 1990 and is the story of a woman (Thuli) who encounters problems in her attempt to be a theatre producer and is thwarted by a society that is sceptical of artists, particularly women artists. Again, minimal scenic elements are supplemented by essential physical

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[1]The play makes use of sign posts to define the dramatic space in some scenes. Store and street names are written on boards, for example "Bazooka Supermarket", "Botshsayo Bakery" and "Robert Mugabe Way". Sale posters announce a shopping centre, as does a rubbish bin written "A CLEAN CITY BEGINS HERE" for a city area. A shop veranda is suggested by poles with canvas roofing, further indicating the presence of a store and the various other stores around where the vendors sell their wares.

objects against a single black backdrop.[1] The presence of kitchen utensils and household furniture indicate a domestic environment and the appropriate conventional female role. The decorations and balloons establish a festive mood on Thuli's birthday thereby simultaneously operating decoratively, functionalistically and atmospherically.

First performed in 1985, Nansi LeNdoda discusses the problems of corruption, nepotism, bribery and sexual harassment in the Zimbabwean society. Staged in an almost empty space, furniture (two chairs and a desk) demarcate specific areas and proclaim the identity of the spaces as John Shasha's office, Alibaba Ndhlovu's brother's house and Halimani's house.

Waiting for Lefty deals with a taxi company workers' problems leading the workers into an industrial action to press their demands for better working conditions.[2] The perspective shading of the masking boards suggest clouds to give an impression of great depth on the stage without attempting to be illusionistic. The telephone and typewriter transform the space into various offices required by the dramatic action from, for instance, the taxi company to Dr. Barnes' offices, and the absence of these items establish the space as a room in a house.

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[1]The play makes use of a washing dish, kitchen table and chairs which are continuously on stage throughout but by convention are ignored in other scenes when they are not needed. Decorations and balloons are stuck to the backdrop for Thuli's birthday in Mbazo's house.

[2]In the production masking boards shaded in perspective with white chalk are placed at an inclined angle to mask the opening between the proscenium arch and the house tabs. Five dramatic spaces are used and indicated by the presence and arrangement of significant props like a typewriter and a telephone.

Empty stage strategies are also employed in the production Taneta by Cam and Motor Primary School at Cam and Motor Hall in August 1996. The play deals with the question of child abuse apparently sanctioned by traditional, and often superstitious, beliefs that killing one's child will bring good luck or chase away evil spirits from one's family. The story is told from the children's point of view and the set consists only of a stool and improvised back cloths, matching with a traditional healer's costume, underpinning the traditional mysticism of the play.

4.1.2 Neo-Brechtian Strategies

Productions by Zambuko/Izibuko collectively workshopped, directed and designed under the influence of Dr. Robert McLaren incorporate several aspects of Brecht's staging techniques. Katshaa! and Samora Continua were first performed in 1986 and 1988 respectively at Alfred Beit Hall and ever since they have been performed regularly at commemorative and solidarity political events around the country. Katshaa!, the story of South Africa's liberation struggle, was produced in order to "mobilize and educate Zimbabweans about the situation in South Africa" (McLaren, 1992: 92).[1] The narrations constantly link South Africa and Zimbabwe. The

[1]The play begins with both the performers and audience actively participating by singing, dancing and making political speeches and slogans as they celebrate Zimbabwe's independence. The narrator then calls for silence and asks, "How can we say we are free when our brothers and sisters in South Africa are not free?", thereby shifting the story's focus from Zimbabwe to South Africa. The narrator asks the audience to remember "our comrades [who] lost their lives so that we could be free". Songs are in Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele and Shona, with their English translations narrated in the background and the events of the songs foregrounded by mime in slow motion. The only items required on stage are two chairs and a drum.

technique of reportage leaves the audience outside the narrative discouraging empathy. The personal props and scenic items used are not removed from stage but are put on the floor only to be picked up when required for use later in the action. The performers do not leave the stage when not playing their parts but freeze with their backs to the audience thereby achieving the Alienation effect by making the audience conscious of the theatricality of the event it is encountering. The scenic elements are reduced to an absolute minimum so that they do not represent any specific locality.

Samora Continua documents the revolutionary life of Samora Machel and the struggle to attain socialism in Mozambique. The two Zambuko/Izibuko plays basically use the same techniques.[1] Slide projections function as the background set required by the production to achieve the authenticity of social documentary. The slide projections locate the dramatic action within a specific geographical and social context. The linking of the maps of Mozambique and Zimbabwe in the first scene visually link the ideological affiliations expressed in the play and visually echo Samora Machel's words that Mozambique and Zimbabwe are one. This critical perception is central to the text and is fully understood in the context of Samora's words to the ZANU delegation at a May 1970 meeting in Lusaka, Zambia:

> Some of us, when we look at the situation in Mozambique, realize if we liberate Mozambique tomorrow that will not be the end. The liberation of Mozambique without the liberation of Zimbabwe is meaningless (Martin and Johnson, 1981: 17).

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[1]The set of Samora Continua consists of only one chair on a bare stage. The play depicts the history of Mozambique through song, dance, poetry, dialogue and the use of slides, projecting maps, images of people and activities relevant to each scene.

A Rhodesian colonial ruler looks at the screen showing the inauguration of the Zimbabwean government in 1980 and announces, "Gentlemen, I believe we underestimated the situation in Rhodesia. I think its about time to join others down south", before running away. The slides initiate actions which make the play move forward in that the image projected is consistently used as a catalyst to trigger the following scene in terms of plot and dialogue. Significantly all the projected images are archival documents providing historical and documentary proof to the narrated events.

Watch Me Fly deals with the problem of unemployment that university graduates find themselves in after obtaining their degrees. Arguably also performed according to Brecht's epic theatre practice, the play uses banners and boards to establish the locale at any one moment in the shifting identities of the space.[1]

4.1.3 Multiple Staging Strategies

The nature of the arrangement of spaces into specific static locations adjacent to each other and simultaneously present as in the multiple staging tradition is another manifestation of "theatrical" staging practices. Multiple staging in Zimbabwean theatre can be said to arise from pre-colonial practices like the processional Kurova guva and story-telling. The incorporation of these spatial solutions is a logical response to the demands of enacting an epic narrative with many different

[1]A banner written "1989 GRADUATION CEREMONY" and boards written "MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SOLUTIONS" and "SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER" are used in the play.

scenes, often short, and in different locations. The multiple staging strategy is adopted in order to capture the numerous locations as well as to facilitate quick transitions from one scene to another, since only minimal changes to the different spatial areas are incorporated. The concept at work here finds its closest parallel in western theatre in the staging of Medieval pageants and mystery cycles where the wagons provide specific locales while the platea is the neutral space around which the wagons are arranged.

Tsinzinai Titadze was improvised by the Faculty of Arts Drama students in 1992 and performed at Alfred Beit Hall. It deals with the cultural clash between Christian and traditional religions. The several scenes take place in one of three scenic units (see Figure 23). The main stage forms a broad acting space where several different scenes are played. The space contains few and portable scenic elements which prevent its localization and, hence, allow other scenes to be played there without effecting any scenic changes.[1]

The traditional hangings marking Skokombia's space provide a frame against which the healer sits and is seen, considering that he is placed alone on a generally lit bare apron stage. The frame guides and directs the audience's attention on this seemingly unstructured general area. The traditional paraphernalia hung on the frame also provides an atmosphere charged with the sacredness and awe associated with traditional healing places. The other two scenic units are

[1]For instance a table covered with a black cloth in the first scene suggests a coffin, thereby indicating that the space is a homestead during a funeral. In another scene the space becomes a beerhall, marked by a board written "CLUB RUFARO" and chairs grouped around tables. The same space is also used as a church, indicated briefly by the presence of a crucifix. Skokombia, a bogus traditional healer, has his residence in the same space marked by a frame made of a wire line where some traditional objects like animal hides are hung.

Chengwa and Zvorwadza's houses. These are distinguished by arrangement of furniture and are in stack juxtaposition. Although all the three scenic units are broadly identifiable and highly specific in their use, the furniture they contain is removed and reset. This action serves to extend some public scenes like the church and beer hall from the main stage down to the thrust stages.

Pasi Papinduka, Hopes of the Living Dead and Zviri Pakati Pavo were produced by Theatre Arts Department at Alfred Beit Hall in 1995 and designed by Fani-Kayode Omoregie. Pasi Papinduka was workshopped by the students and is the story of a man who impregnates his house maid, who is also his wife's cousin. Shadreck and Jacha's houses are set apart from each other by house numbers and the furniture they contain.[1] The presence of performers in a single scenic unit attracts the audience's attention to it. The audience's focus is, thus, unhindered by the other visible stage units.

Adapted from Ola Rotimi's play and co-directed by Seda and Omoregie Hopes of the Living Dead is the story of lepers who find themselves chased away from the hospital they are staying at and sent to a farm from where they are to await the building of a leprosy centre. The hospital ward is denoted by hospital beds while the hospital office is suggested by a portrait and a letter basket. The technique cannot be entirely considered to be one adopting multiple staging because there are instances when spaces are cleared to make way for other scenes, although in the main, certain scenes are simultaneously present. This is the case in a scene when the lepers migrate to Mutoko to await the building of the leprosy centre. The table in the office and beds in the ward are removed, leaving the stage bare with only blankets and suitcases marking each leper's possessions.

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[1]Shadreck's house has chairs and a dining table while Jacha's has chairs and a coffee table. The doors of the houses are marked by curtained frames. The office is also suggested by the furniture in it.

The removal of the beds transforms Wards G and H of the hospital into a disused old infectious disease hospital in Mutoko. When it is necessary to return to the hospital office the office table is brought back on stage. When not in use, the table and chairs are pushed upstage during scene changes and their presence is ignored by the audience.

Zviri Pakati Pavo was workshopped by Practical Drama I students and directed by Owen Seda. It is the story of a man who neglects his conjugal duties only to come back home one night to find his wife in his domestic worker's arms. Baba Kudzi and Dhlodhlo's houses in the play are set away from each other as different scenic units, although some scene changes are effected to Baba Kudzi's house to transform it into a shebeen.

Spatial delimination and boundaries of individual spaces are delimited and suggested by restricting the performers' movements to a particular limited area on the stage. The particular identity of the houses is indicated by the furniture and props which are emblems of domesticity and serve the practical function of providing performers with everyday objects to incorporate in the performance.

4.1.4 Attempts at Illusionism

Although various Theatre Arts Department productions designed by Omoregie offer a model closest to scenic illusion in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre, the performance style cannot be said to be illusionistic. The style remains an attempt which is not realized because of various constraints and the nature of the spaces used for the actions. The presented settings are most

frequently synecdochic. Synecdoche involves the substitution of a part for the whole. Elam argues that "Extensive settings are usually represented by pertinent and recognizable aspects thereof" (Elam, 1980: 29), for instance one store can stand in for the whole shopping centre. Elam also argues that the synecdochally presented spectacle stands for part of the dramatic environment in which the action takes place.

Baba Kudzi's and Dhlodhlo's houses in Zviri Pakati Pavo are partial "box sets" placed side by side and distinguished by the furniture in them. The spectacle operates sociometrically in indicating baba Kudzi as the head of an elegant family because of the furniture in it and the balancing of the scenic elements in the house. Constructed on the horizontal plane of the floor, with a matching and harmonious colour scheme uniting the elements making up the house, the spectacle suggests order and stability associated with the financial stability of the family. This spectacle is contrasted with Dhlodhlo's house which is "read" on the vertical plane because it is mounted on raised rostrum to suggest the family's financial and social instability. The audience infers the presence of invisible items as when Dhlodhlo and his family watch television: mimetic action by Lucy and Dhlodhlo depicts them as viewers, and this is supplemented by the two's imitation of the wrestling being watched, thus sharing the content of the television programme with the theatre audience. This prevents the style of presentation from approaching illusionism, the more so when there is no ceiling or roofing to cover the houses.

In Hopes of the Living Dead a hospital is spatially configured by curtains which also mark doors and windows in conventionalized framed openings. The architecture of the Alfred Beit Hall is exploited to help present the scenic environment. The masking flats link with the doors into the

auditorium, giving the impression of a real ward.[1] Thus, a fictional role is assigned to the structure of the performance site, it is incorporated into the dramatic or fictive reality of the play. Beds, appropriate in a hospital ward situation, are arranged in two rows to leave the performance space in between them, although performers at times play their parts from their beds. Some of the beds are unkept and untidy intending to convey the impression of disorder in the ward, which links well with the impoverished costumes: together these suggest a situation of dereliction, neglect and disease. This helps the play to present leprosy as a metaphor for social and political problems in the society. This rudimentary stage imagery is stark and eloquent and is integral to the realization of the concerns of the dramatic text, presenting the story, theme and ideology in pictorial terms.

Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again was co-directed by Seda and Omoregie while The Strong Breed was directed by Omoregie and Cheukai by Seda. They were designed by Omoregie and produced by Theatre Arts Department at Alfred Beit Hall. Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again was adapted in 1995 from Rotimi's play and is the story of Tshova George Brown, a former army major who tries his luck in politics. His military strategy is rejected by his party and he finds both his home and political life crumpling.[2] Apart from decorating the house, the map of Zimbabwe shows Tshova George's concern with politics. At one point he uses the map to illustrate to Chauya Chauya the tactics of his political campaign. Other traditional decorative artifacts on the walls are also practically used at specific points in the play. The different rooms of the house are marked by breaks in the flats, door frames and the furniture in a way that makes the physical structure of the

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[1]The doors have glass portions to look through, as if in a real hospital and are used for entrances and exits. In the space between the doors is a portrait of Alfred Beit, appropriately positioned as if he were a benefactor to the hospital or ward.

[2]Tshovha George's house has steps and a door frame to give an impression of a door leading outside. Portraits, posters and a map are used decoratively, functionally and symbolically.

house appear like the front of a house but without the fourth wall.

The changing focus on individual spaces in the play indicates a corresponding movement in the story line. The change from Tshova George's house to the airport is indicated by the masking off of the living room. The addition of the flats with a poster stuck on one of the during scene changes is used to effect a transition to a different dramatic space, the airport. In this instance the image on the poster, the airport, proclaims the identity of the space. To return to the house the flats are removed. The same flats are used to demarcate the space for a political rally but in this instance the spaces is neutralized by simply removing the airport poster. This use of posters is one that Brecht also advocates and practices in his epic theatre in order to set a location.

Written by Wole Soyinka, The Strong Breed was produced in 1993 and it deals with the clash between "modern" life and traditional customs.[1] The spectacle works symbolically in that the cabins, representing rural huts, are painted black to suggest a mystical life which characterises the concerns of the play. The village and the school compound are juxtaposed to suggest the conflict between traditional customs and modern life as symbolized by the villagers and the teachers respectively. The spectacle foregrounds the ideological concerns of the play. Whereas the villagers are shrouded in superstition, having to sacrifice outcasts to cleanse themselves from evil spirits, the teachers are against this custom and Eman attempts to rescue one outcast thereby

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[1]The set consists of cabins constructed on one side of the stage with curtained openings for windows and doors. Dust bins next to each cabin show them as residential units. A mortar and pestle are placed at one upstage corner by the cabins to reflect the rural areas. On the other side of the stage is a modern house in a school compound. The house, belonging to two teachers, is painted brown and has white curtains, thereby setting it aside from the village homes.

setting the conflict of the play in motion.

Cheukai, workshopped in 1995, tells the story of a medical doctor who becomes mad after refusing to "answer the call" of his ancestors to practice the art of traditional medicine left to him by his father. His father Gondoguru's house in the rural areas is an almost empty space with only two traditional stools, while Dr. Roparembwa's has furniture which suggests an affluent family. The scenic elements in the two houses distinguish them from each other, the former is a rural setting where a traditional healer stays while the latter is an urban setting inhabited by the medical doctor, who is the healer's son. Another setting is a hospital ward which is shown by beds covered with striped bed sheets and health posters as in a real hospital.

The spectacle in the productions attempting illusionistic sets cannot be called illusionistic "box sets" because there is a situation where some individual scenes are "empty spaces" while others give an impression of a deliberate attempt to recreate the environment. This apparent inconsistency is also evident in the adoption of lighting styles as will be seen shortly.

The adopted visual styles of presentation are not intended to present environments or scenic locales that provide heightened visual pleasure to the audiences. The synecdochic strategies employed in the minimalist sets on stage emphasize the theatricality of the events because the audiences recognize and also enjoy filling in the gaps to provide the environments of the performances. As has been seen in the costuming strategies, the Brechtian model of stressing the sociological aspect of presentation outweighs naturalistic concerns of the environment reflecting specific individual identity. The underlying communal and collective ideology of the productions inhibit any focus on psychological or individual traits that represent an individual as a product of his environment. The

collectivity underpinning the scenic concepts can also be said to be a function of the collective efforts of the production teams. With no specialist departments, there is collaborative team work contributing to the realization of the overall effect.[1]

4.2 Lighting

Lighting ultimately controls all visual aspects on stage. Adolphe Appia (1982: 50) argues that the human figure of the performer and the scenic arrangement are defined in their spatial quality by the incidence of light. Thus, the bodies on stage are given form and expression by the way in which they are lit.

Lighting the stage is generally in the form of flood lighting, which covers the whole performance space in light of equal intensity, this is supplemented by specific or spot lighting which is concentrated on particular areas of the stage. Francis Reid argues that one way in which lighting functions creatively in selecting details for the audience's attention is to light the stage separately, that is black out some stage areas while lighting others, or alternatively to light the selected areas brighter than the rest of the stage (Reid, 1992: 12). Thus, lighting would be directing the audience's attention to a particular part of the stage. The lit part is marked off from the rest of the

[1]For instance the Amakhosi productions Dapulap, Nansi LeNdoda, Stitsha and Hoyaya Ho were all "designed" collectively by a "technical team". The University of Zimbabwe productions Waiting For Lefty and Tsinzinai Titadze were collectively workshopped, directed and designed by the entire crew, so are Zambuko/Izibuko productions Samora Continua and Katshaa!

stage so that it is pointed at for the audience to see. Kenneth M. Cameron and Patti P. Gillespie (1989: 758) argue that the stage is a visually busy place so there is a practical need to direct the audience to the most important point at each moment. The lights, in this case, will be used to select some details which are required at a particular moment and to leave out others. Thus, the dramatic space is made fluid by a controlled use of lighting, making scenic units to appear and disappear. The critique of lighting in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre will follow an analysis of its general illumination and artistic functions in the two categories of flood (or generic) lighting and spot (or selective) lighting.

McLaren (undated: 92) argues that lighting operates in two ways in terms of function. The most basic of these functions is to light the performers and the area they perform in, that is it makes the action on stage visible to the audience. The other way of using stage lighting is to add certain effects to the action of the production, thus creative lighting offers an artistic contribution to the total experience a production communicates to the audience. Reid (1992: 10) emphasizes the primary function of lighting by arguing that only after functioning in its role of providing basic illumination should lighting begin to fulfil a role as a dramatic tool. This assertion is very important to the practice of Zimbabwean theatre makers where ideological imperatives, and limited technical resources and specialist personnel influence the range of style choices which are available.

One characteristic of lighting in illusionistic theatre traditions is to illuminate the stage and black out the auditorium. This facilitates the separation of the performers and the audience to the effect that by implication, the audience in the darkened auditorium does not exist at all. There is a pretence that the audience is not physically present, "that it is a magical observer, an eavesdropper on the action" (Arnott, 1989: 11). But where both the stage and the auditorium are lit there is no

separation of the audience and the performers. There is the acknowledgement of the presence of the audience in that the performers can see the audience and the audience members can also see each other. This motivates the audience to participate directly in the performance. Grotowski (1968: 20) argues that it is of particular significance that the placing of audience members in an "illuminated zone" makes them to play a direct part in the production, a feature of theatrical staging.

It is interesting to note how contemporary Zimbabwean theatre treats this issue of where the light is directed, given that blacking out the auditorium would strengthen the audience's focus on the production but weaken its interactive role with the performers. In most of the productions in this study, the lighting of the stage and the blacking out of the auditorium is still a consistent practice, suggesting that along with "importing" the technology and equipment key conventional uses have equally been adopted without interrogating the assumptions of this practice. This is in the case of performances using open stages which acknowledge the presence of the audience through their performance styles where the use of lighting implicitly negates the active presence of the audience.[1] Thus, there is what apparently appears to be a contradiction in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre. Some cases, however, do not show this apparent contradiction in the use of lighting. The audience-performer interaction in Samora Continua is facilitated by the use of lighting, which is directed into the auditorium as well as the stage.

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[1]For instance in Nansi LeNdoda there is the acknowledgement of the audience through rhetoric questions and references directed to the audience, yet lighting isolates the auditorium from the stage by blacking out the auditorium.

Cases in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre illustrate the adoption of both the generic and the selective lighting strategies in a single production.[1] The mixing of styles evident in the productions is a result of a practice not concerned much with a systematic application of lighting "tricks", as long as visibility is provided to the action of the performance.

Watch Me Fly relies on the use of the selective spot light which illuminates sequentially the areas in use while all the other spaces are dark. This has the effect of cancelling out the multiple scenic units simultaneously present but out of view. As a character refers to a situation, lights cross fade and go up on him and the referred situation. This shows the new scene as coming out of the narration of a speaker telling his part of the story of the play. The minimal scene changes that are done are in dark when lights are focusing on another scene during the performance. This is another contradiction in that the practice of darkening one part of the stage for scene changes is part of the "illusionist" tradition: the changing of the scene is concealed away from the audience's view. This practice contrasts with the lighting strategy adopted in Pasi Papinduka where the lighting is used to focus attention on one scene against another in this multiple staging. The lighting does not cancel out the other stage areas by blacking them out but by intensifying the light

[1]At one point in Tsinzinai Titadze the whole stage is lit when there is only Pastor Chekahose and Grace in an environment of sparse scenery. The same generic lighting is used when Chengwa visits Skokombia and the two are confined on the stage left apron corner. In the healing scene light cover the whole stage yet the action is confined to the apron stage. There is an exceptional instance when lights are up on the stage right thrust, Chengwa's house, but down on all other spaces not in use at the time. In Nansi LeNdoda generic lighting is used in all scenes except in the disco scene where light is localized and functions artistically. Disco lights effects are achieved by rapid alternating of light and darkness cross fading. The lighting provides an atmosphere required by the scene, a disco mood. Generic lighting is also used in Waiting For Lefty, The Stronger Breed and Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again.

on the required scene.[1]

Like in its use of slides, the use of lighting in Samora Continua makes for interesting study due to its innovation in Zimbabwean theatre in the effects it attempts to produce. Multi-coloured lighting gels are effectively used for illusionistic purposes to suggest the time of the day the action of the play is taking place. The green and pink light also has a practical function to facilitate the visibility of the projected images. When projecting slides onto stage there is a problem of how to have a bright image and at the same time sufficiently lighting the performers on stage. The use of slide projections calls for the lowering of the intensity of the lighting to retain clear visibility of the projected images. Besides this practical necessity, the lighting is of low intensity and is coloured also to suggest the time of night lit by fire in mountains during Pungwe performances. Artistically, the combination of the amber following spot, with its round form, and the pink and green light, together with the shadows of the performers, is effective in enhancing the lit fire effect as it appears with some performers more lit than others depending on the distance away from the source of the fire. At the same time, the contrast created by the colours stimulates visual interest to the audience.

The use of the follow spot light highlights a speaker at any moment, rather than give prominence to any one character. This is ideal on a stage full of performers at the same time. In such a situation there is need to illuminate the speaker so that the audience concentrates on what it is seeing and what is being said since people hear more when they can see the speaker. The changing

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[1] For instance the office exists side by side with the Women's League meeting space. During the office scene lights of high intensity are focused on the office, thereby making the audience to ignore the less intensely lit meeting space side by.

focus of the follow spot on performers also operates ideologically in underlining egalitarian sentiments consistent with Socialism as called for by the play, or Communalism which is an aspect of the traditional society from which the play's styles are also adopted.

Although productions at some sites make use of stage lighting in the forms analyzed above, some theatre groups in the country do not have access to these lights due to financial constraints. They do not have enough money to either hire equipped performance sites or to move around found spaces with any equipment. They make do with what nature provides, in the case of outdoor performances, or make use of everyday domestic lighting in community halls. Where there is the use of stage lighting, the lighting is either generic or selective and the styles used range from an illusionistic denial of the presence of the audience to its theatrical acknowledgement. This range of styles can be understood in the context of the way in which Zimbabwean theatre has evolved from its pre-colonial practice and the inversion by colonial theatre as seen in Chapter One, this also influencing the identity and organization of the sites of performance as seen in Chapter Two. The spectacle on stage facilitated by the performer's body and its transformation as seen in the previous chapter also appears in the same light of the adoption of various styles even in a single production.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

TRADITION OR INNOVATION: TOWARDS THE FUTURE?

This thesis has provided a documentation and analysis of the current range of styles used in Zimbabwean theatre establishing a broad common visual practice mainly as a result of its history and other cultural factors. Contemporary Zimbabwean theatre is guided by a convention emphasizing the theatricality of the production as a consciously produced work of art rather than putting the audience under an illusion that the work of art is a "slice of life" brought on stage. Thus, all the practised styles in the theatre are functionaries of this acknowledgement of the theatricality of the event.

The theatre in Zimbabwe is effectively an "alternative theatre" to the orthodox colonial theatre practice and this is seen in its distinctive features. There is a demystification of the theatre event as seen in the use of open stages and flexible spaces. This feature also links with that of a direct audience participation as both the performers and the audiences are brought together into a shared communal space. In this theatre the mechanisms of the theatrical production, like lighting, are not hidden but revealed for the audience members to see. The spectacle is one that is presented mainly

through the primary resources of the performer: the performer's body is used symbolically in suggesting the spectacle through kinetic imagery facilitated by gestures, mime and movement. The costume strategy adopted presents the performer in everyday clothes that link the performer with the audience as being the same, a feature that is also underlined by the collective ideology concern underpinning the presentation styles of the performances. The scenic style is one that ranges from an almost bare stage to synecdochal elements suggesting the environment. The result is that there is no lavish and representative spectacle but rather a moderated and presentative one where both the pictorial and the other expressive elements contribute to the visual practice.

The visual styles and the convention of contemporary Zimbabwean theatre are a synthesis of pre-colonial cultural performances and the colonial theatre practice. Characteristic features of each tradition are evident in a hybrid contemporary practice. The perpetuation of the contemporary visual styles and conventions is, however, sustained through current conditions. For instance ideology has played a crucial role in the maintenance of a visual practice bearing characteristics of pre-colonial traditions. Ismail Serageldin argues,

> Few issues affect contemporary African societies as deeply as a sense of lost identity and a corollary search for cultural "authenticity" (Serageldin, 1995: 21).

This search, for many directors, entails a return to the pre-colonial heritage where the culture "would be purged of the extraneous elements introduced by history and Western hegemony" (Ibid: 21). The directors believe they have an ideological duty to play by continuing or re-establishing, where these had been lost to colonial traditions, visual practices of the pre-colonial period. This would seem like going back to a recreation of past creative modes and reinventing the wheel rather than moving forward innovatively. But I would argue that this is not the case because there is much innovation which involves incorporating traditional elements in a new context.

Raymond Williams argues that tradition can be more than an inert historicized segment. It can be

> an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification (Williams, 1977: 115).

The tradition that the theatre attempts to maintain is not a retreat into cultural aspects which have been "left stranded by some particular hegemonic development" (Ibid: 116) or archaic elements to be revived but one that is a selective perpetuation of past practices. The maintenance of the presentation of traditional performance practices and styles in contemporary theatre should be seen in the context of a wider struggle by anti-colonialism activists throughout Africa, among whom are linguists and writers advocating for the use of indigenous languages and literal styles. As Brockett (1995) argues, this rededication to the values of the past also serves as a critique against colonial and neo-colonial values. The theatre becomes committed art in both content and form, ideologically serving to conscientize people to an awakening. It is a political act of conscientization innovatively making use of traditional presentation modes.

The theatre practice is likely to be strengthened by the injection of capital and personnel resources into the theatre. At a national seminar on theatre in Zimbabwe organized for the World Theatre Day and held on the 27th of March 1996, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, Mr. Stephen J. Chifunyise articulated policies that the government was putting in place for the funding of theatre groups (see Appendix E). With structures put in place for providing financial resources through government and private sector support, funds will be available for theatre activities so that the companies will realize their visions and potential unhindered by financial constraints. The provision of financial resources is one that is already

making an impact through the establishment of purpose-built performance sites.[1] The proliferation of manpower trained in the country's visual traditions will result in a situation where there are competent and informed practitioners who are in a position to adopt the visual styles relevant to the history and traditions of their theatre to suit contemporary concerns.

Currently there is a situation where there is lack of financial resources and specialist personnel to facilitate the styles of presentation that are desired by the directors. McLaren acknowledges that many theatre groups in Zimbabwe operate without any significant budgets to the extent that the theatre is deprived of some aspects which are generally taken for granted in the theatre world but hopes that the situation will soon be over since "there is no virtue in deprivation". He argues,

> Though we do not have theatre buildings, lighting, sound, money for costumes, props, instruments etc. now, this does not mean that these things are not for us. We must fight for our fair share of the world's fruits and more advanced technology and equipment in the theatre is our right - which at present is being denied to us (McLaren, undated: 14).

McLaren's concern is likely to be realized with the role of government and private sponsorship of theatre.

With these current developments the resulting visual treatment given to a production is clearly going to be one intended by the designer in consultation with the director rather than a make-shift treatment not accorded specialist attention as is prevalent in current practice. Whatever spectacle

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[1] For instance Amakhosi Theatre Productions' Township Square Cultural Centre currently under construction was funded mainly by the Swedish International Development Agency. Another performance company in Bulawayo, Black Umfolosi, has recently started building its performance centre in Ntumbane high density area. Harare has an academy earmarked for Imbongi Arts Production and Promotion and the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatre is launching a theatre arts training college

presented will be one that is intended, not a chance element dependant on what each performer can manage to find for the stage. The impact of specialist resources and divorcing the performer from collaborative tasks of making and equipping the production may equally impact on the visual styles of presentation and conventions in contemporary Zimbabwean theatre. Where there is solid funding, specialists can arguably fully contribute their expertise and the commitment of such individuals to particular styles and forms may do much to shape the developments anticipated. The impact of these developments on style and convention remains to be seen.

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in 1998.

Appendix A

Reps Theatre Technical Specifications

17 fly bars, operating on a counterweight system.

3 lighting bars.

30 Circuit Programmable lighting system.

Revamping of lighting system at a cost of Z$250 000,00.

4 Amplifiers and two mixer boards for sound system.

Stage Monitoring Camera.

Stage Manager's Desk with intercom system.

2 Props Rooms.

1 Workshop.

4 acre large wardrobe

4 Rehearsal Rooms including the Adrian Stanley, which is the main one, and the George Barns Rehearsal Rooms.

1996 maintenance budget Z$188 250,00 in recurrent expenditure.

27 people employed:

Full time: General Manager.

2 professional Directors

Workshop Manager

Office Book-keeper

Booking Secretary

4 Wardrobe personnel

Carpenters

Bar Attendants

Security Guards

Voluntary: Technical personnel (eg sound and lighting)

Stage Managers

F.O.H. attendants

7 Administration Offices

Banking facilities (ATM service)

Computerised ticket booking system

1 Green Room

Dressing Rooms

2 Bars

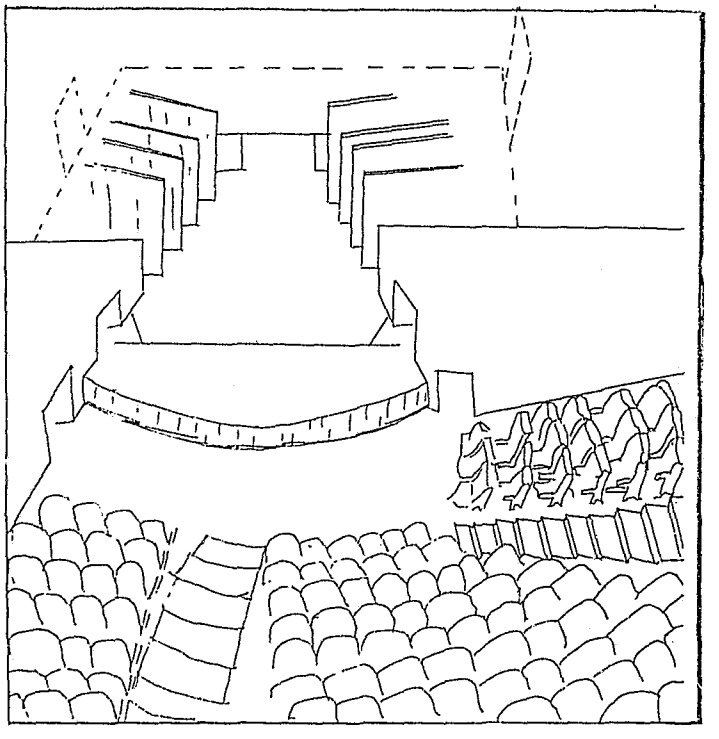


Figure 1 Reps Theatre Interior

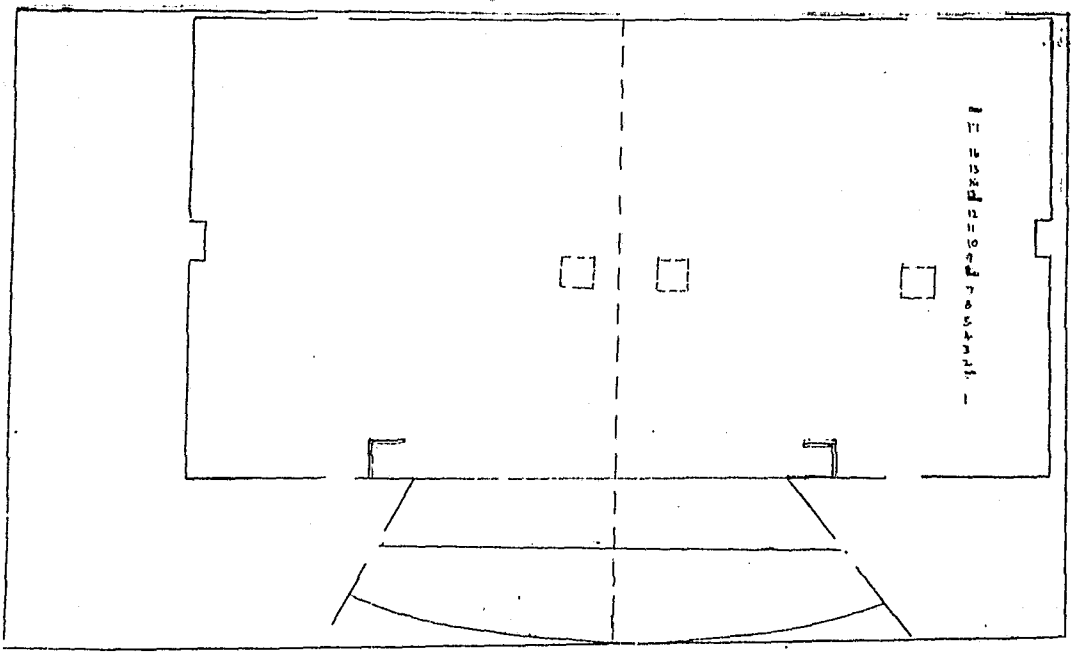
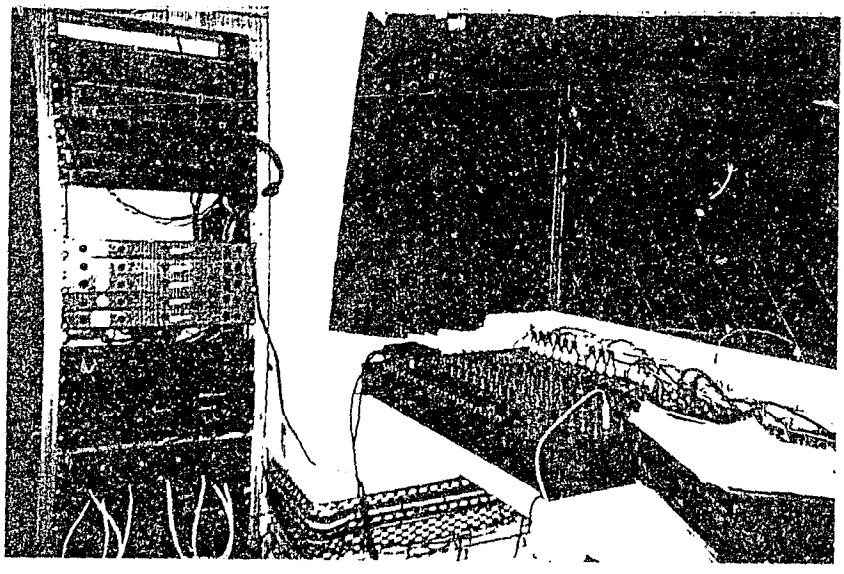
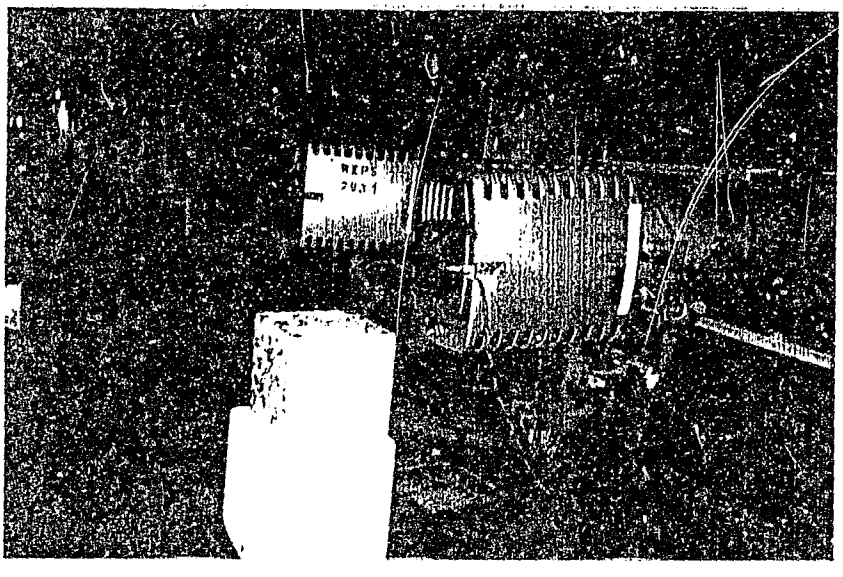


Figure 2 Reps Theatre Stage Floor Plan





Figures 3 and 4 Reps Theatre Lighting Equipment

Appendix B

Alfred Beit Hall Technical Facilities

70 socket Lighting grid above the auditorium

Manually operated lighting Dimmer Board

Reel sound machine

Special effects projector

336 capacity Auditorium

2 Dressing rooms

1 Storeroom

3 Small trunk Wardrobe

2 Technical personnel

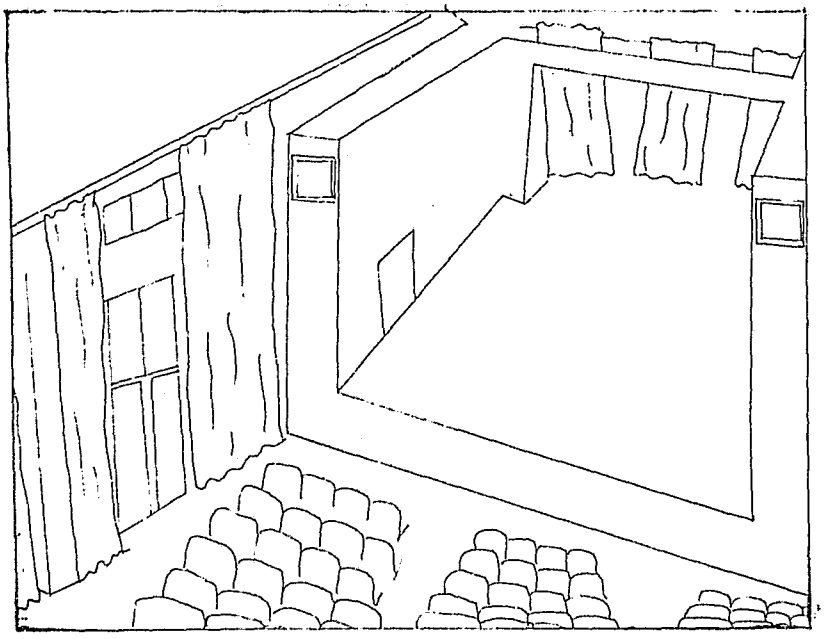


Figure 5 Alfred Beit Hall Interior

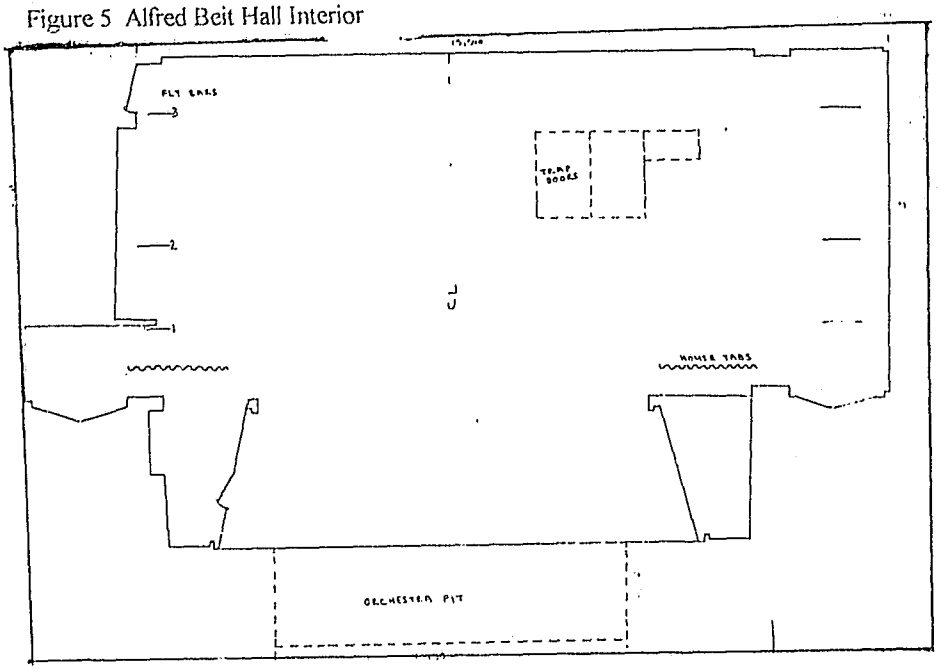


Figure 6 Alfred Beit Hall Stage Floor Plan

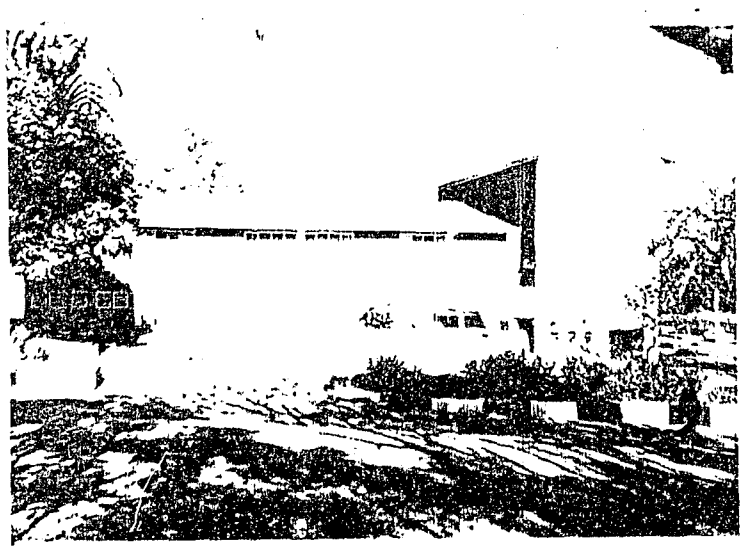


Figure 7 Alfred Beit Hall

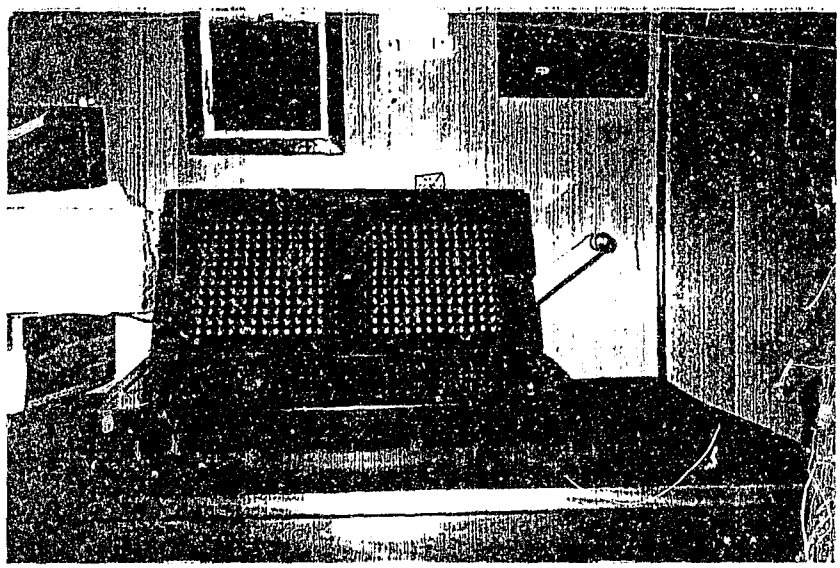


Figure 8 Alfred Beit Hall Lighting Control Panel

Appendix C

Township Square Cultural Centre Technical Specifications

Rafters used as lighting grid

Non-programmable twenty-four channel Dimmer Board

Table sound system with a sound mixer, effects rack, 8 Amplifiers operating on 3 Speakers 3 500 watts each

1 Workshop

1 Dressing Room

1 Green Room

An Open-air Amphitheatre with 1 200 seating capacity

A Round open space for story telling, poetry recitals and general discussions

1 Bar and Restaurant

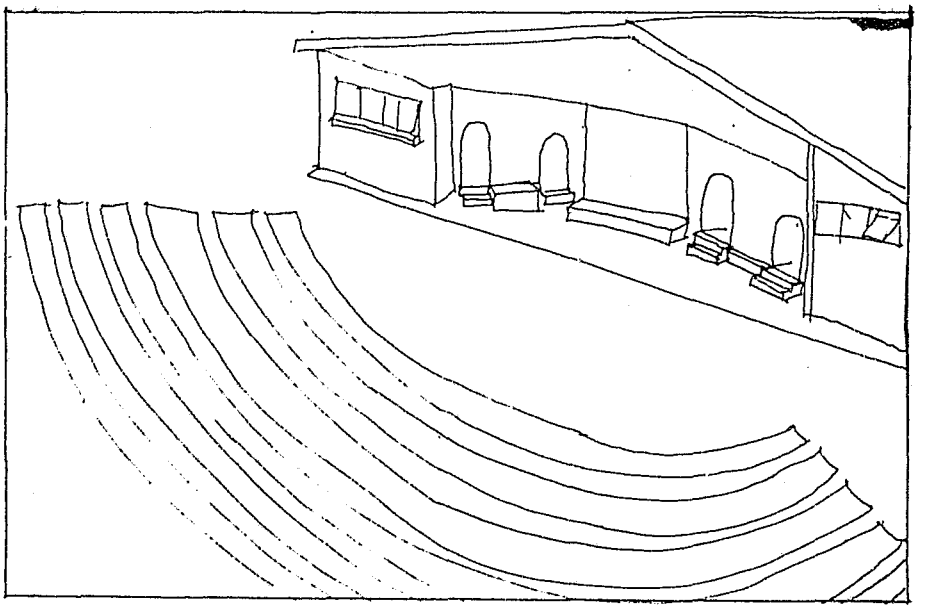


Figure 9 Township Square Cultural Centre Main Stage Diagram

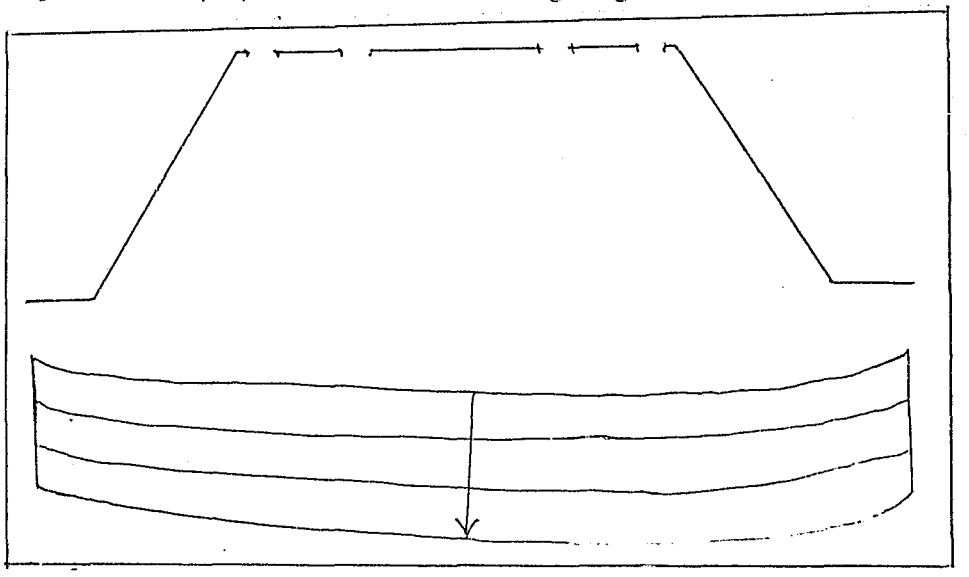


Figure 10 Township Square Cultural Centre Stage Floor Plan

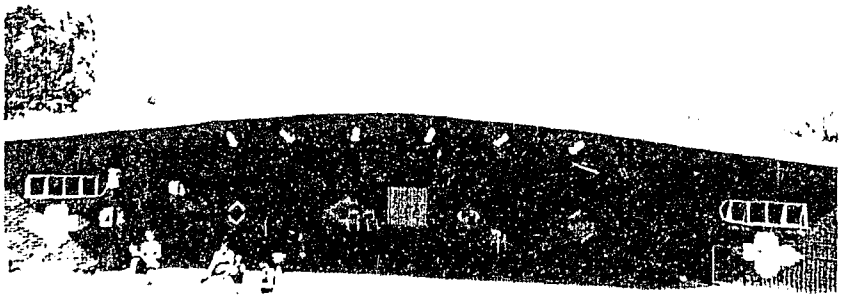


Figure 11 Township Square Cultural Centre Main Performance Space

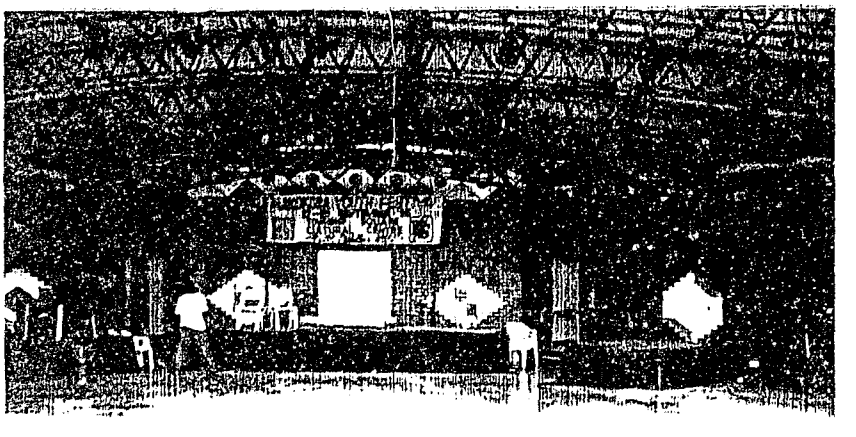


Figure 12 Township Square Cultural Centre lighting grid



Figure 13 Stanley Hall

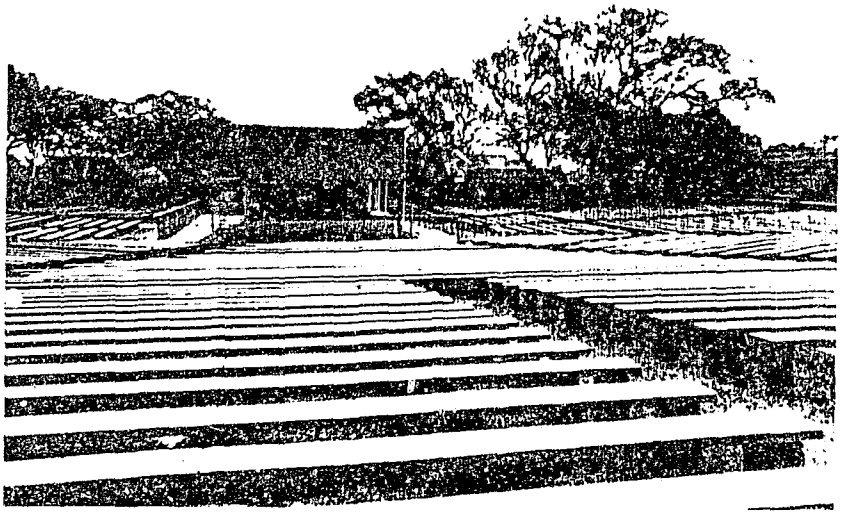


Figure 14 Stanley Square

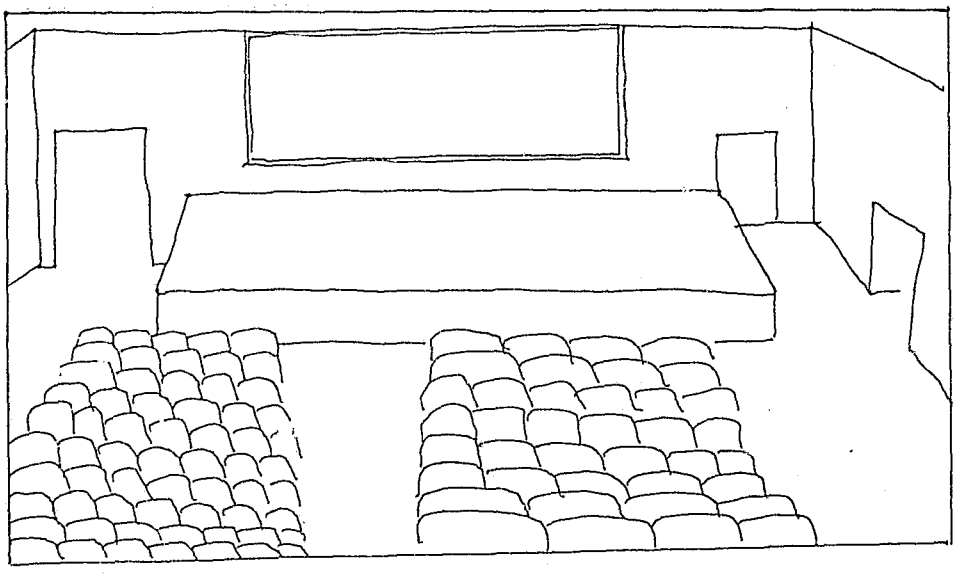


Figure 15 Stanley Hall Interior

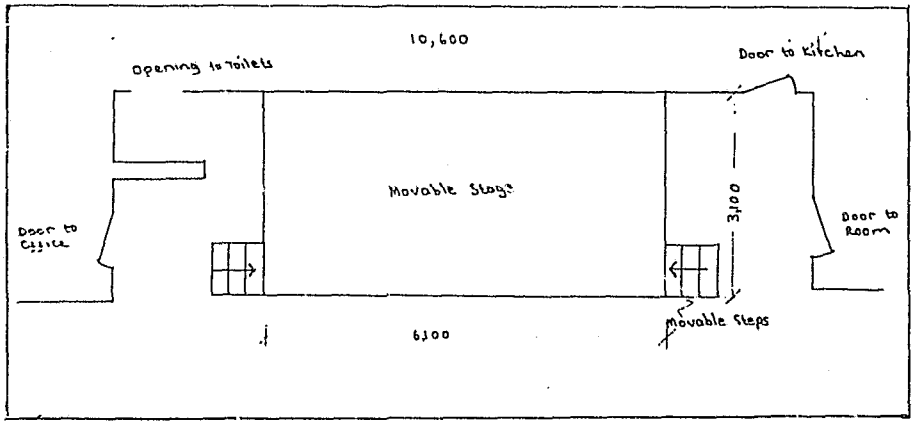


Figure 16 Stanley Hall Stage Floor Plan



Figure 17 Batanai Dance Company Performing in Harare Gardens

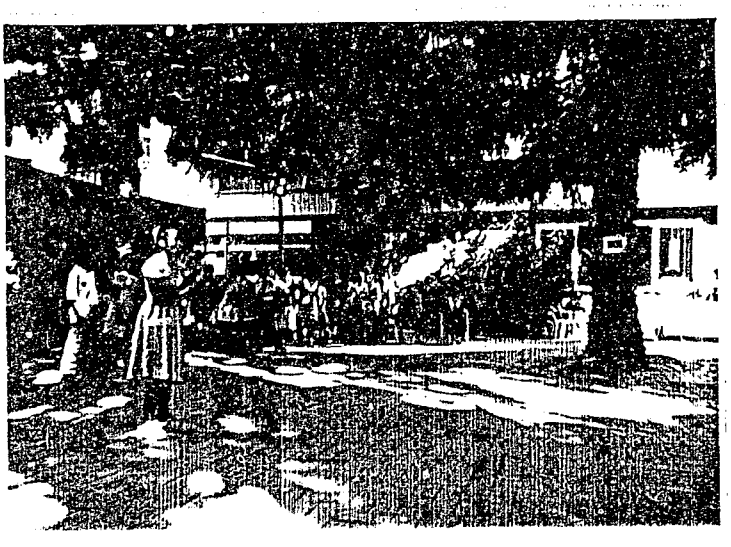


Figure 18 Cam and Motor Primary School Performing in Harare Gardens

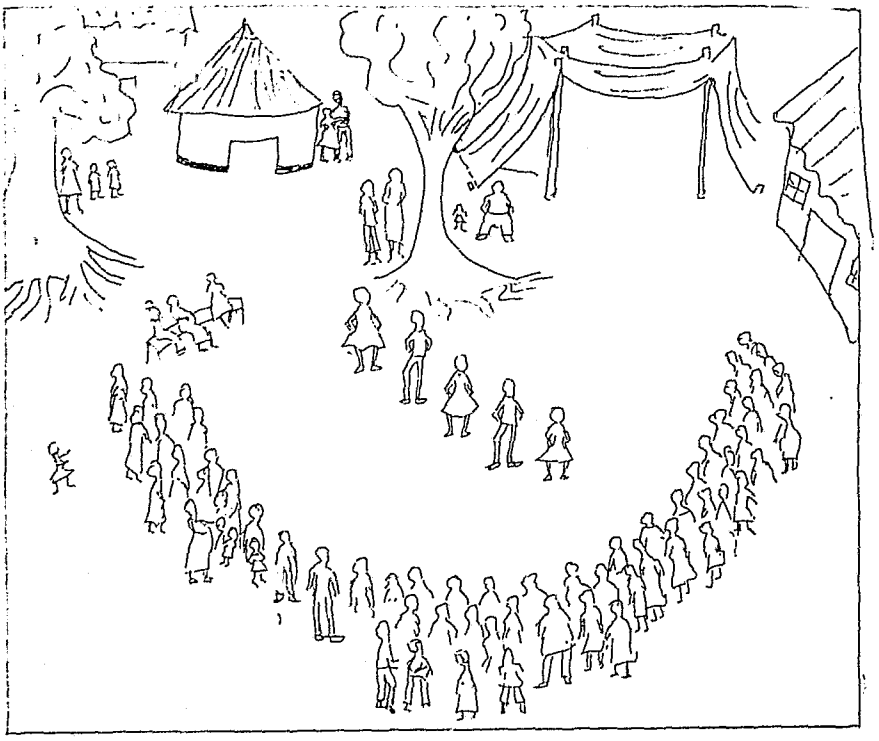


Figure 19 A Performance in Harare Gardens

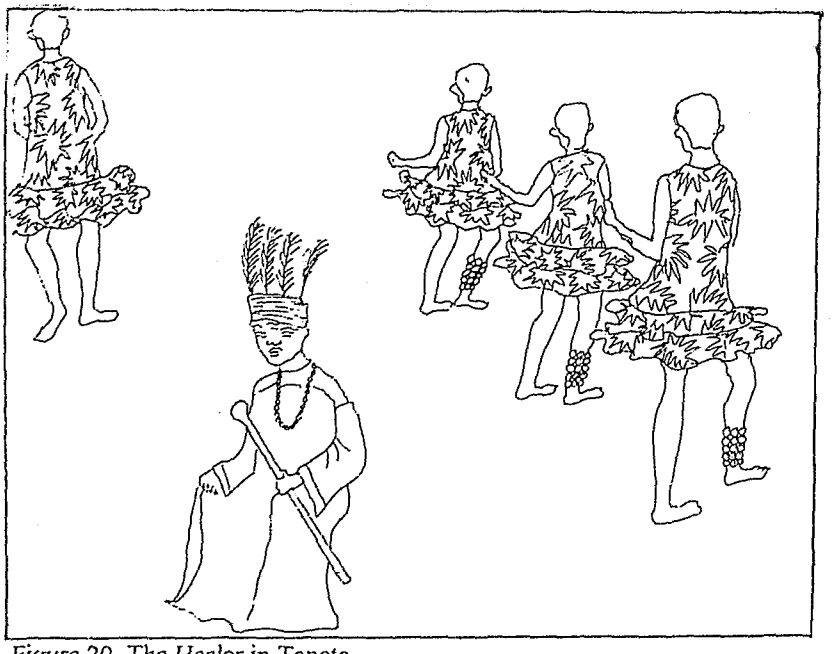


Figure 20 The Healer in Taneta

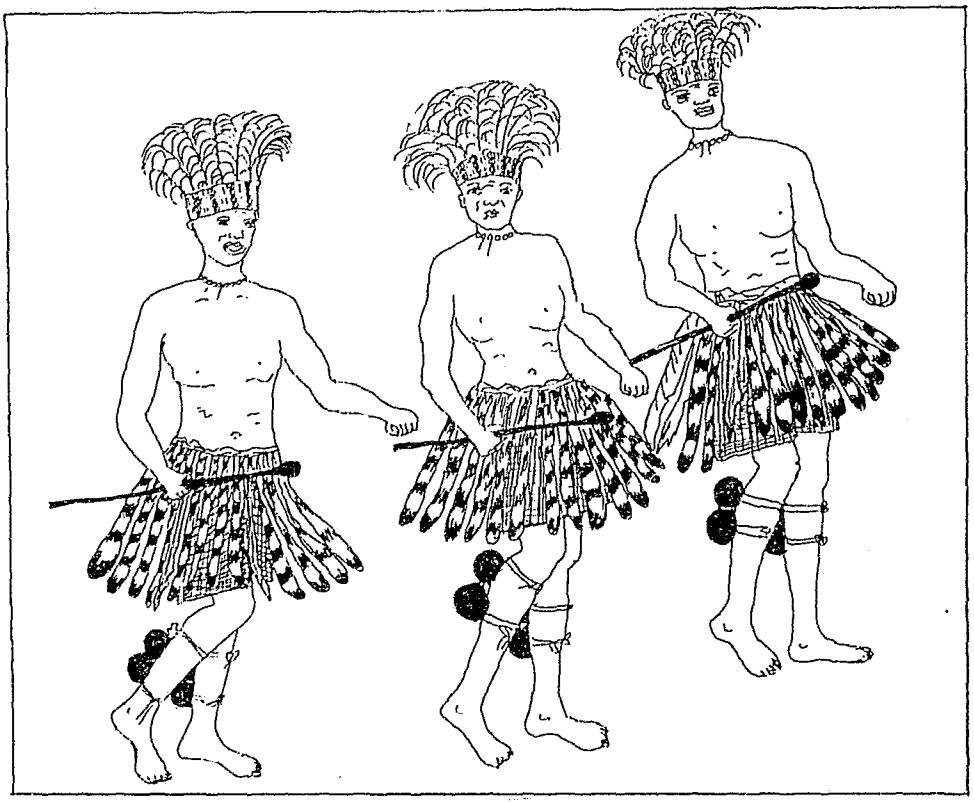


Figure 21 Dancers in a Batanai Dance Company Production



Figure 22 Tshovha George's Wives

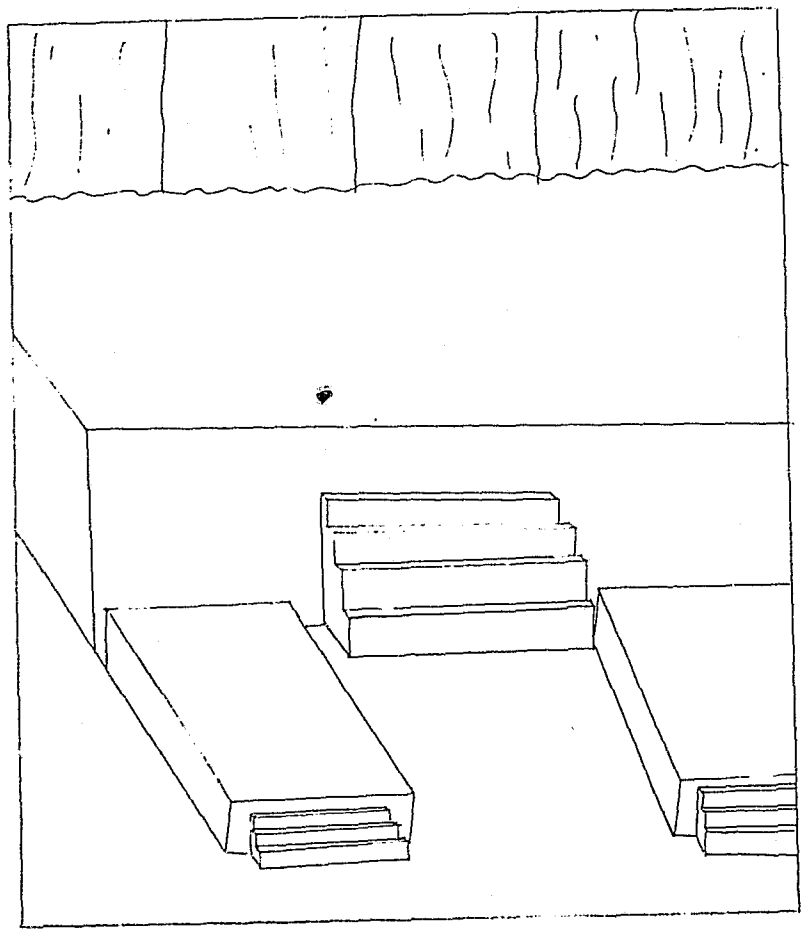


Figure 23 Multiple Staging in Tsinzinai Titadze '

Appendix E

TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE FUNDING OF THEATER IN ZIMBABWE: Paper read by The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, Cde. S.J. Chifunyise.

1. Institution Building Grants

   These would be available for all registered full-time theater groups to create a basic administartive structure. This was proposed as a permanent and practical annual action.

2. Access to Capital: National Credit Facility for the Arts

   This was a project proposal that could be run under the National Arts Council with an independent Board of Trustees. It could provide loans to artists who had difficulty in getting credit from banks and other institutions.

3. Community Audience Building

   This project had been supported by Norwegians. Theater groups would be funded to produce weekly shows in a venue of their choice. Evaluation after six months would monitor the centres which could be supported for up to four years, by which time the community halls would have become transformed into cultural centres providing regular employment.

4. Upgrading Administrative Structure National Theater Associations

   For four years national culture associations would be eligible for grants of $20 000 mainly to improve their communications with members. This project also had been created from the Norwegian support to the Cultural Sector.

5. Access to Venues

The Ministry had initiated the establishment of a National Arts Centre which would be another way of raising the status of the performing arts. Theatre groups would be among the main beneficiaries.

6. National Centre for Arts Administration

The Ministry had decided to join co-operating partners and donor community in funding this project to provide common services for all national arts organisations in a rented building.

7. Establishment of local branches of International Organisations

Being a member of the ITI, ASSITEJ and IATA would allow Zimbabwe to participate in international theater activities. The Ministry might consider assisting by disseminating information, convening meetings and providing grants for membership fees.

8. Collaborative Advanced Theater Training Programmes

The Ministry could collaborate with national associations and groups to provide advanced training programmes in mobilising human and financial resources from donors.

9. Setting up Realistic Theater Budgets

The Ministry had set up a cultural data bank collecting information about operational costs; this would enable the theater sector to produce more realistic budgets.

10. Theater to School

Although some activities were already going on they were very poorly funded. Proposals to give support included providing funding for touring groups within the National Arts Council and developing helpful policies such as allowing free use of school halls, publishing plays and funding workshops.

In conclusion Mr. Chifunyise pointed out that resources for theatre would never be adequate so the resources available must be mobilised to provide maximum benefit for a viable and vibrant national theater. It was the mission of the Ministry to mobilise the resources - human, financial, material and immaterial as a strategy for a comprehensive support to the theater sector in Zimbabwe.

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