

## An Analysis Of *United We Stand As A Dance Performance* By Bauchi State Council For Arts And Culture

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### Abstract

*Dance as a mother of all arts is tolerant and accommodating in nature. All the variants of both plastic and performing arts find their living expressions in the production of any dance theatre. This is because dance stands as an entertainment and natural phenomenon constantly predicted on conscious or unconscious movements of man within a social setting. Ability of dance to accommodate these arrays of production codes can be linked to its double learning on time and space. This study therefore, analyses the performance of united we stand by the Bauchi State Council for Arts and Culture as dance theatre. The study employs the descriptive and analytical methods with participant- observation approach as instrument of research. The researcher uses direct involvement in the dance performance as produced by the Bauchi State Council for Arts and Culture at Bayelsa's NAFEST, 2013. In addition, interviews were conducted as books and journals were equally consulted. It is discovered from the foregoing that united we Stand Dance performance at the 2013 NAFEST in Bayelsa State, is a dance theatre. Music, costumes, makeup, lighting, properties and other theatrical elements enhance the communicative potential of dances in modern time as the blending of dance, costumes, music are expressive and not mimetic. This concludes that no art; plastic or performing arts, is an island of survival as they co-exist in the continuous development of their cultural abode. If art is a recreation of life, and life activities goes beyond imitation of an action (drama) to expression of unspoken feelings in gesticular movements, then, a conglomeration of all performing and plastic arts cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore our recommendation that clinical approach to dance packaging be adopted to make it a total dance theatre. Because if dramatic presentations can be enliven with intersperse of dance performances, then choreographers should as a matter of artistic relevance, be pragmatic in their thematic arrangements of choreographic elements. This will enhance its recognition as the mother of all arts.*

### Introduction

The communal nature of African people; the philosophy of commonness; ideology of togetherness; and spirit of co-existence to form a formidable front, usually influence and reflect in their cultural activities especially art forms. Art is an instrument of culture which bears the emblem of the people with particular reference to dance arts. Dance art in African context is an expressive medium through which Africans conveys their inner thoughts with bodily movements in response to external or internal stimuli of sounds. This presupposes that dance art in African context, exists and survives with other parts of similar orients.

Dance theatre as a creative product, emerges through collective efforts of various artists of the theatre like choreographer, dance instructor, costume, make-up, technical, artistic, stage manager and other artists for a unified artistic goal. Reflecting on the synergy between dance and music, Ufford (2014, p.80) reflects that:

Dance is a medium of emotion... this expression of emotions actualized through rhythmic body movements. This emphasizes the relevance of music in any dance presentation. The fact that dance is performed according to musical beats shows that music comes to mind first before the rhythmic movements of the body. It provides movements which is dance.

Aside from the symbolic relationship between dance and music, other elements of theatre like costumes, make-up and others, share working relationship with dance theatre performance. For instance, Edwin (cited in Johnson, 2005, p.15) emphasizes the place of costumes that “no matter how attractive or symbolic, stage costume must work for (not against) the (dance) performers”.

Therefore, all the elements needed to be well considered and integrated as Jordan (1969) says “the dissociation of music, design and choreography and the provision of a multiplicity of centre of attention call for alert”. It is worthy of note that “each art does this separately in a unique way that one form may depend on another for effectiveness, but will not for that reason be the same with the form from which it borrows. Thus, this study analysis “United we Stand” by the Bauchi State Council for Arts and Culture as dance theatre.

### Literature Review

Dance, beyond its understanding as a medium of human expression in movements, is “an activity very intimately connected with human condition” and “reveals many aspects of human development” (Olomu 2007, p.27). This is linked to the utilitarian and entertainment purpose of dance to all human associations as the most effective means of emotional expression. As a result of this, the multifarious evolution of dance is located and attached to “emotional impulse and improvisation; the need to release psychic tension by means of rhythmic movement and; ecstasy or magic” of ritual ordinance.

In essence, dance has become a universal phenomenon of communication that has interrelation approach with all cultures of the world. It has become an “art of expressing the sentiments of the mind or the passions (Abbe, 2007, p.6). The seemingly affordability of human expression through movements of dance, make it a celebrated art form among various cultures as a representative of cultural identity of a group of people. In this light, dance is viewed and not limited to its performance at ceremonies but as all round phenomenon capable of enhancing human existence as regards professionalism.

Therefore, dance stands as an entertainment and natural phenomenon constantly predicted on conscious or unconscious movements of man within a social setting. As a naturalistic phenomenon, dance, according to Abbe (2007, p.9) purposely occur at initiations, marriage, funerals, naming-ceremony... with ability of bringing to bare history of people and their culture (p.8) Abbe's view is locked within the utilitarian purpose or function of dance in a given society. It is multi-dynamic in nature and a problem solving factory member of a society. While as a form of prayer to ward off evil and attract blessings, dance functions as a means of expressing their innate gratitude for blessings received over time. In addition, it becomes a repertory of history especially in a traditional gathering like festivals.

Away from the utilitarian periscope, dance is a tenable instrument of entertainment; as a pure art with consciousness of planned, structured and tailored movements in forms and styles. In perceiving dance as an art, it is viewed from Akunna's (2007, p.16) statement as :

That artistic medium through which human experiences in all levels may be reflected and interpreted. For in the meaningful employment of its varied forms of artistic expressions among other things are made manifest cultural understanding and or perceptions of concepts of moral/social consciousness by which human conditions are established.

Akunna's statement above implies that dance is a design movement capable of reflecting and interpreting diverse human experiences with aesthetic focus to gain not only physical pleasure but with social reformation and cultural upliftment. Suffice to say that art especially performing Arts, remains a latent skill of an average African, which can occasionally

or seasonally manifest in the course of variegated human expressions with social relevance. Therefore, irrespective of the functional essence of dance; entertainment or utilitarian, dance and social framework are diachronically important. No wonder Spencer (1989), (cited in Anomal 2012) observe that:

The relation (ship) between dance and society would be mutual: both drawing from each other. Society with its physical elements, diffusion, development of language and culture, forms the basis of dance. A dance...creates images, stories and spreads messages of society. Society in turn internalizes its lessons of content and pleasure from dance.

Deductively, one can say that dance as intangible cultural material, survives on the tangible (physical element) materials like clothing, drumming, artifacts and spatial environment all which can be related to theatrical elements in a production. Therefore dance as an art form transcends the basic or ordinary movement of the body to time and space but an art of purposeful communication built or created in synergy with other expensive art forms like songs and music, costumes, make-up , and other choreographic elements of meaning; thus becoming dance Theatre. Since theatre is seen as collaborative art where all performance and expressive Arts forms collectively synthesize to communicate.

In view of this, “theatrical art is regarded as a highly complex human behavior. One which ultimately results in a holistic unique tool (or work of creativity) presented in unified virtually inseparable didactic, yet entertaining plays involving music, dance and dramatic enactments”. The non-verbal focus of dance theatre therefore, implies the presence, function, and synchronization of theatrical elements with dance arts for communication purpose.

Expressly, Ugolo (2007, p.40) describe the concept of dance theatre with modern social framework thus:

Dance Theatre also implies that in the dance production, a number of theatrical elements are employed in its realization. For example the usage of costume, props, lighting , makeup, sound effects and music which usually accompany a modern dance production. Dance theatre suggests the influence of modernity and it is therefore a modern concept.

Also ,Monyeh (2007,p 110) believes dance theatre to be an “integrated art (that) can combine movement, mime , costume, make-up , music , song “ that has to do with “expression of ideas and feelings “ through bodily media. It is however important at this juncture, to distinguish between “dance drama and dance theatre “. Different from Ugolo and Monyeh’s description of Dance Theatre above, dance drama according to Way (1967), is “the combination of Dance and dramatic experience”. He then further explained that dance drama makes fuller use of dramatic elements and involves the full use of the body in response to musical elements. Ugolo (2007, p. 40) in his clarification, sees dance drama as combination of two distinct art forms that “engage in the representation of emotion (human emotion) and they make use of verbal and non-verbal mediums of communication”. He further refutes in appropriate or the linguistic identity and suggest dramatic dance as a better alternative to dance drama.

Importantly, functionality and relationships of various elements in dance theatre are reviewed within the artistic relevance and appropriateness in performance. Among all the theatrical elements, music and songs are the most influential to any dance theatre production. The reason may not be unconnected to the expression of Olomu (2007, p.34) that “although all Arts communicate, music and dance have special ways of appealing to emotions than any of the other Arts thereby becoming the supreme communication system used by man for man”. In the same extensive vein, Okafor (1999, p. 6) has earlier observed that:

As a vehicle for expression, human communities find it convenient and useful to express social statements in dance and music to which they add as time rolls by. These are those folk songs of the world whose most common themes are proved and worship.

The inseparable relationship of dance and music can equally be attributed to sharing elements of time and rhythm. Dance is a rhythmic movement of the body while musical aesthetics of any song (vocal or instrumental) greatly relies on its rhythmic patterns and overleaps. Extensively, Lo-Bamijoko (2007, p. 176) exposes the inter-relevance of rhythm to dance and music that "rhythm in both dance and music is a regular pulsating phenomenon regulated in time and space.... rhythm in dance follow the same rules as rhythm in music". The universality of rhythm that makes music essential to dance theatre and surreptitiously enhances the sociocultural, entertainment and religious functions of dance in any society. In fact, "dance like music is used in celebrating all of life's events from birth to growing, living and dying...." (178).

In his submission on the *interdependence of music and dance in Anioha Igbo culture*, Mokwunyei (2007, p. 184) concludes that "there is no dance without music". The influential role of music in any dance performance is connected to the fact that, dance production is primarily predicted on rhythm verbally or non verbally, audible or inaudible. In essence the marriage of music and dance are inextricably difficult to separate.

In another angle, the role of costume in dance theatre goes beyond mere concealment of dancers' nakedness or to make ordinary appearance, but contributes immensely to the dramaticness and dexterity of such dance. Meanwhile costumes generally assume symbolic significance in a performance" as it helps to serves some cryptic and ritual purposes, enhance believability and enrich performance aesthetically. Theatrically, costume deployment and design usually "adds to the aesthetics of production" in dance theatre. It must in addition, work for the "dancers in motion, helping with gesture and expression without getting in the way" (Brueckman, 2012, p. 14).

In a particular reference to dance, Cooper (1998) considers some factors in the design process of costumes for dance production. Accordingly, "costumes are designed on anticipated movements of the dancers and budget" hence it must be done in synthesis with other artistic and technical designers of the play at hand. In fact, dance costumes are made with lightweight, breathable and stretchy garments which provide dancers with comfort and freedom".

Another essential element of artistic importance to dance theatre is the operational functions and deployment of lightning in a creative way. Lighting in theater is primarily concern with distribution and dissemination of illumination basically to reveal object(s) on stage. While it enhances thematic and artistic intentions of any performance, its deployment in dance theater is quite different .according to Leach (2014,p.460) says dance lighting is unique among performance disciplines in large part because dance is concern first and foremost with movement . While in all performance mediums our focus is bodies in space, focus is on where and how that body moves “ in dance .

In short, lighting “is concern with the whole stage and the quality of movement and rather than where one is standing for such and such a monologue. Also, Rosenthal (1972) clarifies the purpose of lighting in a dance performance in comparison with dramatic production that” in drama the primary goal of a designer is to light the actors face while in a dance theater, the primary goal of the designer is to reveal the sculpture qualities of dancers body”.

The special considerations of lighting a dance performance are purposely in agreement with the need to enhance the artistic coloration and thematic preoccupation in line with some technical requirement like angles and positioning of lightning equipments in dance theatre.

Lighting interacts with all visual elements of stage design, costumes and makeup as it is crucial to have clear communication between lighting designer, choreographer and other collaborators”

Set design as an important visual element in dance performance in dance theater, becomes intertwined to the complete or comprehensive communication of dance movements, as it enliven the spatial and psychological frame-up of the context of the performance . Just like music, lighting and costume as dance mood booster and interpretation relief, “stage sets may also amplify certain qualities of dance movements because set and design are vital elements of theatre, they are most important in those types of theatre-dance” (Encarta).

Similarly is the functionality of properties usage in dance theatre. In theatre, property usage as other visual elements such as costumes, makeup, set design, lighting to create mood, needed artistic essence of such production. Property in dance usually augments characterization of dancers, elegance of dance steps and dexterity of movements. Makeup stimulate the specters interest in understanding the psychological state of the dancers minds as it allows them to complete immerse themselves in the performance with the help of physical transformation that stage makeup create. As a result, Ford (2016,p.16)expresses the essence of make-up as being “an incredibly important part of enhancing a dancers stage presence and building the atmosphere of a performance...by highlighting a dancers most elegant and expensive features, reflecting the mood of the piece”

Consequently, the conglomeration of both physical or visual and aural paraphernalia of theatre in dance production, render such a performance a holistic medium of communication. It abolishes verbal or non-verbal barriers that may inhabit selected members of audience. Ability of dance to accommodate these arrays of production codes can be linked to its double learning on time and space. Relatively, Sach (1973) cited in Layiwola (2015,p.1)expunges that:

Dance is the mother of the arts. Music and poetry exist in time and space. But the dance lives at once in time and space... Rhythmic patterns of movement, the plastic scene of space, the valid representation of a world seen and imagined-these things man creates in his own body in the dance before he uses substance and stone and word to give expressions to his inner experiences.

The notion of dancer using “substance, stone and word” in the above statement implies that dance occurs first at abstract level but it’s manifestation in physical realm is enhanced with the use “substance (costume, makeup, scenery, lighting movements), stone (props or accessories) and word (music and sound effects)

### **Brief History of the Bauchi State Council for Arts and Culture**

According to Yari (2017 in an ninterview),trhe troupe was founded in the year 1984 by the then military administrator, Gen. Mohammed Sani Sami who is now the Emir of Zuru he was moved by the performances of the Niger state cultural troupe (gwape international) who performed at one of the trade fares in the then Bauchi state. The trade fares turn between the three states of Bauchi, Borno, and Gongola. The military administrator sought for the assistance of elders in coming up with a dance troupe of their own. Amidst various setbacks, the troupe was formed. Mr Peter Adegboyega Babejo was brought from A.B.U Zaria to train the group for a period of three months. After the departure of the renowned choreographer the troupe can now boast of over forty of their own traditional choreographed dances. Among these dances are Rakachia, Itsom, Agwangwasje, Takai,Fulani danse, Maladumbas dance, Koroso, Asauwara, Tsubtu, Kamun-Kifi, Asawara and Baushe.

### **The communicative analysis of the performance**

Standing on the tripod of culture, peace and national transformation, 'United We Stand' as performed by the troupe of Bauchi State Arts and Culture (2013), has a logical presentation and narration of social crisis and the need for a peaceful and united Nigeria .the music and dance begins with a narrator who comes on stage with a local guitar (Gurmi) and uses the English language to relay in folkloric form the endowment of the state. After which a set of six women come on stage in locomotive movements from left and right wings of the cyclorama to celebrate the coming of the new rainy season.

This celebration brings six male dancers dancing to the stage hanging on shoulders big hoes (Garma) and cutlasses (Adda) positioned to their waist in readiness to clear and cultivate the land for the planting season. Dropping the hoes with their wives, who rhythmically stand at the back, watching their husband as they clear the lands and subsequently construct ridges in energetic, but calculated movements as culture demands, women are to help their husbands so; they assist in planting the seeds while the men tilt the land the planting goes on with joy and the hope of a bountiful harvest.

The hope is dashed as a devilish costumed character hops in to destroy the plantation. Farmers are alerted and choreographically barge in to chase out the enemy of progress. They executed warrior dances using bows and arrows (Kori da Baka) in an expressive dance of war. Abruptly, a woman cries out in appeal for ceasefire of the looming interregnum and is followed by a man. The woman leads a song of lamentation which dovetails into a song of unity after the stressful ceasefire the dancers submit their weapons ; embrace the truce and begins movements of friendship in duet, as they leave the stage.

### **Dance theatre: United we Stand**

The operational nomenclature of dance theatre philosophy presupposes that dance is an intensive and holistic medium of expression that majorly relies on body and communicative theatrically embellishment of theatrical elements such as costume makeup, props, set and designs, lighting and so on. The dramaticness of dance theatre; plot or storyline, actions, conflict and suspense rhythmically weaved together are purposely done to among various needs make development contribution in human resources for a better society. Relatively, the components of theatrical elements including the stoe analysis, choreographic explanation of the dances are the focus of the paper.

### **Costume in Dance Theatre**

Designing garments or cloths for a dance production is quite different from any other performance forms because not only would the character protection and thematic reflection be considered but the freedom of movement of dancers in such a way that the artistic/choreographic intention and goals will not be jeopardized. It must be done in a way that flexibility of movement would be allowed. Therefore costume deployment in United We Stand as performed by the troupe of Bauchi State Council for Arts and Culture , are with the relevance and performance factors, categorized into three which are ;

Costumes for farmers /warriors and women farmers

Instrumentalists

Intermediary and Devil costumes

Thus, the central of the story of planting and challenges of farming in our heterogeneous society like Nigeria, has equipped many farmers to be hunters/warriors for the

purpose of self-defense. This reflected in the United We Stand as six male dancers wear warrior costumes with accessories of amulets to complement. The clothes come in shorts and top (Riga da Buje) for the male dancers. they wear waist charm (Warki). The costume allow them to express without obstruction, the elaborate and energetic movements as they spin, hop, jump and take upper, middle and lower level of dance steps. During the war dance, the jumping and hopping come out with beauty of speed (fast tempo) without any costume accident. Also, the women (wives of framers) dressed in skirt and Blouse (Riga da patari). The skirt is below knee level but spacious to allow them take larger steps fort and back without any form of restriction. Ordinarily women's costumes could be made in top and wrapper to depict their womanhood, but there is probability that the wrapper could create problem in the course of performance which hitherto will affect negatively the choreographic aesthetics at the moment. Yet their marital status reflects that the costume is not tight and long enough to protect womanhood integrity and give the needed sense of maturity in compliance with movements. For instance, during planting, they are able to maintain middle level without restriction on their knees.

The symbolic aspect of the male costume which has the symbol of LOVE has Red as the dominant color. It tells of the heroic and courageous instinct of the dancers as reflected in their war dance. However, love as design motif at the back of the costumes preaches peace and unity treasured on love. It implies that love and unity is needed to have a united front as a country with duet composition of dancers towards the end. Similarly, color pink and lilac of the women dancers, is synonymous with happiness that could only be generated in the atmosphere of peace and unity with culture as its promoter.

The second category of costume used is the uniform of the instrumentalists that are stationary and constantly supplying the tones to dictate the required mood and movements of the dances. Mostly, the sunflower of the costumes depicts loveliness; entertainment which correlates with their facial expressions in the course of the performance. Also, the solo guitarist, in Hausa style of guinea brocade. The greenish colour enhances his oratory; about the richness of Bauchi State in cultures and people of substance in Nigeria. Green represents fertility and growth which surreptitiously connected to the farming activities of the story line. As warriors, warki (waist skin) with other props of welfare assist the choreographic patterns and response to the rhythm of musical ensembles.

The third category of costume used is coloured with dramatic representation of evil (black costume for devil) and peace (white for the peace monger). The woman who cries out appears in wrappers and top with head gear, to show her state of despair of war in the land.

### **Properties used in the Production**

Properties used in the production of United We Stand as dance theatre are classified into two namely; hand(movable) props and set (immovable) props. The hand props consist of Adda (cutlass), Kori da Bakka (Bow and Arrow), Fantaya (small hoe), Garma (Big Hoe), Kwando (Basket) Sarewa (Flute) and Gurmi (Local Guitar), while the set props are the Duman-Girke and Dunduba (Jarawa Drums) as drums ensembles. Like in costumes design, properties design for dance performance requires two major things for its effectiveness and efficiency. First, is the nature and weight of the material used. It is not advisable in dance, to used metallic objects no matter the sacrosanct of its realities, so as to avoid accident on stage. Also, light weighted materials should be used so as to be handy for dancers. In the performance for instance, dancers movement are more valued with the lightness of props like Adda, Garma, Kori da Bakka. All these props, used at different moments, did not in any way stand in the ways of dances or dancers as their frenetic and communicative movements' shows clarity of a choreographic purpose. For instance, when male dancers came on stage with cutlass by their sides and Garma (big hoe) on their shoulders the cutlass being a wooden object, did not cause

any apprehension while Garma though big and looks metallic, is wooden and light. They are able to use it with much energy that did not distort the choreographic design of the production. Also, Duman-girke (drum ensemble) set props function to supply the needed and timely rhythm, to the dancers.

All the drums dictate different tones and unified rhythms at appropriate points in the course of production. Rather than been noisy and clumsy because of its number, all nine drums (including the kalangu) are distinct as dancers respond to the mood and rhythm of the ensemble.

### **Dance and Songs**

Predominantly, dance is predicted on production of sounds (music), which make them an inseparable twin. Dance and song in the performance of United We Stand, hinges on both oral and instrumentals. Sarewa (flute) leads the introduction as the ensemble of drummers usher in the guitarist on an oral but musical presentation of the trope. With unique folkloric style, the guitarist plays the Gurmi and chants in English language. All the dances; various movements and dance floor, are design into one constant beat except at the ceasefire stage where there is a pause. At the climax of the war dance, the mood of the moment is heightens with increased fast tempo energetic movements before they pause for songs of lamentation to rise up with slow movement.

Thereafter, peace, unity and the need for national transformation in the song by the male singer , brings about the return of pure instruments to register the moment of joy happiness and professed tranquility as they disappear with drummers closing the glee. Therefore, the structural pattern of songs and music in the performance begins with an introduction of mid-tempo rhythm, progressing to high tempo, and climax into a fast tempo rhythm. Aside from the fact that the instrument and the produced sounds are distinct, they are connected to the dances, and the arrangements of sounds is equally choreographically synchronized in ensuring the evocation of mood and contextual appreciation.

### **Findings**

It is discovered from the forgoing that United We Stand dance performance at the 2013 NAFEST in Bayelsa State, is dance theatre. Like the peculiar nature of the African context, communality and spirit of togetherness of all arts in dance performance is termed dance theatre. It among other findings that;

- i. African dance are originally established with marriage of convenience to all other arts as a mother of all,
- ii. Music , costumes, make-up, lighting, properties and other theoretical elements enhance the communicative potential of dances in modern time,
- iii. Dance theatre is most appropriate to describe communicative or didactic dance performance as it suffices without spoken words, and
- iv. Usage of other elements especially musical on sounds (instrument)is most apt as a universal medium devoid of ambiguity in dance theatre performance as the blending of dance, costumes, music are expressive and not

### **Conclusion**

Consequently, dance theatre refers to “dance performance that employs the complements of theatrical elements irrespective of the type of composition. That is based on a concept and application of systematic approach with the aim of portraying a certain issue and conveying particular messages” (Bello, 2017,p.318). this concludes that no art; plastic or performing arts, is an island of survival as they co-exist in the continuous development of their



cultural abode .if art is a recreation of life, and life activities goes beyond imitation of an action (drama) to expression of unspoken feelings in gesticular movements, then conglomeration of all performing and plastic arts cannot be over-emphasized. It is therefore our recommendation that clinical approach to dance packaging be adopted to make it a total dance theatre. Because if dramatic presentations can be enliven with intersperse of dance performance, then a choreographer should as a matter of artistic relevance, be pragmatic in their thematic arrangements of choreographic elements. This will enhance its recognition as the mother of all arts.

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