

THE SCENE SHOP IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY THEATRES

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Abstract

Theatre Arts is essentially a visual-based discipline in which scene shop facilities and equipment need to be put in place to meet the demands of productions in order to engender the development of theatrical aesthetics. But, to our utter dismay, the area of theatre technology concerning scenery design and construction has suffered neglect in Nigerian Theatre scholarship, whereby set design students in the Departments of Theatre Arts practically operate in an environment that is not technically-friendly due to the paucity of basic facilities and equipment. Yet, the fact remains that the role of scene design cannot be underplayed in contemporary theatre practice. Against this background, this paper attempts a critical evaluation of the scene shop facilities and equipment for set design and construction in Nigerian University Theatres as witnessed in three University Theatres which fall into the first, second and third generations, respectively, of Theatre Arts Departments established in Nigeria. These are: the University of Ibadan, University of Port-Harcourt and Delta State University, Abraka. Findings from the study of these University Theatres reveal that, despite their many years of existence, they are still grappling, in varying degrees, with inadequate facilities and equipment for students of set design and construction to train with. Hence, urgent steps need to be taken to upgrade University Theatres in Nigeria technologically to aid visual designs and the training of students in the important and indispensable discipline of Technical Theatre.

INTRODUCTION

Theatre Arts in the University system is an academic and creative discipline that thrives on a practical-friendly environment. This paper is in line with the view expressed by Lanrele Bamidele (2003) to the effect that 'Theatre Arts study in the university system is a creative discipline which caters for the development of ideas and the re-training of artistic talents'; a view that is shared by other theatre scholars. Therefore, as an important part of the university curriculum, Theatre Arts deserves to be provided with up-to-date facilities to enhance the teaching and learning process. These educational facilities, according to P. Campbell (1966), "exist to facilitate instructions, and their inadequacies usually have adverse effects on the teaching or learning process." Theatre Arts study, as spelt out by Sam Ukala (2006: 9), comprises seven major aspects as follows: "Dramatic Arts, Speech, Music, Dance, Visual Arts, Media and Management". We shall, in this study, lump aural aesthetics with the visual, because they both have the same theoretical base and empirical technical realization. The visual aspects, which comprise various kinds of design for scenery, stage properties, lighting, sound, costume and makeup, play significant roles, and demand a lot of technical equipment for their execution. This is normally realised through drawings, construction, painting, sculpting, iron works, wood works, leather works, dress-making, mask-making, electrical works and other stage crafts (Ukala 2006: 9). Unfortunately, these aspects are suffering from varying degrees of neglect in many Nigerian universities. As observed by technical theatre scholars like Duro Oni (2006), Sunday Ododo (2006), Adesina Adegbite (2009), Alphonsus S. Orisaremi (2006), Kenneth Njokuwu (2006) and a host of others, technical theatre equipment and facilities are either, inadequate, dilapidated or non-existent in

the Nigerian university system. These facilities are those things which enable a skilled teacher to achieve the desired level of instructional effectiveness.

It is imperative to state at this point that the theatre is a unique art. Hugh Hunt regards the theatre as a 'hybrid art' because the course entrenches itself fully into the Humanities, the Sciences, and the Social Sciences. Therefore, this paper solicits special attention for this unique discipline in the provision of adequate facilities to aid concepts and practice because the theatre is a practical-based study. Our focus is on the scene shop which accommodates technical equipment for set design and construction. It has become imperative to assess the state of the scene shop facilities and equipment in Nigerian university theatres, focusing on the challenges they pose in the teaching of technical theatre courses and how their inadequacy has affected students' interest in stage design. But first, we must make a brief overview of the Nigerian university theatres and their fundamental objectives.

UNIVERSITY THEATRE IN NIGERIA

The University College, Ibadan, which is today known as the University of Ibadan, introduced a programme of dramatic activities in 1957 under the auspices of the English Department. This became necessary following students' drama productions, which led to the forming of dramatic societies, and also, the activities of a group of expatriates, made up mainly of university teachers and civil servants resident in Ibadan who got together and formed an amateur theatre group. Wole Soyinka's return to Nigeria in 1960 added impetus to the growth of the Nigerian University Theatre and his establishment of the '1960 Mask', a semi-professional theatre company, laid the foundation for serious theatrical performances in Nigeria. These factors and more led to the establishment of a diploma awarding School of Drama at the fully chartered University of Ibadan during the 1963-64 academic

session which graduated into Nigeria's first Department of Theatre Arts in 1970, a training ground for the country's first generation of professionally-trained theatre artists. Within a short period, other Nigerian universities borrowed a leaf from the Ibadan initiative and formed theirs. According to F.O. Shaka (1999:1-8), "by the late 1970's what started out as an experimental training programme for professional theatre Artist in Ibadan had spread to other parts of the country." He elaborates as follows:

The 1980's witnessed the rapid spread of Departments of Theatre/Dramatic Arts across the country. Theatre Departments that took off within the period included those of the University of Benin, Calabar, Ife, Nsukka, Jos, Port Harcourt, Ilorin and sub-departments in ABU Zaria and Bayero University Kano. And in the late 1980's and early 1990's, others were established at Uyo, Abuja, Awka, Makurdi, Abraka, Ekpoma, etc.

These departments were established to achieve certain objectives. According to Olu Akomolafe (1981: 426), "the purpose was to provide a training ground for future theatre artists and to organize workshops for professionals in the theatre to gain skill and experience." In the same vein, John Egwugwu Illah (1999:25-31), clarifies that,

at a conceptual level, these programmes (academic theatre courses) in the Universities were designed primarily to achieve the following objectives, among others:

- provide high level manpower through organized training in the performing arts;

- conduct research into Nigeria's residual performative cultures, thus making them available to contemporary audience;
- engender literary dramatic creativity;
- provide entertainment for the immediate community and the larger Nigerian audience, reflective of the ideas of Independence and National Unity.

John Clifford, in a related study, also identifies the purpose and values of educational theatre, as cited by Remi Adedokun (2011:37). He classifies it into primary and secondary purposes as follows:

- A. The primary purpose is to entertain the audience.
- B. The secondary purposes are:
 - to preserve, in living form, the great heritage of the dramatic literature of the past;
 - to raise the general public's level of taste, appreciation and standards for theatre arts;
 - to provide quality theatrical entertainment for the academic and local communities;
 - to provide opportunities for interested persons to participate in an artistic endeavour;
 - to provide an opportunity to learn the arts and craft of quality theatre for students interested in pursuing theatre as a profession.

The big question is: how far has the Nigerian university system fulfilled its expectation of catering for the various Departments of Theatre Arts to meet their required objectives? As a department in the Faculty of Arts or Humanities, Theatre Arts is a special discipline. According to Ayo Akinwale (1999:94), "within the Faculty of Arts of Nigerian Universities, the only professional discipline is the Theatre Arts discipline...because one can train as a theatre artist and establish his own company." But the Federal Government policy on education, which supports the Science

disciplines over the Arts with a ratio of 60:40, has aggravated the growing neglect of the Arts of which Theatre is a part, thus resulting in the dwindling fortunes of Theatre Arts as a discipline in Nigerian Universities. According to Dugga Victor (2002:121), the situation has been compounded by

the absence of theatre infrastructure, political instability and insecurity, the resulting economic cascade, the soaring competition from television, cinema, and later video film, as well as the negative social perception and attitude to the theatre as a profession.

This undesirable trend is jeopardizing the objectives of theatre arts education in Nigerian Universities, lacking the basic facilities to train the students, and thus adversely causing a decline in the standard of the discipline. John Egwugwu Illa (1999:25-31) affirms that "the evidence of the decline is most glaring in the dilapidated structures, crowded classrooms, and obsolete equipment..." There has to be a rethink in the provision of the basic facilities and equipment needed for an ideal educational theatre. This is imperative because, for the theatre to achieve the positive objectives set at the conception of the programme, necessary efforts need to be made in providing the ideal training ground for the practitioners. Furthermore, there must be the recognition of the programme as one that is aimed towards intellectual and creative development of the art and craft in the practice of theatre. The theatre is more than a mere artistic enterprise; it is also an economic venture, capable of assisting the country in the realization of the set aim by the government of Nigeria to be one of the world's most developed economies by year 2020.

SET DESIGN AND TECHNICAL THEATRE PRACTICE

As a study aimed at assessing the technical facilities used for set design and construction in Nigerian university theatres, it is imperative to highlight the functions and role of scenery in the theatre. Taiwo Adeyemi (2006:110-124), defines technical theatre as “the art and craft of designing and constructing scenery, properties, lighting and sound for theatre productions.” In furtherance of Adeyemi’s claim, we want to state categorically that there must be a design first, before its technical execution. We can, therefore, define technical theatre as the science of design actualization. This process involves set construction and assemblage on stage, with sound and lighting being rigged and given directional flow. The basic aim is to achieve the development of scenery for a theatrical production. Scenery is made up of structures put on stage according to the demands of the production, and these structures are generally known as sets. Scenery is simply the environment or the locale within which a performance is enacted. It is a very important aspect of technical theatre practice because, apart from dialogue and movement, the environment of the action (comprising scenery, lighting and sound design) of a performance is of utmost importance. Hence, Edwin Wilson (1991:326) states that “the theatre does not occur in a visual vacuum.” Set design is a very important technical theatre element because it makes up the visual composition of a performance and also creates spectacle when required in a theatrical performance. Therefore, it will not be out of place to state that scenery creates the overall impression of a production as it is the first theatrical element that interacts with the audience. Hence, Robert Cohen (1997: 118) submits that “scenery is usually the first thing we see of a play either at the rise of the curtain in a traditional proscenium production, or as we enter the theatre where there is no curtain”.

Consequently, it is a basic fact in theatre practice whether in the professional, amateur or educational theatre, that the role of a good set design, scenery or scenic background as it is called, has become inevitable. As much as the play is the *heart* of the theatre, it needs the technical elements of set, costume, lighting and sound design to *beat* properly. Thus, Raymond Sovey, cited by Edward Wright (1972:152), observes that "scenery aids to furnish the play production with a satisfactory locale in mood and spirit". W. Oren Parker and Harvey K. Smith (1979:22) in the same vein support this view where they opine that "Scene design creates a visual expression of the mood and the expression of the author's intent", thus reinforcing the theme and aiding the action of the play. According to Roderick Ham (2003:78),

The stage setting assists visual expression of the dramatic performance by providing a geography for the actor within the stage space, assisting the action contributing to the atmosphere of the play and clarifying the time and place of the scene. It also serves to screen other distractions from the audience.

Having given a brief insight into what set design, scenery or scenic design is all about, it is necessary to spell out the objectives of scenery in the theatre. Scenery, to Frank M. Whiting (1969:291), is "essentially the environment in which actors live and move." From this assertion, it has been established that scenery's major objective is to create a world for the actor to live in, and acting as a springboard in producing the theatre experience which the audience seek. In line with Frank Whiting, George Leyminier (1962:252) affirms that

the aim of stage scenery is not merely to confine to representation of specific places where well-defined actions take place, and to the establishment between place and action of a certain mutual and explanatory relationship; stage scenery must also provide the play with an outline which delineates it as a whole.

Scenery is not just a decorative element of the theatre; it plays an important supportive role in the theatre experience. Hence, Robert Edmond Jones asserts that

a setting is not just a beautiful thing... it is a presence, a mood, a warm wind fanning the drama to flame. It echoes, it says nothing but everything... (It is) an environment in which all noble emotions are possible (quoted by Aledare, R. Y. 1998:67).

In projecting the place and importance of scenery in the theatre, David Welker (1977:3) emphasizes that; "...of all technical elements in a production, the setting typically bulks largest. In fact, all of the purposes of the other production elements are also served by scenery, which reinforces them and provides a solid foundation for the total experience of the audience." David Welker goes further to state that "the scenery is the most visible element of a production, occupying a larger area of the stage picture than even the actors themselves." Edwin Wilson (1991:328), understanding the nature of scenery and its function in the theatre, tries to be explicit when he outlines the objective of set design as:

- a. creating an environment for the performers;
- b. helping to set the time and style of the production;
- c. helping to distinguish realistic from non-realistic theatre;
- d. establishing the locale and period in which the play takes place;
- e. developing a design concept; and, where appropriate,

- f. providing a central image or metaphor for the production.

Therefore, scenery is very important to today's theatre. For the live theatre to stand the stiff competition coming from the Nigerian movie industry, theatrical aesthetics needs to be improved upon. Olateju Wasee Kareem, in a documented interview with Sola Fosudo (2011:115), advised that: "...if we want to woo the audience back to the theatre, we must be ready to give them something magical, something spectacular, beyond the average that we see on our stages these days." Thus, the level of attainment of reality and spectacle in a play production is a determining factor for audience patronage. The theatre is a slice of life which ought to touch the life space of the audience. This can only be achieved if the technical theatre elements are given the desired attention they deserve. Theatrical productions, in this era of technological advancement, lean so much on modern theatre technology which affects basically set design, sound and lighting. Hence, for the objective of scenery to be achieved, the enabling environment and necessary tools need to be provided.

THE SCENE SHOP IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY THEATRES: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

The university theatre, as discussed above, is designed for the training of theatre arts practitioners. Hence, for technical theatre students to be taken through theory and practice for an all-round training in the art and craft of the theatre profession, the university theatres need to make available the necessary production areas or studios fully equipped with adequate tools to aid the teaching,

learning and practice process. These studios include the scene shop, lighting studio, costume and make-up studio, sound studio etc. They are usually located at the back stage or somewhere behind the main theatre structure for proximity to the stage. But, according to Roderick Ham (2003:150), "these spaces do not have to be part of the building complex or even on the site as the rest of the building, though there are obvious advantages when they are." In line with the subject of this paper, our main focus is on the scene shop facility and equipment in our university theatres. According to *Wikipedia*, the free online encyclopedia,

A scenery shop or scene shop is a specialized workshop found in many medium or large theatres, as well as many educational theatre settings... The primary function of a scene shop is to fabricate and assemble the flats, platforms, scenery wagons and other scenic (set) pieces required for a performance... The scene shop is also the location where most of the set painting is done, and is sometimes used to make props.

Roderick Ham (2003:150) emphasizes the importance of the scene shop when he states that "the first priority in the provision of production spaces must go to the workshop for building and painting scenery." Thus, the importance of the scene shop cannot be overemphasized. As a "specialized workshop", it has to be adequately equipped with up-to-date equipment for it to function in accordance with its design and objectives. Scenery making embraces diverse materials which include wood, fabric, metal, and plastics, for the construction of set pieces. Thus, scenery construction undergoes distinct stages towards realizing a good design. It begins with the reading of the script and conceptualization of the scenic design required by the production on paper, through drafts and sketches, before it is constructed, painted and then transferred on stage. The construction of set pieces with any material must undergo the process of:

- Measurement/markings
- Cutting
- Paring
- Impelling/driving and
- Painting

The steps above require a well-sized scene shop with the various equipment or tools needed to enable the teaching and practice of set design and construction to be carried out effectively, and with minimum discomfort. Scene shop tools are of two basic types: 'Hand' and 'Power' tools. Hand tools are handy and easily carried about as the need arises and designed for limited and special applications, whereas, power tools are bulky, sometimes permanently installed in the scenic shop, and designed to conserve energy and time in executing set construction works. These tools need to be available in their numbers to aid students' practice of the craft of set design and construction in a standard university theatre.

Three university theatres are used below as being representative of the prevailing trends in the Nigerian university theatre, through a practical survey and analysis of the scene shop facilities and equipment available for set design and construction in the select university theatres: the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre, the University of Port-Harcourt CRAB Theatre and Delta State University Theatre Arts Studio. The selection is based on the fact that they represent, respectively, the first, second and third generations, of Theatre Arts Departments established in Nigeria. The main areas explored are the scene shop, space facilities, and

the equipment or tools available for the teaching and learning process of the art and craft of set design and construction.

The University of Ibadan Arts Theatre

The University of Ibadan Arts Theatre is a two-storey structure that was opened in 1955 under the management of the English Department, until 1962 when the School of Drama was opened, with Geoffrey Axworthy as the founding Director. Behind the stage house is the scene dock, fairly big in size, which houses used flats and scenic pieces. There is a trap door on the floor of the scene dock that leads to the workshop, where all scenic pieces are initially constructed and then hauled up manually into the scene dock, from where they are mounted on stage for productions. The University of Ibadan Arts Theatre structure, was designed to make adequate provision for the spaces needed for the construction, mounting and storage of set pieces. The scene shop which is directly behind the scene dock at the bottom of the two-storey building structure is large enough for construction and painting jobs, at least for an educational theatre. The workshop was, at inception, equipped with five power machines used basically for woodwork, but they are no longer functioning. In an interview, Orisaremi (2004:76) provides further information as follows:

These are heavy-duty machines, but the truth is that they are no longer functioning, although they functioned for a very long time. I had the privilege of training with those machines then, but it goes with the general decadence in the country.

The Technical Theatre manager [Set Construction] Adebo Saheed Adeyemi confirmed this assertion during a tour of the facilities. The dilapidated machines include a stationary ban saw (floor design) used to cut irregular shapes, lathe machine for turning

operations, surface planer, used to plane wood surfaces to smoothness and a crosscut machine, used to cut woods across the surface. For now they are mere relics serving no purpose other than occupying needed space at the workshop. However, the workshop remains very functional. It is equipped with a sizeable work bench and the tools used there are basically hand tools which, most times, are not adequately available for students' use.

Although, the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre has a functional scene shop, the ventilation and lighting system is poor, the trap door that leads from the scene dock to the workshop is in a very bad state and is seldom used due to some structural problems that have been left unattended to for years. This compels the construction of sets on the stage or the scene dock since it is cumbersome to manually transport constructed sets from the workshop to the stage as the path meant for that is not functional. However, for a pioneer Department of Theatre Arts in Nigeria, that was, at a point in time, the most equipped theatre structure in the country, within or outside the university system. At present, the department has fallen short of its past glory in the aspect of scene shop equipment. The recent renovation and upgrade of facilities and equipment in the Arts Theatre, which took place in 2010, did not, regrettably, cater for equipment and tools for the scene shop. Instead, attention was focused on only lighting equipment as if that is the only area of technical theatre in need of overhaul in the Arts Theatre.

Our study tour through the University of Ibadan technical theatre workshop confirmed that the area of scenery needs to be improved upon tremendously. For instance, the power machines installed in the workshop are due for renovation or outright replacement, construction tools and materials are inadequate

compared to the number of student productions that occur weekly. This has put a lot of burden on Technical Theatre students interested in set design and construction, as they are made to either provide or improvise tools needed to accomplish their task, thus frustrating their interest and causing a decline in their output.

University of Port-Harcourt CRAB

The University of Port Harcourt Arts Theatre, commonly known as CRAB (Creative Review of Arts and Books), and given a crab-like physical structure, was established in 1982 under the headship of Ola Rotimi. The theatre structure houses a thrust stage, possibly in a bid to adopt a performance space that accommodates the typical African performances in which members of the audience are always participant-spectators. However, there was no scene shop constructed as part of the theatre design. Hence, practical aspects of scenery making are carried out either at the back foyer or on the Arts Theatre stage, depending on the weather condition of any given day and the availability of space inside the theatre itself. According to K. Njoku (2006:127),

when the combined factors of adverse weather conditions and ever-increasing student population brought tremendous pressure to bear on the use of the little available spaces in the CRAB Theatre, the Department, under the leadership of the pioneer head of department, Ola Rotimi, saw a need to erect a shade behind the Arts Theatre to serve both as workshop for set construction and space to sustain class activities.

From findings, the improvised workshop was initially constructed on woods, riverine native mats and sheets of cellophane. Under successive heads of department, the workshop has undergone several renovations to what it is today. The workshop is, at present, a zinc canopy standing over a half-raised wall, which also serves as a lecture theatre. Our inescapable

conclusion is that, structurally, the University of Port-Harcourt CRAB does not cater for set design and construction in the provision of the needed spaces like scene shop, scene dock, etc. This could be attributed to the fact that the structure was intended to be a temporary studio, which has now become permanent by default. According to Juliana Okoh (2005:406), "the CRAB, which was built in the early 1980s as a temporary studio for experimental programmes, has now become a permanent theatre space, even though all the equipment are dilapidated and the building itself is in need of renovation." Thus, the University of Port-Harcourt CRAB has no functional scene shop. What is available is a makeshift called a workshop with a part of it acting as the scene dock and lecture room. The said workshop is porous and prone to theft as well as adverse weather conditions because it is a mere zinc canopy open on all sides. Its small size and multipurpose nature act as a limitation to the type of set pieces that can be constructed in it.

It is not cheering that a department that is about 30 years old cannot boast of a permanent theatre structure that encompasses all the needed backstage space, to take adequate care of the needs of the crop of theatre scholars and ever-growing student population. The lack of a proper scene shop results in valuable set pieces, constructed by the students with their hard-earned money, lying carelessly about. This undesirable situation also implies that the discipline of set design and construction is treated with levity, and theatre productions are usually done with sparse set pieces. Consequently, the current situation does not encourage technical theatre practice in Set Design and Construction. In this era where theatre technology has gone beyond the ordinary, the CRAB

Theatre, Uniport, is still struggling with obsolete equipment and dilapidated structural facilities.

Delta State University Theatre Arts Studio (TAS)

Delta State University was founded in 1992 from the then Bendel State University, Abraka campus, following the creation of Edo and Delta States on August 27th, 1991. Theatre Arts was founded in the 1992/93 academic session as a unit under the Department of Performing Arts, the other unit being Music. Samuel Ukala who came on sabbatical from Edo State University Ekpoma (now known as Ambrose Ali University Ekpoma) was the pioneer Head of Theatre Arts Unit. In 2005, after the full accreditation of the Unit, it was separated from the Department of Performing Arts and attained the full autonomous status of the Department of Theatre Arts. The Delta State University Theatre Arts Studio is not a purpose-built theatre plant. What they have was formerly a multi-purpose hall now adapted as a theatre structure with a platform for a stage and an inadequate auditorium. In an interview, Martins Tugbokorowie, the lecturer in charge of Technical Theatre courses, said "they have been managing this structure right from the inception of the department". However, backstage spaces, including the scene shop, scene dock and others, are not available. The only space available is a back room toilet, converted to a store for props and set pieces.

As a result, practical aspects of Set Design and Construction are carried out either on the stage, the auditorium or outside the theatre building, depending on the weather conditions of any given day and the availability of space inside the theatre. With the unavailability of a workshop or store, the department cannot boast of adequate construction tools, not even the basic hand tools needed by technical students for the construction of set pieces. In a tone of despair, Martins Tugbokorowe submits that

it has not been very easy because the things we need to properly execute the technical phases in a production are not there, in terms of space, and facilities for set construction, and storage of set pieces.

From our on-the-spot investigation and observation at the Delta State University Theatre Arts Studio, its shortage of backstage spaces for Technical Theatre practices has dealt a serious blow on the training of Technical Theatre students. Flats and set pieces lie carelessly about the theatre because of lack of storage facilities, and this makes them vulnerable to destruction. They are not well handled by students and religious organizations that use the hall in the process of moving them from one place to another. According to Martins Tugbokorowie, "this has caused the over-stretching of budget for production because they have no stock of flats to fall back on. So, for every production they construct new flats and set pieces". Students interested in set design and construction are discouraged because the facilities are not there to practise with. Those who make the effort to get involved in practical theatre often find themselves commissioning paid carpenters outside to help construct set pieces for productions, which places great strain on the students' budgets and distorts the learning process. Those who want to delve into the endeavour of building their sets, go to the extent of obtaining tools for the work, which later get stolen because of lack of safe storage facility. The net effect is that students of this department are short-changed by being denied the necessary facilities that should at least aid the teaching and learning process in an essentially practical-oriented discipline. Hence, the authorities of this University need to put in more effort to make available adequate structural and technical facilities for

the training of the discipline of Technical Theatre and providing the right atmosphere for practical teaching and learning.

Recommendations

Arising from our field research, we hereby make the following recommendations:

1. The authorities of the various universities, where Theatre Arts is being studied, should as a matter of urgency provide a standard theatre plant with all backstage spaces adequately equipped to serve the needs of the staff and students, and other users.
2. A modern theatre scene shop with the necessary space requirements should be provided, along with the basic hand and power tools. This would enable the technical theatre student to have the space and variety of tools needed to translate his creative ingenuity to practice in accordance with the demands of a theatrical production. He thus becomes a master of his craft, with the practical knowledge of theatre aesthetics.
3. The University authorities, as the principal source of finance, should improve upon the funding of Theatre Arts Departments to enable frequent upgrade of facilities, tools and equipment to enhance the students' practical productions.

Conclusion

This study has exposed the painful reality facing most Nigerian University theatres, as far as the discipline of Technical Theatre is concerned. It is observed that the state of Scene Shop facilities and equipment needed for set design and construction in most Nigerian university theatres is deplorable, having undergone a gradual process of decay. This situation has consequently affected the

effective teaching and learning of technical theatre courses in the university theatres. As we all know, the theatre is dynamic; hence, it should not be allowed to remain stagnant or retrogressive. Theatre technology the world over is experiencing a time of rapid innovation and development and aspects of designs are becoming more scientific by the day with growing technological input. This input, unfortunately, is not being felt in the Nigerian university theatres. Instead, Theatre Arts Departments resort to regressive improvisational techniques which further downplay the significance of technical input in creating the theatre experience. The important role of stage scenery cannot be underestimated in the theatre. It will be a costly mistake for contemporary technical theatre practitioners-in-training to remain blind to new technological influences in the theatre as this will put them at a great disadvantage, among their counterparts in other parts of the world. Contemporary theatre practice, as we see today, is geared towards new and fresh approaches to artistic and aesthetic delivery through the employment of modern tools, facilities and equipment that can aid the realization of designs capable of creating the theatre experience that makes it uniquely satisfying.

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