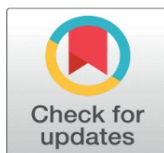
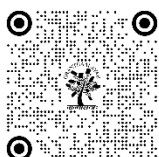


AN ACTION RESEARCH ON MANAGING AND DIRECTING DRAMA IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND BLENDING THE POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

This paper focusses on the difficulties in the production of a live drama in an educational institution from auditioning the actors to seamless performance on stage. The actors were chosen from students of literature doing their undergraduate and postgraduate studies. A postcolonial drama, *The Lion and The Jewel* by Wole Soyinka was chosen and the drama was staged. The researcher has been the director of the drama and a field study has been studied on the process of creating a successful drama. It involves stage management, producing the play, directing, acting, light design, set design and costume design. Stage management is one of the crucial factors in a drama which needs to be taken care of from the practice sessions to the show time. The outcome of the show relies entirely on the management of the stage. In this study Yoruba's drama is taken and replicating them was a tougher one which includes costume, realistic stage setting, lighting, sound setting and their dances. The drama is also chosen to highlight the sufferings of women in African society and how they are victimized. All these aspects are previously designed and experimented practically to find out the shortcomings in staging a live drama in an educational institution. Questionnaires are also designed and circulated among the actors for further study.

Keywords: Post-Colonial Feminism, Male Patriarchy, Women's Suppression, Drama, Visual Arts, Directing, Stage Management

1. INTRODUCTION

The research is carried to find out the difficulties in directing and managing the stage in educational institutions. Unlike the regular theatre practitioners whose job is to act, this involves students who are involved in academics and theatre arts. Creating a live drama and training theater arts among students is tough and challenging. They are involved in theater arts while they concentrate on their academics. Running the two wheels poses great challenges to the coordinator of the drama troop. An action research study is carried out by choosing a drama and training students of a sample population. The difficulties are met, planned, and

reflected. It is further studied, and a revised plan is drafted and carried out. The drama was chosen by the researcher to reflect the postcolonial feminism that existed in Africa. Women are focused more on the drama. Along with the action research of managing and directing the drama, the feminist theme is also projected by choosing the drama. [Action Research \(n.d.\)](#)

2. ACTION RESEARCH

Action research is a study that helps to find out the realistic difficulties and challenges of a project. A statement of the problem is made, and methodology is adopted to solve the crisis. This is later revised, and a second plan is made and observed. It is a learning method by performing. It comes under performative inquiry. It involves many stages with repetitive planning, acting, observing, drawing errors, and rectifying them again. Action research projects are very common in educational institutions. New methodologies in classroom teaching are framed and administered for further research. They are mostly driven to statement of problem and finding solutions for them. It draws interpretations from participants. They are involved in the action and are also drawn for reflections for further changes in the study. It involves first determining the sample population, collecting information, and assembling them. The sample group is assembled and are instructed about their role. It is important to make them realize their crucial role of participation. They are taken under process and the results evaluated further to draw conclusions. Action research has been phenomenally successful in classroom studies to adopt various modern techniques. This is carried out in a drama team in this study to draw inferences on challenges in creating a live drama in educational institutions.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Objective based education is the need of modern-day education. It is centered around students and their learning. Outcomes of the learning are stated, and students are driven to activities based on the objective. It is primarily an outcome-based learning. Drama is one such rostrum which gives students opportunities to learn all life skills necessary to face the outer world. They not only learn to act and communicate but also become skilled in ample life skills like leadership, teamwork, conflict resolutions, crisis management, initiations, adaptability, negotiation, listening and flexibility. All these skills are highly essential to tackle circumstances in career. This learning is made easy through training them in drama. Education is made effortless where students do not restrict themselves to chairs but are involved in ground performance. This being the important platform of study has many challenges from involving the students to a flawless performance. This study frames them by carrying out action research. [Action Research \(n.d.\)](#)

4. CHOSEN DRAMA

The researcher chooses a post-colonial drama, *The Lion and The Jewel* by Wole Soyinka. The play is set in a village called Illujunle. Sidi, the most beautiful girl in the village is symbolized as the jewel and the traditional king, Baroka and a renegade, Lakunle fights for the jewel. The drama is taken for the study. It is divided into morning, afternoon, and night scenes rather than acts by the author. The plot takes place in a single day and the story is divided into three scenes. It is a lively and vibrant story which looks sumptuous on the stage. it involves six major characters; however, a number of minor characters are involved as villagers. [Gandhi \(1998\)](#)

5. PROJECTION OF MALE PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY IN THE DRAMA

In this play, the women characters are used merely as a commodity. Sidi, the most beautiful girl in the village is treated like a jewel where men forfeit for her. She is treated as a possession. Sadiku, the head wife has seen two husbands in her life which she detests, and it is against her wish. Both the characters are victimized by the king, and this has been the tradition for years. The women are deceived with Baroka's plot. Baroka takes about 62 wives, and his main job is to deceive every woman in the village and to make them his wife. When the women come to know of his impotency they celebrate together. This scene is emphasized more with lively celebrations of Sadiku and Sidi. However, they fall as prey to this plot, and they fall back to the patriarchal norms. The drama is chosen by the researcher to make the audience aware of the male-controlled society after colonialism. [Jacobus \(1993\)](#)

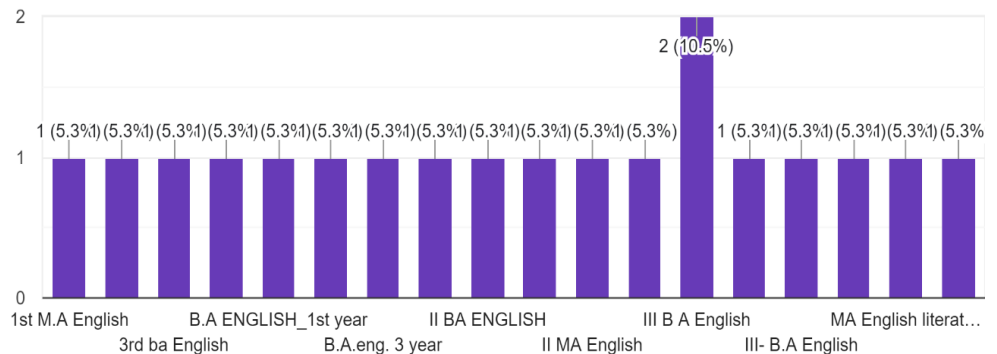
6. LOCALE OF THE STUDY

The study was carried out at the Department of English at National College in Trichy, Tamil Nadu, India. The selected sample population live in and around the district. They are all Indians who are going to be trained to act as Africans in the drama. The culture and traditions vary immensely when compared to the roles they are subjected in acting. Participants were chosen not limiting to language barriers. It includes a troop of other state students in it. [Smith \(1996, 2001, 2007, 2017\)](#)

7. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The selected sample population at first act is twenty. They are students of literature varying in their year of program. It involved students from both undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Most of them were better communicators at first step, volunteers were collected from each class and later were auditioned. Acting skills, dialogue delivery, memorizing caliber were taken into consideration while auditioning. Some were auditioned for dance and were chosen as villagers. While selecting for main characters their physical features were also taken into consideration and were selected. They were all fresh actors who did not have experience earlier except one or two.

Class
19 responses



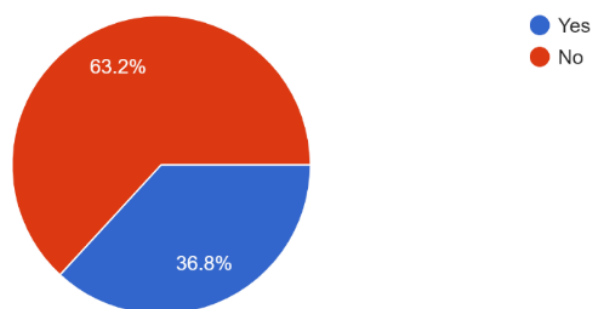
8. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 1

1) Costume Design

Costume design should start right from the beginning of the practice. It is important to match the style of dresses with the characters as described by the author. This drama follows Yoruba culture, and it is highly essential to reflect the same culture. The sample population are Indians which vary drastically from Yorubas. The actors were divided into major and minor characters for costume designing. The main characters Sidi, Lakunle, Baroka were concentrated more to bring Yoruba culture on stage. The minor characters or villagers were given a uniform dress.

Were the costumes matched with the Yoruba culture?

19 responses

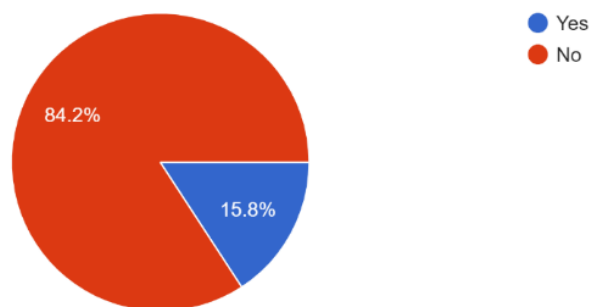


2) Light Design

Lighting is the substantial in theater arts. It requires meticulous work to light the theater from stage lighting to audience light. A general lighting of changing colors was established and it did not help to distinguish the scenes.

Did the lighting reflect scene change and its scenario?

19 responses

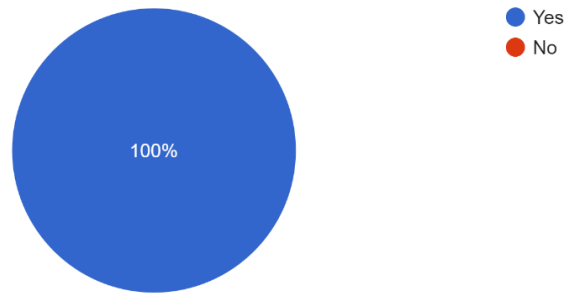


3) Microphones

Training students to handle microphones also counts for the success apart from regular rehearsals. About five collar microphones and three hand microphones were distributed. Main characters were given collar mics which made them move easily to produce their planned body language.

Were you given audio rehearsal a day prior to the show?

19 responses



4) Makeup

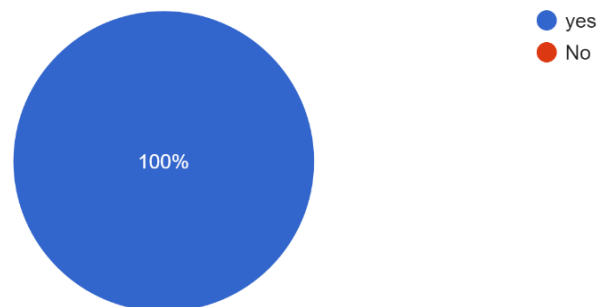
Bringing an African look to the Indians was the Herculean tasks. Their head was covered completely with turbans. Both boys and girls were made to look like Africans.

5) Sound design

Since it was an African drama, music is inevitable and a special team had to be installed. Keyboard and drums were prominently used and were trained to play African music and beats.

Were background music played for dialogues?

19 responses

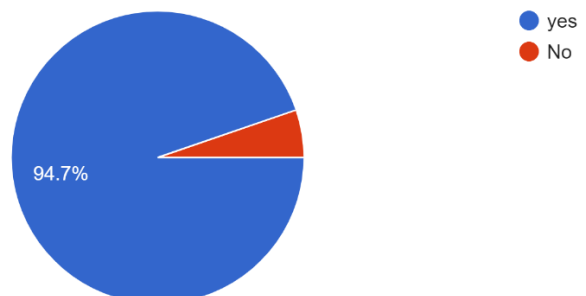


6) Properties

Stage properties like pail, axes, maps, Baroka's statue were necessary to be made. The props used were perfect and it did not require any further alterations.

Were the props used relevant to the play?

19 responses

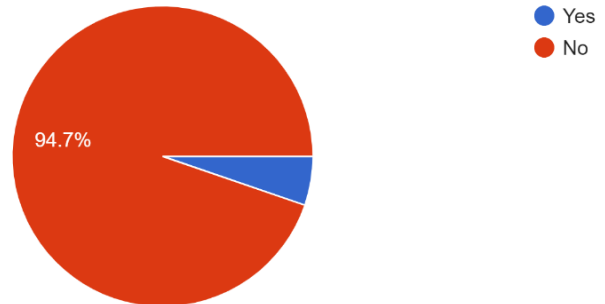


7) Scenic Art

Scenic art refers to the stage background. A stage should never be left empty, and it has to be filled. In this drama, about three stage setting were required. A school scene, a forest scene and a king’s bedroom scene were need to be installed. Scenic backgrounds were not installed in the stage and the drama proceeded with only props.

Were the scenic background installed in first performance?

19 responses



8) Change of Scenery

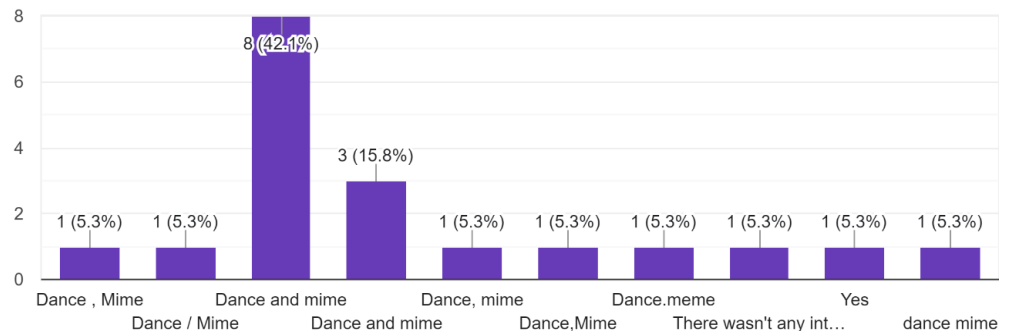
A drama involves shifting of background between scenes. In the morning scene, a forest setting must be installed, followed by a bedroom setup in the afternoon and night scene. No scenic background was installed.

9) Interludes

Interludes are short dramatic entertainments staged in between the main plots when the script seems dull and dragging. This can be filled with interludes to bring the audience back into the drama atmosphere. Interludes were planned earlier in entertaining the audience with vibrant African dances in every scene shift.

What were the interludes included in first performance?

19 responses

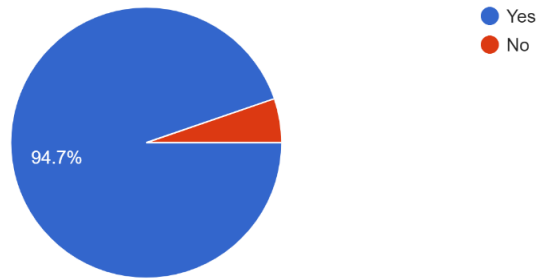


10) Venue preparations

It is important for actors to be taken to the venue a day prior to the show for them to know the dimensions of the stage. They were taken to the stage for rehearsals.

Was the team taken to the venue a day prior to the performance?

19 responses

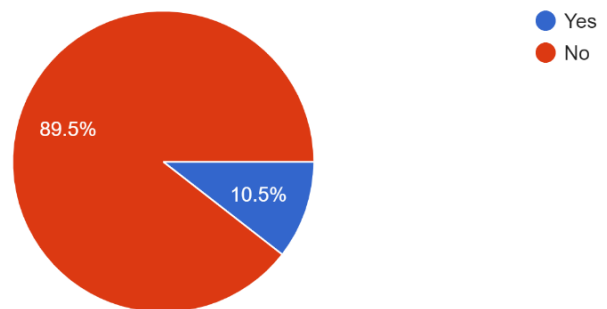


11) Understudy

Understudy is a substitute character who is trained to be ready in case of the absence of the actor. It is important to have many rehearsals for the understudy. No understudy was trained in case of any absence.

Were understudies assigned for all the roles?

19 responses

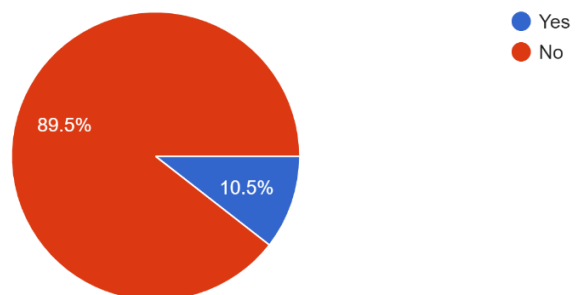


12) Scene Breakdown

When the plot seems to be dull or dragging or when the script is too elaborate, the director must work with the playwright in breaking the scenes in the script. The original script of Wole Soyinka was first planned. The morning scene was not altered. The noon and night script were altered.

Was there a scene breakdown in the script of first performance?

19 responses

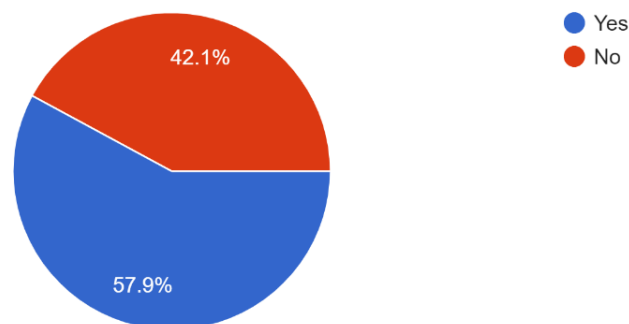


13) Play atmosphere

Play atmosphere refers to the envisioned atmosphere created by the author in the text. In this play, an African atmosphere has to be reflected and it is achieved by the music, scenery, costumes and dance.

Was the African atmosphere successfully created on stage?

19 responses

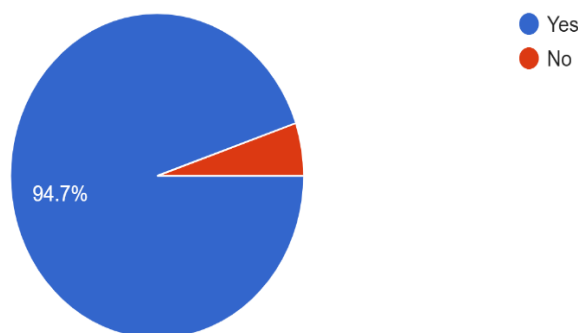


14) Dress rehearsals

Rehearsals are imperative when the script is taken in contemplation. However, rehearsing the costumes is a requisite and it must be done a week before the drama. They are to be collected and stored in a commonplace prior to the drama to avoid last minute apprehensions.

Were the dress rehearsal conducted and were the costumes collected earlier?

19 responses



15) Performance 1

The team was assigned their roles and they were trained for about one hour everyday followed by practice sessions. It was a learning for them every day and the team was ready for the first performance. The stage was set, and they had finished their script and dress rehearsal. The first performance was done at Krishnamoorthy Auditorium in National College. Audience were invited from the Department of English and their feedbacks and inferences were collected from the performance. The actors were given questionnaires later to collect suggestions and to infer areas of improvements.

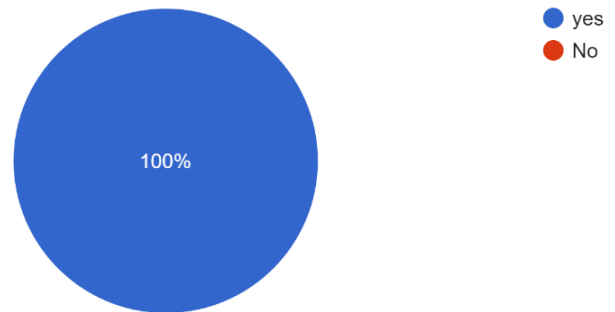
9. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 2

1) Costume Design

To make it more accurate the villagers and minor characters were not given a uniform dress, but they were dressed distinctively like those of Yoruba people.

Was the improved costume close to Yoruba culture?

17 responses

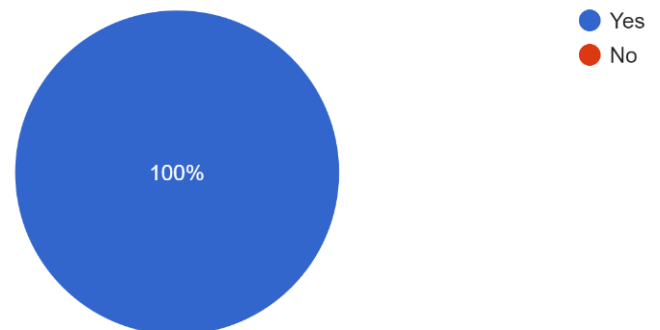


2) Light Design

Light was used to reflect the scene and mood of the plot to audience. For instance, a bright golden light was used for morning scene, red for afternoon and blue for night scene.

Did the lighting reflect scene change and its scenario?

17 responses



3) Microphones

In first act, the characters were found having not aligned their microphones properly which made their breath sounds audible. This was rectified by giving audio rehearsals earlier.

4) Makeup

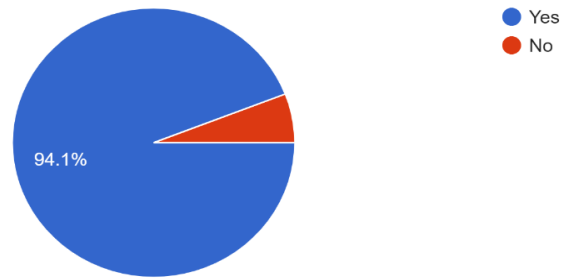
The actors acted without any face makeup in second act. Earlier they were raised to African tone which was avoided.

5) Scenic Art

In the context of occupying the stage completely, a forest background and bedroom background were installed. Big trees and stumps were made for forest scene. For bedroom scene, an African hut banner was erected at the back with bedroom props.

Were the scenic background installed in second performance?

17 responses



6) Change of Scenery

The scenery backgrounds were installed and removed with curtains.

7) Interludes

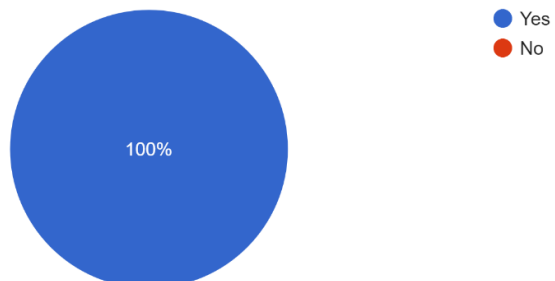
More importance to interludes was given to keep the audience amused. This time a trained student who knows magic tricks was given the narration role. He narrated the scenes with magic tricks enhancing the theme of the play, deception.

8) Understudy

Understudies for every main character were substituted and made to have rehearsals.

Were understudies assigned for all the roles?

17 responses

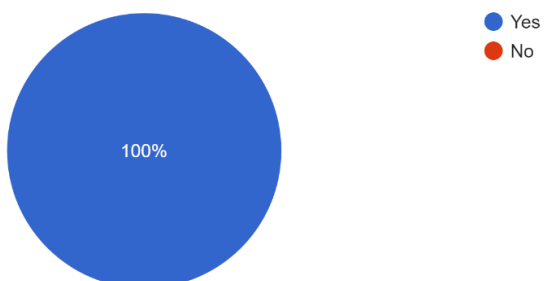


9) Scene Breakdown

The morning scene was found to be exceptionally long which was later subjected to scene break.

Was there a scene breakdown in the script of second performance?

17 responses

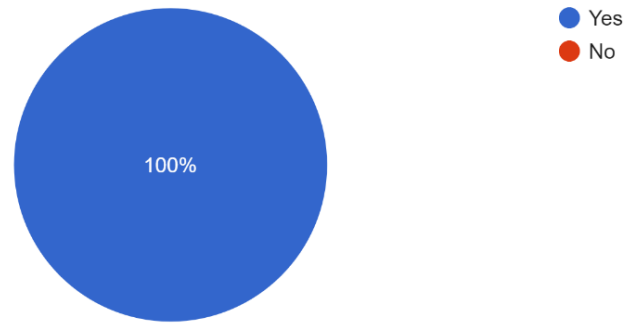


10) Table read

A table read is a method where the actors are made to sit in a round table and the script had to be read in order by the actors. Each of them will read their dialogues. This gives an idea for the entire team to know about others role in drama. This might avoid confusions in sequence of the play.

Did the team sit for a table read before the second performance?

17 responses



11) Performance 2

Following the first performance, the problems were deducted and narrowed down. The plans were revised to improve the quality of drama. Many changes were brought in the second performance and it was later staged to reduce the complexities in managing the stage and directing the team. The team was now ready for the second performance.

10. LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Though all the aspects of drama were planned and rehearsed twice, they were certain limitations and challenges. However, the drama was made entertaining with interludes of drama and magic, the storyline did not reach some audience. This can be solved probably by altering dialogues and not pertaining to the original script. The costumes suffered or lacked originality as the actors were not much comfortable with the original Yoruba people's costume. For instance, Sidi's shoulders need to be uncovered which was not comfortable for the student. It was matched with a black t-shirt making it seem like uncovered. Most of the limitations were present because of the cultural barriers that existed between African and Indian culture. It was quite difficult to bring the African vernacular English. Though English is the Lingua Franca, they are spoken across globe with their mother tongue influence. Africans have a peculiar way of speaking English which was trained to the students but only one among them were able to acquire it. Also emphasizing much on the African tone would confuse the Indian audience making it more complex. Since the chosen sample population were students, after a year, the last year PG and UG students would leave the college after the studies. It is always necessary to have understudy from first year students who would be available for the next three and they must be trained.

Technology plays a crucial role in modern theatres these days and it is important for the directors and actors to be technically sound to manage the stage. There must be ample rehearsals and preshow issues must be solved to avoid obvious flaws on the day of the show. The director's role is the most herculean task

which involves managing the stage to designing costume, set, light and dance sways. The drama was successful in creating the frames of suppression of women under patriarchy and colonialism. The coordinator must have the managerial expertise to bring in stage props at the right time between scene changes and it also involves communicating to the light controller, sound system controller, and actors at both rehearsals and during show time.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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