

## LIGHTING DESIGN AND APPLICATION IN AKSU PINNACLE THEATRE: A STUDY OF EKAETTE BRIAN-DIRECTED OLA ROTIMI'S *OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN*

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### Abstract

*This critical work aims at unraveling lighting as a multi-dimensional design element which has fundamental importance for a sustained effect and for creating beauty in stage performances. Using Ekaette Brian-Directed production of Ola Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again, the study draws on Stanley McCandless' lighting theory as the theoretical framework and relies on qualitative research design. It employs both primary and secondary sources of data collection in which empirical observations, experimentations, description of situations in the play and participations constitute the primary sources, while secondary sources were drawn from related texts and critical resources to support the discourse. At the end of this research, the management of Akwa Ibom State University (AKSU), Technical Theatre Practitioners (TTPs) and Scholars, as well as students will be the direct beneficiaries of the ideas generated in this research. It was found out that lighting design remains an inseparable component of technical theatre and should be properly managed and handled within and outside the institution of higher learning in Nigeria. The study concludes that, without proper lighting design, theatre patrons and the general audience would be left in the dark, without comprehending the message of the performance. The research thus recommends that AKSU should purchase and install more technologically advanced digital lighting fixtures in the theatre so as to enhance the effects of lighting in the theatre arena towards attaining the innovativeness in, and the goals of performance in line with contemporary digital world order.*

**Keywords: Lighting Design, Application, AKSU Pinnacle Theatre, Technical Practitioners.**

### Introduction

Lighting, as an essential part of dramatic expression theatre arts require a closer study and scholarly explication. Lighting design is an important part of any performance, whether it is a play or a concert. Lighting designers are responsible for creating the mood and atmosphere that members of the audience experience when they enter the theatre or concert hall for any form of performance. Lighting designers use many different types of lighting fixtures to achieve their goals, such as accent lighting, backlight, and scene lighting. It is also seen that visual designs in the theatre are important aspects of theatrical production because, as Okon Udofot Jacob asserts, "In Theatre Arts practice in particular and indeed Performing Arts in general, the concept of design is held as being very crucial to the profession." This assertion buttresses Jean Rosenthal and Lael Wertebaker's opinion that, "The use of light for anything must remain primarily social and logical. This is because the design feature of lighting is of necessity which goes all the way back to the human demand and need for visibility in order to see in the dark" (17). Furthermore, Nobert Green states thus:

Stage lighting is an art of using artificial light (now mostly electric light) to illuminate the stage (even screen set) in order to showcase actors in their dramatic world, to punctuate their moods and emotions, to fire their imagination and that of the audience as well as lay bare, the actors' field of thought. (149)

This involves deciding which lights to use, where to place them in the theatre, which colour gels and which effects to use in a theatrical production, as well as the practical knowledge of how to rig the lights and cue the show. Lighting design is a growing phase and a sophisticated learning which requires copious knowledge in order to meet up with the emerging trends, and aims at maximising what Afiah, Amaku and Udoinwang refer to as "creative technicality" (12) in theatre performance. The primary concern of this study is to discuss the important role lighting design plays in a theatrical production. This is the reason why the strategies in the staging of Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* by Ekaette Brian and her suggests regarding better ways to improve the application of lighting design in the Akwa Ibom State University Pinnacle Theatre becomes very instructive, educative and worthy of research attention.

### **Developments and Innovations in the art of Lighting Design in the Theatre**

According to Jean Rosenthal and Lael Wertenbaker, "man first acknowledged the existence of his soul by worshipping his sources of light, the sun and the moon. With this discovery of ability he could control fire; and with this man began to master his environment and with firelight the history of lighting design or artificial illumination began" (82). In corroboration with the above assertion, Jacob avers that, "Literature from inception has remained a predominant means of eliciting exhilarations and the sublime appreciation of man's inner sensation towards nature and the world around him, just as it has been a means of expression of inner thoughts and feelings". (123).

Early man left evidence that he could light the darkness of his caves and paint on their walls what he saw outside of them. Prehistoric ritual, tale-telling, comic recital, the forerunners of legend, of abstracting what he learned, of tragedy, in which man envisioned his own death, of entertainment at his own expense must have acquired aspects of mystery and theatrically when the flickering lights of fires and torches revealed the moving shadows of priest or performer. In this perspective, Jacob explains that, "African playwrights have found the need to bring... stories to bear on their artistry" (23).

Richard Pilbrow, a notable lighting designer and writer on Lighting Design states that "Lighting Design did not begin with electricity and had in fact been around for hundreds of years before the introduction of electricity. From the beginning of time, man has always had a special attachment to fire as his source of illumination." (114). To justify this notion, according to Jean Rosenthal and Lael Wertenbaker, "Primitive man started to worship the firelight which was his source of light. At night, he told stories of his daytime exploits, sitting near a burning fire, with his source of light and worship casting shadows on his enactments; and so, began the history of illumination" (72).

Light predates the existence of man. The earliest application of light and its etymology surfaced in the account of creation of the world in the Bible. It was clear that in the absence of

light God did not create anything when he saw that the whole place was engulfed in total darkness. Then God declared that there should be light and so there was light (Gen.1:1). It was that illumination that contributed to the creation of other things. This became the origin of natural light which was created for the purpose of illumination. The historical antecedent of theatrical lighting cannot be discussed without tracing it to the origin of drama. Drama started from the ancient Greeks, in their city of Athens where dithyrambs were sung in honor of their God of wine and fertility; Dionysus. The different periods will be examined briefly to underscore the historical evolution of theatrical lighting from the ancient Greek to the twentieth century.

According to Michael Gillert, "...consequently, what is known as lighting in the theatre, motion and still picture industry is a result of many decades of growth and development of electromagnetic spectrum spearheaded by scientists across the globe" (256). It is a form of energy that is conveyed in an empty space at high velocity. Historically, in the western theatre, lighting as an invention of modernity came into existence in the renaissance era when candles were used to lit interior performances. This was a developmental stride in the history of theatre because classical tradition embraced staging of performances in the broad daylight.

Gordon Craig, a respectable lighting designer and theatre director states that "most lighting designers should do away with the traditional footlights but rather light the stage from above, placing the lights in the ceiling of the theatre" (9). From this notion Craig, saw that most lighting designers using the traditional footlights did not give the aesthetic beauty in the production but just to light the stage. He rather suggested that lights should be placed above the actors so that when the different colours of light combine, the aesthetic quality of the production will be revealed. Robert Wilson on the other hand demonstrated lighting design as part of the new theatre language to innovate the modern theatre. Wilson further posits that "lighting can be a connector of separate elements" (17). This is so because lighting design functions as a connector and also integrates separate elements, such as the body and props, into the stage picture during the course of the performance.

### **Origin of Stage Lighting in Nigeria**

The emergence of Hubert Ogunde, the Doyen of Nigerian Modern theatre, in the 1940s brought about a recognisable face-lift in the staging tradition in Nigeria. In this perspective, Okon Udofot Jacob expound that, "Performing Arts practice in Nigeria can be traced down to the traditional performative activities inherent in the culture of virtually every community, because most societies in Africa have story-telling traditions with some accompaniment of songs and music." (88). After his initial effort at acquiring modern lighting equipment, he later incorporated aesthetic elements of lighting into his performances of drama-dance especially his operatic movement. To this effect, Clark reports that Hubert Ogunde "made use of such modern theatre equipment as lighting, scenery, and later sound amplification" (4).

William Dexter Lyndersay is another important figure in the history of Nigerian theatre who made remarkable and significant efforts at standardising the art of stage lighting in Nigerian modern performances. According to Okon Udofot Jacob, "Kingsley Wiliam Dexter Lyndersay was in stage management, lighting and scenography before he came to Nigeria to practice his chosen career" (25). He was a technical director that saw to the birth of the profession in the earlier higher institutions in Nigeria. Oni states of him as thus: "...an expert in technical

theatre, Lyndersay provided stage lighting, stage set and technician directions at the University of Ibadan (1966- 1983), Ahmadu Bello University (1972-1974), University of Calabar (1976-1983) and the then Cross River State University in Uyo (1983- 1985)". His approach to lighting was not only for visibility of actors in the theatre, but for total artistic and aesthetic effect, this was visible in the way he utilised lighting effects, which included the use of strobe lights, water waves and colour wheels. Apart from him, other prominent personalities who have contributed to the development of lighting design on both stage and screen over the years in Nigeria include Olateju Wasee Kareem, Sunnie Ododo, Molinta Enendu, Abiodun Abe among others. Duro Oni is also known as one of the best and experts in stage lighting design in Nigeria. He operated by viewing an actor as being separated from his background by three-dimensional lighting of key lighting, fill lighting and back lighting. The above represent the brief history of stage lighting in Nigeria.

### **Synopsis of the Play**

**In discussing lighting design application and effects in *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*, it is imperative to discuss the synopsis of the play first as presented below:**

Major Rahman Taslim Lejoka-Brown is a retired army officer who leaves his successful cocoa business to join partisan politics. He does not do this because he loves to serve the people but because of what he is going to gain: money and fame. While serving in the Congo, Lejoka-Brown had been married to his eldest brother's wife, Mama Rashida by his father without his consent. This happened two days before his marriage to Liza, an American Catholic nurse. As Liza goes to the USA to study Medicine, Lejoka-Brown leaves for Nigeria to join partisan politics. In order to win more votes, especially from the women, Lejoka-Brown has to marry Sikira, the daughter of the President of the market women union. After the election, Liza returns to discover that she is not the only woman in the life of Lejoka-Brown. As would be expected from a typical Western Catholic woman who cannot tolerate polygamy, she begins to foment trouble. This later leads to comical cultural conflicts. The conflicts later take a different dramatic turn as Liza begins to give Sikira provoking ideas about what she calls 'women's lib' or women liberation. The rather too many conflicts of the play finally come to a resolution as Sikira finally joins politics after much persuasion by Liza, and Mama Rashida leaves Lagos to seek better conditions in the villages. This resolution comes as a result of Liza's tact in handling the women. Lejoka-Brown on the other hand is booted out of the National Liberation Party because of high-handedness and he regrets leaving his lucrative cocoa business to join politics.

### **Light Application and Effects in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* with Visual Representations**

Ekaette Brian's lighting strategy in the stage of the play in Pinnacle Theatre has remained a memorable experience to theatre audience and students who watched the play in the moments of productions. Lighting Application and its effects in any theatrical performance take place within a specified area. Buttressing this assertion, Jacob again posits that, "Every Theatrical performance takes place within a given space otherwise known as the acting area" (148). In describing the importance and significant place of lighting in any theatrical production, Gillets says that;

Any dramatic production, unless it is performed outdoors in the daytime, needs some kind of artificial light. Obviously, there is something more to stage lighting than simply bathing the stage with light. Effective stage lighting not

only lets the spectators see the action of the stage but also ties together all the visual elements of the production and helps create an appropriate mood and atmosphere that heightens the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the play. (288)

This statement goes a long way to show the effectiveness, importance, role and efficacy of lighting, just like the other design elements in the collaborative success of any play production. No matter the skills an actor can have or portray in any production, if there is no lighting to show his presence to the audience, he has failed and no communication can occur. It is therefore pertinent to critically evaluate the place of lighting in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* as a case study in order to justify its selection in discussing Lighting design and its application on contemporary stage performances.

The production opens with a match past, and Brian - the lighting designer uses the Fresnel and the Ellipsoidal light. The Ellipsoidal light comes in during the match past scene as the lighting designer uses that to achieve the function of selective visibility. The lighting designer has the key lighting source is coming from above Lejoka Brown and Okonkwo and this is achieved with the use of Fresnel light. The light designer knows that Fresnel and the LED light are used for different purposes. The designer now combines the radiation of the two lights to get his lighting design for this scene. This scene would have been better with a follow-up spotlight but due to the absence of that equipment. For obvious reason, Brian, the light designer now applies the lighting source of the Fresnel and the LED light. This brightens the picture in the view of the audience just like as stated in our theoretical framework concerning lighting the acting area, as propounded by Stanley McCandless.

The light designer lets the audience feel the mood and the time the action took place in the production as he uses the LED lights and also adds a little of the Fresnel light. The LED light is really significant because it shows that there is trouble and that the time the action took was in the evening. The lighting designer focuses the light on the Down Stage Left (DSL), and so the light designer combines the two lights; he is able to achieve the time that event or action took place and also letting the audience feel what Alhaji Mustapha feels at that moment.

The lighting designer uses the Fresnel to give a general illumination of the scene so as to let the members of the audience see very well and also know that the scene is taking place in the day time, and through this there is little or no shadow of the characters on stage. The Fresnel light is hung at the Stage Left (SL) and Stage Right (SR) which really give the illumination on the actors and the stage.

Illumination is another key function of lighting in the theatre and the right lights are in this instance used to achieve this in the production. As aptly captured in McCandless' lighting theory, general illumination is also known as lighting the acting area. In the situation under study, there was little or no shadow in the production, which is very commendable. Illumination in this scene was intensely used, the light was used to depict the time of the day which happened to be a day time meeting and it also reflected serenity and calmness. With the aforementioned lighting effects, the Director found it wise to ensure that light in scene two was able to communicate mood and timing.

In the above picture, the lighting designer used the Fresnel to achieve the illumination as appropriate but the lighting designer ensured that the light focused more on Mama Rashida and Major Lejoka Brown. The light designer also applied McCandless' theoretical prescription for blending and toning where he blended the Fresnel light with the LED and that gave a better toning to the actors on stage as well as focused the major part of the illumination on the actors on stage so as to let the audience get more visibility of them. It is seen in this scene that the lighting designer makes sure she blends the illumination with the actors on stage.

### **Lighting Instruments used in Ekaette Brian-Directed *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again***

Lighting is one of the most important aspects of a theatre production, before a theatre performance can be aesthetically pleasing. The analysis so far shows that there are different lighting equipment (instrument) needed to be harnessed and applied to light the performance. This requirement serves to enable different special lighting effects to be enhanced on stage. (Parker & Craig et.al 2009) submits that: "When the designer has a visual image of what is desired, the next step is to determine which type of lighting instrument is most capable of producing that specific quality of light" (360). There are many lighting instruments available to the lighting designer in the design of appropriate lighting for different production types and for use as scenic elements. In this direction, the instruments are explained below, in the varieties of the two lighting instruments explained above:

**i. The Ellipsoidal Reflector Spotlight (ERS):** The Ellipsoidal Reflector Spotlight is a fixture with an elliptical-shaped reflector to gather and direct light from a single-point source. The light is directed through a tube with one or more lenses. It provides a sharp circular beam of light. ERS are equipped with four internal shutters that allow the user to control the beam of light by shuttering off walls, scenery, etc. ERS are most commonly used for projecting medium to long distances. Wattage is typically 575 watts, but can range from 375 watts to 1000 watts. Ellipsoidal: Strand SL because they have a lens, the ERS is also used to project patterns and images, called "gobos." Gobos may be stainless steel or glass. Hundreds of standard images and patterns are available, as well as custom patterns made to order. ERS instruments are the most varied and utilised type of stage lighting instrument. ERS may also be referred to as Profile Spotlights (especially in Europe) because the beam can be shaped to the profile of an object. Ellipsoidal reflectors are used for their strong, well-defined light and their versatility. The lamps are loaded from the rear (in most cases), and either mounted axially, or radially with the base either up or down (the orientation is important when mounting the instrument as using the light upside down will shorten lamp life) at a 45-degree angle or sometimes at a 90-degree angle. The filament of the lamp is at one focal point of the ellipsoidal reflector and the gate with the shutters and gobo are at the other focal point. The ellipsoidal shaped reflector, in combination with lenses sized from 2" to 8", establish the various focal lengths. The fixture incorporates the use of shutters that can shape the beam of light. Ellipsoidal also uses other accessories such as an iris to shape the light, or a pattern or "Gobo" for projection. This fixture is the primary tool of the designer, and are most often used Ellipsoidal Reflector Spotlights is seen to have important function theatrical performance as it can be used to give special and general illumination on stage performances. Gel can be placed on it les to generate special effect. This lighting instrument was used in the production as the fill lighting instrument as it acted in to kill the shadows of the actors on stage when the production was on. The Ellipsoidal Reflector Spotlights were used to reveal Lejoka Brown and

Okonkwo on set before the other lighting instruments came on to reveal the remaining parts of the house that also revealed Sikira.

**ii. Fresnel Spotlights:** Fresnel is named for the man who invented the shape of the lens, which was originally used in lighthouses. (Parker & Craig et al, 2009:374) "The inventor of its unique lens is Augustine Jean Fresnel (1788-1827)". The Fresnel has a small parabolic reflector to direct light out of the front of the fixture and through the Fresnel lens. Like the ERS, the Fresnel produces a circular beam of light, but it is soft and not as easily controlled. Only the size of the pool of light can be adjusted on the Fresnel. A Fresnel is described in "spot" focus if the pool is zoomed to a small diameter. The Fresnel is in "flood" focus if the pool of light is zoomed out to a larger diameter. Fresnel are typically used for short to medium throw distances. Typical wattages range from 500 watts to 2000 watts, however, 5,000 to 10,000 watts is not unusual for film/video production in large studio spaces. By adding a "barn door" accessory to the front of the fixture, you can block light off of scenery and walls.

Fresnel spots can be focused to have a narrow or wide beam by an adjusting knob usually located at the back of the instrument. Because of the soft edges produced by Fresnel they are often used as "fill" or "back" lights. Fresnel spotlight has its operational features.

The most common Fresnel is the 6-inches which use 500-to-1,000-watt incandescent lamps. Short to medium throw distance for larger stages and longer throw distances, the 8-inch Fresnel is recommended. It takes up to 2,000-watt incandescent lamp and delivers a powerful beam with the typical smooth Fresnel pattern. The Fresnel spotlight is also available in 10 to 20 inch in diameter and lamp of 5,000 or even 10,000 watts. Apparently, four kinds of Fresnel spotlight have been explained in the above assertion, nothing that the 3-inch and 6-inch Fresnel spotlights are available for short and medium throw of light beam on stage while the other two which are 8-inch and 10-20 inches are available for long throw distance of light beam. The Fresnel spotlights mainly acted as the key lighting in the production "*Our husband has gone mad again*". The Fresnel lights also were used to set the mood and also tell the time of which the action was taking place. It was used as the key lighting as it usually revealed the actors on stage and also as the fill lighting because it was used kill or blend in the shadows of the actors on stage as to achieve a good aesthetic picture.

**iii. Dimmers:** Oni submits that, "in the theatre, a dimmer is regarded as the lighting designer's paintbrush that he uses to alter the state of lighting of a scene in a subtle manner rather than the switching on and off of lighting instruments(76)." Giving the definition of dimmer, (Reid 1992, Parker and Wolf 1996, and Lawal 2010) dimmer is a device, or an apparatus used for the controlling the amount and intensity of electricity in the theatre. Similarly, Gillette explains that:

A dimmer is a device used to vary the average voltage applied to an instrument's lamp. The brightness of a lamp is proportional to its electric current, which in turn is proportional to the applied lamp voltage". When the applied voltage is decreased, a lamp's electric current will also decrease, thus reducing the light output from the lamp (dimming it). Conversely, a higher voltage will cause higher lamp current and increase (152).

This is made possible because a dimmer board is a rectangular electronic device that looks like a console, which has several buttons on it with each button connected to a particular lantern in the theatre. This each button is used to regulate and control the lantern connected

to it. This dimmer is usually placed in the control room. The lighting designer uses this dimmer to control all lanterns in a theatrical performance. There are processes which take place in a dimmer board before it regulates light. In other words, there are ways in which dimmer board works. In this research, the dimmer was an essential lighting equipment used in the stage production which helped in controlling the intensity of the lighting equipment's. It was also used in creating the various moods that occurred in the course of the production. In the production, the researcher observed that the dimmer control board used was the DMX 2420 and it was used to control the intensity of the light given by the equipment.

**iv. Dimmer Pack:** Dimmer pack is also known as dimmer rack. This is a device that has different connections of cable connected to it and it is connected to the dimmer board to aid the control of lanterns from the dimmer board. This is why Lawal refers to it as "the intermediary between the dimmer board, the socket and the lantern (125)." According to Parker & Wolf, Normally, two dimmers are enclosed in modules that fit into racks of various sizes, the twelve dimmer rack is a standard portable size. The dimmer module can be slide out of its rack for servicing; electrical connection is made by virtue of plugs located at the rear (463). The dimmer pack or rack had all the lanterns connected to it and it supplied energy to those lanterns which helped the lighting designer design for the production.

### **Functions of Lighting Design**

Lighting design is the application of design principles to create the appropriate mood for a theatrical performance. Different lighting designs, or styles, help create the right atmosphere for each act of a play. The designer also uses lighting to create special effects for audiences and to direct actors' movements. In addition, the proper use of lighting can uplift and exalt the audience's mood. According to Wolf and Block,

The basic obligation of stage design is to give performers meaning in their surroundings, providing an atmosphere in which the role may be logically interpreted through the manipulation of light in all its aspects—intensity, colour, distribution, and movement—the lighting designer assists in creating an environment for the play by achieving selective visibility, by providing appropriate composition and revelation of form, and by establishing mood and reinforcing the theme. (318).

Also, Domba Asomba in *Fundamentals of Lighting Design* states that;

The role of Lighting Design in a performance is a measure of its value, the impact of which is always subjected to the psychological disposition of the audience. This is invariably achieved in a performance through the provision of illumination, selective visibility, modeling/composition and reinforcement of mood (105).

The researcher agrees with the above statement that lighting design makes a production stand out and it also gives great value to the actors on stage. This cannot be achieved without applying the functions of lighting design into a production as explained below:

**Visibility:** Salzberg states that "If the audience can't see the actors, everything else the lighting designer does is a waste of time". Studies have shown that visibility affects our ability to understand spoken speech. Light makes audience understand the actor on stage; His gestures,



actions, movements and mannerism. Also, Stanley McCandless states: “Lighting Design may be defined as the use of light to create a sense of Visibility, Composition and Mood, (Or Atmosphere)” (qtd in Bill 5). This function of lighting design was achieved in the play production as the different lighting instruments were put into use to unveil the actors to the audience members and also unveil the stage setting to the audience members.

**Selective Visibility:** The actor must be seen in order to be heard. Visibility cannot be defined as a fixed degree of brightness or an established angle of distribution; rather, it is the amount of light needed for a moment of recognition deemed appropriate for that point in the action of the play. Good theatre lighting guides the audience’s eye; selective visibility establishes focus.

“To see what should be seen” may mean revealing the mere silhouette of a three-dimensional form, the solidity of its mass, or the full decorative and textural detail of all surfaces. Although visibility certainly relies on intensity, contrast also plays a significant role in achieving good stage visibility. This is directing the spectators’ attention to a specific place. The lighting designer can selectively focus attention in a number of ways, but the primary method is by manipulating our instinctive response to light. Everybody has a strong instinct to look at an area of brightness or movement in an otherwise neutral scene. By simply making one part of the stage brighter than the rest of the set, the lighting designer forces the spectators to look there. This technique of emphatic focus is amply demonstrated, for example, whenever a follow-spot is used in a musical number. Colour can also be used to focus attention.

Trever Griffiths in *Stage Craft* says of the importance of light in the theatre that: “lighting is a crucial element in any stage performance” (93). The human eye cannot function without light. Too little light will have an audience peering to see a performance but too much will actually hinder their ability to see by producing distracting glare. The eye is always attracted to the brightest object on stage. And the lighting designer achieved this function of lighting design unveiling Okonkwo and Lejoka Brown first in the first scene before flooding the stage with other lights as they were the selected characters for that scene and the lighting designer made sure that the set to be shown then was Lejoka Brown’s living room and also making sure that other parts of his house was not visible to the audience members until the lights came on.

**Mood:** Light is able to heighten the atmosphere in the theatre and create an outburst of goose bumps on the skin of the audience members and this is done with colour and intensity. Wolf and Block states that:

A colour impression comes from the mood as does a suggestion of the intensity and the distribution of light. While colour often is equated with mood, the other three qualities of light also have great influence. Bright light supports comedy and a happy mood; high angled distribution, creating long shadows and deep eye sockets suggests tragedy; and movement influences the pace of action (125).

Although it is fun to create sunset or similar breathtaking display, the opportunity to do so legitimately does not present itself in many plays and may also kill the mood of a play. In creating a good mood for a stage production, the lighting is subtle and rarely noticed.

Occasionally, a lighting designer allows concern for mood or atmosphere to override all else, sacrificing other functions, including visibility. It should be remembered that mood is only one of five equally important light functions; to slight any one for another must be a conscious decision made by the entire design team and director. Although an abstract mood or a dramatic mood is more impressive and eye-catching than is the realistic visibility of a conventional interior setting, realism is far more difficult to accomplish with light. And to conform to the assertion above, the play *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* is not only adding forcefulness to the admixture of modern and indigenous dramatic heritage that promotes what Udoinwang and Udoette describes as “the resilient cultural continuum of traditional African world” (217), but is indeed a satirical play that in the production of it, the lighting designer made use of bright colours which gave the audience a gripping excitement and an idea that the play creates an aura of arresting and enjoyable momentum.

**Aesthetics:** Lighting design can be used to enhance the aesthetics of a space, by creating a particular mood or ambiance, highlighting architectural features or art and creating visual interest. This also exposes the hidden meanings behind the different artworks displayed either on stage or worn by the actors through costuming and also either by the technical students or set designers through the set made on stage. Kupferman says in *Lighting Design for Students* (2008) “Just aesthetics - often there is a show where you don't have much to do besides illuminate, and another useful aim is to try and make it look prettier or more visually striking than it would have without your lighting, thus compelling audience attention more strongly and heightening the theatrical experience. It might be a simple comedy or ballet, and you might just want to frame it in nice colour or throw some gobos on the cycle.” The researcher agrees with Kupferman on the basis that “spontaneous change of colours and movement of light adds to the glare of a performance”.

**Revelation of Form:** The position of a light source on an object or character gives it form. Backlights shown on a character are capable of creating a silhouette effect on the character. Wolf and Block states “form is often best revealed if the various sources of light playing on it have some degree of contrast either in intensity or colour. Altering form is one of light's greatest powers” (321-322). This function is displayed or portrayed in the play production as the lighting designer puts on the light to reveal the actors and stage set to the audience members.

**Reinforcing the Theme:** Light must build up to the thematic structure of a stage performance. As a major design element that helps to reinforce the production theme, Parker and Wolf states that: “the lighting of a scene must reinforce, or support, the action lighting the actor is key, but thematic lighting requires a concern with compositional revelation of the thematic forms of the setting as well” (327).

To further assert this, this researcher uses the view of Mackey when he says “When considering lighting design, you will be aware that you should be lighting the set, the costumed actors, the props, makeup and so on. Therefore, as part of a coherent design concept, ideas for lighting the production should refer to these elements”. The lighting designer uses the bright colours to reinforce theme in the play.

**Reinforcing the Act:** Kupferman states that "Actors are generally happy that the Lighting Design shuts them off from the audience in a different world, but sometimes they may need extra help it could be as simple as some low-intensity light to help them find their way in the dark. Actors blinded by sidelights may be helped by having faint light on the floor; this is an absolute necessity for dancers en pointe" (2). This notion says light assists the performers to get their way through stage fright, onto the stage and off the stage. Lighting design also gives actors more confidence when acting on stage.

**Fluidity:** Oni says "it is the fluidity of lighting that enables a theatrical production to have a flow that makes the audience feel more at home in a performance than in a performance where there are frequent and disjointed light changes" (10). This corroborates Reid's position that "lighting design is not static. Throughout the time span of a performance, the selectivity and atmosphere of the light is fluid with changes of two basic types: Conscious and Subconscious". In addition to the above explained functions of Lighting design for theatrical performances, it can be reiterated that lighting provides appropriate visibility, reinforce and create stage composition, Enhances Mood and Atmosphere, Supports Style and Production Concept, Reinforces the Story Line,

Telling of the story from one scene to another just as pages divides the one scene from another in a play text, light is used to shift from one scene to another. For example, in the early classical drama, chorus as well as cotton drop is used as a shift from one scene to another but in the age of modernism and advancement in technology; light is use to transit from one scene to another. That is why we have blackout or dim light to transit into the next scene. Lawal posits that, "the movement from scene to scene or from area to area is an exercise in control of precise distribution and delicate intensity of light. Movement or transition within a scene from scene to scene by lighting becomes a connecting or unifying factor for the production" (32).

Apart from the fact that lighting does the above mentioned functions, light also performs important functions such as projecting the time and period of the day, morning and night can be projected through lighting. More so, light also projects natural phenomena on the stage such as thunder rumbling, fog, rain drop, etc. This means that light functions significantly to theatrical performances.



Plate 1. Opening scene where Lejoka Brown is marching around the house with Okonkwo  
Source: Researcher's Fieldwork,



Plate 2. Alhaji Mustapha going to warn Major Lejoka Brown about the government people  
Source: Researchers Fieldwork, 2022.



Plate 3. Major Lejoka Brown having meeting with the party members  
Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2022.



Plate 4. Major Lejoka Brown having an argument with Mama Rashida his wife  
Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2022

## Summary

In summary, it is pertinent to summarise this work by echoing what Duro Oni seems to be pointed out when he stated that "different productions have different styles and lighting can assist in achieving and enhancing the particular style" (65). Taking into consideration all the functions were displayed during the stage production of *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*. This research sums it all that stage lighting in contemporary theatre practice serves as the link wire and anchor point in which all theatrical performances revolve around.

## Conclusion

Lighting design plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall visual impact of stage productions. It sets the tone and mood, creates a sense of space and depth, highlights key elements and characters, and guides the audience's attention. The use of colour, intensity, angle, and movement can evoke emotions and convey meaning. A well-executed lighting design can transform an ordinary performance into a spectacular one. However, it requires careful planning, coordination with other technical aspects of the production, and artistic

vision to achieve its full potential. Overall, lighting design is an important element of stage productions that can greatly enhance the overall experience for the audience.

### Recommendations

After examining lighting design and application in AKSU Pinnacle theatre during Ekaette Brian's directing of Rotimi's *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* as a case study, this work recommends that the lighting designer, in order to have a good and successful show and a nice lighting design, must not work alone, but in synergy with other personnel of technical unit during performance in particular and theatre practice in general. The work also recommends that the requisite materials, tools and equipment must be made available for efficient lighting design exercise. In the same vein, more lighting fixtures should be provided for the lighting designers in AKSU Pinnacle theatre so as to make their work and presentation smooth and easy whenever they have any production. Finally, this research work recommends that lighting designers should familiarise themselves with the necessary drafting tools and materials so as to prepare the requisite paper works such as lighting plot, lighting legend and lighting cues to be used as Technical guide during their lighting design exercise.

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