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ENHANCING MOOD AND LOCALE REALISATION THROUGH EBULLIENT LIGHTING DESIGN IN SONIA ISHMAEL'S DIRECTION OF GEOFFREY AGBO'S *GRAMMAR DON DO*

ANIEBIET UDUAK DAVID
Department of Performing Arts
Akwa Ibom State Univeristy, Obio Akpa Campus, Nigeria
udofiadavid211@gmail.com, 08162104848

ABSTRACT

This work entitled Enhancing Mood and Locale Realisation Through Ebullient Lighting Design in Sonia Ishmael's Direction of Geoffrey Agbo's Grammar Don Do reveals Lighting design as an art form that transcends mere illumination; it is a powerful tool capable of transforming spaces, influencing emotions, and enhancing the overall experience of a locale. The study therefore makes use of Participatory Research Approach as primary and secondary source of data collection i.e. books, magazines and journals. The research design adopted for the work was the descriptive and qualitative design. The study uses the Stanley McCandless Lighting Theory as the theoretical framework. The relationship between mood enhancement and spatial perception is a crucial area of study within theatre design, particularly in the realm of lighting. Recent findings indicate that ebullient lighting design characterised by dynamic intensity, colour, variation, and adaptive control significantly influence both psychological well-being and the perception of space. This research recommends that technical designers should utilise diverse palette of colours that resonate with the thematic elements of the production, as well as adjusting light intensity to reflect shifts in mood throughout the performance. Strategic placement and layering of lights can create depth and dimension on stage, further contributing to locale realisation. Designers should also direct the light to highlight specific areas or characters, drawing attention and guiding the audience's focus by employing various types of lighting fixtures-such as spotlights for focal points and wash lights for ambient illumination-designers can craft visually compelling environments that immerse audiences in the story.

Keywords: Ebullient, Enhancing Mood, Locale Realisation, Lighting Design.

Introduction

Lighting design is an art form that transcends mere illumination; it is a powerful tool capable of transforming spaces, influencing emotions, and enhancing the overall experience of a locale. The term "ebullient" in the context of lighting design refers to the exuberant, lively, and enthusiastic use of light to create dynamic and impactful environments. Lighting design plays a crucial role in enhancing the mood and atmosphere of any space. By utilising ebullient lighting techniques, one can create a warm and inviting environment that promotes feelings of happiness and positivity. Whether it be in a home, office, or public setting, the right lighting can significantly impact our emotional well-being.

Creating a mood with light is one of the easiest and, at the same time, most difficult aspects of stage lighting. It is relatively easy to create a spectacular sunset effect or a sinister feeling of lurking terror; the difficulty comes in integrating these impressive effects with the other elements of the production. Effective stage lighting is subtle and rarely noticed. Although it is fun to create a sunset or similar breathtaking visual display, the opportunity to do so legitimately does not present itself in many plays. Within the parameters of the production concept, stage lighting is usually designed to enhance the mood of a play as unobtrusive as possible because according to Okon Udofot Jacob (2024), "Every theatrical production has a concept" (137). By strategically placing lights to highlight architectural features or focal points, one can create a dynamic and visually appealing environment that captivates the senses. Overall, ebullient lighting design is an essential element in creating an inviting and positive atmosphere. By harnessing the power of light, we can transform any space into a vibrant and uplifting environment that promotes happiness and well-being.

Origin of Lighting Design

According to Jean Rosenthal and Lael Wertenbaker (1976), "man first acknowledged the existence of his soul by worshipping his sources of light, the sun and the moon. With this discovery that he could control fire, man began to master his environment, and with firelight, the history of lighting design or artificial illumination begins" (34). In corroboration with the above assertion, Okon Udofot Jacob (2024) avers that, "Literature from inception has remained a predominant means of eliciting exhilarations and the sublime appreciation of man towards nature and the world around him, just as it has been a means of expressions 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 theatre when the flickering lights of fires and torches revealed the moving shadows of priest or performer. In this perspective, Okon Jacob (2024) explains that, "African playwrights have found the need to bring… stories to bare on their artistry" (23).

It should be noted that, lighting design did not begin with the advent of electricity as it existed for hundreds of years before the introduction of electricity to stage performances. From the beginning of time, man has always had a special attachment to fire as his source of illumination. To justify this notion and according to Rosenthal and Wertenbaker (1976), "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).

Gordon Craig (1957), a respectable lighting designer and theatre director buttresses 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 quality in the production but just to illuminate the stage. Rather, he suggested that lights

should be placed above the actors so that when the different colours of light are combined, the aesthetics of the production could be revealed. Robert Wilson (1991), on the other hand demonstrates lighting design as part of the new theatre language to innovate the modern theatre,… lighting can be a connector of separate elements" (17). This is 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. Also, Wilson sees lighting as an interaction between the animate (the actor) and the inanimate (lighting, props and set) and that through these interactions, the mingling of contrasting images will also contribute to dramatic intensity.

Overview of Lighting Design 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. 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, Clark (1980) reports that, Hubert Ogunde "made use of such modern theatre equipment as lighting, scenery, and later sound amplification" (4). In fact, Fasina who cited in Duro Oni (2004), says that the desire to achieve a colourful show made Hubert Ogunde to have spent the sum of two thousand Pounds Sterling in the purchase of lighting and stage equipment" (97). Ogunde's sense of aesthetics prompted Dexter Lyndersay to remark that Ogunde had special agenda for stage lighting as employed in his presentations in Nigeria.

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 (2023), "Kingsley William 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 (2024) highlights him as "an expert in technical theatre, Lyndersay provided stage lighting, stage set and technical directions at the University of Ibadan (1966- 1983), Ahmadu Bello University (1972-1974), University of Calabar (1976-1983) and Cross River State University in Uyo (1983- 1985)" (65). His approach to lighting is not only for visibility of actors in the theatre, but for artistic and aesthetic effects, 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 include Okon Udofot Jacob, Olateju Wasee Kareem, Sunnie Ododo, Molinta Enendu, Abiodun Abe among many others.

Duro Oni is also known as one of the best 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. According to Oni in his book entitled, *Stage Lighting Design*: *The Nigerian Perspective:*

> Stage lighting design in Nigeria, since 1880 has gone through several developmental stages. While it was initially aimed at only achieving general illumination, stage lighting design in the contemporary Nigerian theatre is

> advancing to the stage of substantially reducing the use of stage sets... the required fluidity in the establishment of a tempo-spatial realisation has to rely significantly and inevitably on-stage lighting. (85)

Therefore, he asserts that all of the three dimensions of lighting design are very important because of visibility or illumination. Poor illumination can lead to loss of attention on the part of members of the audience.

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. These functions of lighting in Performing Arts include:

Visibility: In both stage and film performances, it should be noted that the audience cannot see the actors clearly, everything else 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 (1966) states: "Lighting Design may be defined as the use of light to create a sense of visibility, composition and mood or atmosphere" (5). These functions of lighting design were achieved in the play production under review as the different lighting instruments were put into use to unveil the actors as well as 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.

Mood: Light is able to heighten the atmosphere in the theatre and create an outburst of Goosebumps on the skin of the audience members and this is done with colour and intensity. 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.

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 makeup design.

According to Kupferman Judy (2008) in *Lighting Design for Students*, "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" (234). 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.

Synopsis of *Grammar Don Do*

Grammar Don Do, written by Geoffrey Agbo, (1967 – 2013) is a satirical play with a clear structure and arrangement of incidents centered on conflict at two levels – the first is between a couple with different socio-economic and cultural orientation and the other between two intellectuals with different academic backgrounds and exposure. Okoro, the central character is illiterate, but married to Queen, a school teacher. Andy is Okoro's brother, highly educated in Philosophy but jobless. Every character has an area of comparative strength, but instead of pulling forces together to overcome common challenges, they prefer to live in turbulence until the landlord calls them to order and instills into them some words of wisdom. Between the hilarious dialogues and grammatical 'bombardments', the play communicates the need for people to synergise and realise optimum value from their relationships. The rendition blends the musical form with regular dialogue in a diehard comedy that 'serves another tension-relieving pill to the audience' and helps them to unwind after the pressures of the day or season.

Lighting Plot and Instrumentation in *Grammar Don Do*

The lighting plot is a scale mechanical drawing, a "road map" that indicates where the lighting instruments should be placed. Oscar Brockett (20110 states that, it is a "composite plan drawing that provides the most descriptive possible view of the luminaries so that the production staff can most efficiently execute the design intent" (134). According to the United States Institute for Theatre Technology's (USITT), "*Recommended Practice for Theatrical Lighting Design* "all lighting instruments being used in the production are the primary purpose of the light plot" (356). This goes a long way to buttress Okon Udofot Jacob's (2024) position that, "The sole focus of theatrical performances are human beings and its environment including other animate and inanimate objects around" (127).

Lighting is one of the most important aspects of a theatre production, before a theatre performance can be aesthetically pleasing, there are different lighting equipment (instrument) that are needed to be harnessed and applied to light the performance. This enables different special lighting effects to be enhanced on stage. Parker and Craig (2014) submit 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. In this direction, these instruments are explained below:

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 is 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." According to Parker and Craig (2014), "Gobos may be stainless steel or glass. Hundreds of standard images and patterns are available, as well as custom patterns made to order" (341).

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.

ii. Fresnel Spotlights: Fresnel is named after the man who invented the shape of the lens, which was originally used in lighthouses. According to Parker and Craig (2014), "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" (374). Like the Ellipsoidal Reflector Spotlight, the Fresnel produces a circular beam of light, but it is soft and not as easily controlled.

Mood and Atmosphere in *Grammar Don Do*

The interplay between mood and atmosphere in lighting design is a fundamental component of stage productions, as it significantly influences audience perception and emotional engagement. Lighting serves not merely as a tool for visibility but rather as an artistic medium that shapes the narrative and enhances thematic elements. By manipulating intensity, colour, and direction of light, designers can evoke specific emotions that resonate with the audience, thereby deepening their connection to the performance.

The mood and atmosphere established in the play production was chaos. Here, the lighting designer decides to play with bright colour, because the play itself is a comic play and comedy does not align with dull colours. The set designer, costumier and the lighting designer worked hand in hand to achieve a beautiful work.

In the production under review, Andy having an argument with Queen shows another chaotic scene in the play "*Grammar Don Do*". The light designer maintained using bright lights throughout the play, because it's a comedy, although he lightly filtered the stage with blue light to depict the time of the day in which the action was taking place. The lighting designer reduces the intensity of the lighting equipment to show that the period of the action was actually in the evening. The lighting designer also made use of the lighting fixtures to show the tension between the two characters, although making sure that the stage was well lit while focusing on the characters on stage and as well making the audience members understand the action taking place.

Enhancing Locale through Lighting Design in *Grammar Don Do*

The lighting system is one of the most important factors influencing the value of a space in theatrical productions. The psychological impact of well-designed lighting cannot be understated. Research shows that proper illumination affects mood and well-being; bright, warm lights can create an inviting atmosphere while dimmer settings may evoke intimacy or

tranquility. For instance, public parks illuminated with soft lighting invite families for evening strolls, fostering community bonds. Conversely, poorly lit areas tend to promote feelings of fear and isolation.

In modern society, the lighting system plays an important role in workspace, residential buildings, and also industrial sites. Besides, a proper lighting system has a direct relation with a healthy society, public safety, beauty, and also the cost of energy consumption. Also, if the lamps are appropriately chosen and arranged according to an optimised lighting system, loss of energy can be prevented. The amount of light intensity we need varies from place to place, depending on the functionality of the space.

In *Grammar Don Do*, the lighting designer enhances the locale of which the play took place to the audience members. It shows that the play is a contemporary play which aligns with the contemporary settings. The lighting designer made use of lighting fixtures like the Hydrargyrum Medium Arciodide (HMI), PARcan, LED Lights etc to light the show. From the different fixtures used, the audience members could note the difference between an epic play and a contemporary play. The entire stage was intended to have cohesiveness relative to the scene. The lighting was intended to emphasise the flow of the story. Therefore, lighting helped to structure and form the scene and set. The composition of the light formed and directed the eyes which manipulate the thoughts of the mind and set the picture of that scene. The composition therefore created the entire perspective and forms an overall perception by using light.

Summary

The interchange between mood and locale in theatre productions is significantly enhanced through the strategic use of lighting design. Lighting serves not merely as a technical element but as a crucial narrative device that shapes the audience's emotional experience and contextual understanding of the performance. By manipulating light intensity, colour, and direction, designers can evoke specific atmospheres that resonate with the thematic elements of the production. Locale realisation is intricately tied to lighting choices that reflect both time and space within a theatrical context. Effective lighting design can transport audiences from vibrant urban environments to serene natural landscapes by employing distinct colour palettes and intensities that mirror these settings. This manipulation not only grounds the audience in the physical space of the narrative but also enhances their emotional engagement with it.

Ebullient lighting design plays indispensable roles in theatre productions by shaping mood and realising locale effectively. Through thoughtful consideration of how light interacts with stage elements, designers are able to craft immersive experiences that elevate storytelling. As such, lighting should be recognised as an essential component of theatrical artistry rather than merely a functional aspect of production.

Conclusion

The concept of locale realisation is intrinsically linked to ebullient lighting design and it involves fostering a sense of place through sensory experiences that engage individuals emotionally and cognitively. Effective lighting can accentuate architectural features, highlight focal points within a space, and guide users through their environment seamlessly. This not

only enhances aesthetic appeal but also reinforces the identity of the space itself. Enhancing mood and locale realisation through ebullient lighting design is imperative in modern theatre design practices. By recognising the emotional power of light and its capacity to shape experiences within various environments, designers can craft spaces that foster well-being while simultaneously reflecting cultural identities. As such, continued exploration in this domain remains essential for advancing both practical applications and theoretical frameworks surrounding environmental psychology in theatre practices.

Recommendations

To optimise the impact of lighting on audience perception, it is essential to employ techniques that manipulate intensity, colour, and movement hence the following recommendations: Technical designers should utilise diverse palette of colours that resonate with the thematic elements of the production, as well as adjusting light intensity to reflect shifts in mood throughout the performance. In the same vein, strategic placement and layering of lights can create depth and dimension on stage, further contributing to locale realisation. Also, designers should direct the light to highlight specific areas or characters, drawing attention and guiding the audience's focus by employing various types of lighting fixtures - such as spotlights for focal points and wash lights for ambient illumination - designers can craft visually compelling environments that immerse audiences in the story.

Furthermore, since integrating dynamic lighting changes during key movements and can heighten emotional engagement by mirroring character development or plot progression, it should be encouraged. For instance, transitioning from warm hues during intimate scenes to cooler tones during moments of conflict can effectively signal shifts in emotional tone. Finally, enhancing mood and locale realisation through ebullient lighting design necessitates a thoughtful approach that considers both aesthetic quality and narrative coherence. By embracing innovative techniques such as colour manipulation, strategic placement, and dynamic transitions, theatre productions can elevate their storytelling capabilities. Ultimately, effective lighting design not only enriches audience experience but also reinforces the overall artistic vision of theatrical works, hence strongly recommended.

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