

Fluidity and fixity of performer, audience and performing space

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Abstract

Performance Theory is one of the theories which have by far removed several inconsistencies and contradictions in analysing orature, notably African orature. Unlike former theories which took texts as a basis in interpreting orature, Performance Theory considers performance as a socially situated aesthetic communication between the performer and the audience both of whom participate in the process as active agents. However, some of its notions are heavily influenced by western theatre. Consequently, some conceptual details go unnoticed because, instead of enriching the notions from the first-hand experience of the African oral arts, western concepts are used instead. This paper seeks to challenge some of the performance conceptual axioms by showing aspects that were taken for granted. Most of the concepts, particularly performer, audience and performance space (stage) were for quite a long time treated as separate fundamental performance entities. In this paper, I attempt to refute these truisms and instead argue that, in practice, these notions are fluid except for only a few of them. A wide variety of examples are given to testify arguments put forward. The paper concludes by emphasising that African orature genres are more characterised by fluidity and only a few of them are really fixed. In addition, some elements of African orature performances are ephemeral and sometimes unexpected.

Key words:

Performance theory, Performer, Audience, African orature

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Introduction

Orature started to gain popularity as a stand-alone field of study in the 20th century. The late recognition of orature as a full-fledged field of study has brought about far-reaching effects not only on the status of orature as an academic specialization, but its intrinsic concepts have also been relatively shaken. Apart from painting a general picture that orature performances date back to time immemorial, orature has been the object of study of several fields,

some of which impacted it adversely (Finnegan, 2012). Accordingly, scholars such as William Bascom and Walter Ong did not only resist the then used contradictory concepts but proposed other terms which would replace 'oral literature' which sounds somewhat contradictory (Bascom, 1955; Ong, 2002).¹ Actually, what appears to be a conceptual contradiction, especially following imposition of written literary concepts - almost absent in some African languages such as Swahili - into orature, indicates that orature faces serious conceptual problems. For example, David Kerr argues that the Western notion of theatrical stage physically separates the performer from the audience (Kerr, 1988). Even the idea of stage is built upon Western theatre designs which distance the performer from the audience.

To avoid such conceptual confusion, this paper uses the term *performing space* instead of *stage*². The notion of the performer, the audience and the performing space appear to reverberate in many Africanist and African scholars. For example, Mugyabuso Mulokozi identifies features of orature by treating the performer and the audience as two separate entities of performance (Mulokozi, 2017), while in some circumstances, it is evident that the boundary between the two is practically absent. In other words, in some performances, there is no clear demarcation line that sets the performer apart from the audience. Following the lack of a clear borderline between them, the notion of performance space also lends itself to be extended to scrutiny because it is closely related to the two.

This study reviews the concepts of the performer, the audience, and the orature performance space to investigate their fixity and fluidity. The fluidity assumption arises primarily because in African orature, these notions are not always separate entities as implied by some scholars. In practice, the concepts seem to be more fluid. It is only unfortunate that the terms used in African orature were coined by using western theatrical concepts. However, conceptual misunderstandings arising from terminological confusions are not quite new (Gossen, 1984; Mnenuka, 2017; Okpewho, 1992).

¹ For detailed discussion on conceptual contradictions that emerge when inappropriate terms such as *unwritten literature*, *popular literature*, *folk literature*, *primitive literature* and *oral literature* are used, see Bascom (1955:246). A similar argument is made by Ong (2002). In this paper, I will make use of the term orature because it is relatively better than the rest of the terms because it avoids some of the conceptual contradictions as noted.

² Stage is essentially a special area on which performers display their artistic skills whereas space may be extended to involve audience who may also join performance from where they are seated or can decide to approach the open area. Generally, performance space is more extended and more inclusive than stage.

Before embarking on a detailed discussion about the fixity and fluidity of the abovementioned notions, it is paramount to briefly clarify the emergence of orature which predates written literature as a practice, as noted earlier, but very novel as a full-fledged academic discipline. According to Richard Bauman, folklore is a field of study that was established in the modern period, i.e., between the late 18th century and the early 19th century (Bauman, 1989). In this period, structural, political, economic and intellectual transformations occurred in Europe. Despite such transformations, old elements of life, i.e., agrarian pre-capitalist modes of life continued to exist in the society deemed to be modern. Scholars saw the need to draw a boundary that would break up fields of study which would deal with the old and new changes in society.

In the process of dividing the old and new ways of life, folklore was born (Bauman, 1989). Supporting the argument by Jürgen Habermas (1984 [1981]:5), Bauman argues further that folklore had responsibilities of dealing with symbolic forms of life and their expressions in life and how societies maintained their significant past. Folklore, Bauman argues, dealt with both social life and social transformation that involved the past and the present. Later, folklorists narrowed its scope down to specifically deal with traditional society (Bauman, 1989). Doubtlessly, this might be among the reasons why scholars such as Levi-Bruhl, Joseph Rysan and Francis Gummere argue that folklore is a field of study that deals with traditional society as observed by Dan Ben-Amos (Ben-Amos 1971). According to Stith Thompson, the basis for folklore is traditions, which implies that folklore deals with unchanging realities (Thompson, 1951). It must be emphasised that orature was one of the elements of folklore, the result of which was some scholars inclination to the thinking that orature is also a remnant of the past. These claims are strongly criticised by scholars such as Bauman and Ben-Amos who argue that folklore does not confine itself to dealing with only old stuff as contemporary issues also fall within its research areas (Bauman, 1989; Ben-Amos, 1971).

Orature arose in attempts to isolate verbal arts from the big umbrella of folklore (cf. Thompson, 1940; Bascom, 1953; Bascom, 1955, Smith, 1959; Utley, 1961; Ben-Amos, 1971; Smith, 1973a; Smith, 1973b; Ong, 2002; Finnegan, 2004; Finnegan, 2012).³ The attempts to establish orature as an independent discipline were made alongside coining the term. Some of the scholars who pioneered the process of establishing verbal art as a full-fledged field of study together with coining the term for the discipline is Bascom (1955; 1973a, 1973b). Given that orature emerged from folklore and has been associated with the past as noted in the discussion

³ The use of old references here may be shocking to scholars who prefer currency of literature. However, to appreciate and trace the debate, citing such old sources is inevitable as it takes us back to where the whole story began.

above, some of the coined terms have sparked very fierce academic debates owing to their close link with writings (Mnenuka, 2017). Terminological contradictions in orature connected with the nature and context of its emergence as some of them, such as performer, audience and performance space, retain features from other related fields.

Fixity of Performer, Audience and Performing Space

The performer, one of the core components of orature, according to Performance Theory, is a person or a group of people who show certain audio-visual skills before an audience while knowing that they are watched and their displayed actions are evaluated (Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Bauman, 1992, 2004, 2011, 2012). Accordingly, to meet his/her aims, in some of the arts, the performer prepares oneself before a performance (Vansina, 1985; Mulokozi, 2002). The basis for Performance Theory, according to Bauman, is communication between the performer and the audience (Bauman, 2012, 2011, 2004, 1992, 1984; Bauman and Briggs, 1990). Performance Theory therefore eradicates the boundary between the performer and the audience, at least from some performances as exemplified later. On the contrary, in some scholarly works, the notions of performer and audience are treated as fixed categories (Finnegan, 1992; Mulokozi, 2017; Okpewho, 1992). In this regard, the performer and the audience are deemed as different entities whose roles are clearly demarcated, ostensibly, no crossover. Epic, ritual and royal court poetry are typical cases that perfectly illustrate the argument. Epic performers are, for instance, required to learn how to play musical instruments which are an essential part of the genre (Johnson 1980; Seydou 1983; Mulokozi 2002).

Thus, playing an instrument in epic performance is one of the main factors that separate the performer from the audience. Following the nature of the content, performance and the use of musical instruments, some epic performances reveal that epic is one of the genres that keep performers and their audience ideally far apart from each other. For example, when comparing a Peul epic of the Massina region in western Sahel with the Gabonese mvét epic, Seydou (1983) shows how the Peul epic is histrionically fixed compared to the Gabonese mvét. Similar accounts are given by Mugyabuso Mulokozi in his study on the enanga epic among the Bahaya. In both cases, the audience remains tranquil during performances. Other performers who share this feature are griots and imbongi found in western and southern Africa respectively whose traditional function involved performing in royal courts and on special occasions (Gunner, 1986; Okpewho, 1992; Diawara, 1997; Finnegan, 2012). Included in this group is Rwanda royal court poetry in which during its performance, while a performer recites poems, the audience was not encouraged to produce reactions (Okpewho, 1992).

Following their special acquired skills, some of which are learned for quite a long time, such kind of performers, i.e. epic, griot, imbongi, and royal court poets, are among the few distinguished individuals in society. Not everyone can assume their performers' roles during performances without receiving training as it is the case with other orature genres. This is apparent even in epic performances which demonstrate a higher degree of dynamism. For example, despite performers' and audience's broader participation during the mvet performances, according to Seydou (1983), there is a clear borderline between the two parts because apart from playing musical instruments, mvet performers are dressed in special costumes, headgear and special make-up (Alexandre, 1974; Seydou, 1983). The two demarcated parts are entirely separate entities. Thus, every oral genre that requires training is characterised by substantial degree of fixity. The performers' flexibility directly determines their encounters, audience reactions. Thus, performers that exhibit a higher degree of fixity tend to have calm audience except in a few cases as noted by Mulokozi (2002).

Fixity of Performance Space

The performing space is a place where a performative event takes place. It can be prepared in advance, especially when orature performances are parts of prepared events. This includes socio-political events such as ritualistic prayers and festivals (Bauman, 1984; Finnegan, 2012; Finnegan, 1992; Lord, 1971; Mulokozi, 2017; Mulokozi, 2002; Okpewho, 1992; Omari, 2009; Smith, 1977). Often, this kind of space is already known by the community. It may be constructed and elevated to enable all members of the audience to see the performances. In such cases, the fixity of the orature performing space is centred on features that define the special area prepared for orature performances to take place. This is the kind of a performing space which comes first to the mind when one thinks of the orature performing space.

Apart from such a physically demarcated performing space, in ordinary contexts, performing spaces are not marked. Performers and members of the audience stay at the same place, often next to each other. However physically close the two parts are, the nature of the genre determines their level of fixity and fluidity as stated earlier. Briefly, performing space in traditionally fixed African oral genres tend to be rigid. Although some genres such as Enanga Epic have notable fixity feature, most of the other genres are relatively fluid. Some of the elements of orature have no clear boundary between the performer and the audience.

In this section, I will examine some of them to show, at various levels, how fluid the notions of performer and audience are. For example, fixity and fluidity of the performer and audience will concentrate on how performers' roles extend to include the audience and sometimes the two parts merge and function as one. To

begin with, the next section sets out the discussion on the fluidity of the performer and audience.

Fluidity of the Performer and Audience

As already noted, in some elements of orature, the notions of performer and audience are so fluid that, sometimes, it is harder to locate the borderline between them because either both sides participate equally or sometimes their positions are switched in turns, which again does not really indicate performerhood and audiencehood.⁴ For instance, in riddling performances⁵, after setting a difficult riddle, attempts to puzzle it out by the audience might take more time than the performer's.⁶ Even when the riddler is asked to choose a town of his or her choice, those who propose towns dominate the performance space more than the riddler. In addition, since the performer's display is subject to evaluation, in riddling, the provider of the answer is more subject to evaluation than the riddler. In other words, riddle responses play more performative roles than riddlers'. In such cases, roles of the performer and the audience are too fluid to clearly show the exact boundary between them. Likewise, switching roles between the riddler on the one hand and respondents on the other makes the two positions uncertain, i.e., almost all participants assume performer and audience roles in the same performative event.

Another good example that makes the performer and audience positions fluid are jokes. Joke performances in everyday life have neither clear performer nor audience since even the one who initiates joke performance is not regarded as the performer. In ordinary joke performances, the exchange of words between the participants does not guarantee exactly who is subject to fail in terms of being overwhelmed by the jocular statements from the opponent. However, this should never undermine the ability and talent of some people to perform jokes. It suffices to argue that the notions of the performer and audience are very fluid, sometimes differences between the two are virtually absent.

Singing is another element of orature in which variations between the two notions disappear altogether. For example, when audience members actively participate

⁴ According to Erving Goffman, a person who dominates talks between two sides, a shopkeeper for instance, is the one who assumes roles of the performer and the customer is the audience (Goffman, 1959).

⁵ The notion of the riddles clearly indicates performances made by two sides, i.e., "two performers". Thus, the act of riddling shows how some of the elements of orature are fluid.

⁶ For detailed clarification of riddling see Mnenuka, (2019), Noss (2006) and Toit (1966)

in singing performance as either audience members or as characters of the tale, based on the singing performance, one cannot sharply point out who is the performer and who forms part of the audience bearing in mind that both parts sit next to each other. In those minor incidences, the two roles are indistinguishable. Julius S. Spencer offers an example of a Mende tale performer, Lele Gbomba in Sierra Leone, who was good at capturing the attention of the audience and made them participate fully in his storytelling sessions. Often, while performing stories, Gbomba used to appoint one of the members of the audience and begin a conversation with him/her playing characters' roles (Spencer, 1990). In such circumstances, a member of the audience who participates in the performance becomes a co-performer because the other members of the audience looked at him/her, and as usual, assessed his/her displayed performative ability while knowing for sure that his/her performance was subject to evaluation (cf. Bauman, 2004, 2004, 2012).

What has been exemplified as a typical case of a fixed genre has, on some occasions, displayed a high degree of fluidity. In their studies, Christiane Seydou and Mugyabuso Mulokozi highlight the dynamic nature of some forms of African epic (Mulokozi, 2002; Seydou, 1983). Mulokozi (2002), for instance, gives an account of peculiar events which can occur during *enanga* epic performance. Sometimes, the audience participates in performing the *enanga* epic. On one occasion, the performer invites his audience to sing the song along with him. Mulokozi reports that at one time the audience was unaware of the song and thus could not perform the song. The performer assumed responsibility to teach the chorus and later the audience sang along with the performer who at this time became a lead singer.

In this context, the performer-audience distance disappears suddenly and the two parts become one and the same thing. Again, cases of possessed people breaking into performance are not uncommon during *enanga* performances. Mulokozi reports two cases, one of them occurred when an inciting poem was performed. For example, one person got possessed and started performing praise poetry after being provoked by an inciting poem meanwhile the *enanga* performer continued to play his musical instrument, only to carry over after the possessed person had ended his performance. A praise poet in this context becomes a co-performer. On the other hand, while comparing the Peul epic of the Massana region in western Sahel and the Gabonese *mvvet* epic, Seydou (1983) shows that during *mvvet* performance, the audience is active and participates noisily upon being called by the performer. Suffice it to say that some scholars had already noted the dynamism in orature performances.

Other good examples are proverbs, idioms and puzzle performances. Proverb performance is quite different from poetry and tales. Proverbs are performed by

anyone for his or her special purpose in ordinary and artistic performances. Not always the one who performs proverbs is the performer since proverbs can be employed by anyone in formal and informal talks, though in some African societies the elderly are more entitled to perform proverbs than young people, especially when the two converse (cf. Okpewho, 1992). However, some of the sayings composed by young people depict their environment and challenges. In that context, the main reason that determines proverbs usage is the ability of the user (cf. Mnenuka, 2012). Likewise, idioms are one of the elements of orature which do not make its user the performer, even the speaker does not consider oneself to be performing a literary work which is subject to evaluation. Therefore, in these elements of orature, there is no clear line that separates the performer from the audience. The environments in which proverbs and idioms arise are not different from puzzles. All of them do not identify overtly the roles played by the performer and the audience. The fluidity of the performer and audience also appear in the physical environment in which both parts, the performer and the audience are the same people who sit next to each other and switch positions. The next section discusses the fluidity of the performer and audience as one and the same.

Performer and Audience as One and the Same

Apart from looking at the performer and audience as fixed concepts, in some contexts, the two merge and appear to be one and the same. There are plenty of examples that demonstrate this argument, some of which are song performances performed by a group of people. The following, a famous song in running the National Torch (Mwenge), is one good example.

<i>Lead singer: Mwenge huo Mwenge</i>	Here is the torch, This is the torch
<i>Chorus: Mbio mbio</i>	Run run
<i>Lead singer: Mwenge huo Mwenge</i>	Here is the torch, This is the torch
<i>Chorus: Mbio mbio</i>	Run run
<i>Lead singer: Mwenge tunaukimbiza</i>	We are running the torch
<i>Chorus: Mbio mbio</i>	Run run
<i>Lead singer: Mpaka makao makuu</i>	To the capital city
<i>Chorus: Mbio mbio</i>	Run run

In the song above, all the people who participate in the running are supposed to sing while moving towards a described direction. In such contexts, who is the performer and who is the audience? The same people do all the roles. The performer and audience are one and the same. Similar examples of song performances can be seen in the celebration of various kinds in which all people perform songs. In my field research carried out in 2014, 2015, and 2016 in Mdandu, one of the wards of Wanging'ombe District in Njombe Region in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania, I noticed that there are circumstances in which

all people sing and dance. Again, in such performances, none can be said to be the performer or the audience. A similar kind of performance is described by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. After staging *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, as described in his paper *Enactments of Power: The Politics of Performance Space* (1988), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o explains that both the actors and audience performed song performance together, which eradicated the boundary between them:

They all went outside the theatre building, still dancing. What had been confined to the stage had spilt out into the open air, and there was no longer any distinction between actors and audience. (wa Thiong'o, 1997:19, emphasis added)

It can, thus, be said that some of the elements of orature such as songs, sometimes, do not have clear boundaries that separate the performer from the audience. Therefore, considering these concepts in their fixity is misleading and is an act of over-generalisation. Apart from functioning as fully fixed notions in some circumstances, they substantiate a big deal of fluidity often overlooked by researchers. It is hoped that this study will pose challenges for other researchers to delve into these concepts. The next section discusses fixity and fluidity of the orature performance space alongside the concepts of the performer and audience because the three are closely related.

Fixity and Fluidity of Orature Performance Space

Like performer and audience concepts, orature performance space, depending on contexts, is characterised by similar features, i.e., fixity and fluidity. Still, these concepts have not been analysed in significant detail. In this section, I will begin to investigate the fixity of orature and then end with its fluidity. In fact, the performance space is a key element that makes orature realise itself through performance.

Fluidity of Orature Performance Space

The orature performance space, contrary to explanations by other scholars, can either be prepared or not. Since the prepared performance space is already briefly explained above, this part deals with exclusively the ephemeral orature performance space that emerges and disappears unpredictably. Plenty of examples can be illustrated. For example, consider a scenario where people who are familiar with each other meet at a market and begin joke performances. The performance space of this artistic encounter emerges as soon as the joke performance starts and ends immediately after it stops. Actually, both the art and its performance space are short-lived. Even its unexpected audience, the bystanders, are also temporary. Passing time fabricated stories commonly known as *soga* in Swahili can also emerge and disappear anywhere, in church homilies, political speeches, and in teaching. Even song performances, in some cases, can be

ephemeral. For example, in Tanzania, it is common for the people to burst into singing when someone's name, be it a guest of honour or someone rewarded, is mentioned. One of the most common song's, performed in Hehe melody is the following:

Lead	Baba baba,	Lead	Father, father,
singer:	Baba	singer:	Father,
Chorus:	Baba huyo,	All:	Here is the father,
Lead	Baba, baba huyo, baba,	Lead	Father, here is the father,
singer:	Baba huyo, baba.	singer:	Father, here is the father.
Chorus:		All:	Or
	Mama mama,		Mother, mother,
Au	Mama		Mother,
Lead	Mama huyo,	Lead	Here is the mother,
singer:	Mama, mama huyo,	singer:	Mother, here is the mother,
Chorus:	Mama, mama huyo, mama	All:	Mother, here is the mother.
Lead		Lead	
singer:		singer:	
Chorus:		All:	

Since this song is popular, it can be performed anywhere unexpectedly, including in the unprepared performance space as well. Thus, it can be sung or not and its place can be just taken by handclaps when the named or rewarded heads towards a podium or stage. The orature event emerges and disappears unexpectedly, the art comes ephemerally and unexpectedly. This is one of the incidents that exemplify the fluidity of orature performance space.

Frames of Orature Performance

As noted above that orature performances such as jokes can emerge and disappear ephemerally, so is the orature performance space. An essential defining feature in this context is the manner of going on and off the performance space. Since no initial preparations are made, it is easy, especially in joke performances, to provoke social conflicts when some of the participants are unaware that they have already broken-through into joke performances. This is actually the main challenge of performing jokes. Kenneth Burke, Erving Goffman, and Gregory Bateson underscore the importance of all participants to be aware of what is going on (Bateson, 2006; Burke, 1969; Goffman, 1986). In this regard, the performer and audience must understand that they are in an artistic performance. It must also be stated that, to put on an impressive joke performance, participants must place themselves in performative contexts. Sometimes, jokers know each other, but others are unaware of their relationship. For example, events such as funeral in some parts of the Iringa Region are spaces where jokes can be performed. When the bereaved are the Hehe and happens that someone assumed to be Ngoni

attends a funeral, he can be caught and tied up with ropes and left helplessly unless he agrees to pay a ransom that his or her jokers may claim. In such kinds of events, a newcomer might be disturbed when suddenly a man is caught and tied up with ropes as if a victim has run mad or has been revealed as a thief or dangerous person. When all these actions take place, no one smiles or laughs unless other viewers who know the performance. This kind of joke performance may last for ten minutes. It is ephemeral.

Let me end this section by emphasising that it is not necessary for the oral performance space to be prepared prior to the performance, nor should there be an event in which orature performance is programmed to be held. Orature can emerge anywhere, at any time: can be prepared or unprepared. Social relations among most of African people might be a reason for such ephemeral nature of orature performances. Apparently, anybody can perform jokes with anyone, although jokes between subjects who know each other are more serious and somewhat extended. The most important point is awareness among performers so that fast switching from one frame to another, from a normal conversation context to artistic context, does not lead to conflicts.

Types and Fluidity of Orature Performance Space

Orature, as noted above, is performed in various kinds of performing spaces. In this section, the focus is on four categories. The first performing space is that in which the performer and audience stay in the same place. I shall call this kind of performance space *stationary performance space*. The second performance space involves the performer moving while its audience is relatively stationary, which can be termed *transitory performance space*. The third type is that which both the performer and audience are in the same place but they are moving such as being in a car. This kind of performance space can be called *trans-stationary performance space*⁷. The last performance space is that which involves the performer staying stationary while his/her audience is in motion. This can be called *semi-stationary performance space*. These are the main categories of orature performance spaces. Generally, one may have noticed that of all the kinds of performance spaces mentioned above, only one performance space is largely mentioned by scholars, that is the stationary performance space whose performer and audience are motionless, despite the varying degrees of fluidity can be observed in the orature performance space. For example, in tale, riddle or song performances, unlike theatre or classroom, the performer (an adult) can hold a child on his or her lap

⁷ This kind of performance space is famous in African societies in which when people go to funeral, burial, marriage celebrations and others of the kind, do hire buses and lorries. Often when travelling, people in the car put on song performances all the way to the place of event. People outside the bus or lorry can just witness such performances when a car stops or moves slowly or in traffic jams.

while performing tales. Here, the child is the only member of the audience. The similar situation may appear in city buses in some African countries like Tanzania where jokes and stories are often performed while other commuters get on and off the bus. Sometimes, passengers who go on and off instigate such performances. Therefore, there is a possibility of having no performance space as a physical place prepared for special orature performances.

Stationary Performing Space

This is a kind of performing space common in orature performances. In this kind of performing space, the performer and audience, the main actors in orature, stay in the same place where performances take place. For example, songs and other kinds of arts performed in recreational venues for social or political events, tale performances at home or at school (immovable houses and school buildings). All of these constitute one of the elements of orature performed in the stationary performance space. This is the kind of performance space which has far-reaching effects on the concept of orature performance, rendering many orature scholars to rely on it as the only kind of performance space. As revealed by its name, it is all about fixity. This is the notion of fixity of the performing space which has for years dominated orature analyses.

Transitory Performance Space

This kind of performance space is common in some places but still uncommon conceptually. The performer in this type of performance space performs while moving on foot or carried by any moving object such as a car while members of the audience remain relatively stationary in places where a car passes through. Often, this is mainly done when advertising products, especially in a metropolitan. In Dar es Salaam, for example, artists perform on the back of the moving lorries which passes in crowded neighbourhoods and streets to capture the attention of as many people as possible. This kind of performance space looks like elevated stationary performance spaces. In fact, these are mechanically designed performance spaces on which comedians, dancers, and others of the kind perform to attract people while frequently punctuated by commercial advertisements. The audience listens and watches just for a short time while the truck moves slowly down streets. Similar kind of this performance space is used by a Mdundiko dance performance along resident streets. From time to time, Mdundiko dancers perform while moving along residential streets attracting a group of people behind them. People who continue with their everyday accomplishments would just watch and enjoy as dancers move along their streets. In most cases, at the end of the dance performance, incidents of children getting lost are uncommon because they might reach a point where it is difficult for them to navigate to where they came from. This performance space is very fluid

because it is in continuous change. People who live at a certain point start hearing instrumental beats and applauding voices relatively long time before the actual arrival of the performers; thus, they start enjoying the dance before actual performances is before their eyes. Since performers are in constant motion, places through which they pass are ephemeral orature performance spaces. That is why it is called a transitory performance space. The fact that the performance space is transitory, it always faces a new audience. In this regard, the performance space, audience, and the art are fluid. The only fixed component of performance would be performers themselves, with other people joining the performance, dance and exist while permanent group performers continue the exercise to the end point.

Semi-transitory Performance Space

Whether a performance is prepared or emerges and disappears ephemerally when the performer and audience are in a moving object such as a bus, lorry and the like, such a performance space is referred to as a semi-transitory performance space. It is transitory because an object in which performances take place is moving, while the performer and audience are stationary. Events such a wedding celebration and funeral processions can involve people who perform songs in moving objects. This includes clapping hands, drumming, playing flutes and other musical instruments. Alongside song genre, other genres which can be performed in a similar manner are jokes, fabricated and funny stories which can make people burst into laughter. It is common for various artistic narratives to be performed while commuting. In a way, these elements of orature can easily be performed in small buses. In normal cases, many passengers participate in any of the genres as members of the audience. Not only in small buses, even in big buses two to four people can participate in an orature performance. Some people might be inclined to think that the fact that the performer and audience are travelling together makes the performance space to appear as if it is not considerably different from the stationary performance space. Unlike the stationary performance space, the context of orature performances, in this case, is triggered by radio news, announcements, and contents of songs played in a vehicle. Not only are these, what is seen outside the moving object, in areas where the vehicle passes through, are some of the factors that trigger orature narratives and their post-performance discussions. Passengers who go on and off buses can also be instigators of orature performances by directly performing, contributing or being the topic of discussions. Sometimes, traffic police who stop vehicles and take time to converse with passengers about the journey may be an important starting point of the story, joke, and song performances. Therefore, this performance space is unique on its own right and deserves to be analysed differently from the stationary performance space. The fluidity of this performance space relies heavily on a moving performance space from which performed orature can largely be influenced by the outside environment. Such performances communicate to the outside people that they are either in a funeral, perhaps going

for burial, or are going to a wedding celebration. Often, people immediately recognise the purpose of such journeys by contents of the song performances.

Semi-stationary Performance Space

This kind of performance space appears to be like the one described by Albert Lord in his research on sung tales in which singers of tales perform to an unstable audience composed of members who may stay or disappear at any moment depending on how much the performers attract them (Lord, 1971). This kind of performance space is common in urban areas in which performers stay stationary singing, chanting, and performing jokes and funny fabricated stories and comedy. The audience is mainly formed by bystanders who may stay for some time depending on how much they are impressed by performances or some of them just ignore and continue with their own business transactions. This is a kind of performance space in which the audience is never permanent and often tends to change. It can hardly remain the same from the beginning to the end of a single song performance, especially long songs.

The performer may change the content of what he/she performs as influenced by the nature of the audience. Some of the performers may praise the audience as a strategy to get some money; when they do not get what they expect, they may turn to their audience and embarrass them (Okpewho, 1992). This performing space is fluid because its audience is unstable and subject to change for nor clear performative reasons. Even directions of their movement may not be predicted as each member pays attention to the performer in the manner unpredicted neither to the performer nor to other members of the audience.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to investigate the fixity and fluidity of the performer, audience, and the orature performance space. The data shows that although such concepts as performer, audience and performance space are explained in the manner which emphasises their fixity, in fact, they are relatively fluid. There are issues which orature scholars have overlooked in their analyses. It has been shown that the notions such as performer and audience can change their roles fast and sometimes even there is no clear boundary that separates them. Likewise, in some contexts, it has been explained that the performer and members of the audience are one and the same in the same performative event at the same time; in such contexts, the statuses of the performer and audience completely disappear. In addition, it has been demonstrated how fluid the concept of audience is in the transitory and semi-transitory orature performance spaces. It can be argued that these concepts need more detailed explanations and analyses to avoid generalisation which might mislead readers as a result of superimposing foreign concepts without a careful examination, as stated at the beginning of this paper. As orature is a relatively young field of study and that Africa is one of the

continents which is enormously rich in orature, many new concepts should be expected to emerge from the continent by researchers who seek to deliver detailed examination of African orature. Otherwise, the wealth of orature in Africa will not contribute to the world if all aspects are viewed from the Western perspective.

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