

# Introduction to Topics in Theatre and Film Studies

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Many universities and colleges offer programs in theatre and film, sometimes under different departmental names like Performing Arts or Creative Arts. Regardless of the specific title, these departments generally follow a similar curriculum, introducing students to a range of courses that are then broken down into specific topics. This journal edition focuses on key topics within theatre and film studies, aiming to enhance understanding for both students and scholars. Given the vastness of the field, this edition presents a selection of topics, with the hope of expanding on these and introducing new areas of research in future publications editions

Directing courses are a staple in the academic journey of theatre and film students, offered at various levels of their education. Furthermore, scholarly research is dedicated to exploring and documenting advancements in directing techniques within both theatre and film. This highlights the continuous evolution and importance of directing as a field of study and practice. In this journal edition, Oliogu Obado's article introduces directing for stage and screen in Nigeria as a dynamic blend of traditional African performance elements and Western techniques, shaped by its postcolonial history. Unlike the Western focus on the director as the sole creative authority, his contribution claim that Nigerian directing (stage and screen) emphasizes communal creativity and cultural heritage, an approach that integrates rituals, music, dance, and storytelling, creating a hybrid artistic environment.

Theatre history is another area students and researchers must come across. In this journal edition, Kester and Lugard narration focuses on the evolution of drama and theatre from ancient time. The duo explained that the history of drama and theatre is traced back to ancient civilizations. They explain that drama and theatre were integral to rituals and celebrations in Africa, Asia, and Egypt. According to them, in ancient Africa, performances involved music, dance, and masks, connecting communities with the divine. They further extended their discussion to the Medieval European theatre which was heavily influenced by the church, with liturgical dramas and mystery plays teaching biblical stories. The Renaissance, according to them brought a revival of classical drama, exemplified by playwrights like William Shakespeare. The 18th and 19th centuries saw the rise of Romanticism and Realism, influencing theatre with dramatists like Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov. They mentioned that Artistic movements such as Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Avant-Garde also shaped the development of drama and theatre, each responding to its cultural and historical context. They noted that Western drama originated in ancient Greece, particularly during the festival of Dionysus, with Thespis being the first known actor. Their paper extended to Roman drama which adapted Greek plays, adding musical elements and Roman flair. Coming to Africa, they narrated that traditional African drama, rooted in local cultures and traditions, features storytelling, religious festivals, and rituals. However, they stood with writers like Oscar Bocket and Hildy, F.J who believe that the earliest known permanent theatre was the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens. They also narrated key figures in the development of drama and theatre to include Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Carlo Goldoni, and Gotthold Ephraim whose contributions

have significantly shaped the art form. Their narration also touches the Renaissance period which saw a revival of classical themes, while the English Renaissance, particularly the Elizabethan era, produced ground breaking works by Shakespeare and Marlowe. And that Italian Renaissance drama included humanist drama and *commedia dell'arte*, while French Renaissance drama was influenced by neoclassical ideals. This article is a marvellous piece for students and researchers of theatre history. This article provides insights into the key transformations, influences, and significant milestones that have shaped the theatrical landscape over centuries. It serves as a valuable resource for students and researchers seeking to understand the rich and complex history of theatre.

In theatre, an actor's body serves as a vital instrument of communication, while in film, tools like camera angles, editing, lighting, and sound design accentuate non-verbal cues. Ultimately, non-verbal communication shapes narrative meaning and emotional depth in both theatre and film, functioning alongside or even in opposition to spoken language. It is on this basis that Jonathan Arum and Cornelius Eze Onyekaba contributed an article: non-verbal communication in theatre and film. In it, they stated that Non-verbal communication is a crucial aspect of human interaction, particularly in theatre and film, where it often conveys more meaning than spoken language. In these visual mediums, elements like facial expressions, body language, gestures, posture, spatial relationships (proxemics), costumes, and silence become powerful tools for storytelling. Their article mentioned that non-verbal expression has been central to performance, evolving from the exaggerated masks of ancient Greek theatre to the subtle facial expressions which is now captured in modern cinema. The article mentioned that the effectiveness of non-verbal communication lies in its dynamic interaction with other aesthetic elements such as lighting, costume, sound design, and *mise-en-scène*. While non-verbal communication is neither universal nor fixed, its interpretation is mediated by cultural and contextual frameworks. The work explored key components of non-verbal communication to include kinesics, proxemics, haptics, chronemics, appearance, and paralinguistics. Also, the article acknowledges major proponents like Konstantin Stanislavski, Jerzy Grotowski, Antonin Artaud, Rudolf Laban, Charlie Chaplin, Jacques Lecoq and Peter Brook whose works have significantly contributed to understanding non-verbal communication in theatre and film.

Josephine Awele odunze explores Choreography and Kinesthetic in her article where she highlighted that choreography, the art of structuring movement, is fundamental to dance and other performance arts, stating further that it relies heavily on kinesthetics, the awareness of body movement and position, which is crucial for both performers and audiences. she defines choreography as a form of "movement writing" that combines artistic vision, cultural codes, and physical vocabulary, and Kinesthetic as the awareness that allows individuals to sense and interpret movement internally and externally, fostering a visceral connection between performers and spectators. Her historical exploration shows that choreography was embedded in ritual and communal performances, serving as a mode of cultural transmission. Noting that modern pioneers like Rudolf Laban, Martha Graham, and Merce Cunningham expanded choreography into a scientific study of movement and an avant-garde artistic practice. Her article also mentioned that in African contexts, choreography is intertwined with rhythm, communal participation, and symbolic gestures, encoding history, spirituality, and collective memory. However, that contemporary discourse examines choreography and kinesthetics through embodied cognition and phenomenology, highlighting their role as practical skills and theoretical frameworks. She explain in the paper that the diversity of choreographic practice is evident in traditional, classical,

modernist, contemporary, and digital forms, stating that traditional choreography serves religious and communal purposes, while classical and modernist forms prioritize individual artistry. Contemporary choreography on the other hand emphasizes improvisation and inter-disciplinarity. While Digital choreography, popularized by social media, democratizes movement creation. She narrated that choreography serves multiple functions, including artistic expression, communication, social cohesion, education, political activism, and therapy. An art form that organizes movement to evoke beauty, convey narratives, foster social bonds, enhance learning, express political views, and promote healing. The article further explicate that choreography is structured through the elements of body, space, time, energy, and relationship. The body is the instrument of movement, space defines pathways and orientations, time encompasses rhythm and tempo, energy dictates movement quality, and relationship involves connections between bodies and environments. One area of strength of Josephine's paper is the listing of key figures like Rudolf Laban, Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, and Germaine Acogny who have shaped choreography through their innovative techniques and theories, and by mentioning that in Nigeria, Hubert Ogunde and Peter Badejo have integrated choreography into theatre and theorized African dance as an intellectual practice.

Playwriting: The Essential by Juliana Omoifo Okoh and Obire, U. Dennis explores playwriting as a unique form of creative writing that involves crafting compelling stories, developing characters, and formatting scripts specifically for live performance. While sharing similarities with other storytelling mediums like novels, film, and radio, stage plays have distinct characteristics. Key differences lie in the live performance aspect, audience proximity, reliance on dialogue, and limited locations. Different drama genres exist, including tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, melodrama, farce, fantasy, opera, historical drama, and docudrama, each with its own style and conventions. In their article, they explain that playwriting process involves brainstorming ideas, developing a synopsis and outline, and incorporating stage directions. Also stating that formatting a play script is crucial for clarity and professionalism, including elements like a title page, cast list, setting, and properly formatted dialogue and stage directions. The article mentioned that plays can take different forms, such as one-act, two-act, or three-act plays, each with varying lengths and complexities, and that plot structure typically follows a pattern of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Noting that conflict is a driving force, and elements like foreshadowing and suspense enhance the dramatic action. Characters and characterization are essential, with various character types like dynamic, static, and archetypal characters, each serving specific functions. Language and dialogue are critical, conveying character, advancing the plot, and revealing subtext. Concluding that finalizing a play involves rewriting, editing, and seeking feedback to refine the script for production.

Obire Dennis and Ogboru Rita's contribution introduces absurdism as a philosophical and artistic movement that reflects the belief that human existence is inherently meaningless and chaotic. Originating around the 1940s, particularly after World War II, absurdism found expression in drama through the Theatre of the Absurd. This theatrical form challenges conventional dramatic structures and explores themes of hopelessness and the futility of human efforts to find order in a disordered universe. Key figures like Albert Camus and playwrights such as Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco are highlighted for their contributions. Their paper also touches on how Nigerian playwrights like Wole Soyinka and Ola Rotimi have explored absurdist concepts in their works. The core elements of absurdism, including illogical plots, nonsensical language, ambiguous

characters, minimalist settings, and tragicomedy, are examined in detail, using examples from plays like Elo Ibagere's *Random Talks* and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Their paper concludes by emphasizing how these elements collectively convey the meaninglessness of human existence and challenge traditional theatrical norms.

From ancient Greek dramas to modern cinema, music has evolved to enhance narrative depth and emotional impact. In theatre, live orchestration and vocal performances shape the mood and pacing, while in film, scores guide audience perception and emotional response through techniques like leitmotifs and synchronized scoring. Arum Jonathan, Akpojivi Ogbe, and Morione Joan's article explores music as a fundamental element in theatre and film, serving as more than just background noise; but a crucial tool for storytelling, emotional expression, and audience engagement.

Tekena Gasper Mark's article explores the importance of understanding genres in both theatre and film. It emphasizes that a solid grasp of genre is crucial for students and scholars, aiding in the interpretation and categorization of artistic works based on shared themes, styles, and structures. The article highlights that genre theory provides a framework for understanding how texts and performances are organized, interpreted, and circulated, thereby mediating relationships among creators, texts, and audiences. While the stability of genres is debated, it is generally accepted that genres evolve through repetition, adaptation, and innovation. The article traces the origins of theatre genres to classical antiquity, where tragedy and comedy were established as foundational forms. Film, shaped by industrial and technological advancements, further expanded this evolution. Mark examines specific theatre genres, including tragedy, comedy, and farce, as well as modern hybrid forms like tragicomedy and melodrama. He also acknowledges the existence of culturally specific genres, such as the Alárinjọ theatre in indigenous African traditions. Finally, the article touches on film genres like melodrama, slapstick, and Westerns, noting their established narrative formulas.

Ovunda C. Ihunwo's article, "Introduction to the Art of Acting" underscores the enduring significance of stage acting as a foundational skill, even as screen acting gains popularity. The article emphasizes the need for 21st-century actors to be versatile across stage, screen, and radio, as the fundamental acting principles remain consistent. Ihunwo defines acting beyond mere imitation, framing it as living truthfully under imaginary circumstances. He identifies four key obstacles to effective acting: self-consciousness, self-righteousness, the pressure to be perfect, and cynicism. The article also highlights the collaborative nature of successful performances, emphasizing the importance of a strong script, talented co-actors, a visionary director, comprehensive rehearsals, and effective technical elements like lighting and set design. Ihunwo stresses the importance of the actor's primary tools: the body and the voice, advocating for flexibility, awareness, expressiveness, and physical fitness. He also touches on vocal training techniques, including breathing exercises, articulation practice, and resonance development.

Parents and students who study theatre and film in universities and colleges often ask questions about career opportunities for graduates. For celerity of career choices and progression for theatre and film graduates, Onyekaba Cornelius, Alao Barakat and Adegbola Mitchel contributed an article on Career Opportunities for Theatre and Film Arts Graduates in Nigeria where they stated that the Nigerian creative industry, particularly theatre and film, significantly contributes to the nation's economy and cultural identity. Stating that Nollywood's global recognition and the resurgence of stage productions highlight the demand for skilled professionals.

They however, stated that Theatre and Film Arts graduates face challenges in translating academic training into sustainable careers due to rapidly evolving industry demands. Their article, explores career opportunities for these graduates in Nigeria, examining how personal attributes align with professional roles within the creative economy. It identifies key practitioners in various fields, including acting, directing, production design, and academia, providing insights into building successful careers. The article stated that career paths for Theatre and Film Arts graduates include performance and acting, directing and scriptwriting, technical direction and production, arts administration, and academia. Noting that each path requires a unique blend of skills and adaptability to the evolving creative landscape. Their contribution further emphasizes the need for curriculum enhancement, internships, mentorship programs, and stronger industry-academia collaboration.

The contribution of Blessing Adjeketa provides an introduction to the field of Digital Humanities (DH), addressing the fundamental question of its definition and exploring its scope and impact, particularly in the context of its emerging recognition in places like Nigeria. It begins by defining the core components: the humanities, the concept of digital, and the process of digitalization. The humanities, rooted in the study of human culture and civilization, are undergoing a transformation through the integration of digital technology, influencing research methodologies, funding opportunities, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The article traces the evolution of DH from Humanities Computing, highlighting its interdisciplinary nature and the ongoing debate surrounding its definition. The paper made it clear that DH involves applying digital tools and methodologies to humanities research, enabling scholars to explore questions in innovative ways. His paper emphasizes the collaborative nature of DH projects and the use of computational methods to analyze large datasets of cultural information. It also highlights the opportunities DH presents for re-evaluating the role of humanities in society and connecting with the past in new and immersive ways. Ultimately, his paper contribution shows that DH broadens understanding of global cultures, fosters intellectual exchange, and compels scholars to revisit core questions about knowledge creation and pedagogical approaches.

No doubt that this special edition of the AHABA Journal of Creative Arts focuses on topics vital to the fields of theatre and film. It emphasizes the importance of these topics in fostering learning, critical thinking, and artistic growth. This edition serves as a valuable resource, providing a repository of ideas, theoretical perspectives, and references for scholars and practitioners alike.