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COSTUME AND MAKEUP AS INDISPENSABLE ARTS OF THE THEATRE

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ABSTRACT

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Theatre is an ancient art, with costume and makeup being integral from its inception. These elements are key in bringing a play to life, acting as nonverbal communicators on stage. Costumes and makeup, crafted by designers, convey hidden messages through their shapes, colors, and textures, making an immediate visual impact. Collaboration between the costume designer, director, and technical crew ensures these elements fit seamlessly into the production. Costume and makeup serve to personify characters and enhance the theme of the performance, making them essential tools for communication with the audience. Despite their significance, the emphasis in theatre often leans heavily on dialogue, overshadowing the visual storytelling power of costumes and makeup. This project aims to explore why costume and makeup are indispensable in theatre, particularly in their role in setting, educating, entertaining, and conveying hidden meanings to the audience.

Key words: Costume, Makeup, Designer, Collaboration, Theatre Art, communicators

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Introduction

In their function as a medium of play interpretation and communication, costume and makeup re-enforces the dramatic situation, thereby making reflecting the environment of the performance. Therefore, the study of costume and makeup is valuable both on aesthetic ground and the mirror of time and society in which it is used.

Basically, this study is aimed at facilitating and highlighting the importance and functions of costume and makeup as inevitable tools in the promotion and development of theatrical performances. Secondly, it is aimed at re – orientating the attitudes of costumiers, directors, actors and actresses, students, scholars and playwrights towards the use of costumes in theatrical performances. Over the years, much emphasis have been attributed to dialogues and actions in theatre articulations. Hence, in most occasion little amount of information and attentions have been ascribed to costume and makeup in most performances. Consequently, this project intends to increase the numbers of existing literatures on the discipline in order to promote useful interest in the field of costume and makeup.

Again, this study is an attempt to emphasize the fact that costume and makeup can be used as part of the elements of communication in a given play text and naturally will assist a producer or director in the realization of a given production.

The main objective of this research is to establish a more interpretative depth to the value of costume and makeup in stage productions. However, this research is also geared towards interrogating the possible dangers that could be encountered by costume and makeup designers and artists in producing for theatrical performances in the future. Consequently, this study intends to broaden our knowledge on the aesthetics of costume and makeup and the need for costumiers and make-

up artistes to initiate a critical and creative approach in handling the arts.

As already established in the abstract, costume in drama (Theatre) include all the clothes, carry on and accessories worn by actors and actresses in a play, film or movie to complement the features in their character or to make them look like somebody or something else; whereas, makeup is an artificial substance usually used to complement the actor and actress facial characteristics or to disguise them. It is also essentially used to help fit the actors or actress into character. Therefore, the art of makeup needs to work in synergy with actor's costume. We shall now look at the issues jointly and severally by analyzing related literatures.

The study explains the roles or functions of costume and makeup in the theatre. This research includes some visual presentation. Since costumes are visual elements, the need for the use of pictures are necessary in order to aid understanding in the entire presentation of data. In a nutshell, this study will deal with the importance of costume and makeup and how they help in the realization of theatre productions as they both show the aesthetics and semiotics in the performances.

Definition of Terms

With the view of giving appropriate understanding to meaning of words as used in the project topic, it is important to define some words and terminologies used within the context of this study:

Costume: these are clothes worn by the performers. Costume are the most personal aspect of the visual elements in theatre. Costume can also be seen as live scenery by an actor or actress in a particular role in a particular role in a particular play; so acting is

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impersonation – not reality, thus it needs costume for it is the exterior reflection of actors’

impersonation, which assumes that the person portrayed, is someone other than the actor himself. Generally, costumes are clothes worn by actors and actresses in a play or film/movie or worn by somebody to make them look like something else.

Makeup: this actually deals with expressiveness and facial arrangements and decorations. Makeup helps to create the visual appearance of the characters, making them more believable to the audience. Makeup can transform the actors, making them appear older, younger, or more glamorous. It can also be used to accentuate the actor’s features, making them more visible to the audience, even from a distance.

Indispensable: anything that is indispensable is so important that you cannot do anything meaningful without it. It means that costume and makeup are very essential to every theatrical performances and productions. So the arts of costume and make up should be taken seriously in the theatre.

Theatre: the theatre can be seen as a building where theatrical activities are organized. Theatre is also a collaborative art, where the playwright, artistic director, technical designers, performers and audience come together to make a complete theatre experience.

The Art of Costume/Makeup in the Theatre

As already established so far, costume in drama (Theatre) include all the clothes, carry on and accessories worn by actors and actresses in a play, film or movie to complement the features in their character or to make them look like somebody or something else; whereas, makeup is an artificial substance usually used to complement the actor and actress facial characteristics or to disguise them. It is also

essentially used to help fit the actors or actress into character. Therefore, the art of makeup needs to work in synergy with actor’s costume.

We shall now look at the issues jointly and severally by analyzing related literatures.

Costume can generally be defined as the special kind of clothing worn by actors and actresses on stage in order to aid dramatic actions and interpretations. In combination with other aspects of stage craft, costumes can help actors portray characters and their contexts as well as communicate information about the historical era, geography and season or weather of the theatre performance. In the theatre, costume is very powerful. It creates the first impression with the audience. Therefore, costume and makeup plays an important role in actualization of a play on stage. Since theatre is an ancient art, costume and makeup in the theatre is as old as theatre itself. So, costume and make up as integral part of the theatre can be conceptualized in the historical perspectives. Costume design has a very long history. The ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus, who lived in the 5th century BC, created specific costumes to wear when performing his tragedies. In those days, theatrical costumes were an innovation of Greek poet Thespis in the 6th century BCE and hence theatrical costumes were long called “the robes of Thespis”. The followings are a brief history of the use costumes:

Athenians on Costumes: as the history goes, Athenians spent lavishly on the production and costumes at annual drama contests. Due to their ritualized style of theatre, many masks were used – giving each character a specific look and they varied depending on whether they were used for comedy or dramatic purposes.

Middle Ages in Europe: during the late middle ages in Europe, dramatic enactment of Bible stories were prevalent and hence actual

Christian vestments were worn as costume. In the Elizabethan era, costumes and makeup became the most important visual elements. Garments were very expensive as they were made from the finest fabrics. This practice

however continued for a long time until art began to copy life and realistic characteristic started getting full attention.

The importance of costume and makeup to theatrical performances can never be over emphasized. They remain as the most personal and non-verbal form among other visual elements of drama. Costume and makeup have values of their own, adding colour, shape, texture and symbols to the overall effects created on stage. Accessories such as masks, walking sticks, head gear, hairdo, makeup and personal items like bracelets and necklaces are important components of costumes. Consequently, there is no gain saying that costumes and makeup aid the character's actions on stage. They portray traits of the actors and actresses, depict the moods, and distinguish occupations and so on. In plays showing fable or myth, costumes have the added functions of providing spectacles on stage.

In the theatre, the costume designer works closely with the director to create a visual aesthetic that complements production. In addition, costume and makeup design can impact the movement and physicality of the actors. If a costume is too tight or heavy, it may impede the actor's performance. A well designed costume can help the actor or actress move more fluidly and comfortably on stage. Whereas, makeup is another critical aspect of theatrical productions; it help to create the visual appearance of the characters, making them more believable to the audience. Makeup can transform the actors, actresses making them appear older, younger, or more

glamorous. Makeup can also be used to enhance the character's personality and help to tell the story. For example, a villain's makeup may be more exaggerated and darker than a hero's makeup, helping to visually distinguish the two characters. Makeup can also be used to accentuate the actor's features, making them more visible to the audience, even from a distance.

One of the most important aspects of costume and makeup is attention to details. Every element must be carefully considered to ensure that it is accurate and authentic to the time, period, setting, and characters. This includes not only the design and creation of the costumes and makeup, but also the application and maintenance of them throughout the performance. Attention to details is important because it helps to create a cohesive and immersive experience for the audience. A well – designed costume and makeup can help the audience to believe in the reality of the story and become emotionally invested in the characters. Ameh Dennis Akoh extrapolates thus:

The use of make-up and costumes in a play productions go a long way to identify and establish the environment, personalities of the characters and interpret with meaning, the ideology of the playwright and the directorial concept without the use of dialogue... the costumier and makeup artists are indispensable members of the team and should bear this in mind remembering that they are part of the industry and whatever they do affects the perception and formation of opinion and personnel of the viewers (Akoh, 173 – 174).

Akoh further contended that: Theatre is a collaborative enterprise relying on the spoken words as well as the visual elements of costume, makeup, set, lighting, sound, and properties to communicate effectively to the audience... costume and makeup as visual

elements are majorly the agents of interpretation and home drivers of the intended message... [So] costume and makeup are basically means of identification... [Thus]... the costume and makeup are salient information given about the characters who may have never have the chance of giving such information verbally about themselves to the viewers... the costumier and makeup artists are indispensable

members of the team and should bear this in mind remembering that they are part of the [theatre] industry and whatever they do affect the perception and formation of opinion and personnel of the viewers (723 – 724).

In furtherance of his postulations Akoh also notes: Costume design may serve several functions. It may help to establish time and place. They may indicate a particular country, a particular kind of place; costumes may establish the characters social status by distinguishing between lower and upper class, between rich and poor or between rich and poor or more and less affluent members of the same group. Costume may identify occupation or life style. Costumes usually indicate gender and may reflect age... costume and makeup are worn by actors and given life by the actions of the actor (727 – 728).

On the relevance and importance of costume and makeup, Utoh (2006) observes: Costume and makeup are the visual elements in any traditional African performance... costume and makeup occupy such important position in the traditional theatre that they are universally regarded as indispensable aids to performances... historically, theatre scholarship tells us that costume and makeup among ancient Egyptians were specialized arts. The arts of costume and makeup has remained essential to theatre practice since its formal engagement as a craft that aids in the illumination of character for the actor as movements is the natural way by which dance

an ancient and natural way of expressing physical emotion (Utoh (2006), 184 – 185).

On costume, Utoh (2006) argues: We makeup for what we do not have. We desire to have looked a particular way; had a particular colour and volume of hair, and since we do not have it naturally, we make up for what we do not have ... it is proper for the actor to have his facial features undistorted by whatever powerful

light rays are used on stage. This is the essence of that make-up; and when makeup prevents this distinction, this ugly and twisted looks of the actor's make-up allows for the aesthetic to be revealed... [Hence], it is in character depiction that makeup asserts its value. It is also in character make-up that the men are usually separated from the boys as to the ability of the designer (161 – 163).

In the presentation under the topic of The Aesthetic in Costume and makeup, Effiong states: The world in its current form have assumed a very sophisticated posture, such that cloths are not just worn for covering the skin, but more so, to induce appeal... costumes are worn by actors for several reasons, namely to cover nakedness, provide warmth for the body, to show the status of the character played, to distinguish sexes, to identify cultures, and to depict the period of the production. Costumes should be made to confirm the recommended status upon the characters played (151).

Akoh made it clear that: Make-up can serve several functions. First, make-up characterizes; it can be age, state of health, race. It may suggest profession, basic attitudes and self-regard. Make-up aids expressiveness by emphasizing feedback features and making them more visible to the audience. Make-up restores beauty and forms that are sometimes diminished on stage by lighting... [And whereas], dress [costume] is a form of non-

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verbal communication, which gives mental clues to a person's social identity (727).

The 19th century may be regarded as the period that gave birth to modern theatrical make-up because the art becomes more detailed towards the end of the century perhaps because of the introduction of gas followed by electricity, which made it possible to concentrate intense light on the stage. Ogungbesan and Olaoyo (2023) reasons that:

Social responses and first impressions are influenced through clothing and makeup choices as they both communicate extensive and complex information. It is important to note that people who dress similar to one another have more effect on each other than those who do not and those who wear formal clothing elicit a different response than those who do not. The significant roles played by costume and makeup in the realization of objectives cannot be over emphasized (196).

Chidera Nwafor in "Dressing to Represent..." agrees that: Garments hold vital information about the wearer. They communicate the wearer's personality, worldview, cultural and traditional background. A group of people are culturally and traditionally distinguished through their clothing which shapes their identity. This implies that the function and relevance of clothing [costume] in the identification process of an individual or members of a society cannot be overstated (204).

The Basic Essence of Costume and Make-up in the Theatre

As already established above, costume design is a crucial part of theatrical productions. The costumes worn by the actors can help to establish the time, period and setting of the play. They can also reveal the personality of

each character and help to tell the story. In the process, the costume designer works closely with the director to create a visual aesthetics that complements the production. In terms of makeup, makeup is another critical aspect of any theatrical productions. It definitely helps to create the visual appearance of the characters, making them more believable to the audience. This is because; makeup can transform the actors, making them appear older, younger, or even more glamorous. In essence, makeup can also be used to enhance the character's personality and help to tell the story.

One of the most important aspects of costume and makeup design is attention to details. Every element must be carefully considered to ensure that it is accurate and authentic to the time, period, settings and characters: this includes not only the design and creation of the costume and makeups, but also the application and maintenance of them throughout the performance. Attention to details is important because it helps to create a cohesive and immersive experience for the audience. The indispensable nature of costume and makeup can be understandable in that a well-designed costume and makeup can help the audience to believe in the reality of the story and become emotionally invested in the characters. In fact, it is so imperative that the roles behind the scenes or stage like costume and makeup are vital in bringing the story to life and immersing the audience in the world of the play or any other theatrical production and performances. Consequently, a successful production requires a collaborative effort between the director, actors/actresses costume and makeup designers to create a cohesive and engaging performance.

Summary

Going back to history, costume and makeup played a central role in the theatrical production of the Greek classical period. The designers of those periods made use of colours,

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fabrics, lines and masks to create character portraits well suited to the mood of the plays. Plays were costumed according to genres. Masks were essential aspects of the costume of all performers during that period. They were made of linen, wood, and fitted over the entire head of the performers. The costume practices of the Roman theatre were not very exclusive or original, especially in the area of tragic and comic costumes, because they were derived from the Greek theatre. For the Medieval theatre, costumes were treated symbolically rather than realistically. Conversely, in both the formal and popular theatres of Renaissance,

costume played an important part in creating the scenic illusion.

In the popular theatres, they served to identify the characters, as well as to add to the stage decorations. During the 19th century, costume and makeup developed authenticity and historical accuracy in line and details adapted to the configuration of the contemporary performer without necessarily presenting an exact duplicate of the original appearance. However, some producers tried costume reforms during the late 18th and early nineteenth centuries, a genuine and lasting reform was only made possible through the efforts of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, whose exhaustive researches and careful and accurate costuming in the theatre had become a universally accepted practice. Therefore, costume and makeup in the theatre was now conceived as essential contributing elements to the whole mode and style of a play; thereby the assertion here, that costume and makeup have been indispensable to the theatre from the

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As visualized in the numerous robust indigenous theatrical traditions of most societies in Nigeria – such as religious ritual enactment, festival performances, initiation ceremonies,

storytelling sessions, masquerade displays and so on. In these performances, indigenous actors, costumes, make-up, masks, songs, mimes, folktales, dances have become the major high points of the communication of this theatre among various communities in Nigeria; thus, bringing to light the fact that costume and makeup emerged concurrently with indigenous actors, dancers and musicians in the theatrical performances in Nigeria. No wonder Adedeji (1986) asserts that:

The indigenous Nigerian Theatre generally as an activity in which an actor takes a role other than himself through mime, speech, songs or movement with the use of performing aids (costume, makeup, properties, mask) conveys or communicates a message to an audience which may be visible or invisible participatory and non-participatory (103).

Conclusion

Whatever a theatrical production is set in the present, past, in a distant location, or in an imaginary time and place, costume designers and makeup artists collaborate with the director and the production designer to tell the story. Actors and actresses bring the fictional characters in the play to life; and the makeup artists and costumier assist in the transformation. On a stage, the audience sees actors from the top of their head to the bottom of their feet. That is why theatrical costumes and makeup use bold colours and large design elements so they can be recognized from the last row of even the orchestra. Costumiers and makeup artists in the theatre work closely with their directors, set designers, and lighting designers to formulate a consistent look for every play or performance.

Both the costumiers and makeup artists work with the production designer, actors and actresses as well as with their own crews and with each other; to create a total look that conveys the play's themes, settings and moods.

Costume and makeup functioned as storytelling tool in the 2023 Convocation Play by communicating subtle details of each character's personality and history quickly and economically to the audience. The costumes helped the actors and actresses to leave their own personalities behind and become new and believable people on stage. This is why costume and makeup are created to be worn by one specific actor, as one specific character, in one specific scene.

In *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, the costume design process began with a careful study of the play. The script described the action; what happens in the scene, time period; when the action takes place, the

location; where the action takes place, and the number and identity of the characters in each scene. Costumes do not have to exactly duplicate the play's period, but they need to look right to the audience. Costumiers may exaggerate colour, style, and silhouette for dramatic effects.

When a play covers several decades, or is set in a distant location, costumes help the audience know when and where each scene takes place. In real life, people do not always wear an outfit in which everything is brand new. A teenage girl might wear a favourite well-worn skirt, a pair of earrings from the local mall, and a birthday scarf from her best friend. Although the audience meets play characters when the play starts, like real people; the characters must seem to have lived before the story begins. Costumes are part of the visual composition of each frame of play.

Costumes are also used to focus attention on the major actors and the important action in a scene. Costumes can change the shape of an actor's body to reflect the period and personality of the character. Revealing, close-fitting clothes look sexy, while clothes that

hide the body could make a character seem conservative or shy. Soft silhouettes lend characters a vulnerable or compliant quality, while stiff, tailored clothing conveys authority. Shoes also affect the posture and gait of actors. Like costumiers, makeup artists are storytellers. Whether the script requires actors and actresses to look beautiful or ragged, younger or older, or like monsters or other fantastic beings, makeup artists and hairstylists help the audiences believe that what they see on the play on stage is real. Makeup is at the same time, is a combination of art and science. It is both corrective, covering flaws and emphasizing attractive features and creative; enabling actors and actress to inhabit almost any type of character. Theatrical makeup that is used to hide pores, wrinkles, and other facial imperfections must withstand close scrutiny

when magnified on stage. Makeup and hairstyles must look natural, but be durable enough to last for long hours under hot lights while actors fight, kiss and sweat. Good makeup design requires research, experimentation and sometime inventing makeup products or appliances.

It is worthy of note that makeup artists and hairstylists do more than make actors and actresses look attractive. They work closely with costumiers to visualize the complete character. Again, makeup artists try to reflect the time, period, lifestyle and the social status of the characters.

Generally, special effects makeup involves the most elaborate and time-consuming procedures. It includes creating blood, knife wounds, bullet wounds, and other grisly effects, as well as deformities, monsters and other worldly beings. Often, contemporary special effects makeup involves digital enhancements or manipulations. For example, animatronics – remote-controlled systems that use mechanical devices to produce a lifelike performance from puppets or models, are

sometimes part of special effects makeup. So, there is no doubt that theatrical makeup enhances the features of the performers so the audience at the back of the house can connect with them, and it brings to life a world of fantasy created by the playwright.

Furthermore, many different elements influence costume design, including the time and place in which the story is set; the relationships between the different characters and the wishes of the director. Regarding to plays set in the past, costume designers study books, photos, paintings, newspapers, and magazines to learn exactly what clothes from that time looked like. Costumes can tell you a lot about the characters in a stage play. The fabrics, fit and style of each costume are all carefully chosen by the designer to help the audience understand the characters. For example, a wealthy person would dress in designer outfits, while a poorer one might wear hand-me-down clothes.

Recommendations

From this study on the indispensability of costume and makeup in the theatre, the following recommendations have been advanced by this research work:

1. The relevance of costume and makeup should never be underestimated in the theatre, but rather appreciation and attention should be given to its essences so that the audiences can easily relate to the story of the performances.
2. A lot effort must be put into costume design and production to meet the necessary need for character interpretation.
3. In the articulation of budgeting for the entire theatre productions, proper financial consideration must be given to procurements and designing of the
4. appropriate costume and the adequate makeup kits.
5. In the use of makeup, extra care must be taken to ensure safety. This is because some of the contents and bye products of these makeup compliments are made up of some soft and terrible chemicals that could be injurious to the skin in the long run when it is not well managed.
6. In anticipation of the unbundling of the Department of Theatre Arts, frantic efforts should be made to the creation of the Department of Costume and Makeup so that detailed training can be handed down to creative arts students and practitioners.

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