

**THE ART OF STAGE DIRECTING: A CASE OF THREE KENYAN
DIRECTORS**

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M66/24471/2013

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS
(FILM AND THEATRE ARTS) IN THE SCHOOL OF CREATIVE
ARTS, FILM & MEDIA STUDIES OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**

MAY 2018

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for award of a degree in any other University.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Parents, John KahuroWainaina and Mary-JecintaWambui, my sister Vienna MugureKahuro, my loving wife Cynthia Muthoni and my beautiful angel Aart Casey Wambui.

Acknowledgement

Most High God for his mercies, favour and grace; without him I wouldn't have come this far. Support from my parents John Kahuro and Mary-Jecinta Wambui, my one and only sister Vienna Mugure Kahuro and my wife Cynthia Muthoni.

Gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. John Mugubi and Dr. Emmanuel Shikuku for your sacrifice, support and mentorship throughout my entire master's journey. Asante sana to my able teachers, Prof. Richard Hess for your inspiration, encouragement and support. Rachel Diang'a, Dr. David Kakuta Mulwa, and Dr. Wasambo Were, you will always be remembered and appreciated.

I also thank my peers and classmates, Gabriel Kimani, Michael Ndeti, Eutycus Mwangi, Eric Abuga, Erastus Sorobi, Steve Wekesa and Fr. Charles for the immense support and encouragement.

May the Lord bless you abundantly!

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviations that have been used in this document will stand as follows

TAT – Traditional African Theatre

MAT- Moscow Art Theatre

PIC - Picture

Operational Definition of Terms

The following terms that are used in this document are defined as follows;

1. **Western Theatre** – a collaborative form of fine art that uses live performers to present the experience of a real or imagined event before a live audience through gesture, speech, song, music, and dance on a stage.
2. **Traditional African Theatre** – an art, concerned almost exclusively with live performances in which the action is precisely planned to create a coherent and significant sense of drama, as it is presented in sub-Saharan Africa.
3. **Urban African Theatre** – theatre that draws on indigenous performance traditions including dance, music, storytelling and mime, and combines them with ideas of drama drawn from experiences of Western colonialism, to create theatre forms which are syncretic and inclusive in both form and content.
4. **Auteur theory** - “Auteur” is a French word for “author.” The principles of the auteur theory are based on the assumption that the director is the controlling force in the structure of a dramatic production.
5. **Director** (Used to refer to a stage director) - is a person in the theatre field who oversees and orchestrates the mounting of a theatre production (a play, an opera, a musical, or a devised piece of work) by unifying various endeavours and aspects of production.
6. **Director’s vision** – What that director in particular can bring to a project that someone else can't. An experience of seeing the final product of a dramatic production.
7. **Verfremdungseffekt**- It is known as the Alienation effect or the A effect. This is a technique which “estranges” the audience and forces them to question the political and social realities of the situations being presented in the play. It can also be translated to mean “to make strange”.

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Abstract

This study interrogates the directing techniques/styles used by three Kenyan stage directors: Joseph Murungu a guru in the Schools and Colleges and Universities Drama Festival director, Sammy Mwangi of Heartstrings Entertainment and Andy Ruri of Sparks Theatre Company. The study examines how these directors use their directing techniques to convey thematic concerns, and the factors influencing the techniques/styles used. The study has been informed by the Auteur Theory – a theory that is appropriated in theatre studies – which refers to the director as the author of a film/theatre production. The theory argues that the point of view – and the implementation of the point of view of a dramatic production – comes almost entirely from the director rather than from a writer, the audience or the text. The study used observation of rehearsals and the performance, recording of the production and interviews as the primary means of data collection for analysis and interpretation. Textual analysis was applied to the recorded texts. Secondary data was obtained by sourcing materials from the libraries, online, published and unpublished works that are related to the study. This study foregrounds that directors with academic background and vast research in theatre have a wide and rich range of directing techniques, and that Konstantin Stanislavski system acting is the most common acting style used in Kenya. This study also establishes that theatre directors try to influence the society by addressing the vices that affect the people and society at large.

1.0 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the following: background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, rationale and significance, and scope and limitations. The chapter reviews relevant literature in the field of theatre directing. Further, suitability of auteur theory is explained. Finally, the chapter discusses the research design with regard to population and sampling, data collection and data analysis.

1.2 Background of the study

Theatre in Kenya traces its roots back to the pre-colonial period with what is commonly known as Traditional African Theatre (TAT). Theatre was an intrinsic social activity rooted in people's daily life and was simply enacted in the various activities that the community members undertook. With the coming of the missionaries and the colonizers, Traditional African Theatre started to diminish as they discouraged it; some described it as immoral and viewed it as primitive and backward. The colonial government forced people to act in halls and church buildings. The Kenya National Theatre was built and was largely dominated by performances featuring foreigners and Western plays (Mugubi&Kebaya, 2012).

Traditional African Theatre is based on religion, folklore and mythology. It is a kind of live performance as well as an aesthetic activity with music, song, dance, and spectacle. The early tribal rituals grew to involve elements that are considered as theatrical

crafts, including staging, costuming, makeup, music, dance, formalized speech, chanting, and singing, as well as specific physical “props” (objects such as staffs, spears, skulls, and so on), often with totemic or spiritual properties that would prove crucial to the staged event (Cohen, 2005). Drama and dance-drama was indeed a constant feature of major events and stages in the lives of people in most Kenyan communities. Notably, the Kalenjin, Embu, Meru, and kikuyu utilized drama and dance to communicate values and traditions during circumcision, dowry payment and marriage ceremonies (Banham, 2004).

Evidently, the role of the director in the pre-colonial TAT was not an institution in itself. TAT has no distinction between actor and audience because the role of the actors does not require them to keep the distance unlike the Western Theatre. Western Theatre is organized in a specific way that enables one to distinguish it from other forms of writing such as novels or poetry. This includes a written dramatic action (text), a live enactment of the dramatic action, a seated audience, the actors, theatre space (stage) and the director. The post-colonial theatre in Kenya still retained a lot of its colonial heritage by the fact that most of the scripts played in the Kenya National Theatre were by Western authors and directed by Europeans. However, the emergence of playwrights such as NgugiwaThiong’o, Francis Imbuga, MicereMugo, MumbiwaMaina, Seth Agadala and WaigwaWachiira(Kerr, 1995) changed this narrative. In the 1970’s, University of Nairobi played a pivotal role in the africanisation of theatre through groups such as “*Mshindo Players*” and “*Tamaduni players*”. The emergence of such groups was slowly but steadfastly giving rise to the role of the director in the African theatre of post-colonial Kenya. The success of theatre in Kenya can be partly credited to the contributions of Joe de Graft, John Ruganda, David

Mulwa, Austin Bukonya, Arthur Kimoli and Wasambo Were (Banham, 2004). Apparently, there was little separation of the playwright and the director in the post-colonial theatre as most plays were directed by the playwrights (Kerr, 1995). However, professional groups such as “*Tamaduni Players*” and “*The University Players*” had directors who worked closely with the leading playwrights in the emerging African theatre (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1994). The post-colonial African theatre in Kenya was characterized by the struggle to emancipate theatre from European control and influence. Literary luminaries such as NgugiwaThiongo, NgugiwaMirii, Seth Adagala not only promoted the growth of counter-Shakespeare theatre works, but also criticized the dominance of theatre by mostly European directors. The culmination of the struggle was the appointment of Seth Adagala as the director of the Kenya National theatre in 1968.

Most Urban African Theatre groups and companies in Kenya have adopted the Western style of theatre which has become popular in most of the Kenyan theatre performances especially in stage play performances. The content and style of this Urban African Theatre is influenced by both African dramatic traditions and Western theatre. The influence of Western styles is the result of a colonial presence, education in European languages, and the training of artists abroad as well as residues of globalization (Bennett & Carson, 2013).

A prominent feature of the Western and the Urban African theatre is stage directing, which is the backbone of every stage performance. Stage directing is an occupation that has been in existence from ancient Greece where the playwright bore the principle

responsibility of staging the play (Wright, 1979). The playwright oversaw the mounting of the play by coaching actors, training the chorus, compose the music and supervise every aspect of the production. The director oversees and orchestrates the mounting of a theatre production by unifying various endeavors and aspects of production. Additionally, a director's function is to ensure the quality and completeness of theatre production and to lead the members of the creative team into realizing their artistic vision for it. A director further collaborates with a team of creative individuals and other staff, coordinating research, stagecraft, costume design, props, lighting design, acting, set design, stage combat, and sound design for the production (Downs & Ramsey, 2012).

The role of the director as is currently understood, only developed in the 20th century, during which theatre/stage directing became a profession by itself. Towards mid-19th century, the role of directing a stage production was primarily undertaken by a lead actor or the scriptwriter who in most cases was part of the cast of semi-professional actors. However, as set designers began to experiment with different environments for plays and tools such as stage lighting, there arose a need for a single source of authority or a unifying artistic vision for the play. The role of the director also became a necessity due to emergence of strong artistic movements that encouraged different goals for different theatre texts. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a German artist, was one of the earliest theatre practitioners to take up the art of stage directing when he assembled a company of actors in Weimar and coached them on his diction and character interpretation. In realizing the artistic vision and collaborating with the creative team, each director uses different

methods, techniques and approach, which is evident in various directors along the history of stage directing.

Directing is an art form that has grown with the development of theatre theory and theatre practice. With the emergence of new trends in theatre, so have directors adopted new methodologies and engaged in new practices. One fact that has remained fundamentally constant over the years is that a director's goal is to interpret a playwright's text and unify all the other artists work to bring out the main artistic theme and vision of the production as envisioned by the author or by the director himself/herself. To achieve this goal, a director relies on the text and other artists as his/her tools in a production concept. The success of a theatre production is, therefore, heavily dependent on the directors' knowledge and technical expertise as relates to the aforementioned tools of directing. It is imperative, therefore, that a critical analysis of the application of directing techniques by Kenyan directors be undertaken to shed more light on the quality of theatre productions and growth of directing profession in Kenya. It is also worthy to acknowledge that a director creates a vision, interprets the script, casts the production and moulds characters. As such, the success of a theatre production is critically dependent on the ability of the director to utilize his skills, knowledge and tools available to him/her. Therefore, it is imperative to study theatre directing as a profession, with the view of improving the quality and effectiveness of Kenyan theatre productions in conveying the playwrights' vision.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

As a leader, collaborator and teacher, the director takes control of the production; when transferring the vision of the playwright from paper to stage, the director summons experience and knowledge, works with designers and technicians to create a world on a theatre stage with a certain identity that manifests itself in the works. In Kenya, there has been an increase in the number of theatre productions both at the Schools, Colleges and Universities Drama Festival and at the public show level. As a result, more directors have emerged, each with their own identity and style. This study investigates the art of stage directing in Kenya, how the directors use the techniques to convey thematic concerns and the factors influencing their art by appraising the work of three Kenyan theatre directors.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the stage directing techniques/styles used by selected Kenyan directors.
2. To establish how the directors use directing techniques to convey thematic concerns.
3. To interrogate factors that influence the directing techniques/styles used by the directors.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What stage directing techniques/styles do the selected Kenyan stage directors use?
2. How do directors use the directing techniques to convey thematic concerns?

3. What factors influence the stage directing techniques/styles used by the Kenyan stage directors?

1.6 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Theatre and especially stage production in the country has gained popularity over the last decade. This study will contribute to the academia criticism of stage production in the country. Secondly, the art of stage directing is not regarded as an important aspect in the country as many stage productions and directors simply borrow directing techniques and styles from others in order to achieve their objectives. This study will thus be useful to the theatre professionals and researchers, as the study of the art of stage directing will go a long way in the development of the theatre industry in the country.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation

This study is based on three Kenyan stage directors based in Nairobi; Joseph Murungu – a director at the Kenya Schools, Colleges and Universities Drama Festival and Braeburn Garden Estate, Samuel Mwangi – Director of “Heartstrings Entertainment” stage plays and comedies and Andy Ruri- director of the “Spark Theatre”. The study interrogates the stage directing techniques used by these directors, how the directors use their directing techniques to convey thematic concerns and factors influencing the use of these techniques.

1.8 Review of Related Literature

1.8.1 Introduction

This subtopic reviews literature related to this study. The researcher focused on key elements that classify theatre as an art which include; the performer, acting, theatre space, dramatic action and the work of the director. The subtopic further looks in to the art of directing of five auteur directors and how their work relates to this study.

1.8.2 Elements of Theatre

Theatre is a principal occupation of its practitioners – it is the body of artistic work in which actors impersonate characters in a live performance of a play (Cohen, 2008). There are certain elements without which, an event ceases to be theatre and becomes a different art form and experience. The first essential element is the performers/performance; people on stage presenting characters in dramatic action. Acting – one person standing in front of other people and begins to speak and move in ways that convey an image of a specific character (Edwin & Goldfarb, 1999) – is at the heart of every theatre. Acting is the oldest form of theatrical arts; it is older than playwriting because actors began by improvising their text and according to Cohen (2006), Thespis, the first known actor, was the author of the dramas in which he appeared.

Acting is also the most public art of theatre, the most visible to and recognized by the audience. Cohen (2008) notes that there are two notions of acting which are different and contradicting; the first notion is that acting is something that the actor “presents” to the

audience – through vocal skill in phrasing and projection, through an ability to imitate different characters and their individual (and social) styles and through a variety of associated talents which may include singing, dancing, juggling, comic improvisation, oral interpretation and the like. This kind of acting is normally called presentation, external or technical acting because the actor learns to present a role through a program of training and often results in the actor imitating the trainer, well-known actors or other students/actors.

The second notion of acting is that it emanates from somewhere inside the actor. By studying the role closely and entering – through his or her own imagination – the world of the play, the actor works to honestly and effectively live the life of the character within the play's situation. This kind of acting is considered to be the “internal” or “representational”; “internal” because it begins within the actor and “representational” because it asks the actor to represent all aspects – emotional as well as physical and intellectual – of the character portrayed. This notion/type of acting is mostly called “method acting” or “the method” and is derived from Russian actor-director Konstantin Stanislavsky (Cole & Chinoy, 1963). Whichever type of acting an actor chooses, he/she should make sure they create believability or the emotional truth of the characters they portray; the audience must be convinced that the actor or actress is thinking and feeling what the character would think and feel.

The second essential element of theatre is the audience. Edwin and Goldfarb (1999) noted that the principle essence of theatre is the interaction between the performer and the audience and a theatre, play, dance or musical event is not complete – one could almost

say it does not occur – unless there are people to see and hear it. Theatre is like an electrical connection: the connection is not made until positive and negative wires touch and complete the circuit. The performers are half of that connection and the audiences are the other half. The audiences participate vicariously in a theatre performance, through the mind and the heart (Archeir, Gendrich& Hood, 1999). They believe in the reality they see on stage and identify with the characters through laughter, silence, tension among others.

The third element of theatre is the theatre space in which the performers and the audiences come together. The stage; where the actors and actresses perform, a place for them to change costumes, a way for them to enter and exit from the stage and a place for the audience to sit or stand. The fourth essential element of theatre is the design element of the production. Design element includes visual aspects – costumes, lighting and scenic background – and a nonvisual aspect, sound. According to Cohen (2006), scenery, lighting and costumes can create realistic-looking environments such as living rooms and Roman piazzas, barrooms and butcher shops – and imagined locales such as Satan’s Hell. Sound designers can create scores that enhance (or contrast with) the play’s actions by means of musical or other sonic themes, thereby underlining romance, tension or grief.

The other essential element of theatre is the dramatic action embodied in a text that is performed by the actors and actresses. This is a story, an incident, or an event that has been put into dramatic form by a playwright, or perhaps by performers or a director (Edwin & Goldfarb, 1999). A dramatic story must be present for theatre to occur and is called a text which takes the form of a script. The script/text features characters talking and

interacting with one another with a developing dramatic structure. It should also have a focus – who the play is about – and a point of view – what the play is about.

The final and key essential element to theatre is the work of the director – who will be the main focus of this study – as the person who rehearses the performers and coordinates their actions to make certain that they interpret the text appropriately, intelligently and excitingly (Brockett & Ball, 2004).

The study has investigated how the director uses and combines all these critical and essential elements when coming up with a production, how he uses them in conveying his thematic concern as well as the factors influencing the use of the elements and techniques.

1.8.3 Art of Stage Directing

This study reviewed the work of several stage directors looking into their art, the techniques used and how they use the techniques to convey their thematic concerns, as well as the factors influencing their art and how they relate to this study. These directors include; Konstantin Stanislavsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Bertolt Brecht, Augusto Boal and Neil Copen.

Konstantin Stanislavsky

In 1877 – as a 14 year old – Stanislavsky took part in a performance of two plays directed by his tutor. In the first play, he was very relaxed and excited, and based his performance on a famous actor. He thought that he made a brilliant performance, but he

was inaudible and he acted badly. In the second play, which gave him troubles in rehearsals, he acted much better. He couldn't understand the contradiction between what he thought and what the audience experienced. As a response to that, he decided to keep a notebook in which he recorded his impressions, analysed difficulties and found solutions, Konstantin Stanislavsky, (2015).

In 1885, he studied in the Moscow Theatre School. Students were expected to follow the instructions and conventions of their tutors. Stanislavsky was disappointed by this approach, and he went to study in the Maly Theatre, where he learned to appear fresh during performances, and extract energy from the stage players. This approach suited him because he wanted to really understand how to behave on stage and not only to follow instructions. He knew that he should create rather than imitate “What influenced and motivated Stanislavsky,” (2008).

Stanislavsky and successful author-producer Nemirovich-Danchenko decided to merge their acting companies and form “Moscow Art Theatre”, popularly known as MAT in 1897. This was in response to the then current state of theatre that was, in Stanislavsky's words, hopeless with clichéd traditions and ham acting “Sawoski Perviz, 2ed”. “Moscow Art Theatre” opened on October 14 (October 26, New Style), 1898, with a performance of Aleksey K. Tolstoy's *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*. But Stanislavsky was disappointed in the acting that night. He found it to be merely imitative of the gestures, intonations, and conceptions of the director. To project important thoughts and to affect the spectators, he reflected, there must be living characters on stage, and the mere external behaviour of the

actors is insufficient to create a character's unique inner world. A key component of this study is the technique of directing the actor, which is an integral part of the work of the director. How the director works with the actors/actresses in order to make sure that they are believable on stage and help in conveying the thematic concern. This is evidence that directing being an art, takes several trials and experiments before one finally settles on a given style or technique and to Stanislavsky acting was the key technique in which he used to convey his thematic concerns.

To seek knowledge about human behaviour, Stanislavsky turned to science. He began experimenting in developing the first elements of what came to be known as the Stanislavsky method/system (Sonia, 1984). Stanislavsky's method/system proposed that a series of physical actions arranged in sequential order, would trigger the necessary emotions in an actor's performance. These emotions were based in the unconscious (or subconscious) and could not otherwise directly come to surface when needed. They would have to be brought out through indirect means. Hence his search for the conscious means to the unconscious led him to create 'Method of Physical Actions,' a physical map plotted out for the actor. This conscious physical map of action would then arouse and bring out the unconscious emotions of the actor. It includes the following; units and objectives, line of actions and the super-objective, analysis of text through action, truth, belief and the magic if, imagination, subtext, motivation, concentration, relaxation, communion – communication with audience – adaptation, tempo-rhythm, the physical apparatus "SawoskiPerviz, 2ed".

Stanislavsky revolutionized theatre acting, promoted realism movement through theatre that often reflected real world current social issues. He is known as the father of realism in theatre. Stanislavsky placed grand importance on psychological truth in acting, with a strong focus on the actor having to understand everything about their character and the scene they are presenting. Stanislavsky's system of acting was a system of rehearsal and acting techniques used to train actors to draw believable emotions into their performances. He based this system on the concept of emotional memory, a means by which an actor looks into their own personal experiences to give emotion and meaning to a character. As a result of his disappointment in his first acting experience as an actor, as a student as well as a director as mentioned above, he strived to make sure he found a solution to what he believed to be bad acting. As a result Stanislavsky developed his own art of directing with which acting was the key element and was evident in many of his productions and is still used till now and acting was the main thing that he used as an auteur director to convey his thematic concerns.

The experience of Stanislavsky shows the importance of actor training and coaching as part of the art of stage directing which is a key component in this study and how actor training affects the thematic concerns addressed by the director as well as the factors influencing techniques used by the director.

VsevolodMeyerhold

VsevolodMeyerhold – another auteur director – went to see *Othello* staged by Konstantin Stanislavsky. This simple experience changed Meyerhold's life. Inspired by

Stanislavsky's talent, he left the law department and attended the Theatre and Musical School of the Moscow Philharmonic Society and pursued acting classes taught by Vladimir Danchenko in 1896. At the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT), he played 18 roles in various productions notably Trepev in Chekhov's *The Seagull*" VsevolodEmilievichMeyerhold." (2004). He left MAT in 1902 and took part in a number of theatrical projects both as an actor and director.

Meyerhold was a contemporary of Stanislavsky and Chekov. His ideas were influenced by the music Chekov used in his plays but considered realism a type of style that alienated the character from the actor. His perspective was that theatre is not mimetic to reality (Cohen, 2007). Meyerhold experimented on each project he undertook and created new staging techniques. He was an advocate of symbolism in theatre and developed a number of body expressions that his actors would use to portray specific emotions and characters. This is evidence that auteur directors experiment new things and have or use different elements of theatre in their work because they are creators and authors on stage which is the main objective that this study sort to investigate.

According to Leiter and Samuel (1994), Meyerhold regarded movement, space, rhythm and gesture as primary elements in the language of theatre and looked for ways to create truthful performances without imitating or trying to copy the reality evident in everyday life. His work focused on developing the energy and rhythms available through non-representational performance styles and he believed that actors should learn to present their character without trying to become their character. Even though he was influenced by

Stanislavsky, Meyerhold's art of directing the actors was completely deferent from that of Stanislavsky which is a clear indication that each director has their own and different art of directing. Actors in Meyerhold productions were therefore encouraged to comment on their characters, to directly address spectators from positions downstage or to improvise and banter with audiences. Acting as a key element of theatre can be used differently by each director in achieving their overall objective of the production, and this study has put emphasis on acting as a technique used by the Kenyan directors.

Strongly emphasising the theatre's need for simplicity and the power of a bare stage, in the 1920s he began to use a mode of set design called constructivism. This approach focused on the function of scenery and multi-levelled sets with ramps leading between platforms constructed according to their utility and their ability to enhance biomechanical acting rather than for any decorative purpose (Toby & Helen, 1963). He rarely used front curtains, often kept the house lights on so that the actors and spectators could clearly see each other and his productions explored a variety of non-representational approaches to set design and acting. Music was also used to support the physical and emotional rhythms he wished to accentuate in productions and he sometimes composed his own scores. Meyerhold, like a number of theorists, suggested that theatre has its own language (Chambers & Colin, 2002).

Meyerhold art of directing includes a combination of many techniques and elements such as the bare stage, body movements, music and set design which are key elements and

techniques that the researcher investigated and how the directors under this study used all these elements and techniques in achieving their overall objective of their productions.

Bertolt Brecht

As a rebellion against naturalism and realism in theatre where the audience could forget about their lives when watching a play and not think of what affected society from a political and social perspective (Cole & Chinoy, 1963), Bertolt Brecht used a different art of directing and introduced the Epic Theatre. For the audience to step back and view the message in the performance, he created the *Verfremdungseffekt* which can be translated to mean to make strange. It is also known as the Alienation effect or the A effect. This is a technique which estranges the audience and forces them to question the political and social realities of the situations being presented in the play (Willet, 1964). *Verfremdungseffekt* was used to direct the audience's attention to something new. This was done by getting the scene started and then doing something unexpected. When the rhythm is interrupted, the audience stops getting lost in the emotion, story and characters. They start to think and question. The *Verfremdungseffekt* effect was to constantly remind the audience they were in a theatre watching a play. Brecht did not want the audience to get lost in the story or the characters. He wanted to remind the audience that these actors are communicating ideas and situations to them. Brecht used this effect as his main art of directing identity due to his desire to change the society; conveying critical and thematic messages by making sure the audience remember that they are watching a play and is a clear example of how directors use their art of directing and techniques to convey their thematic concerns.

Brecht usually left the stage bare in his productions as a means of preventing the audience from experiencing a detailed illusion of reality. He exposed stage machinery, opened up the physical stage to the wings and often exposed the back wall. He also exposed the lighting grid above the stage so the audience could see how lights influence the mood of the scene and influence the audience's judgment. Plays were performed with house lights on so that the audience remained aware of each other during the performance (Cole & Chinoy, 1963). Projections of images or slides were often launched onto the back wall. Placards were also used to give titles of scenes or the title of a song, followed by the projection of the words of the song for the audience to join in. As mentioned earlier, this study has investigated how directors use the stage, lighting, music among other techniques to add to their art of directing and this shows that different directors tend to use some techniques similarly and often borrow some from other works as is the case with Meyerhold and Brecht.

Brecht developed his own acting style. He believed that an actor's job was merely to show what happened. Actors could be swapped around in roles during the piece to keep the audience alert. Actors would 'step-out' of their roles and speak directly to the audience or explain what happens next. They would also speak in the third person when in character and speak stage directions to continuously remind the audience that they are actors. *Gestus* is the "attitude" of acting which was employed in Epic Theatre. The term *gestus* as used by Brecht referred to everything an actor did in terms of gesture, stance, body language, facial expressions and intonations in order to show the significance of a scene (Willet,

1964). The use of the A effect, bare stage, lighting and gestus are techniques used by Brecht and are also discussed in this study and how the Kenyan directors use them.

Augusto Boal

Augusto Boal, a Brazilian theatre director, writer and politician was the founder of *Theatre of the Oppressed*, a theatrical form originally used in radical popular education movements. In what Boal calls Forum Theatre, for example, the actors begin with a dramatic situation from everyday life and try to find solutions—parents trying to help a child on drugs, a neighbour who is being evicted from his home, and individual confronting racial or gender discrimination, or simply a student in a new community who is shy and has difficulty making friends. Audience members are urged to intervene by stopping the action, coming on stage to replace actors, and enacting their own ideas. Bridging the separation between actor (the one who acts) and spectator (the one who observes but is not permitted to intervene in the theatrical situation), the Theatre of the Oppressed is practiced by spect-actors who have the opportunity to both act and observe, and who engage in self-empowering processes of dialogue that help foster critical thinking. The theatrical act is thus experienced as conscious intervention, as a rehearsal for social action rooted in a collective analysis of shared problems (Babbage, 2014).

Augusto Boal theatre is another clear indication of how the director is the author of what happens on stage. This art of directing allows the audience to be part of the performance as well as the solution of the thematic concern. He involves the audience in thinking about the solution at hand just like Brecht but he goes further by allowing them to

join the actors in solving the thematic concern. His use of the audience shows that the director has a wide range of freedom and techniques to experiment from.

Neil Coppen

Neil Coppen, a South African director, had his first theatre experience as a six year old after watching *Singing in the Rain* at the Natal Playhouse, and was transfixed as whole world transformed and evolved before his eyes. He then forced his mother to see the same show six more times and from then an obsession with theatre was born. As a child, Coppen wrote small scripts for his sister and himself. He notes how many of his plays have children at their centre, where South African life and history is viewed through the eyes of child (or childlike) protagonists. Fascinated by the concept of ‘total theatre,’ Coppen drives his motivation from Schaffer and notes that;

Peter Schaffer’s play *Royal Hunt of the Sun* inspired me with the notion of ‘total theatre’ in the way the visual symbols and elements were as seminal as the text was. Most playwrights focused exclusively on dialogue without considering the overall visual impact and context of their plays, but Shaffer was adamant that music, lighting, sound design, costume, set were important tools to creating a powerful and immersive theatrical experience. (Twiynstra&Durden, 2014, p.14).

Coppen loved Schaffer’s notion that theatre should be a visceral and all-encompassing experience for an audience, and he set out to achieve this in the work he creates by paying equal attention to the text, design, lighting, score, sound and staging conventions and notes that;

I wanted to free-up the theatre, avoid pandering to the idea of South African drama as static, a bunch of talking heads around the kitchen sink or one location. I wanted to show audiences that stage plays can be as dynamic and engrossing as the big-budget stories one sees in the cinema. I adopted various cinematic devices of flash-back and flash-forward, close-up and long-shot and attempted to whirl the audience through time and history while keeping track of the fated trajectories of four (hopefully) well-developed and believable South African characters. (Twijnstra&Durden, 2014, p.17).

Coppen focuses on character studies and stories that fall outside the norm and offer audiences more complex alternatives to what they have come to expect. He says he is constantly looking at and exploring the idea of ‘freedom’ in his narratives – examining his characters’ relationships to the societies they live in and under. He believes it is the duty of theatre-makers in South Africa to work very hard at subverting stereotypes and reductive clichés as opposed to simply pondering to audiences’ expectations of them. “We are a complex, contradictory, beautiful and pretty fucked-up nation and people,” he says, “and theatre-makers should embrace this, use their platforms and stages to interrogate these notions both critically and imaginatively” (Twijnstra&Durden, 2014). Just like Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Brecht and Boal, Cohen uses total theatre as his main identity by employing cinematic devices – also discussed in this study – to show his art of stage directing.

Kenya theatre directors have benefited very little from academic reviews and studies that interrogate directing styles and techniques. Only few playwrights/directors like NgugiwaThiong’o have benefited from academic studies and reviews. Diakhate, Eyoh&

Rubin (2013)note that in NgugiwaThiong'o's play *I will Marry when I Want* staged at KamirithuCommunity Education and Cultural Center in Limuru, was an experiment in creating community theatre. "All the actors help shape the script, all were involved in the direction of the play and in building an open-air theatre"(Diakhate, Eyoh& Rubin, 2013 p.165).NgugiwaThiong'o's directing style allowed everyone to be part of the production and help in coming up with the direction of the play and this is the only mention in relation to stage directing in Kenya by Diakhate, Eyoh& Rubin, 2013. Most scholarly works have focused on the historical aspects of theatre in Kenya but few or none have focused on styles and techniques of stage directing, the factors behind the styles and techniques used and how these techniques and styles are used to convey the thematic concerns. The study investigates the art of stage directing among the selected Kenyan stage directors.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

In order to fulfil its objectives, the study is guided and informed by auteur theory. This is the perspective that is used to support the arguments presented during discussions. Thus the inquiry and analytical description of the art of stage directing in Kenya is based and molded around auteur theory.

1.9.1 Auteur Theory

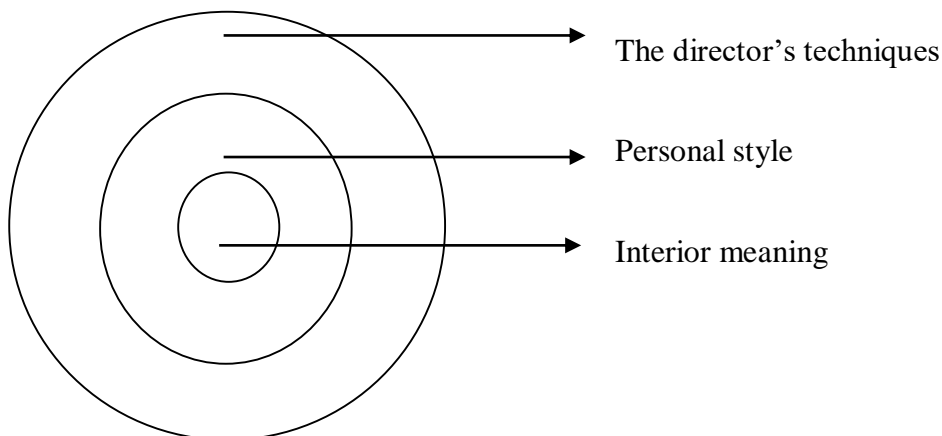
"Auteur" is a French word for "author." Kolker (1999) observes that the principles of the auteur theory are based on the assumption that the director is the controlling force in the structure of a dramatic production. Auteur theorists study a play as a medium of

personal expression in which great directors leave a recognizable stylistic signature on their work. Auteur critics usually consider this author to be the director. This model of criticism is now the most commonly employed and deeply ingrained method of thinking about play and film (Prince, 1997).

Auteurist criticism originally developed among the French New Wave critics and then imported to the United States in the 1960s by Andrew Sarris. It gained popularity in the 1950s with the influential film journal *Cahiers du cinema*, founded and edited by Andre Bazin. Contributors to this journal and early proponents of the theory (both as critics and directors) included the new wave filmmakers Francis Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, and Claude Chabrol. Bazin is most closely associated with auteur theory.

1.9.2 Elements of Auteurism

Sarris (1962) notes that auteur theory may be visualized as concentric circles; the outer as the technique, the middle circle as personal style and inner circle as the interior meaning.



The correspondent roles of the director may be designated as those of a technician, a stylist and an auteur. The director must show the technical competence and ability to understand and practice the techniques of play production in an expressive way. The second element is the coherent personal style, a set of visual and narrative attributes that are recognizable in production and after production. Kolker (1999) argues that the style is not decoration, but the visible creation and expression of emotion and thought. The ability to think visually, to know just the right place to position the actors, to create stillness or motion on stage, to understand exactly what to remove or add – these are the initial marks of the auteur. Technique that is learned and forgotten becomes style, because style is technique put to imaginative use.

1.9.3 Application of auteur theory in this study

This study has used this theory to justify that the director bears the duty of originating artistic vision, concept, and realizing the staging of a production by unifying aspects of the production and collaborating with creative individuals and coordinating research, stagecraft, costume design, props, lighting design, acting, set design, stage combat, and sound design for the production. Thus, the final stage production is a signature of its director.

1.10 Research Design

This is an investigative study. “Qualitative methods are used to address research questions that require explanation or understanding of social phenomena” (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p.8). Qualitative analysis suited the aim of this study: performance analysis with regard to the art of stage directing. As such; data collection, research methods, data analysis and interpretation, and the final report were methodologically positioned within qualitative research approaches as opposed to quantitative research.

1.10.1 Sample Size and Selection Procedure

Detailed analysis and examination of the directing techniques were based on a purposive sample of three selected Kenyan stage directors. Purposive sampling as a nonprobability technique in qualitative research was employed in arriving at these performance-texts. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) regard purposive sampling as a “technique that allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objectives of his or her study” (p.50). In this regard, population sampling is criterion based and is aimed at a small sample. There are different approaches to purposive sampling and each choice yields different results (Ritchie, Lewis & Gillian 2003). Fifty (50) Kenyan Stage directors who direct public shows or direct during the Kenya National Schools, Colleges and Universities Drama Festival were listed and contacted for the purpose of this study. Ten of the fifty directors with well-known productions which exhibit high level of consistency in directing techniques and have been accepted by a wide range of audience responded positively but only three of the ten had their productions fall under

the timelines of the study. The three are; Joseph Murungu - a well know stage director for the Kenya National Schools, Colleges and Universities Drama Festival and public shows. Samuel Mwangi - producer and director of “Heartstrings Kenya” and Andy Ruri of “Spark Theatre”. While the study aimed looking at deferent genres, coincidentally, the three production selected were comedy. Since the study was not interested on the theatre genres, this did not affect the objectives it set out to study.

1.10.2 Data Collection

In order to achieve its stated objectives, this research gathered relevant data from both primary and secondary sources.

1.10.3 Primary Data

1.10.3.1 Observation

Observation of the three directors at work formed the main bulk of obtaining the primary data. The research observed the three directors work during rehearsals, how they conduct the rehearsals, how they use the directing techniques, work with designers and technicians, all the way to the final stage performance. The researcher as a form of assessing the directing techniques also observed previous recordings of the three directors' works.

1.10.3.2 Interviews

In-depth interviews with the directors were the second form of primary data. The interviews are vital in verifying the researcher's analyses and offering other enriching outlooks on Kenyan Stage directing identity.

1.10.4 Secondary data

To strengthen the analysis of the primary data, secondary data was sourced from books, journals, and articles that carry information relevant to the subject of this study and

Internet sources. The information gathered here helped in furnishing and strengthening the analysis and arguments that were synthesized from the primary data.

1.10.5 Data Analysis

The data obtained from the observation of rehearsals and interviews with the directors was examined and analyzed in pursuance of the techniques used by Kenyan stage directors, the factors influencing the use of these techniques and how the directors use the techniques to convey their thematic concerns. Content analysis was used for this purpose. Thematic analysis was done on the transcribed interview notes as well as an analysis of notes made from the readings of the secondary data sources based on the topics of interest as guided by the study objectives. Triangulation of the different sets of data from the interviews with the directors and reference materials was employed to validate the regular and repeated observations.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has stated that in response to the rise of theatre in Kenya, this qualitative research studies the art of stage directing in Kenya focusing on three directors; Sammy Mwangi, Joseph Murungu and Andy Ruri. This study is in respect to the directing techniques used by the Kenyan directors. This chapter has discussed the theoretical framework upon which the study is based and reviewed related literature on stage directing. The next chapter discusses the directing techniques.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO:STAGE DIRECTING TECHNIQUES

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter probes the directing techniques available for the director and how they can help a director achieve his objectives in staging his production.

2.2 Stage directing techniques

The purpose of technique in all the arts is to concept or subject matter clearer, more effective, more compelling and more moving and to convey its mood to the spectator or listener by using the elements of art that will coordinate and express its inherent mood qualities (Dean &Carra, 1974). Therefore, for theatre to occur, key elements of theatre which include the performer/performance, theatre space, the audience, dramatic action and the director must be brought together and coordinated. The director must stage the play written by the playwright and must share with the playwright an understanding of structure, theme and style. He must work closely with the performers in rehearsing the play and with the designers of scenery, lights, costumes and sound to bring the production to fruition as he is responsible for the overall style, pace and visual appearance. By doing so, the director is going about the art of stage directing. Each stage director has his/her own ways of handling this art and is evident in the works of various directors along the history of stage directing. Each director has a vision and in achieving that vision, he/she uses various techniques and styles in order to reach his desired theatrical destination.

One key function of the stage director is to translate a play text into stage terms: that is, to make the play as written, clear, interesting, enjoyable, by means of living actors, sound, colours and movements (Cole & Chinoy, 1963), thus how the director uses the actors, sound, colour and movement defines him/herself. How the director initiates and develops the process of interpreting the language of the script in theatrical terms to come up with a production using his/her directing technique/s. Carlson and Shafer (1990) notes that by coordinating the activities of the playwright, the director provides an overall interpretation of the play, chooses a cast of actors through auditions, works with several designers to create a coordinated approach, conducts rehearsals, directs the actors in movements and stage business, modulates and focuses the emotional structure of the scenes, works with the designers to create precise dramatic effects involving the setting, costumes, lights, and music and in the final rehearsal polishes and refines, attempting to create a cohesive dramatic event.

The knowhow and ability to coordinate all the elements of theatre is a skill that a director must possess, these skills are evident in their work by use of certain techniques and style. Wilson (1980) notes that theatre is a complex art involving not one or two elements, but many simultaneously: script, performance, costumes, scenery, lighting, and point of view and these diverse elements – a mixture of the tangible and intangible – must be brought together into an organic whole. The director must therefore find a way in which a play is presented which is the ‘style’.

Style can be looked at in terms of realistic or non-realistic theatre. Realistic style in the theatre is one that resembles observable reality; it is a kind of photographic truth. Wilson (1980) states that we apply the term 'realistic' to those elements of theatre that conform to our normal observation of people, places, and events. Realistic theatre follows the predictable logic of everyday life: the law of gravity, the time it takes a person to travel from one place to another, the way a room in a house looks, the way a person dresses. On the other hand, non-realistic style of theatre consists of everything that does not conform to our observation of surface reality; poetry instead of prose, ghosts rather than believable people and abstract forms of scenery. Wilson notes that;

The argument is that the surface of life – a real conversation or a real room in a house – can never convey the whole truth of life, because so much life occurs in our heads, in our imagination. If we are deeply depressed and tell a friend that we feel "lousy" or "awful" we do not begin to communicate the depths of our feelings. It is because of the inadequacy of ordinary words that people turn to poetry, and because of the inadequacy of other forms of daily communication that they turn to music, dance, art, sculpture, and the entire range of symbols and metaphors (Wilson, 1980, p.72).

Thus any activity or scenic device which transcends or symbolizes reality tends to be non-realistic.

Realistic and the non-realistic elements of theatre can be combined as a style. Most performances and theatre events contain a mixture of realistic and non-realistic elements. Here realistic characters playing a role on stage engages in non-realistic actions and techniques – with the voice and body – not observed in everyday life such as speaking

verse, direct address to the audience and acrobatic or dance movements. Another way to look at style is in terms of tragedy or comedy. This is whether a play is serious or comic. A farce (a type of comedy), for example, employs exaggerations and performers often use extreme gestures and indulge in slapstick or pratfalls.

For the director, developing a style that is realistic, non-realistic, tragic or comic, involves giving a signature or an imprint to an entire production, the look of the scenery and lights, the way performers handle their costumes and props and the manner in which the performers speak, and the rhythm and pace of the play. In so doing, the director uses the various directing techniques at his disposal as elaborated in the following subtopics.

2.2.1 Text selection

Brockett and Ball (2004) note that the starting point of most productions are the scripts. The script is the basic element to which the audience responds – or thinks it responds – and it is universally perceived as the core of the theatrical experience (Cohen, 2008). The director is tasked with the duty of selecting the script for the production and be able to address several issues including; significance of the play's time and setting, how its arrangement would affect a live audience and how it conveys the message. Directors choose to do plays, because the plays excite them; idea and spectacle are probably the most common elements to prompt directorial interests (Cameron & Gillespie, 2004). It is therefore very important for a director to make sure that the selected play has no conflicting theatrical elements. Thus, directors require the knowledge of studying a script in great depth and not to be led astray by enthusiasm of a single element, only to

find to one's sorrow later that serious problems were unheeded. Thus, the director should consider three key issues before selecting the script; his/her own interests, the interest of the intended audience and the capability of the producer to conceptualize and produce the play.

2.2.2 Characterization

Characterization is anything that delineates a person or differentiates that person from others. Brockett and Ball (2004) define a character as the primary material from which plots are created because incidents are developed through the speech and behavior of dramatic personages. Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) note that by carefully emphasizing certain feature of a character's personality and eliminating others, dramatist can show us in 2 hours the entire history of a person whom we might need a life time to know in the real world. A character is revealed in several ways such as what the character says, what other characters say about them and most importantly, through what the character does.

A character can be defined using four levels; the first is physical or biological, that is by use of age, size, coloration and general appearances. The second is societal, which includes characters economic status, profession, religion and other factors that place a character in a particular social environment. The third level is psychological and it reveals a character's habitual responses, desires, motivation, likes and dislikes. Brockett and Ball (2004) note that, because drama most arises from conflicting desires, the psychological is the most essential level of characterization. The fourth

level is the moral and it reveals what characters are willing to do to get what they want and what characters actually do when faced with a difficult choice as opposed to what they have said they or others should do in such situations.

Types of Characters

a. Extraordinary Characters

Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) define extraordinary characters as those filling prestigious roles and generally represent some extreme of human behavior – men and women at their worst or best. They are characters at the breaking point, at the outer limits of human capability and endurance.

b. Representative or Quintessential Characters

This is a character who stands out apart not by being exceptional but by being typical of a large, important sector of the population. Rather than being “worst,” “best,” or some other extreme, such characters are notable because they embody the characteristics of an entire group.

c. Stock Characters

Many characters in drama are not complete; rather, they symbolize and throw into bold relief a particular type of a person or one outstanding characteristic of human behavior, to exclusion of virtually everything else. We recognize their familiar traits and their attitudes and actions are always predictable.

d. Characters with a dominate trait

This is where one aspect of a character dominates all others, making for an unbalanced, often comic personality.

e. MinorCharacters

These are characters who play a small part in the overall action. They appear briefly and serve to further the story or to support more important characters.

f. Narrator or Chorus

A narrator speaks directly to the audience, frequently commenting on the actions of the play. The narrator may or may not have a dramatic persona in the same scene as the other characters. A chorus is a group of actors who sing and dance on the action of the main plot and react to it.

g. Non-human characters

These are characters that represent other forms of characters that are not human and mostly are animals or other imaginary beings and creatures.

2.2.3 The Directing Approach

Archer, Gendrich and Hood (1999) state that the very nature of modern live theatre offers directors considerable freedom in which to work. Directors have the entire body of dramatic literature from which to choose plus all the available unproduced scripts they can gather. With this in mind, directors have several approaches to directing a production. One

approach stems from the belief that the director serves the playwright by transferring the script as literally as possible from page to stage (Brockett & Ball, 2004). Such directors usually retain the time and place specified in the script and closely follow the playwright's prescriptions about staging. Cameron and Gillespie (2004) call this approach the worshipful director's approach where it is the director's job to mount the playwright's work as a faithfully and correctly as is humanly possible.

According to Abiodun (2011), this directing style requires that the play as written by the playwright is not modified by the theatre director. Every movement, moods and all stage instructions are followed by the director and the cast to the minutest detail. Such plays must be directed with a view to retaining the original intentions and vision of the playwright through a detailed examination of the script. Proponents of this style strive to retain the vision of the play at the expense of other radical or somewhat unconventional directorial styles within the experimental realm. Most playwrights prefer their plays to be directed through this style. At the emergence of the post-independence African theatre in Kenya, playwrights such as NgugiwaThiong'o preferred to work closely with the upcoming directors to preserve the authenticity and vision of their work. It is not always logically possible to have the playwright present to preserve the originality of their work. However, adherence to this style guarantees a high level of professionalism by respecting the playwright's important contribution to their work.

The second approach stems from the view of directors as translators whose goal is to capture the spirit of the playwright's script, although to do this they may depart from the

playwrights' specifications (Brockett & Ball, 2004). Directors using this approach usually search for a metaphor, dominant theme, or set of conventions that will define the focus that will shape the production.

The third approach as Brockett and Ball (2004) note is the approach to directing that places less emphasis on the script. Here the director treats the script as raw material for the production and thus the director is considered the principal creative force behind the production. This approach thus eliminates the distinction between the writer and the director. This style endows the actor with unlimited freedom and influence on the stage, to the extent that the script and movements can be adjusted several times upon the suggestions of the actors.

Konstantin Stanislavsky is a major originator and proponent of this technique of directing. Stanislavsky believed that actors could be trained to bring out the necessary emotions and performance required for highly successful theatre productions. The proponents of this style also argue that it is very effective in creating a strong bond between directors and actors in the sense that they all develop a strong responsibility towards owning the success of the final product of rehearsal. This is the most appropriate style for the realistic theatre that requires the artist to interpret the play in the best natural sense possible. However, Abiodun, (2011) advises that it is critically important that the director remains firm on the key contents, theme and vision of the play to avoid their diffusion through the actors' "creative destruction and innovation".

Stanislavski believed that the actor must first of all believe in everything that takes place onstage and most of all he must believe what he himself is doing. He developed a series of exercises and techniques for the actor which Wilson (1980) notes as follows; the actor must make the outward activities of the performer – gestures, the voice, the rhythm of movements – natural and convincing and that the actor or actress must convey the inner truth of part. To achieve this director must guide the actors by assessing their work and making suggestions for improvements. Effective directors are sensitive listeners and observers, critics, disciplinarians, teachers and friends (Brockett & Ball, 2004). The director also allows the actors to imaginatively and innovatively give unique interpretations to their roles and characters. This style is very common in the urban African theatre as it allows the directors to use actors to develop a somewhat intimate and meaningful relationship between a play and the audience.

2.2.4 Directing the Actor

Cohen (2008) states that the director is the actor's coach and both initiates and leads the various activities – discussions, improvisation, games, exercises, lectures, research, blocking or polishing – that will occupy the actors during each rehearsal. Creating a believable character is an important factor of any acting where the characters resemble recognizable human beings and Wilson (1980) states that the man most responsible for developing a technique for realistic acting was Konstantin Stanislavski (1863 – 1938). A co-founder of the Moscow Art Theatre and the director of Chekhov's most important plays, Stanislavski was an actor, as well as a director.

Stanislavski believed that the actor must first of all believe in everything that takes place onstage and most of all he must believe what he himself is doing. He developed a series of exercises and techniques for the actor which Wilson (1980) notes as follows; the actor must make the outward activities of the performer – gestures, the voice, the rhythm of movements – natural and convincing and that the actor or actress must convey the inner truth of part. To achieve this, the director must guide the actors by assessing their work and making suggestions for improvements. Effective directors are sensitive listeners and observers, critics, disciplinarians, teachers and friends (Brockett & Ball, 2004).

Cohen (2008) describes two ways in which directors go about coaching actors. One is the passive way, where directors either block and run or function primarily as a sounding board for actors' decisions about intention, action or business. Secondly, there are directors closer to the popular stereotype, mercurial fanatics whose approaches at times verge on the despotic: they cajole, bully, plead, storm and rage at their actors; involve themselves in every detail of motive and characterization and turn every rehearsal into a mixture of acting class, group therapy session and religious experience. The cast must be willing to accept the directors' directorial authority irrespective of the approach. Depending on the acting style – realistic, non-realistic, epic or absurd – the director should be sensitive to the approach he uses.

2.2.5 Biomechanics theatre techniques

As a sign of rebellion against the realism style of theatre, Russian artist, playwright and director, Vsevolod Meyerhold frequently experimented with theatricalism. Wilson and

Goldfarb (2002) noted that theatricalists liked to expose the devices of theatre such as the way stage machinery works, to make the audience conscious of watching a performance and they borrowed techniques from the circus, the music hall and similar entertainments. Meyerhold devised an acting system known as biomechanics which emphasized external, physical training; the implication of biomechanics was that the performer's body could be trained to operate like a machine. Biomechanics' purpose is to widen the emotional potential of a theatre piece and express thoughts and ideas.

2.2.6 Cinematic theatre techniques

Cinematic theatre is a fusion of live performance and the magic of the big screen. Jennings and Maxwell (2004) state that there are endless possibilities to create interesting narratives and stage dynamics through the synergy of story, stage design and digital cinematic projection. Cinematic theatre projects pre-edited and live vision sequences onto screens and surfaces to integrate with the live performance and enhance the drama that is taking place in the performance space.

Vignette is a short impressionistic scene that focuses on one moment or character and gives an incisive impression about that character, idea, setting and/or object. It's a short descriptive passage that's more about evoking meaning through imagery than it is about plot.

2.2.7 Collaboration

Production design is a key factor towards achieving the vision and objective of the director. The director works and collaborates with set, costume, light and sound designers and as the person who sits top of the artistic hierarchy, he has the last word on all that the designers do. Cameron and Gillespie (2004) note that the director must communicate feelings and ideas about a play and the entire production to designers and the two – director and designer – have to agree on the interpretation of the production and based on the ideas and images of the director, the designer must come up with the required designs for the presentation of the production.

2.2.7.1 Set

Set design is the organization and appearance of the performance space. Brockett and Ball (2004) observe that the set designer defines and characterizes the space, arranges it to facilitate the movement of the actors and uses it to reinforce the production concept. The set serves several functions including; defining the performance space by establishing distinctions between stage and off stage. Set design also creates a floor plan that provides opportunities for movement, composition, character interaction and stage business and characterizes the acting space. Set design most importantly, creates mood and atmosphere for the production. Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) note that a stage setting can help establish the mood, style and meaning of the play as well as the location and period i.e. a set should tell the audience where and when the play takes place and therefore set design is a critical

tool and technique that directors use to communicate their ideas and messages as well as the interpretation of the production.

2.2.7.2 Costume

Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) observe that of all the visual elements, costumes are the most personal because they are actually worn by the performers. Visually, performers and costumes are perceived as one because they merge into a single image on stage. Brockett and Ball (2004) state that costumes are concerned with the visual appearance of characters and help to tell the time and place of the production. Directors use costumes to establish the characters' social and economic status, occupation, gender, age, mood and atmosphere as well as clarify character relationship. At the same time, costumes have a value of their own, adding colour, shape, texture and symbolism to the overall design and interpretation of the production.

2.2.7.3 Sound and Music

Cohen (2003) observes that music and sound effects have been in use in the theatre since ancient times; Aristotle considered music as one of the six essential components of tragedy. Offstage thunder, trumpet flourishes and confused noise are all called for in Shakespeare's original stage directions. Sound – which has become an increasingly important element in theatre production – may be said to include all sound effects, recording and electronic enhancement (Wilson and Goldfarb, 2002). Brockett and Ball (2004) outline four main functions of sound; sound evokes mood and atmosphere,

reinforces the action, reinforces the performers' voice and also reinforces the production's style or comments on the action. Archer, Gendrich and Hood (1999) classify music and sound into four categories; **Framing effects** – sound effects that help frame the entire production and help the audience to know when the show starts, when intermissions happen and when the show is over. **Underscoring** – this is music that accompanies the action onstage but rarely acknowledged by the characters, mostly known as background music. **Transitional sound/music** – effects that help transition from one scene or movement to the next and can mark a change in place or time. **Specific cues** – sounds that the characters are aware of and rely on to help progress the action of the plot e.g. gunshot, a train whistle or a doorbell. By collaborating with sound and music designer the director uses the above discussed sounds and music effect to enhance meaning to his production.

2.2.7.4 Lighting

Brockett and Ball (2004) state that lighting makes other elements of theatrical productions visible and plays a major role in creating mood and atmosphere, in emphasizing and subordinating visual elements and blending the entire stage picture. The director uses lighting as a means to establish time and place, reinforce the style and establish rhythm of visual movements. Cameron and Gillespie (2004) observe that the lighting designer works with three fundamentals: colour, direction and intensity of light. Colour is changed physically by the placement of a transparent coloured medium – gel – in the beam of light. Direction is a function of the location of the lighting instrument against

that of the action on stage. Lighting intensity is controlled by changes in the electrical current supplied to the instrument, and controlled on the dimmer board.

2.2.8 Run-throughs, technical and Dress rehearsal

Run-through is a technique or a requirement where the director usually begins to have the cast perform the entire script as he takes notes and then discusses matters of concern. A technical rehearsal is when the director incorporates all the technical elements – scenery, costumes, lighting, properties, sound effects and so on (Archer, Gendrich & Hood, 1999). It is during the technical rehearsals that the director harmonizes all the elements of production and order for changes where there is no harmony. Dress rehearsal is a try-out of the entire production just before the opening day. The purpose of a dress rehearsal is to confirm that everything and everyone – actors, designers and technicians – is ready for the opening or the main show.

2.2.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the stage directing techniques available for the directors and how the techniques help them achieve their overall objective in staging a theatrical production. The next chapter investigates how Kenyan directors under this study use the directing techniques adumbrated in the foregoing discussion in their production.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE: STAGE DIRECTING TECHNIQUES USED BY THE SELECTED KENYAN DIRECTORS AND HOW THEY USE THEM TO CONVEY THEIR THEMATIC CONCERNS

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter discusses the techniques and style used by the three selected stage directors. Using their plays as the backbone of the discussion, the chapter investigates the techniques outlined in chapter two and how the directors use the techniques to convey their thematic concerns. In so doing, this chapter will examine the stage directing techniques used by selected Kenyan directors – objective one of this study – and establish how the directors use the techniques to convey their thematic concerns in their respective productions which is the objective number two of this study.

3.2Directors

The three directors selected for this study are Joseph Murungu, Sammy Mwangi and Andy Ruri.

3.2.1 Joseph Murungu

Joseph Murungu is a playwright and theatre director who boasts of an impressive record in the Kenya National, Schools, colleges and Universities Drama Festival. He is one few products of the festival who have served in all the available positions in the festival. As an actor, he was awarded the best actor in the country in 1988. As a playwright and director, he has won accolades with his productions such as “The Replay”(KerugoyaBoys, 3rd

position, 1996), “Boomerang” (Kerugoya Boys, Winning play 1997), “Fire Fire” (Kabare Girls, Winning play 1998), “Bottom Power” (Tripha Girls, 2001) “Duel for Fuel” (Chania Boys, 2nd Position 2003), “Story of Glory” (Thika High, 3rd position, 2006), “Mirror, Mirror” (Njiiri School, 2007), “Messiah” (Njiiri School, 2008) “Fixing the Fox” (Njiiri School, 2009), “We Must Win” (Maryhill Girls, 2010), “Adam and Steve” (Limuru Girls, 2011), “Ballad of the Balcony” (Kerugoya Boys, 2012), “Under Fire” (Marryhill Girls, 2013) and many others. He is a skilled and experienced drama facilitator and adjudicator at all levels. He is also a vibrant participant of Theatre for Development in the community and has worked with NGOs such as PSI and Plan International. Joseph Murungu is currently teaching English and Drama at Breaburn International – Garden Estate in Nairobi, Kenya.

Having established himself as one of the best directors in the Kenya National Schools, colleges and Universities Drama Festival, responding positively and whose production “Torrent of Rodents” staged at the Kenya National Schools, Colleges and Universities Drama Festival in April, 2016 fell under the timelines of this study, Joseph Murungu and the play “Torrent of Rodents” was selected as one of the three directors whose works are investigated in this study due to his high level of consistency in the festival

“Torrent of Rodents” uses allegory and stage metaphors to expose the social ills that threaten to destroy our young economy. At the centre of the conflict is a child, Baby Kauchumi, who is about to be devoured by ferocious sewage rats while the leaders continue to exploit the situation for their own selfish interests.

The play opens with high octane tension as Baby Kauchumi is trapped in a house surrounded by a flood of sewage which is infested with dangerous giant sewage rats. The two parents, Mr.Mukurinowa Drama and his wife Patience are unable to access the house due to the rats. Therefore, they split ways to seek remedy for the Baby from two directions: Mr.Mukurinowa Drama approaches the local Member of Parliament Mr.Bungei while Patience goes to see Sergeant Robert to initiate urgent rescue operation for Baby Kauchumi. They are both faced by obstacles on two fronts:

On one side, the Sergeant refuses to initiate the rescue operation for Baby Kauchumi until and unless Patience gives him a bribe “Something to make the pistons of his engine work faster.” When Patience refuses to comply she is violently ejected from the Police Station.

On the other side, it turns out that MheshimiwaBungei is under investigation by the Anti-Corruption Action Team (ACAT) for receiving 20 Million shillings from parliament on false allegations that his Baby was trapped in the flood of sewage and needed to be rescued. However, it is revealed that he has no Baby and the anti-corruption team plans to search his house for evidence. Mukurino’s predicament of Baby Kauchumi therefore gives the MP an idea; to adopt the Baby from Mukurino, parade him as his own Baby and use the Baby to justify the expenditure of the 20 Million Shillings. In his absence, the legislator has given his wife Victoria instructions to get Mr.Mukorino’s Baby which she misinterprets as an order to conceive a Baby by him. This confusion leads to hilarious actions climaxing in the MP catching the two in a compromising situation and consequently divorce. Victoria

plots revenge against the MP for divorcing her and therefore betrays him to the Anti-Corruption Action Team (ACAT).

Finally, the Sergeant, the MP and his wife Victoria begin trading accusations and counter accusations which piles evidence of corruption against them leading to their arrest. The rescue operation for Baby Kauchumi is initiated only after the corrupt elements are removed and the rats eradicated. The rats then become symbolic of the corrupt leaders and their elimination is juxtaposed to make this statement.

The play is set in a socio-political climate characterized by corruption and wanton theft of public resources by the political elite despite repeated assertions about a strengthened democratic space. The play was successful at skilfully depicting corruption and impunity and the perpetrators. The play also offered a vivid symbolism of how corruption affects the common person.

3.2.2 Andy Ruri

Andy Ruri is an upcoming and very promising playwright and theatre director in Kenya. He has written award winning plays like “Hello Adults” (Kenyatta University, Winning play 2012) at the Kenya National Schools, Colleges and Universities Drama Festival. He has also written several plays that have been presented as public shows amongst them “The Devil’s Compound” and “The Homecoming”. Andy Ruri holds a Bachelor’s degree in Theatre Arts and Film technology from Kenyatta University and owns a theatre company

called Sparks Theatre Company. He is currently working with Royal Media Services as an online digital producer.

Having responded positively to the request of the researcher and his play “The Devil’s Compound” staged at the Phoenix Theatre falling under the timelines of this study, Andy Ruriwas selected as one of the three directors whose works are investigated in this study.

“The Devil’s Compound” is inspired from the world’s most famous story; the story of Jesus from the Bible. After the death of Jesus on the cross, he descended to Hell and on the third day He rose. But what happened during the three days?

After Jesus dies he descends to Hell to meet with the Devil. The Devil is a business being who runs a Hotel called The Grand Sinners Regency – a place where sinners end up. Jesus’ main objective is to save the sinners from the hands of the Devil but the Devil is not up for the idea. Rodio, the Devil’s assistant, is torn between whom to follow. She has grown without the knowledge of Jesus and when Jesus tells her of the benefits she will receive from following Him, she wants to get out of Hell. She is given all she has ever wanted by the Devil, making it difficult for her to make up her mind. She knew the Devil as the best musician and there is no better way to test the Devil than on something he knows very well. She comes up with a singing competition and sets it on the third day when Jesus was to resurrect. Unfortunately, on the competition day, the Devil’s former girlfriend gets the Devil late while making a Baby. The Devil was sure the singing competition was to be easy, so why not have a little time with his former girlfriend? The Devil does not show up for the Competition, Jesus takes the day and the sinners go free.

3.2.3 Sammy Mwangi

Sammy Mwangi is the founder and director of Heartstrings Entertainment. Sammy has directed over one hundred public shows in Kenya and is commonly known as Governor Sammy Mwangi due to his prowess in the comedy industry in Kenya. Sammy Mwangi produces shows on monthly basis and mainly stages his productions at Alliance Francaise.

His play investigated in this study “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach” is a play whose story revolves around Patrick and Cynthia, who have been married for five years and are yet to get children. Patrick pressures Cynthia to give him five children as they had agreed but Cynthia insists that she will only have one Baby after three more years when she gets promotion at work. Due to increased pressure from Patrick, Cynthia buys drugs which depicts symptoms of a pregnancy when taken and gives them to Patrick. Patrick falls sick and when taken to hospital, test results show that he is pregnant. Led by Pastor C, Doctor Mukiri and Maggie, the neighbours plan how to capitalize on the first man pregnancy to make money. They later learn that it was Cynthia’s plan to show Patrick how difficult it is to carry a pregnancy and to expose the vices of the current crop of society leaders like Pastor C and Doctor Mukiri.

3.3 Dramatic Genre

“Torrent of Rodents” is a comical play under the sub-genre of satire. According to Wilson and Goldfarb (1999) satire is the use of humour, irony, exaggerations or ridicule to expose and criticize people’s stupidity or vices particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.

“The Devil’s Compound” is a comedy under the sub-genre of farce. Farce thrives on all forms of exaggerations, plot complication, stereotyped characters and its humour usually results from ridiculous situations as well as pratfalls and horseplay (Wilson and Goldfarb, 1999). Through the stereotyped characters such as Jesus, The Devil and Judas, Ruri is able to make the “The Devil’s Compound” a very funny play meant to entertain his audience.

“Behind Every Kenyan Stomach” is a comical play under the sub-genre of domestic comedy. Domestic comedy is one that deals with family situations and features members of a family or neighbours caught up in a series of complicated but amusing situations (Wilson and Goldfarb 1999). Domestic comedy is focused on relations between close family members, their friends and their neighbours. In Kenya, “Vitimbi”, a popular show that has dominated TV for more than two decades falls under the genre of domestic comedy. The play also has elements of satire as it also seeks to expose human weaknesses and aspect of the Kenyan society which only minds about themselves and what they gain using laughter.

3.4 Characterization

The main characters in Joseph Murungu’s “Torrent of Rodents”, Mukurinowa Drama, Patience, Mheshimiwa Bungei, Sergeant Robert representative character. Mukurinowa Drama represents the high school teachers whose pay do not allow them to live in a posh estate or house. The teachers who focus on themselves in order to get promotions and pay rise for a better living at the expense of the students they are supposed

to mentor. Mukurinowa Drama used to pay adjudicators for his school to be named and awarded as the best in drama. The actions of corruption by Mukurinowa Drama are ironical considering his name Mukurino – a name associated with a religious group called Akorino. The Akorino is a Christian sect that grew purely out of indigenous Africans leadership in Kenya during the colonization of the country in 1920's. The Akorino church advocates peaceful coexistence, non-violence and purity as prescribed by the biblical scriptures. The dominance of the sect by members of the Agikuyu community can be explained by the fact that its founders in the colonial Kenya belonged to the community and had no association with the mainstream churches (Gachanga, 2016).

MheshimiwaBungei represents the Kenya politicians who are corrupt and would do anything to get rich. MheshimiwaBungei has taken twenty million Kenyan shillings to save a Baby which he does not have. In 2015, the Kenyan government confirmed that close to one billion shillings was embezzled from the National Youth Service. Although, the entity is under the authority of the executive, unsubstantiated allegations pointed towards an involvement of some Members of Parliament in the theft (Mbaka, 2016).

Sergeant Robert who represents the Kenya police is very corrupt and cannot help Patience to save her child because she has nothing to scratch his back, nothing to make the piston of his engine to work faster – a bribe. The kettle at his station and the cup which he carries are also used as a symbol of showing how corrupt the institution of the police is. Such a depiction is a true illustration of the corrupt nature of the Kenya police force. According

to a 2015 report by Transparency International, Kenya Police is ranked as the most corrupt public institution in the country (Gicobi, 2015).

Baby Kauchumi – the Baby is a representative character used as a symbol of the Kenyan economy which is young, fragile and under attack by corruption.

Chorus is used as a sign and to help in the experimentations of the director. The chorus creates the mood and atmosphere of various scenes, react to situations in the play and uses them as human props in achieving the biomechanics techniques.

Rodents – the rodents are non-human characters used symbolically to represent corruption.

Death – An imaginary character signifying death appears when Baby Kauchumi is being attacked by the rodents, during the flash-forward showing Baby Kauchumi funeral and when Baby Kauchumi is not breathing after she is rescued by her mother from the torrent of the sewage.

The use of representative characters helps him to address the theme of corruption using characters that everyone can identify with, characters who are well known for their traits and behaviours.

Characters in “The Devils Compound”

Jesus and The Devil are extraordinary characters who generally represent some extreme of human behaviour – men and women at their worst or best. Jesus is concerned about the humans and that is why he was crucified and went to hell to fight The Devil so that he can save the humans. The Devil on the other hand is on the other extreme side of

evil. He wants the humans to perish so that his business can prosper. He invents diseases and possesses humans with his evil spirits so that they can perish and do evil. He also beats his right hand helper – Rodio – mercilessly.

Rodio and Lady, represent the role of women in the society, in evil and the greatest weakness of both man and even The Devil himself. Rodio is used as the right hand girl by The Devil, keeping all his records, receiving all the sinners' and yet the Devil beats her mercilessly. She is used to even taste wine before The Devil and Lady drink it.

Lady is portrayed as a seductress and the main cause of problems and evil deeds. She is the reason why The Devil was thrown out of heaven; she arouses the Devil's evilness. She also makes The Devil to miss, and consequently lose the singing competition with Jesus. She is able to convince him to help make a Baby and while they are busy making the Baby, Jesus performs his song and is declared winner. This depiction bears some similarity with the biblical stories of Adam and Eve in the creation period and Samson and Delilah. Eve was used by the devil to mislead Adam leading to their expulsion from a garden full of abundance due to violation of the set rules (Genesis 2, 3, King James Bible). Delilah was used by Samson's enemies to uncover and eliminate his secret source of strength-his hair (Judges 16, King James Bible). The director further legitimises the biblical and cultural depiction of women as a source of wickedness in society by using a woman in the narrative as the cause of Devil's loss.

Judas is used as a representative with a dominant trait. He represents the corrupt and greedy people in today's society and with a dominant trait of extreme love for money.

He is portrayed as a very weak character whenever money is mentioned and is very easily swayed away by money.

The messengers and other sinners are used as minor characters in the play.

Characters in “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach”

All characters used in the play “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach” are representative characters. The characters represent normal Kenyans in a family and neighbourhood set up as they struggle to earn a living and lead a better life and will do anything to achieve the better lives they desire without caring much about others and their interests.

Cynthia and Patrick who are the main characters have been married for five years and are yet to get a child. They had agreed to get a child after five years when Cynthia settles at her work place and gets a promotion. This has not happened and Patrick is impatient and insists that he wants five kids but since Cynthia has not gotten the promotion at work she asks Patrick to wait for another three years and that she can only give him one child as she does not want to spoil her body shape by giving birth to many children. The two characters represent today’s society and marriage where each party wants to have their way without considering the other party. Cynthia wants the promotion at work and does not care about Patrick’s desire for a Baby, Patrick on the other hand does not have a proper job yet he wants to have five children.

Pastor C represents the church today. The church that is more concerned about material gain and less focused on its calling to save souls by spreading the gospel and

performing miracles. That's why he is very happy when he learns about Patrick's pregnancy which he says he will maximize on for his church to be famous to a point where T.D Jakes, an internationally recognised televangelist, will be an usher in his church.

Maggie who is Cynthia's house help represents the gossiping women in the society. She is the one who spreads the news about Patrick's pregnancy which spread very fast and the neighbours plan a meeting at night to discuss how they will benefit from the unusual situation. She has also been used to represent the many learned Kenyans who have no jobs while those with no qualifications occupy the jobs due to corruption and nepotism. She is a very qualified nurse yet she works as a house help and the fake doctor works at the hospital.

Mollis is also a representative character used to represent the poor in the society who do not use family planning methods despite their humble lives. He has six kids, lives in a slum, works at a railway station and earns a hundred shillings a day.

3.5 The Directing Approach

Murungu adopts a somewhat improvisational directing style. Improvisation is defined as follows;

Improvisation is the skill of using bodies, space, all human resources, to generate a coherent physical expression of an idea, a situation, a character (even, perhaps, a text); to do this spontaneously, in response to the immediate stimuli of one's environment, and to do it a l'improviste: as though taken by surprise, without preconceptions. (Frost & Yarrow, 1990, p.1).

Therefore, improvisational directing style is one that is not strictly loyal to the script and only uses it as the raw material for the production and where the director uses balance and body, space, movements, points of concentration and impulses as key elements and techniques while giving directions and creating scenarios on stage.

Murungu does not strictly abide by the traditional or the pre-blocked styles of directing. He has incorporated improvement and improvisation to the script while directing. Murungu also notes that he incorporates the creativity of his actors displayed during auditions, rehearsals and by interactions with his team and friends as well as the adjudicator's comments. This approach helps him address relevant themes affecting the society at the time of his production and is able to change the script to meet the requirements and demands of the festival and his audience. By allowing his actors freedom to influence the theme, vision and flavour of his work, Murungu is able to tap into the richness of their natural abilities and their diverse worldviews to the effect that his work is more relevant and appealing to the audience. This approach also enhances harmony and team spirit between the director and his cast particularly during rehearsal period.

Andy Ruri believes that the director serves the playwright by transferring the script as literally as possible from page to stage, retain the time and place specified in his script and closely follow the playwright's prescriptions about staging. He mounts the playwright's work as faithfully and correctly as is humanly possible. This means that Ruri's style of directing bears a lot of traditional directing approach whereby the director strictly follows the movements and blocking in the playwrights work.

Sammy Mwangi relies on a directing approach that treats the script as raw material for the production. In the play “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach”, he created a new story, sequence, gave the actors freedom to create their own lines and movements only retaining the original idea of the script. Mwangi also seems to offer his actors significantly enhanced space to decide the mood, characterisation and movements in his work. By so doing, Mwangi is able to tap into their creativity, innovation and enthusiasm for staging a successful comical play.

3.6 Directing the actor

Joseph Murungu in the play “Torrent of Rodents” worked with high school students with no proven acting history, and he therefore, had to teach them the craft of acting from the word go. Using improvisation during auditions, the actors have to impress him in regard to voice, talent, skills such as dancing and singing. These skills are used as sources of creativity and improvisation while mounting up the production. After he selects his cast, he then has a read through where he explains to the actors the spine of the play, the objectives and super – objective of each character in his play (see appendix).

He then teaches them the skills of acting, starting with the basic knowledge about the stage geography and its conventions as well as the tools of acting i.e. emotions, voice and speech, gestures and body expression.

With the whole cast comprised of boys only, he had to work assiduously to make sure that the boys given female roles are able to play the role credibly and convince the audience

that they are females. He acknowledges their eagerness to learn and experiment as a key motivator. After weeks of rehearsals he sits down his actors and asks them to explain their roles, characters and character relations as well as their objectives and super-objective of the play as a way of helping them get in character and understand the play better.

Making and sustaining the second person in an actor – the character on stage – so that he or she is acceptable and believable to the audience, while still remaining oneself is one of the most complicated things required of an actor. Using Stanislavsky’s method acting and techniques, he directs the actors using the following: objectives of each scene, line of actions and the super-objective of the play, analysis of text through action, truth, belief, imagination, subtext, motivation, concentration, relaxation, communion – communication with audience – adaptation, tempo-rhythm and the physical apparatus and movements (Downs & Ramsey, 2012). Murungu, thus, uses the auteur principles which regard the director as the single most important creative force in a play. According to this theory, the script alone is not sufficient to achieve the intended vision of the play. This means that the aforementioned skills and tools are vital in ensuring the director is able to make a play successful at achieving its vision (Innes & Shetsova, 2013). In light of this, Murungu was highly successful at employing his improvisational style in directing his team of actors to bring out the intended meaning of the play “Torrent of Rodents”.

While Murungu selects the cast and makes a play with them, Andy Ruri on the other hand selects the play that he intends to perform and opts for type casting. He looks for and identifies actors who fit the characters in his plays for casting through type casting or by

call of auditions when he fails to identify actor/actors via typecasting. Typecasting is where the director assigns roles to actors and actresses repeatedly due to the appropriateness of their appearance to a given character or previous success in such roles.

In the case of the play “The Devil’s Compound”, the director used typecasting in all the five main roles and characters. The actors playing The Devil, Judas and The lady had previously been involved in the same production with the actors playing the roles of the Devil and Judas retaining their roles. After casting, the director conducts a read through of the script with the actors. He then explains the objective and super-objectives of each character and the whole play. When it comes to directing the actors; Andy Ruri, just like Murungu subscribes to Stanislavsky method acting, he directs his actors and expects them to portray their characters and activities natural and convincing by conveying the inner truth of their characters (See appendix).

To some extent, Ruri allows his actors and actresses to create, innovate and improvise their stage movements as he also gets to learn and create a bond with them. This allows the actors to explore their limits and to be free with one another for maximum productivity. The director notes that this helps the actors to be themselves, maintain their level of energy and passion when playing their respective characters. The first two weeks of rehearsals are used for bonding, actors getting their lines and expressing themselves on stage with their own stage movements while using the scripts. The director then blocks the play while still allowing the actors to come up with their own movements guided by their motivations and stage business. He also allows the actors to adlib but make sure they stick to their objective

and the spine and super-objective of play and he must approve the adlib during rehearsal. Acting is his most important – if not the only – technique the director uses in his production and he believes that theatre communicates through the actions and dialogue of the characters on stage. His actors and actress must therefore follow his instructions and those of the playwright as closely as possible.

Sammy Mwangi identifies scripts and stories that suit the Kenyan audience and current issues the country is facing. He then shares the general idea of the play ‘a man getting symptoms of a pregnancy and later learning that he is pregnant’ with his cast and they brainstorm around the idea and come up with their own story of the idea and creates new characters, plot and scenarios in their play. This helps the cast to understand the play and own it as their production. The actors come up with their own dialogue guided by the current situation and pressing issues in the country guided by the director. After several days of brainstorming the director and his cast came up with a complete play “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach”. Sammy Mwangi then results to typecasting as he has already visualized the characters. The reason for typecasting is because he works with actors who already know their trade and not those who think they can and he only needs to guide them towards the expectations of the production at hand. He calls the already selected cast and shares the general idea of the play with them and starts to workshop the idea through brainstorming (See Appendix).

During the brainstorming it is hard to distinguish the director and the cast as they do so as a whole team. This helps the cast member to fully express and reveal themselves without

holding back or fearing that the director is watching. The male actors take up the role of the main male character and the ladies take up the role of the main female character. In this case all male actors take the role of Patrick and all female actresses take the role of Cynthia and they have a conversation with everyone free to say their own lines of how they would have reacted if they were in that situation. The director only guides and intervenes when he feels that the discussion is not in line with the super-objective of the play. When the sequence of the play is complete and characters are well developed, it is only then that the director assigns roles to the cast. At this point every actor understands every role perfectly and any actor can play any role or fill the roles of missing actors.

After assigning of roles, the brainstorming continues but now with every actor taking up their roles and characters and when the director is satisfied with a specific scene, the stage manager notes down the various key issues and sequence of the scene as the actors take to stage for blocking. At this point, his trust for the actors is very high as he rarely gives them stage movements and is mainly interested at the delivery of lines for comic relief.

With the main aim of his production being entertainment, he strives to make sure that the actors are able to deliver the jokes and punch lines effectively but not to teach actors how to act. Sammy Mwangi notes that the actor should have all the skills required and his work is to only guide them towards meeting the expectations of acting for his company and compares this to a small Toyota car driver.

When you take the Toyota driver and give him a range rover sport, he already knows how to drive; all you need is to show him are the features of the range rover and how to handle it when driving (See Appendix)

Using Stanislavsky method acting, Sammy Mwangi guides his actors to believe in everything that takes place onstage and what they are doing. He insists that they should be natural and convincing for them to convey the inner truth of what they represent on stage and make the audience laugh and enjoy the production. He lets the actors know the final destination of the production by explaining and giving them the super-objective and spine of the production and gives them the freedom to create as they find their own route of arriving at the final destination.

All the three directors subscribe to Stanislavsky method acting and use it to direct their actors. Even though not to the same extent due to their directing approach, the three directors give their actors chance to create and influence their movements as well as their stage business and take into account the contribution of the actors/actresses. There are key factors that contribute to the approach used by each director as are a result to the performance space as well as the talent available. Sammy Mwangi is able to fully trust his actors and give them freedom due to their experience and expertise in acting as opposed to Joseph Murungu who works with high school students.

3.7 Cinematic theatre techniques

Cinematic techniques involve the use of motion and still pictures in theatre to aid in the conveyance of previously unknown information in a play to the audience. The pictures and sound could also be used to develop a scene-relevant agenda in a play without reverting to flashbacks or flash forwards (Innes & Shetsova, 2013).

While cinematic techniques are in essence tools to a director, their use by Murungu confirms his improvisational directing techniques that involve a fusion of traditional and previously unconventional elements such as electronic sounds to aid the effectiveness of a play.

When MheshimiwaBungei realizes that his wife misunderstood what he meant by telling her to make sure that she gets Mukurinowa Drama's Baby, he asks for the CCTV footage to see what his wife and Mukurinowa Drama were doing. The CCTV footage is played on stage in a fast forward mode and shows all the actions that took place a few minutes before he entered the house. The CCTV recording is a cinematic technique which recorded the events that took place in MheshimiwaBungei's house. MheshimiwaBungei is able to play, fast-forward, pause, zoom in and zoom out the recorded footage. All this are features possible in film but theatre applies them using the cinematic techniques.

Murungu uses a **vignette** – a cinematic technique – a short descriptive image when MheshimiwaBungei's wife holds Mukurinowa Drama, they freeze and a song is played; “teacher teacherteacher wee, mwarimuwakwa teacher eee, hariatugachemania no gakahura kiss ee.” The kikuyu song meaning “my teacher, when we shall meet, I shall kiss you” and the actions and intentions of MheshimiwaBungei's wife prior to the stage freeze, is a cinematic technique (vignette) used to create meaning and justifying the action of MheshimiwaBungei's wife.

Tableau – a stage picture – is a technique under cinematic techniques used in the play “Torrent of Rodents”. MheshimiwaBungei's wife shows how Mukurinowa Drama used to

call adjudicators so that his school can be named the best school in drama and how the trophy was handed to him. The whole action of how he called and received the trophy is shown by use of stage images.



Picture number 1: A tableau used to show Mukurinowa Drama calling adjudicators

As Sergeant Robert is asking for a bribe in form of a motivation from Patience, he tells her that even her husband Mukurinowa Drama used to ask them to give motivation fees for the lick-age of the CRE exams. He uses a stage picture of Mukurinowa Drama drinking from a cup which Sergeant Robert was holding. He again uses a stage picture to show Mukurinowa Drama receiving a trophy from the festival officials for the overall winning play yet it was not among the best.



Picture number 2: A stage picture of Mukurinowa Drama drinking from a cup held Sergent Robert as a sign of corruption.



Picture number 3: A stage picture of Mukurinowa Drama receiving a trophy from the festival officials for the overall winning play.

In the last scene where members of the Anti-corruption Action Team (ACAT) rescue Baby Kauchumi from the house, the rodents attack and grab Baby Kauchumi and dives in the torrent of sewage with the Baby, Patience the mother of Baby Kauchumi dives in the sewage in an attempt to save BabyKauchumi. The actions of her attempts to swim under water and saving Baby Kauchumi are shown at the centre stage. The director uses cinematic technique of projecting what is happening down stage inside the sewage, which the audience cannot see at the centre of the stage using replica characters, costumes and a brown cloth signifying the dirty sewage. The director is able to show and amusing the audience what they did not expect or think was possible to do in a production.

The director uses these cinematic techniques to drive the plot by creatively showing what happened in the past without necessarily using a flashback. The cinematic technique gives the director an opportunity to show what happened by use of stage pictures as opposed to action which would take a lot of time thus slowing the pace of the production. Using the CCTV footage, MheshimiwaBungei is able to see what happened in more than five minutes in less than a minute and at the same time amusing the audience by showing the action as if they are watching a fast-forwarded tape or DVD on a TV screen.

The cinematic techniques have been used also to help the director convey his thematic concern. The stage pictures discussed above have been used to show how corrupt Mukurinowa Drama was and how he used to call adjudicators at night so that his school could be awarded the best in drama and how he made his student pay motivation fees for the leakage of the C.R.E exams. The CCTV footage is also used to show how rotten and

corrupt the wife of Mheshimiwa Bungei is. After being told to have Mukurinowa Drama's Baby, she does not think about adoption, she thinks about sleeping with Mukurinowa Drama to get pregnant. The footage reveals how she tried to seduce and sleep with Mukurinowa Drama for the sake of saving his husband who is about to be investigated by the Anti-Corruption Action Team (ACAT).

Murungu's reliance on cinematic theatre techniques affirms his preference for the director's theatre and improvisational styles of directing. The use of tableau and vignette enables the director to successfully reduce his reliance on the actors' natural abilities to convey his vision through dialogue. It is also justifiable to contend that Murungu conforms to the auteur principle that upholds the superiority of the director's artistry and authorship in transforming a script into a successful play. Andy Ruri and Sammy Mwangi do not use any cinematic techniques in their production.

3.8 Biomechanics theatre techniques

Murungu employs and experiments using biomechanics technique in the play "Torrent of Rodents" in various scenes. Mheshimiwa Bungei's wife is seen swimming, she swims using the front crawl and the backstroke styles. The director uses the movement of the human body parts in achieving this swimming effect.



pic.4



pic.5

Picture number 4 and 5: Mheshimiwa Bungei's wife is seen swimming

When Mheshimiwa Bungei realizes that his wife misunderstood what he meant by telling her to make sure that she gets Mukurinowa Drama's baby, he asks for the CCTV footage to see what his wife and Mukurinowa Drama were doing. The CCTV footage is played on

stage in a fast-forward mode and shows all the actions that took place a few minutes before he entered the house. The director achieves this effect of fast-forwarding the CCTV footage by use of the biomechanics technique. The actors repeat their actions very fast without words but by movement of their body only.

After convincing Mukurinowa Drama to let him adopt his baby, MheshimiwaBungei and Mukurinowa Drama sign documents showing that both parties have agreed. The signing is done using biomechanics, a human prop, with cloths on his back signifying the pages comes on stage and Mukurinowa Drama is told to sign, as he signs, the human prop moves his body indicating movement of the signature and MheshimiwaBungei turns the hand of the human prop showing the turning of pages for Mukurinowa Drama to sign the document on page two.



pic.6



pic.7

Picture number 6 and 7 :MheshimiwaBungei and Mukurinowa Drama signing an agreement using the biomechanics technique

When patience the wife of Mukurinowa Drama is slapped by one of Sergeant Robert's policemen, an actor with skate shoes enters the stage and skates around patience showing the vertigo effect – the false sense that you or your surroundings are spinning or moving.



pic.8



pic.9

Picture number 8 and 9:Patience experiencing the vertigo effect after being slapped is clearly shown by use of biomechanics technique

The rodents attack baby Kauchumi and since there is no one to rescue the child, patience the mother of baby Kauchumi decides to swim through the torrent of the sewage to save

the baby but is attached by the rodents. MheshimiwaBungei and Mukurinowa Drama who are looking for her, see Patience in the torrent struggling with the rodents. Using MheshimiwaBungei's gun, Mukurinowa Drama fires a bullet at the rodent on top of Patience. The firing of the gun and the bullet moving and hitting the rodent is shown through biomechanics. Actors enter the stage and form a pattern of the gun which Mukurinowa Drama fires, one of the actors, holding the bullet – as a prop – moves towards the rodent until the bullet hit the rodent and it falls in the torrent of the sewage.



pic.10



pic.11



pic.12



pic.13



pic.14

Picture number 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14: The firing of the gun and the bullet moving till it hits the rodent achieved by use of biomechanics technique

In the resolution of the play “Torrent of Rodents”, Patience declares that MheshimiwaBungei, his wife and Sergeant Robert would be injected with anti-rodent pesticides from the Anti-corruption Action Team (ACAT) as a sign of detoxing them from greed and later cleansing them. The injection of MheshimiwaBungei and his wife is done in a very creative way shown by movement of the body using skating. As Mukurinowa Drama aims at the buttocks of MheshimiwaBungei and his wife, the skater skates on stage, takes the two syringes and skates all the way to their position and places the syringes on the buttocks of the two.



pic.15



pic.16



pic.17



Pic.18

Picture number 15, 16, 17 and 18: MheshimiwaBungei, his wife and Sergeant Robert being injected with anti-rodent pesticides from the Anti-corruption Action Team (ACAT) as a sign of detoxing them from their corrupt vices

The director uses biomechanics technique to enhance the actions on stage and at the same time amuse the audience. The amusement is used as an alienation effect to remind the audience that they are watching a production and to stop getting lost in the emotion, story and characters of the play. The director forces audience to think and question the political and social realities of the situations being presented in the play so that they can address the issues.

Just as the cinematic techniques, Andy Ruri and Sammy Mwangi do not use any biomechanics technique in their productions.

3.9 Dialogue

Dialogue is the words spoken by characters in a play or a film. Brockett and Ball (2004) note that for a dramatist to convey intentions and meaning, they depend almost entirely on dialogue. Dialogue in a play serves many purposes such as impart information, to characterize, to direct attention to important plot elements, to reveal themes and ideas of the play, to establish tone or mood and internal logic and to also establish tempo and rhythm.

Joseph Murungu complements dialogue with stage action and business and most of his communications are achieved through actions on stage and dialogue is only used to complement the actions. As discussed above in cinematic and biomechanics techniques, the director shows most of what is said. When MheshimiwaBungei is narrating how MukurinoWa Drama used to call adjudicators at night and how the trophies were handed to him, Murungu compliments the dialogue with stage picture so as to enhance the action on stage.

In a bid to convince Mukurinowa Drama to accept his baby Kauchumi to be adopted by MheshimiwaBungei so that he can cover up for the twenty millions shillings he took to save a baby which he does not have, MheshimiwaBungei tells him that his baby will not be rescued and will die. Murungu shows this in a creative way using a flash-forward, he shows the coffin and burial of Baby Kauchumi while MheshimiwaBungei is talking to Mukurinowa Drama telling him that he will be responsible for his baby's death, that he is a murderer, a monster and a beast. This moves and convinces Mukurinowa Drama to have

his baby adopted by MheshimiwaBungei. The flash-forward is used to drive the plot by convincing Mukurinowa drama to accept to have his baby adopted by MheshimiwaBungei so that he can save the baby. In so doing, the flash-forward helps to reveal how heartless and determined MheshimiwaBungei is in making sure that he adopts baby Kauchumi in order to clear his name from corruption instead of giving Mukurinowa Drama the money which is meant to save baby Kauchumi. This helps the director address his thematic concern as well as complement the words of MheshimiwaBungei with action on stage.

Andy Ruri uses dialogue as his main directing technique in the play “The Devil’s Compound”. Almost all his thematic concerns and communication are addressed through dialogue, soliloquy and asides. Dialogue is the main force used to drive the plot of the play. Everything in the play is revealed using dialogue. At the beginning, Rodio the only character on stage receives a phone call by saying “Hello, grand sinner’s regency! How may I help you?” When Judas enters the stage to meet Rodio, it is through their dialogue that we really get to know where the play is set – in Hell.

RODIO: You must be Judas Iscariot?
JUDAS: Yes! How do know my name?
RODIO: (Removing the rope around his neck) this belongs to TD.
JUDAS: TD?
RODIO: The Devil!
JUDAS: The what? I am in hell?
RODIO: Welcome to grand sinner’s regency, your one stop for nyamachoma (Roast meat).

It is using the dialogue of the characters that we get to know that the play is set in hell, as well as introduce other characters. The mention of The Devil at the beginning also

helps the audience know that there is a character called the Devil in the play. Dialogue in this case is used to impart information about the setting and also about the characters and their names.

It is also through Lady's dialogue that we get to know the genesis of the grand sinner's regency and how The Devil ended up being thrown out of heaven.

LADY: You should have listened to me. Father would have not chased you out; all you had to do was follow my plan to the end. He gave you more powers beyond believe, made you the most talented angel in heaven. What more could you have asked for? But, no...you wanted to take his position. It is a good thing you started the Grand Sinner's Regency, to keep your mind off things.

Here dialogue is used to show the character traits of TD as a very greedy being who even wanted to take the position of God yet he was given very many powers and made him the most talented angel in heaven and why he is in hell.

It is through dialogue that the director is able to address his thematic concerns. When Judas is taken to the burning chambers he tries to use corruption in order for the temperature in his chamber to be reduced but Rodio tells him that corruption does not work in hell.

JUDAS: Look I buried 30 shillings on earth, if I could get it and give you 10 shillings.
RODIO: 10 shillings?
JUDAS: Well 20 shillings then!
RODIO: Judas, Judas, corruption does not work in here.

When Jesus tells Judas that he will compete with TD and his singing is terrible, Judas tells Jesus that corruption has proved to work in hell. He urges Jesus to resurrect him

so that he can go back to earth get the 30 shillings he buried then hung himself again and come back to hell so that they can work out something with TD. Jesus tells Judas that he cannot be corrupt because he is the saviour and not the Kenyan government.

Dialogue has been used to drive the plot and explain why the grand sinner's regency is not doing well. Lady tells TD that God – their father – sent Jesus on earth to save the human beings from his evil ways and that he needs to do something to save his business.

- LADY: Father sent Jesus to earth thirty years ago to save the human beings from your evil ways. That is why your business has gone down drastically. And if you do not do something soon, you will lose your business for ever.
- T.D: What are you trying to say?
- LADY: Twenty year ago, you would receive a thousand or more sinner a day. But, of late, you only receive one at a time. If you ask me, that is poor business.
- T.D: I have noticed a decrease in the number of sinners in a day. But, just a minute...

The director has also used **monologue** as a technique to express the feelings of characters. Monologue is a long speech by an actor in a play while soliloquy represents a character's thoughts so the audience can know what he/she is thinking at a given moment. Literarydevices.net, (2015) define monologue as a Greek word monos means alone and logos means speech. It is a literary device, which is the speech or verbal presentation that a single character presents in order to express his/her collection of thoughts and ideas aloud. When TD is given information about Jesus and that he is coming to hell, TD goes into deep thoughts about his business. The director combines a long speech with the thoughts of TD to address thematic concerns of corruption, police brutality, poor governance and tribalism.

T.D I started this business with nothing, all I had was a pocket full of evil and the power of making it happen. Now my business is almost running down.

(Silence as he walks around)

Hmm...If the demand for sin is high, the higher the number is sinners. But, if the demand for sin goes down, the lower the numbers of sinner I get. This...this so called Jesus has taken the demand for sin and replaced it with the demand for joy, happiness, love, patience, hard work, trust, hope, faith, peace...who needs all those? How would the world be with all those good things? I mean, how do you take away witchcraft, lust, greed, hate, murder, of all corruption? How do you expect Kenyans to survive without corruption, poor governance, police brutality, tribalism? How...?

(Screams of sinner falling from earth and Rodio walks to get them)

How does he expect me to get my sinners? How...?

The monologue is also used to show how the coming of Jesus has affected the business of the Devil by replacing his evil ways with good deeds.

When Jesus is also put in a singing competition with The Devil yet he cannot sing, the director uses monologue and soliloquy to explain what is going through his head as he talks to his father.

JESUS: You know I am your only son, but, at times I wish I had a small sister. You know maybe her name would be Joan Christ. I need somebody father to help me. Back on earth I had twelve men walking with me. Fighting the devil has proved difficult. Father you know I can't sing neither can I dance, but if it were acting, I would have pulled it out easily. You saw me on the cross... (Emulating) EloiEloiLasabekithani. Or the time I walked on water, that was the bomb, but singing? I don't even have any lyrics to any song. Dear Father I need help...

The director uses the monologues to advance the plot as well as address his thematic concerns but most importantly is to amuse the audience by making them laugh.

Aside is another technique used by the director to address thematic technique of greediness and desire for earthly things as portrayed by the character Judas. Jesus tells Judas that there is a house in heaven already prepared for him alone. The director uses an aside to show Judas fantasizing and his desire for earthly things.

JESUS: Leave it alone, God has promised you a home of internal peace. A home where you will not need money .A home where you will only praise and worship him. Your own house!

JUDAS: No need for money?

JESUS: Yes.

JUDAS: My own house? (*Aside*) I want it to be near an ocean and the morning light shall be falling on my face every morning...

Just like Andy Ruri, Sammy Mwangi also uses dialogue as the main force driving the plot and almost everything is revealed through dialogue and only complemented by setting which is discussed later on. The main conflict between the two main characters that is Cynthia and Patrick is revealed through their dialogue. Patrick's desire to have children, how he has waited for five years after their marriage in order to allow his wife to get a promotion at work so that they can have a child and Cynthia's demand for three more years is all revealed using dialogue.

Patrick: Dawaya Crumping nimimba, patamimba (The solution to crumping is pregnancy, get pregnant.)

Cynthia: No, no, wait a minte! So this was the point all along? So you have been faking all your sickness. You needed to prove a point that I need to get a baby? So that was the point all along?

Patrick: That was not the point, now that you have brought the point, that is the point. We need to get a kid ASAP.

Cynthia: I'm so pissed at you. You know I have not been going to work for the past two weeks because of something we have

talked over a thousand times. I have told you that we will get a baby but we need to plan ourselves first.

Patrick: but it's been five years now. What do you mean plan ourselves? We plan for a kid? Kwanimtotonimkutano, tunaitisha agenda na members present? (Is getting a child like a meeting, that we need agenda or members present?)

Cynthia: Before we got married I told you to give me five years so that I plan myself, get promoted at work then we can start thinking about the baby.

Patrick: But it's five years now.

Cynthia: But I have not yet been promoted at work. So you need to give me at least three more years then we start thinking about the baby.

Patrick: Three more years? I wait for three more years? In the next four years you will be thirty five, how are you planning to have five kids before menopause catches up with you?

Cynthia: No, no, come again? How many kids?

Patrick: Yes five kids!

Cynthia: Five kids? You expect me Cynthia Mboya to go through CS five times?

Patrick: I need five kids.

Cynthia: The best I can give is one kid and it's after three more years.

All this is revealed as Cynthia and Patrick have this conversation seated in their living room. At the hospital, it is through dialogue that we also realize that Patrick is pregnant. Comic relief in the play “Behind Every Kenyan’s Stomach” is also achieved through dialogue as characters disclose the plot and tell jokes on stage. Both Andy Ruri and Sammy Mwangi use dialogue as their main technique in driving and developing the plots of their production unlike Joseph Murungu who employs more techniques.

3.10 Design Collaboration

The stage director collaborates with a team of creative individuals and other staff, coordinating all aspects of stagecraft, costume design, props, lighting design, set design,

stage combat, and sound design for the production. Here, the researcher has discussed how the three directors used music and sound effects, set design, costumes and lighting to achieve the overall goal of the production as well as address their thematic concerns in their productions.

3.10.1 Music and Sound Effects

Music and sound effects in the “Torrent of Rodents” are significant tools for Murungu in bringing out the moods and intended performance from his cast. By using such elements to enhance the effectiveness of the script, Murungu acts as the supreme author of the script and the play thus making him the single most important ingredient in the success of the production.

Underscoring – music that accompanies the action onstage but rarely acknowledged by the characters, mostly known as background music. The background music in the play “Torrent of Rodents” is used in most of the scenes with an aim of setting the tempo and rhythm for the actors by creating the mood and atmosphere of the scene.

Specific cues are sounds that the characters are aware of and rely on to help progress the action of the plot. These sounds are used to reinforce the action of the characters and creating a sense of reality in the production. Every time someone jumps in the torrent of sewage, the sound of water splash is played enhancing the action of people jumping into water as well as creating that reality that the characters are jumping in real water which is not the case. When Mheshimiwa Bungei’s wife is swimming, the sound of

someone swimming is played. Any time the commander of the Anti-corruption Action Team (ACAT) mentions the name Anti-corruption Action Team (ACAT), the sound of a cat is played. The play starts with the cry of Baby Kauchumi, and the cry sound is played every time the rodents attack Mukurinowa Drama's house indicating that the Baby is in danger.

Andy Ruri employs this technique of music and sound effect effectively in his production. He uses live performance of two songs on stage. The Devil asks Rodio to entertain him and the Lady as they talk and drink wine, Rodio introduces two characters – sinners – on stage one at a time. Kagumo rapper a well-known musician is the first on stage and he performs a full song on stage. The song – I cherish you – praises and talks about the ladies and how they are cherished by men. The other character performs a song playing a guitar. The song is also praises the lady saying that heaven must be missing an angel because she is seated next to you – The Devil. The music was used to enhance the character of the Devil. It is mentioned in the play severally that the devil was the choir master in heaven meaning he liked music but the actor taking his role could not sing and thus the director saw it necessary to have characters performing live music to enhance his love for music.

Background music is used during The Devil and Jesus monologues/soliloquy. The music sets the mood for the scene as well as the tempo of the monologues/soliloquy. In the monologue by Jesus which is used as a lamentation, the music is smooth and slow which helps create a sad lamentation mood while in The Devil's monologue, the music played is

a bit fast and it sets the tempo for monologue. Background music is also used to set the rhythm and tempo of the scene where The Devil is disrupting Jesus and Judas during rehearsals with coins. As Judas follows and collects the coins being thrown at him by The Devil, the both move with the tempo and rhythm of the background music. The music, its rhythm and tempo is combined with the actions of the two character to create comic relief as the devil tempts Judas away from Jesus.

Specific cues are used severally in the play. The Wilhelm sound – a sound used when someone falls from a great height – is used every time someone arrives in hell. The sound is the cue for Rodio to open the door for sinners who arrive in hell.

Music and sound effects are used very selectively in the play “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach” by Sammy Mwangi. There is only one specific cue used in the play. Door knocks at Patrick’s house. The first notable sound effect is used in scene three. The scene takes place at night. Patrick neighbours are meeting to discuss how to capitalize on his pregnancy and cricket sounds are played to enhance the atmosphere of the scene.

The director uses background music in the last scene as Cynthia reveals that Patrick was not pregnant. The background music is used to enhance the mood of the scene. The sombre mood in the scene helps Cynthia exposes the behaviours of Pastor C who used the pregnancy of Patrick to bring fame to his church, the fake Doctor Mukiri who sells drugs without caring, Maggie the gossip and the neighbour who capitalised on the pregnancy for fame and riches. They do all these for their own benefits and not caring about the truth about the pregnancy or the pregnant man.

3.10.2 Set

Murungu uses a mode of set design similar to constructivism – an approach used by Vsevolod Meyerhold – which focused on the function of scenery and multi-levelled sets and a bare stage for enhance biomechanical acting. The set of the Play “Torrent of Rodents” is designed to meet the needs of the production i.e. a functional multi-level set with few props and rostrums to allow the use of biomechanics, experimentation and movement of characters on stage. The set is used to define the performance space. The house of Mukurinowa Drama is set on the left hand side of the down stage where the torrent of the sewage is. On the right hand side of the down stage is the swimming pool of Mheshimiwa Bungei’s house. The juxtaposition of the two, a clean swimming pool of a posh house and a torrent of the sewage outside Mukurinowa Drama’s small house is used to show the contrast in the living standards between the normal Kenyans and the problems they face and those of the politicians and the lives they live using the tax payers’ money. In the play, the two houses have a swimming pools but one swims in poverty and corruption caused by the politicians who swim in a clean water swimming pool.



Picture number 19: The juxtaposition a clean swimming pool of MheshimiwaBungei's posh house and a torrent of the sewage outside Mukurinowa Drama's small and humble house.

The set is designed in a way that allows characters to dive, swim and cross the torrent of sewage outside the house of Mukurinowa Drama and the swimming pool at MheshimiwaBungei's house.



Picture number 20: Mukurinowa Drama crossing the torrent of sewage in an attempt to save BabayKauchumi.



Picture number 21: MheshimiwaBungei's wife swimming at the pool.

The up-stage is the house of MheshimiwaBungei which is big, posh and classy. The size, painting style and colours used (yellow, gold and shades of red) in his house

show that it is a house for a rich person. This again is a juxtaposition of MheshimiwaBungei's house and that of Mukurinowa Drama which is small and simple showing the contrast between their lifestyle and how the rich thrive using money meant to help the poor.



Picture number 22: Mukurinowa Drama and his wife Patience outside MheshimiwaBungei's house.

The design of the stage is creatively done to create additional space for other locations in the production such as the police station and the Anti-Corruption Action Team (ACAT) office. The centre stage set opens to divulge the police station while the left side set opens to divulge the ACAT office.



Picture number 23: Sergeant Robert at the police station.



Picture number 24: The ACAT boss seated at their office with two other ACAT officers.

The painting and decoration of the set is both realistic and non-realistic. It is realistic as it shows the houses, torrent of sewage and the swimming pool which are a representation of reality and non-realistic as the two houses painted are used symbolically to represent the contrast of the common Kenyan man and the Kenyan politicians. The other non-realistic elements of the painting are the coat of arms and the kettle at the police station and the tiger/cat drawings at the ACAT office which are symbols used to represent something else.

On the other hand "The Devil's Compound" set is very simply designed. The set has three exits. The first is the one that sinners enter and leave hell from, on the right side, the second is the one that leads to the burning chambers and the third leads to The Devil's room on the left. Rodio's desk is on the stage right, and The Devil's drinks shelf is next to the door leading to his room. A couch is placed at the center of the stage.

The set design is very simple and realistic with normal furniture and paintings contrary to the expectations of hell.



Picture number 25: “*The Devil’s Compound*”set

In the play “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach”, Sammy Mwangi never had a constructed set. He used the stage as it was. The play is set in Patrick’s house, a hospital room and a scene at the neighbourhood compound. The director only gives an impression of the location by use of props rather than the set. Patrick’s house is characterized by the seats, carpet and the entrances to the house, bedroom and the kitchen. The hospital is characterized by the table and costumes of the doctor and the nurse. The scene at the neighbourhood compound is only characterized by lighting, sound and costuming. The director does not have a realistic impression of the house, hospital and the neighbourhood compound. The stage is left bare. The audience can see all the walls of the stage and some actors are seen moving at the back. The decoration is done just by the use of coloured chalk and they do not in any way relate to the play. #someoneTellCNN, Obama is Kenyan, “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach” , Heartstrings is Kenyan, Kenya is one, caricatures of the deputy president William Ruto asking himself if he will meet Obama, the president of

Kenya Uhuru Kenyatta, all this were trending issues at the time of the production and is what the director chose to have on the walls of the stage. This kind of a bare set also creates the alienation effect which helps the audience know that they are watching a fictional story and they are there to be entertained and learn something from the production. The bare stage and writings on the wall helps the director keep the mind of the audience thinking throughout the duration of the production. By the audience asking themselves questions about the writings on the wall and their meaning, he is able to carry them all the way to the end of the production as opposed to confining their mind to house set-up where they will only need to look at once and identify with.



Picture number 26: A picture of all characters on stage in the last scene in Patrick's house characterized by the house holds – the chairs, carpet and table.



Picture number 27: A picture showing the scene in the hospital characterized by the costumes of the doctor and the nurse and the props on stage.



Picture number 28: The scene at the neighbourhood compound, only characterized by lighting, sound and costuming.

3.10.3 Costume

The costumes used in the play “Torrents of Rodents” are realistic in nature except for the imaginary character Death. Mukurinowa Drama has a white cloth in his head which are common with the religious beliefs associated with the Akorino church. Short sleeved shirt and black trousers are simple and realistic costumes for a teacher. The long black beard is used as a unique feature for the character to be easily identified and remembered. Patience costumes also help show social class and religion who dress in long dresses. For Mheshimiwa Bungei and his wife their costumes are designed to resemble their class and elegance. The Anti-Corruption Action Team (ACAT) and the police costumes are designed to show their occupation. Baby Kauchumi is on napkins to show that the baby is still very young and a perfect symbol of our economy with a white cloth in his head showing the affiliation to the father’s religion.

The chorus is dressed in well African designed white tops and black trousers for male characters and plain white tops and orange skirts with African print for aesthetic value.

The Rodents costumes are also well designed to create the illusion of real rats. The character representing death is also dressed in black – a colour associated with death and funeral and creepy mask.



pic.29



pic.30

Picture number 29 and 30: Costumes of death and the rats respectively.

In the play, “The Devil’s Compound”, The Devil, Lady and the Messengers are all dressed in black. Black is a mysterious colour associated with fear and the unknown – black holes. It usually has a negative connotation - blacklist, black humour, 'black death'. The costumes are used by the director to enhance the characters, The Devil is very evil, and so is the lady who made him lose his job in heaven and the messengers who work for the devil thus all the three characters costumes are used to show how evil they are. The Devil’s make up shows him as ugly and frightening.



Picture number 31: The Devil’s make up showing him as ugly and frightening.

Lady is dressed in long sexy dresses which help show her sexual nature and character in the play.



pic.32



pic.33

Picture number 32 and 33: The Devil dressed in complete black and The Lady dressed in a long sexy dress and a close up shot of the sexy Lady

Jesus, as we know him from the bible was the son of God and came to save the human beings. The director dresses Jesus in a white robe, showing his pure and clean heart and intentions for the humans.



Picture number 34: Jesus in white robe and Judas

Rodio is dressed in ragged cloths signifying his role under The Devil and how she is oppressed and misused. Judas who was one of the twelve disciples is dressed in a robe just as the disciples of Jesus used to dress.

In the play “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach”, costumes for all characters are realistic and the director used them to show the social class of the characters, their occupation and the atmosphere. Doctor Mukiri and the nurse are dressed in white dust coats and the nurse also wears white gloves. These costumes are used to show their occupation. Maggie is dresses in a blue dress and a white apron which show she is a house help.

Cynthia is dressed in very classy, fitting dresses, skirts and tops, high heel shoes, well-kept hair style, and changes her costumes in every scene that she appears. This identifies her social class. A woman with a good job and probably belongs to the middle class. Pastor C is also dressed in smart casual with khaki trousers and nice long sleeved shirts and drives a Toyota Harrier. This again is also used to show his social class.

Patrick and his workmate Mollis, Maggie and her husband Baba Boyie, are dressed in costumes that again show people who work as casual workers and earn very little money.

The director also uses costumes to show the atmosphere of the play. This is evident in scene three when all the neighbour of Patrick are in a meeting at night discussing how they will benefit from Patrick’s pregnancy – the first man in the world to become pregnant. The costumes worn by the characters on stage show that the weather is very cold and that the meeting is taking place at night.



Picture number 35: Costumes worn by the characters on stage show that the weather is very cold and that the meeting is taking place at night.

3.10.4 Lighting

The play “Torrent of Rodents” was performed in Schools halls which are not equipped with professional theatre lights and thus Joseph Murungu did not use any lighting techniques and design. His play was performed using house lighting.

Andy Ruri uses lighting for two purposes. One is to reveal the setting and the other is to direct the attention of the audience to specific actions on stage. The play is set in hell but the set used is realistic as well as realistic lighting is used.



Picture number 36: Lighting used in the play "*The Devil's Compound*".

The other lighting technique used by Ruri is that of directing the attention of the audience to specific actions on stage. When the Devil and Jesus are acting their monologues on stage, only the spot light is used to light the character on stage. When Jesus is performing during the competition, the director again uses the spot light only lighting the character Jesus. Using this lighting technique, the director is able to direct the attention of the audience only to the spot at which the character on stage is and their actions.



pic.37



pic.38

Picture number 37 and 38: The devil and Jesus on stage and spot light used to direct the attention of the audience.



Picture number 39: A spot light on Jesus as he performed during the competition.

Sammy Mwangi on the other hand uses lighting creatively to depict various effects and scenarios. The spot light is used every time the stand-up comedian is on stage at the end of every scene. With all other lights put off, the director directs the attention of the audience only to the stand-up comedian on stage. This then allows the cast to prepare the stage for the next scene.



Picture number 40: A spot light highlighting the stand-up comedian is on stage.

The director also uses lighting to separate the stage set up. With the play set in three locations; Patrick's house, the hospital and the neighbourhood's compound, the director uses lighting to distinguish the three locations. The main location is Patrick's house which is set at the centre of the stage but the hospital is set on the stage left and the compound on the stage right. By fully lighting the whole stage and use of props which show Patrick's house, the director directs the attention of the audience to the stage left only by use of lighting. He lights the stage left only, where the action of the scene is.



Picture number 41: The caption of a scene in Patrick's house. The whole stage is lit allowing the audience to focus on everything happening.



Picture number 42: The caption of a scene in the hospital, only this part of the stage is lit at this point and thus the audience only focus their attention to the scene.

The scene at the compound at night is also achieved through lighting. The attention is directed to the stage right and at the same time, lighting is used to show the time as night.



Picture number 43: The caption of a scene in Patrick's compound where his neighbours are meeting at night.

The director uses a spot light only lighting where the action is taking place using a cool and calm blue effect which creates the illusion of night. This helps the director to also show the mood and atmosphere of the scene using lighting.

3.11 Run-throughs, technical and Dress rehearsal

Joseph Murungu uses run-throughs, technical and dress rehearsal to make sure that everyone understands their roles. The run-through and technical rehearsals helps to identify any loop hole in the production, the actors understanding of the production and the music

technicians understanding where and when to play the music and sound effects. Murungu uses the dress rehearsals as an exposure to his actors and technicians. Most of the dress rehearsals are fully packed with audience so that the students can overcome their stage fright as well as show the producer – who is the principal of the school – how his students are faring and performing before they go for the competition.

Andy Ruri conducts several run-throughs so as to harmonize the various scenes rehearsed independently and to make sure that the tempo, pace and rhythm of the entire play is as he desired it to be. Technical and dress rehearsal are conducted on the day of the opening night. It is during this rehearsal that all technical aspects of the production are incorporated in the production; the music, lighting and costumes.

The Sammy Mwangi only conducts a run-through of the play prior to the opening night to make sure that the story is flowing and time the duration of the play. He however does not conduct technical and dress rehearsal. The first show acts as the first technical and dress rehearsal and it is then that the director is able to guide his cast on several issues like duration, language and other issues affecting the production. Sammy Mwangi notes that rehearsals end when the show ends. He watches every show as he controls the lighting and music and takes note of each show. He then addresses his concerns before the next show starts and this happens till the end of the production.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed and discussed how Joseph Murungu, Andy Ruri and Sammy Mwangi go about their art in directing, the tools and techniques they use and how they use them to convey their thematic concerns. Joseph Murungu uses improvisational and experimental directing style and the script as the raw material for the production. This approach helps him address relevant themes affecting the society at the time of his production and is able to change the script to meet the requirements and demands of the festival and his audience.

Ruri relies on the inner and outer resources directing style whereby he combines pre-blocking and actor's freedom directing styles to the effect that he retains a degree of control in interpreting the script but also allows the actors to innovate and be creative in enhancing the effectiveness and appeal of the play.

Sammy Mwangi's directing style does not rigidly subscribe to any particular generic approach to directing. Rather, Mwangi combines the traditional approach where the script is the source of authority relating to every aspect of staging the play. However, it is also fair to note that Mwangi gives his cast members an enhanced role in deciding how the play should be staged and how the script can be modified to have their intended impact. Therefore, Mwangi's style of directing can be viewed as an improvisational directing style that combines different ideas, tools and approaches towards making a stage production successful. The next chapter discusses the factors influencing the techniques and tools used by the three directors.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: FACTORS INFLUENCING STAGE DIRECTING TECHNIQUES USED BY KENYAN DIRECTORS

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter analyses how factors such as academic background in theatre, the audience, funding, performance platform, social issues, and technical support affect the stage directing style and techniques used by Joseph Murungu, Andy Ruri and Sammy Mwangi.

4.2 Factors Influencing Stage directing

The directors' goal is to unify and blend all elements of a performance together into a unity of both interpretation and presentation (Cameron and Gillespie, 2004 Pg. 152) and to the extent in which they unify, make pictures, illusion, organize and manage depends on several factors like the situation and society, experience, education, resources available, the audience and performance platform, personal convictions among others. Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) note that the emergence of the director as a separate creative functionary coincided with important social changes which began to take place during the nineteenth century; Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin and Karl Marx brought a breakdown in established social, religious and political concepts and the century also marked an increase in communication. It is also important to note that the playwright creates the play's words, the actors then execute its action and impersonate its characters but the theatre designers and technicians together with the director determine what both the stage

and actors will look like and for this reason, the designers and technicians become a great factor influencing the work of the director.

4.2.1 Academic background in Theatre

Cohen (2008) notes that well-trained directors possess a strong literary imagination and ability to conceptualize intellectually and visually, a sensitive interpersonal relationship and a good and sound understanding and knowledge of the history of theatre in the various styles and techniques of dramatic literature and technologies available for the theatre space. Academic background in theatre, therefore, helps the director to understand in details the elements of theatre, history and conventions. Elements of theatre are the components required for a theatrical experience to take place which include; the text, performer, director, theatre space and the audience. A good academic background helps the director to understand this elements and how best to use them. History of theatre is another important component of academic background which helps directors to learn what others have done in the past, how and why they used the elements of theatre and other techniques to achieve their objectives. Theatre academics also expose directors to several theatre conventions such as theatre of the absurd, epic theatre, realism, Elizabethan theatre and many more. Knowledge on text selection, acting, staging a play, collaboration with technicians and designers are all included in theatre courses and they help shape a director.

Joseph Murungu holds a bachelor's degree in education in English and Literature which has components of theatre and drama and is a teacher of drama and theatre at

Braeburn Garden Estate, Nairobi. Academic background and being taught by lecturers who are influencing in theatre like Francis Imbuga, Wasambo Were and David Mulwa have greatly influenced him. His love for satirical comedy was greatly influenced by Francis Imbuga and his plays like *Betrayal in the City* and *Aminata*. Murungu has a wide range of knowledge about the history of theatre and interacted with works of great theatre directors in history such as Constantin Stanislavski, Bertolt Brecht, Vsevolod Meyerhold and Eugene O'Neill.

The biomechanics used by Joseph Murungu draw influence from Vsevolod Meyerhold who regarded movement, space, rhythm and gesture as primary elements in the language of theatre and looked for ways to create 'truthful' performances without imitating or trying to copy the reality evident in everyday life. He believed that rhythm should be the base of all theatrical activity and that actors should be encouraged to refine their art until they could reach the precision of machines (Cole and Chinoy, 2013). The model of set design also used by Murungu similar to that of constructivism – an approach used by Vsevolod Meyerhold – which focused on the function of scenery and multi-levelled sets and a bare stage to enhance biomechanical acting is another technique influenced by Vsevolod Meyerhold.

Use of symbolism in his plays has also been influenced by Eugene O'Neill. Just like Murungu, Eugene O'Neill believed that he had more to say than could be said in a plain word (Butler, 1972). The nature of professionalism and lushness of Joseph Murungu productions have been greatly influenced by his academic background in theatre.

Andy Ruri holds a bachelor's degree in Theatre arts and Film. The study of theatre arts has helped Andy structure his creativity through the use of theatre. He notes that the theatre academics helped him understand theatre, its element and use it to express himself and his talent as both a playwright and director. His writing skills and importance on dialogue and acting are as a result of knowing the power in words of an actor on stage. Borrowing from Stanislavski method acting, Andy's directing mostly focuses on the actor, their movement and desire to have natural and convincing actors who must convey the inner truth of a character.

Andy Ruri works closely with his technicians and designers and allows them to create and be part of the production. By learning that a director is a collaborator, he is able to let costume designers design costumes without him imposing or sticking to his initial idea. The same case applies to lighting and set design where he accommodates and goes with that the technicians and designers say.

Sammy Mwangihas undertaken several short courses in directing, scripting and movement offered at the Alliance Francaise in Nairobi, improve short course obtained at the Poland National Theatre and stage design and instrument training from the University of Maryland. He has also trained in storytelling and dance theatre from the University of Cameroon. The knowledge and skills gained through these courses has helped and influenced his directing techniques and style. It is in University of Maryland that he got a chance to work with a bare stage and brainstorming techniques which are the two main techniques he uses in his production.

4.2.2 Audience

The audience are people who watch a theatrical production. Brockett and Ball (2004) note that audience vary widely in terms of taste, education, economic status, race, age and other factors and that those who produce theatre usually feel it necessary, in the choice of play and production style to consider to whom they wish to appeal. The performer-audience relationship is key to any theatrical performance. The audience participates in a production through the mind and the heart by believing and/or relating to the reality of what they see onstage and identifying with the characters (Wilson and Goldfarb, 1999). For the audience to believe, relate and identify with the characters on stage and the entire production, the director has to use a production genre and style they love and relate to.

The play “Rodents of Torrent” by Joseph Murungu is a satire, “The Devil’s Compound” by Andy Ruri is a farce and “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach” by Sammy Mwangi is a mixture of farce and satire. All the three directors noted that the Kenyan audience like laughing and they go to watch productions as a form of entertainment and thus they expect to laugh. The audiences’ high expectation of being entertained has influenced the three directors under this study to produce comical plays.

4.2.3 Funding

Theatre production is a very demanding and expensive venture which requires lots of investment. From rehearsals and performance venue, costumes, set design and construction, tickets and marketing, the director needs money/funding to make sure that

he gets his desired output. Funding has both positive and negative influence in the work of any director depending on its availability.

The play “Rodents of Torrent” was performed by students of Kianyaga High School, a mid-level government boys’ boarding school in Kenya’s Kirinyaga County. The school’s principal was the producer. The school is able to purchase costumes, set design and construction and provide most of the requirements needed by the director. The aesthetic value, relevance and intended meaning created by the use of costumes worn by the characters on stage are as a result of resources provided by the school. The multi-functional set that helped the director to have Mukurinowa Drama’s house, Mheshimiwa Bungei’s house and his swimming pool, the police station and the Anti-Corruption Action Team (ACAT) station as well as the props that enabled the biomechanics techniques could not have been achieved without proper funding by the school.

Being the director and producer of the play “The Devil’s Compound” and with little funding, Andy Ruri did not have every resource that he may have wanted for a successful production. The set design was a simple because he could not get the resources to construct a set that would create the impression of hell. He resulted to the realistic and very simple set. The costumes used in the play were also not specifically designed, bought or tailored for the production. Cast members were requested to come with or borrow costumes that would fit the character description given by the director and the costume

manager. To this effect the director's intentions were limited and could only work with what was brought by the cast members.

“Behind Every Kenyan Stomach” play had no dress rehearsal with the first show serving as the tryout and dress rehearsal and the opening show. Sammy Mwangi attributes this to lack of resources to have the performance venue a day before the opening night. Just like in “The Devil’s Compound”, the cast members were also requested to carry their own costumes because resources are not sufficient for the production to purchase costumes for each character.

4.2.4 Performance platform

Another great influence to the techniques and style of a director is the performance platform. Two of the three directors in this study direct plays meant for public showing in popular Auditoriums and public facilities such as the Kenya National Theatre and Alliance Française Theatre in Nairobi. The directors have also been involved in high schools’ National Dram Festival competitions. With no rules at the public show, AndiRuri and Sammy Mwangi are able to fully express themselves through their productions as they have plenty of time to do so as there is no time limit for the productions. They are able to use already trained, established and experienced actors. This allows them to give the actors the freedom to create their own lines, movements and stage business. Availability of professional theatre halls allows both Sammy Mwangi and Andy Ruri use lighting as a technique to create various moods and effects. Their text selection is only guided by their

own preference and the needs of the audience and can thus choose from a wide range of themes and concerns.

Joseph Murungu on the other hand is guided by the rules and regulations of the festival. His text selection was guided by the theme of the festival and duration limited to forty minutes and thus all his creativity has to be compressed to forty minutes as opposed to almost two hours in the public show. The actors at his disposal were very green and he had to teach them the craft of acting. The performance space available at the festival do not allow Joseph Murungu to use lighting technique as the performances are held in school halls which are not equipped with the professional lighting equipment.

4.2.5 Social issues/Personal convictions

Social issues affecting today's society are key to the works of the three directors. With our society affected by greed, corruption, oppression and poverty, the directors use theatre to try and address some of these social issues.

Joseph Murungu addresses these social issues in his entire play. Corruption is addressed using symbolism and metaphor. He uses the character of Baby Kauchumi symbolically to show how our economy is on its knees due to corruption and other vices like exam cheating and immorality.

Through use of dialogue, Andy Ruri addresses issues of corruption in his play. Jesus at one point mentions that he cannot be corrupt as he is not the government of Kenya, when tempted by Judas to resurrect him so that he can get the thirty shillings he buried on

earth so that they can bribe The Devil. The Devil in his monologue addresses issues of police brutality which was the case in the recent anti-IEBC (independent electoral and boundaries commission) demonstrations.

Sammy Mwangi in his play “Behind Every Kenyan Stomach” tackles issues of selfishness and greed in today’s society. Patrick neighbours and friends want to capitalize on his pregnancy to make money, Doctor Mukiri is a fake doctor who is interested in making money and not service to the patients, Pastor C wants to own the miracle of the first man to become pregnant so that he can have lots of followers and Maggie who steals from her employer. All this are social issues affecting the society we live in.

The desire to have these social issues and vices addressed by both the government and the citizens has greatly influenced the work of the three directors. Brockett and Ball (2004) state that of all the arts, theatre has the greatest potential as a humanizing force because much of it asks us to enter imaginatively into the lives of others so we understand their aspirations and motivations. Using theatre and its capacity to improve the quality of life by sharpening our perceptions, increasing our sensitivity to others and the surrounding and suggesting that moral and societal concerns should take precedence over materialistic goals, the directors try to influence the society.

4.2.6 Technical Support

The director needs to work closely with the technical support of costume designers, set designers, lighting and music technicians. Availability of the technical

support is crucial to any theatrical production and how well the director leads the collaboration amongst them also determines the success of the production.

Working with students, Murungu does almost all decision making in regards to the costumes, décor and music. The technical support comes on board as tailors start to tailor the costumes and carpenters making the set. He then has to teach the students how to arrange their set as well as a music technician to operate and play music as the play goes on. Andy Ruri on the other side had all the technical support at his disposal. He worked with a costume designer, lighting and music technicians who were able to contribute to the creative process of the production with instructions from the director. Sammy Mwangi works solely as the director, lighting and music technician. He controls the lighting and music in every show and attributes this to lack of qualified technicians as well as lack of enough resources to hire the technicians in all his shows.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research has discussed how academic background in theatre, the audience, funding, performance platform, social issues/personal convictions and technical support has influenced Joseph Murungu, Andy Ruri and Sammy Mwangi's art of stage directing. The next chapter summarizes the findings, conclusion and recommendations of this research.

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the findings and conclusions of this study, and makes recommendations for further studies and practices on the art of stage directing.

5.2 Summary

The rise of theatre in Kenya has resulted in an increase in the number of productions and theatre companies in the country. The director oversees and orchestrates the mounting of a theatre production by unifying various endeavours and aspects of production. Additionally, a director's function is to ensure the quality and completeness of theatre production and to lead the members of the creative team into realizing their artistic vision for it. A director further collaborates with a team of creative individuals and other staff, coordinating research, stagecraft, costume design, props, lighting design, acting, set design, stage combat, and sound design for the production.

In realizing the artistic vision and collaborating with the creative team, each director uses different methods, techniques and approach, which is evident in various directors along the history of stage directing. Directing is an art form that has grown with the development of theatre theory and theatre practice. With the emergence of new trends in theatre, so have directors adopted new methodologies and engaged in new practices. This study set out to investigate the art of stage directing in Kenya by examining the stage

directing techniques, how they use them to address their thematic concerns and the factors influencing the stage directing techniques anchored on auteur theory.

To address the objectives of the study, the researcher first outlined the directing styles that have been used by other directors in history – realistic and non-realistic styles – and the directing techniques available for the directors and how the techniques help them achieve their overall objective in staging a theatrical production.

The first and second objective was to examine the stage directing techniques used by the selected sage directors and how they use them to address their thematic concerns. It has been noted that Kenyan stage directors use the following stage directing techniques to address their thematic concerns;

- Kenya directors use comical genres of satire and farce and like to address their thematic concerns using laughter.
- Directing approaches used in Kenya are; the approach that stems from the belief that the director serves the playwright by transferring the script as literally as possible from page to stage, the approach that stems from the view of directors as translators whose goal is to capture the spirit of the playwright's script, although to do this they may depart from the playwrights' specifications and the approach to directing that places less emphasis on the script.
- When directing the actors, directors use Constantin Stanislavski Method-Acting which requires the actors to portray their characters and activities

natural and convincing by conveying the inner truth of their characters for the audience to believe and relate to the characters on stage.

- Use of biomechanics and cinematic techniques has been used for amusement and creating the alienation effect for the audience to know that they are watching a theatre production and should concentrate on the message of the play
- Directors produce realistic production style by use of realistic characters, situations, setting, costuming and lighting to effectively address social issues affecting the society like corruption, greed and police brutality with a few elements of non-realism like the alienation effect like stand-up comedy and biomechanics techniques.

The third objective sought to explore the factors influencing the stage directing techniques used by the selected stage directors. Here the researcher probed why the directors chose to use the techniques. Exploring factors like theatre academic background, the audience, funding, performance platform, social issues affecting the society and the technical support the research noted the following;

- Directors with a wide range of theatre academic background and research on the same have a wide range of directing techniques.
- The Kenyan audience goes to the theatre to be entertained and thus prefer comical genres and directors produce what the audience wants to see.
- Funding has a great impact to any theatrical production with the public show greatly affected as their only source of income is the audience and thus are not able to make big investments in their productions.

- Social issues affecting the society greatly influence the work of a theatre director.
- The collaboration aspect between the director and the designers and technicians is greatly affected by their availability.

5.3 Conclusions

- a) Directors with academic background and vast research in theatre have a wide and rich range of directing techniques.
- b) Constantin Stanislavski method acting is the most common acting style used in Kenya
- c) Funding is key to the success of theatre productions.
- d) Directors try to influence the society by addressing the vices that affect the people and society at large.

5.4 Recommendations

- a. Further research can be done to investigate the effect of social issues addressed by directors.
- b. Further research can be done to explore the influence of Stanislavski method acting in Kenya.
- c. Further research can also be conducted to inquire the effect of funding in theatre production in Kenya.

- d. This research recommends that in order to achieve high levels of theatre production in Kenya, the government and development partners need to fund the industry properly.

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Appendix 1: Interviews

Interview Questions

1. How and when do you start your rehearsals?
2. How do you conduct your rehearsals?
3. How do you direct the actors?
4. How do you work with the designers?
5. What are your most common directing techniques that you use?
6. What influences use of these techniques?

Some of the answers used in the discussions

1. Joseph Murungu's response

A1. Beginning of first term or late third term before exams

A2. I start rehearsals with auditions, read through and then blocking. Working in the evening after classes.

A3. Being high school students, they have no experience in acting and so I have to show and teach them everything about acting, basic stage movements and positions. This is very tasking but easy at the same time because I like what I do. I audition every talent available: acrobats, dancers, singers and every aspect of talent which in turn helps me with the techniques that I plan and think of using. I then have a read through and an open discussion to see if the students understand the plan as I also explain the objective of each character and the spine of the play.

A4. Since I work with a school which has no designers, I take responsibility of the design by visualizing my set, costumes, background music and the painting of the set. I then give the carpenters my specific requirements of the set, the specific costume designs to the tailor and I give the exact painting requirements to the painter. For the technical aspect of music, I teach the students how to play the background music themselves.

A5. I love symbolism and metaphor, cinematic techniques, humour and Stanislavski method acting. These are the most common techniques I prefer.

A6. I naturally love humour and symbolism. I combine the two because I tackle social issues affecting our country and there is no better way of doing it other than use of satire.

Cinematic techniques, Stanislavski and other techniques which I use for my productions are all influenced by research and encounter with various directors and theatre movements along the history of theatre such as Constantin Stanislavski, Eugene O’nil, BertoltBrecht among others. My lectures at Kenyatta University such as Francis Imbuga and David Mulwa have also played a big role in shaping my life as a playwright and director.

2. Andy Ruri’s response

A1. Two months before the day of the show.

A2. I start with visualizing the characters in the production then settle for type casting. Due to finances, we start our rehearsal at my place and only move to the venue of performance a day before the show – it is only then that we are able to do the technical and dress rehearsals.

A3. I prefer working with people and actors I know. I strive to make sure that they portray their characters as real as possible – they should portray their characters and activities naturally. My main way of passing my message is through the actors and therefore I am very key on acting.

A4. I have a good friend from University who is a designer especially when it comes to costumes. I tell her what I want to achieve with the costumes and leave everything else to her. I only see the costumes during dress rehearsals but we normally have discussion on the ideas that she has. On the music, sound and lighting, we work closely with the lighting and sound technicians a day before the show during the technical rehearsal and agree on what I want but generally I normally know what I want. Mostly we do not have resources to do a complete set and we just settle for what we get at the venue, but the setting, I do it myself when coming up with the directorial concept of the production.

A5. My main directing technique is acting. The actor is the one who passes the message and therefore I mainly focus on acting. The other techniques like lighting are just meant to complement what the actors do on stage.

A6. I have been greatly influenced by the work of Constantin Stanislavski method acting, and my encounters with other directors and lectures at the university.

3. Sammy Mwangi’s response

A1. It depends with the production, but mostly five weeks to the opening date.

A2. With the idea in mind of what I want to present, I call my cast which I normally settle on by typecasting and then we sit down and brainstorm on the script, plot, the flow and the lines. I then block the actors but mainly focus on their delivery of the jokes because I trust them with the movements. During the opening show is when we do our first dress rehearsals due to availability of the performance theatre as well as resources and our rehearsals end with the last performance on stage. If you have ever watched our show the first day and watched it the last day, you will see two different performances.

A3. I work with actors who know their trade and therefore I don't concentrate on how they act but how they deliver and help in achieving the overall objective of the production. I only help them to adjust to my style of production. When you take the Toyota driver and give him a range rover sport, he already knows how to drive; all you need is to show him the features of the range rover and how to handle it when driving.

A4. I do the lighting and sound myself and when I'm not available, I have shown my assistant how to handle the technical aspect of the production. Costume, we have company costumes and where they are not applicable actors are asked to bring costumes that fit their roles and because I mostly use actors in their normal life situation – realistic characters – the actors don't find it hard to get the costumes. We are not in a position to buy costumes for every production and every actor. I do not build a set. I like working with a bare stage so that I don't constrain the audience to a specific set like a house or a hotel, I normally do writings on the wall or just use white and red curtains. If it is a house, I will have a sofa set and that's it. I normally want the audience to be engaged and to ask themselves questions about the set. So basically I control all the designers when need arises.

A5. Comedy and humour and it has to be accompanied by good acting and for it to be effective, it has to come from the actors and therefore settle for brainstorming as a way of coming up with the plot, sequence and lines used. Bare set for the audience to see almost everything on stage and just painting on the wall as you can see.

A6. The audience come to the theatre to be entertained and that's why I do comedy. In order to maintain the audience focused and thinking, I use bare stage. All the techniques that I use are as a result of very many workshops and courses in theatre.

Appendix 11: Observation Guide

1. Director
2. Rehearsal venue.....
3. Date.....
4. Production Name
5. Rehearsal objectives

Warm – ups	Blocking	Director – Cast Interaction	Techniques used	How the technique helps convey the thematic concerns.