

**POETRY BEYOND THE PAGE: AN ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE
TECHNIQUES IN MUFASA'S SPOKEN WORD POETRY.**

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M66/27963/2013

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULLFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
THE DEGREE OF MASTERS (THEATRE ARTS) IN THE SCHOOL
OF CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS, FILM AND MEDIA
STUDIES OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY.**

JUNE, 2021.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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This project is submitted with my approval as university supervisor.

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Date.....

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Mufasa, the motivation for this study! To my parents, Florence Masese and Charles Masese and siblings, Christine Masese, Christopher Masese, my dearest grandmother, Nessila Achieng' and Grandfather, Joseph Pius Nyimbae.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you so much Prof. Mugubi, my supervisor for not only believing in me but for also for intellectually guiding and mentoring me through this research and completion of this project. I acknowledge your effort through your positive criticism and insightful readings and recommendations.

To Mufasa - My case study, because of your art, I got content to research on. My sincere gratitude for your cooperation throughout this project! Thank you for not tiring in providing me with all the information I needed. May you continue creating and inspiring through your craft!

To the Department of Film and Theatre Arts, School of Creative And Performing Arts, Film and Media Studies, thank you for the resources and opportunity to pursue this course. To my lecturer, David Kakuta Mulwa, thank you for igniting my love for performance!

To Sandra Nekh, Clinton and Ngobia I am sincerely grateful that you constantly reminded me that 'I GOT THIS!' Glad that I finally did.

To my mum and dad thank you for the financial support to pursue this course! To my sister, Christine Masese and brother, Christopher Masese thank you for your encouragements. To my grandma and granddad, for your constant prayers and for being a constant support system. I am forever indebted!

Special gratitude goes to all the spoken word poets, audience and fans of Mufasa who allowed me to work with them through this study. My research would not have been possible without your generous participation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ACRONYMS

NTV – Nation Television

DVD- Digital Video Disc or Digital Versatile Disc

FIDA- Foundation for International Development Assistance

UN - United Nations

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Audience (n.):** Those who come to see spoken word performances. This term is used interchangeably with ‘community’ in this paper because spoken word poets perform their poetry in their own local communities.
- Performance (n.):** An action of showcasing a play, poetry, show, or any other form of entertainment.
- Performance technique (n):** Ways that enable a successful showcase of a performance.
- Slam (n.):** A short form way of saying ‘slam poetry’ or of referring to the structure, rules and culture of poetry slams.
- Slam poetry (n.):** A competition of spoken word artists in which poets are judged by people in the audience. Audience judges hold up cards scoring the poets from 0.0 to 10.0. Poets must perform their own work and finish in under a three minute time limit.
- Slam poet (n.):** Someone who writes and performs poetry.
- Spoken word (n.):** A form of performance poetry.
- Spoken Word Artist (n.):** A term which encompasses various types of oral performers: rappers, slammers, spoken word poets. It is used interchangeably with ‘spoken word poet’ ‘spoken word performer,’ ‘poet.’

ABSTRACT

Spoken word performance is an expression of oral art. This classification of poetry has not benefited much from documented academic criticism. The little criticism documented, focuses more on the literariness of the poetry and not its performance aspect. This study therefore is a documented analysis of aspects of performance techniques in spoken word. The selected poet for this study was Mufasa. The study analyzed performance techniques employed by the poet, factors that influence his performances and how the poet uses these techniques to enhance the interpretation of his content, aesthetic value and the quality of performance. The poems analyzed were performed between 2014 and 2019. These selected samples had to illustrate an array of performance techniques implemented by Mufasa. This study was qualitative in nature. Focus Groups matrices were used to study and analyze poetic performances. Interview matrices were used to understand the poet's perspective of his performance techniques. Secondary data was gathered by reading closely in libraries, using the Internet, e-books, and participating in one on one discussions with the audience. Audio and Audio-Visual recordings were used to collect data. Additionally, note-taking and recording devices were also used. This study was anchored on the performance theory to interrogate his performances. This study illustrated Mufasa's choice of performance techniques and his implementation (methodology). This study finds that performance is an integral aspect of spoken word poetry as it is what distinguishes oral poetry from the written form. It also not only enhances the aesthetic appeal and quality of performance but also aids in the interpretation of the poetry content. This study concludes that Mufasa incorporates various performance techniques, gestures, repetition, tonal variation, pauses, and pitch among others to ensure that his intended message is rightfully understood and interpreted by his target audience.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers an understanding of Poetry Performance in spoken word. Word choice and combination, as well as the use of many poetic devices that give words unique richness and resonance, and determine the meaning of a poem (Stein, 2010). Poetry performance entails consideration of aspects of performance such as texture and temporality. Texture is the relative density or thickness (as opposed to sparseness or thinness) of a piece (78). Temporality; how long things last -the lengths of notes and their relative durations as suggested by notation, and the speed at which something is performed, as determined by consideration of tempo (88).

Spoken word is a form of performance poetry that emerged in the last 1960s from the Black Arts movement. It owes its heritage most directly to the Beats Poetry of the 1950s and the Jazz Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance (1920-1940). It calls directly upon the African American Oral Tradition for much of its aesthetic and spiritual power (Lorenzo, p. 308). The emerging modern literary expression of spoken word roots itself from African-American civil rights movement in the 1960s as a form of socio-political discourse (Brown, 2012).

Spoken word poetry is also known as performance poetry and is coming to greater prominence in public awareness through the advent of poetry slams (spoken word poetry competitions) locally, nationally and abroad. Spoken word can trace its roots from

Ancient Greece, in the form of the Greek lyric, which is characterized by short, occasionally rhyming stanzas and heavy sensory detail emphasis (Lynch, 2014).

In spoken word, poets attempt to engage the audience using a combination of literary and oratory aesthetics. Performances can also include physical movement, dramatic performances, music and song. For example, hip hop is widely considered to be a branch of spoken word poetry (Eleveld, 2003). The growing popularity of spoken word is widely attributed to Marc smith (2011) who is credited with bringing the art form to prominence through hosting some of the first modern poetry competitions in Chicago, Illinois in the 1980s. In slams, poets face off against each other in audience-adjudicated poetry competitions. The energy filled slam events often invoke memories of the raucous poetry readings that spoke out against injustice, apathy, consumerism, and war during the Beat era of the 1950.

According to Christopher Mwiti (2015), poetry has incessantly dodged efforts to describe it. From Aristotle in his book, *Poetics*, to modern poets and critics, it has attached as many definitions as there are people defining it. A look at many of these definitions leaves one more confused on what is and what is not poetry. Perhaps after sensing this confusion, Michael Meyer (2001) advised those interested in understanding the full meanings of poetry to seek it in the open sea of experience where poetry is rather than in exclusionary definitions.

The twenty first century Kenya has witnessed the rise of a new wave of oral poetry known as **spoken word**. This art form has provided many talented artists with the

platform on which to express themselves and articulate their concerns in society by addressing pertinent issues within Kenyan borders and beyond. To provide this chapter with the foundation on which to lay performance of spoken word poetry in Kenya, it will be important to expound on performance as asserted by different scholars. For spoken word performance to be complete, the audience must be put into consideration. Karin Barber (1997) argues that as long as there is performance, there is always an audience. Whenever the spoken word poets put up a performance, there is a particular audience they are targeting. The importance of the audience of spoken word is to govern the choice of subject matter, dictate mood and mode of content delivery. Furthermore, the audience participation motivates or demotivates the poet's performance.

Spoken word has an activism function in society. The thematic concerns of spoken word performances cater to these discussions. For instance, studies show that there are many people living in Kenya who are faced with challenges including unemployment, urban crime, deprivation and general stagnation in life (Waswalla, 2013). As a result, Kenya's urban youth have launched initiatives through social networks where they use art forms such as spoken word to reclaim their individual and collective dignity and to redefine their role and relevance in society. Such initiatives have thrived through various platforms including **Fatuma's Voice**, **Kwani**, **Open Mic** and **Poetry After Lunch (PAL)**, hosted by Kennet B. at the Kenya National Theatre. For instance, Fatuma's Voice uses poetry, art, music and spoken word to encourage expression. An event is initiated and a general theme put out for poets, musicians and artists to create art

and performances which are then exhibited and showcased to a live audience to stir conversations.

Spoken word has been in existence in Kenya for over a decade now. Most people perceive it merely as a form of entertainment whereas spoken word artists make use of the various spaces available to perform unabashedly on themes that affect society. In Mark Eleveld's (2003) definition of spoken word, he gives importance to the audience. He defines poetry as what is read and performed before an audience. This definition acknowledges spoken word as poetry and places performance before an audience at the centre of this genre. In this study therefore, the researcher discusses the various spoken word performance techniques, factors that influence them, the role they play in enhancing the interpretation of the text, aesthetic value and quality of performance.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Spoken word artistry has seen immense growth in performing arts in Kenya. Through initiatives such as Fatuma's Voice, Slam Poetry, Kwani, Open Mic and Poetry After Lunch (PAL) spoken word is slowly becoming a major voice in activism. Despite this emergent form of art and its impact on the arts industry in Kenya, the understanding of its performance techniques is crucial to understanding of spoken word genre in totality. Performance techniques enhance communication, retain audience attention and evoke audience participation. For the poet, performance techniques enhance the interpretation of his poems and the aesthetic value and improve the quality of his or her performance. This

research analyzed the application of performance techniques by Mufasa in an effort to create a methodology to the use of performance techniques.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

This study aims to;

1. Establish performance techniques illustrated by Mufasa.
2. Investigate the factors that influence the performance techniques used by Mufasa.
3. Analyze how Mufasa's performance techniques enhance the interpretation, quality and aesthetic value of his spoken word performances.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the performance techniques employed by Mufasa in his spoken word poetry performances?
2. What factors influence the performance techniques used by Mufasa?
3. How do the performance techniques employed by Mufasa enhance the interpretation, quality and aesthetic value of his spoken word performances?

1.5 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

1. Mufasa is adept to using specific performance techniques regularly.
2. There are factors that influence performance techniques employed by Mufasa.
3. The performance techniques as exemplified by Mufasa are likely to enhance the interpretation, quality and esthetic value of his spoken word performances.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

In the past decade, there has been a lot of activity in the Kenyan spoken word scene. Milestones have been achieved by a number of young artists who have overzealously fought to give poetry a place in this country. The field has solely remained a tuff for young minds with little interest from the older groups and an entertainment industry that seems to steer clear of the genre which appeals its loyal fan base in the East African country. However, this genre has not benefited much from documented academic criticism on the performance aspect since the documented criticism focus more on the literary analysis. This study is therefore aimed at contributing to the academic criticism of spoken word performance in Kenya. This study will be useful to spoken word artists, writers and researchers as the study of performance techniques in spoken word poetry will go a long way in the development and appreciation of the spoken word industry in Kenya.

1.7 JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY

Though it is still relatively new in Kenya, spoken word poetry has grown in popularity. Despite its success, little has been achieved in terms of performance criticism documentation. This realization has led to the study's attention on one of Kenya's most well-known spoken word artists. Moreover, most of the research conducted on spoken word even from other countries has been inclined mostly towards the literary approach (Oliver, 2002), leaving the performance aspect of this genre.

Mufasa is known for his evocative voice and animated delivery. He believes in the power of creativity to affect social change thus writes to inspire individual stories as a campaigner for social justice and human dignity. As an artist, he uses concept events to explore and highlight works that spark discussions and raise social awareness. He is known for his energetic performances.

Mufasa not only writes poetry, he also a frequent performer in various avenues that attract a large and diverse audience and serves as a judge and workshop facilitator for Poetry Slam Africa. It is this multidimensional nature to art that informed this study's choice of his poetry performance techniques as its case study. This study assessed and ascertained Mufasa's distinctive performance techniques as illustrated by Mufasa's performances.

1.8 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

The study, however, was limited to performance techniques; as an essential of performance. This study is limited to spoken word works of Mufasa performed between 2014 and 2019. The poems selected had to fit the sampling criteria which specifically analyzes the poet's spoken word poetry in relation performance techniques employed. All poems selected are in English and are written by the poet.

1.9 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

The history, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions and assumptions, intent and justification of the study were all presented in this chapter. It also looked at the research's limitations and delimitations.

The following chapter looks at previous research on spoken word performance aspect, classification of poetry and Mufasa's biography. This chapter will further review the study's theoretical framework and a detailed breakdown of the performance theory.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section entails a critical summary of the published research relevant to this study.

2.2 SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE ASPECT

Mark Eleveld (2003) defines spoken word as poetry that is narrated and performed before an audience. This definition acknowledges spoken word as poetry and places performance at the centre of this genre.

According to North (2008), spoken word poetry (or sometimes referred to as slam poetry) is poetry inscribed on page, but is intended for an onstage performance. Before being performed, spoken word places prominence on the utilization of rhythm, improvisation, free association, rhymes, wordplay and use of slang. As such, it is always considered to be more aggressive and direct in comparison to traditional forms of poetry. It became necessary for artists to convey their pieces in a frank and straight to the point manner to assert the urgency of their cause and to hopefully make their audience understand the gravity of each experience or issue they were sharing.

Finnegan (1977) asserts that performance is very crucial to any kind or form of oral literature. She proffers that the sole way to ensure continuity of an oral poem is achieved through performance where significant aspects like “the dexterity and personality of the performer, the nature and response of the audience, the framework, the

drive” (p.28) offer an intuition into an oral art form. This research based its argument on Finnegan’s idea that the text alone cannot complete any discussion of oral poetry without considering the element of performance. The study examined how performance techniques enhance the interpretation of spoken word, the aesthetic value and quality of performance.

Wanjiku and Karega Mutahi (1998) are of the same view as Ruth Finnegan that performance is significant in oral literature. They recognize the significance of the cultural context in the understanding of performance by asserting that: oral literature can only be copiously esteemed within its cultural setting and presentation (performance). It is the cultural context that gives the audience the entire picture of the inferences of the literature itself. In the performance, the extra linguistic features boost the message harboured in the language that is used (p.6).

Mark Smith, who is said to be the founder of poetry slam, echoes Billy Collins’ sentiments when he views spoken word as poetry’s primary form. He says, “I think when poetry moved from the oral tradition to the page, someone should’ve asked, is that really poetry? I think slam gets poetry back to its root, breathing life into the words.” This assertion by Mark Smith takes us back to the question posed earlier: Is spoken word poetry? According to him, spoken word is not only poetry, but also an original form of poetry. Looking at the etymological definition of poetry; the word poetry comes from a Greek noun *poiesis*. When used as a verb, it means “to make.” Therefore, it can be translated as “to create poetry.” The art of creation does not necessarily involve writing alone. It could also include speaking out, like the case of spoken word poetry.

Bob Holman (1994) also celebrates performance poetry in his foreword to *Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Café* by stating that, “poetry has forged a clear way to bore through the wax that has been accumulating for long periods! Poetry is no longer a display in a dust museum. Poetry is active; poetry is aloud.” Holman’s choice of the phrase “dust museum” in relation to written poetry clearly brings out his bias. He is opposed to the classical poetry that relies heavily on writing. In the foreword to his book he writes boldly: “DO NOT READ THIS BOOK! This book reads to you.” This shows his support for orality, which is the key element in spoken word. The study used the above analogy to show how performance technique enhances aesthetic appeal of Mufasa’s spoken word performances.

Ciaruji Chesaina (1997) looks at the duality of oral literature as a literary art and as a performing art, notes that “whereas written literature makes use of writing as its core medium of expression, oral literature is dependent on an amalgamation of language and performance” (p.29). Spoken word artists bring their written poems to life by performing them to an audience, hence bridging the gap between written poetry and performance poetry.

Okpewho (1979) looks at the effect of oral poetry on both the audience and the performer by stating that poetry has the power to touch us emotionally. He asserts that the staging and repetition evident in the performance of poetry advances the emotions of both the performer and his or her audience. Isidore (1985) further rejects the notion that poetry is all about the order in which words are arranged. He states that “the kernel of true

poetry therefore lies in its authority to appeal sturdily to our indebtedness and, in a sense, lift us up (p.85).”

Susan Somers-Willet (2009) notes the performative nature of spoken word poetry, which distinguishes it from straightforward oral communication. She writes that such poetry’s reception involves not only hearing but, in fact all senses, with the poems enactment becoming more important than its recitation. Somers-Willet takes the position that spoken word poetry functions both in writing and on stage.

Spoken word poetry goes beyond poetry’s literary aspect, it involves the incorporation of performance techniques impact the interpretation of the texts, aesthetic value and quality of performance.

2.3 CLASSIFICATION OF POETRY

Poetry can be classified by mode of transmission. Pfeiler (2003) uses mode of transmission to classify poets as follows:

i. The Pagers

These are poets who purely write for the page. Theirs is a written poetry that is solely transmitted to its audience through the print media (Mwiti, 2014).

ii. The ‘Page –stagers’

These are poets who write for print but at times may read their published works aloud to an audience as a way of marketing those works or just for fun. Although they present their poems in a well-articulated way which brings much of the meaning to the fore, or adds meaning in the overall perception of the poems, these printed poems also work well for the silent recipient whose auditory imagination is well trained. Dylan Thomas and T. S Eliot are examples of the ‘page-stagers’ (Mwiti, 2014).

iii. The ‘Stagers’

These write poems to purely perform them. They include the ‘spoken word’ poets who have been credited with reclaiming poetry as a spoken art actualized through performance. The ‘stagers’ use the stage as the page, transforming poetry readings to theatrical events. While the recent resurgence of ‘spoken word’ poetry is seen against mainstream, print based poetry, the style takes us back to the classic role of the poet, who recited, chanted or sang notable happenings, emotions and perception on occasion. While traditional poets utilized standard structures, in part to serve as mnemonic devices, contemporary ‘spoken word’ poets call upon experimental rhythms as a means to engage their audience in the listening experience (Mwiti, 2014).

iv. The ‘On-stagers’

‘On-stagers’ orally compose spontaneously during a performance and only later transcribe and publish. There are very few poets in this category. It is mostly free-style hip-hoppers who can fit in this classification.

The ‘page stager’, the ‘stager’ and the ‘on-stager’ are all ‘spoken word’ poets. It is only their levels of performance that differ. The ‘page-stager’ mainly emphasizes sound while the other two may flavor their renditions with physical body actions (Mwiti, 2014).

Gray (1986) attributes the origin and the rise of this form of poetry in USA to poets that include James Russell, Henry Wadsworth, Robert Frost, Edgar Allan Poe and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Their poetry gained popularity not just because it was performed but also for its handling of everyday subject matter often using material that titillates the audience. Glazner (2000) calls this form of poetry, ‘sound’ or ‘spoken word’ poetry although classifies it further to include ‘slum poetry’ that is a cross between poetry reading and competition where judges picked randomly from the audience to rate the performances. The recent growth of ‘spoken word’ poetry can be attributed to the popularity of this slam, which has grown to a movement dedicated to creating real-time discourse between the performer and his or her audience, coupled with other ‘spoken word’ efforts. While ‘spoken word’ cannot be categorized, for example sonnet or a haiku, it has its uniqueness that bears in mind the presence of a listening or (and)

watching audience. It is an inclusive art form that invites all people to participate, whether as a poet, audience member, or a judge.

2.4 BIOGRAPHY OF MUFASA POET

Picture 1 MUFASA



Ken Kibet AKA Mufasa poet, has established himself as a leading performance poet in Kenya. He was born in Eldoret and partly raised in the small township of Kapsabet before finally moving to Nairobi to pursue tertiary education. It was in Nairobi that Mufasa fell in love with the spoken word poetry genre and eventually made the decision to pursue it as a career.

He is renowned for intense performances, highly emotive voice and animated delivery that sparks electric frenzy among his audience at any performance. Mufasa's poetry is influenced by American poets, Saul Williams and Allysia Harris and the Canadian poet Shane Kocicyzan.

His works focuses on social political evils and are a clarion call for enlightenment of people in order to fight for freedom.

He serves as a judge and workshop facilitator of Poetry Slam Africa (A poetry competition that aims to recognize poets and spoken word artists discussing a range of current issues affecting Africa and the world at large). He was crowned the Slam king on the 40th Edition of Slam Africa. He also won a poetry Slam conducted by NTV on AM LIVE dubbed "THE STAND" and has been featured on platforms such as '7poems', "Back to my roots", 'Unchained Voices' and 'No Judgement' events to air the dirt surrounding our societies.

Besides poetry, he is also an actor and has been cast in a lead role on Mnet's movie "It's Not Yet Dusk" starring alongside celebrated actors such as Serah Ndanu and Angel Waruinge. He has also acted in Mama Duka, Aunty Boss, Theatrix Travelling group and Phoenix. Recently, he has performed in "Careless in Red" a stage play where he played a journalist and a house mate in a house occupied by 5 people involved in love triangles. In this play he performed three poems '*My Girlfriend Got Married*', 'an untitled one' and '*My sister gave birth to God's child*'.

These pieces helped his character to connect with the audience from a point of relatability and honesty. The second play is '*Deliberate Contempt*' a stage plays too where he played patient zero. A patient frustrated by government services and also at the public hospital where he is waiting to be attended to. In this play he performed two poems; '*My Boys are dying*' and an untitled piece which he created for the show. The pieces helped his character evoke emotion from the audience and also provided his character with a unique entertainment value.

He is a co-founder of Creative Spills, a collective that has challenged themselves to push for the growth and spread of spoken word poetry in Kenya while virtually purposing to give young people an opportunity to express themselves.

Mufasa constantly writes and performs on issues about women and the girl child and has graced events hosted by; UN WOMEN (He or She Campaign), Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya (FIDA), Forum Syd, Open Society Initiative for East Africa, Media Focus on Africa and Fatuma's Voice. As a campaigner for social justice and human dignity, other performances include; Ted Ideas Search Nairobi, Human Defenders Ceremony, Annual Kenya judges and magistrate meeting and The Supreme Court of Kenya, Ubumuntu Arts Festival in Rwanda and Milimani High Court of Kenya.

Aside from his popularity in live performance, Mufasa has an album, '*Inside Out*' - a six poem masterpiece that resonates with the four walls of the house and speaks to the soul. He is very vibrant and creative on stage but a very calm and invisible person in a crowd. He also launched his anthology '*Raising a Sun*' in June, 2019.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.5.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to fulfill the objectives set out for this study, the study employed a theoretical framework that assisted with the theoretical resources as well as in spoken word poetry in Kenya were grounded on performance theory. This section names the theories that are applied in the research, their tenets and criticism. This section also informs the study and supports the arguments presented. Therefore, the inquiry and analytical description of performance techniques

2.5.2 PERFORMANCE THEORY

This study was principally based on theatre performance theory as promulgated by Richard Schechner (2003) and supported by Eli Rozik (2010). This study looked at performance theory from a performance techniques perspective within the limits of spoken word. Schechner suggested a model of performance which goes beyond text-based drama and presumes that performance-texts will be marked by performance aesthetics that include theatre codes and heightened enactments (Kinyua, 2019).

Semantically, the term ‘performance’ is in itself very fluid. Goffman (1959) defines performances which seeks to influence or affect in any way any other’ (p.15). Schechner (2003) uses the term ‘performance’ in a broad spectrum to refer to any act in human activity: day to day life, sports, occupation, sex, ritual and play. Observably, a performance is marked by the intentional activity, space and the audience. However, the application of the term ‘performance’ to other activities other than theatre is not of

concern to this study. Instead this research, attempts to explain theatre performance, which Schechner (2003) defines as the presentation or enactment of drama by actors on a stage' (p.15) as far as spoken word poetry performance technique is concerned.

Performance theorists suppose that performance is an operation made up of various components that work together to communicate a unified message. According to Schechner (2003), each element in a performance matrix speaks its language but "all elements of theatre are in the same plane" (p. 62) thereby contributing to a unified effect (Kinyua, 2019). Schechner identifies these elements as: performer, scenery, costuming, lighting, sound, props and so forth. This study recognizes that the elements of costume, stage setting, lighting, sound and music accompaniment are integrated to achieve a cohesive performance.

Eli Rozik (2010) expands the notions of the 'actor', 'text' and 'character' by recognizing the fundamental gaps between text and the two worlds, that is the gap between real life and the enacted action i.e., performance. Furthermore, Rozik's take on performance breaks down performance techniques in an exertion of the audience experiencing the performers' bodies; through inherently non-verbal acts, symbolic non-verbal acts, metonymic non-verbal acts and hand gestures by allegoric characters. Mufasa brings theory to life as he employs Rozik's concepts on the performer's body in his performances.

The performance theory has a radical nature which is demonstrated by its inclusive and holistic approach to theatre and performance, with popular culture, folklore,

and ethnic diversity incorporated into the cross-disciplinary amalgam. The study used the concept of “performativity” which is closely related to the postmodern view that performance is not only intrinsically artistic or theatrical, but also something that pervades the fabric of the social, political and the material world. The term “performative” was first coined by J.L Austin, a linguistic philosopher, during lectures at Harvard University in 1955 where he said that “to utter something is to do something” (Austin, 1962). Spoken word artists do not only perform their poems to entertain the audience but they also use them as spaces to challenge dominant discourses in society.

Richard Schechner asserts that “performing on stage, performing in special, social circumstances ... and performing in everyday life are a band” (Schechner, 2003, p.143). He argues that every human being is in some sagacity a performer and that various figures in the public arena like politicians, religious leaders, and businessmen and women adopt tactics of performance and role play in order to achieve a precise goal they’ve put. In the same way, spoken word artists make use of varying procedures in their performances to get their message to the intended audience. Mufasa uses a conversational tone in his performance to draw in the audience. Additionally, his real life scenarios and personal experiences captured in his performances blurs the lines between performance and reality hence making the spoken word stage fluid in terms of locale: spoken word is performed in diverse locations i.e. bars, restaurants, open spaces, auditoriums and so on.

Weinstein (2010) refers to the performance techniques like use of gesticulations and body movement as “physical text”, which includes other rudiments like words, voice, and inflections. According to him, these techniques help in the understanding of a

performance text. Therefore, this aspect of performance theory was useful to this study when interrogating the data as the study focused on the performance techniques incorporated by the spoken word poet to influence the interpretation of the performance, aesthetic value and quality of performance.

This research employed the performance theory in the analysis of Mufasa's spoken word performances in an effort to discern methodology from the performative technique he uses. This was achieved by interrogating what his performance techniques are, how he incorporates them in his performances and how they influence the audience's understanding of his performances.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the chapter explains the research design, methodology and the strategies used in the research. It also aims at describing the data collection methods and procedures used in analyzing and presenting the data.

3.2 RESEARCH LOCATION

This research was conducted in Nairobi County within the areas where spoken word poetry performances are staged. The study specifically focused on **Kenya National Theatre**, **Alliance Francaise** and the **Goethe Institute** where the selected poet showcased his performances. These venues provided a controlled environment which made it easier to select a sample group that is representative of spoken word poetry audience. They also doubled up as centers of learning where spoken word documentation is preserved, especially, the performance aspect of spoken word in Kenya.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

“Qualitative methods are used to tackle research questions that need clarification or understanding of societal phenomena” (Snape and Spencer, 2003, p.8). The research design was therefore qualitative in nature. Qualitative analysis suited the aim of this study: Performance technique analysis with regard to the impact it has on the interpretation, aesthetic value and quality of spoken word performance. The primary data was collected through active watching of live performances and video recordings of Mufasa’s performances and in-depth interview of the poet, his avid fans and audiences for the different

shows through focused group discussions. This offered other enriching outlooks on spoken word performance techniques. The research then adopted descriptive approaches to the study of the selected poets' performance in a systematic analysis of content with the purpose of finding the performance techniques incorporated by the poet to enhance his performances and to help in the interpretation of his texts. To strengthen the analysis of primary data, secondary data sourced from books, journals and articles that carry information relevant to the subject of this study and internet sources – Facebook and twitter updates were also considered. They were in turn analyzed and synthesized.

3.4 TARGET POPULATION

Most spoken word performances in Kenya are not documented, hence lack of clarity in the number of performances and participants. Mufasa was selected for this study mainly because he has taken up spoken word poetry as a career, has won accolades for his performances. He is also an actor, hence understands the key importance of performance techniques to the storytelling process.

The study analyzed ten poems from Mufasa's performances between 2014 and 2019. These poems were selected purposively to suit the study needs: the performances needed to illustrate performance techniques employed by Mufasa, they needed to have been performed before a live audience and have audio-visual recordings in archive. These poems also needed to be performed in English and have an almost consistent time-line of between 3 to 5minutes.

Besides interviewing the selected poet, the researcher engaged one focus group discussion consisting of fans of spoken word poetry, Kenyan spoken word artists who had collaborated and/ or shared a stage with Mufasa and audiences for the different shows. The

focus group discussion tackled six different aspects of performance. Gender balance was put into consideration to avoid bias. Additionally, purposive sampling technique was used to recruit the poet and the participants of the focus group discussions. According to Alkassim (2016), purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of a participant based on the qualities the participant possesses. The researcher decides what needs to be known and then seeks out people who can and are willing to provide the information based on their knowledge or experience.

The participants of the focus group discussions were gender balanced and ranged between ages 18-30 years. The population was gauged according to character, availability, willingness and ability to participate in the sessions guided by a facilitator. The study had three focus groups: the first consisted of fans of spoken word poetry, the second consisted of spoken word artists who had collaborated and/or shared a stage with Mufasa, and the final focus group had participants who were part of the audience from different shows.

3.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Non-probability sampling was used in the study. This sampling technique allows the study to choose performances for the project based on a purposive personal opinion that the spoken word performances chosen for the project are the most appropriate for the study. The performances that were chosen for the project were showcased between 2014 and 2019.

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) regard purposive sampling as a “system that permits a researcher to use cases that have the needed information with reverence 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, hence the selection of Mufasa. He had zeal to help push research in the field

of spoken word poetry performance. He availed himself for interviews and invited the study into his performance spaces. Additionally, he provided the study with an archived body of work for further analysis.

The criteria that were used to select the audience of the focus group considered the participants availability, interest and occupational relationship to the subject. The participants were aged between 18 and 28 years old, they were characterized to be lively with a critical interest in spoken word poetry performance. This study was unbiased as it also included a selection of ordinary audience members with little to no experience in the area of research to capture different perspectives.

The research involved the participation of thirty-three critics who were classified into three focus groups. The groups included, spoken word enthusiasts, the spoken word poets and the ordinary audience with little to no experience in spoken word performance. The spoken word enthusiasts' focus group session had 18 participants, 12 of them were women and 6 were male. The spoken word poets' focus group discussion had 10 participants, 6 of them were female and the rest were male. The focus group discussion for the ordinary audience had 5 participants, 3 male and 2 women.

3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

This study was achieved by using observation matrix to watch live and recorded videos of performances of the selected poet with an aim of finding out the performance techniques and theatrical elements used to enhance the interpretation of the performance. Observation matrix enabled capturing of visual details and also gave firsthand information. The researcher set an interview schedule and an interview guide with open ended questions

for the poet-participant as illustrated in APPENDIX. Focus group discussion guides and schedules were also incorporated to gauge thoughts of the fans, poetry performance and ordinary audience concerning spoken word performance techniques in Kenya and those of the selected poet-participant. Secondary data was sourced from relevant thesis, books, journals, newspaper articles and online materials.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Observation aided in creating a holistic approach towards understanding performance techniques used by Mufasa. It also formed the main bulk of obtaining the primary data. The researcher and her assistants attended and watched live spoken word poetry at Kenya National Theatre, Goethe Institute and Alliance Française made notes using an observation guide affixed at the end of this study. They also watched recorded performances of Mufasa on 'THE TREND' and YouTube. The performances observed were documented through note taking and on DVD (Digital Video Disc) for purposes of transcription and further analysis. This technique worked for this research because spoken word performance is visually driven hence gave the researcher an opportunity to capture the non-verbal elements of the spoken word performances in detail. During this process, the poet's voice projection, articulation, body postures, tone, facial expressions, and stage business were all given close attention.

Focus groups have been used as an alternative to other research methods as part of a multi-method research design, according to Wilkinson (1998). Focus groups were used in this study with the assumption that mutual sense-making occurs. The researcher also interviewed and had focus group discussion with fans of spoken word poetry, spoken word artists who had collaborated and/or shared a stage with Mufasa and audience for different

performances. The researcher observed how people created, communicated, and defended their beliefs as part of the sense-making process. The interview and focus group discussion questions were then filled through notes. They were also recorded using audio-visual devices for purposes of posterity to ease the reference process.

All of the interviews began with the interviewer ensuring that the interviewees were at ease and knew what the interviews entailed and how they would be used. The researcher also ensured that the interview places were pleasant and that the interviewees were in charge of scheduling the interviews.

3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The research employed the triangulation data source strategy which is the gathering of evidence from different types of data sources, such as primary and secondary researches, documents, public records, photographs and observations to validate the data and the study. Any data that was found to be erratic with the set objectives was considered redundant and thus not given prominence.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive data analysis was employed in this research because it is a study strategy which describes the main aspects of data being analyzed.

This allowed the researcher to validate performance techniques showcased by the selected poet in pursuance of identifying the techniques, factors that influence the choice of these techniques and impact these techniques have on the interpretation, aesthetic value and quality of performance. The study used the methods given by the Stanislavski System (1949)

and the External Acting Method (1968) extensively to decide how Mufasa conforms to or sallies from the techniques provided by the various adherents of the theories.

Interviewee answers and focus group conversations were also evaluated using discourse analysis. Discourse analytic analysis, according to Potter (2009), can be performed on virtually any collection of materials that includes talk and texts because it allows for a degree of standardization across a sample of interviewees and allows the study to focus on specific topics or themes in a focused manner.

The analysis entail, organization of the interview and focused group discussion notes taken, notes made from the readings of the secondary data and their transformation into a coherent and informative texts which take a format of description and the process of interpretation of the entire findings. The data was also analyzed in terms of how 'believable,' 'truthful,' and 'realistic' the characters were perceived to be. For the audience, interpreting a performance entails determining how much the poet has 'become' the character, which can only be explored in terms of authenticity, truthfulness, or realism, according to Abrams, Bell, and Udris (2001).

In conclusion, the study has included criticism and defense of the findings appropriately with detailed references. The study then employed the use of continuous reporting to present the findings from the analyzed notes compiled into a coherent final report.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research adhered to the ethical considerations of research as stipulated by Kenyatta University. The researcher ensured this by ensuring that documentation of references is well done and that it protects the rights of the participants engaged in the study. The researcher further ensured that the participants suffer no harm from the research process and outcomes.

The researcher obtained authority to conduct the research by requesting for permit from the office of the president. Information obtained from the respondents was protected and not be shared to any other person and only used for purposes of this research. Materials containing the information was destroyed once the study was complete.

The researcher engaged all purposively selected participants to attend the interview and focused group discussion sessions through a consent letter of introduction from various research institutions and government agencies involved in the research process. The researcher ensured the participants get clarity of any issue that arises during or after the sessions.

3.11 CONCLUSION

This section focused on the methods and techniques that the study undertook to effectively achieve a viable research. The following chapter explores performance techniques in spoken word poetry performance and then narrows down specific performance techniques used by Mufasa to enhance his performances.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES USED BY MUFASA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on establishing performance techniques illustrated by Mufasa in his performances. It further investigates the factors that influence the performance techniques he uses and analyzes how Mufasa's performance techniques enhance the interpretation, quality and aesthetic value of his spoken word performance.

4.2 CONCEPTUALIZING PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES

Oral poetry is described as being verbal art. The basic idea is that in its composition and performance, oral poetry is delivered by word of mouth. Nandwa and Bukenya (1983) argue that the audience responds to the oral performance. Thus, the performance of an oral poem as an interactive enterprise where the poet performs before a participating audience.

The aim of technique is to make an idea or subject matter simpler, more powerful, more convincing, and more moving, as well as to communicate its mood to the audience or listener by combining and expressing the elements of art that will organize and express its inherent mood qualities (Dean & Carra, 1974).

Performance is a form of expression which uses gestures, bodily movements, what Weistein (2010) calls 'physical text' (p.7). It also includes words, voice, intonations and non-verbal cues as part of its delivery. They all aid the audience with interpreting a performance. Spoken word poets are performers whose visuals as just as essential to the interpretation of their texts as their words are to the representations of alternative realities.

According to Schechner (1983), performances refer to actions; to perform means to undertake something. Often, the term performance is used to refer to artistic events such as the performance of a play, a dance, poetry and so on. But the modern use of the term includes a vast range of activities that involve the presentation of rehearsed actions and pre-established patterns of behavior in arts, literature, and in everyday social communication. Performance is often defined as a contested term by many performance theorists, because of its multiple uses in a variety of disciplines (Woolgar & Pickering, 2009).

Emphasizing the importance of theatrical performance, the eminent contemporary Indian playwright Mahesh Dattani says that the reading of a play is not actually complete ignoring its performance aspect. Encouraging the notion different interpretations of a play in performance, he says that such interpretations are encouraging for playwrights as well; but simultaneously incorrect interpretations can be frustrating for the playwright (Dattani, 2010). Commenting on the text/performance divide, the playwright says that the most important fact involving a performance is that how much impact it creates on the audience.

Mufasa's spoken word and performance is centred on who he is, different aspects of his life, personal experiences, love, human dignity, social justice, current state of politics and personal moments and stories of people he cares about. He uses personal stories to break ice and to transition from one piece to another. His bravery and tenacity of sharing is evinced on the content. His work is heavy and raw, particularly his exploration of his political pieces. Nonetheless, his performance is purposeful and what he does care about is that it comes from an honest place. 'Any word that I feel is just there to sound dope or force a rhyme, I will remove it...' Mufasa aspires to create environments that allow for the free exchange of thoughts, voices, and experiences. He also aspires to create cultures in which no one's voice

is silenced, and no one's perspective is overlooked or overshadowed by another. His performances create an atmosphere that encourages intelligent, emotionally fragile dialogue about topics that are not easily discussed.

In *Drama in Performance*, Raymond Williams (2008) says that drama comprises of four elements; which include speech (including singing, oratorio speech, dialogue and tête-à-tête), movement (including gesticulations, dance, physical enactment and acted event), design (including scene, scenery, costume and effects of lighting) and sound (including music, sound effects); they are all expression of performance but there are variations in these elements' relation to the literary text in performance. In certain texts, the performance is within the text itself to a large extent.

Langham (1983), demarcates that the difference between drama as literature and drama as theatre by affirming: 'There is all the difference in the world between literature and drama. A play's sound, music, movement, looks, dynamics - and much more - are to be discovered in the script, yet cannot be detected through strictly literary methods of reading and analysis'. Mufasa employs different techniques for his different pieces and this is determined by what he wants the audience to feel at a given point. 'If I want to make you feel guilty or make you think about the piece even after the performance, I will put you in an emotional state.'

Mufasa has established a distinct vocal performance style that's distinct from his normal speaking voice. His voice is soulful and emotional as he reads his poetry onstage, and he articulates each word of every line from his poem with distinction and intensity. His natural speaking voice, which is full of tonal variations, discourse markers, and laughter or

giggles, is not like this. However, when he performs poetry, his voice is amplified to fill vast venues. He speaks plainly to ensure that each poem is conveyed to his audience, and he maintains his composure even when sharing intimate, raw experiences he has had. Between words, he pauses as he considers the lines; each expression is crucial to the performance's momentum.

As an artist, he is most alive when he uses this conscious delivery. He goes to great lengths to convey the experience in a confident, coherent, and inspiring manner. His choices in performance show speak from a place of intelligence, honesty, and courage. He expresses his various emotions in a straightforward and concise manner that is consistent with his overall message. He has discovered his voice and isn't afraid to use it. He articulates his ideas and shares his insights on the stage, which is a scaled-down slice of the contemporary world.

Mufasa is a performer who understands the effects and impact of movement onstage. He harnesses the powers of stillness and silence, sometimes halting her physical body to create a captivating stillness providing a resounding silence. For example, after addressing the characters directly in the poem, he pauses after each “you” and “my” to allow the audience to comprehend the seriousness of the statements. This severity emphasizes how unwelcome, memorable, and permanent a situation like this is. His powerful, intense energy as a performer makes him appear to be illuminated from within when on stage, both vocally and physically. Mufasa makes extensive use of his body and voice to humanize his stories throughout his performances. Furthermore, despite the heaviness of his material, his ease in performing is reflected in his hand movements, eyes that are downcast, widened, and at times closed, and shoulders that are both relaxed and tense, giving off a naturalistic stylized performance that is both soothing and comfortable to observe.

Sosulky (2008), states that the essence of a dramatic text is in its performance and for this reason, the dramatic text needs to be experienced not just read and analyzed. Such texts only blossom into its full range of meaning when put on a stage by actors in flesh and blood. This is because the audience has the opportunity to see the drama from inside, giving them the possibility of interpreting the words and giving them meaning, not simply through words uttered by the characters, but by using gestures and body movements which more evocatively reveal the relationship between the characters, their attitudes and intentions. The preceding establishes the emphasis of this chapter.

4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF PERFORMANCE

According to Klich and Scheer (2012) among the many characteristics of performance, the main foundations of all performances are:

1. The manipulation of the performances body- a principal essential element of any performing art.
2. The manipulation of space, which the performer empties out and the carves up and occupies in its slightest nooks and crannies.
3. The relation that performance establishes between the artist and the audience, between the audience and the work of art and between the work of art and the artist.

4.4 ELEMENTS OF PERFORMANCE

4.4.1 ACTOR-PERFORMER

An actor /impersonator portrays certain character (s) within a theatrical performance. The actor performs as a person in a given theatre space or stage. He is given a role or a character to impersonate and is responsible for its interpretation in a theatrical performance (Anpe, 2014, p.38).

It will be quite inadequate to consider the essential performance elements of oral literature without giving a thought for the artist, the performance and the audience. The artist who in this case is the poet, it is his performance that constitutes the literature in question. An essential feature of oral literature is therefore, its performance.

It will not be an exaggeration to posit that no genre of oral literature is worth its name without its practical performance. Anpe, emphasizes the significance of performance when she avers that an oral poem is essentially a fleeting work of art and that it's the performance that gives it its essence.

4.4.2 AUDIENCE

In understanding the effectiveness of theatrical form, it is empirical to understand the basis of audience psychology. As theatrical form is the communication of ideas between performers and audiences, it can in turn be analyzed under the scope of psychology of spectators of art. Visual, auditory, spoken information, though delivered in physical, measurable ways, becomes abstract as it is interpreted and experienced by a spectator. Similar to an individual interpreting music or art, the deliberate emotional and intellectual

understanding one achieves during a theatre performance can only be assumed under certain definition.

To further explain the effectiveness of theatrical form, many of the same elements can be paralleled with the more familiar term 'willing suspension disbelief'. This idea is commonly applied to literature and in a more contemporary sense, to cinema. Willing suspension of disbelief entails the 'hypnotic process whereby (spectators) willingly allow themselves to be transported from story spectator to story participant'. In other words, an audience member is engaging in and achieving an understanding for a given word on a deliberate, more insightful level. In relation to theatrical form, artistic ideas, whether sentimentally obvious or intellectually obscure are communicated between performers and audiences in hopes of attaining a like level connectivity and involvement.

Additionally, an individual's interpretation of art is extremely subjective. This is a singularity that has challenged many artists as they strive to find commonalities and, in most cases, accomplish specific expressional goals with their work.

As elaborated by Bennet (1997), a more extensive phenomenon existing specifically to theatre, describes that the audience must be present in order for cultural affirmation and purpose of the performance to be realized. The spectators experience may also prove to be most revealing about the nature of performance. Following the process an artist undergoes in developing a work, the interpretation an audience gathers from its presentation provides indication as to if the goals of the artists were achieved or not.

According to Becker (1979), Aristotle in *On Poetics*, was the first to use the term spectator. When talking about the way in which the spectator can access the play, Aristotle

distinguishes between the two types of spectator: those who watch the events in the scene, identifying with the characters and their feelings, and those who do the same thing but from a certain distance. On the other hand, the term audience is somewhat more complex. The simplest definition of the audience would relate to a cluster of people, persons who have their own points of view, political opinions, personal antiquities, and prospects and understandings and who can sway the process of producing theatrical performances (De Marinis, 2006).

The audience is the essence of any theatrical performance. The mutual interaction between the performer and the audience is what makes a theatrical performance a complete event. Since the audience is the receptor and simulating agent of a theatrical performance, the reaction towards the performance at the moment influences and transmits energy to the performer on stage, when negative, they will do better and when positive, it will be a fulfillment of doing the right (De Marinis, 2006)

The above is in line with Richard Bauman's assertion that performance as a means of spoken vocal communication comprises in the supposition of duty to an audience for display of communicative aptitude (Bauman, 1977).

English dramatist, Martin Esslin (1995), states that 'a good theatre audience ceases to be an assemblage of isolated individuals, it becomes a collective consciousness.' It is this idea of collective consciousness that drives the purpose of theatre performance forward: unifying people and communicating ideas. Schechner (2003) asserts that 'Reflexivity in theatre goes hand in hand with audience participation' (p.131). In respect to the audience, this study describes how the performance techniques enhanced interpretation of Mufasa's performances.

4.4.3 VOCAL SKILLS

The voice has four components, according to Adams (1986): quality, pitch, strength, and tempo. When the four elements of voice are used intelligently, he observes, variety and contrast in interpretation are created. The characteristic sound of the voice generated by the mode of vibration of the vocal cords or folds is referred to as voice quality. Adams (1986) links voice quality with tone of voice, explaining that tonal quality often reflects a person's personality: kind, loving, and compassionate. The frequency of the waves that produce sound determines the pitch of the sound.

Pitch, according to Mugubi (2017), refers to the 'loudness' caused by the strength of our vocal chords' vibrations. The frequency or projection of one's voice is referred to as voice power. It refers to the rate at which sound energy is produced by the vocal codes, while tempo refers to the rate, speed, or duration of an utterance. According to Mugubi (2017), we can emphasize our message in speech by adjusting the pace at which we articulate our phrases. As a result, tempo in performance can effectively connote or express a variety of emotions, such as frustration, worry, tranquility, reconciliation, subjugation, adoration, and tenderness. The voice components are linked since they must be used together in order for speech to be convincing. In reality, in order to be understood, the actor's voice must function in tandem with his or her body.

When performing '*My Girlfriend is getting married today*', Mufasa captured the attention of the audience by powerfully and loudly saying, '**My Girlfriend, Is getting married today. To another man.**' This got a number of people in the audience ask questions like 'What...' some burst into laughter as others leaned forward supporting their

chin showing how shocked they were to hear that statement and their eagerness to know how the poem would unfold. Not to lose the audience's attention, Mufasa articulated his words while paying attention to his pace.

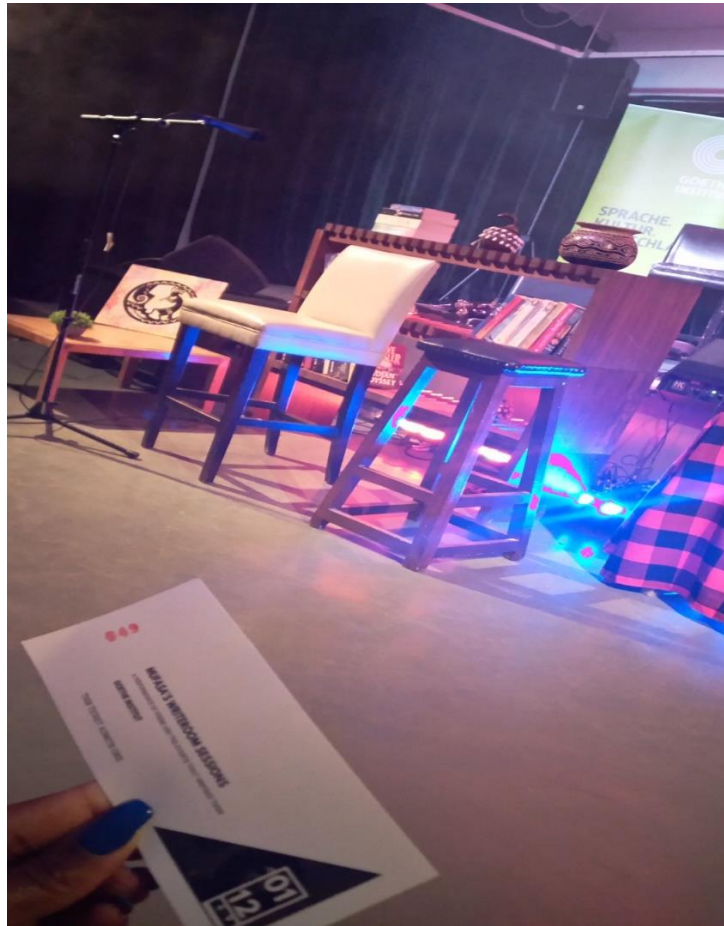
4.4.4 STAGE SETTING

This is an artistic and a creative process that evokes interpretation of performance text through visual thinking in order to produce a visually aesthetic picture of a production (Brockett & Ball, 2014). The set serves several functions including; defining the performance space by establishing distinctions between stage and offstage. It 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.

They can be abstract, highly realistic or anything in between. They are a chance for a designer to showcase interesting concepts, new techniques to draw in the audience. Wilson & Goldfard (2002) notes that a stage setting can aid establish the mood, style and mood of the play as well as the setting and period. The set should reveal to the audience where and when the play takes place. Therefore, a stage set plays an integral role in any performance for interpretation purposes.

This is evident in Mufasa's write room sessions performance of 2018, and when interviewed about his set, he agrees with Wilson and Goldfard (2002) and goes on to elaborate that his set sets the mood for his performances, mentally prepares his audience for a performance and acts as an element of suspense as he believes that through the set the audience will be very expectant of a quality performance.

Picture 2 MUFASA'S WRITE ROOM SESSIONS SET



4.4.5 LIGHTING

Several researchers have studied the concept of stage lighting, its aims and functions for stage but most sentiments still find a way of meeting at the same point. The researcher agrees with them on the view that the key purpose and role of light is visibility or illumination.

Wolf and Block say ‘

The basic obligation of stage design is to give performers meaning in their surroundings, providing an atmosphere in which the role may be logically interpreted through manipulation of light in all its aspects – intensity, color, distribution and movement – the lighting designer assists in creating an environment for the play by achieving selective visibility, by providing appropriate composition and revelation of form and by establishing a mood and reinforcing the theme. (pg 105)

Also, Domba Asomba (2006) in *Fundamentals of Stage Lighting* says that:

The role of stage lighting in a performance is a measure of its value, the impact of which is subjected to psychological disposition of the audience. This is invariably achieved in a performance through the provision of illumination, selective visibility, modeling/composition and reinforcement of mood (pg318)

Though in agreement to the above-mentioned functions of lights, the researcher believes there are other functions and found out the following in relation to Mufasa’s performances.

The main function of lighting in Mufasa’s performances was to illuminate and transition from one performance to another – The lights would fade off after a performance and gradually come back on at the start of a new performance .However, in some instances, like when performing ‘*My Mother*’, *My Boys are Dying*’, ‘*My Girlfriend is Getting*

Married' and *'Cancer'* it was mainly used to set the mood of the performance and the spotlight used also helped to focus on Mufasa and not the band

Picture 3 MUFASA'S STAGE LIGHTING



4.4.6 SOUND AND MUSIC ACCOMPANIMENT

Brocket and Ball (2004) outline four main functions of music; to evoke mood and atmosphere, reinforces the action, reinforces the performer's voice and also reinforces the production's style and comments on action. Archer and Gendrich and Hood (1999) classify music and music into four categories

1. Framing effects- sound effects that help frame the entire production and helps the audience to know when the show starts, the intermissions and when the show ends.
2. Underscoring – is also referred to as background music. This is the music that accompanies the action onstage but barely acknowledged by the characters.

3. Transitional sound/music – These are effects that help transition from one scene or movement to the next and can mark a change in place or time.
4. 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.

4.5 TYPES OF TECHNIQUES (DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES)

4.5.1 REPETITION

Repetition is the simple echoing of an action during a theatrical performance or it could be repeating of a word or sentence and a poetical line in a song in order to secure a prominence. It is also used to create rhythm and bring attention to an idea (Anpe, 2014, p.33).

Geoffrey Leech (1985) lends credibility to his position that repetition as a literary device is very important in oral literature based on his observation that humans want to express themselves expansively on matters which affect them deeply. Give this natural tendency to say and repeat matters of deep personal concerns many times over. Thus, for Leech, the repeated hammering of the same issue and using the same words and sounds etc. is a veritable way of relieving inner feelings of sadness or of joy.

Okpewho shares the same view about the artistic and communicative importance of repetition: Repetition is no doubt one of the most fundamental characteristic features of oral literature. It has both aesthetic and utilitarian value. In other words, it is a device that not only gives a touch of beauty or attractiveness to a piece of oral expression whether song or

narrative or other kind of statement) but also serves certain practical purposes in the overall organization of the oral performance.

Okpewho emphasizes that, it is necessary to grasp the aesthetic value of repetition in a piece of oral performance. In a fundamental way, repetition of a phrase, line or a passage does have a sing-song quality to it, if the repetition occurs between intervals in, say a song, or a tale, the audience is often delighted to identify with it to accompany the performer in going over the passage that has now become familiar. The oral artist usually presents the rhyming elements, the events, diverse images, or all these together.

Mufasa uses repetition as a technique to emphasize on certain words in a given poem and also as a tactic not to lose the audience in the process of the performance.

This technique also acts as an engagement tactic because when the audience gets the flow or the pattern of the performance, they become more familiar with the piece and therefore can pre-empt certain lines or words. The poet has also repeated a number of pieces, like '*My Boys Are Dying*' *My Girlfriend is Getting Married*' which has made a number of audience members to master the content and say the lines along with him as he performs.

The aesthetic quality of oral literature, especially poetry, partly depends on the skillful manipulation of phonological properties of which one of the main elements of marking time is the rhythm or a regular repetition of sound patterns.

4.5.2 GESTURES

In its most general definition, it refers to the movement of any part of the body including facial expression. However, only voluntary gestures which are used to express

thoughts are considered when researching the use of gestures in a learning context. To further identify gestures when researching and relating gesture to learning many researchers have broken gestures into categories. (Goldin- Meadow 1999, p.422) described McNeils four types of gestures:

1. Deictic; where the speaker points out an aspect to which they are referring.
2. Iconic; visual representation of the feature it's relating to.
3. Metaphorical; Visual representation off a metaphor.
4. Beat; Independent signs which contain meaning through social context e.g. wagging a finger.

Research has overwhelmingly found that people use communication to portray their thoughts and knowledge and often use gestures in isolation or in combination with speech in order to do so. From this notion many researchers believe that gestures therefore provide a unique insight to people's thoughts.

When performing '*My girlfriend is Getting Married*' Mufasa locked eyes with different members of the audience in order to personalize his communication and to grab their attention while saying the first statement of this poem. This got the audience curious as the eye contact was accompanied by a pause that made some of the audience to react shockingly in anticipation of his next line.

Blame My Roots, invoked cheers and snaps from the audience who keenly followed the different experiences creatively told by Mufasa. His hand gestures and eye contact that moved from one audience member to the other in order to position the different characters in the poem weaved connections and experiences between the poet and the audience.

Standing rigid, eyes filled with anger and mouth twitching whilst performing these verse from '*How is he your man*';

How will he hold you?

If those are the same hands,

You ran away from when you want to run away from scars.

And if you can't trust his hands,

Then how will you trust his ears when scars inside you need an ear

Through his body language, the poet represented a personal experience for the audience to feel, relate and understand the characters in the poem. It was evident from the sighs, silent moments and sniffs from the audience that they connected and some were even affected by the piece. This in turn imparted the poet's truth on domestic violence and a reflection of the audience's stand on that truth.

For *School Fees Kinda Love*, *My girlfriend is getting married today*, *Cancer*, *Love*, *My sister gave birth to God's child*, *Weirdest date ever* and *Our mothers*, He continuously gestured with his hands and arms constantly while changing his speed of delivery depending on the actions described in the poems. The audience was able to view situations and themes represented in the poetry performances more comprehensively. In an interview, *Participant 9* stated that, "Mufasa conveys what he wants to communicate through emotions, voice, and gestures and the audience gets to explore the literature on a deeper level." In effect, the

audience gains a better sense of connection to not only the poet, but the work itself, leading them to be more open to new views.

Picture 4 MUFASA USING GESTURES



4.5.3 COMPOSITION

Composition is a harmony of words, man's natural instrument, penetrating not only the ears but the very soul. It arouses all kinds of conceptions of words and thoughts and objects beauty and melody-all things native and natural to mankind. The amalgamation and diversity of its sounds bear the speaker's emotions to the minds of those around him and make the listeners share them. If it fits his great opinions into a comprehensible structure by the way in which it builds patterns of words' (Longinus, 2001).

In poetry, the language the narrator employs is different from that of the ordinary language and surface meaning of spoken word. This makes it a superior means of

communication marked by poetic diction and metaphoric expression. A poem is an encapsulated artistic language, the expression of a poet's vision or inner life and a mirror of his times. It is a reflection of universal truth, whether bad or good, comedy or tragedy, humorous or satirical, euphoric or melancholic and peace or war.

4.5.4 VISUAL IMPACT

“Because the poet creates or arranges his own story, he creates a self-sufficient world of his own...that world is itself a proper creation based on rudiments in the real world, an illumination of an aspect of the world as it really is” (Daiches,1969).

Poetry is viewed by the generation of poets as a decorated speaking picture or visual image. The pattern of a poem or the way it is arranged and its colorful expression are its important dimensions of artistic effects. Another dimension in the analysis of poetry is the relationship between its vocabulary and the imagery of what is termed as ornamental language which is meant to inspire the audience (readers or listeners).

The point here is that a poem becomes a work of art if we probe into its artistic arrangement. The meticulous interpretation of the visual image might help us to uncover the power of a poem. The analysis of poetry essentially demands the careful scrutiny of its depth, its language and texture, its organic unity, its implication and the particular scene it depicts.

The oral narrator carefully selects a particular image in order to capture the interests of his audience. In one case, the image or symbol a poet uses are the outcome of his impulse to perceive the natural world, its unity and diversity. The meanings the poet assigns to the image and purpose of each poem is different in depth and complexity. In general, the analysis

of a certain image very often leads to a wide range of possibilities of deriving additional aesthetic force from the contextual relations

Each poem is generated to embody a great variety of important issues to which the poet directs the attention of the audience.

4.6 TYPES OF PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES USED BY MUFASA

In all forms of arts, technique purposes at making a thought or subject matter clearer, more operative, more persuasive to convey its mood to the spectator or listener by using the rudiments of art that will synchronize and express its inherent mood qualities (Dean & Carra, 1974).

Written text is nothing but an iconic sign representing the social realities. The written play when performed on stage acts as a sign representing those realities by verbal and visual means. A theatrical performance as a whole is symbolic phenomenon. In 'Semiotics and Theatre: By way of Introduction', Ruth Amossy (1981) comments that 'text' and 'stage' are the two main components of the 'theatrical relation', and their peculiar modes of interrelation lies in the specificity of theatre. The dramatic text, according to her, becomes only one of the important parts of theatre. She also emphasizes the communicative aspect of theatre and defines it as a signifying practice in which meaning production takes place in the interrelation of the different codes such as voices, lights, gestures, props etc. along with the actor's body used in the performance.

In performance, the text is concretized and actualized in a given space and time with the help of stage components like actor, voice, music, rhythm and many other stage elements.

Hence, the focus of this study in analyzing the performance techniques used by the selected poet to enhance the aesthetic value, quality and interpretation of his performances.

The concept of spoken word or performance poetry might be a western import, but like all things foreign, it is slowly being adopted and Kenya is experiencing and embracing the rise of the new wave of oral poetry. This art form has provided many talented and upcoming artists with a space to articulate their concerns by addressing pertinent issues within the Kenyan borders and beyond. Mufasa is one of Kenyan talented artists who has thrived in the spoken word poetry performance genre thus being selected for this study.

When one thinks about poetry, the immediate image that comes to his/her mind is a written text of rhymes: no one thinks about a person performing in front of a big crowd. However, if we refer to the etymological meaning of the word itself, we realize that it comes from the Greek noun 'poiesis' whose verb means 'to make' therefore 'to create poetry' not necessarily to write it down on paper. So why do people persist in thinking that 'proper' poetry has to be written? (Tracie Morris & Jean 'Binta' Breeze, 2014). In addition to this; to define a poem as 'oral' it is necessary to consider three different factors which are: composition, transmission and performance (Finnegan, 2011).

Kenneth Burke (1965) looks at the variety of viewpoints during the construal of a text by placing the audience and the text at the centre. While he leaves the actor and the playwright in the interpretation of the text, this study considers the spoken word poet, the text and the audience as key players in this regard. The researcher thereby focused in examining how the techniques of performance employed by the selected poet determined the interpretation of content.

The oral artist supplements his verbal efforts with dramatic actions, gestures, charming voices, and facial expression, dramatic uses of pauses and rhythms and receptivity of the reactions of the audience. They are all integral part of the composition process. Those non-verbal actions described above together with the costume of the artist and prevailing mood at the moment of performance all add to the meaning of the oral poem. Therefore, performance of the poetry is much more than mere verbal creation (Oludare and Olajubu, 1981).

The above statement shows that spoken word poetry is an important artistic convention that permeates oral performance and communicated not only through oral rendition as poems delivered as speech in a performance but also through exhibitions of various theatrical elements before a live audience with the help of different theatrical elements. Indeed, virtually all oral forms possess dramatic elements and are actualized only through performance before an audience (Kumba, 1994).

Wallestein (1991) asserts that performance is the ‘physical text’ which encompasses the use of gesticulations, body movements, words, voice, inflection and other no-verbal cues. It is the blend of all these elements which leads to the understanding of the text by the spectators. The same view is held by walker and Chaplin (1997) who echo that it is performance that offers added meaning and different understanding of text. In this section, the researcher will focus on how Mufasa uses tonal variation, facial expression, gestures and body movement and any other performance element like performer, stage set, music accompaniment and light to enhance the interpretation of the content of his poem.

4.6.1 THE BODY AND VOCAL TECHNIQUE

The emphasis on the body in performance is not a new phenomenon. It is divided into three categories (1) physical gestures (2) facial expression, and (3) postures or movements. According to this treatise, facial expressions re of immense importance; physical actions/gestures accompanied by facial expression lead to effective performance (Rangacharya, 2005). While transforming the text into performance the actor and his body plays an important function. As Patrice Pavis (2003) says: “In theatre, emotions are always manifested by means of rhetoric of the body and gestures in which emotional expression is systematized or codified.” The body becomes a very important component of the performance text drawing together the other elements and acts as a living connection between the author’s text, the director’s introduction and the spectator’s perception.

Picture 5 MUFASA PERFORMING IN WRITE ROOM SESSIONS



The body becomes readable either as a ‘text’ or as a ‘code’ – source of a multiplicity of information. Patrick Campbell (2004) in his book *The Body in Performance* states that the body in performance is a physical presence moving in space and time making its own distinctive sounds; the body may also manifest itself in verbal traces or in echoes which signify its absence.

Performance is pre-eminently an activity of bodies. Any performance consists two sets of bodies – the body scripted by the society and the body scripted by theatrical practice and values (Shepherd and Wallis, 2004). Looking at the poetry texts included in this study, the notion of theatre as a bodied phenomenon – an act of “seeing” and being “seen” by the audience – becomes clear.

The body in performance is always in a state of instability and transition; it can be perceived as a multiplicity rather a unity. Theatrical performance is primarily an event of bodily activities in which every move made by the actor bears significant connotation. Hence the expressive possibilities of a body in performance are numerous. Performances are embodied events. Every aspect relating to the actor such as his body, his speech and voice turn into signifying units on stage and influences the spectator’s perception and decoding of messages.

Finnegan (1977) asserts that a poem can be sung, chanted (recited), but sometimes it can involve a combination of all these modes. Most spoken word poets use the spoken mode delivery but it is not uncommon for some to infuse the spoken with the sung or chanted modes hence creating a collage of genres.

When interviewed, *Participant 4* echoed the importance of pauses and tonal variations by stating that ‘Speed variations also works in a similar way as tone variation as it also gives an audience a chance to grasp the key words at a slow pace and high pace depending on the message of the artist. Pauses help in creating tension and give time for the audience to concentrate on the artist before a key section of the act...’ (*See Appendix IV*).

Mufasa’s delivery is mostly through speaking mode while manipulating his voice in dissatisfaction of those elected in the Kenyan government. This is vividly portrayed in his poetry performance of ‘*To be in government*’ – a poem that revolves around leaders who aim at being in government for their own selfish gains at the expense of the citizens, who unfortunately vote for them not based on their vision but from the tribe they hail from.

In an angry voice he rants;

To be in government is to be first in the fast-food joint...you eat fast first.

To be in the government is to learn how to use the term ‘youth’ in front of cameras to pretend you care.

To be in the government is to talk about talent and ignore the fact that the place with the most talent are the graveyards

To be in the government is to be able to visit a public hospital when you are well,

And absolutely not when you are unwell.

To be Kenyan and ignorant is to keep voting in people because of where
they come from

Instead of where we want to go...

For emphasis, the poet uses a poignant pause between the last two lines in the above poem in order to emphasize his dissatisfaction for the leaders in government who have empowered the ordinary citizen in any way. He stresses on the words 'To be in government...' in the first five lines of the poem to remind the leaders in government the picture they are portraying to the citizens on their incompetent leadership.

Participant 4 echoes the importance of pauses and tonal variations by stating that 'Speed variations also works in a similar way as tone variation as it also gives an audience a chance to grasp the key words at a slow pace and high pace depending on the message of the artist. Pauses help in creating tension and give time for the audience to concentrate on the artist before a key section of the act...' (*See Appendix IV*).

Picture 6 MUFASA USING FACIAL EXPRESSION



4.6.2 MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

Music works in a variety of ways in theatrical performances and its effect differs from performance to performance. For example, in Western mise-en-scene, and particularly in productions of the classical texts, music's effect is that of an accompaniment to the texts; it helps in understanding the text and acting. Accompaniments are an important feature in oral poetry in Africa. In African performance, accompaniments can take the form of sticks, jingles, harp, drums and flute. The combination of singing and instrumentation produces music that has a greater impact on both artist and audience (Olajubu 1978, Okpewho 1985, Miruka 1994, Finnegan 1970)

Picture 7 LIVE BAND IN MUFASA'S WRITE ROOM SESSION

PERFORMANCE



Music is a component of the theatrical stage that contributes to the audience's overall perception of a play. Music is an acoustic event consisting of vocal and instrumental sound effects. It is asemantic by nature as it is difficult to say exactly what meanings music produces. As it has no specific object, it may mean anything; its value measured in terms of the overall effect it produces in the audience's mind (Pavis, 2003).

Sometimes music simply produces sound effects to make a situation recognizable while in different cases it seems to comment ironically on the actions of a play. For example, the songs in Brecht's plays. Apart from creating an atmosphere in the performance, music can also help in producing actions through musical means. Music enhances the impact of a performance by coordinating all the elements of scenic presentation into a harmonious whole

in a way which is beyond rational understanding. Thus, music and the stage enjoy a symbiotic relationship (Lal, 2004).

Pavis (2003) states that music creates a mysterious atmosphere. Therefore, influences the audience to be particularly receptive to a performance out of curiosity of the unknown. When interviewed, Mufasa shared in the same sentiments by stating the reason he incorporates music in his performances ‘First, it puts people in a certain mood – the right mood. Music helps to prepare people’s nerves, feelings...’ (*See Appendix VI*). This was clearly demonstrated by the slow instrumental music accompanied by humming that created a somber mood and then slowly faded as Mufasa in an almost shaky and devastated voice said ‘*My Boys are Dying...*’ a statement that caught the attention of the audience that had been murmuring or conversing or scrolling through their phones, making them focus on Mufasa in anticipation of the next stamen so as to understand its context. He uses a similar technique to introduce ‘*Blame My Roots*’, ‘*My Girlfriend is Getting Married*’, ‘*How is He Your Man*’, ‘*Cancer*’ and ‘*My President is Kenyan*’ which shows the ‘integrative’ function of music alluded to by Pavis

Before performing ‘*Weirdest Date Ever*’, ‘*Love*’, ‘*Our Mothers*’, ‘*Before My Daughter is Born*’ the lead vocalist, accompanied by the instrumentalists sang simple songs, with rich lyrics and catchy chorus that related to the themes of these poems to emphasize on them and also to create pace for Mufasa’s performance that were sometimes heightened or slowed depending on what he wanted to stress on. This in turn created a rollercoaster of emotions in the audience who carefully followed through and engaged in the different performances.

A participatory audience adds to the general performance since it participates in the delivery of the poem (Ekesa, 2016). From the research, Mufasa uses music to engage his audience while encouraging them to sing along to the music sang by the lead vocalist and to also appreciate each band member from the saxophonist, to the violinist, to the drummer, to the keyboardist and sometimes contemporary dancers. He appreciates each band member by giving them an opportunity at the end of his performance to ‘shine’ their craft. This technique acts as a transition from one performance to another, breaking monotony and as a way to climax the spoken word event or hint to the audience that the event is coming an end.

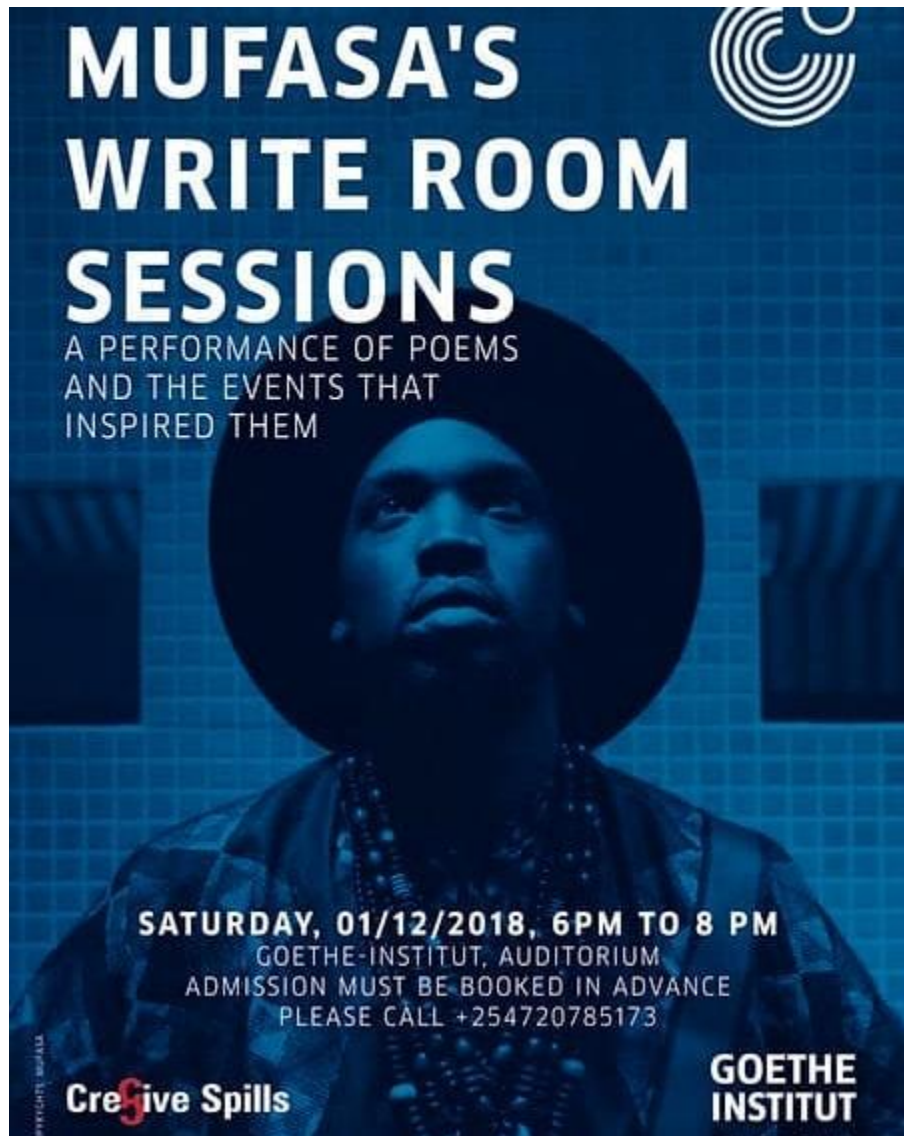
**Picture 8 LIVE BAND IN THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRROR
PERFORMANCE**



Most of Mufasa’s poetry performances were accompanied by a live band. In his show dubbed ‘*Mufasa Write Room Sessions*’ – A Performance of Poems and the events that

inspired them. It was held at the **Goethe institute** auditorium in Nairobi on 1st December, 2018.

Picture 9 POSTER OF MUFASA'S WRITE ROOM SESSIONS



During the performances, Mufasa wowed the audience with a poetry performance fused with a live band – a saxophonist, vocalist, bass guitarist, drummer and a keyboardist. The band accompanied the opening acts by enhancing and supporting what the audience

visually witnessed in the performances. There were various tonal changes in the music as the saxophone and the percussion were introduced at different moments of the performances. The ending of the accompanying music on a low intense tone prepared the audience for new upcoming acts behind the curtain as the band transitioned to Mufasa as the main act. The musical instruments varied the performances, created mood and depth by influencing the audience to feel excited and celebratory while also creating suspense and fear and also greatly heightened the mood and entertained the audience who appreciated in claps and by singing along to songs that were familiar to them.

4.6.3 DRAMATIZATION

According to Kintoch (2005), spoken word poetry is a form of self-expression and self-representation in which poets incorporate emotions in the delivery of their narratives.

Poetic drama is supposed to bind greater power to express moods, moments and feelings more than prose drama. They create one body. Drama is integral to verse and poetry turns towards drama. From this point of view, drama and poetry are fused together. Thereby, drama and poetry are closely related together as a dramatic art can be considered from ‘a double point of view, how far it is poetically and how far it is theatrically. The two are by no means inseparable’ (Shlegel, p.31, 2018).

As such, in a poetic performance, the audience comes to appreciate the meaning of poetry and also the musical harmony that strengthen the passionate impression of the sight. A poetic drama is thus as worldwide and natural as music. It affords greater pleasure than prose drama. The spectator of a poetry performance will enjoy at least two things. First, a story with its plot, events and action and secondly, the sense of poetry, music and rhythm.

Consequently, a good poetic drama presumes a kind of poetic vocalization that is both theatrical and reasonable for action it provokes. In a poetic drama, poetry and action are made integral but they are very indistinguishable (Shlegel, p.31).

The actions of the actor have meaning in the gaze of a spectator. The spectator receives the performance in a specific social context and constructs and reconstructs its meaning on the basis of their cultural and ideological presuppositions. With the advent of “Reception Theory” in the 1970s and 1980s, the role of interpretation by reader/spectator came to be recognized.

Emphasizing the role of reader in interpreting a literary text, Roman Ingarden in *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, says that literary text is a many layered intersubjective intentional formation which has the source of its being in the creative acts of consciousness of its author which is preserved through writing or other physical means that are later on re-animated by the consciousness of the reader. It becomes an intersubjective intentional object related to a community of readers (1980).

In a poetic performance, verse constitutes the third voice of poetry, in which the poet is “uttering not what he would utter in his peculiar person, but only what he can say in the limits of make-believe character speaking to another invented character” (Elliot, T.S, 2000,p.80) William Skaff in “*The poetic Drama and Dramatic Poem*’ defines poetic drama saying that ‘poetry conveys the most powerful emotion only with a dramatic condition comprising of a persona whose individuality is discrete from the author’s and who addresses other characters and an audience according to particular situations dictated by plot action’ (Skaff, 1986, p.1140).

To invite the audience to the performance of *'Our Mothers'* Mufasa narrated a scenario he had with his mother while imitating the mother's voice. This gave a comic effect to the piece that got the audience not only to laugh but find the situation very relatable. 'The technique helps in creating vivid imagery in the mind of an audience which helps to enhance the emotional connection to the piece and hence capture the audiences' imagination. It largely speaks to the life of the performance and relates the persona and their story more deeply with the audience...' (*Participant 3, Part B - Appendix IV*).

Participant 3 also acknowledged that Mufasa does not dramatize a lot as his performance is centralized on elocution of his words. (*See Part B, Appendix IV*). Participant 7 on the other end went ahead to say

Mufasa uses dramatization in his performances to influence the interpretation of his spoken word poem titled *'My Boys are Dying'*. This poem connects with what the youth in Kenya are going through with bad leadership/corrupt government that is resulting to undignified jobs, unemployment, police brutality poverty etc.

My boys are dying because the universe has refused to accept them
as stars

Now they are earth bound,

Bound to be earth

Earth is soil

Soil is sometimes called dirt

My boys are dirty

My boys are dying from working in sewers and garbage points
without proper gear

Their families fear

But it's what steers a living

Believing, tomorrow will come but today is leaving

Poems 10 MUFASA IN ACTION



Mufasa performs the same spoken word in a play “**Deliberate Contempt**” a play written by Walter Sitati and directed by Carol Odongo. His role is *‘patient zero’* a patient who is frustrated by the government services and in a public hospital where he is waiting to be attended to. He states that dramatization of this piece helped his character evoke emotion from the audience and in turn provided his character with a unique entertainment value. He performed the most heart wrenching lines of *‘My Boys Are Dying’*, lying on the floor of the hospital with teary eyes and clenched fist, his voice trembled as a symbol of pain the ‘boys’ are going through due to the government’s negligence.

4.6.4 INTERNALIZATION

Memory is versatile. In performance, memorization refers to erudition of a large quantity of dialogue in a brief period and adopting then replicating it real time with utter impulsiveness, while from a perceptive psychological viewpoint, it is the progression of encrypting, stowing, and retrieving information (Cowan, 2008; Tulving, 1995).

This research established that Mufasa performed all the selected poems from memory. His internalization greatly helped him with delivery and connection with the audience. Having command of his content made his poetry more believable. It also made his performances very conversational and relatable hence breaking the fourth wall as the poet directly interacted with the audience. This is reiterated by *Participant 1* part *B* answer ‘I think performance works best on self-written pieces because they are more honest...’

Mufasa’s poems last between three to ten minutes. His tonal variation varies throughout the performances and he speaks with so much emotion, using pauses throughout to emphasize certain words and phrases. The audience listens in rapt attention and there seemed to be no lessening of his or the audience’s attention and focus after his initial break in the performance.

In conclusion, dramatization, musical accompaniment, internalization, body and vocal techniques enhance the aesthetic enjoyment of Mufasa’s performances. These techniques enable the audience to understand the text, enjoy it, remember it and in the process become unified with other audience members and the performer.

CHAPTER FIVE: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES USED BY MUFASA.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Ekesa (2016) notes that performance is one of the crucial structures of spoken word without which the genre will not exist. She goes on to emphasize that although it is probable for spoken word to be inscribed on the page, its efficiency can only be attained through a verbal presentation. That the sense of the text becomes more intense when the words are given life in oral presentation. Therefore, the performance techniques employed by the poet are meant to assist the audience to supplement their interpretation of the words in the poem hence improving their understanding (p.105).

The above sentiments is confirmed by a respondent who states ‘I have personally not read his written pieces and I also wouldn’t want to. I want to see him perform. I personally believe that there is more power and impact in performed pieces than written ones. I am sure I will not read the music, stage movement, intonation, the pauses, the fast-paced lines, the low paced lines, therefore as opposed to literature- written spoken word, theatre has life and thus performed pieces have more impact than written pieces...’ (*Participant 4, Part B - Appendix IV*).

While interviewing Mufasa, there are a number of factors that he listed that influence the techniques he uses for his performances stating, ‘I have different techniques for different pieces depending on what I want to achieve or what I want to achieve with a piece. If I want to make you feel guilty or want to make you think about the piece even after the

performance, I will put you in an emotional state (**Appendix VI**).’ The researcher focused on delving deeply on the specific techniques in this section of the study.

5.2 AUDIENCE

Audience involvement is a key part of any oral performance and interjections and participations from the audience is expected (Swartz,1956).

Karin Barber (1997) argues that as long as there is a performance, then the presence of an audience is inevitable. When the spoken word poets stage a performance there is always a type of audience they are targeting. This audience determines the poet’s choice of subject matter and the mode of delivery. Interview with Mufasa and a selected number of spoken word poets revealed that most of the poets usually compose their poems for a specific type of audience. The audience is a very important aspect of oral performance. Most of the time, the audience seize to be spectators and become active participants. This is essentially true when in such instances in the course of performances when the audience/participants take part in the songs or other antiphonal acts.

Can theatre exist without an audience? At least one spectator is needed to make it a performance (Grotowki, 2002). As a rhetorical structure for truth building, the poet’s craft develops an immediate rapport with the audience by developing interconnected relationships within Aristotle’s triangle: The speaker, the audience and the text. Hence competitive performance poetry is a ‘marriage of text and the artful presentation of spoken words onstage to an audience that has permission to talk back and let the poet performer know whether he/she is communicating effectively (Marc Smith, 2008).

This relationship between poet, words and audience brings life for everyone involved. Although the poet is the person who experienced a certain emotion /event that sparked the poem's inception, the unique words and delivery of performance poetry creates an all new powerful experience that both the poet and audience feel. Essentially, the poet tweaks Locke's idea that a person has to experience an event to gain knowledge, by recreating something into an experience for other to feel, to live, to know.

Mufasa values the relationship he build with his different audience hence breaking the fourth wall by ensuring that he is at the same level by standing on a leveled platform, arm's length away from the audience with an intention to an 'intimate' conversation around his personal stories that keep him vulnerable, matters love, politics, advocacy and so on. These different experiences in turn give the audience an opportunity to relieve the moments with him, learn from his experiences and become more aware on issues addressed that might have been unknown to them.

He is very aware which audience he wants to reach. When asked who his audience is, he confidently said; 'I want my poetry to reach out to people who are in positions of influence, could be at work, could be in parliament, or be in school. He went on to affirm – 'we are all influential in our own ways, in our own circles.' (*See Appendix VI*).

Picture 11 AUDIENCE LISTENING IN



5.3 PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE

Edward Balcerzan and Zbigniew Osinski (1981) point out two ensembles; the “A-ensemble” and the “P-ensemble”. The “A-ensemble” refers to the agents or the creator of the performance while the “P-ensemble” refers to the percipients or the audience. Not only have the creators of a theatrical event, such as director, actors and stage designers contributed to communicating/transmitting the message to the audience; but also reactions of the audience in form of whistles, cries, laughter, applause, different demonstrations and so on, collaborate to create and communicate the message within a theatrical performance. Hence the communication of information or production of meaning in a theatrical production is a joint venture both by the agents of performance and the recipients of that performance. The same ‘performer-spectator’ collaboration is not possible in the mere reading of the written text. The world of theatrical performance is always a make-believe world and a sense of ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ is required to enjoy it. Any failure in this communication process leads to miscommunication or misinterpretation (Guwahati, 2009).

Mufasa stated that he composes his poems mostly for adults over eighteen years of age, who he believes, are independent minded and comprehend most issues in life. However, he also stressed that most times he just composes poetry with no particular audience in mind, just his personal life issues and surprisingly during a performance it turns out that there are many people who relate and appreciate the content of the poems.

For example; during his performance dubbed ‘Mufasa’s Write Room Sessions’, his poem ‘*My Girlfriend Got Married*’ resonated to with many adult men and women who are victims, are familiar with it or have through the same incident of having the woman they

thought they loved get married to a different man. This could be the fact that this poem tackles a real-life situation and not fiction that would probably throw off a number of people.

Besides that, he also mentioned that there are times when the target audience for the poetry he composes keeps shifting depending on the issues he is communicating in a given poem. For instance, the poem titled '*My President is Kenyan*' targets the Kenyan president. He wants the Kenyan president to understand that even though he is a Kenyan, he is not aware of the problems that the local Kenyan citizen goes through. His wish as he was composing this particular piece was that it would reach the intended target audience or better still a third party attending his performance would relay the message to the president to make him aware of the grievances a local Kenyan citizen has.

At the beginning of his poetry performance, Mufasa engages the audience by deliberately asking them whether they know the citizenship of the president of Kenya. At first there were murmurs followed by a unison shout from a group in the audience saying 'Kenyan!' He nodded in agreement and went on to introduce his poem "*My President is Kenyan*". This technique of involving the audience helps in the interpretation of his poem because the audience is now aware that the poem is directed to the Kenyan president and not of any other country. In the poem, the persona feels that even though the president is Kenyan, he will not automatically know or relate to the problems the local Kenyan citizen battles with in their homes.

My president is Kenyan but he cannot tell my story

Like when I was fifteen years' old

My mother bought a sofa set from her friend

Her friend had bought a new one and now the old one was taking too much space

When the new, old, seats occupied our house

We could not seat on our praises; we sang praises to my mother

For warrior who had slaughtered a dragon

I thought this is what the president meant when he said the economy is growing

Three months later we learnt my mother had not finished paying for the seats

In fact, wasn't even half way there

We watched men come into our house on a February

Lift our seats and march away with our dignity

My mother's friend did not care enough to leave us with our ego to sit on

That year, I missed so much of school,

I started to hate math,

I hated how everything was not adding up

I hated the fact that outside our home,

The economy was growing.

In the above stanza, the persona vents how they are not able to afford seats that are second quality yet the president keeps saying that the Kenyan economy is growing. This shows how various local Kenyans are living with bare minimum contrary to what is said by

those in authority. He feels that the president should work on improving and empowering the living status of the local citizens to enable them afford basic needs. His main message in the above poem is that the real character of a leader is judged by their 'action' when people need their leadership.

Ruth Finnegan (1977) asserts that the configuration and broadcast of literature is principally determined by the nature of the audience (p.214). She believes that the poet considers his/her audience long before the performance when creating the poem and 'it is at no time a sheer afterthought'. J.S Nketia (1975) also aptly observes that" ...the presence and participation of the audience influences the animation of the performance, the spontaneous selection of music, the range of textual improvisation and other details and this stimulus to creative activity is welcomed and even sought by the performer" (33)

Every artist seeks to communicate and entertain their target audience. Mufasa is not an exception because during his interview, he confirmed that this is the case as his main aim is to always communicate and connect with any given audience that he is performing to. Thus, he considers an audience during his composition process. Although Finnegan acknowledges that there are times when the audience is not involved in a performance, she states that in most cases oral literature performances must include the audience. She further outlines two types of audiences in the performance of oral literature as the participatory audience, and separate audience.

She clarifies that there is a difference between poetry that is composed for a participatory audience and that which is composed for a separate audience in terms of purpose and function. The participatory audience occurs when almost all those who attend a

performance participate in it “The audience, even as listeners and spectators-but sometimes in a more active role – are directly involved in the realization of the poem as literature in the moment of its performance” (Finnegan, 1977). This is a common technique by spoken word poets who infuse music in their performances. For example, during Mufasa’s performance opening act of the event dubbed “Mufasa’s Writing Session” the audience joined the main vocalist in singing and applauded the saxophonist, drummer, keyboardist and the base guitarist by clapping, snapping and dancing to their tunes. This in turn made the audience appreciate Mufasa’s poems more as they felt engaged and had to learn the words of the song by the vocalist to enjoy the performances more. And when Mufasa signaled the band to take the music down, the audience also maintained the rhythm of the performance in their slow claps and snaps to back up the band.

Through their participation, the audience played a great role in adding aesthetic appeal and quality to the poet’s performances. There was direct exchange between the performer and the audience and this in turn made the oral poetry a special type of art on the grounds that written form is considered a one-way communication while in this case of performance we are dealing with bilateral exchange based on the impact the performer had on his audience and the reaction of the latter to him.

Besides, the audience’s reaction can actively influence the interpreter’s performance as evidence of what has just been stated. As a result, performance is not something fixed but it keeps changing every time and it depends on different aspects such as: “the age and the energy of the performer, the nature of the occasion, the type of setting, whether or not any musical accompaniment is used especially by the performer” (Okpewho,1992,42).

The separate audience on the other hand is one that attends a performance but does not participate actively in it. In this case “the performance is sometimes a specialized activity, explicitly valued as an end, with a special time and place set aside for its enjoyment” (Finnegan, 1977, 228). When asked by the researcher on his thoughts about the ‘separate’ type of audience, Mufasa echoed Finnegan by stating that his main aim of performing is to communicate and get feedback from his audience and he doesn’t mind at all if the response is silence. This is because, even though this type of audience remains silent throughout his performance, their response to his words and mode of delivery enables him to rate how his performance was received. In most cases, the audience responds through snapping to show agreement or appreciation of a given point by the poet – especially when he rhymes or articulates real societal issues.

In one of his live performances at Alliance Francaise, Mufasa entertained the audience in his spoken word poem titled “*The Weirdest Date Ever.*” This is a love piece in which the persona laments on how the woman he loved toyed around with his feelings. He begins the poem with a nostalgic tone by talking the audience down memory lane when he first met the lady. He as very innocent and naïve that he allowed his feelings for this lady control him and in turn went to all extremes to please her.

The first time you asked me to enter your world,

I was confused

I quickly took off my shoes

Didn’t know if I was supposed to

But I told myself if your world was anything like your neck or eyes

With sunshine that swallows the movements

In my capillaries just to hold me in shock

Then I had to.

As Mufasa performed this poem to the audience, most of them were keenly listening in silence, while others were having refreshments. The audience was out to be entertained and this choice of poem was perfect for the evening since it was on love. The poet's clarity of voice, the lighting on stage and the slow and soft music from the musical accompaniment enhanced the mood of love.

Being a rather fast speaker in most of his performances, on this particular piece, Mufasa chose to articulate his words slowly to ensure that the audience got the message clearly. He took the audience through a journey of love in which the persona reveals that theirs was the kind of love that did not wait for valentines because every day was valentine' day for the tree years they were together. However, the tone of the poem changes to one of lament when the persona begins to describe how their love was prematurely terminated when he thought they were doing just fine. He describes the emotional turmoil he went through as he tried to come to terms with the unexpected break-up.

Two weeks, two weeks after you left

You didn't break my heart

My heart was too surprised to break

At least not immediately I have tattooed your life in my body

Those hot showers and scrubbing myself

Would not rub off your memory

Your voice as still a scar

I couldn't trust on my skin

Forget the bruises your goodbye left me

The persona takes the audience through the pain of heartbreak. He uses personification in giving a description of how his heart reacted to the break up by saying that it was too surprised to take in what was happening to their love. This shows how difficult it was for the persona to accept that he had been jilted. He talks out how he had immersed himself in the relationship which made it difficult for him to let go. Memories of their life together haunted him and made it hard for him to accept that it was all over. The once sweet love left a painful mark in his life.

Throughout the performance of this poem, the audience listened keenly and silently. The poet uses a song to relieve people of the pent-up emotions created by the poem. The song is not part of the original poem but it is introduced in this context in order to provide entertainment for the audience who responds by dancing to the tune without joining in. His different performances determine the venues he chooses for his shows. For more intimate shows, he goes for **Goethe Institute** and bigger audience shows he opts for **Alliance Francaise** and the **Kenya National Theatre**, all located in Nairobi.

The role of the audience in the performance of spoken word cannot be over emphasized. A poet needs to consider his target audience and fashion his poems in a way that will be appealing to them as they play a huge role in the quality and aesthetic appeal of the overall performance and interpretation of the poems. Moreover, the 'emotional relation'

established between the audience and performer can be decisive for the performance success. On this basis Zumthor states that the performance is free and ‘unpredictable’ (Zumthor, 1984).

5.4 THEATRE ACTING INFLUENCE

Acting is the most detectable, demonstrable, provable and visible element of the theatre which invariably personifies theatre. No wonder Marsh Cassidy submits that, ‘theatre cannot exist without an actor the person with whom the audience most closely identifies; ‘theatre cannot exist without an actor the person with whom the audience most closely identifies; the one who provides the glamour who personifies theatre in the eyes of the spectator’. Acting is the convincing imitation of real life human behaviour, it is on stage. Acting is the act of using or lending the body, voice and sometime soul of the playwright to the audience.

The actor must discover the essence of the character and project the essence to the audience. The audience of the character has been perceived differently, however at different times, periods, styles and cultures and by different personalities of characters. The basic ingredient of the actor is native ability which is talent; they equally need training and practice. The training involves relaxation, concentration, imagination and observation. The actor must analyze his role thus; using the script to determine all the information about the character and fabricate what the script does not tell you.

The quotation analysis is valuable tool for the actor: analyzing what the character says and does and what others say about the character and believes towards the character. The character defines his role as a character, determines the character’s objective, what the

characters want for each scene, intention, purpose. This is really the character's entire justification for being on stage.

During his interview, Mufasa affirmed that his performance techniques, stage presence and confidence have greatly been influenced by his acting roles mentioned in chapter one under his background information. He also reckons that his communication to his audience has become more seamless through the skills learnt in his acting experience. Though an actor, he stresses that he presents his true-life experiences to his target audience through storytelling and by incorporating performance techniques that in turn make the communication more effective.

5.5 CONTENT

According to Ekesa (2016), there are diverse frameworks for the performance of spoken word in Kenya, while some perform their poems for entertainment purposes, others do it to alert the community about germane issues, and still others do it for competitive reasons.

From an interview with Mufasa, the study noted that his performances mainly address issues on love, politics, gender violence, depression, family and personal stories.

The researcher through a close watch of Mufasa's performances, noted that the performance techniques used vary from one performance to another and on inquiring from the poet, he echoed that he only uses gestures, tonal variation, facial expression, musical accompaniment, repetition among other techniques depending on the poem and the message he intends to deliver to his target audience.

5.6 COSTUME

Costume is used to appeal and capture the attention of an audience by most performing artists. When asked if this is the case for him, Mufasa stated that his dressing varies from one performance to another and for him; his costume plays two main roles. One, it sets the mood and tone for the first gasp the audience has before he opens his mouth to perform and in turn captures their attention. Two, as a performer it puts him into an element of performance. In most of his performances he goes on stage barefoot. This always gets a number of people in the audience murmuring in surprise. He goes on to clarify why he performs barefoot. “So that I know that this is not my ordinary self, this is different, it’s a special moment. So that when someone says the performance was out of the world, maybe that’s where they were...out of the world in my performance.”

Picture 12 MUFASA BAREFOOT ON STAGE



5.7 STORYTELLING

Story Telling is an oral activity to grab audience's attention by using multisensory stirring emotion of an event in a story, it involves improvisation in telling story, facial gestures, and body movement (Stanley and Dillingham, 2009: 2). In another theory, Champion as cited in Irawati, S. (2003) says that story telling is an oral activity where language and gestures are used in a colourfull way to create scenes in a sequence however, storytelling consists of more than just story telling

Finnegan (1970), states that performers of spoken word poetry use storytelling as a basis for generating knowledge through re-articulation of their lived experiences and social realities for their listeners or audiences and social realities for their listeners or audiences. Thus, this form of storytelling situationally constructs knowledge which contains themes of a common history and similarities among lived experiences and social realities. Scheub (1985), echoes this by stating that performance texts such as spoken word poetry connect the lived experiences and social realities of a group by reinterpreting the ‘original meanings or perceptions that an audience have of them’.

A story or a narrative in its broadcast sense is anything that is told recounted normally in the casually linked set of events or happenings, whether true or fictitious. Stories are a medium for sharing and a vehicle for assessing and interpreting events, experiences and concepts to an audience. Though stories we explain how things are the way they are and our role and purpose within them. They are building blocks of knowledge and can be viewed as a foundation of memory and learning (Healing Through Learning, 2005, p.12).

Storytelling involves both creating a story and the production of an event of telling. A person becomes a storyteller by creating a story or a narrative out of the events of involvement both real and imaginings. And the storyteller makes that story into a communiqué event by telling it to and for the spectators (Finnegan, 1992). *Participant 2* from the focus group discussion notes that through interacting closely with Mufasa, Mufasa revealed that “All my pieces are my experiences. That way, I own them, and the pieces are from the heart. And what comes from the heart will always resonate with any audience.” Bauman (1986) also states that a storyteller is not appreciated by an audience merely for the information or message that performance carries

On the contrary, it is the storyteller's aptitude to make a report of proceedings into something noteworthy, unforgettable and worthy of indebtedness and response that attracts the audience's attention. In storytelling, communication is productive; that is storytelling makes something special, something poetic out of something that might otherwise be a prosaic or mundane message. The performative aspects of doing storytelling are readily apparent in events where a skillful performer tells highly polished narrative for a clearly demarcated audience (p.4).

This study established that Mufasa uses storytelling as a key technique to draw the audience's attention to his performances. The poet believes that if he uses a personal story that is relatable to the audience, the audience will easily gain interest in his performance. For example, his performance of '**Our Mothers**' got many snapping, laughing and shouting 'yes!' at the descriptions he adorned his mother. One of those incidences was when he said '...My mother is the first beautiful woman I saw.

I have never seen Mekatilili, my mother is the first female warrior I saw. As a matter of fact, my mother is the first warrior I saw...' My mother told us the toothpaste story...Told us a woman left her husband because he always squeezed toothpaste from the top. My mother told us the pilot story.Told us of a boy who became a pilot, and every time he flew over their home; he would wrap money on a stone and drop it at their compound.

The other performance with the concept of storytelling that got the audiences' attention was '**My Boys are Dying**'...My boys are dying. Some of them are poets. They have written a thousand poems and not one, has earned them a living. Open mics don't open

the door when the landlord closes your house...’Mufasa also uses narration in his performance of **‘Weirdest Date Ever’** a poem on his date experience.

According to Crump (1968), the poet must have the supremacy to connect through his or her art the meaning of what he or she has pragmatic. Hence bringing together these two components, a performance poet becomes a creator of knowledge and experience. A performance poet’s well- crafted poem becomes an instigator for new, collective truths, just as a conventional poem does in the realm of books

5.8 PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUE IMPACT ON INTERPRETATION

All performance poetry, then, naturally becomes revolutionary, raising its voice from the people, for the people. Performance poetry becomes words with ‘special emphasis’ using ‘heightened speech’ to rhyme, to punctuate, to slant, to sing and to break the rules the society has placed on language. All of this keeps the audience’s attention aligned with the knowledge of the poet, connecting both parties to a truth shaped by the experience of performance poetry.

The poet acts as the mediator between knowledge and the audience; weaving connections between the two by creating an experience through the delivery of his words. An exchange of this mediation is the movements (or lack thereof) that accompany a poet’s words, such as standing rigid during a serious intense poem or flapping limbs during a poem of calamity. By developing a deeper meaning of a word, through movements, voice, tempo and many more delivery devices, the poet stands a better chance to connect his or her message to the heteroglossia of the audience.

The addition of delivery gives each word and the entire piece- multiple layers that the audience processes, and the additional layers gives more options for the audience to ‘get’ a poem. After all, the poet is pulling language from hyperlinked experiences and ideas compressed in his mind and trying to match his words in as many ways as possible to that of the audience. If the poet can match his or her language of the poem with the audience’s word – the audience will feel more inclined to connect with the poem even if the message is something foreign to them. Indeed, audience members feel a connection to the words, to the poet through the oral poetry that can be lifeless and lost in a textbook.

The audience wants to feel questioned by the knowledge and the truth of the poet, which each listening member recalculating his or her truth regarding what has been experience from the stage. This is because all performance poetry roots in changing social problems and evaluating the ‘realities of existence’. This is evident in Mufasa’s performance of ‘*My President Is Kenyan*’: a poem that elaborates on the negligence of the president on crucial issues affecting the Kenyan citizen besides him holding the same citizenship. ‘My president is Kenyan, yes, but he cannot tell my story. I hear he is a good man, He is warm with laughter, He takes photos with children, Invites artists to the state house...’

“To hear a poem is to experience its momentary escape from the prison of the page, where silence is enforced, to a freedom dependent only on the ability to open the mouth – that most democratic of instruments - to speak”. The poet and audience face one another, transacting as words move from mouth to ear, which creates a dynamic two-way relationship. The relationship between the two parties in a realm of sculpted messages that impart a poet’s truth and the audience’s reflection of that truth, can be felt in the hum of energy, of passion

of poetry at the venue that moves everyone to a collective feeling of awe that revives truth for all that is involved. It is a whole different experience from poetry of written words.

5.9 CONCLUSION

The performance techniques employed by the poet are meant to help the audience supplement their interpretation of the words in the poem, hence improving their understanding. On this basis we immediately understand how important the body is in oral poetry because as Okpewho puts it ‘the visual impact seems to anticipate the sound and meaning of the words since the audience judges the performance as successful or not starting from its extra-verbal features and not strictly from its words (Okpewho, 1992). Body movements become part of poetry and the performer himself/herself seems to be pervaded by it.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a summary of the findings and conclusions of this research and makes recommendations for further studies on spoken word performance in Kenya.

6.2 SUMMARY

The twenty first century Kenya has experienced a new wave of oral poetry – spoken word. The number of spoken word poets in Kenya is continuously growing as the genre gains more popularity. This art form has not only provided many talented artists with a safe space to articulate their concerns by addressing key issues of the society that directly or indirectly affect them but this genre has seen many artists embrace various performance techniques to enhance their craft’s aesthetic appeal, quality and interpretation of content.

This study analyzed the spoken word poetry in Kenya by examining the performance techniques, how they enhance aesthetic appeal, performance quality and interpretation of poems and factors that influence the performance techniques based on the performance theory.

In addressing the objectives of the study, the researcher outlines the performance elements and the performance techniques used by the selected poet to enhance his performance and communicate his intended message to his target audience as evident in the first and second objective.

The third objective on the other hand aimed at investigating the factors influencing the performance techniques used by the selected spoken word poet.

The researcher asked the poet why they chose to use the techniques. Thereby while exploring factors like audience, acting/theatre influence and composition of poetry the research highlighted the following;

1. Mufasa's theatre acting has influenced a wide range of the techniques he uses in his performances.
2. Performance techniques not only enhance the aesthetic appeal and quality of performances but also supplement the audience's interpretation of content and the audience being the main recipient of the performance, the poet chooses techniques that are appropriate for a given target audience and relevance to a particular poetry piece.
3. Composition and content of poetry greatly determines a target audience and techniques used.
4. The nature of the audience empowers the audience during a performance. A participatory audience enhances the performance by participating in the poetry delivery. Despite the separate audience not participating in the performance, their reaction to a poet's performance reflects their reception to the message.
5. Performance is a key feature of spoken word without which spoken word genre is non-existence.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS

1. Performance is an integral aspect of spoken word poetry as it is what distinguishes oral poetry from the written form. It also not only enhances the aesthetic appeal and quality of performance but also aids in the interpretation of the poetry content. Spoken word poets incorporate various performance techniques to ensure that their intended message is rightfully interpreted by their target audience. In the event dubbed ‘Mufasa’s Write Room Sessions’, Mufasa performed twelve poems, namely “*My Girlfriend is Getting Married Today*”, “*My President is Kenyan*”, “*My Boys are Dying*”, “*School Fees Kind of Love*”, “*Our Mothers*”, “*Cancer*”, “*My Sister Gave Birth to God’s Child*”, “*Blame my Roots*”, “*How is he your Man*”, “*Before my Daughter is Born*”, “*Love*” and “*Weirdest Date Ever.*” In the above poems he uses tonal variation, gestures, repetition, high and low pitch and different type of pauses to articulate the concerns addressed in each poem. He also incorporates live band that engages the audience with their beautiful tunes that in turn creates a mood, aesthetic appeal and also enhances the quality of performance by influencing the interpretation of the poems presented. This is mostly evident in the poem ‘*My President Is Kenyan*’ where the musical instruments played – saxophone, key board, bass guitar and drum set enhances the rant and pensive mood of the poem hence helping the audience to visualize the struggles of local Kenya citizens that are not known to the president beside him being a Kenyan. The spotlight used on Mufasa help focus the attention of

the audience to the performance and not to be distracted by the background music played by the band whose lights are dimmed.

2. For an effective performance, the audience is key. A separate and participatory audience is equally important for the success of a performance. It is the audience that determines the composition of spoken word poetry.
3. Memorization is an essential productive skill in oral poetry production.
4. Being an actor, specifically a theatre actor, influenced most techniques applied by Mufasa.
5. Mufasa's poetry content mainly targets people in the society, whatever capacity.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

There should be further research to find out the following;

1. The similarities and differences of spoken word poetry performance techniques used in Kenya and those used by spoken word poets in other countries to see whether Kenya is on the same page with the rest of the world in the advancement of this genre.
2. Academics should find a way to document spoken word performances in Kenya for easier accessibility to all who are interested in this area of research.
3. Audience as the pivot of spoken word poetry performance.
4. Acting as an influencing factor in performance of spoken word poetry.

Lastly, this research recommends to all spoken word poets in Kenya, that for them to thrive in their performances, they have to incorporate relevant performance techniques to communicate effectively to their target audience and to enhance the quality of their performances. They can therefore borrow some techniques used by Mufasa in his performances and see what is appropriate for them.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: OBSERVATION MATRIX

	FOCUS GROUP 1	FOCUS GROUP 2	FOCUS GROUP 3
Performance title			
Performance Technique			
How Technique has been employed			
Is the technique appropriately			
Effect of the Technique on the interpretation, aesthetic value and quality of performance.			

Comments.			

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SELECTED SPOKEN WORD POET

1. What is your name? (Official names)? Why ‘Mufasa’?
2. How long have you been a spoken word artist?
3. Why did you choose spoken word poetry performance as a career?
4. Are you the writer of the spoken word poetry that you perform?
5. What themes do you address in your performance and why?
6. Do you employ any performance techniques? If yes, which ones?
7. What factors influence the techniques you use?
8. What impact do you think the techniques have on the interpretation, aesthetic value and quality your performance?
9. Do you think performance is an important aspect of spoken word poetry?
10. Having performed for a long time, which are some of your performances that stand out for you?

APPENDIX III: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Focused group guiding questions for the spoken word audience.

1. What is your understanding of performance technique?
2. What are the types of performance techniques that you have identified in the performance?
3. What are the importance of performance techniques in spoken word poetry?
4. Do you think the techniques used are appropriate for the performance?
5. What considerations do you think should be taken into account when choosing techniques for spoken word poetry performance?

APPENDIX IV: FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE FOR SPOKEN WORD POETS

Dear Sir/Madam,

This focus group schedule aims at collecting information from selected spoken word poets in Kenya on the performance techniques used by Kenyan spoken word poets. Kindly note that, this information will only be used for the purpose of this research.

You are requested to answer the questions below as detailed and as honestly as you can.

PART A

- 1. How would you define your spoken word poetry in terms of performance?**
- 2. Are there any performance techniques that you can identify from your spoken word performances?**
- 3. How do these techniques influence the interpretation of the spoken word, aesthetic value and quality of your performances?**
- 4. Do you have any additional information on spoken word performance?**
- 5. What is your take between written and performed spoken word?**

PART B

- 1. How would you define Mufasa's spoken word poetry in terms of performance?**
- 2. Mufasa writes and performs his poems. What is your take on the impact of written vs the performed pieces? Does any of the above outweigh the other?**
- 3. What is your understanding of performance technique? Are there any performance techniques that you can identify from Mufasa's performances?**

4. **How do the above techniques influence your interpretation of his spoken word and what impact does it have on the aesthetic value and quality of Mufasa's performances?**
5. **How would you rate him as a performer and spoken word poet?**
6. **Do you have any other information regarding Mufasa as a spoken word poet?**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS (APPENDIX IV)

PART A

Participant 1

1. How would you define your spoken word poetry in terms of performance? **I write each piece from a particular place so that when I am performing I am just trying to recreate that experience for everybody.**
2. Are there any performance techniques that you can identify from your spoken word performances? **Engaging refrains where I invite the audience to participate in the performance by requesting them to respond to something;**
 - **Tonal variation to invoke different moods.**
 - **Pace fluctuation to emphasis on certain points**
 - **Incorporating music to compliment my poetry**
 - **Repetition, for the emphasis of rhythm**
3. How do these techniques influence the interpretation of the spoken word, aesthetic value and quality of your performances? **I would say there are 'pros' and 'cons' to everything but if well executed all these make the**

performance so much better. One needs to be very deliberate on the technique or techniques of choice.

4. Do you have any other information on spoken word performance? **For me I feel that it's all a process and it starts with the writing. With a good script it is hard to go wrong, because a good script gives you the confidence and conviction to back it up on stage. All in all performance is a skill and one needs to put in work and study and rehearsals in order to become a master of their craft.**
5. What is your take between written and performed spoken word? **Spoken word is poetry that is written for performance purposes so, first things first, it has to be poetry. Page and stage are just mediums, and at the end of it all, good poetry is good poetry.**

PART B

1. **How would you define Mufasa's spoken word poetry in terms of performance?** Emotive. Intense. Spirited. I have shared stages with him and watched him perform for a couple of years, so I can confidently say I have watched him perform almost all his pieces. Those three words come to mind when I watch him.
2. **Mufasa writes and also performs his poems. What is your take on the impact of written vs the performed pieces? Does any of the above outweigh the other?** I think performance works best on self-written pieces because they are more honest. And like I said earlier, page and stage are just mediums and it boils down to preference but also one cannot overlook the

possibilities that a stage provides. In a performance, a poet has the opportunity to bring to life the words in the best way they can but also one cannot overlook the opportunity a page offers to the user to use their imagination and make their own interpretation without interference from the performance interpretation.

3. **What is your understanding of performance technique? Are there any performance techniques that you can identify from Mufasa's performances?** Performance techniques refer to the performance elements that a performer incorporates to enhance their performance. These may or may not be part of the written script.

They include; Repetition, tonal variation, pace fluctuation, body language or gestures, sound effects (like imitating a vehicle's engine)

4. **How do the above techniques influence your interpretation of his spoken word and what impact does it have on the aesthetic value and quality of Mufasa's performances?** He is always very deliberate about his choice of technique and that adds a great deal to the experience of his performances. For the short time he is on stage, he makes the audience part of the piece.

5. **How would you rate him as a performer and spoken word poet?** He is a great performer. Being an actor as well, you can see how he incorporates his theatre experiences to add value to his performances when you watch him stage.

6. **Do you have any other information regarding Mufasa's spoken word performances?** He is quite a dancer and I wish he could find a way to incorporate that in his performances.

Participant 3

PART B

1. Mufasa's poetry borders on poetry and storytelling in terms of technique. His use of voice and narrational kind of his recital which also features in his style of writing which is akin to prosodic performance. He does not however dramatize a lot and his performance is centralized in the elocution of his words.

Music is an integral part of Mufasa's performances in view of providing rhythm, pace and even providing the emotional tone underscored by his voice inflections.

2. I would say he has created a distinct style of performance which easily resonates with his audience. His energy on stage and his commanding voice is iconic. I would say listening to a recording of him on CD is far from watching him on stage which is profound. (Watching him at Kenya International Theater Festival, 2017, performing without shoes on a dusty stage where everyone else had shoes on, was refreshing. It means he was immersed totally in the show). An important part of an artist's growth is identifying good collaborators that enhance one's abilities and work. His choice of musical collaborators is shrewd and excellent in many ways.
3. Narration technique coupled with elocution.
4. The technique helps in creating vivid imagery in the mind of an audience which helps to enhance the emotional connection to the piece and hence capture the audiences' imagination. It largely speaks to the life of the

performance and relates the persona and their story more deeply with the audience.

Participant 4

PART A

1. Use of rhyming words to pass a message while incorporating improvisation, rap and music.
2. Tonal variation, speed variation (pauses, fast rap, slow rap) and acting.
3. Tone variation helps the artist to emphasis on key words and aspects of their performance for the audience to understand and digest.
4. Speed variations also works in a similar way as tone variation as it also gives an audience a chance to grasp the key words at a slow pace and high pace depending on the message of the artist. Pauses help in creating tension and give time for the audience to concentrate on the artist before a key section of the act. Acting enables the audience to be fully immersed in the performance as the artist demonstrates key action in his performance.
5. It is a powerful form of art that can pass critical messages that might be hard to pass in other form of art in a very short time.
6. Written spoken word is literature and performed spoken word is theatre.

PART B

1. Yes, I have. Very rich performance technique by use of live music and incorporation of other musicians.

2. I have personally not read his written pieces and I also wouldn't want to. I want to see him perform. I personally believe that there is more power and impact in performed pieces than written ones. I am sure I will not read the music, stage movement, intonation, the pauses, the fast-paced lines, the low paced lines, therefore as opposed to literature- written spoken word, theatre has life and thus performed pieces have more impact than written pieces.
3. Performance technique is the art of delivering a written piece of literature on stage to a live audience. Performance techniques of Mufasa include; use of live music, pauses, tone variation, pace variation and rap.
4. The techniques used gives his performance a rich experience, entertainment and captivating aspects to interpret his message.
5. He has been able to create a unique spoken word identity...7/10.

Participant 5

PART A

1. My performance style is a snack sized crunchy bit of lyricism dipped in a healthy bowl of dramatis guacamole. Never repeating a performance and never shying away from hard hitting topics interwoven neatly in a well stringed overlay of knitted wordplay influenced deeply by research, theatrical style presentation, fast paced recitation and of course -views bearing polarity potential.
2. Heavy use of multimedia support i.e. ambience, sounds, special effects and stage lights. Specifically, for the style, wordplay, slang, rich poetic phrases.

3. Lyricism, wordplay, fast paced recitation and dramatic performance in spoken word may dilute the impact felt by the audience as they attempt to digest all layers of the performance in an instant. The techniques, especially, visual aids i.e. lights and sounds help listeners to understand better what my presentation is about by placing them in the environment of the piece.
4. Yes. Every local poet is evolving into other mediums of art; film, theatre, painting, marketing. You name it...the reason being every medium of art anchors on beautifully crafted words which is synonymous to poetry.
5. Written engages the mind in a deeper sense as it only serves words to the audience with liberty to decipher in their own interpretation. Performed spoken word is a rendition by the performer and though open to interpretation, the performer impersonates the piece and therefore may not necessarily be open sourced.

APPENDIX V: FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE FOR AUDIENCE

Dear Sir/Madam,

This focus group schedule aims at collecting information from selected spoken word poets in Kenya on the performance techniques used by Kenyan spoken word poets. Kindly note that, this information will only be used for the purpose of this research.

You are requested to answer the questions below as detailed and as honestly as you can.

Participant 2

PART A

1. How would you define spoken word poetry in terms of performance? **Spoken word is a discipline of arts that is dependent on word play and rhythm. Without flow and mastery of language (whichever that is used) ceases to be captivating as a spoken word performance.**
2. Are there any performance techniques that you can identify from the spoken word performances you have watched in the past? **Wordplay, audience participation, fusion of music and fusion of dramatization.**
3. How do these techniques influence the interpretation of the spoken word, aesthetic value and quality of performance? **These techniques engage the**

audience and keep them glued to the piece to the end. They also help the audience grasp the message easily through repetition and rhythm.

4. Do you have any additional information regarding spoken word performance?
Spoken word is a discipline that has been neglected and as a form of art, it should be revived because it mostly performed by the writers themselves. Meaning there is greater sense of originality and true expression from the pieces.
5. What is your comparison between written and performed spoken word?
6. **Performed spoken word has a chance to be given different modes of interpretation since there are many ways of painting a picture in the mind of the audience. Written is great but limited.**

PART B

1. **How would you define Mufasa's spoken word poetry in terms of performance? (Have you watched any?)** I have watched Mufasa's performances, about four of them. Two on love, and two on governance and leadership. His performances are exhilarating and full of life. His fearlessness in creating a real picture of what he feels without fusing too much symbolism with the subject matter makes his pieces authentic and direct to the point.
2. **Mufasa writes and also performs his poems. What is your take on the impact of written vs the performed pieces? Does any of the above outweigh the other?** Definitely, the written penetrates the imaginations of the reader and is interpreted in diverse ways, depending on the perspective the

reader is looking at the piece without necessarily being guided by the already biased performance.

3. **What is your understanding of performance technique? Are there any performance techniques that you can identify from Mufasa's performances?** Styles that are used on stage by the performer to help paint a clearer picture on his piece.
4. Mufasa has used a lot of repetition in some of his performances to cement the core of his message in the audience's mind. He's also used word play that weaves very well with his poems, especially his romantic pieces this help him in keeping his audience falling for his message.
5. **How do the above techniques influence your interpretation of his spoken word and what impact does it have on the aesthetic value and quality of Mufasa's performances?** As answered in question three.
6. **How would you rate him as a performer and spoken word poet?** I would undoubtedly say that he is one of the best artists in the country and regionally.
7. **Do you have any other information regarding Mufasa as a spoken word poet?** I once asked him what inspires his pieces and if he truly believes in what he performs. And his answer was, "All my pieces are my experiences. That way, I own them, and the pieces are from the heart. And what comes from the heart will always resonate with any audience."

APPENDIX VI: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION FOR MUFASA

This study interviewed the selected poet about spoken word poetry. Below is a summary of Mufasa's response to the questions;

1. **What is your name? (Official names)?** Ken Kibet.
2. **Why 'Mufasa'?** The energy in my performances bore the name Mufasa. Most people, especially friends used to refer to him as 'Lion', 'King' and this transformed to 'Mufasa' and after seven performances he owned the name.
3. **How long have you been a spoken word artist?** Seven years.
4. **Why Spoken word?** Spoken word is the perfect tool to spread a message, it's lively, you can compound different styles, it's in between acting and poetry, they are fused together and you can use different elements to perform.

Spoken word poetry came about in my life when I was quite alone, I felt alone. I was in Nairobi alone. I was watching random stuff on You Tube on a random day and saw a performance from a poet in the States and I felt something. All along I used to write and script some things, but I wouldn't call them poetry, they were more of prose.

And the first time I performed, I felt so free, felt so good felt like I could write about my life and have no one judge me.

It makes me vulnerable but makes me not ashamed of my vulnerability and not being ashamed of what I am going through or things I feel should change and I feel like I have a platform not just to talk on behalf of other people but also to talk for myself.

5. **Who is your mentor?** No specific mentor. I have no specific way of performing poetry. I learn from different people. I am not inspired by one

person and neither am I only inspired by poetry performers. I could be inspired by Serena Williams, I'd want to be as good in my poetry as she is in her sport. I can also be inspired by an activist because of what drives his/her passion and need to change something and I'd feel that I can use my work to bring impact, so different people inspire me differently.

6. Is spoken word poetry performance a career for you? Yes. Basically, it is my life. It is what I do. Every time I feel something, I want write about it. Every time I see something, I write about it. Every time I am speak to people and I feel like the topic is interesting, I will write about it. At a later stage, I see myself retiring as a performance teacher somewhere.

7. Are you the writer of the pieces you perform? I don't think I can perform someone else's poem. I don't know why. I own my pieces. It is also so hard for me to write for someone else to perform, especially regarding my personal life, I find it very hard. I could write about something a different thing. The process is, a topic comes, at times it's not a topic, it's a feeling that comes, it could be a feeling and all of a sudden I feel this vulnerable about something I don't know, and then I start writing a few words and it does not make sense, I will go for a walk thinking about it without a pen and try to make sense of what I want to talk about first and then when I feel that its right I go back write a couple of words and if I feel like the process is meeting a stop then I look for something to watch, to listen to something that will put me in that element again, it could a performance by somebody else, a movie with a storyline based on what I am writing about. I will then go back and write whatever I can write. Writing is not done until I've performed it to someone

and get how they feel and get their reaction about it to know which words don't work. I go back restructure my lines. Saying it aloud is an important process. I will say it aloud, before the mirror, as I walk to make sure does it sound right, does it sound believable, does it sound honest any word I feel that is just there to sound dope or force a rhyme, I will remove it. It does not matter how good or how clever they sound but if they interfere with the storyline and is not consistent, I will remove it. When done, I can look for a nearest event and perform the poem and based on how I feel my performance was, I will then make my final adjustments to that piece.

8. **What themes do you address in your performance and why?** I want to talk about terrorism, gender, violence, God, love, family, depression, poverty, governance, and politics. But generally I would put them in the context that I write about human dignity and social justice and as well personal stories- they help me relate with the audience, brings me closer to the audience because if I tell you a story on how I was raised that connects to you, you will laugh – I use personal stories to break ice, we are communicating and at ease.
9. **Do you employ any performance techniques? If yes, which ones?** First one Putting people in a certain mood – the right mood. Music helps to prepare people's nerves, feelings. The other reason is entertainment. This whole art is about entertainment and I want to ensure that my audience is amazed and entertained and the performance is not monotonous and to ensure the audience does not know what to expect hence a surprise element in the performance. Mentally your mind is prepared for something immediately they see a set. The lights helps audience to focus on what you want them to focus on. If you want

them to focus on you, you will dim the lights on the rest of the stage and have a spotlight on you and when you want to leave the stage, you simply have the lights dimmed and you can also use them to transition from one performance to another.

10. What factors influence the techniques you use? I have different techniques for different pieces depending on what I want to achieve or what I want to achieve with a piece. If I want to make you feel guilty or want to make you think about the piece even after the performance, I will put you in an emotional state. The different use of my voice – how I play around with my voice to communicate

11. What impact do you think the techniques have on the interpretation, aesthetic value and quality your performance? What I want to do with spoken word is to communicate. I don't want to talk to myself while on stage, I want it to be a communication process. I expect a reaction. So, if it is not soliciting any reaction, it could be silence but deliberate silence. From the reaction I will know if I am communicating with the audience.

When you read a book and you have your imagination on the content but when you watch it in a performance your interpretation will be totally different – that's the power of performance and performance technique.

12. Do you think performance is an important aspect of spoken word poetry? Performance is key in spoken word. You determine how you want your audience to react to your words, the emotional state you want them to be.

13. Having performed for a long time, which are some of your performances that stand out for you? My last two shows; '*Mufasa's Write Room Sessions*' and '*Mufasa in Concert*'

APPENDIX VII: FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTS FOR SPOKEN WORD POETS

Participant 5

PART B

1. Mufasa is a true wordsmith whose forte rests on wooing audience into giving standing ovations having served them a cool full course meal of intonation variations, near perfect diction, dramatics exhibition, layered metaphors, and use of live band, well ironed costumes and a killer stage presence. I watched his poetry launch at Alliance Francaise.
2. Written is up for interpretation by readers. Performed is crafted to be served by the voice, actions and objectivity of the performer. On the point of outweighing the other, it all comes to the poetry taste buds of the consumer of poetry.
3. Technique in spoken word entails use of gestures, facial expressions, rhyme, improvisation, wordplay, rich poetic phrases, slang and other accompaniments meant to enhance the performer's relay of the piece as well as the experience audiences gain from watching/listening to a piece.
4. (Answered in question one of Mufasa's segment)
5. It doesn't beat mine.

Participant 6

PART B

1. His spoken word poetry is thought provoking, emancipating and revolutionary

2. Both his written and performance are epic. It although feel his performed pieces outweigh his written, in that his expressions and his tone by far and large help to drive the message home.
3. Tonal variations, facial expressions, rhyme scheme, rhythm, body language, word play among others.
4. This technique makes his performances authentic and easily help to drive the message home, in that it helps to paint a mental picture and also vividly gives a description on what he talks about.
5. 10/10, he never disappoints.
6. His spoken word pieces speak to the soul and awakens ones soul.

Participant 7

PART B

1. Mufasa is the most versatile and eclectic performer of poetry I've come across regionally as evidenced in his cadence, canorousness and delivery. Most of his performances are based off of scripts/material that is very rare and relatable. You can almost see yourself in the stories and this to create an air of honesty and believability throughout his presentations. His sporadic switches between wit, humor and vulnerability also keeps you connected as he sometimes infuses twists which you might miss if you blink. All this while still being able to stick to the undying theme of his poetry which are always specific.

2. **Having been part of Mufasa's performances, what would you say about his growth in terms of performance?** He has evolved into an artist of sorts and transcended the label of just a spoken word poet. He fuses music with his poetry, he writes himself and contributes to the arrangements. Knowing and understanding his sound as also hugely contributed to the potency of his product as he purposes to push the best out of hand, stay I control and also allow moments for each individual member to flair the stage, complimenting rather than shadowing the performances. He never gets complacent and keeps working to test his limits and project better versions of himself with every single passing day.
3. Every single poem has attitude. It is easy to tell that this artist is sure of what he wants to say. His physical presence during a performance always find a way to draw in the audience. His voice and his articulation is employed in such a manner as to be understood without trying too hard at inflection and accent. Dramatic appropriateness, always attempts not to antagonize his audience while at the same time using gestures and body movements to emphasize specific points of the presentation. Evidence of understanding can be traced all round, a strength acquired by the artists insistence on research and experiential treatment of his work.
4. I have been able to observe the power of the performances in the rollercoaster of emotion he is able to send his audiences through. People cry, people laugh, people cheer, people react and respond to provocation all in one show and this is not quantifiable at all. Even when he talks about 'the sky hosting asterisms of scorpio as if to remind us that death stings'.

And seeing ‘Alpha summon Beta, Gamma, Delta and Delphini to for Job’s coffin’ he still finds a way to keep it simple and relatable, creating more of an ‘experience’ than a poetry performance as a product.

5. Mufasa has a signature shriek that he employs as both a break and cue during his live band performances. He is also a pretty good singer and dancer, elements he has not fully exploited yet on stage. His words alone are potent enough to spark emotion without necessarily having to infuse music or other art forms and he hasn’t even scratched the surface with what he is capable of. I feel that the best of him is yet to be seen.

Participant 8

PART A

1. My spoken word poetry performance, I would say is more storytelling than performing.
2. I don’t use any techniques. Maybe pausing for effect on punchlines.
3. It helps the audience understand my metaphorical use of words and phrases to pass a point across.
4. Poets are sounding like Mufasa or Teardrops while on stage. No originality to some extent. Maybe changing how they perform could help them out in finding their own style of performing.
5. Written is good for a sit down in the afternoon but performance makes you feel everything the poet is saying hence relating more to the piece.

PART B

1. I have watched almost all of Mufasa's pieces especially 'A letter to my daughter' I am not sure about the title though. He brings out emotions in his performance, which is his own style. It is quite captivating.
2. For me his performed pieces have more weight compared to written because I am more into performance poetry than written. I am more of a visual person.
3. Performance techniques for me is using tools around you to bring forth your intended message in an artistic way. Mufasa's technique includes more of music and drama (acting).
4. The above techniques can help me understand better his thought process and flow of the piece being performed. It helps capture and retain the audiences' attention.
5. 9.5, leaving room for further improvement.

Participant 9

PART A

1. I'd describe it as release. A spark of life from prison. The moment I am most naked before humanity.
2. Yes. Different poets have different performance techniques. I like incorporating musicality in my way to have a strong stage presence while still connecting with my audience. I use pauses, intonation, song, and dance.
3. They give my poetry its identity, which makes my work distinctive.

4. Spoken word performance is a powerful art form that needs to be studied and explored further especially in Africa. We need more storytellers and poets to tell African stories incorporating traditional and modern methods of art.
5. There are stylistic devices that can only be seen in written poetry that the spoken will miss. And there are devices that are strong when spoken, for example voice intonation and song.

PART B

1. I have watched a lot of Mufasa's performances. Among them is *'BEFORE MY DAUGHTER IS BORN'*. I'd describe his performances as engaging, thrilling and thought provoking.
2. I think both styles are powerful media to get to different audiences who have different preferences. They have different experiences and sometimes even, evoke different emotions. None outweighs the other.
3. My understanding of performance technique is the style an artist chooses to use to express their art. And I think they do it mostly for identity, either for the piece of work or both. I'd say Mufasa uses voice intonation very strongly, stage dress, audience involvement in the pieces, and storytelling.
4. They make me feel engaged and it is fun to follow because of the mental images and emotions I experience when he is on stage. This makes me feel and interact with his work on a deeply personal level. The audience is able to view situations more comprehensively. I believe Mufasa conveys what he wants to tell the audience through emotions, voice, and gestures, hence

his audience gets to explore the literature on a deeper level.” In effect, the audience gains a better sense of connection to not only to him, but the work itself, leading them to be more open to new views.

5. Not sure the rate of measurement for this one but he is an exceptional poet, performer and writer; one of the best in the world.

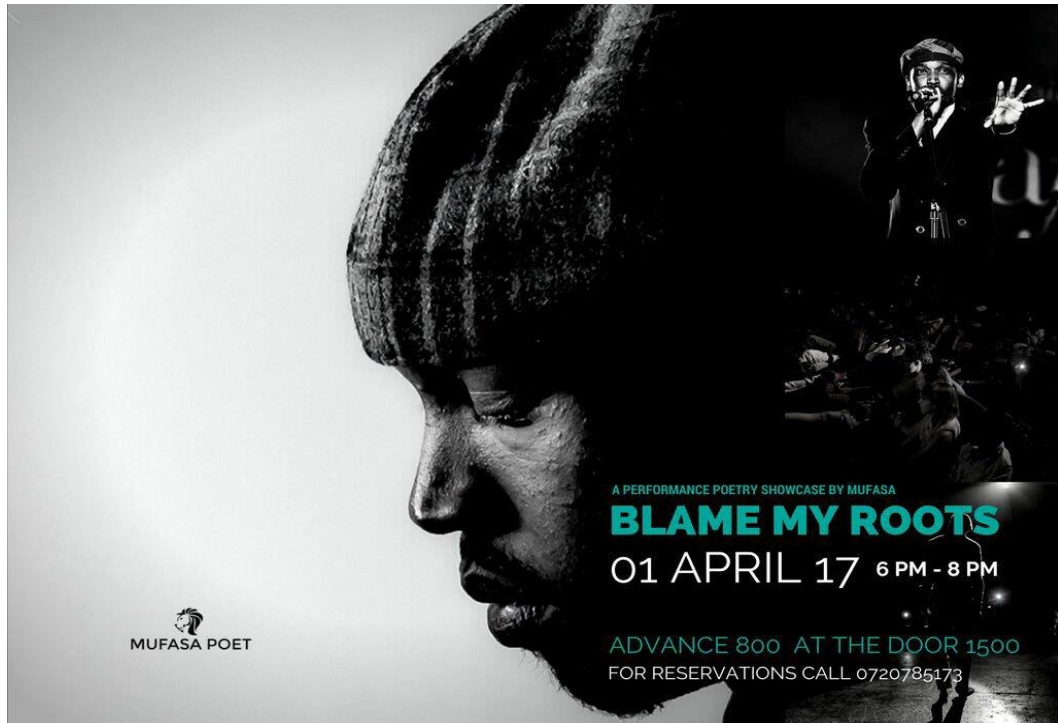
APPENDIX VIII: MUFASA'S PERFORMANCES

Picture 13 MUFASA'S WRITE ROOM SESSION'S, 2018



A poetry performance at Goethe- Institute, Nairobi. Inspired by poems and the events that inspired them.

Picture 14 BLAME MY ROOTS, 2017





This performance was showcased at Alliance Francaise, Nairobi with a cast of 13 fused with live music backed up with guest singers, theatrical elements, beatbox, and percussion. Pieces performed; Blame My Roots, 14 again, Mother in Mama Africa and ‘Siko’ Cell (Inspired by sickle cell warrior).

Picture 15 BLAME MY ROOTS, 2015

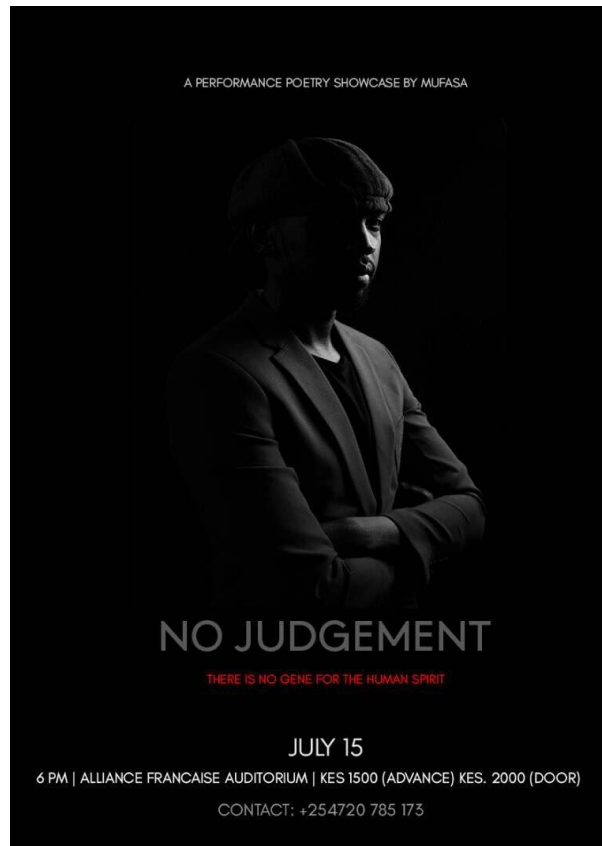
MUFASA

**BLAME
MY
ROOTS**

ALLIANCE FRANCAISE
12TH JULY 2015
3PM-6PM
Advance
600KES
Gate
1000KES
contact +254 720 785 173

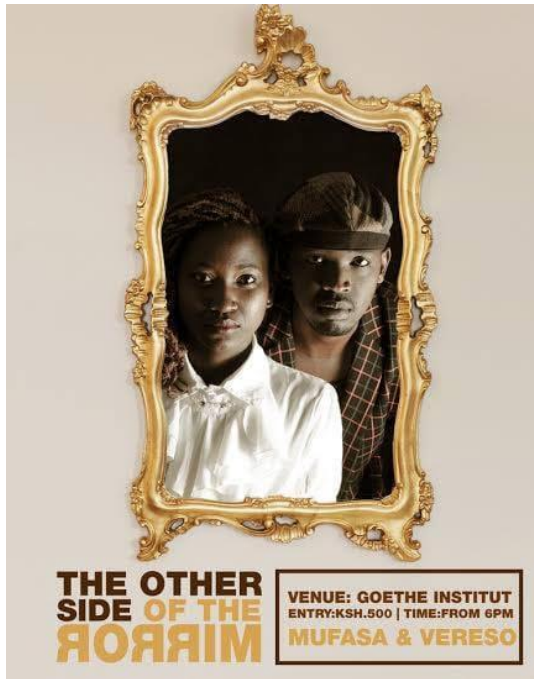
 **Spoken Word meets Music/meets Soul/meets Dance.** 

Picture 16 NO JUDGEMENT, 2016



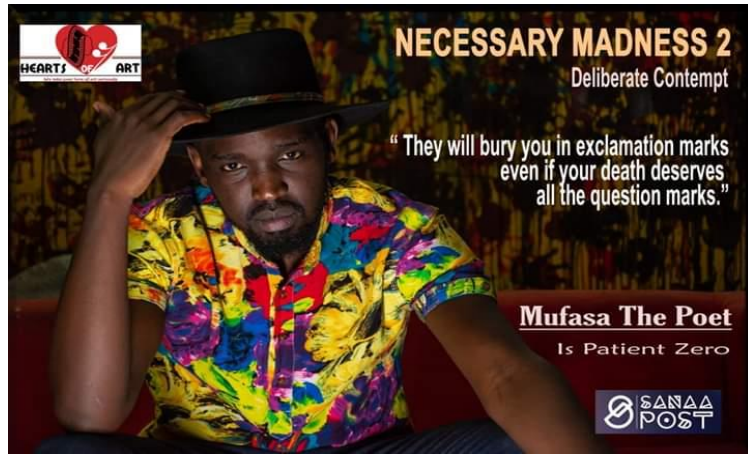
A poetry performance experience directed by Matt Swallow.

Picture 17 THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRROR, 2015



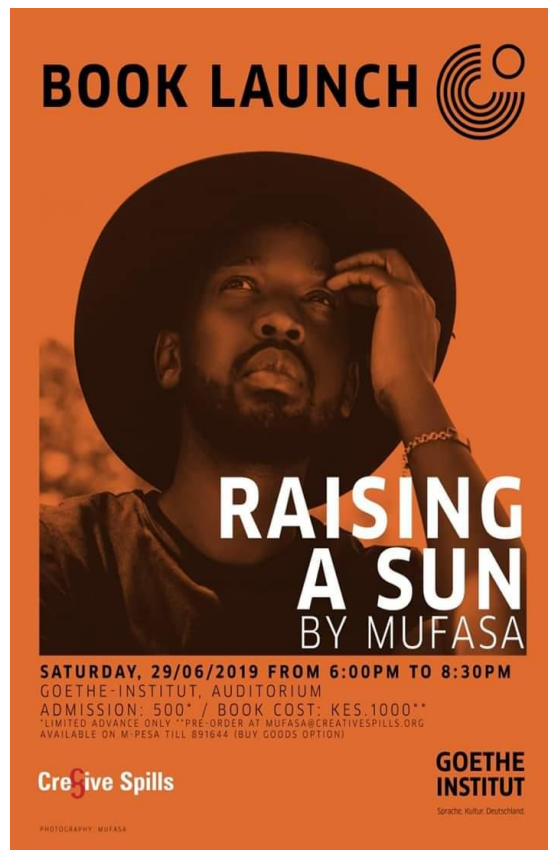
The other side of the mirror was an event concept centered on the emancipation of words from the depths of the soul. It was an evening at Goethe Institute, Nairobi where spoken word met soul music and the two artists, Vereso (an urban Afro Soul singer and songwriter based in Nairobi) and Mufasa joined up to take the audience from soul to soul as they shared personal life experiences in the midst of their performances.

Picture 18 NECESSARY MADNESS 2, DELIBERATE CONTEMPT, 2019



A stage play that revolves around governments and the frustrations citizens have in acquiring government services.

Picture 19 RAISING A SUN, 2019



This is Mufasa's book launch of his anthology fused with performance poetry launched June, 2019.

Picture 20 MUFASA IN CONCERT



In this performance, Mufasa took a leap beyond the confines of normalcy to blend his poetry with an array of dynamic sounds and rhythm to propel the art form into a space that is eclectic and free.

APPENDIX IX: A LIST OF CITED POEMS

SCHOOL FEES KIND OF LOVE

The way I was raised,
My parents said I love you,
By paying school fees,
By buying food,
By clothing you.

My parents were not obligated to offer you friendship
Although there were friendly gestures here and there
Like when my mother called me, *'Baba'*
Or when my father asked, *'Umekula?'*

My parents did not ask you how you were doing.
They told you what to do,
They told you how you were doing.

I remember the bossy tendencies in our relationship.
Like when my mother sent me to the shop 6 times within 10 minutes.
My mother would send me to buy sugar.
When I got back from the shop with sugar,
My mother would ask,
'na chumvi?'
When I came back with salt, my mother would say,
"Mbona hamukkusema hakuna sabuni kwa hii nyumba."
And this always happened when your favourite program on TV was on. Always!

I never hugged my father.
If I did, I don't remember
If I don't remember, I was probably a kid
If I was probably a kid, then I don't remember.
The first time I hugged my mother and I was old enough to remember was at my post
initiation ceremony.
I can say right now, I wasn't really myself because I was wearing a cow hide
Women including my grandmother,
My mother and her friends were dancing
It wasn't a hug exactly.
It was something really close to a hug,
Where I come from, people call it *Asaai*.

MY SISTER GAVE BIRTH TO GOD'S CHILD

When my sister was 7 months with child,
I was 7 months without knowing
Even when I hugged her,

I couldn't tell she was no longer alone in her own body

When my mother called to tell me the news that my sister was about to deliver,
I wanted to tell her, to be a funny mum, she needed to work on her delivery.

My family couldn't believe my blindness,
I couldn't believe my family.

My brother said,
My sister never treated her pregnancy as prison
So the day she gave birth,
It was not the end of a sentence,
It was beginning of all the word we could find to describe the most beautiful baby.

My sister gave birth to the most beautiful baby
We called him our child but we knew he was God's child.
God prepared my sister the same way God prepared David.
Before David faced a giant he was prepared to face his fear,
Come a lion, come a bear, go David with his bare hands.
My sister was ready for her baby.
We all watched her become a mother dragon and no one was spared,
Even the neighbourhood kids had to be careful of my nephew; son to a mother who
spit fire.

I keep thinking we've never loved anybody like we love my sister's baby.
Not even ourselves.
My sister's baby came with a ladder for all the walls we thought
Couldn't go over
For all the times my sister has held her baby,
I have seen her baby hold her together.
I guess I'll never understand love.
How strong and weak and raw and whole it makes you feel at the same time
Maybe it's why we struggle to understand God.
My sister said,
All the strength and love she got was God preaching reaching out.
So when her baby started walking my sister walked him to church.

You see, my sister is not my baby sister anymore.
She is the last born who finds ways to come first so many times.
What I'm trying to say is,
If numbers mean something,
I know I can count on my sister.
Every time my nephew says, "Mum is sick in the eye"
I know its how he's been taught but for what it is, she is crying.
I wonder, if in the same way,
God made us call it rain when actually it is Him crying.
I have seen people love with their hearts.

But my sister loves her baby with her whole life
And if God calls us His children,
Then I am afraid,
We do not have the capacity to understand that love.
These days my sister digs herself out of her own grave,
That's the kind of wrestler she is.
The under cannot take her.
And I have seen the sun be more than just light to my sister's son.
On hot days my nephew has melted into a crown which my sister
wears.

My sister wears her baby as a crown so all men who put a target
on her can identify a queen, a ruler, a kingdom, a monarch.

I think we can learn a thing or two here;

1. Babies in their first school uniform make their mothers cry.
2. Babies with great smiles will make their mothers go to war.
3. Babies with their beautiful feet will make their mothers run
away from men with ugly steps.
4. Women with babies want the best for their children. No
mother goes through C-section hoping to raise a D student.
5. Women with babies are bullet proof every time the man in
front of them is shaped like a gun.
6. Women with babies have learnt to share themselves. Men
who are full of themselves will have to empty themselves.
7. Every time it feels like your life is at an end, God begins
things

The story of creation did not end with Genesis, God is still creating new things.

BLAME MY ROOTS

For the times I write about my father,
I don't need him to be alive to be somebody's son.

For the times text a girl who texts back after 4 days, man,
I am a victim

For the times I call someone and my credit runs out immediately
They pick up,
And when they call back,
I refuse to pick up,
Image my people, Image!

For the times I become water.
It's something I do.
It's a talent I tap into.

It is easy.
Our bodies are made up of 70 percent water.
It is easy to drown,
Into ourselves.

For the times I used a bus,
Alighted in a hurry and forgot my change,
A moment of silence.

For the times I didn't rhyme,
Call the police.

For the times my soul was naked on stage,
I was doing a cover.

For the time I almost punched someone, look on the bright side,
I didn't!

For the times I went on a date and I had nothing to say,
Let's not call it a disappointed.
Maybe I was breathless,
Maybe I was in awe,
Maybe words were not enough here.

For the times I went through things but couldn't say anything,
Remember that out here,
Men have been conditioned not to speak, not to snitch, not to cry,
Not no scream.

For the times I write about my mother,
My mother is a surface I am familiar with.
My mother is a hard place.
My mother forgets quickly.
We used to talk,
But these days we don't call each other unless we are asking.
Blood is what is under our skin,
These are those days we depend more on our blood to be family.
Yesterday at 4p.m,
I had an apple and beetroot juice.
My blood increased by a fraction
And in that moment,
I was family more.

MY GIRLFRIEND IS GETTING MARRIED

My Girlfriend,
Is getting married today.
To another man.
She is not my girlfriend exactly,
But man, it almost happened.
It was so close.

I'm missing out on her wedding today
T and 'do' are just simple words.
But it is hard to watch a woman you want today
want another man for life.

There's not enough poetry for a poem about how I feel right now.
There's just how I feel, right now.
I can picture her walking down the aisle.
And I'm not sure if the groom's heart will be doing a somersault
or freezing.
But if like poles repel,
Then for such a hot woman he must be a walking iceberg.

I don't know if he knows,
A green dress and her skin,
Are coffee and cream.
But then again, here I go using a poem to pretend I know so much,
If I know so much why I'm I not the groom, right?

The downside of a boy falling in love with a girl his age,
Even if they wore the same watches on their wrists, the society
Will still read their times differently.
The same person who will tell her she should have been married by now,
Will tell me, you can start looking right now...

I'm looking at life right now,
And I don't have the pieces right,
Nothing fits.
I have been praying for a woman on behalf of another man.
I'm not taking my prayers back,
But this sure is the genesis of something
Before I am scripture to another woman I might need to see some revelation first.

When you see someone,
It never really hits you that this might be the last time you see them.
I don't see myself seated having coffee with her again
After the wedding I can't trust myself around her anymore.
I have a feeling I'm going to be petty,
Like stupid, stupid petty

Like, if I saw a pimple on her face,
I will blame it on him.
I'll be like, what's that on your face?
Did he do that to you?
Did he do that to you?
Listen, you don't need to be strong for anybody.
I think you should leave him!

I know I tried.
I threw everything at this girl,
Ethiopian food, my sister, yoghurt pancakes!

For 5 years now,
She has been the girls of my dreams
And tonight when I go to bed,
I'm supposed to change that
Maybe, I can try to find another girl to dream about.
But that won't make her,
The girl of my dreams

HOW IS HE YOUR MAN?

How is he your man?
If he hits you?
How is he your man?
If you run to your friends for protection

How will he hold you?
If those are the same hands,
You ran away from when you want to run away from scars.
And if you can't trust his hands,
Then how will you trust his ears when scars inside you need an ear.

How deep can your mirror go before it's too far for you?
How many blows on your face before your wedding dress doesn't?
Blow your mind anymore

Yes, his love used to leave you breathless
But tonight his hands will be on your neck choking you because
Lately that is the only way I picture you, breathless

You said he used to stir your nerves
But from the wounds inside you,
He's been stabbing your nerves.
You say you still love him,
So you are stretching your hands to a porcupine hoping his iris will find a way to
Teach his pupil to look at you as a lady bird

You say he hits you because...he's a man.

What if...

He hits you because he's not man enough...not to.

MY BOYS ARE DYING

My boys are dying.

Some of them are poets.

They have written a thousand poems and not one, has earned them a living

Open mics don't open the door

When the landlord closes the door

My boys are dying

Some of them are singers.

You may or may have not heard their songs before.

But every meal time they eat their own songs and choke on their lyrics.

My boys are dying

Don't let those Nike shoes fool you.

There is nothing 'correct' about the heart of a young man who has nothing

But his Nike shoes

From being misunderstood.

Understand that my boys will do anything for money.

Understand that sometimes the modern woman has a watchman,

CCTV cameras, and a Mobile App that will send people to fix anything in her house

So, the only security she might need from her man, is financial.

My boys are dying because their pockets are light.

My boys are dying because their heart is heavy.

Maybe, if they had Whitney's voice,

They would sing their heart out and watch it beating right in front of them.

My boys are dying,

From heartbreaks,

From disappointments,

They are not asking to win all the time, they are asking to win at least this one time.

My boys are dying because the universe has refused to accept them as stars.

Now they are earth bound,

Bound to be earth,

Earth is soil,

Soil is sometimes called dirt.

My boys are dirty.

My boys are dying from working in sewers and garbage dumps without proper gear,

Their family fears

But it's what steers a living,
Believing, tomorrow will come but today is leaving.

My boys are dying from taking care of families that don't feel taken care of
My boys are dying from bullet wounds,
My boys are dying from being boys,
For being big boys,
For being just boys
For being bus boys
For being a group of boys

Ask the jail warden,
My boys are dying inside.
My boys are dying from intestinal wounds,
From duodenal wounds,
My boys are dying outside,
My boys are dying in tribal fights.
My boys are dying because their leaders are clashing.
My boys are dying because their leaders are lying.
My boys are dying because integrity is dying.
My boys are dying because their dreams are dying.
My boys are dying because there is nothing to go back to.
I know boys my age in the streets going back to back blaming a whole country for
not having their back
My boys are dying because Tom Mboya did not long enough

My boys are dying because their talent is not enough
My boys are dying because they lost hope
My boys are dying because their mind is at war.

My boys are dying and oh boy,
I'm not the one to save them!

MY PRESIDENT IS KENYAN

Children are to die for,
And parents are working to death for their children.
But parents are afraid to die.
Single fathers are afraid to die.
Single mothers are afraid to die.
They are not afraid of how they will die,
They are afraid if, if they die,
They will leave their children with nothing.
Children with nothing are begging on our streets every day.
Children with nothing grow up to become grown men with nothing.
Grown men with nothing but a knife will stab you for nothing, for a phone, for the
tiniest bulge in your pocket.
Our GDP don't mean nothing to children with nothing.

Or is it children with nothing mean nothing to our GDP.

My president is Kenyan, yes,
But he cannot tell my story.
I hear he is a good man,
He is warm with laughter,
He takes photos with children,
Invites artists to the state house...
It is a beautiful thing.
It's good... for his image.

Mothers who lose their children to cancer because of delayed chemo at Kenyatta care about image too.

They want to clean their babies' bodies and bury them beautiful too.

Outstanding medical bills are holding back mothers from burying their children.

Yesterday,

I heard a stranger at the barbershop say,

If his child dies with a hospital bill he will not sell his tiny piece of land to bring a dead body home.

There might be no land left for burial.

My president doesn't know, we know,

In this city, you don't have ancestral land,

You just have compound eyes, use your eyes.

I challenge you to look at the people we vote for.

How they make it about themselves after elections and about their tribes before election but never about their work.

Because if it were about service I would point it out they have not been giving, they have been taking.

Look at how rich they have become now.

How will they really care about land policy for the poor when they are clearly about owning more land than a province?

Isn't that how much land they have now, enough land to land themselves their own country.

Tell me, don't our parents work so hard, to buy a piece of land then sell everything every time a severe illness visits our family.

My president is Kenyan okay,

But he doesn't know our story.

Because what we need is not 4 pillars, 5 pillars or 66 pillars of anything.

What we need is for people in the government to stop eating our money.

Every year about 600 billion shillings, 1/3 of our country's budget is lost through corruption.

So now tell me,

What is a government project if it's not another project to take from?

How will we ever know what 600 billion shillings could do for homeless Kenyans, for landless Kenyans, for jobless Kenyans, for hungry Kenyans, for girls living in families that cannot afford to buy them sanitary pads in 2019!

How will we know what 600 billion shillings could do for quality and relevant education for about 90 percent of Kenyan children who don't go to private or international schools, Mr. President?

How will we know what 600 billion shillings could do for families that do not have easy access to affordable medical care... Mr. President?

How will we know what 600 billion shillings could do for up-to 40 percent of Kenyans who live below the poverty line Mr. President?

How will we know, when we don't even know in the first place why Kenya imports sugar, and maize...
When we have farmers, and land.
And our flag says, it's green!

BEFORE MY DAUGHTER IS BORN

Before my daughter is born,
Her mother will be 3, then 5, then 9 months pregnant.
I will have 9 names for her, her mother will refuse 5 but I will hold on to some.

I don't know if my daughter will be dark or light skinned,
I won't choose her mother by her skin color,
I'm into deep stuff.
The sound of our heartbeats together will be louder than the sound of our skin tone.
But in case my daughter complains about being dark, I will tell her not to worry, I'm paying school fees for her be bright.

And I hope she will learn that education is key, add humility, dignity and respect, you have a bunch of keys.

I hope she will learn beauty is engraved on the soul, that's where things like forever come from.

I hope she will learn to be there when the world needs her,
I hope she will learn her gender should not be her limitation,
So, I hope she will fight, not her neighbors but fight those things that will make her and her neighbors to fight.

I hope she will never know rape like the back of her hands,
I hope she won't have to talk about one-night stands,
I hope she will be heard from more than one mic stands,
I hope she won't need Rick Ross to tell her the devil is a liar,
I hope the man who melts her heart will be there when it solidifies,
I know she will test her tears but I hope her smiles will be sweet enough,
I hope she will go places further than Mahatma Gandhi with his eyes closed,
I hope the beats from my heart will be enough to make her my song, my song, my song...

OUR MOTHERS

Strong, rock, divine,
Raised us,
Groomed us,
Broke, broken,
Fed up but still feeding us.
Uneducated mothers raising learners,
But learning your mother's tongue,
Will not teach you to understand your mother's pain.

Our mothers...
What does it mean to be a child without your mother's hands?
If cleanliness is next to godliness,
Then our mothers will be God's neighbors in heaven.

Our mothers...
They stay.
More often than not it's our fathers who leave.
If a country is its people, then, our mothers are raising this country.
Our mothers...
No one hurts like mothers when stray bullets jump off police guns and land on the chests of their children.
Tell them it's their children who stray into straight bullets,
They will still hold their breath,
That's how they die by not breathing.
By not breathing they are not living.
It's mothers who live the nightmares of children who don't live their dreams.
Our mothers' hearts are the graveyards for all the dreams that died.
They wear a black skin for all the funeral services in their body.

Our mothers...
Chased out of parliament for breastfeeding a child,
A house more important than motherhood.
People we pay sitting allowances to stand for something won't even stand for a mother and a child.
As if this country has not grown on the backs of our mothers.
Our mothers, bending from the weight of carrying a nation.
This country, folding our mothers' backs for high taxes that don't come back to have their backs, in fact, very soon,
Mothers will be taxed for being in the business of raising their children.

I'm not saying everything should go our mothers' way.
I'm saying,
Look outside the window...
Highways are for motorcades,
Our ways home are full of potholes.
We've made holes feel at home.

I can trace holes into my mother's house, into my mother's heart.

LOVE

When you are 14.

Love is a girl you don't talk to,
Just a girl you stare at and on a lucky day, she stares back.

When you are 16.

Love is the girl you see in church.
Always with her mother.
She doesn't wear dresses.
She's always in jeans.
Every time you walk past her and her mother, you bounce a bit.
Every time her mother is busy talking to other people, you always almost go over to say hi
....but you never do.

When you are 18.

Love is jealousy.
The girl in church is friends with your friend.
Your friend is the boy who walked over and said hi when her mother was busy talking to other people.

When you are 22,

Love is petty.
Like, postponing a date because of a pimple on your face.

When you are 24,

Love is a poem.
Like,
I think about you 8 days in a week.
Like,
I don't see you often, I see us together.
Like,
Your eyes are the recipe for how to cook my heart.

Like,

Sometimes when I miss you, I can't eat. And I'm always afraid to tell people. They might say you make me sick.

Like,

I'm in a corner right now, I can't buy you airtime but I'm so into you,
I can stage a demo at freedom corner and demand for your free airtime!

When you are 25.

Love is a delicate thing.
You don't want people to know you are a glass just in case they like breaking things.

When you are 27,
Love is to say I miss you without saying I miss you.
Like, I read something that reminded me about you today.

When you are 28,
Love is something with no name.
That way, you don't have to call it.
It will come when it wants to.

When you stop counting,
Love is who you are,
Love is what you feel,
Love is something you did,
Love is free,
Love is where you want to be,
I feel like I can change the world.
And it's all love.

CANCER...

I don't have poetry enough to take away the pain of those cancer has paid a visit to.
I have no rhyme or punchline to console families hurting now.
There is no dopeness in how to write this, hopelessness is the new alliteration,
At least that's how I'm about to start every word.
What cancer did to Ken Okoth was horrible.
We saw it rob him his face and we saw him fight to keep his smile.

We haven't lost 3 people this month because of cancer.
We have lost 3 visible people because of cancer but thousands who have died have
not found a place in our Twitter mentions.
I agree, there is somebody who is known by everybody.
But I insist, everybody is somebody.

Up to 60 Kenyan MPs are said to have Cancer.
Well, up to 40,000 new cancer cases are diagnosed in Kenya every year, with 27,000
deaths.
I'm not good at math but I'm thinking,
If 60 as a number can shock you,
Then 40,000 yearly should literally kill you.

Maybe, the comedy industry is growing not because of the content comedians create
but because of the lack of joy cancer creates.
Or maybe, leadership in the country is failing because people have only two knees,
And two knees have not even been enough to pray for their family members battling
cancer.

Last year,

It was reported that The MRI scan and the laparoscopy tower machine (both vital for cancer screening and treatment) at the Kenyatta National Hospital, had broken down in 2017 and had been nonfunctioning for up to a year.

This news wasn't a big deal because big people make big news and ordinary people do not even make ordinary news.

Limited and overworked cancer treatment machines at KNH (Kenya's largest public referral facility) have broken down so many times without urgent response.

I'm not saying prominent people should not be mourned.

I'm saying, every time billions are lost in corrupt deals, which is every year, or every day,

I think of how many public cancer centers we could have in the whole country.

I think of how many new cancer treatment machines we could add to these centers yearly.

I think of how low we can make cancer treatment costs be.

I think of how unfair our leaders have been.

Or maybe I'm being unfair for not understanding the billions in their bank accounts are lonely, they need to hang out with more billions.

I'm not saying we are done.

I'm still convinced that one day, in fact, sometime soon,

We will start looking at ourselves as big people and start making big decisions.

Big decisions change things and so many things need to change.

I'm not saying your current leaders are uncanny,

I'm saying your current leaders will come collect votes at your funeral.

They will use a body in a coffin to resurrect their ambition.

I'm not done.

I'm asking, how will the conditions in public hospitals be improved by people who don't use them at all?

WEIRDEST DATE EVER

You took a risk and you are here.

Maybe life is a journey because of all the places inside us dying to go places.

You wake up on a Saturday morning in Dar.

Something about beautiful hotel rooms that makes you want to use your camera.

You know, a few clicks for the gram.

But then again, your room, this whole thing was paid for by someone you haven't even met.

And that's just enough to leave the phone charging and focus on today.

Chances are, you are going to meet her today.

So let's talk about her...

Now, you absolutely have no idea, how she looks or how old she really is.

You wish you could pretend you are so soul deep, that the physical has nothing on you, completely!

But nope, sometimes. Not always.

As a matter of fact, sometimes, you being created from soil is the deepest you can be.

Anyway, you've a couple guesses here...

She has the psyche of a rich 19-year-old, but she sounds mature old.

So, your first guess is, she's 29, or 27, but definitely not younger than 25... Oh, and she could be 35. Yap, that's a possibility.

Yet again 25 could be just too ambitious.

I mean, you don't even know a 28-year-old lady who would finance your whole trip just to feed your curiosity.

After breakfast, the nerves start coming on.

You shower and damn right you dress up to show up!

This is definitely the one time you don't forget to wear cologne on your neck. You know, the neck better show up during the hugging too!

You are back on the bed...waiting...waiting for the call.

As you wait, in your mind there's a whole chain of questions that need answers.

You know you shouldn't ask a lady how old she is...at least not today.

But it's a burning thought here.

Ever since a lady you totally fell for, claimed you were younger than her so it couldn't work out, this age thing just keeps popping up in your head.

You want to be prepared for such situations.

If only you had your mother's talent.

Thing is, your mother has a talent for telling things. She can tell a woman's age, a mother from a woman, just by looking at her legs!

Could be a mother's thing because it's definitely not a family thing, you are not wired to pick numbers from looking at a leg.

Maybe you could secretly take a photo of her legs when you meet and send it to your mother. Haha!

By 1pm, she hasn't called, and there's no inbox from her on your gram.

You decide to head out for lunch.

You treat yourself to a feast of mshikaki.

A chicken one, a beef one, a fish one, fries and if you know TZ, then you know a Pepsi!

You do your beach walk, hang out and by evening, something definitely feels odd..

The nerves are still camping on your skin. I mean, the plan was to meet her outside, in a public place, hang out with her, get to know her, you know.

Hear her laugh, see the face she puts on when she's being sarcastic...All that.

But what if her plan is to knock at your door...tonight.

You don't want to stay in the room now.

You head out looking for a place to hang,

Like a karaoke joint.

By 9pm, you decide to inbox her,

Just to be clear about this night time situation before you head back to your room.

You open your IG only to find she beat you to it.

You have an inbox from her...the nerves rush to your fingers as you read it.
She is apologizing for not showing up.
She was really needed at home she says.
She insists to know if you enjoyed yourself.
She says she won't make to see you off in the morning but hopefully next time you will get a chance to meet up.

The nerves leave you.
A lot of questions leave your mind too.
There's a few new ones...like what does home really mean here...does she live with her parents? Or does she have a family...
Albeit, there's a sense of genuine respect you develop for her. She did this for you.
Not for her.
It's a long night before you pack and leave in the morning.

These last few days back in Nairobi, have you wishing to see her.
You really want to put a face to this peculiar being.
The questions are still there.... How tall is she? How short is she? What does she really do? How does her touch on your hand feel like? Does she look away when she smiles?
How old might she be? And is she single, really?

Maybe there will be another chance.