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**THE STATUS OF
CHILDREN'S THEATRE IN NAIROBI**

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BY

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P3P 386/CP

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the

Degree of Master of Arts of Kenyatta University.

Kabui, Elizabeth
*The status of
children's theatre*



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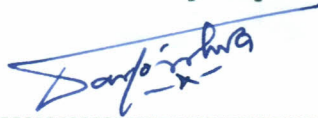
DECLARATION

**This is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in
any other university**



ELIZABETH WATETU KABUI

**This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as
university supervisors**



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DEDICATION

**This work is dedicated to my niece, Wangeci, who re-taught me how
to play**

I am immensely indebted to my supervisors, Mr. David K. Muleke and Prof. Francis Imbuga for their dedicated guidance, insightful criticism and encouragement.

I also wish to express gratitude to Dr. Nyambura Mwachia, Ezekiel Aembi, Mr. Wasembo Were and Mr. Evans Mugendi who though not my supervisors found time to read my initial work and give advice. I also owe special thanks to Dr. Mpasaba whose insightful lectures on Children's Literature inspired my study.

Much appreciation goes to my classmates, Abungu Tawo and Mbugua Mungei for the academic warmth.

Many thanks go to Mr. Wilberforce Wangeci who got weary of my consistent insistence that he type my work faster.

Last but not least, I thank my family for their special concern, prayers and encouragement that I needed so often.

Thanks be to God, for having blessed the work of my hands.

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1.6 Objectives

1.7 Theoretical Framework

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1.6.2 Search of Data

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1.8.3.2 Questionnaire

Thanks be to God, for has blessed the work of my hands.

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ABSTRACT

The overall objective of the research was to establish the status of children's theatre as an art form in Nairobi. The study reveals the forms in which children's theatre in Nairobi is manifested and critically examines the plot, characters, theme and style of plays performed for child audiences to determine whether they are suitable for them. Previous research has put more emphasis on the analysis of adult theatre hence the endeavour to open up the field of children's theatre in this study.

The main assumption is that the value of children's theatre as a tool for education and entertainment has not been appreciated by artists in Nairobi.

Data for the study was obtained through observation of plays performed for children and by children, questionnaires to primary school children from within Nairobi, interviews with theatre artists and through library research. Chief among the findings is that although children, through their participation in dramatic play reveal that they would enjoy theatre, only 1 out of 5 theatre groups in Nairobi perform plays for children, and this being only on festive seasons such as Christmas time. Thus much of what children are exposed to as theatre is not suitable for them in terms of plot, characters, theme and style. I have therefore made some recommendations on how to make children's theatre more relevant to the children.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1: Introduction

Drama is that mode of fiction designed for stage presentation and theatre grows out of it. Drama is 'the thing' that is performed in theatre; the medium through which theatre is communicated. Theatre then becomes the circumstance of live dramatic performance. Elam (1980) views theatre as,

the complex of phenomenon associated with the performer-audience transaction, that is with the production and communication of meaning in the performance itself and with the systems underlying it (p. 2).

From this definition it can be construed that theatre exists in performance, the performance is before an audience and there is communication going on between the performers and the audience.

Children's theatre is therefore taken to mean 'performance... of plays for young audience (i.e. up to 12 or 13 years)' (Jackson 1980). The purpose of children's theatre is to entertain, educate and to introduce theatre to the children.

Children's theatre is a development of childhood dramatic play. In dramatic play, children play out roles and use symbols to represent the real or imagined world. Dramatic play then becomes more than just expending energy; it is a learning process. It is the child's way of daring, creating, absorbing and testing the environment (Slade 1973). Dramatic play is an effective learning tool because it

allows the children to 'do' and to 'experience'. The tendency of children's total involvement in dramatic play shows that children like and enjoy drama. Further, characteristics of dramatic play give an insight into the kind of drama which may appeal to children. It also suggests the role that children's theatre should play.

Indigenous forms of children's theatre such as story-telling and children's games, communicate knowledge to the children. They teach values such as unity, the proper way to behave amongst elders and in-laws and discourage anti-social behaviour such as greed and materialism (Alembi, 1991; Beidelman, 1963). In the traditional setting, these forms of children's theatre also serve as entertainment as they were usually performed in the evenings after work. Children would also engage in games to while away the time and entertain themselves while they did tasks such as herding cattle or watching over crops in the field. Contemporary theatre for children is expected to carry the same function of educating and entertaining children. It would be expected to reflect the contemporary society and help integrate the child into the society.

Contemporary children's theatre in Kenya has however not received sufficient scholarly attention. The various forms in which children's theatre has manifested itself in the contemporary society, the function these forms of theatre play or indeed whether a contemporary form of children's theatre exists are issues that have remained unaddressed in scholarship. In this thesis therefore, we have addressed these issues to determine whether or not there is contemporary theatre for children in Nairobi and if so whether the theatre is suitable for the children.

1.2: Literature Review

Mumma's concern for the neglect of children's theatre in Kenya echoes the central concern of this thesis. He notes Penina Mlama's lament in 1986 at a Goethe Institute workshop on youth and children's theatre:

There are no professional groups performing for children, otherwise all that children get to see is adult theatre. Once in a while say at Easter or Christmas we get plays and pantomimes mounted with the little ones in mind (Mumma, 1987:20).

Mumma's study however, does not evaluate these 'plays and pantomimes'. In this study we have evaluated the various forms of theatre that children in Nairobi are exposed to.

McGreggor *et al* (1972) are mainly concerned with drama as a learning medium. They do however, emphasise that children's theatre is a valuable experience. They discuss factors such as identification with characters on stage, the meaning presented and the effectiveness of communication as some of the factors which determine what children get out of a theatre experience. This work benefits our study because it suggests parameters of gauging a children's theatre production.

Alstrom (1957) discusses the educational value of theatre to children. Her emphasis is on the message children's theatre should communicate. It should teach children about their environment, other people and themselves. In our analysis of plays performed for children we have assessed whether the message communicated is of any value to the children.

Fernandez - Moreno *et al* (eds, 1979) highlight the role of children's theatre in personality development and in the development of creativity. They also highlight aspects of style, such as chronological plot and strong characters, which children's theatre should employ. The emphasis is that the style employed in children's theatre should enhance communication to children. Davies and Walkins (1969) also discuss aspects of style such as plot, characterisation and language in children's theatre. These works have informed this thesis as one of our objectives is to assess the suitability of the style employed in children's play productions.

Siks (1977) and C.S. Lewis in Fox (1976) discuss the content in children's theatre. The content should differ depending on the age-group that the theatre targets. They argue that each age-group has a different perception of life and therefore should be presented with content that appeals to them. Siks recommends fantasy for six year olds but adventure, struggle and heroism for eight to eleven year olds. At about twelve years, children are idealist and theatre that appeals to them will have characters with power, courage and loyalty who will be solving difficult problems. This categorisation of content suitable for the various age-groups emphasises the fact that children's theatre has to address children's interests.

Webster (1975) considers the possibility of audience participation as a great advantage of theatre over other forms of entertainment such as television and film. He emphasises that audience participation should be maximised in children's theatre. In our analysis of plays performed for children in chapter three, audience participation is recognised as an aspect of style and the role it plays is assessed.

Spolin (1973) is concerned with the child actor and gives useful guidelines for the directors of children's theatre. Her emphasis is that the child should be treated as an equal and should be allowed freedom to make contributions. In our analysis of plays performed by children, we have tried to assess how much children are involved in the creation of the plays they perform and to determine whether their involvement has significant influence on the content of the play.

1.3: Statement of the Problem

As mentioned in the introduction, children's theatre is a complement to childhood dramatic play. Children's theatre like childhood dramatic play should address needs of children. As discussed in the literature review, children's theatre should present characters and situations on stage with which children will identify and thus experience danger, risk, pain, victory and pleasure albeit vicariously. This experience helps children gain a better understanding of themselves, others and their environment.

However, in spite of this usefulness of children's theatre no study in Kenyan scholarship has been undertaken to investigate the practice of theatre for children. Basic information regarding the various forms of theatre for children in Nairobi, the techniques employed in the performance or even whether theatre for children does indeed exist, remains undocumented.

This study therefore stems from the understanding of the nature and value of children's theatre. We raise a number of questions about the state of children's theatre in Nairobi. For example, is there children's theatre in Nairobi? If there is,

what are the forms in which it is manifested? To what extent does it answer to the issues raised in the Literature Review about the nature and function of children's theatre? What issues do Nairobi theatre artists present to children and what techniques do they use to communicate to the child audience? Are these techniques appropriate or adequate? How do children respond to theatre presented to them?

In answering these questions we have provided fundamental information on the practice of children's theatre in Nairobi. We have also arrived at a framework for enhancing and evaluating children's theatre.

1.4: Rationale

As mentioned in the Introduction and Literature Review, children's theatre, when well developed, can effectively educate and entertain. In spite of this, children's theatre has been ignored in Kenyan scholarship. Studies in theatre have concentrated on textual analysis and indigenous theatre forms as in the works of Kyallo (1989, 1991) and Karani (1991). Furthermore these studies have dealt only with adult theatre. The dearth of research in children's theatre is a gap that this study hopes to fill. This study will also furnish information on the practice of children's theatre in Nairobi and open up the field of children's theatre for further research.

The study is also considered important because it suggests a framework for the evaluation and enhancement of children's theatre in Nairobi. The research findings

will provide useful guidelines for theatre artists experimenting with children's theatre and further sensitise theatre artists into performing for children.

1.5: Assumptions

This study on children's theatre in Nairobi has been based on two main assumptions.

The first assumption is that the value of children's theatre as entertainment and as a tool for education has not been appreciated by Nairobi theatre artists. In this study we have assessed theatre artists' involvement in children's theatre. It is our argument that appreciation of the value of children's theatre would be reflected in the artists' practice of it.

The second assumption is that the forms of children's theatre differ from those of adult theatre because children are at a relatively lower level of conceptual and psychological development. It is on this assumption that the techniques of performance and the thematic concerns of children's theatre have been evaluated.

1.6: Objectives

Based on the above assumptions the study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. Describe the present state of children's theatre as an art form in Nairobi.
2. Evaluate children's theatre in Nairobi in terms of plot characterisation, theme and style to determine its suitability to a child audience.

3. Determine the reasons for the present state of children's theatre in Nairobi.
4. Explore ways of enhancing children's theatre in Nairobi.

1.7: Theoretical Framework

In our analysis of children's theatre, we have relied on a combination of the theory of Children's Literature, the Psychoanalytic Approach and the Stylistic Approach to Literature.

The theory of children's literature regards children's literature as that literature created ostensibly for children, for the purpose of entertaining and educating them. Enjoyment is achieved through escape from problems and stirring up of imagination. Education from children's literature is achieved when the children understand language and its use, themselves and others better and get an experience of other times and places. This theory is a negation of earlier beliefs that regarded a child as a 'miniature adult who was expected to assume adult roles and responsibilities and read adult literature'. (Sleing, 1980)

This theory acknowledges the uniqueness of children in their psychological and conceptual make-up. It thus emphasises that literature for children should match children's psychological and conceptual development. The objectives of children's literature - entertainment and education can not be achieved unless the story and the manner of its presentation is appealing to children. Indeed C.S. Lewis in Fox (1978) urges that we;

must write for children out of those elements in our own imagination which we share with children, differing from our child readers not by any less serious interest, but by the fact that we have other interests which children share with us. We must meet children as equals in that area of our nature where we are their equals (p. 187).

Our study has borrowed from this theory of children's literature for within theatre is a story being told. The story told in children's theatre targets a child audience. This theory has helped us determine whether the story told in children's theatre in Nairobi is suitable for the children.

According to Guerin *et al* (1979: 125), 'psychoanalysis can give clues towards solving a work's thematic and symbolic mysteries'. Psychoanalysis, a postulate of Sigmund Freud, is based on the tenet that human behaviour is determined by unconscious forces within an individual. It therefore deals with mental concepts such as experiences, wishes, fears, fantasies, thoughts and impulses in a bid to understand how they influence human behaviour. Often these unconscious drives are not fulfilled since their fulfilment is forbidden by society. These drives thus often remain suppressed. When fulfilled however, these drives "are not directly manifested in behaviour but are disguised and transformed so that one must learn how to discern or interpret their influence" (Sander ed. 1982: 14). These drives manifest themselves in symbols. Understanding symbols in society would therefore mean understanding its people better.

The study of symbols in literature helps to arrive at the deeper meaning in a work of art. A story will have various levels of meaning and this approach helps us go beyond the surface meaning to the deeper meaning. In our study of children's

theatre we are interested in the meaning conveyed through plays performed for children in Nairobi.

To effectively study the relationship between the techniques used in play performance and the message communicated, this study has employed the stylistic approach to literature. According to Leech (1981) the goal of stylistics is to explain the relationship between language and artistic function. Here art is regarded as communication between the artists and the audience. The stylist is interested in why certain linguistic features are used and how these features effect communication. Leech applies stylistics to the study of texts alone but Ngara (1982) observes that the approach can be applied to all art forms. For our purpose we have extended stylistics to embrace the manner of performance of plays. We have analysed the techniques employed in play performance and how they affect communication with the child audience.

1.8: Research Design and Methodology

1.8.1: Rationale for Choice of Nairobi as the Study Area

Nairobi was chosen as the area of study for two reasons. First, Nairobi has a multi-cultural set-up which offers a rich source for theatre. Secondly, given the limitation of time, money and other resources including transport, there was need to choose an area that was easily accessible. In this regard, Nairobi was found to be easily accessible.

1.8.2: Source of Data

Data for this study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources.

The primary sources included children, drama teachers, theatre resource persons and theatre artists. Members from these groups were interviewed to give insight into the practice and understanding of children's theatre in Nairobi. The children were drawn from eight primary schools within Nairobi. Plays performed by children and by theatre artists were assessed.

The secondary sources consisted of literature pertaining to children's theatre.

Library books, newspapers and relevant write-ups on theatre were read.

1.8.3: Data Gathering Instruments

Data for this study was gathered through:

- (a) Field observation
- (b) Questionnaires
- (c) Interviews

1.8.3.1: Field observation

Plays presented by primary schools at the 1996 Schools and Colleges Drama Festival were observed. The overall objective of the observation was to understand the nature of the plays presented by primary schools and determine whether the plays were suitable in terms of plot, characterisation, themes and style for the child actor and audience. At this festival two plays were presented by Nairobi Province. The plays were '*The Will*' presented by Nairobi Primary School and '*Daraja Ilivyovunjika*' by Drive-in Primary School. In this thesis the play '*The Will*' has been

studied as a microcosm for primary schools drama festival plays. We have also studied the play '*The Game of Junkies*' performed at the festival by Taveta Primary School (Coast Province) for comparison with '*The Will*'.

Other plays outside the Schools and Colleges Drama Festival observed were '*Oliver*', a school play performed by St. Mary's School and '*Red Riding Hood*' by Nairobi City Players. These plays were performed at different venues as family entertainment and were observed with the view to determine whether the productions were suitable for the child audience that made-up the larger part of the audience.

Two other plays, '*The Gift*', performed by Shangilia Mtoto wa Afrika theatre group and '*Watoto na Sheria*', performed by Sambamba Street theatre were observed as a microcosm of children's theatre.

Category	School	Sample Size (Pupils)
1.8.3.2: Questionnaires	Rumani School	20
	Mulhanga Primary	20
Two sets of questionnaires were used:		
1. Questionnaire to pupils (Appendix 1A).	Mulhanga Primary	20
	Mulhanga Primary	20
The sample of pupils was drawn from eight primary schools within Nairobi. The eight schools were selected through purposive sampling and were categorised as follows:		
A.	Two high cost private primary schools offering other curriculum apart from	

8-4-4.

- B. Two high/medium cost private primary schools offering the 8-4-4 Curriculum.
- C. Two public primary schools located in affluent residential areas.
- D. Two public primary school located in areas of medium and low income earners.

This categorisation was fundamental in determining what forms of theatre children in the different types of schools and social backgrounds are exposed to and is therefore representative of Nairobi children in primary schools.

In each school, twenty questionnaires were distributed to twenty standard seven (12-13 years) pupils selected through random sampling. Twenty was considered as representative of the variety of theatre groups in Nairobi. The questionnaire was designed towards obtaining the following information.

The following schools were used:

Category	School	Sample Size (Pupils)
A	Rusinga School	20
	The Nairobi Academy	11
B	St. Nicholas Primary	20
	Makini School	20
C	Lavington Primary	20
	Muthaiga Primary	20
D	Toi Primary	20
	Kawangware Primary	20
	Total	151

The questionnaire was administered to pupils in standard seven (12-13 years) as these would understand the language of the questionnaire. Moreover, the

experiences of a six-year-old are encompassed in those of the twelve-year-old child. The questionnaire to pupils had the aim of eliciting information regarding:

- I. Children's participation in theatre as audience and actors.
- II. How children respond to the theatre presented to them.
- III. How children's theatre can be modelled to suit the tastes of the children.

2. Questionnaire to theatre Artists (Appendix 1B).

Five theatre groups namely; Amani Peoples Theatre, Chelepe Arts, The Story Tellers, Phoenix Theatre and Nairobi City Players were used. These were taken to be representative of the variety of theatre groups in Nairobi. This questionnaire was directed towards obtaining the following information;

- i. Whether theatre artists in Nairobi perform plays for children.
- ii. The attitudes of Nairobi theatre artists towards children's theatre.
- iii. Whether theatre artists have any knowledge pertaining to the content and style of children's theatre.
- iv. Factors that have contributed to the prevailing state of children's theatre in Nairobi.
- v. Suggestions on how children's theatre can be enhanced.

Ten theatre resource persons who included school teachers, theatre artists and educators were interviewed with the view of eliciting information on the practise of children's theatre in Nairobi (Appendix 2A) Nairobi City Players were interviewed on their performance of '*Red Riding Hood*' with the view of giving insight to a children's theatre production (Appendix 2B).

CHAPTER TWO

Children's Growth Through Dramatic Play

2.1: Introduction

Theories advanced on play show its importance during childhood. Stressing on this, Gross in Courtney (1974) argues that "the sole purpose of childhood is to provide a period of play."

Many of the theories developed on play go beyond the Schiller-Spencer theory whose mainstay is that play is a means of expending surplus energy. For instance Carr (Courtney: 1974) proposes that play is important as it functions as a safety valve for pent up emotions.

The Schiller-Spencer theory however does identify a link between play and art. It argues that 'neither has maintenance of the species as its immediate or remote ends' (Courtney 1974: 25). A further link is observed between dramatic play and art in that both draw upon the imaginative and creative potential of an individual. Developing this concept of play as art, Victor D' Amilo in Siks (1958: 7) argues that 'every child is a potential creator endowed with those sensibilities that characterise the artist. In dramatic play, children draw from these sensibilities and translate their inner and outer experiences into play .

Stressing the fact that children have a great creative potential, Davies (1983) states that "every child already possesses, almost from birth, all the necessary

requirements for drama." In this chapter therefore we view childhood dramatic play as artistic expression and as a base from which children's theatre develops. We have analysed its characteristics and value as a tool in the psychological and social development of children and specifically of those in Nairobi primary schools.

We have also analysed Nairobi primary school pupils' participation in theatre and Nairobi theatre artists involvement in children's theatre.

2.2: Characteristics and Value of Childhood Dramatic Play.

Dramatic play is one of the play activities which children engage in. It is played by children between the age of 2½ years to 12 years. It is a natural role-play in which children play out a make - believe world. This role-play is based on identification and imitation of life. For example, children can play out classroom or home situations based on what they have observed happening. They may also act out fictional characters from T.V. or create their own characters to suit particular situations.

Dramatic play has no script and therefore unfolds spontaneously. Each participant is expected to come up with lines and action to develop the play. The play requires the children to draw upon their imagination and creativity in translating their inner and outer experiences into play.

Like theatre, dramatic play is symbolic. However, unlike theatre it does not require technical aids such as lighting or sophisticated props. For the children blocks of wood, tins and any other common objects are sufficient symbols to represent a

desired concept. Sometimes dramatic play makes use of costume. When used, costume is symbolic. For example, a *leso*^{*} tied around the waist transforms a girl into a housewife. While a blazer transforms a boy into a man. Costume that is associated with adults transforms children into adults. Dramatic play centres more on experience rather than performance as does theatre. As such it does not have a formal audience but rather the participants vicariously take the role of the audience.

Often dramatic play requires partners and is therefore a social activity.

Slade (1973: 1) views dramatic play as a great tool for personality development. According to him it is a 'child's way of thinking, proving, relaxing, working, remembering, daring, testing, creating and absorbing'. Dramatic play performs these roles in a number of ways as discussed here.

When children play out their inner and outer experiences they relive these experiences. This not only helps them understand their actions but also gives them an opportunity to experiment with different behaviour. Often children will act out situations that cause them emotional disturbance. For instance, going to the hospital is a frightening experience for many children. In dramatic play children pretend to be parents taking their children to hospital or doctors treating the sick children. Other children also play the roles of the sick children. In playing this scene, children relive the experience albeit now with hindsight. The once frightening situation ceases to be frightening as the children take different roles and experience them.

* A cloth worn by women as an apron

Children attempt to understand others by putting themselves in other people's shoes (sometimes literally). They enact roles such as father, mother, teacher, doctor and policeman and imagine themselves living the lives of these characters. They try to perform these characters' duties, think their thoughts and feel their emotions. Acting out helps the children understand different characters in different situations for as Courtney (1974) observes:

the best way to be anybody - to get the feel of him as he is from the inside is to act out his character and function (p.32).

It is important to note that most of the characters children impersonate during dramatic play are adults. Much of children's lives is controlled by adults and as such 'one of the child's strongest desires is to be grown up and wield grown up power' (Alington: 1961). Through character impersonation children obtain power vicariously. As adults they are responsible, make important decisions and are beyond recrimination from parents and other adults such as teachers. Furthermore as adults, children possess objects of power such as cars. Acting out characters with power gives children assurance of their own personal power and consequently builds their ego.

Dramatic play is also a child's way of projecting an ideal life and conduct. In play children identify with characters they admire through impersonation. They impersonate heroes in real life or in fiction (characters on T.V. and movies). The heroes in fiction often have super-human qualities and as children impersonate them, they live in this larger than life world. Much as these ideal characters are

utopian, impersonating them gives children a sense of achievement, power and fulfilment of personal aspiration.

In dramatic play, there is no real punishment for wrong conduct. As such dramatic play offers children an opportunity to fulfil forbidden desires or to try out behaviour patterns that are not accepted by society. For instance, children will play the role of a naughty pupil in school and be involved in mischief or a robber whose violence is abhorred by society. In so doing children satisfy their curiosity and wonder at these characters and also fulfil wishes vicariously. As a result, the children will not exhibit forbidden behaviour patterns in real life.

When children play out admired professional roles such as teacher, doctor, driver and policeman and family roles such as father, mother, uncle or grandmother, they are in a sense rehearsing life. They play out roles they would like to play in future as they imagine the roles to be. Playing these roles gives children an opportunity to 'achieve' admired qualities and confidence to forge into the future.

Through its calling upon children's creative potential, dramatic play encourages originality rather than dependence on other people's ideas and also develops creativity. Dramatic play further encourages oracy and presentational skills of the children. It further equips children with vocabulary and language to cope with different situations. It also teaches children to communicate effectively using language and the whole body. As dramatic play is a social activity it develops social attitudes required in teamwork such as respect for one another and taking turns.

Dramatic play offers direct experience by allowing the child to 'do'. Children explore meaning through the medium of the whole person and through social interaction. Caldwell Cook's theory of play as a way of learning (Courtney: 1974) and Piaget's theory of intellectual development (Siks: 1958) emphasise that children need to manipulate things and engage in social interactions in order to learn. Dramatic play involves children in social and physical activities where they are required to think, talk, manipulate concrete things and to share ideas. It is for this reason that dramatic play can be said to be an effective means of learning in childhood.

Children's theatre can be regarded as a complement to childhood dramatic play. The role that dramatic play has in personality development reflects that children's theatre too has a great potential to influence behaviour and in personality development.

2.3: Nairobi Primary Schools Pupils' Participation and Experience in Childhood Dramatic Play

To find out the involvement of Nairobi children in dramatic play, 151 pupils from 8 primary schools within Nairobi were used. Table 2.1 shows the findings from the questionnaire administered to the pupils.

Table 2.1: Nairobi Primary Schools Pupils' Participation and Experience in Childhood Dramatic Play.

School Category	PRIVATE SCHOOLS		PUBLIC SCHOOLS	
	A	B	C	D
Percentage of Pupils Participating	46	68	93	95
Name Given to Dramatic Play	Mother Mother, Doctor Doctor, Teacher Teacher, Police and Robbers, Guess Who?	Mother Mother, Doctor Doctor, Teacher Teacher	Mother mother, Doctor Doctor, Teacher Teacher, Police and Robbers, Kalongo.	Chamama, Teacher Teacher, Let's Pretend, Mother Father.
Role Played	Mother, Teacher, Criminal, Movie Star, Pupil, Child, Footballer	Teacher, Doctor, Police Robber, Pupil, Michael Jordan	Mother, Teacher, Doctor, Judge, Robber, Naughty Pupil, Prefect.	Mother, Teacher, Soldier, Policeman
Percentage of Pupils who enjoyed	66	80	83	85
Reason for enjoyment	Evokes emotions, Funny Adventurous Teaches about life	-Socialising -Become someone else -Feel grown up -Experience future -Teaches not to be naughty.	-Teaches about life -Practise future career	-Teaches about life -Share ideas -Become someone else

KEY

A: Private high cost offering 1GSCE. **B:** Private offering 8-4-4.

C: Public in affluence residential area. **D:** Public in areas of medium/ low income areas.

As the table shows, majority of the pupils have participated in childhood dramatic play. In category C and D schools almost all the pupils (93% and 95% respectively) participated in the game. It is only in category A schools where less than half (46%) admitted to have participated in dramatic play. In Nairobi Academy for instance, only 36% of the pupils admitted having participated in the game. This lack of participation in an otherwise universal game may be attributed to a school culture where other games are more popular. One pupil admitted that she watched T.V. rather than participate in social games because she has no siblings and lives in a quiet estate. We may conclude that the more access children have to pursue forms of entertainment, for example computer games, the less likely it is for them to participate in social games like dramatic play.

The names children give to dramatic play are similar in the four categories of schools. Often the names given are characters that children impersonate in the game. The name further defines the context of the make - believe world that the children create. For instance in '*Mother Mother*' or '*Father Mother*' children play out family scenes in which there are characters such as mother, father, children sometimes relatives and a house-help. In this case the children dramatise their experiences in the family and the home in general.

The title '*Doctor Doctor*' reflects a hospital scene. This then is children's avenue of putting their experiences at hospital into perspective. Through re-enacting these experiences they come to terms with their feelings (often fear and apprehension). Eventually doctors become less frightening but more admirable characters.

Children spend between four to eight hours a day in school. Consequently many of their experiences are drawn from school. The variation of dramatic play under the name '*Teacher Teacher*' reflects children's school experience. Here children impersonate teachers, head teachers, and even other pupils such as the prefect or the naughty pupils. Often parents visit the school for various reasons such as on parent-teacher consultation. Such consultations are also reflected in the '*Teacher Teacher*' game.

The title '*Police and Robbers*' defines these two as the main characters in this game. In this case, children play out a situation in which there is a criminal and the law enforcement. It gives children an opportunity to not only feel powerful in the authority of policemen but also to vicariously exhibit errant behaviour of criminals.

Sometimes dramatic play is given a more general term such as '*Guess Who?*' or '*Let's pretend*'. In this case, children are not confined to act out defined characters but may impersonate anyone of their choice. In this variation of dramatic play then, a child may not need partners. On his own for instance, a child can imagine himself as Michael Jordan and act out the great athlete's life as he imagines it to be. It is also in this variation that we would find many characters from the T.V. movies and other imaginary super-human characters enacted. To satisfy their curiosity about

In the various situations, children enact a range of roles. In the family scenes for instance, roles such as father, mother and child are played. In order to experience adult careers, children play roles such as doctor, judge, teacher and policeman. Classroom experiences are re-enacted through the roles of teacher and pupils

(naughty pupil, prefect). Children also play roles of admired characters whom they do not come into direct contact with such as famous sportsmen and movie stars.

From the table (2.1), majority of the pupils who engaged in dramatic play enjoyed the experience. Varied reasons were given for this enjoyment. An analysis of the reasons for enjoyment given by the pupils reveals that dramatic play is a valuable experience to children.

According to the pupils, dramatic play teaches about life. This is achieved through the children experiencing other people's lives and other places. This experience of being someone else and living a different life is an adventure for children and thus adds to the enjoyment of the game.

The children also cited the fact that dramatic play is a social activity in which they share ideas as another reason for enjoying the game. Life values such as 'not to be naughty' are taught through dramatic play. We may add that perhaps it is more the manner in which these values are imparted than the value itself that is enjoyable to children. For instance, the naughty pupils or the robbers in dramatic play learn that their conduct is unacceptable through the vicarious punishments. Further play allows them to release their pent up emotions and to satisfy their curiosity about this errant behaviour. Consequently the desire to exhibit such forbidden conduct diminishes in real life.

The children also cited that dramatic play made them feel grown up. Being grown up is accompanied by responsibilities, decision making and authority all of which

reason why children enjoy dramatic play. As they play adult roles, children also get the opportunity to play out careers they would like to engage in future. This helps the children satisfy their curiosity and wonder at these careers and also to be a part of this 'admirable' world. As a result children derive enjoyment from these dramatic activities. The pupils' responses and literature related to dramatic play reveal that dramatic play is valuable not only as a source of enjoyment but also as a learning tool.

However, of the pupils interviewed a small percentage (21.5%) indicated that they did not enjoy dramatic play. The reasons given for this were that they did not understand the role of the character they were meant to play or that they had been forced to play a particular role. We may conclude that for children to derive enjoyment from dramatic play, the roles they play must be those that cause them interest and concern. Then the children will have the motivation to find out more about these characters.

The key difference between dramatic play and theatre is that while dramatic play is aimed at educating and entertaining the performers, theatre targets an audience set apart from the actors and thus makes use of scripts, rehearsals, elaborate costume, lighting and sound effects, all designed to enhance communication between the performer and the audience.

However, dramatic play and theatre share in that both use symbolism and role-play. The value that dramatic play has in children's personality development, therefore, suggests that theatre has a great potential to entertain, educate and develop personality. We shall next look at Nairobi children's involvement in theatre.

2.4: Nairobi Primary School Pupils' Participation in theatre.

In this section we shall determine to what extent children in Nairobi primary schools participate in theatre as actors and audience. We shall also determine what forms of theatre the pupils are exposed to. The table below shows pupils' participation in theatre (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Pupils participation in Theatre

Forms of participation	Percentage of Pupils Participating			
	PRIVATE SCHOOLS		PUBLIC SCHOOLS	
School Category	A	B	C	D
Play Reading	61%	40%	75%	62%
Audience	100%	85%	100%	85%
Acting	96%	55%	90%	60%
Play Creation	12%	47%	11%	17%

From the table it can be deduced that majority of the pupils in Nairobi primary schools have participated in theatre.

Private primary schools offering the 5-4-4 curriculum (Category B schools) also play reading as an access to theatre is not popular in the schools. For example in Category A schools, while 100% of the pupils have watched plays and 96% have acted in plays, only 61% of the pupils have read plays. In category B schools, only 40% of the pupils have read plays while 85% have watched plays. Moreover, as the pupils' response revealed, most of the pupils who have read plays have read only one or two and this often was a class reader. The questionnaire further revealed that most of the plays read by the pupils were, by nature of the language and themes, more suitable for secondary school students. For instance,

Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night Dream* was read in some schools as a class reader. Other plays read by pupils include Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Bride* by A. Bukenya and extracts of plays in the pupils text books such as '*Mkatili*', ed. Curtis, A.

This apparent unpopularity of play reading amongst the pupils can be accounted for by, as Nyambura Mpesha and Barnabas Kasigwa noted in interviews, the lack of published plays for children. They observed that publishers are reluctant to publish plays unless they are school textbooks. As such majority of the plays published and the plays that children get access to are for secondary level education.

The largest percentage of pupils have participated in theatre as audience. Although the schools Drama Festival organised by the Ministry of Education is open to all schools, the Category A schools do not participate in this festival. As such, of the pupils interviewed none of them had participated in the festival as audience or actors.

Private primary schools offering the 8-4-4 curriculum (Category B schools) also rarely participate in the Schools Drama Festival. According to the teachers interviewed in these schools, the 8-4-4 curriculum is 'too congested' to allow the pupils active participation in co-curricula activities. This category of schools is noted for stress on academic excellence. Consequently drama and other co-curricula activities are viewed as very time consuming. However, when we understand that drama does contribute to the development of intelligence, we realise that these schools are denying their pupils a valuable experience.

The public primary schools are actively involved in the drama festival and thus there is a larger percentage of pupils who have participated in the schools drama festival as performers or audience. Indeed Kawangware Primary School is renowned for its regular participation in the festival. Though the school is more interested in the dance-drama category, its participation affords an opportunity for the pupils to watch play performances by other schools.

Theatre going as an access to theatre is more common amongst pupils in Category A schools. In the Category D schools, for example, only 15% of the pupils interviewed have watched plays in theatres outside the school, while in Category A schools 78% of the pupils have been audiences at plays in theatres outside their schools. This difference may be accounted for by the fact that theatre is often times more expensive than other forms of entertainment. Nairobi City Players for example, charge an average of five hundred shillings (Sh. 500) and two hundred and fifty shillings (Sh. 250) for adults and children respectively. To the medium and low income earners, theatre could then be viewed as a luxury beyond their means.

The difference in the theatre-going trend amongst the different categories of schools may also suggest that much of the theatre performed by consistent theatre groups in Nairobi does not appeal to majority of indigenous Kenyans who stay in the city. As interviews revealed, some of the most consistent theatre groups in Nairobi such as Phoenix Theatre and Nairobi City Players have a western bias in their choice of productions. It is also worth noting that a large percentage of pupils who watch plays are from category A schools which comprises pupils from the expatriate community.

Many of the pupils interviewed have watched plays in their own schools or in other schools. The Category A schools for example, produce a school play annually and invite other schools and members of the public to watch the performance. Pupils also perform short plays for other pupils on special days such as Parents-Day.

In the Category A schools almost all the pupils have been involved in acting. As already mentioned these schools produce a school play annually. The actors are drawn from the students body. In the past years for example, The Nairobi Academy has put up productions such as '*Mary Poppins*', '*The Wizard of Oz*', '*A Boy Called Tom*' and '*The Boyfriend*'. The pupils also get an opportunity to act short plays during assembly. For example in Rusinga School, every week a class is assigned to conduct the assembly. This affords the pupils an opportunity to act short plays.

In other schools (Category B, C and D) much of the acting is done on special days such as Parents-Day and Prize-Giving day. The plays and improvisations acted on these occasions are often created by the teachers for the entertainment of the parents and for moral teaching of the pupils. Such plays acted include '*Mtoto Umleyavyo*', '*Asiyefunzwa na Mamaye*' and '*The Disobedient Girl*'.

The church is another forum in which children can participate in theatre. This form of theatre is apparently more popular amongst pupils in Category C schools than in other categories. In the church, children and youth often act out sections of the Bible or short plays emphasising a Christian moral. The *Mavuno* Drama Festival for

instance is a church based drama festival in which children and youth of various churches participate.

As Table 2.2 shows, pupils are usually not involved in the creation of the plays they perform. Some of the plays, such as the school play performed annually in category A schools, are adaptations from children's story books. Many of the plays performed on assembly and on Parents-Days are meant to emphasise a moral as suggested by their titles. Plays performed during the schools drama festival are often purely creations of the teachers because of the competitive nature of the festival. Teachers will often select plays that appeal more to the adjudicators than to the child audience and actor.

We can conclude here that the majority of the pupils in Nairobi primary schools are exposed to theatre through performing and watching of plays. In Chapter Three we shall determine whether these plays performed and watched by children are suitable for them.

2.5: Nairobi Theatre Artists' Involvement in Children's Theatre

One of the assumptions of this study was that the value of children's theatre as entertainment or as a tool for education has not been appreciated by Nairobi theatre artists. Five theatre groups namely: *Chelepe Arts, Amani People's Theatre, Phoenix Theatre, The Story-tellers and Nairobi City Players* were interviewed. These were taken to be representative of the variety of the theatre groups existing in Nairobi. In this section we shall examine these theatre groups' involvement in children's theatre and attempt an explanation for the nature of their participation.

Of the groups interviewed, only one - *The Story-tellers* - has children as its main target group. *The Story-tellers* is a semi-professional theatre group that was established in 1993 with the objectives of entertaining, educating and creating environmental awareness among children. According to the group, it has chosen children as the target group because this 'is the untargeted age-group in Kenya'. Some of the productions this group has put up for children in the past include: '*The Adventures of Brer Rabbit*', '*The Ogre and the Woman*', '*The Amazing Cat*' and '*The Beer Drinking Party*'. As the name of the group suggests, *The Story-tellers* fall back on traditional Kenyan folklore and story telling techniques in its productions. *The Story-tellers* retell folklore but take into account changes in modern society. For example, the traditional story-telling space around the fire is no longer there and has been replaced by the stage. While in the traditional context, a story would have one main performer, *The Story-tellers* use different actors to perform the different roles. They appeal to today's audience by using modern costume such as jeans and sunglasses for the animal characters. *The Story-tellers* however has not been consistent in its productions as is evidenced by the fact that in the last twelve months it has not put up a performance.

As such the only theatre group currently catering for children is *Nairobi City Players*. This is an amateur theatre group established in 1956. Every Christmas time the group puts up a pantomime. On these occasions many children accompanied by their parents or in school troupes come to watch the performances. These pantomimes are usually based on European folklore and in the past, the group has performed pantomimes such as '*Little Red Riding Hood*', '*Cinderella*' and '*Sleeping Beauty*'.

The other groups interviewed gave varied reasons for their non-participation in children's theatre. *Phoenix Theatre*, for instance said that children's theatre is outside the scope of their performance. *Chelepe Arts* said that it did not perform ostensibly for children for fear of monetary loss. However an analysis of the groups' responses gives further insight into the problem. Two of the groups rely on published plays for their productions, two on their own original scripts and one on improvisations. As noted earlier, there is a dearth of published plays for children. As such a theatre group that solely relies on published plays for its productions will rarely perform plays for children. *Nairobi City Players* relies on adaptations of story books for its productions. The advantage of adaptations is that these stories are already known and are often enjoyed by children. The performance of the story is likely to get much better audience reception than the retelling of the original story.

Of the factors that influence a group's choice of the play to be performed (Appendix 1B Question 6), the status of the audience ranks first. This is to say that the artists assess their audience and give them what they would like to watch. For instance *Phoenix Players* often performs nineteenth century European theatre. This choice of play is based on the taste of the audience which is mainly composed of the expatriate community.

Contemporary issues in the country ranks second in the influence of the choice of the play to be performed. Of the five groups interviewed, three of them, *Chelepe Arts*, *Amani* and *Story-tellers*, perform plays with a specifically Kenyan setting. The groups' non-performance of children's plays would give the misconception that there are no issues in children's lives that need addressing. This suggests that

theatre artists have not appreciated the potential of theatre as a tool to entertain and educate children. Thus though none of the groups admitted that they had never thought of performing for children (Appendix 1B Question 9(iii)) it is quite possible that many of the theatre artists in Nairobi have not given children's theatre much thought.

In spite of most group's non-participation in children's theatre, all groups consider a children's play production more difficult to mount than an adult play. The main difference is seen to lie on the fact that children have a different scope of reality from adults. As such the artist has to match the story and the techniques with the intelligence and reality of the child's mind. Moreover, as the chairman of *Nairobi City Players*, Francis Catemole, noted, children in the audience also have varying scopes of reality. While some children will, for example understand that theatre is make-believe, others will view it as reality. The artist therefore has to use varying techniques to bridge fantasy and reality.

In conclusion we may say that Nairobi theatre artists' participation in children's theatre has not improved over the years. There are no theatre groups that consistently put up plays for children. Children who frequent theatres outside the school do not watch children's plays except perhaps at Christmas time. What they are exposed to is adult theatre.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1: Introduction

This chapter is an analysis of the forms of theatre that pupils in primary schools in Nairobi are exposed to. In chapter two, it was observed that pupils are exposed to three main forms of theatre namely; the Schools and Colleges Drama Festival, the school play and plays performed by theatre groups within the city.

We shall analyse the plot, characters, theme and style of these plays to determine whether what Nairobi primary school pupils are exposed to is suitable for them.

Plot refers to the plan of action of a play from the beginning to the end. It is 'the thread that holds the fabric of the story together' (Huck 1979). In analysing the plot, we look at how events are interrelated and how they develop from the beginning, through the complication in the middle to the resolution at its end.

In characterisation we look at the various roles acted out. We are interested in the various aspects of each character, such as the age, personality, what they represent and the message conveyed through them, the motivation of their actions, how they react to situations they find themselves in, the interpersonal relationship among characters and what effect all these have on the audience.

In analysing the theme, we shall look at the meaning of a play, that is, the message conveyed through the play. A play can have several layers of meaning.

As we analyse the themes, we shall determine whether any of the meanings or messages in the play are relevant to the child audience.

In theatre style refers to 'the way in which a story is acted and produced.' (Ommanney 1960). In analysing the style, we shall determine whether the techniques employed in the play production and the general composition of the play facilitate communication with the child audience.

3.2: The Primary Schools Drama Festival

The Schools Drama Festival was started in 1959 by the British Council, the East African Theatre Guild and the Ministry of Education. Formally the festival did not include the primary schools but in 1980, Wasambo Were, the first African organising secretary to the festival, initiated the primary schools into the festival.

The Schools and Colleges Drama Festival managed by the Kenya Drama Festival Committee under the auspices of the Ministry of Education draws participants from schools from all over the country. As observed in Chapter Two, pupils participating as audience or actors at the festival are mainly from public schools.

Items presented at the festival are play, creative dramatic dance and dramatised verse. Items presented at the national level of the festival must successfully go through the zonal, district and provincial levels of the competition. As such, items presented at the national level are considered the best productions from each province. Initially only items in English were eligible for the festival but now

institutions may have entries in English, Kiswahili as well as other Kenyan languages.

The plays eligible for the festival may be published, adapted (published or unpublished) or original unpublished material. As there are awards to be won, there is a panel of adjudicators who award marks to items presented. The marks in the play category are awarded as follows.

(i) Choice of play	10%
(ii) Acting	40%
(iii) Production	30%
(iv) Costume and Decor	10%
(v) Originality/achievement	10%
Total	100%

(Kenya National Drama Festival, 1994; 13)

The festival has the following objectives:

- (a) To educate and re-educate our people to appreciate our cultural values.
- (b) To preserve what is good in our cultures and allow for innovations.
- (c) To promote culture which portrays a national image and identity.
- (d) To sustain nationalism by inculcating tolerance and openness amongst citizens.
- (e) To develop positive character traits and a strong sense of self-discipline.
- (f) To develop the participants' eloquence in expressing their ideas and feelings so as to enable them to communicate effectively and convincingly in their daily lives.
- (g) To inculcate sharp critical attitudes which enable the participants to accommodate new ideas and adjust to different situations.

(h) To bring together all the artistically talented individuals and create opportunity for sharing experiences and problems with a common goal of promoting a National Culture.

(i) To educate and create awareness on topical issues affecting society.

(Kenya National Drama Festival 1994;1)

Embodied in these objectives is the belief in the potential of theatre to educate, create awareness and shape attitudes in the young growing child. The objectives (e), (g) and (i) are specifically related to the participant. The participant in the primary schools drama festival are majorly children of ten to fifteen years. If these objectives are to be achieved, the principles of children's theatre then have to be adhered to. Analysing whether the drama festival plays are suitable for the child audience and actor, is in a sense determining whether these objectives are achieved.

The 1996 National Drama Festival was held between 4th and 11th April that year at Lenana High School. There were 14 plays performed by primary schools from all over the country during the festival. Nairobi Province was represented by Nairobi Primary School and Drive-in Primary School with the plays *The Will* and *Daraja Iliyovinjika* respectively. Here we analyse *The Will* as a microcosm of plays presented by primary schools.

3.2.1: *The Will* (Appendix 3a)

The play develops through a well-knit plot. The conflict is introduced at the onset. Chief Yanga is already ailing when the play opens and is struggling against pain. This problem intensifies as each wife comes on the scene and claims what she

thinks is her rightful inheritance. Relatives also come on the scene expecting to get part of the dying man's property. Chief Yanga can no longer get treatment as each wife recommends a different procedure of treatment. On the Chief's death bed, the 'wives' start fresh arguments about where he should be buried. However, these conflicts are resolved at the end of the play when it is revealed that the chief had indeed drawn a will. A lawyer intervenes and reads out the chief's will. The chief is to be buried in his rural *Shamba*. The will also describes how the chief's property will be shared amongst the three wives.

This plot however lacks sufficient suspense which would keep the audience, particularly a child audience, eager to find out what will happen next. Indeed Siks (1977) recommends adventures for primary school children. In adventures there is much action, suspense and heroic characters struggling against great odds.

We may conclude that in its plot, this play is developed from an adult point of view and so lacks immediate appeal for children.

Nonetheless, the play addresses an issue that has become pertinent in our Kenyan society. It is not uncommon that when a prominent personality dies, women, previously unheard of, step out and claim to be the deceased's wives. They go as far as presenting children and photographs of a happy family as evidence. What follows then is often a lengthy lawsuit as each warring wife claims her rights as the deceased's wife. While some of the claims may be true it is not unlikely that the claims are motivated by greed. As the play portrays, the women are not really concerned about the chief's health. They do not even give him the peace of mind that will enhance recovery as they keep pestering him, attempting to draw his

attention to them. They are merely interested in what they can get out of him. As such, we conclude that the women have not associated with chief Yanga because of who he is but because of the material wealth he can give them. The play thus deals with materialism in society and the consequent strife that erodes family units.

At another level, the play depicts a major conflict that arises in a polygamous family. Polygamy, the play depicts, breeds bitterness, anger, hatred and self-centredness as each wife tries to secure her position in the family. The result is a disintegrated family.

How do these issues relate to the child audience? Children are part of the family structure and are affected by strife within it. As the play depicts, in a polygamous family children are taught to hate and to be selfish. As injustices are perpetrated on them, children become victims of the adult conflicts. It is adults who are materialistic as they are the ones who understand the real value of property. As such the play addresses an adult problem. Children get caught up in this adult strife but they are not urgent issues in their lives as they may not understand the conflict. The play thus appeals less to children because it does not present issues through their point of view.

The play has five major characters namely, Chief Yanga, his sister and his three wives. While the chief is absent from the scene almost throughout the play, he is the character around whom all actions revolve. It is he who, though his imminent death, has drawn together the other characters. When the play opens, he is already dying. We however get a glimpse of him in his heydays as a politician. This is revealed through a flashback. We see him then as powerful and influential.

As each of the wives presents her case, she represents a character type. The city wife, for example, represents the modern woman who dwells in the city and has severed links with rural life. On the other hand, the rural wife still holds onto the traditional beliefs of her community and thus insists that certain traditional burial rites must be adhered to. The Muslim wife brings religion into the conflict. Her religion demands that certain rituals and procedures be followed. The chief's sister comes on the scene to represent the chief's family ties. The relatives feel he has an obligation which he must meet towards them. Consistent with their character, each wife demands what she thinks is beneficial to her. The city wife, for instance, insists that the urban home and estate are hers.

Adults in the audience may be drawn to sympathise with at least one of the characters. However, for the child audience, there is no character whom they really identify with. Davies and Watkins (1960) recommend children and animal characters in children's plays. Children are fascinated by animal characters who behave like human beings. They identify with children characters who are physically small. Furthermore the children characters get into situations that children can identify with.

In this play, there is only one child character. This is the son of Chief Yanga's city wife. His role in the play is to show how children are caught up in adult conflicts. He witnesses the women quarrelling and arguing but does not take sides for he does not understand the argument. His mother claims that he is the rightful inheritor of all the chief's property. Even then the boy does not utter a word or show agreement or disagreement. He is occasionally sent on errands to the shop, the

coffin maker or to see to his father's needs. He is passive as the strife goes on in the family. The conflict begins, intensifies and is even resolved without the boy's involvement. In the play, the boy has no goal to struggle to achieve and so he remains uninvolved in the action. This portrayal of the boy, while realistic, would not draw much interest among child audiences because of the passive nature of the character. The play would have appealed more to children had the boy been the main character and the struggle presented through his eyes.

The reviewer observed that the child audience found it

Children's theatre requires that ideas are presented in concrete terms - the manner in which children think. The play succeeded in communicating aspects of character through costume. As the actors came on stage, their costume immediately conveyed to the audience who they were. For instance, Chief Yanga's smart suit and pot-belly marked him out as a wealthy man by society's standards. The dressing of the three wives also sets out the background of each. The Muslim wife for example, was clad in a *buibui* while the rural wife tied a head scarf. In general we can say that this contrast symbolises the conflict within the play.

The play however lacks the kind of action which would keep children engrossed. It relies heavily on verbal communication which requires the audience to keenly follow each character's argument to get the drift of the conflict. Children do not have the concentration to follow forty minutes of verbal argument. Furthermore, the argument is in a language that adults use (as these are adult characters) which is often above children's level of understanding.

one of the plays, *Start of Ago*, directly addressed the audience thus: 'Parents are here advised to carefully monitor the growth of their children so that they do not grow like Michael' (Michael has

* A garment worn by Muslim women on top of other garments as a religious practice

The play at one instance utilises the flashback technique. When the play opens, Chief Yanga is already ailing. A flashback is employed to show Chief Yanga in his heydays as a politician. This shows what a great man Yanga once was and contrasts this with his present ailing condition. The technique however may confuse children who have not been able to follow the conversations and arguments well.

The diviner cum medicine man who is called in by the rural wife provides brief comic relief in the play. The researcher observed that the child audience found it humorous as the diviner went through his apparently unintelligible diviner's chant. This provided the kind of comic relief that children love.

This play ran for approximately forty minutes. However, although the casting and the acting of the play were well done, it can not be considered as children's theatre for it did not address children.

The Will could be considered as a microcosm of the plays that are presented by primary schools at the Schools Drama Festival. The plays carried various themes such as misuse of power, exploitation by rich employers, marital problems and the street children phenomenon. These issues are prevalent in our society and in most cases children are victims of the conflicts. Children, for example, go into the streets and suffer because of problems created by their parents or the adult world. As such many plays which carry these themes mainly address adults to show them where they have gone wrong in parenting. Indeed, one of the plays, *Tears of Agony*, directly addressed the audience thus; 'Parents are here advised to carefully monitor the growth of their children so that they do not grow like Michael'. (Michael has turned out to be an errant husband who is lured away from his family by

opportunistic women). Such a statement clearly shows that the play targets an adult audience. Techniques employed in the plays such as flashback, further make the message difficult for children to understand. The flashback technique may be confusing to children especially if the past and the present are not clearly demarcated.

It can be concluded that plays presented at the Primary Schools Drama Festival are designed for an adult audience. Andrew Gurr, an adjudicator at the 1971 Schools Drama Festival, questioned whether a play should be designed to captivate the judges or for the benefit of the actors and audience (Mumma, 1987). This should still be a pertinent question in the Primary Schools Drama Festival. Although Curr's concern was mainly with the style of presentation, we can extend the question to embrace the relevance of the themes in the plays. The actors and the majority of the audience are children but as observed, the plays by nature of the themes and style do not address children.

However, one play presented at the 1996 Primary Schools Drama Festival, did strike the researcher as leaning towards children's theatre. This play, *The Game of Junkies* is discussed next.

3.2.2: *The Game of Junkies* (Appendix 3b)

Presented by Taveta Primary School (Coast Province).

The play develops through a well-knit plot. Initially there is only one problem- Sophie's loss of her parents. But this problem gets complicated as the story unfolds. We learn that their death is not natural but a result of murder. The problem

intensifies when the murderers demand money from Sophie. The problem reaches a crisis when the murderers kidnap Sophie. However, a resolution is arrived at and the murderers are taken away by police.

The play is full of suspense. From the onset, there are questions that the audience seek answers to. For instance, when the play opens, Sophie is weeping by her parents' graves. Immediately, we want to know what caused their death. The Mafia are soon seen spying around Sophie's house. The audience wonder who these are and what they want from Sophie. The suspense heightens when the gang kidnaps Sophie. The audience wonder what they will do with her and whether the *Black Zinjas* will find her. If they do, will they be able to rescue her? How will they fight the armed guards? At the end we wonder whether The *Black Zinjas* will betray their newly set out path away from drugs and crime by killing the murderers.

There is a lot of action throughout the play. For instance, at one point the boys are 'high' on drugs or attempting to steal Sophie's purse. There is the gang chasing Sophie and escaping from the house through a window. There is the kidnapping of Sophie and the fight between The Mafia and The *Black Zinjas*. Such action is necessary for it keeps the audience, especially children whose concentration span is short, engrossed in the play.

At the end, the criminals are caught and the audience, through the decision of the *Black Zinjas*, are encouraged to do good. As a result of their fight against evil, the *Black Zinjas* acquire a respectable status in society. Sophie wins herself new friends and a peaceful life. This positive ending appeals to children.

This play addresses the problem of drug abuse. It explores greed for wealth as a possible cause of extensive drug trafficking. For example, Sophie's parents acquired millions from drug trafficking. As such, the more people indulge in drug abuse, the more money the traffickers make.

Street children are shown as abusing drugs for the apparent relief it gives them from their immediate problems such as hunger and lack of shelter. This temporary relief blinds them to the far-reaching effects of drug abuse. As the play reveals, drug abuse deteriorates physical and mental health. When Kevin and Teddy take drugs, they get the temporary illusion that all is well. Their basic needs however remain unmet. When the effect of the drug is over, they are still destitute. Furthermore, the street boys spend any money they get in purchasing drugs and so remain in the quagmire of destitution. As a result they engage in petty crime to get money to spend on drugs. More serious crimes are committed by those more caught up in the web of drug abuse. Nicodemus and Nicholas (the drug traffickers) are ruthless killers. They do not hesitate to do anything to get what they want.

While drug abuse is a problem that can affect adults and children in society, the play presents this problem as it affects the young adolescents. Drugs reach children through adults like Nicodemus and Nicholas for whom drug trafficking is an economic venture. Drugs become a problem to children when they have to make the choice of whether or not to indulge in them. The play shows that they are dangerous and whether presented by adults or whether they seem to give apparent relief, children should say 'No' to drugs as do Sophie, Teddy and Kevin. The play

Taveta Primary School drama teacher commented, 'Sophie is the character that led

thus addresses children of Sophie's, Teddy's and Kevin's age (upper primary) and shows them that drugs are not a solution to problems.

While this message is very important, it is not expressed overtly but is impressed implicitly through the plot, characters and the acting. The characters in this play can be grouped into two; the good and the bad. The good are Sophie, Teddy and Kevin while the bad are Nicodemus and Nicholas (the drug traffickers). The play therefore is essentially a struggle between the good and the bad. It is worthwhile to note that the good characters are children.

Sophie is the protagonist. She is an innocent victim of drug related crime. One of her greatest qualities is her determination to fight evil. She recognises that the drug dealers are criminals and is determined not to associate with them or to profit them by giving them the money they demand. Sophie is also friendly and unprejudiced. Though she is wealthy she does not despise the street boys for their poverty and filth. Rather she recognises their predicament and helps them out of it. It is as a result of this friendship that the boys in turn help her when she is in trouble.

As the protagonist, Sophie comes up with the solution to the problem. The police and her aunt (adults), do not help her. The solution does not easily come by. Sophie has to fight for her life bravely and with determination. It is believable that she, a young girl of twelve, cannot fight the two murderers alone and so her friends, Teddy and Kevin, come in to help her.

Sophie is thus an admirable character whom children would identify with. As the Taveta Primary School drama teacher commented, 'Sophie is the character that left

everyone who watched the play agape ... School, zonal, divisional that way up to the national, the character was not only admired by fellow characters but also received gifts from different quarters'.

Aunt Betty is necessary in the play for her to be the parent image. She gives the Teddy and Kevin, who are street boys, may not initially strike the audience as 'good'. We first encounter them "high" on drugs. They attempt to steal Sophie's purse and to flirt with her. However, as the boys grumble about their persistent hunger and other sufferings, we identify them as victims of a harsh world. Their indulgence in drugs is for the temporary relief from suffering and their petty crime is a means of survival. When they denounce crime and set out to help Sophie the audience is left with no doubt that they are good.

As a reflection of their new mission in life, the street boys now call themselves *The Black Zinjas*. Mr. Mwaniki, the school drama teacher explained that '*Zinja*' is the localised pronunciation of '*Ninja*' and was used to appeal to the Taita audience and actors and also so as not "to employ the *Ninjas* in an otherwise original composition". It is obvious however that the *Black Zinjas* were playing out the role of *Ninja* in the movies - strong, fearless helper of the helpless.

The 'bad' characters, Nicholas and Nicodemus, are ruthless, greedy, cowardly and treacherous. They have murdered Sophie's parents and taken advantage of the plight of the street boys to exploit them. They are also depicted as not very intelligent. We laugh at how easily Sophie dodges them and leaves them confused when she escapes from the house through the window. They are easily tricked by the *Black Zinjas* and in spite of their being heavily armed, are overpowered by the two boys. Their treacherous nature comes to the fore when at the mercy of the

Black Zinjas, they blame each other for their predicament. By poking fun at them rather than evoking sympathy, the playwright paints the drug traffickers as villains.

Aunt Bertty is necessary in the play for she gives the parent image. She gives the sense of security which is important in children's lives. She is also important in the play because she emphasises the qualities of the others. Her despondence, fear and irresolution are contrasted with the fearless determination of Sophie and the *Black Zinjas*. Her fear also reflects the ruthlessness of the thugs who are the cause of the fear. The other role she plays is tipping the police when she becomes too anxious of the *Black Zinjas'* plan to rescue Sophie. However, the police arrive at the scene when all is done and all they have to do is take the criminals away.

The style employed in this play is suitable for children. For instance, the play evolves through much action. Action in this play is not just to carry the story forward; it is used to convey the message in concrete terms. For example, the adverse effects of drug abuse are reflected through the chants and drunken movement of the street boys and their attempts to steal from Sophie. The same is reflected through the murder of Sophie's parents. The lesson of the play is thus imparted implicitly through the action rather than through moralising phrases.

At several instances action is a source of humour. For instance we laugh at how easily the drug traffickers are tricked by Sophie and later by the *Black Zinjas*. The attempts of the street boys to lure Sophie at the beginning of the play are also amusing.

As the main characters in this play were children, the language was within the level of the primary school children unlike many other plays with basically adult characters. As Mr. Mwaniki commented, the children did not understand the 'jargon' of many plays.

(iii) *Back* - Oliver is in the line of food, clothing, shelter, love and security.

The play also utilised sound effects to enhance suspense in moments of danger and tension.

(iv) *Appearance of Danes* - Oliver accidentally encounters Mr. Brownlow who it is for these reasons that we consider this play suitable for a child audience.

(v) *Test by donors* - Oliver is asked what he is given back and

3.3: The School Play (Appendix 3c)

As observed in chapter two, some of the private schools that do not participate in the Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festival put up a school play annually. These plays may be straight plays (where music and dance is not a major component) or musicals. The plays are performed by the pupils for the school community and the general public. Here we discuss the play *Oliver*, performed by St. Mary's School in 1996. The school has previously performed plays such as *Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat* (1995), *Pirates of Penanze* (1994) and *Fiddler on the Roof* (1993).

This fairy tale pattern sets a struggle between good and evil. Good triumphs.

The play, *Oliver* is an adaptation of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. The story of Oliver has a great appeal to children because it follows the fairy tale pattern. According to Propp (1968), fairy tales have a basic morphological pattern based on the functions of the *dramatis personae*. A fairy tale can have a maximum of thirty one functions (fundamental components of the tale). *Oliver* exhibits the following functions: *King who begs the child audience to stand up for what is good.*

- (i) **Absentation:-** Oliver's parents are dead and there is no immediate family to take him up.
- (ii) **Villainy:-** Oliver is put under the charge of Mr. Bumble and Mr. Sowerberry both who exploit him.
- (iii) **Lack:-** Oliver is in dire need of food, clothing, shelter, love and security.
- (iv) **Departure:-** Oliver leaves the workhouse in the hope of finding a better life in the city.
- (v) **Appearance of Donor:-** Oliver accidentally encounters Mr. Brownlow who will, in future, lead him out of misery.
- (vi) **Test by donor:-** Oliver's honesty is tested when he is given books and money to take to the library.
- (vii) **Pursuit:-** Oliver is pursued by Fagin's gang who are afraid that he might report them to the police. He is captured.
- (viii) **Rescue:-** Oliver is rescued from the gang by the police and Mr. Brownlow
- (ix) **Transfiguration:-** Mr. Brownlow discovers that Oliver is his nephew and adopts him. Oliver acquires new status (son of wealthy Brownlow).
- (x) **Punishment:-** The villains - Mr Bumble, Sowerberry, Bill and the petty thieves are punished by law.

This fairy tale pattern entails a struggle between good and evil. Good triumphs while the evil characters are punished at the end. The punishment and rewards in this story are tangible. Oliver is rewarded by becoming a son to wealthy Mr. Brownlow as a result of his honesty. He can now have all the things (food, clothing, love, shelter) that he has always longed for. Mr. Bumble is demoted from his job as caretaker of the orphanage, Bill is killed and the other petty thugs are imprisoned. Such an ending encourages the child audience to stand up for what is good.

Wants the orphan to be adopted by the rich and the effects of the orphan's journey.

There is much suspense throughout the play. Oliver is an innocent victim and the audience identify with him. The audience sympathise with his poverty but fear for him when he asks Mr. Bumble for more food. There is much suspense when Oliver is told to pick Mr. Brownlow's pocket and when he is falsely accused. Knowing that Fagin's gang is waiting for him, the audience wonder whether Oliver will reach the library and return to Mr. Brownlow's safely. Such suspense keeps the audience engrossed in the story.

Mr. Brownlow who are wealthy but kindhearted. The child audience is worried to see what the wife as it is they who help Oliver. The

The story unfolds through much action. In this adaptation, only the action scenes are included. For instance the play opens, not with the birth and consequent naming of Oliver (Dickens, 1979), but with Oliver already in the boarding house. There is a lot of action throughout Oliver's escape, recapture and on the streets as the boys attempt to pick pockets. Such action helps to keep the child audience engrossed in the play.

Oliver Twist exposes the evils of nineteenth century London society. It reveals the society as being composed of two basic strata; the rich and the poor. Dickens shows that the abject poverty of the majority of the people is a result of exploitation by the wealthy. The worst affected by this exploitation are children. At the height of the industrial revolution and with capitalism gaining root, children would offer cheap labour as does Oliver at Sowerberry's parlour. Dickens shows the injustices perpetrated by greed in society. Although Oliver is disadvantaged from birth (an orphan) he suffers more through society than as a result of fate.

is linked to Oliver and prevent him from keeping to the path of goodness. These are Bill, Bumble, Sowerberry and Fagin and Nancy (before reassessing them later).

While the dynamics of social stratification and the effects of capitalism are basically adult concerns, the story of Oliver brings them down to a level children can understand. Oliver is a child and is the protagonist and consequently the child audience identify with him. Through him children understand the plight of the poor. Poverty means lack of food, clothing, shelter and protection as expressed through Oliver. The child audience is presented with two types of wealthy people. There are those who are wealthy but also greedy and cruel, such as Bumble and Sowerberry. Then there are those like Brownlow who are wealthy but kind-hearted. The child audience is encouraged to be like the latter as it is they who help Oliver. The punishments meted on Sowerberry and Bumble encourage the child to abhor greed.

with the household.

The ending of the play leaves the audience with the conclusion to be unshakeably moral. In spite of the problems Oliver faces, he makes the choice to remain honest. It is because of his honesty that Brownlow decides to help him. At the end Oliver is rewarded for his honesty - he is adopted by Brownlow and can live in security.

belonging in a world of his needs. Oliver has to meet the great challenge of

Although this story is set in 19th century London, it is still relevant today. After such a theatre experience, the child audience now has some idea of the life of street children in Nairobi for if Oliver were in Nairobi today, he would be a street boy.

the sons to run an errand for Brownlow). The 'bad' characters are stumbling blocks

Dickens's characters are basically types - they represent ideas. They can be classified as the good and the bad. Oliver is the protagonist. The good characters are those who sympathise with him and help him. These are Mr. Brownlow and later on Nancy and Fagin. The bad characters are those that are unkind to Oliver and prevent him from keeping to the path of goodness. These are Bill, Bumble, Sowerberry and Fagin and Nancy (before reassessing their lives).

Oliver is an innocent victim of both fate and man. Soon after his birth, he is orphaned and is left under the charge of Bumble. However, Oliver suffers not so much because he is an orphan but because the people the authorities have appointed to take care of orphans are greedy and exploitative. In spite of his suffering, Oliver is honest, loyal, thankful and strong-willed. For example, Fagin's gang show him that he can make a living by picking pockets but he refuses to associate with crime. The novel (Dickens 1979) carries a scene in which Oliver is forced to enter a house through a window by Bill. He is supposed to get into the house, steal jewellery and bring it to Bill. Oliver however attempts to run upstairs to warn the household.

for Bill when he kills Nancy. But at the end of the play all the

bad characters get just punishment for mistreating Oliver

Oliver's struggle is to meet his basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and love. He runs away from Sowerberry's parlour because he does not get these. He is easily lured by The Artful Dodger because Dodger offers him friendship and a sense of belonging. In pursuit of his needs Oliver has to meet the great challenge of remaining honest at whatever cost. His eventual good fortune is dependent on his remaining honest throughout. Mr. Brownlow decides to help him although by then he does not know he is Oliver's uncle because Oliver is honest and shows gratitude (he asks to run an errand for Brownlow). The 'bad' characters are stumbling blocks to Oliver's path of honesty. When they realise that they can not involve Oliver in their criminal activities they kidnap him thus keeping him away from Mr. Brownlow who will meet his needs.

These are rewards and such characters are rewarded while

the bad characters who are greedy, cruel and dishonest are punished. Fagin, Due to his positive qualities Oliver becomes the character that the audience sympathise with. Children specially identify with him for he is a child like them.

The role played by Mr. Brownlow is that of a kindly, honest man.

Mr. Brownlow is 'good' because he helps Oliver. He is a man after justice and therefore drops charges against Oliver because he is convinced that Oliver is not a pick-pocket. He nurses Oliver when he is recovering from the bullet wound. He shows trust when he gives Oliver books and money to take to the library. It is to the joy of Oliver and the audience to discover that Brownlow is Oliver's uncle.

All the bad characters evoke contempt from the audience as they mistreat Oliver and keep him away from his good fortune. The audience attitude toward Nancy changes when she resolves to return Oliver to Mr. Brownlow. The audience thus have more contempt for Bill when he kills Nancy. But at the end of the play all the bad characters get just punishment for mistreating Oliver.

The play presents concrete images that children can understand. The wealthy characters for example are presented in suits complete with hats while the poor often are in tattered clothes. There is further contrast between Oliver and Mr. Bumble. While Oliver is tooth-pick thin, Bumble as the sound of his name suggests is extremely fat. Mr. Sowerberry's name suggests a bitter and cruel nature (sour berry). Such are names that children would find amusing, easily remember and create associations with.

The idea of good and bad is presented physically through characters. Good virtues such as honesty and kindness are exalted and such characters are rewarded while the bad characters who are greedy, cruel and dishonest are punished. Fagin, although he was initially a petty criminal is not caught by the police because he has made up his mind to denounce crime. He therefore does not deserve punishment.

This role played by Fagin is part of the script writer's ingenuity. The story of Oliver (Dickens 1979) does not show Fagin repentant. He is therefore caught by the police and sentenced to public hanging. Nancy dies for although she realises that crime is cruel she does not fully disengage with Bill. Her death emphasises that one cannot mix good and evil. Such consequences impress upon the children to practise virtue.

While the novel does not contain many humorous incidents, the play on stage transforms some scenes into humour. For example when Mr. Bumble is chasing Oliver, the audience get excitement on seeing the fat Bumble run and fall over. It is also fun to see the fat, cruel Mrs. Sowerberry pushed by Oliver and fall into an open coffin. In the fight between Mr. Bumble and his wife it is to the audience's delight that Mr. Bumble is overpowered by his wife. However, humour derived from speech does not appeal to children mainly because they do not understand it. For instance, in the fight between Mr. Bumble and his wife, the reference to 'Beijing' that draws laughter from the adult audience, escapes the children. Later when Bumble is forwarded to the authorities for his misuse of public funds, he shifts the blame to his wife. The prosecutor however insists that it is the responsibility of Mr. Bumble, as the man, to make decisions. Mr Bumble retorts, 'If the law thinks that, the law is an ass!' For the adult who has diligently followed the speech in which Mrs. Bumble tells her husband that they are in the 'Beijing era', Mr. Bumble's retort is well in place. It is quite humorous that the law expects Mr. Bumble as a man to be the head of his home yet we know that Mrs. Bumble has overpowered him both physically and in decision making.

The play is designed as a musical and so utilises many songs and dances. Often the characters sing out their thoughts rather than engage in monologue. For children, following a monologue would be tedious for it is passive. Thus to keep the audience's concentration and to help them remember the scene, song accompanied by dance, is employed. For instance, Nancy sings her devotion to Bill in spite of the fact that he is a criminal. She sings:

As long as he needs me
... In spite of who you are...

Fagin reflects on his involvement in crime when he sings:

Reviewing the situation ...
Can a fellow be a villain all his life?

Consequently he decides to live a clean life. Characters also use song to express their philosophy in life. This gives the audience insight into their character. For example, Sowerberry, the undertaker sings:

'That's your funeral'

This reveals him as a callous man who does not care about humanity. The audience sympathise with Oliver who is sold to work for him.

Initially Fagin is an unscrupulous criminal who hoards his wealth. He thus sings:

In life one thing counts
In the bank, large amounts!
I'm afraid these don't grow on trees
You've got to pick a pocket or two.

Songs also help in creating the mood that reflects the character's state. For example, in the workhouse the hungry boys sing in anticipation of food.

Food glorious food
Hot sausages mustard...

This song reflects the boys desperate situation.

When Oliver runs away from Sowerberry and has nowhere to go, he sings;

Where is love?
Does it fall from skies above?
Who can say where love may hide?
Must I travel far and wide?

His song evokes sympathy from the audience. His earnest search for love prepares him to accept The Artful Dodger's offer.

When Artful Dodger extends friendship to Oliver rather than engage in speech, he sings:

Consider yourself at home
Consider yourself one of the family

Such songs create necessary variation in the over two hour production.

Although the play did not specially target a child audience, we can conclude that the children, who made up a large part the audience had a fair share of entertainment and education.

3.4: Plays Performed By Theatre Groups

In Chapter two, it was observed that some primary school pupils, particularly those in Category A schools, watch plays performed by theatre groups. As the interviews with theatre groups revealed, many of these groups do not target children as their audience. Of the groups interviewed, only one consistently puts up a play for children.

Every Christmas time, Nairobi City Players puts up a pantomime for children. This group has performed pantomimes such as *Sleeping Beauty* (1990), *Cinderella* (1993) *Alladin* (1994) and *Little Red Riding Hood* (1995).

Here we analyse *Little Red Riding Hood* to determine its suitability for children. The play is an adaptation from the European folk tale by the same title. This is a great advantage for the production. Fairy tales endure the test of time because they are always relevant to people's lives and so are enjoyed. Thus even before it is produced as a play, it is already a successful children's story.

At the onset of the play, we meet Mary who is struggling with self-identification. The rest of the play develops chronologically as she struggles to come to an understanding of herself. There is much suspense as she pursues pleasure and is stalked by the wolf. In this play however, the audience is allowed to relieve tension by warning Mary of the approaching wolf. This warning of Mary is one of the instances where the audience actively participates in the development of the plot.

The play has both human and non human characters. Little Red is the protagonist. She is a budding adolescent and she has urgent emotional problems to solve. Her age and the problems she is struggling with such as the need for recognition, sense of self and independence, are problems that young adolescents can identify with. She is strong-headed and unwise when she refuses to heed warning from the villagers concerning the wolf. But this stubbornness is motivated by her determination to solve her problems herself. She thus stubbornly puts herself in a dangerous situation. However, she comes to the realisation of the danger on her own. Her experience helps her realise that the wolf is dangerous. Little Red solves her problems on her own. The fairy, her mother, grandmother or the police do not help her. The fairy for instance tries magic to banish the wolf away from the village but the magic fails. The policemen are cowardly and so are not diligently searching for the wolf. The grandmother, although she is in the same room when the wolf tells Little Red that he is going to eat her, does not attempt to help. It is important that Little Red solves her own problems for then she understands what the danger is. At the end of the play, she is not the naïve girl she was at the beginning, but has grown through experience.

The play takes up some of the problems the school age girl has to solve, which

The grandmother has two main functions in the play. First she is the one who, by giving Little Red the hood, presents her with the opportunity that will lead to her growth. However, when she gives Little Red the hood, it is not in the hope that Little Red will be devoured by the wolf, she has spoiled Little Red and is only giving her what she longs for. Secondly the grandmother provides much humour in the play. We laugh for example, at her trying to fit into small clothes thinking that this will make her look younger and attractive.

is no longer a child but mature enough
to take care of herself? Think what everyone else is afraid of the wolf lurking in the

The fairy functions as a narrator in the play. She introduces the play, gives brief comments and instructs the audience on what to say. Seeing the fairy alerts the audience that the events are happening in fantasy land. This really appeals to the child audience.

The wolf is the antagonist. He is selfish, greedy, sly and set to destroy. He symbolises the Id controlled life. The wolf fascinates the child audience because he is given human attributes. He is dressed in a suit and can talk. Although he is smart and appears very friendly, his evil nature is revealed when he attempts to eat Little Red's lambs, Little Red herself and the grandmother. He is however punished in the end.

The lambs represent Little Red's naivety. They do not talk but dance along with her as she laments her dull life in the village and her search for independence. Like Little Red, the lambs are easy prey for the wolf.

The play 'takes up some crucial problems the school age girl has to solve... which may drive her to expose herself dangerously to the possibility of seduction' (Bettelheim, 1976: 170).

Little Red is twelve turning thirteen and is struggling with pubertal problems. She feels she is not getting enough recognition and thinks that no one remembers her birthday because she is unimportant. She is seeking independence and is determined to prove to everyone that she is no longer a child but is mature enough to take care of herself. Thus when everyone else is afraid of the wolf lurking in the

woods, she asks 'who's afraid of wolf?' further, little Red is looking for excitement as she complains that village life is dull.

The play thus raises the question whether Little Red should live by the pleasure principle (allow herself to be guided by emotional desires) or to rely on intelligence (reality principle).

The unfolding of the plot shows the danger of living by the pleasure principle: one becomes easy prey to the wolf. In this story the wolf symbolises the side of the male that is controlled by pleasure (Id). As such the wolf is selfish, greedy, asocial, violent and destructive. Little Red in her search for excitement and in her determination to appear mature is exposing herself to the dangerous wolf. In spite of her confidence, she is naïve and does not understand the nature of the wolf.

The grandmother spoils Little Red by giving her anything she wants. On her birthday the grandmother gives her what she wants most - an opportunity for excitement and to be regarded mature. This comes in the form of the red hood. Earlier in the play we see the grandmother as a woman who is easily attracted to men. She, for instance, wants to look most attractive at the party and even suggests to one of the young men attending her that afterwards they should meet for a 'friendly chat'. When she then gives her grand-daughter the red hood 'she abdicates her own attractiveness to males and transfers it to the daughter by giving her a too attractive red cloak' (Bettelheim, 1976:173). Red symbolises 'violent emotions, very much including sexual one'. By wearing the red hood Little Red becomes prematurely sexually attractive. It is important to note that previously the

wolf was not after the girl but her lambs. However after she wears the red hood, the wolf pursues her.

Can the school girl handle the emotions and responsibility she is asking for? As the title suggests, the girl is too 'little' she can not handle this responsibility. Little Red seems to realise this when she gives the exact location of her grandmother's cottage. She is directing the Wolf away from herself to the older woman who can handle him. If she still believes that she is mature enough, Little Red has no doubt of her insecurity when she finds the wolf waiting for her in bed and says he wants to devour her. She comes too close to danger and in the nick of time calls for help and runs for cover.

Although the main character is a girl the lesson derived from the play is for both boys and girls. The child audience is taught that it is dangerous to pursue pleasure uncontrollably. It is also dangerous to be naïve. One must understand the nature of other people so as not to present him/herself as an easy prey.

Regarding the style, this play may be considered a great success in employing techniques that appeal to children. One of the greatest appeals to children is fantasy and this is used in the play. For instance, there is the wolf talking and dressed like a man, the dancing lambs, the good fairy and the evil spirits that dance with the wolf. All these emphasise that the events should not be taken literally but should be seen as symbolic of events in the real world. Fantasy makes the lesson of the play memorable.

The play also excites much laughter. According to Francis Cattermole, Chairman of Nairobi City Players, children derive laughter mainly through slapstick comedy. As such this play employs a lot of it. For instance, the cowardly policemen keep falling over as does the plump Fairy who tries magic that does not work. The grandmother also invites much laughter. The role is played by a man (dame) and so physically she appears humorous. Some humour however, is above children's understanding. The policemen are ridiculed for their cowardice and indeed one of them carries a teddy bear. The child audience do not see the irony of a policeman carrying and clinging to a teddy bear.

This play takes over two hours, but the children do not get restive as there is much audience participation. The Fairy, who also functions as the narrator, begins by greeting the audience and insists on a loud response. Later she asks the audience to warn *Little Red* of the approaching wolf. She rehearses the audience on what to say: 'There he is! There he is!' The grandmother asks the audience to guess her age and points out to a few children to answer. At *Little Red's* birthday party sweets are distributed to children in the auditorium who are thirteen years old. It is the audience who expose the wolf from his hiding place under grandmother's bed. When the villagers hear *Little Red's* scream they rush into grandmother's house but the wolf hides. When the villagers search but can not find him they ask the audience where he might be hiding and the auditorium thunders 'under the bed!' At the end of the play the audience is taught a song 'Bye Bye bad wolf'. The two sides of the aisle are then made to compete to see which side will sing louder.

The play also employs a lot of singing and dancing. For example, *Little Red* sings her desire for independence, the wolf dances to the good meal that awaits him and

there is a lot of singing and dancing at Little Red's party. The songs and dances break the monotony of dialogue which children would soon find dull. The songs also help the audience to remember what each character stands for. For example the wolf is remembered for his greed when he sings how he shall eat the lambs, Little Red and the grandmother. The songs also create desired mood. The joyful singing at Little Red's party reflect happiness while the song and dance of the wolf and the evil spirits in the forest impress a sense of danger.

The colourful production is much to the delight of children. The Fairy for instance, has shiny stars of different colour all over her garment. Little Red's party is also very colourful.

In conclusion we may say that Little Red was a very successful production for children in terms of characterisation, theme and style.

The plays discussed in this chapter constitute the three forms of theatre that Nairobi primary school pupils are most exposed to. We have however noted that the Schools and Colleges Drama Festival falls short as a means of child education and entertainment. This is unfortunate for it is in this forum that many primary school pupils are induced to theatre. The school plays and the pantomimes are more successful for often they are adaptations from children's story books or novels that have been appropriated by children as is the case with the two plays analysed here.

In Chapter Four we discuss plays performed by children outside mainstream education.

CHAPTER FOUR

Theatre for Rehabilitation of Street Children: The Case of Shangilia Mtoto wa Afrika Theatre Group and Sambamba Street Theatre

4.1: Introduction

In Chapter Three, we have dealt with theatre that children in primary schools are exposed to. In this chapter, we are concerned with theatre that children outside mainstream education are exposed to. Specifically we shall look at theatre that children in children's homes perform. In children's homes discussed here, almost all the children were picked from the streets. These children go through informal education at the homes and thus cannot be grouped with children in formal education system. Furthermore the needs of these children in rehabilitation homes are different from those of children living with their families and have therefore not been stigmatised by life in the streets.

The problem of street children in Kenya goes back to the 1950's; the peak of colonial rule in Kenya. The colonial system disrupted families by imprisoning men and women or taking them away from their homes to concentration camps. Children, left helpless without the care of parents, wandered off to the streets of Nairobi in the hope of finding some means of survival. (ANPPCAN, 1994). Since then street children have become a

feature not only in Nairobi but also in other major towns such as Nakuru and Kisumu.

Initially only boys went into the streets and thus terms such as 'Parking Boys' and 'Street boys' were used. Onyango *et al* (1991) however show that now there is an equal number of boys and girls in the streets. They further show that poverty is a major contributor to the street children phenomenon. In their study, most of the children in the streets were found to come from slum areas. The children were found to come from hostile home environments where parents had no or low education, were unemployed or engaged in informal low income activities. Most of the homes were headed by women who had married early, were divorced or separated or were unmarried. In these environments children suffered malnutrition, sexual abuse, drug and alcohol abuse and lack of education. Consequently such children preferred life in the streets to life at home. Moreover, the extended family structure which offered security to children, especially in cases of poverty, has been broken down by urbanisation. Children now find themselves in atomised families defenceless against poverty. They thus look for an alternative means of sustenance in the streets.

However, the streets do not offer a solution for the children. They are in dire need of subsistence and are often harassed by members of the public and the police force. They further suffer from a severe lack of self-esteem. They feel unwanted by their parents and society as a whole. The environment in which they find themselves, does not provide them with

positive role models for emulation and thus although they have aspirations such as continuing with education and getting into professions, the environment imposes constraints. As such street children's involvement in petty crime and their addiction to drugs is a distorted means of gaining attention and self-worth while also serving as a means of survival.

Marsha in the 1970's (Dallong, 1974)

As a result of the multiple problems that they face, street children are internationally recognised as constituting a large part of Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC). With the ever-growing awareness of children's rights and the recognition of street children as a social problem, some organisations have taken up the challenge to rehabilitate street children. Rehabilitation of street children is geared towards restoring children's health through provision of adequate diet, shelter, basic hygiene and clothing; accessing knowledge that children of their age-group are expected to have and equipping them with skills for employment; integrating the child into mainstream society through behavioural change (Dallope, 1987). Rehabilitation can be offered through dealing with individual children, offering institutional care or organising the community where children live.

In the next section, we discuss how *Shangilia Mtoto wa Afrika* and *Sambamba* homes use theatre to rehabilitate street children.

4.2. Theatre as a Tool for Rehabilitation

Drama can be used for remedial purposes with disturbed, maladjusted and psychotic cases. Here the individuals are encouraged to enact their inner conflicts rather than merely talk about them. When drama takes on this therapeutic approach it is termed as psychodrama - a term first used by Moreno in the 1920's (Jennings, 1974).

Psychodrama works through catharsis as it allows the actors to go over their unsolved problems in a freer, broader and more flexible setting. It makes use of techniques such as role-play, role reversal, doubling and 'empty chair' to help the individual address his/her problem. Role-play for instance, gives the person a chance to play him/herself and gain insight into his character. It also provides an opportunity to try out new roles in a safe situation. In the role reversal the actor plays the role of the person s/he maybe in conflict with while someone else plays his/her role. This helps the actor not only to understand the character of the person they are in conflict with but to also see both sides of the argument. Doubling technique is used when someone has trouble communicating. In this case someone else acts on her/his behalf. In the empty chair technique an empty chair is used as a character. This technique is used because it is less embarrassing to confront an empty chair than an actual person.

Psychodrama becomes therapeutic theatre when the actors improvise spontaneously before an audience. In this case catharsis takes place in both the actors and the audience.

Shangilia Mtoto wa Afrika theatre group has recognised this potential of theatre to solve inner conflicts in an individual. The group was started in 1994 as a result of a forty-five minute motion picture on street children in Nairobi; *Usilie Mtoto wa Afrika*. In this film, Anne Wanjugu, a renowned Kenya actress, played the part of a mother of nine street children. The role of the street children was acted by actual street children drawn from the streets of Nairobi. Anne Wanjugu is noted as saying that through acting with street children she recognised their great creative potential. It was then that she started the theatre group made up of twenty-five street children. The group is stationed at the *Shangilia Mtoto wa Afrika* Street Children's home in Kangemi.

One of the objectives of the home is to encourage, through theatre, positive role models which the other street children can emulate. This objective is based on the recognition of theatre as a tool for communication and behaviour change. While theatre as used by this group is not a fund-raising venture, it not only exposes and sensitises the society to the rising predicament of street children but also fosters a sense of confidence in the children actors. This is achieved through use of psychodrama techniques such as role-play and careful selection of plays to be performed.

For example, in the play *Naaman's Maid*, (an adaptation of a Bible story) an eleven-year old Israelite girl carries the theme of the play. She is young and destitute, very much like the street children in Nairobi. She is

however the only one in the entire Syrian Kingdom who knows how Namaan, her master can have his leprosy cured. In spite of the fact that she is a slave, she is courageous enough to disclose her knowledge to the Syrian king, Jehoshaphat. This is made more dangerous by the fact that the king has issued a decree ordering the death of anyone whose prescription for the leprosy fails. The young slave girl is however guided by God and her courageous act not only leads to Namaan's cure but also facilitates the reconciliation of the two warring nations; Syria and Israel. Through this young girl, the play exalts the weak poor and those often disregarded by society. The play is thus relevant to street children as it gives them a sense of power and confidence through their identification with the poor slave girl.

In the same play, Benson, a half-caste boy played the role of King Jehoshaphat. This casting was after careful observation that Benson was extremely self-conscious because of his skin colour. He had been mocked in the street as a '*Mzungu Chokora*' (white street boy). Other street children insinuated that his mother must have been a prostitute. Passers-by too had mused at this '*Mzungu Chokora*' as they expected him to be in the higher echelons of society. Consequently Benson was overly shy and suffered a severe lack of self-worth. Acting King Jehoshaphat would place him prominently on stage and naturally he was reluctant to play the part at first, however, playing the role made him feel important, wealthy and powerful. On stage he got the recognition and appreciation he had lacked in real life. These were important more so because they were drawn from his physical appearance (splendour as king); the very thing that had led to

his low esteem. Anne Wanjugu is witness to his new-found confidence and self-appreciation.

In another play, *The Gift*, the children enact their life in the streets. This is a harsh life where they are unprotected from hunger, cold and harassment from the police. Through the character of the street boy Rui, the play shows that street children are not inherently amoral but have become so because of the harsh environment in which they find themselves. The play thus targets the society to show it that it is responsible for the children in the streets. The play alludes to the birth of Jesus in a manger. The Israelite community did not recognise the majesty of Jesus and thus relegated him to the filthy cattle-shed. Symbolically then, the filthy cattle-shed reflected the spiritual, moral and social decadence of the Israelite community. The same is true for the Nairobi community which allows God's gift - children - to live on rubbish heaps. The play thus fosters self-worth and confidence as the actors realise that they are not responsible for their predicament. Indeed they are not the villains as society often brands them. The children also begin to view themselves as important as Jesus the messiah.

The Gift also presents a role model whom other street children can emulate, Rui the main character repents of his involvement in petty crime and drug abuse. Indeed he gives back the purse he had previously stolen from Sammy's mother. His inner good nature is proved by the fact that he had not removed any money from the purse.

aim of educating the public on issues of children's welfare and promote awareness of the rights of the poor, the role of education (Srinivasan, 1986)

The society is also presented as repentant. Sammy's parents do not chastise Rui for the theft but rather recognise his problem and adopt him. The policeman too views adoption as a more positive alternative than sending Rui to jail or approved school. He even warns Rui's new parents to ensure that Rui does not roam the streets.

As children's theatre, these plays by *Shangilia* theatre group are successful for they address particular problems faced by street children. It also uses techniques such as slap-stick humour which appeals to children. The use of *Sheng* (an integration of English and other Kenyan languages) and especially Kiswahili language make the performances more appealing as it is the language used in the streets.

Shangilia Mtoto wa Afrika theatre group is an example of how some organisations use theatre to rehabilitate street children. *Sambamba Street Theatre Group* uses both role-play and theatre for community development approach as a remedial and protective approach to the street children problem. Though their plays target adult audience, their objective is to aid the community improve life for children.

Apart from fostering emotional, social and physical well being of the children and raising funds to help support and educate them, *Sambamba Street Theatre Group* uses theatre with the aim of educating the public on issues of children's welfare and promote awareness of the rights of the poor, homeless or abused children (*Sambamba*, 1996).

To achieve this aim, the group uses theatre for community development approach. As the group targets the public in general, it goes out to places such as villages and market-places where the people are. This community education is based on the belief that the problems that children face can be solved by the community itself if people at the grassroots have the information and motivation that is needed. In a play such as *Watota na Sheria*, performed by the group in several slum areas in Nairobi including Korokocho, the public is enlightened on the problems the children at home or in the streets face. For instance, Kangari, an eleven year old girl, is raped by her uncle while her parents are away. On the other hand, Manati, a street boy is lured into drug abuse and sodomized by older street boys. Such children further suffer psychologically as they often have no one to confide in.

This play offers both protective and remedial action to these problems. Protective action includes educating children on the privacy of their bodies so as not to allow themselves to be sexually molested. It also encourages a free atmosphere between parents and children so that children can discuss disturbing issues in their lives. Remedial action includes for instance reporting a rape case to the police and seeking help from child welfare organisations such as ANPPCAN (African Network for the Prevention and Protection of Child Abuse and Neglect).

As this play is designed with the prime aim of educating the public, Kiswahili, the language of the majority in the slums of Nairobi, is used.

The play is also often punctuated by commentaries, songs and dances. These directly address the audience and serve to emphasise the issues raised in the play. A song such as '*Mama Utamleyaje Mtoto*' place the fate of children into the hands of the parents. It guides parents into reflecting on their role as parents and to reform, if need be.

In both groups most of the words in the play are provided by the children. Commentaries employed in this play, apart from commenting on the development of the plot, are also used for the emphasis and to provoke the audience to reflect upon the issues raised. For example, children are warned against sniffing glue while parents are advised on how to handle a rape case in the home. At the end of the performance there is an open forum in which the audience is invited to give opinion or ask questions. The questions and comments made by the audience at Korogocho revealed that parents were concerned about the problems children faced but often did not know the appropriate steps to take to protect or resolve the problems. Members of ANPPCAN (the group that sponsored the play) were present to answer the audience's question and to give advice on child welfare issues.

As observed in Chapter Three, plays at the Schools Drama Festival. By having children tell their own story and allowing the community to air its views, *Sambamba Street Theatre* attempts rehabilitate street children by creating a more caring and protective environment for them. *sh to make the festival a more fulfilling experience for school children.*

The use of theatre by both *Shangilia* and *Sambamba* theatres in the rehabilitation of street children is a strong argument for the use of theatre as a tool to educate. As children's theatre, the plays especially by

Shangilia group are quite successful. They specifically address children traumatised by the hard life in the streets. They address issues such as self worth, drug taking, petty crime and fear of the police force which are a major concern to these children.

5.7 Main Findings

In both groups most of the words in the play are provided by the children themselves. Consequently the language level is that which children can cope with. The plays further lack indictment aimed at children or overt moralising since it is the children addressing themselves.

Funny sounding words and slapstick comedy are the major sources of humour in these plays. In *The Gift* for instance, the policeman creates much humour through his funny accent and mispronunciation of words. Writers of scripts for the schools Drama Festival can borrow much from these groups. They should allow children to participate more in the creation of the plays they enact. Then they would be sure that the language level is that which children can cope with.

As observed in Chapter Three, plays at the Schools Drama Festival majorly address the adult audience but do not have much to offer the child actor. Theatre by *Shangilia* and *Sambamba* is beneficial to both actor and audience. The Schools Drama Festival could adopt this approach to make the festival a more fulfilling experience for school children.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1: Major Findings

The study came up with several findings which could be summarised as follows:

1. Although theatre has a great potential to entertain and educate, and children through their participation in dramatic play reveal that they would appreciate theatre, only 20% of the theatre companies in Nairobi target children. Moreover, these performances are infrequent and often only on festive occasions such as Christmas.

Reasons given by theatre groups for not performing plays for children include:

- ◆ The unavailability of scripts for children's plays.
 - ◆ Lack of finances for the purchase of necessary costume and props, for transport and for acting space.
 - ◆ Lack of training in the techniques of children's theatre.
2. Due to the fact that majority of the theatre groups in Nairobi do not perform plays for children, children are mainly exposed to theatre through their participation in plays performed at school on assembly or on special days such as Parents Day and at the Schools Drama Festival. However, many of

these plays were found to be unsuitable for children in terms of plot, characters, theme and style. The plot for instance, lacked the necessary suspense and fast action that children like and often employed flashback which children find confusing.

Rather than have young, heroic characters whom children could identify with, the plays had adult characters as their main characters conveying the message of the play. Consequently the language level was above the children and the message was often directed at the adults in the audience. Indeed the whole world view was presented from an adult viewpoint.

In terms of style, the plays did not make use of techniques such as slapstick comedy, fantasy and audience participation which appeal to children.

5.2: Recommendations

This study proposes the following as ways of enhancing children's theatre in Nairobi:

1. Since the Schools and Colleges Drama Festival is the main forum in which majority of the pupils in Nairobi Primary Schools participate in theatre, plays at the festival should be designed to address children who make up the larger part of the audience. This can be achieved through encouraging teachers and script-writers to involve children in the creation of plays. As revealed through the example of *Shangilia Mtoto wa Afrika* theatre group, involving children in the creation of plays gives the child's perspective of the world in the play.

Further, plays at the Schools and Colleges Drama Festival should be judged according to how relevant the message is and how effectively it is communicated not only to the audience (majorly children) but also to the performer.

2. The lack of necessary skill for the performance of children's plays can be countered through theatre workshops in schools and among amateur and professional theatre artists in Nairobi. In the workshops artists can experiment with techniques and themes for children's theatre.
3. The lack of published scripts for children's plays can be countered by artistic innovations and adaptations of children's story books. It was found that *Nairobi City Players* make adaptations of European folk tales and these have been very successful as children's theatre. Local artists can make adaptations from the wealth of Kenyan folk tales.

Playwrights are also urged to write plays for children using children's classics as guides. Children's classics are those books that have endured the test of time. They are the books that have been enjoyed by children and thus have been read through the years. Through the questionnaire to children, it was revealed that children of 12-13 years in Nairobi enjoy adventure stories most. Playwrights can therefore use children's adventure stories to model their plays so as to make them appealing to children.

4. We also recommend that, for theatre to play its role of educating and entertaining children, it ought to be accorded more space in the school curriculum. Theatre should not be regarded as extra-curricula activity. Rather, it is a tool through which lessons taught in the classroom can be made real to pupils. With this in mind, the Ministry of Education can provide more plays in pupils text books for use in the classroom. The ministry could also commission theatre artists to perform plays for children to educate them on vital issues.

5. Lack of funds is a major problem faced by many amateur theatre groups in Nairobi. As some of the groups interviewed noted, the successful production of children's plays requires funds for costume, props, hiring acting space and transport. We further recommend that theatre groups hold workshops regularly. There is therefore need to look into ways of raising money for these groups. While the Ministry of Culture and Social Services can offer subsidy to theatre, the theatre fraternity ought to approach Non Governmental Organisations that can support theatre.

Over and above this, there should be a serious search of ways of making theatre self-supporting.

6. Finally we recommend that since this study focused only on Nairobi, a similar study can be done in rural setting as a comparative study.

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Appendix 1A

QUESTIONNAIRE TO PUPILS

Section A (For the teacher to assist)

1. What is the name of your school?

.....

2. What type of school is it? (tick one)

Private	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What curriculum does your school offer?

8-4-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
G.C.E.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section B (For the Pupil)

1. How old are you?
2. How do you spend most of your leisure time?

Watching TV and movies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading story books and comics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Why do you like spending your leisure time this way?

.....

.....

4. 1. When you play with your friends which two games do you play most?

a.

b.

- (ii) Have you ever played a game in which you pretend to be someone else e.g. a teacher, mother?

.....

- (iii) What do you and your friends call this game?

.....

- (iv) When you played this game who did you pretend to be?

.....

- (v) (a) Do (did) you enjoy playing this game?

.....

- (b) Why?

.....

- (vi) Do you still play this game?

.....

- (vii) How old were you when you last played this game?

.....

5. (i) Do you enjoy reading story books?

YES	
NO	

- (ii) Name some of the story books you enjoyed reading in the last 12 months.

Title	Author (if remembered)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

(iii) Why did you enjoy these stories?

.....

.....

8. (i) Is there a play you read and did **not** enjoy?

YES	
NO	

(ii) Give the title of this play you read and did **not** enjoy?

(iii) Why didn't you like the play?

.....

9. (ii) Have you ever watched a play?

YES	
NO	

(ii) If Yes, where was the play?

In school	
In theatre	
At the Schools Drama Festival	
Any other (specify)	

(iii) Who took you to watch the play?

Parent	
Teacher	
Any other (specify)	

(iv) What was/were the title(s) of the play (s)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

(v) Who were acting in the play?

Your School	
Another school (specify)	
A theatre group (specify)	

(iv) (a) Did you enjoy the plays that you watched?

Yes	
No	

(b) Why?

10. Would you like to watch another play?

Yes	
No	

11. (i) Have you ever acted in a play?

Yes	
No	

(ii) If Yes, how many plays have you ever acted in?

1-3	
4-6	
6+	

(iii) (a) Where did you perform this /these plays (s) at?

School	
Schools Drama Festival	
Any other (specify)	

(b) If your answer in (a) is 'school', when was/were this/these play(s) performed?

Assembly	
Parents-Day	
Inter-house competition	
Any other (specify)	

12. Give the titles of the play(s) you have acted in.

1.

2.

3.

13. Whose idea was this/these plays (s)

Teacher	
Pupils	
Any other (specify)	

14. Did you enjoy acting?

Yes	
No	

15. Briefly say what the play you liked most was about.

.....

.....

.....

16. How old were you when you first acted in a play?

.....

17. Would you like to act in another play?

Yes	
No	

18. What is the age-group that frequents your productions?

Appendix 1B

QUESTIONNAIRE TO THEATRE ARTISTS

1. What is the name of the group you perform with?.....
2. How many years has the group been in existence?
3. How many plays has your group put up in the past 12 months?

1-3	
4-6	
7-9	
10-12	
12<	

4. Which of the following is the main source of your plays?

Published scripts	
Adaptation from novels	
Groups own original scripts	
Any other (specify)	

5. Most of the plays put up by your group have a(n)

European setting	
African Setting	
Specifically Kenyan setting	

6. The following are possible influences on choice of the plays that your group puts up. Rank them 1 to 5 depending on what is true for your group. 1 being the greatest influence and 5 the least.

Availability of text	
Popularity of a text	
Text is a set book in schools	
Contemporary issues in the country	
the status of the audience who frequent the theatre	

7. What is the age-group that frequents your productions?

Below 13 years	
14-19 years	
20-35 years	
Above 35 years	

8. (i) Does your group target a particular age-group?

Yes	
No	

(ii) If YES, give the age-group that you target.

.....

(iii) Give reasons for targeting that age-group.

.....

9. (i) In the last two years has your group put up any performances in which the majority of the audience was below 13 years?

Yes	
No	

(ii) If YES how many such performances has your group put up?

1-3	
4-6	
7-9	
9-12	
12<	

(iii) If NO which of the following best explains why your group has not put up a performance for an audience below 13 years.

The group has never thought of it	
The group does not have the necessary skill	
There are no available scripts for this age-group	
Children would not appreciate theatre	
The monetary returns would be less	
The audience number would be few	
Any other (specify)	

10. If your group has ever performed for an audience of below thirteen (13) years, give the title(s) of this/these productions(s).

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. What was the source of this/these play(s)?

A published play	
Adaptation from story book	
Groups original play	
Any other (specify)	

12. In this/these production(s) in which the majority of audience was below 13 years, the audience number was:

Far greater than usual	
Greater than usual	
As usual	
Less than usual	
Far less than usual	

13. In this/these play(s) what was the entrance fee.

Adults	
Children	

14. In this/these play(s) the monetary returns of the production were.

Far greater than usual	
Greater than usual	
As usual	
Less than usual	
Far less than usual	

15. It is your opinion that the audience in this/these production(s) (below 13 years) enjoyed the production.

A lot	
A little	
Not at all	

(ii) What led to opinion in (i)

.....

.....

16. Give the title(s) of the production(s) you think the audience below 13 years enjoyed most.

.....

.....

.....

17. Why do you think the audience enjoyed this/these production(s).

.....

.....

.....

18. Do you think children under 13 years would enjoy theatre?

Adults	
Children	

19. Tick the one you think is true.

Putting up a production for children under 13 years is:

Easier than	
The same as	
More difficult than	

Producing for adults.

(ii) Give reason(s) for your answer in 19 (i).

.....

.....

20. (i) Do you take performances to primary schools?

YES	
NO	

- (ii) Why?

.....

- (iii) If YES, give titles of productions you have ever taken to primary schools.

.....

.....

21. (i) If an organisation was willing to offer you any form of assistance to put up a production for children (under 13 years), what would be your first request?

.....

.....

.....

- (ii) Give reasons for your answer in 21 (i)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Appendix 2A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 1

(To Theatre Thespians)

1. How long have you been involved in theatre in your capacity as playwright, director, educator?
2. What is your understanding of children's theatre?
3. What is your comment on the practise of Children's Theatre in Nairobi?
4. What would you say are some of the factors that have contributed to the state of Children's Theatre in Nairobi as you describe it?
5. Have you ever participated in children's theatre?
In what capacity?
6. If you have participated in Children's Theatre, did your participation require you to have any special skills different from adult theatre?
What were these skills?
7. What suggestions can you give for the enhancement of Children's Theatre in Nairobi?

Appendix 2B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 2

(To Theatre Group That Has Performed For Children)

1. How often do you produce a play for children?
2. Why have you chosen children ~~as you~~ as your target group?
3. In your opinion, is performing for children different from performing for adults? In which way(s)?
4. What would you say are the major challenges in mounting a play production for children?
5. How did you and your team handle these challenges?
6. If you were to put up the same play again would you stage it in exactly the same way or would you make changes in the production? What changes would you make? Why?

Appendix 3a

THE WILL

Presented by Nairobi Primary School at the 1996 National Schools and Colleges

Presented by Nairobi Primary School at the 1996 National Schools and Colleges

Drama festival. Wealthy chief Yanga is on the verge of death. Three women come on the scene each claiming to be the rightful wife to the dying chief. As it is now obvious that the chief is dying, each woman comes, not to comfort him but to try and manipulate him to write a will in favour of her. Relatives also converge on him so that they too can be remembered in the will. The 'wives' disagree on what sort of medical treatment the chief should receive. The 'wife' from the village suggests that they call a renowned medicine man. The Muslim 'wife' calls for Islamic rituals while the city 'wife' insists that only a medical doctor from a prestigious hospital in the city should treat the chief.

Amidst these arguments, the chief dies. Fresh arguments on where the chief shall be buried; the burial rites to be followed and the division of the chief's property ensue. The Muslim wife demands that the body be buried at the Muslim graveyard while the city wife says it must be buried at the city cemetery. However, the up-country wife insists he must be buried at the rural 'shamba' or the gods and ancestors will get angry.

Resolution is arrived at when the lawyer intervenes and reads out the chief's will in which he states that he should be buried at his rural 'shamba' and also how his property should be shared amongst the three women. Each woman feels she has received a raw deal but she has to be content with whatever property she gets.

Appendix 3b

'The Game of Junkies'

Presented by Taveta Primary School at the 1996 National Schools and Colleges Drama Festival.

Sophie's parents, dealers in drugs, are murdered by the Mafia gang for their reluctance to co-operate with the gang. Sophie a young girl of twelve, is left a wealthy orphan in the care of her aunt, Betty.

The Mafia gang now come after Sophie and demand three million shillings that they are certain her parents had in their bank. Aunt Betty is worried and would readily give up the money to the gang. But she can not do so without Sophie's consent and Sophie though young feels it is not right. She holds on to the money although her life is greatly endangered.

She meets and befriends two street boys, Teddy and Kevin, but is horrified when she sees the boys taking drugs and the consequent deterioration in their mental and physical health. She gets more determined not to give the Mafia the money they demand when she realises that they are the same ones who sell drugs to the street boys. She can see the effects of the drugs on the boys and she tries to talk to them against drug abuse. However, she only succeeds when she discloses to them that the drug traffickers are the same brutal murderers of her parents. Shocked by this disclosure, the boys reassess their values in life and conclude that they have all along taken the wrong course. Determined to start life anew, they resolve to protect Sophie from the Mafia gang.

By now the gang has grown impatient and it decides to take the drastic step of kidnapping Sophie so that the aunt can release the money. But the street boys, now calling themselves '*Black Zinjas*' (read Black Ninjas) insist that the money should not be given to the gang for even then, the gang may still kill Sophie or demand more money. Now really worried, Aunt Betty proposes to get help from the police. But the *Black Zinjas* are adamant that the police should not be involved, not only because the gang has strictly warned against this but more so because they themselves want the satisfaction of meting out justice to the murderers and drug traffickers. Helplessly, Aunt Betty allows the *Black Zinjas* to take control of the situation.

The black Zinjas, having been toughened by street life and having been previously linked with the gang, do not get much difficulty finding the gang hideout. But how will they, two young boys, fight two dangerous criminals?

The black Zinjas however, have worked out a plan. They set up a decoy. A hooting noise attracts one of the gang away from his post. While he is away, the other is easily overpowered by the black Zinjas. After a futile search for the source of the noise, the other gang member returns to his post only to be disarmed by the waiting Black Zinjas. The two criminals are tied up with ropes and Sophie is rescued from her prison in the house. Now armed with the criminals' guns, the Black Zinjas threaten that killing them (the criminals) is the only justified punishment for the crimes they have committed. However, Sophie disagrees with them, for killing, the Black Zinjas will be murderers just like the Mafia. She pleads with them to reconsider their decision and reminds them of their resolution to set out on a new

course in life away from crime and drug abuse. The Black Zinjas slowly place down their guns as they agree with Sophie, and just then, the police who have been tipped off by frightened Aunt Betty, arrive on the scene. They are grateful to the boys for helping them nab 'the most wanted criminals'. Sophie and Aunt Betty can now live without fear and the Black Zinjas acknowledge their calling to fight against drug abuse.

The play opens with Oliver and other orphans at a boys' boarding house under the charge of Mr. Bumble and his wife. It is meal-time and the boys are given meagre food which they despise. The meal is soon over and the other boys beckon to Oliver that he should go to Mr. Bumble for more. Famed but driven by hunger, Oliver asks for more food. Mr. Bumble is reluctant as an affront to his authority and Oliver is accused of insolence. Oliver tries to run away to escape punishment but Bumble gets hold of him and deciding that he has enough of Oliver, sells him to Mr. Sowerberry, the local undertaker.

In the hands of Sowerberry, Oliver suffers more. He has to work, has leftovers as his meals and even in the night, kneels the bedding. Mr. Sowerberry is not concerned about Oliver's welfare and indeed tells him 'That's your funeral'. When one of the work mates insults Oliver's dead mother, Oliver gets very angry and attacks him. However when the rest of the household come on the scene they demand that Oliver should be punished. Oliver then runs away from the workhouse.

Oliver soon finds himself in the city. He is cold, hungry and lonely. It is while he is searching for food that The Artful Dodger approaches him. He tells Oliver that he can make things better for him, and Oliver, touched by the 'concern and love' shown to him for the first time, believes the Dodger and goes with him to Fagin's

Appendix 3c

Oliver

An adaptation of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, performed by St. Mary's School (1996)

The play opens with Oliver and other orphans at a boys' boarding house under the charge of Mr. Bumble and his wife. It is meal-time and the boys are given meagre food which they hungrily devour. The meal is soon over and the other boys beckon to Oliver that it is his turn to ask Mr. Bumble for more. Terrified but driven by hunger, Oliver asks for more food. Mr. Bumble takes it as an affront to his authority and Oliver is accused of insolence. Oliver tries to run away to escape punishment but Bumble gets hold of him and deciding that he has enough of Oliver, sell him to Mr. Sowerberry, the local undertaker.

In the hands of Sowerberry, Oliver suffers more. He has to work, has leftovers as his meals and spends the nights amongst the coffins. Mr. Sowerberry is not concerned about Oliver's welfare and indeed tells him 'That's your funeral'. When one of the work mates insults Oliver's dead mother, Oliver gets very angry and attacks him. However when the rest of the household come on the scene they demand that Oliver should be punished. Oliver then runs away from the workhouse.

Oliver soon finds himself in the city. He is cold, hungry and lonely. It is while he is lamenting his fate that The Artful Dodger approaches him. He tells Oliver that he can make things better for him, and Oliver, touched by the "concern and love" shown to him for the first time, believes the Dodger and goes with him to Fagin's

den. There Oliver is introduced to Fagin the leader, Nancy and other boys like him. Oliver however does not realise that these are petty criminals. When they teach him how to pick pockets, Oliver thinks it is a game. Soon Oliver is taken to the streets where he is expected to pick pockets. It now dawns on him that he is being told to steal. But he can not steal as he believes it is wrong. One of the other boys attempts to steal from a wealthy man but the man is alerted. The other boys run away but Oliver, stranded, confused and horrified does not run away. He is mistaken for the thief. In his belated attempt to escape, Oliver is shot and arrested by the police. However, the wealthy man, Mr. Brownlow, who saw the other boys run away is not convinced that Oliver is the thief and so drops charges against him. He takes Oliver to his (Brownlow) home where he nurses him and feeds him well. When Oliver recovers he is so grateful to Mr. Brownlow that he asks to run errands for him. Brownlow trusts him and gives him books and money to take to the library.

All this while, Fagin's gang have been worried that Oliver might report them to the police. They have been watching Brownlow's house hoping to recapture Oliver. Now on his way to the library, Oliver is captured by Nancy and taken back to Fagin's den. He now comes under the charge of brutal Bill Sykes. Fagin is against Bill's brutal treatment of Oliver and his insistence that they get involved in more serious crime. It is then that Fagin reassess his life and decides to walk away from crime. Nancy too gets her involvement with Bill when she sees how brutal he can get. She decides to return Oliver to the Brownlows though she can not leave Bill as she loves him. Bill however gets suspicious and fearing that she might report to the police, kills her.

The murder is soon discovered and Bill is on the run. Soon the police catch up with him and when he refuses to give in he is shot dead. The other petty thieves, except Fagin, are retrieved from their hideout. Oliver is rescued and given back to Brownlow, who has discovered that Oliver is his nephew. Thus Oliver lives with Mr. Brownlow, no longer under the threat of hunger, poverty and loneliness.

Appendix 3d**Little Red Riding Hood**

An adaptation of the fairy tale by the same title. Performed by Nairobi City Players (1995).

The story is set in a small rural village in Europe.

It is Mary's birthday. She is turning thirteen and is disappointed that no one seems to remember that it is her birthday. She goes out to the woods with her lambs and while there, laments that she is not getting as much recognition as she, now turning thirteen, ought to get. She also laments the dull life of the village and complains that nothing interesting happens there. How she longs for adventure and for something exciting to happen!

Back home, her mother of course does remember it is her birthday and has organised a surprise party for Mary. Across the woods is Mary's grandmother who is also preparing to go to the party. She has picked out a red hood as a present for Mary.

A fairy arrives and tells the audience that she has seen a dangerous wolf going to the village and she has to warn the villagers. At the police department, the police also receive the news of the dangerous wolf that is eating livestock and may also eat people. Four policemen are dispatched to go and warn the villagers and stalk the wolf.

In the meantime, the wolf has reached the woods neighbouring the village. He is delighted at how green the pastures look and concludes there must be fat juicy lambs in the area. Soon he espies Mary's lambs and tries to catch them. He however does not succeed for Mary soon takes the lambs back home.

Mary is delighted by the party at home and the red hood her grandmother gives her. Soon after the party, the grandmother departs for her cottage across the woods. It is only after she is gone that the rest realise that she has forgotten her cap. Mary, now being called Little Red Riding Hood on account of the red hood she now wears, volunteers to deliver the cap to her grandmother. But some of the villagers who have already heard the news of the dangerous wolf lurking near the village try to warn her against this move. But Little Red asks 'who's afraid of a wolf?' Thus in spite of the warning, she sets out across the woods. After she has left, the police arrive at the village and enquire whether the villagers have seen the wolf. Little Red's mother now gets really worried. The villagers and the police set out on a desperate search for Little Red.

The Wolf lurking in the woods has already spotted Little Red and is stalking her. However the shouts from the audience 'There he is!' (as directed by the fairy) hinder the wolf from getting too close to Little Red. Eventually the wolf decides to trick Little Red by disguising himself as a friendly wolf. He approaches her and introduces himself as a 'friendly wolf'. He enquires of Little Red's destination and innocently she gives the exact location of her grandmother's cottage. The wolf then bids Little Red farewell.

When left alone, the wolf discloses to the audience his plan. He will follow a short cut and get to the cottage before Little Red. There he will devour both the grandmother and Little Red. However, at the cottage, the grandmother realises the danger quickly and locks herself in a cupboard. The wolf disguises himself as the grandmother and lies in bed waiting for Little Red.

When Little Red arrives, she is curious of the grandmother's strange appearance. She asks, 'What strange ears you have grandmother?' when she eventually asks about the large mouth, the wolf pounces on her saying, 'All the better to eat you!' Little Red's screams send the searching party rushing into the house. The wolf is trapped. Grandmother is let out of the cupboard. The wolf is punished for terrorising the villagers and attempting to devour Little Red. He is punished for his greed by having his stomach stuffed with liquid. The wolf's stomach bursts. To mark the wolf's certain end, the audience sing 'Bye Bye Bad Wolf' as directed by the fairy.