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Kinetic Scenery and Experimentation in Nigerian Theatre: Molinta Enendu's Example in James Weldon's *Noah Built the Ark*

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Abstract

Scenographers in Nigeria rarely delve into experimental design but embrace the easy option of crossing pedestal boundaries due to technical challenges. A common example is J.P. Clark's The Raft [1], which requires building a live raft, although Clark also suggests an improvised option of using a mat. How can these two provide the same experience for the paying audience? Molinta Enendu dared to surmount this drab option when 1987 he built a befitting raft for Clark's The Raft on the University of Calabar stage to sail convincingly, rotating in several directions under the star-spangled night sky. A second and yet more inspiring and challenging was Noah Built the Ark[2] (1995), a dramatic adaptation of James Weldon Johnson's poem of the same title. It was a realistic construction of a sea liner that rocked and rose with the flood of lights, thus breaking the barrier of being the first convincing cruising set on a Nigerian theatre stage. The production photographs were lost due to poor storage, dampness, and humidity. 43 years on, and in all ramifications, no other theatre designer in Nigeria has attempted to match that achievement. This study goes beyond narratives to retrace the production process and carefully reconstruct the lost designs due to their immense value to scene design practice and as posterity for theatre studies in Nigeria.

Keywords: Drama, Kinetic Scenery, Molinta Enendu, Noah's Ark,

Introduction

Kinetic! The word defines itself. It is about movement. It is the injection, engagement, or invocation of stage architectonics by electrical, electronic, mechanical, photographic, or media manipulations to bring about transition or mutations. On the theatre stage, objects, images, and pictures are engaged to move by a motorized action. Kinetic action on a theatrical stage propels an object to instigate a creative wonder and mystery. In various ways, designers

[1] Clark, J. P. 1964. The raft. *Three plays*. London: Oxford University Press.
[2] Johnson, J. W. 1978. *Noah built the ark. God's trombones*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books. 17-20.

such as Josef Svoboda and Es Devlin[3] have ingeniously deployed objects and images as the focus of attention, gaining traction and redirecting performance expectations by momentarily stealing attention from the protagonist. Kinetic scenery has this power of command to shift the attention from the passenger (protagonist) to the vehicle of the story (set props) to take residence in the audience's mind permanently. The study relied on a personal interview with the case study, along with his major academic research articles and design reports, through which he articulated some of his design philosophies, ideas, and experimentations. Most importantly, Enendu's PhD Thesis, titled "The effects of architectural structures on technical directing in two Nigerian universities"[4], and "Static and moving scenery in *Noah built the ark"*[5]

Some designers already have track records of kinetic scenery preceding them. For instance, Josef Svoboda, with the sheer quantity of his creations, an astounding 350 works by 1970 with mesmerizing results, Burian (1970) echoed the minds of many when he described Svoboda as a "Theatre Artist in an Age of Science"[6]. What sets designers like Svoboda apart is their abhorrence for static scenery, preferring rather, the association of scenic pieces with the "capacity for association, creates from the abstract and undefined space of the stage a transformable, kinetic, dramatic space and movement"[7] (cited in Burian 126). In their transformations, their presence expands in scope by undefined alterable quantity.

The same passion defines Esmeralda Devlin (Es Devlin), an artist and stage designer known for her super skill of "mapping light and projected film onto kinetic sculptural forms." She has become a master of innovative kinetic sculptures with her unique application of the union of light and film, which has seen her traverse awesome performance venues, including the British National Theatre, O2 Arena, and Wembley. Her unique art has attracted collaboration with mega stars due to the unpredictability of her creations and alluring kinetic outcomes.

Space for theatre performance has been a sensitive subject since the Greeks officially pioneered it to mirror society and man's struggles socially, spiritually, and emotionally. Even though authorities (directors) such as Brook[8] and Grotowski[9] have tried to simplify it when they picked up the actor as the king

[3] Fullylove, Rebecca. Es Devlin on Her Creative Process and Embracing Mistakes (n.d). https://artsandculture.google.com/story/es-devlin-on-her-creative-process-and-embracing-mistakes/gAWx4tUEpwQkLg?hl=en Accessed 28 April 2024
[4] Enendu, Molinta J. The Effects of Architectural Structures on Technical Directing in two Nigerian Universities. Ph.D Thesis. Dept. of Theatre Arts, University of Calabar. vi + 425pp.
[5] Static and Moving Scenery in *Noah Built the Ark. APPLAUSE: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies* (2006) 1.2:164-176.
[6] Burian, J. M. (1970). Josef Svoboda: Theatre Artist in an Age of Science. *Educational Theatre Journal*, *22*(2), 123–145. https://doi.org/10.2307/3205717
[7] Burian, J.M., 126.
[8] Brook, Peter. 1978. *The empty space*. London: Methuen.
[9] Grotowski, J. 1975. *Towards a poor theatre.* London: Methuen.

on a chessboard leaving out the castle, the works of other authorities (designers) such as Mulryne and Shewring[10] (1995) may have viewed this position as nursing the tortoise without its shell when they embarked a 20 years study of British theatre architecture and revealed the staggering number of theatres developed within that period in all British provinces, with emphasis on location, facilities, uniqueness, priorities, and needs. This says that the architecture and performance environment are as essential as the performance itself. Symbiosis technology and performance got Bellman's attention (1997) in the wake of advanced stage control systems and their contributions to the revolution of the theatre experience.

The Bible and the Theatrical Antecedent of Noah's Ark

Noah's ark has unrivalled interest for its religious significance bordering on the faith of man, and yet, continues to generate endless discourse as the turning point between believers (saved and lifted) and doubters (who perished), or what would have been the end of humanity if the ark was not lifted. Curiously, to further demystify biblical wonders, Ken Ham built an exact size of Noah's Ark (2011). Ham, described as a "Christian fundamentalist," "earth creationist," and" apologist," is actually of a rich science background but became unapologetically immersed in the earth or biblical creation stories in the book of Genesis. His intention for making a life-size Noah's Ark, viewers believe, is to show atheists, Christians, and anyone in between that the Bible is true and Noah's Ark was more than just a story—it's reality".[11]

Plate 1. Ken Ham's Noah's Ark in Kentucky, USA

[10] Mulryne, R. & Shewring, M. 1995. *Making Space for the theatre*: *british architecture since 1958*. Strafford – Upon- Avon: Mulryne & Shewring.
[11] (see http://WayoftheMaster.com. Clips are also available on youtube.com).

Plate 2. Ken Ham's Noah's Ark in Kentucky, USA

Source: Youtube.com

Staging any production the size of Noah Built the Ark is huge. Mathematically, today's precise calculation of Noah's ark has been put at 450 x 45 x 75 feet, with an approximate volume of 1,518,750 cubic feet. Conceptually, it is awesome and a sheer total spectacle of re-invented locomotion of a massive vehicular architecture in a measured space. Theatre's search for a peculiar presentation sometimes leads to outrageous experiments. So, literature shows that some have tried to stage this phenomenal biblical story. For instance, Shaliko, an experimental theatre group led by Leonardo Shapiro, performed Noah's Ark in Purchase, USA, 1987[12].

***Noah built the ark*: The Script and Design Approach**

Noah Built the Ark is a poem of about 180 lines from *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, first published in 1922. Like most writings of its age, it was written in verse. The poem is reminiscent of a folk sermon James Weldon Johnson heard as a child. Enendu drew additional inspiration from the Noah story in the bible to adapt this poem for the stage for design and execution. This is because a work of 180 lines provided just a thematic outline for a full theatrical performance. Besides, such works by non-theatre playwrights normally present challenges similar to Demas Nwoko's experience in The *Palm Wine Drunkard* when he took up the direction of the play and had to redesign the visual images many times because the text (dialogues) was too weak to

[12] Klein, Alvin. Theatre; "Noah's Arks Sails onto the stage" *New York Times*, 1987. https://www.nytimes.com/1987/03/22/nyregion/theater-noah-s-ark-sails-onto-the-stage.html

support the visual images. In the case of *Noah Built the Ark*, its contents were enlarged, with alterations for logical sequence and dramatic effectiveness.

A few considerations were made to meet the quality of production Enendu desired; these are a raft convincing both in appearance and movement, a scenery that will not only support but match the realistic presence of the raft, a door that would be of dual function because of the height of the ark from the floor, and a garden of Eden that will be a good prelude the consequences that will follow. This required trees and a snake of acceptable visual. If this structural problem can be surmounted, then the rest would be a matter of execution technique through light and sound, which is the designer's long-standing credential. In the Nigerian theatre, however, the designer is often compelled to fulfill the function of all areas of design, including electric motors. These unenviable circumstances became inevitable when running the trees painted on canvas for maximum realistic effect.

The Architecture of *Noah built the ark*

While Ken Ham's ark is real and exact, its animals are sculptured to astound viewers with the capabilities of the human imagination and the recreative ability of the sculptor, as would the ability of actors to imitate reality. This, exactly, was Enendu's approach to his designs for the stage. *Noah Built the Ark* is a meticulous adaptation of a poem of the same title from the volume *God's Trombones* by James Weldon Johnson. The work is a poet's inspirational poetic rendition of the bible story about Noah's ark: a long narration in verse that begins with the creation and ends in the destruction of the world with flood. It was adapted by Molinta Enendu, and the production ran from July 12 – 15, 1995, in the Arts Theatre of the University of Calabar.

The following describes the architectural design and configuration of the ark:

> The ark was framed of horizontal 2x2x12 timber joining the major vertical support frames made of 2x2x12, all anchored to a keel. The entire unit is mounted on six heavy duty, multidirectional casters on which the whole ark could be moved to any direction. The outside surface of the ark is covered with hardboard sheets and painted to simulate dark brown strings of gopher timber layered together by framed construction. It was about 9feet high at the centre and rising to 11feet toward the stage left end of the ark and folding neatly into a semi-circular, curved, dorian design[13] (Applause 2006:170).

The ark's position in space and acting area was intentional to give significance to its awesome size.

[13] Enendu, Molinta J. . Static and Moving Scenery in *Noah Built The Ark. APPLAUSE: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies (2006)* 1.2:164-176.

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> The whole body of the ark lies across the main stage area, close to the cyclorama with its stage right end disappearing into the wings to create the illusion of size and extensity of the ark[14]

The door is major to the ark's purpose; its function is vital for economy and space, fluidity and unity of movement; the door played a dual function both as entrance space and elevator. Central to the visible body of the ark is the door leading into it: measuring $2^{1/2}$ feet wide by 4feet height, stands 3feet from the base of the ark. Enendu elaborates:

> The door is built to simulate a rugged, stout, study, and rigid structure that is unyielding, impregnable and impenetrable. The closing device is fabricated to incorporate a manual but mechanical gear of a single drum host system with worn and helicoidally wheeled gearing door-leaf with the aid of a six millimeter steel cable, to a closed state.[15]

A close study of the diagram below shows an astute observation of the principles of balance not only for aesthetic view but for the convenience of rocking and levitation. Since its internal framing followed the procedure adopted in the raft, it can also be seen that the structural arrangement and combining technique observed strict adherence to detail for stability as if the ark is designed to sail in a real sea. Six circular rings of wrought iron were made and welded to prevent them from opening up under the weight of the ark when lifted. Each of the rings is then welded to a catcher driven into the mainframes of the ark.

[14] Ibid 170.
[15] Ibid 170

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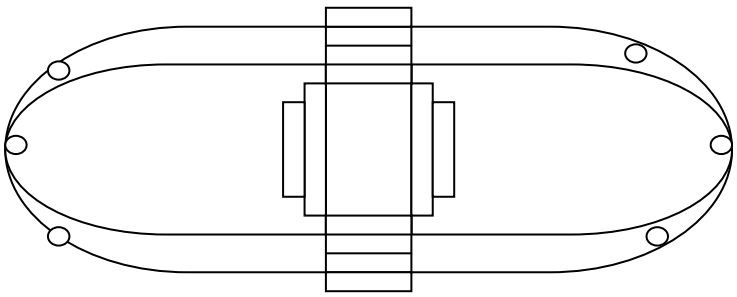
Figure 1 Floor plan of the Ark showing circular rings for steel anchoring for lifting and lowering during flotation

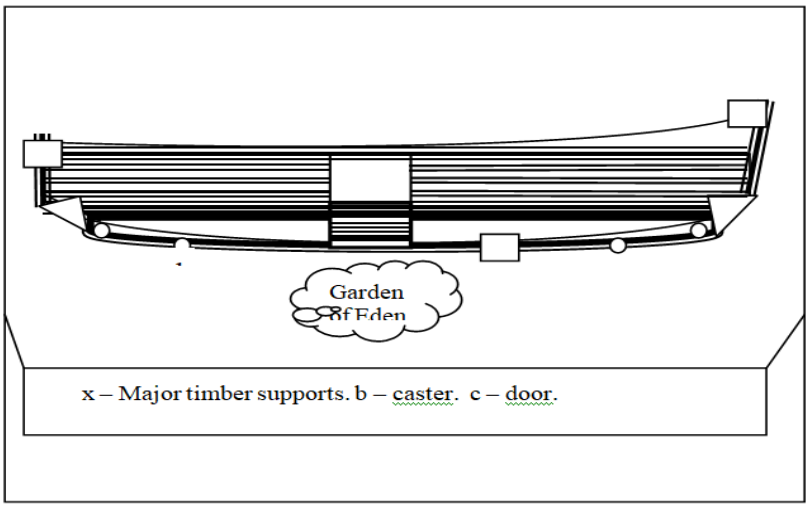


NOTE: The anchoring points are not visible to the audience in order to maintain the illusion (the impression to be created is that the ark is lifted by flood and not ropes). Even the hoisting cables were unseen because at the time of hoisting, the borders were dropped about six inches below the highest point of the ark. The stage right wing took care of its end while the arc shaped rudder of the left and highest point served the left. It is further aided by the borders and legs.

Source: John Iwuh

Conceptually, the framing of Noah's ark followed the process of the raft in terms of internal network design, but unlike the raft, the ark was a much larger structure. Technically, it was conceived to be lighter than the raft, not necessarily because of its levitation but because it had no actor inside it during its up-and-down movements.

Figure 2. Framing the Ark: The major timber supports before being wrapped with hard board. The eventual smooth curved shape in the next drawing was trimmed out of foam and hardboard.



Source: John Iwuh

Figure 3: A Negative impression of the ark with its external structural parts, a jammed door, and showing the stage wing, border, and legs.

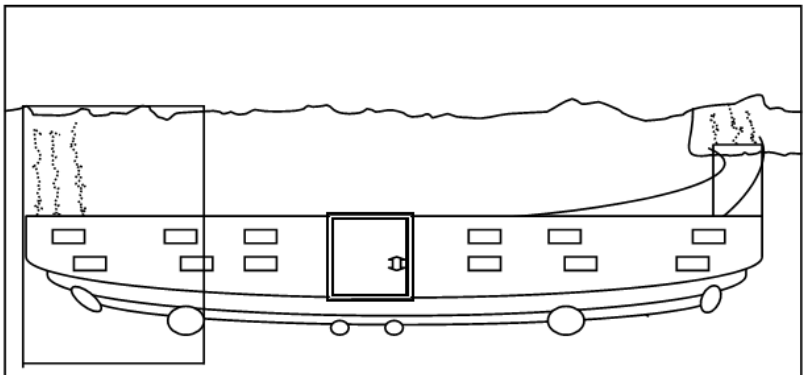


Figure 3. Besides giving the further impression of its length, another major reason for extending the ark into the wings was to mask the steel cables which grip the ark for up and down movement as the flood demands. Failure to do this

Source: John Iwuh

Figure 4: Internal Layout

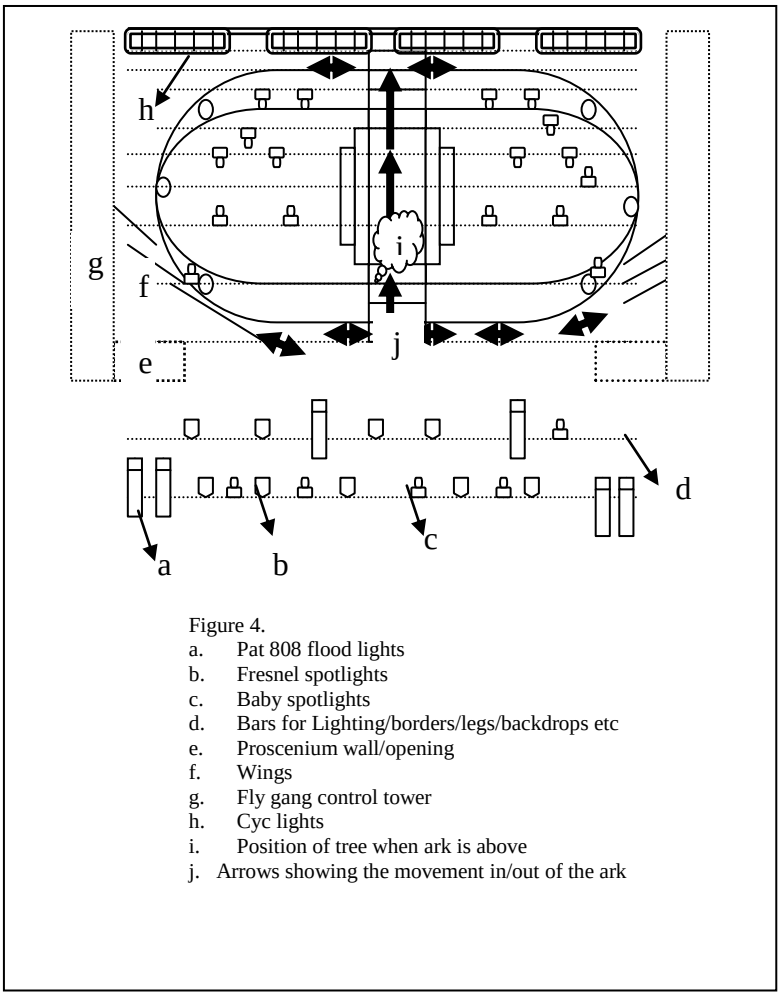


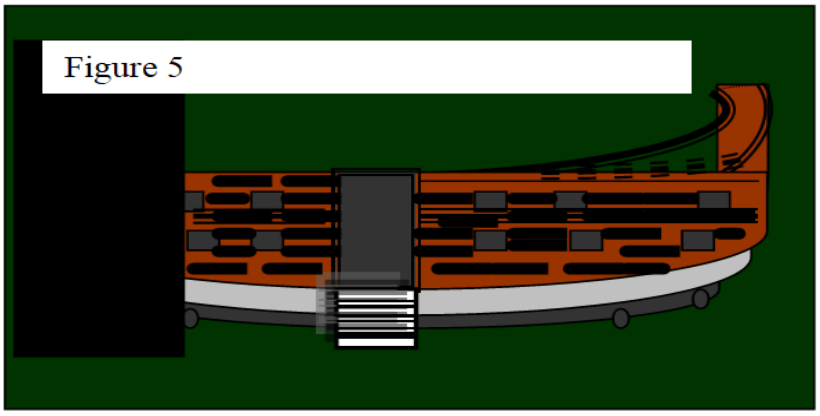
Figure 4.
a. Pat 808 flood lights
b. Fresnel spotlights
c. Baby spotlights
d. Bars for Lighting/borders/legs/backdrops etc
e. Proscenium wall/opening
f. Wings
g. Fly gang control tower
h. Cyc lights
i. Position of tree when ark is above
j. Arrows showing the movement in/out of the ark

Source: John Iwuh

The beauty of space and facility is functionally brought to bear in accommodating and concealing the massive structure of the ark when suspended. The flying system, including its curtain and borders, played major roles in creating the suspense and the surprise. The entire structure is firmly anchored with five lines of steel cable leading from the major timber supports of the ark and cleated to one of the pipes of the counterweight flying system of the arts theatre…the ark remains in the loft in flown position from the

beginning of the show to when it is needed and lowered and thus revealed[16] (171).

Figure 5: The model & finished impression of the Ark



Source: John Iwuh

Figure 6: Eve standing beside the tree of knowledge

Source: Courtesy: M. Enendu

[16] Enendu, Molinta J. Static and Moving Scenery In *Noah Built the Ark. APPLAUSE: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies (2006)* 1.2:164-176.

Two important elements central to the effectiveness of *Noah built the ark* were the Garden. The garden was an open space, supported with some two dimensional trees cut out on profiles and located at the stage sides together with one central three dimensional tree; tree of knowledge (166-167)[17]. Its design incorporated a space on its trunk for a puppeteer manipulating the snake in speech and movement. The designer concentrated on realizing the smaller basic sets and props necessary to aid the fluidity of the performance. These are the animal profiles, Noah's staff, the tree of knowledge, and the snake. The images included 24 life-size animals cut in profile and their human carriers. The dialogue was minimal and mostly delivered by the narrator, while the characters demonstrated the incidents narrated. The snake was instrumental in setting the tone of the performance through the forbidden fruit, which became man's woe. The designer explained that the snake had an operator (a puppeteer) positioned behind the proscenium wall to reach and operate the speaking head of the snake. With his whole arm into the snake's head and neck area, he was able to synchronize the movement of the snake with that of the narrator and mime Eve's speeches like:

> This is the sweetest fruit in the garden
> God's fooling you, Eve
> I know you can eat that forbidden fruit
> And I know that you will not die[18] (200)

In addition, the snake could move, pluck the fruit, eat, and give to Eve.

The Ark: Execution and Movement

To execute any work in the magnitude of *Noah building the ark calls for several specific but imaginative scenic effects, such as* the impression of a moving ark and the impression of a multitude of cast human and animal characters. Enendu's ark design gave the appearance of old age, even though it was in use for the first time. It exudes ruggedness by the sheer sturdy visual outlook of the wood finish and portrayal of weather-beaten, rough wood; after all, the ark had a still-life of 120 years; ordinarily, some parts may have rotted and replaced over time.

The magnificence of *Noah Built the Ark* lies in the sailing of that piece of scenery (the ark), and the effective combination of abstract creatures of animals and the symbolic image of man as a contrast to the actual image of man as the lord

[17] The Effects of Architectural Structures on Technical Directing in Two Nigerian Universities. Ph.D Thesis. Dept. of Theatre Arts, University of Calabar, (2000). vi + 425pp.
[18] The Effects of Architectural Structures on Technical Directing in Two Nigerian Universities. Ph.D Thesis. Dept. of Theatre Arts, University of Calabar, (2000). vi + 425pp.

among other God's creations. In most cases, the symbols were captured on the head and the hip. Then, using strong observational and imitational sense, the different types of animals were captured using their natural postures. For instance, a slip-on mask is made out of fabric with the features of a desired animal, using the most significant features like the large head and broad ears of the elephant and the long horns of the cow, which is then worn by the character. Then, a tail is made and attached to the hip or the waist. Using these two major features, the actor configures the complete image through movement; he either squats, crawls, hops, or gallops.

The guided movement of the animals into the ark was an even livelier sight. The fluidity and precision were achieved through committed and intensive rehearsals. Each animal was assisted in mounting the ark through a perspective tunnel, which immediately closes in, and is seen walking across one or two windows on the upper level. The spectacle of the movement was a creation of lighting effects, weaving through warm and cool colours of various shades. There are occasional twilights of white lights at low intensity to separate day and night as time went by to register the length of time taken for all animal species to embark on the ark.

One major technique that enhanced the effectiveness of the illusion was that over seventy percent of the movement into the ark was carried out via the shadow play method; this was most effective with the animals. With this method, only the shadows of the animals were seen walking into the ark. This way, the actors were recycled many times over; the movements were brisk, swift, and brilliant. They change costumes, wear different images, and adopt different movements; further variations were created through the physiological differences of the characters. For instance, a female would take up the costume first worn by a male actor in the first cycle, and the second time around, light picks her in silhouette instead of full view. In most cases, a little attachment is added to create different animals. This helped to stretch the imagination of the audience as to where the number comes from and where it disappears.

The movement of the ark is significant and one of the major climaxes of the performance and in fact, a central necessity for mechanizing the scenery. Achieving this illusion was calculated to be a major theatrical spectacle:

> The ark had to rock and rise under the effects of flood and running water… The ark was rigged on the flying system whose absence would have marred the total effectuality, meaning and thematic development of *Noah built the ark*[19]

The narrator's lines prompted the next action:

> And the old ark- a she began to rock

[19] The Effects of Architectural Structures on Technical Directing in Two Nigerian Universities. Ph.D Thesis. Dept. of Theatre Arts, University of Calabar, (2000). vi + 425pp.

And the old ark- she began to ride[20]

At this point, from the flying gallery, using the flying system, the ark rocked and eventually rose progressively in an undulating upward directional sequence up to about 3 metres (with its baseline resting on the topmost point of the flood mark. At this point the rocking of the ark on by the flood makes the most sense) from the stage floor, the upper part disappearing into the loft of the stage tower. The flood was a great contrast to the stormy water effect used in *The raft*:

> It was the climax of the production and was greeted by audience ovation each night of the production. The rise was real and meaningful. Its absence or failure would have killed the vital meaning of *Noah built the ark* [21]

By this exact mechanism as well, the ark was lowered to the stage floor when the rains stopped, and the flood dried up:

> When the ark touched the ground, the door opens. Noah's family members, the animal carriers and the animal profiles (who had been waiting in the wings) now move and begin to come out of the door of the ark[22]

The sequence was so effectively managed that the audience believed that they were in the ark from the moment levitation began up to the time it touched the stage floor again. The characters quickly took position, awaiting the door's opening. The applause that welcomed the descent of the ark was as thunderous as that supported its elevation. The audience behaviours at this point of climax show that the theatre experience is best judged by audience reaction. It is an elation as shock is also an inward expression of excitement if we compare this situation with the disintegration of the raft.

Lighting Noah Built the Ark

Lighting was a major technical spectacle that gave meaning to the performance, and a major aspect of the spectacle was the deployment of special effects lanterns. Three types of lighting fixtures[23] contributed greatly to lighting Noah Built the Ark. The first was the special effects lantern, known in Nigeria as the "drum." This is a special photographic image assembly motor attached to its front.[24] The magic of pattern 252 is the engraved photographic images pivoting on a glass wheel. Like the pattern 808, it also projects at 2000w. Equipped with a reliable electric motor, an interchangeable lens for rich notable effects from

[20] Ibid 204.
[21] Ibid 205.
[22] Ibid 206.
[23] https://www.theatrecrafts.com/bhc/equipment/strand-patt-252#google_vignette.
[24] https://ancientlighting.uk/product/strand-patt-252-profile-spotlight/

nature to artificial figures. The gadget spins to project between cloud, flame, sea, and snow with realistic and natural brilliance. The drums are powerful, and no fixtures designed with similar attributes for similar engagements have outperformed them in terms of efficiency and intensified illusion of reality.

The second was Strands' pattern 808. By 1995, when Noah's Ark was performed, the University of Calabar Arts Theatre had the most theatrical lighting fixtures in Nigeria, apart from the National Arts Theatre. It was equipped with the most notable effects lanterns with the proper colour depth. However, they were bulky; of note was Rank Strand's pattern 808 (21.5kg), apart from the brand's follow-spot, was the heaviest hanging luminaire of the '80s. Its projection distance and reach were profound and matched its giant status.

Nevertheless, the electrics and the beams carrying them were rigidly constructed to bear the weights of the line array. The 808 was still an elite fixture in Nigerian designers' collections despite being launched 7 years earlier. A premium purchase for its 2000w power and variable beam characteristics, 285,000cd, 110/220 beam angle, and 18,000/240,000 adjustment circle make it preferred for the front-of-house electrics.

Figure 7: L-R: Strand's Patterns 252, 808 & 23.

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Source: Courtesy: theatrecrafts.com

The third, another brilliant fixture that contrasted the awesome size of pattern 808, was Strand's pattern 23, also known as the baby sport. It has a unique ball shape, short barrel projection, shutters, and a brilliant output beam of 500 watts. Apart from the Fresnel, it was a dominant feature in theatre lighting of the '80s. The Pattern 23 is reputed to be the first mass-produced portable theatre profile spotlight in the World. A carrying weight of 3.75kg, it had a 35-year record run before its reputation waned. With an 8 metre throw, visual intensity output of 18000cd, built with a colour filter slot, the pattern 23 dotted Enendu's lighting design for Noah's Ark as stars on a night sky.

To be able to realise the lighting design capable of creating the kind of mystery and wonder in *Noah built the ark*, the designer configured over twelve unique light projections using the cyclorama as screen or canvas on the vertical plane and the stage floor on the horizontal plane as pasteboards for all the lighting matrixes. An advanced manual control lighting desk aided the execution of lighting cues to prosecute all the cues in their combinations. Lighting execution was eased by adequate hanging positions in the lighting bridges, catwalk, and cat ladder, which served as hangers for all the floor projections. These convenient positions made it possible to create the Garden of Eden – a metaphysical world where God made the first man and woman (figure 4). The wing areas and the orchestra pit were other locations from which projection equipment was positioned.

The special lighting effects were synchronized to run with reinforced sound, and the voice-over of the narrator from the speakers was realistically set to a level that blended with the house acoustics of the theatre. Each effect; sound, light, and elevation of the ark emanated at the moment of precise command from God through the narrator:

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Table 1 Cue Sheet

Dialogue	Sound effect	Lighting effect	Actor	Scenic Effect
God said to Noah: Get in the Ark; and Noah and his folks got in the ark	VO: husky and awesome…	Inside the ark illuminates (seen through the windows)	Silhouette of images appear	Door opens
And all the animals, two by two: a he and a she marched in	VO	Ark light dims off to aid disappearance of cast into wings	They pair male and female clearly signified by costume	
Then God said: Noah bar the door !(repeated three times for theatrical effect	Crackling sound of door begins along with whistling sound of windstorm	Lightning begin to flash but still subdued by white light		The keel of door begins gradual upward lift
And Noah barred the door. And the thunder rolled like a rumbling drum	Door slams to a thunderous jam with sustained thunderstorm	Lightning flashes unabated; all white lights are withdrawn		Costume and scenic pieces fly in different directions
And lightning jumped from pole to pole;	Sustained thunderous claps	Continuous flashing of multidirectional lightning tracks		
And it rained down, rain, rain…	Intermittent thunderstorm	Rain poured down in stringed droplets		
For forty days and forty nights; water poured down and gushed up		flood begins to rise; sweeping across from stage left to stage right		

and the dry land turned to sea				
And the old ark – a began to ride (God's Trombones (1978:19)				The ark levitates and rocks on

Source: M. Enendu

The door barring was a point that the audience strongly reflected upon if the reaction was anything to go by; it was as if heaven had been sealed against all sinners, including the audience, which seemed locked out of it. Perhaps this is the function of drama in touching people's consciences. The synchronized movement of the door was supported with a recorded door jam, which slams to suggest finality. The dual function of the door is made possible by the step unit built onto it:

> The door leaf in an open situation rests its upper width edge on the floor, as it is hinged on the opposite lower width, thus, providing three units of treads (rungs) that form the step-units leading into the deck of the ark[25] (171).

The graphic table above can be summed in a few lines at the commands:

> The fleecy cloud later changed to stormy and rain cloud, the rain effects, the flood and running water, the rainbow, lightning and the chimerical worlds of the spirits and ancestors were created with lights[26] 206).

The atmosphere transition before and during the storm was due to the effective management of the effect cues with commitment. A cloud drum was juxtaposed with an improvised sky background to signal the transition of chaotic and turbulent weather. The gale followed, and the rain soon afterward. This made the flood collect for the ark's levitation and floating. Reacting to Utang, the Chronicle Newspaper reporter, Enendu admitted that "these natural phenomena were theatrically achieved in a precise, logical order and graphical progression" (1995:206).

[25] Enendu, Molinta J. Static and Moving Scenery in *Noah Built The Ark. APPLAUSE: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies (2006)* 1.2:164-176.
[26] The Effects of Architectural Structures on Technical Directing in Two Nigerian Universities. Ph.D Thesis. Dept. of Theatre Arts, University of Calabar, (2000). vi + 425pp.

The cyclorama was not only useful but perfect in the realization of the horizontally directed effects like water and cloud. Richard L. Arnold notes of course that:

> A cyc (cyclorama) is often employed to represent a sky, real or abstract, or simply a limitless space or void, it is frequently lighted in colours and values to aid reality or mood, shapes, patterns… (1990:223)[27].

while Buris-Meyer and Cole add that this function of the cyc must occur simultaneously with other activities and yet does not "interfere with other stage equipment"[28] (48). One of those shapes is the moon or the rainbow.

Enendu's creation of the rainbow in *Noah Built the Ark* remains a theatrical miracle. This is because, to date, the rainbow is not among the country's most highly sought-after theatre lighting effects. By 1988, most local designers depended on Gobo. Thus, the lighting designer could exhibit incredible ingenuity through unorthodox means in environments with fewer means and limited technological support. For instance, to create a rainbow, Enendu dismantled an ellipsoidal zoom profile, constructed and inserted six rings of cylindrical tubes held together by three-millimetre rods between each ring, and a gel corresponding to each colour of the rainbow was inserted in each slot. The lantern was then positioned close to the cyc to retain the total quality of its hue and projected at an angle. However, he blinded the lens by half with scotch tape and lit all colours from a single lantern; a rainbow was effectively registered.

The image of God was handled with delicate abstraction in the sense that He was costumed in the image of man with the mien of timelessness, with no clear defined age other than adult by our imagination. At no time was his face revealed to the audience. The mystery of his presence was coated in a pool of magenta, while His actions were highlighted in silhouette against a background of golden amber light alternated with blue-green colours. Enendu believes that God's presence will be better left a mystery, which it is, enhanced with the deep guttural, commanding voice of the narrator, which echoes by reinforcement. On the contrary, Noah was recognizably a human 'papa'; a humble, dedicated, and obedient servant who accommodates ridicule in humble obedience to God's supernatural instructions. Lighting was the means of God's awesomeness and by costume, while sound gave Him a voice beyond the ordinary.

Conclusion

It is essential to refer to the magnificent characteristics of a proscenium theatre, and one with the relevant facility and space in particular, giving the production the major impetus to live up to its design. This is because the beauty of

[27] Arnold, R. L. 1990. *Scene technology*. Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
[28] Burris-Meyer, H. E. & Cole E. C. *Scenery for theatre*. USA: Little Brown & Co., 1964. P.48

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proscenium is to release action as a finished production through its ability to collect and lock up every action, remold it through the hidden scenic elements, and manage its release within that defined space through the diversified effects of light under which known objects undergo transformation. According to George and Portia Kernodle, "what is dull and flat in diffused general light takes on life and form under spotlights[29] (217). Acknowledging this, Enendu agrees that the production would not have been possible but for these installed facilities. Thus, the large proscenium, broad wings, and expansive fly loft of the University Arts theatre accommodated the theatrical illusion. The wings created the illusion and space that gulped the flow of characters into and out of the ark.

It also made it possible for Adam and Even to go behind God's back when God called, "Adam, Adam, where art thou?" Without the wings, the loft, and the stage tower, the significance and meaning of Noah's performance in building *the ark* would have been negatively affected, not only in size but also in movement and floatation. The designer's passion for this particular space does not mean that *The raft* cannot be staged in any other space. Still, it would not accommodate this level of theatrical illusion, and in effect, the level of theatre experience cannot be equated with that of a smaller space or an open stage, for that matter. This would have greatly reduced or outrightly eliminated the spectacle.

[29] Kernodle, G. & Kernodle, P. 1971. *Invitation to the theatre*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich.