CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

Theatre and the market are two areas that have attracted substantial attention from researchers, scholars, government planners, policy implementers, theatre producers and consumers. But no specific study has had its prime objective as the analysis of the relationship existing between theatre and the market in Uganda, and in particular the impact socio-cultural elements and various government policies have had on theatre as an a form of art, as a profession, and as a social service.

Further, there is need to be aware of the larger contexts, particularly economic and political, within which Uganda's theatre has had to develop and grow. No community, however homogeneous it is, ever succeeds to develop as a uniform entity, even within the same nation. Likewise, no nation or economy can successfully close itself to external influences, especially in this age of massive technological developments that have made the world look smaller than it actually is. What is more, the world is now being described as "a global village", particularly an electronic one, where, with satellite communications, one can effortlessly access and/or transmit loads of information within a matter of seconds from one end of the globe to another. For example, a social or political event of particular relevance to a village in America is easily relayed elsewhere within a matter of seconds, even to some of the remotest places on earth, irrespective of its relevance to the social, cultural, or political set-ups among the recipients.

In this culture of global consumerism, being cultivated by technologically -advanced societies and imbibed by developing markets that indiscriminately hunger after anything in this North-South transmission, lies the danger of consequential annihilation of artistic forms and values in recipient societies by the new world order. In theatre, such consumerism, mostly dressed as inter-culturalism,

1 For example, the impact of colonialism in Africa is very apparent Western education and 'civilisation' might now be integral parts of the "new" societies but they still act as agents of imperialist conquests and cultural imposition. The idea is expounded throughout the research.
has contributed to diversification of the industry and proliferation of markets thus the erosion of the theatre's formally recognised goals and roles in society. Surprisingly, the transmissions are not always forced onto unwilling consumers. Many are able and willing to buy the information and other unique experiences, including the most personal ones, at market prices; mainly because that is what is selling the world over. Unfortunately, global consumption habits ensure that nothing much sells, in material terms at least, from consumer societies in the developing world, except for the perpetual images of chaos, war, deprivation, disease, and ignorance.

The theatre art and profession are also victims of Western ideology and culture and their impact on indigenous societies and social structure. Western world ideologies and culture can be positively appraised, but only with respect to the significant levels of development they have afforded their respective societies. Otherwise, the role played by colonialism among present-day developing societies is not wholly commendable. Many countries were held under colonial rule for at least a century, and through political manipulation and social coercion, whole nations were conquered and subdued to deny their very existence in exchange for "new" civilisation and social order. Mamadou Dia notes that,

During pre-colonial times Africa generally comprised either large empires—West, Center, and South—binding different ethnic groups under one hegemony, or smaller states identifying with a single ethnie—such as the Ibo and Yoruba in Eastern and Western Nigeria. Despite the hierarchical system of traditional governments most of these entities were democratically governed through group representation at the center and village councils at the local level. The key operative concept for decision-making was consensus. The rulers had authority but shared the power. . . . Most historical monarchies in Africa, whether great or small, old or new, belonged to this basic type. They were political and therefore human, as well as ritual and therefore spiritual. . . . The differences in Africa remained generally of form and not substance. 'Ritual' and 'politics' marched hand in hand.2

After years of plundering and divisive rule, Africa was declared lost, a dark continent where the human specie was not just irredeemably backward and inferior but could easily be sub-human as well.3 Unfortunately, such constrictive images still attend the African in much of the Western world, and continue to define all nature of relations between Africa and Western world societies.4 Consequently,

African societies have struggled with, and often psychologically settled, to inferior positions to become parasitic on Western ideals, in total disregard of their own social realities and cultural contexts.

Ironically, it was likewise no guarantee that the age-old social systems on the continent would have consolidated Africa’s growth and development or secured for it a respectable place in the new world order. Hence, colonialism and Western imperialism only acted as a catalyst to the ensuing crisis and not its architect. Nonetheless, a host of development and economic recovery packages recommended by Western economies for the developing societies over the years have tended to push recipient societies in worse situations than previously. Elikia M’Bokolo notes:

> Since the 1980s, the experts of the international finance institutions have stopped talking about escaping from the logic of the ‘world economy’ and the ‘market economy’. Their only ambition is to rationalize the management of the African economies so that they may more easily be integrated into the world economy. But this rationalization, in turn, is at a prohibitive social cost and further intensifies social polarization.⁵

Most recently, and often at the prompting of First World economies, there has developed a ‘consciousness’ among societies in the developing world to sell their social and cultural worthiness to the inquisitive, and mostly tourist, eye of the West. For the cultural items, the presentations are strictly maintained as ‘cultural’, ethnic, and mystic in their selection, intent, and form, with no progressive social ideology or significant political import from the countries of origin. This packaging in mixtures of the very traditional or local with modern artistic forms makes the items artistically acceptable and easily consumable to the selected market, but it kills their cultural import and authenticity. Where performing troupes could not always physically export ‘culture’ to international markets, they have sought to sell their re-packaged ‘culture’ on the local market through cultural association or traditional dance troupes available for hire as entertainers. Other local theatre producers, like Ndere Troupe and SAMAMU Group, hold annual cultural/theatre festivals that are in themselves organised as private economic enterprises that must make good business and value.⁷ Claims of “promotion of African culture” are also prevalent in “beauty contests”, with their attendant dehumanising tendencies of

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⁶ Elikia M’Bokolo, Ibid., p. 142

⁷ Ndere Troupe organises the Uganda Development Theatre association (UDTA) festival and SAMAMU Troupe the International Anti-Corruption Theatre Movement (IATM) festival. The two projects are attractively funded by the Austrian Embassy and MS International, a Danish Development Agency, respectively. Details appear in the relevant sections of Chapter Four.
nudity and sex exhibitionism that are imported from Western societies where sex is often portrayed as common and cheap and the female body as a mere sexual object for the pleasure of the male consumer and/or customer.

All the mentioned socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts have inevitably impacted on Uganda's theatre industry and business, the attitudes and tastes of theatre audiences, and on the general literary life and nature of performance forms.

1. 2. Research Problem

In the last three to four decades (1960s through to 2000), theatre in Uganda has become more commercial than either social or literary. The whole theatrical process, right from composing around an idea through to presenting the finished idea on stage, is evaluated and quantified in monetary and/or material terms. Consequently, the theatre's primary roles of education, socialisation, and literary entertainment have become secondary. The priorities of the individual artists now lie in enterprise development and business expansion, just as is the case with any other commercial or business enterprise. There is little bother with the other aspects of theatre as an art of the people or as a decent profession among others to be recognised in the country and aspired towards.

These apparent negative trends in Uganda's theatre come as no big surprise since, in general, Uganda Government policy has never favoured the growth of theatre as an art and/or a profession which demonstrates government's gross neglect of theatre's development, both for the present and the future. Instead, right from colonial times, theatre has been conceived and promoted as a social and cultural activity but primarily as a commercial enterprise hence perpetrating further the dissonance between the industry and many of its stakeholders.

1. 3. Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- What are theatre's basic nature and aims today: is it an art, a social service or a business commodity hence a commercial enterprise?
- Can theatre exist as an independent and literary art form, a social service, and a vocation in a globalised economy?
• How can traditional performance arts and the roles they usually play in society present and/or preserve themselves in a free, de-regulated economy?

• Is theatre truly part of the country’s present and future national or political economy?

1.4. Research Objectives

1.4.1. General Objective

The research sought to establish and define the relationship between theatre and the market in Uganda; in particular how national policies (political or economic) have impacted on the nature and development of the theatre industry since colonial times through to the close of the 20th century. Influences from the theatre’s cultural and social contexts were also not ignored. All in all, the research sought to analyse the central link between theatre and the different scenarios it presented in relation to the general market environment.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

The research had the following specific objectives:

• To establish the nature and types of theatre in the country, how each operates, and why.

• To determine the extent to which the theatre responds to market forces; that is, how it is regulated by the general laws of demand and supply.

• To discuss the impact of existing rivalry among theatre groups, the continual emergence of new theatrical forms, the on-set of modern technology, satellite communication and other electronic media, the ascendancy of the global amusement arts on the entertainment market, and the need for economic survival by theatre artists on theatre as an art, as a service industry, and as a profession.

• To discuss the general processes of planning, organisation, financing, marketing, and distribution of theatre in Uganda.

• To establish the impact of government policies on the development of theatre in Uganda.
1.5. Scope of the Study

1.5.1. The Time Scope

The impact of market forces, particularly the economic and political, on theatre industry and business in Uganda, is mostly observable among theatre companies and groups operating in the 1980s and 1990s. However, the source of these manifestations lies in Uganda's historical past; like the Economic War policies of 1972, the constitutional crisis of 1966, the socio-cultural environment, and colonial policies implemented in the country since 1894, when Uganda became a British protectorate. Hence the research examines different circumstances - economic, political, or otherwise - that might account for the present state of Uganda's theatre industry and business, its mode of operations, and its probable future trends.

The study has a coherent time scope stretching from 1960 to the present (2000). The discussion on the nature and form of theatre business in Uganda revolves around theatre giants during the 1980s and 1990s while pace-setters in formal theatre and the architects of commercial business enterprise in Uganda are traced back to the 1960s and 1970s. When and where relevant, specific policies by the colonial government that had a direct bearing on theatre business in the country have also been referenced.

The four designated decades are perceived sufficient time to generate enough data for comparative discussion. Further, the same period covers the most pronounced existence of formal theatre in Uganda, reaching its quantitative and qualitative peaks during the 1970s. The chosen period is also considered relevant not only in the sense of testing research variables over an adequate length of time, but also because of the way the different governments' economic policies have impacted on the theatre industry and its market. In some instances, the country's political governance was the same for reasonably longer periods; like Obote I (1964-1971), Amin (1971-1979), Obote II (1980-1985), and Museveni (1986-to date). This sameness of political players benefits the research in the sense that the governments concerned experience(d) less disruptions in the implementation of their pronouncements and/or national policies directed at the social, the private, and the public sectors. Hence the different governments can each be solely accountable for the effects of their policies on theatre, other pressures not withstanding. In addition, the research's arguments and conclusions can easily be validated by the country's historical records.
1.5.2. The Geographical Scope

The study's geographical scope covers the whole of Uganda, but with representative samples from theatre groups, theatre halls, and audiences in Kampala City and a few districts representing the four broad/ethnic regions of Uganda (that is, Northern, Eastern, Central, and South-Western). The major theatre groups based in the said regions have been studied as business enterprises in the country's theatre industry. However, in many cases, formal theatre groups were almost non-existent; as the specific discussions in the study indicate. Many of the groups in existence would also not normally qualify to be regarded as "business" ventures because they are not making a clear headway in that direction. At best, they could be described as service points, although that also heavily depends on a number of factors, chief among them, funding. A number of such groups usually look up to donors in the form of Government or the NGOs to help finance their productions. Without this financial in-put from the outside, the groups are largely redundant, and as good as non-existent.

On the other hand, during the primary period of study, the theatre market was generally differently affected by the economic, political, and other policies in the country, especially at the individual or regional levels. Nevertheless, there still existed among the audiences a general response to the specific policies, as is directly reflected in the audiences' attitudes, behaviour, and expectations over a period of time. The responses by the theatre's primary market, or the audiences, were, sometimes, dependent on their background characteristics of age, gender, etc. and, at other times, on the general socio-political situation in the country. Whatever the case, the role theatre audiences played, and still play, in Uganda's theatre industry and business cannot be ignored.

1.6. Significance of the Study

1.6.1. Information generated by this study shall add to the existing knowledge and scholarly work in Uganda and elsewhere in the world. The research is of primary benefit to my alma mater, Makerere University, particularly the Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Department, the Department of African Studies at the collaborating university, Universitat Bayreuth, in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and other institutions of performing arts the world over.

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8 The districts covered by the research include Kampala, Mukono, Luweero, Masaka, Rakai, Jinja, Mbale, Pallisa, Kotido, Gulu, Arua, Masindi, Hoima, Kabarole, Bushenyi, Mbarara, Kabale, and Rukungiri.
1.6.2. The study also hopes to accomplish an increased understanding and appreciation, in the larger public, of the difference between theatre and other theatrical or dramatic performance forms like "katemba", community theatre, development theatre, cultural performances, and festivals. There also need to be critically aware of the dangers of running theatre as a commodity on the market for those who have the power to demand and possess it.

1.6.3. The findings could also enrich the market research and analysis usually conducted by theatre producers and directors of the different theatre forms and thus help in designing adequate strategies for survival in the face of growing competition from the existing theatre groups, new entrants to the market, the amusement arts, the electronic media, and the profit and leisure enterprises in the country. Proponents of traditional theatre could also strategise better for its survival and/or promotion.

1.6.4. Salient factors that govern economic policy formulation and implementation in Uganda and how the scenarios might impact on the theatre industry could be better appreciated by producers of theatre, its consumers, and government policy makers for future planning and organisation of the industry.

1.6.5. Information generated could be used by both practitioners and professionals in theatre, including the Performance Arts Colleges and Schools, to lobby for favourable national policies towards the arts, and in particular theatre, in the country.

1.6.6. Finally, the study should stimulate new areas of research on theatre or its market in Uganda.

1.7. Methodology

1.7.1. Research Design

In order to realise qualitative data that could at the same time be independently validated, the study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods in the gathering and analysis of data. Like Byaruhanga-Akiki of Makerere University once asserted,

...the two methods are not mutually exclusive as we already know. There is a shared view that quantitative methods deal with statistics. We want to note that Statistics, is in fact an indispensable tool of scientific investigation. It is based on the principles of Arithmetic options of additions, subtractions, division and multiplication. It is known that, whether we are aware or not, like or dislike, we are daily exposed to certain forms of statistics for the better part of our lives... We are
reminded that research is an attitude of mind or heart, not a method. It involves data collection which then initially gets recorded, organised or filed and stored. Then follows the difficult stage of data analysis and reporting! This is where we make deductions and attempt to reach some conclusions. Our experience is that simply getting a mass of data does not substitute for thought and desk research work.... In the Humanities, generalizability is a necessary criterion for good research. Specific research specifies methods of operation and measurement.9 (brackets mine)

Furthermore, very well knowing that theatre, on the one hand, and the market, on the other, both use natural scientific means and 'holistic' or humanistic approaches in their organisation and practice, one could not successfully restrict oneself to any one method of data collection, documentation, or analysis. Both methods were as crucial to the research as the topic of research itself was interdisciplinary.

1.7.1.1. The Quantitative Research Methods

Within the quantitative approach, the research used:

- The *Ex-Post facto* or causal-comparative design; to establish how theatre in Uganda has interacted with the market over the last four decades. Of particular consideration was how various governments’ economic and other policies have, over the years, impacted on theatre as an art form, as a profession, and as a social service. The economic policies under consideration included those of economic indigenisation and nationalisation during Amin’s regime; the quasi-economic liberalisation policies, as in Obote II Government10; and the full liberalisation, privatisation, and modernisation of the economy, as is being propagated in Museveni’s Government. Notable impact on theatre of specific national or public policies, like literary censorship, state-engineered political repression, the philosophy behind liberation wars and political power liberalisation, has also been assessed.

Even for data that was largely historical, the method was favoured by the availability of a number of theatre practitioners and professionals who had lived through and practiced theatre within the larger time scope of the study, and who were, at the same time, very willing to share their knowledge and experiences as they related to the quest of study. Where obtaining the right kind of or credible statistics on the theatre companies and groups in business at the time was itself a big problem, the

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10 Apollo Milton Obote was two times president of Uganda; in 1964-1970 and 1980-1985. These periods in history are usually referred to as Obote I and Obote II respectively.
vivid memories and candidness of the respondents in the specified sample largely compensated for the inadequacies. As for the period concerning mid 1980s to the present, the researcher also relied on her knowledge of and experiences in theatre in the country.

- The survey methods: to record attitudes, perceptions and opinions of economic policy formulators, academicians, theatre producers, and the audience about theatre as an art, a profession, and a social service in today’s Uganda. Depending on the objectivity and reliability of individual responses, the researcher hoped to define the consumption patterns, behaviour, needs, and potential of theatre audiences in Uganda; to establish the logic behind economic planning and policy formulation with the arts and in particular regard to such establishments like theatre; and to establish the amount of planning and organisation, financing, and marketing that normally goes into the country’s theatre, how they are done, and who normally performs the tasks.

1.7.1.2. The Qualitative Research Methods

For the qualitative methods, the research employed the analytical design, particularly on the historical and documentary data. The methods of data collection covered both primary and secondary sources of data. Within the primary sources of data, which mostly constituted formal library research and the study of records in other documentation centres of relevance to the study, data was identified, studied and synthesised to provide a factual understanding of the relationship between theatre and the market in Uganda over the period of study. Much of the library research was done at Universität Bayreuth, in Germany, where the researcher spent eighteen months on a Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) Sandwich Scholarship programme. The Universität Bayreuth is reputed throughout Europe for its wide and almost exhaustive scholarly collections on Ugandan Theatre and African Literature in general.

The research also utilised resources, in form of books, topical magazines, academic journals and newspapers, available at Makerere University’s Main Library, the ITEK Library, the Uganda Management Institute (UMI) Library, the British Council Library, and the then United States Information Service (USIS). Other valuable literature and documentation was secured through friends from

11 USIS is now known as the “American Center”.

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organisations like UNESCO, the National Theatre, the Uganda Museum, and the Deutscher Bühnenverein Bundesverband Deutscher Theater (the German Theatre Association), Goethe Institut Mannheim Library, and from theatres the researcher visited in Germany. Some books and journals were also formally accessed through purchases. The Internet was another useful source of secondary and comparative information.

Outside library and archival studies, the researcher made physical study visits to relevant places and institutions both within and outside the country; like the National Theatre of Uganda, private theatre halls in Kampala, state sponsored and private theatres in Germany, cultural institutions and events like the Uganda Museum, Kasubi Tombs, the carnival and mask festivals in Munchen, Germany, Book Fairs, Fine Art, and Trade exhibitions. The visits were primarily for purposes of observing how theatre business, indigenous culture, dramatic art and literature were conceived and portrayed or organised and conducted. The visits to the theatres indicated how theatre was generally perceived by the respective societies. The visits to public fairs and exhibitions revealed what forms of literature exist and how theatre was generally appraised in critical or reference books, theatre and other journals and magazines. The visits also considered how dramatic literature was displayed in bookshops and other literary stores. In most cases, too, the researcher was interested in just listening to and/or exchanging views with theatre practitioners and the public on the theatre industry and business in Uganda and other countries. Where funds permitted, focus discussion groups, seminars, and workshops were conducted for different stakeholders in the theatre industry, particularly in Uganda. The researcher also attended and participated in conferences and seminars on or related to theatre, mostly outside Uganda.

1.7.2. Discussion of Sample Survey Methods

In formulating and designing the research instruments for data collection and documentation, the researcher was always mindful of problems often encountered by researchers during compilation of data and, consequently, its analysis and evaluation. Such problems as how to measure reliability, validity, and objectivity of the data collected; how to determine the fairness of generalisations in cases where only representative samples have been used; how to select the right samples to demonstrate the impact of the research's key variables - in this case, the theatre and the market - on each other;
how the variables are influenced by other factors; etc. The problem revolved around the ability to get the right type, size, and nature of samples for the research. Only then could the findings be relatively measured and validated. Likewise, conclusions drawn from the findings were bound to be only representational of the larger community not physically involved in the survey. As such, the methods and processes of data collection, documentation, and analysis employed needed to be carefully selected and designed.

Samples of the surveys included theatre artists, groups, and other professionals in the industry and members of the public that would normally constitute both theatre’s primary and secondary markets. The samples were either selected, semi–random, or random, depending on their position and role in the theatre industry. That’s to say, directors or proprietors of theatre halls, some theatre artists and professionals, culture officers, government officials, and students of theatre were approached individually in their respective capacities for the discussion and/or elaboration of specific issues. Methods of data collection used included administration of questionnaires, conduction of interviews, mailing of letters of inquiry, and holding of focus discussion groups and quasi workshops on theatre in Uganda. In a few instances, particularly regarding Obote I’s feudal war with Buganda and his subsequent abolition of kingdoms in 1966167 and Amin’s declaration of an economic war in Uganda in 1972, theatre archives, newspapers covering the same period, and the plays written on the subjects were studied for collaborative data on the causes and effects of the conflicts on the country’s theatre and its market.

1.7.2.1. Questionnaires

The most obvious advantage of the questionnaire is its ability to cover many people at ago. When a good selection of samples has been done, questionnaires can ensure good representation of opinions of the larger public while random samples also ensure that people are never identified. People often feel independent and are free of pressures of time when completing questionnaires. One never feels intimidated as usually happens in a personal interview. The anonymity most times produces reliable and objective responses and a host of valid proposals and suggestions an interview, letter of inquiry,
or experiment cannot usually generate. In case of large samples, questionnaires prove very practical and cheaper to administer.\textsuperscript{12}

Nevertheless, questionnaires have their own serious limitations and/or disadvantages. In general, the researcher found out that, unlike with the interviews, the respondents in the questionnaires sometimes chose not to respond to the questions or they made careless responses they might not have stated in an interview or a letter of inquiry. Most respondents to questionnaires also took time to mail or send back their answers, even where a self-addressed return envelope with adequate stamp duty was provided. Generally, therefore, the researcher relied on the good will of the respondent to realise the urgency and importance of the process or to merely be responsible.

The other limitation of the questionnaire survey was that not many people entertained questions that required elaborate answers or those that demanded their personal views on certain issues. This particular problem was experienced with the July 1998 Questionnaire, where open-ended questions were seen as bad and unrealistic, in spite of the possible logic in them. The questions were intended to generate information against which the researcher could compare, validate, and enrich the facts already gathered about the theatre business and market in Uganda. The survey also intended to identify participants for the general focus discussion group and workshop on theatre planning, finance, and marketing that had been planned for, and was held, in September 1998. Further, the costs of the venture, particularly with its nature of urgency, had to be considered seriously as the research at this point in time was not yet funded.\textsuperscript{13} The Questionnaire was also in English, mainly because it had specific aims to cover and within very limited time.\textsuperscript{14} These principal goals, therefore, account for the relatively many open-ended questions that some respondents found a bit demanding and technically complex.

All in all, however, the failures of the July 1998 Questionnaire did not derail the research process. Other questionnaires specific to the different stakeholders in the theatre industry were designed and administered accordingly. Other methods of survey were used to supplement and/or cross-check the

\textsuperscript{12}Copies of the sets of the Questionnaires used appear in Appendix III

\textsuperscript{13}Research funding was expected from Makerere University, the University of my registration.

\textsuperscript{14}The researcher had won a Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) long-term Scholarship to the Federal Democratic Republic of Germany for research towards her Ph. D. The scholarship was tenable in October, 1998. As such, comprehensive and relevant data had to be gathered through the most possible, workable, and efficient ways at her disposal.
data; like personal interviews with the relevant representative samples, observation guides, seminars and workshops conducted by the researcher and her assistants in the areas of research, informal discussions on the topic of research with research targets and the general public, and through the administration of letters of inquiry.\textsuperscript{15}

1.7.2.2. Interviews

Other people’s observations and experiences are very valuable pieces of information. Many people do not usually find enough time and other resources to put down their thoughts and experiences in permanent form; thus most knowledge is lost that way. Uganda has lost a lot of such knowledge and experience on the country’s theatre, where many prominent practitioners in the industry have passed away without documenting their work. For example, interviews conducted among theatre practitioners and professionals across the primary period of study generated a wealth of knowledge and facts relevant to the industry but beyond the present research. Most probably, not many of these sources shall have their work formally documented for posterity or published to inspire subsequent studies.

23 interviews were conducted.\textsuperscript{16} The researcher’s interview schedule was greatly facilitated by the fact that she personally knew many of her key interviewees. Most of them were also conveniently located in Kampala, and were always eager to discuss the subject. Interviews conducted elsewhere, mostly in Germany, provided the researcher with comparative data on the situation of theatre in other African countries, in Europe, and in the United States.

Information got through interviews and questionnaires usually helped in the formulation of topics for focus group discussions, seminars, and workshops as well as providing the base for testing the variables. Where primary sources could not be accessed physically, specifically designed questionnaires and/or ‘Letters of Inquiry’ were administered.

Limitations of the interview method were mostly experienced in up-country towns where the researcher was often a stranger. Interviewees sometimes spoke to impress the researcher and her team hence compromising the validity of their data. In such cases, the researcher used her discretion to arrive at the probable truth. In addition, field research assistants and regional contact persons were assigned

\textsuperscript{15} Samples of each of the mentioned methods of research are attached in Appendix III
\textsuperscript{16} The list of interviewees appears in Appendix I
to crosscheck specific data. The regional contacts also helped with interpretation and translation where the researcher or her research assistants did not understand the respective local language. However, such instances were few since most of the respondents could communicate in English as well. An additional problem was that most interviewees in rural Uganda expected some kind of reward for their information hence the miscellaneous expenditure and 'entertainment' were sometimes high.

1.7.2.3. Focus Discussion Groups/Workshops

Focus Discussion Groups and workshops on Uganda's theatre were held during 1998, after a significant amount of preliminary data had been gathered through the first lot of questionnaires, interviews, library research, and observation. Aware that theatre is planned, practiced, distributed, and enjoyed variously all over Uganda, focus discussion groups, seminars, and workshops focused on theatre producers, the marketers and promoters of theatre's products, government economic policy formulators, academicians, and the consumers of theatre within Kampala, Uganda's capital city, and the four geographical regions of Uganda, as mentioned in 'the geographical scope' of this study. Participants to the mentioned forums were selected according the role each seemed to play in the planning, financing, and marketing of theatre in the country. Participation in the research's earlier surveys was an added advantage, and was very crucial for purposes of follow-up and cross checking data.

Like with the interviews and Letters of Inquiry, the Focus Discussion Groups and workshops on Uganda's theatre generated a lot of useful and surplus information. The discussions also helped the researcher to re-focus her issues and provided her with fresh angles of argument. In many cases, the discussion groups provided the much longed for opportunities for getting together among theatre practitioners. The fora also facilitated in a less formal way interaction between theatre professionals and government policy makers, and often permitted candid discussion among participants most of them competitors in the business. A number of recommendations aimed at streamlining policies on theatre and cultural activities in the country were drawn and presented to the then Minister of Gender,
Labour and Social Development, where theatre matters fall, and government officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), the usual organiser of schools MDD/cultural festivals.\(^\text{17}\)

Very effective as they were, focus discussion groups, seminars, and workshops remained the most expensive method for data collection and, to an extent, analysis. Besides the high costs of organisation, participants still obliged the organisers to remunerate their participation.

1.7.2.4. Letters of Inquiry

A total of 10 Letters of Inquiry were sent out and response received.\(^\text{18}\) Letters of inquiry helped the researcher to access useful information where she could not personally interview the informants or subject them to questionnaires, mostly because they were unknown to her, very busy people, and not easily accessible to the general public. In such cases, phone calls or e-mail were also considered inappropriate.

The letters of inquiry responded to the queries at hand and earned the researcher additional literature in form of brochures, journals, articles from books, pamphlets, and booklets she did not know of initially or would not have been able to demand at market value and in time. The researcher also received further references and contacts she never knew of initially. Therefore, there was no shortcoming the researcher experienced with this method.

1.7.2.5. Observation Guides and Experiments

Bowen and Weisberg commend experiments as a good method in studying change in people's attitudes and behaviour since "one can be fairly certain no extraneous factors caused the observed changes"\(^\text{19}\) But no such an 'isolation' experiment on attitudes, behaviour, and expectations of theatre audiences in Uganda was conducted by the researcher. Such an experiment was deemed impractical, and the results would have been highly unreliable because of the small sample size of a cross-section of theatre audiences in Uganda. Therefore, personal observation and documented experiences of other theatre practitioners, scholars, and academic researchers on theatre audiences in Uganda were

\(^{17}\) Hon. Janat Mukwaya was the then Mister of Gender, Labour and Social Development while MOES was represented by the then Commissioner of Inspectorate, Mr. Fagil Mandy, the late Hope Keshubi, working with officials and theatre practitioners from Makerere University and Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo (ITEK).

\(^{18}\) See Appendix II for details

\(^{19}\) Bruce D. Bowen and Herbert F. Weisberg, *An Introduction to Data Analysis*, ibid., p. 8
preferred. The advantage and validity of this method was that the fads documented were mostly of a first-hand nature since the respondents and the researcher all had vast knowledge of and were practitioners in Uganda’s theatre industry. In addition, the concern always formed a topic of presentation or plenary discussion during seminars and workshops for select stakeholders in theatre. Hence it was possible to take note of recurrent or progressive arguments about the subject.

1.7.2.6. Archives and Documentations

As afore-mentioned, the study of documentary data constituted the bulk of library research. The most outward advantage of this method is that the researcher was able to access such a variety of, and consolidated, data in specific places where the time resource was maximally utilised and cross-checking data could be effectively and conveniently done, and at minimum cost.

Sometimes, though, the researcher found herself confronted with contradictory data which at the same time contradicted with the situation on the ground, its causes, and impact as she knew it. This was especially so in publications, mostly articles authored by people who seem to have had no first hand information and/or experiences about the situations and topics they wrote about. Yet formally published works and by world-famous critics might not be successfully challenged or disapproved of by world ‘non-entities.’ Other writers analysed issues of cultural significance to respective societies in Africa and published ‘facts’ going by what they read in other books or what they normally read and hear in the media. Some of these sources were apparently biased towards a certain thinking or were not fairly representational in their samples of data.

1.7.3. Sampling Strategies

As afore-mentioned, samples were either directly selected, semi-randomly selected, or randomly selected. Initially, the researcher targeted a population of not less than 500 respondents to include proprietors of theatre halls or groups, the UNCC and its relevant organs, theatre practitioners, economic government policy makers, policy implementers, theatre audiences within the specified localities and academicians in the

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20 A case in point here is Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka’s analysis of Byron Kawaddwa in one of the issues on African Literature Series published by Matatu. Unfortunately, the researcher does not have the publishing particulars at this point in time.

21 Christine Matze’s analysis of Mary Karooro Okurut’s The Curse of the Sacred Cow. The researcher was fortunate to meet Christine Matze in October 1999 in Bayreuth, Germany, who admitted her misconception of the relationship between Mutumo and his blood-pact friend, Mwamba. Matze had thought Mutumo and Mwamba were homosexuals.
universities and institutions of higher learning where training programmes in performance arts do exist. Administration of questionnaires and interviews was to form the basis for data collection. Where applicable, particularly with the theatre producers, the audiences and the academicians, focus discussion groups were to be held.

In the end, however, 200 questionnaires were sent out at different times to identified samples, as indicated below. For the July 1998 General Questionnaire, 50 samples were targeted. 37 questionnaires were returned, representing a response of 74%. Most of the questionnaires were also fully and comprehensively completed. The questionnaire was largely open-ended, and aimed at getting the respondents' personal views on theatre planning, financing, and marketing in Uganda.

In September 1998, another questionnaire was sent out to specific samples within the theatre industry and planning departments within government establishments like Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, MOES, the Uganda National Cultural Centre, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, and higher institutions of learning. The questionnaire was divided into four separate sections, each targeting either historical perspectives of theatre in Uganda, the nature and state of theatre in Uganda today, expectations and behaviour of theatre audiences in Uganda, and challenges and opportunities for Uganda's theatre in a privatised and liberalised economy. 60 questionnaires were sent out and 52 (or 86.8%) returned. The findings on these topics form the respective chapters of the research.

50 questionnaires at the ratio of 1:5 went to selected and regionally representative secondary schools and teachers' colleges throughout the country. Of these, 28 (or 56%) were returned. 20 questionnaires were distributed among the MDD Diploma students at the time, and all, representing 100%, were returned. Most of the diploma students at MDD are attached to performing groups. Hence their views could also easily represent those of the other amateur artists as are common in popular theatre groups. 10 questionnaires, at a ratio of two per region, were given out to regional contact persons for culture officers at the respective districts in the sample. 8 (or 80%) questionnaires were returned. Another 10 questionnaires went to government officials, the administration of Makerere University, and that of ITEK, of which only 4 (40%) were received back. In all, 149 questionnaires were returned. The details are visualised in Table 1 below.

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22 Sample appears in Appendix III
23 Sample appears in Appendix III
24 Sample appears in Appendix III
Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution among Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item (Questionnaires)</th>
<th>Quantity Distributed</th>
<th>Quantity Returned</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1998 General Questionnaire</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured Questionnaire (Sept. 1998)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary schools &amp; colleges</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDD Diploma students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Contacts</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. dept., Makerere Univ., &amp; ITEK</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td><strong>149</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of 200 questionnaires, 51 (25.5%) were not returned. Of the 149 questionnaires returned, 74 (49.6%) were from Kampala; 24 (16.1%) from the western region; 15 (10.1%) from the Eastern region; 30 (20.1%) from the Central region; and 3 (2.0%) from the Northern region. The remaining three questionnaires (2.0%) from Masindi got lost through a third party who was delivering them by hand to Kampala. These facts are also reflected in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Geographical Distribution of Respondents in Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kampala City</td>
<td>Kampala</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central/Buganda</td>
<td>Luweero</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masaka</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mukono</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rakai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>Iganga</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jinja</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mbale</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tororo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Arua</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kotido</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lira</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gulu</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Bushenyi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hoima</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kabale</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kabarole</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mbarara</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masindi</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rukungiri</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Random sampling among members of the general public, presumed to have constituted some of the audiences in the 1960s through to the 1980s, was the most illusive. Either, as is always the case, people become wary of talking to strangers or they rarely have enough time to engage in an activity they do not see any benefit, immediate or otherwise, for themselves. Others apparently simply did not recall much of what happened in theatre beside the fact that the socio-political realities were, sometimes, very unfavourable to their daily lives and work hence impacting on their regular attendance of theatre. What they knew very well, and likewise confirmed, was that Uganda has always had theatre activity, even before the cultivation of conventional theatre forms; and they could cite a few names of theatre artists and companies, many of whom are no longer in business. But nothing much besides could be recalled about the business side of the cited artists.

On the other hand, however, the researcher compensated this shortfall through information got from outstanding dramatists and theatre artists who have also been enthusiastic theatre practitioners since their student days in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s. Theatre reviews of the day were also helpful.

1.7.3.1. Population Samples

From the on-set, the research intended an equal mix of female and male respondents since the study does not dictate in favour of one over the other. Therefore, particularly with the theatre audiences, age group, occupation, ethnicity, and literary appreciation levels constituted special focus in order to realise respective audience perceptions, opinions and attitudes on theatre and the political market in Uganda. Gender considerations only came to the fore in relation to theatre packaging, in particular the commoditisation of feminine sexuality. To an extent, however, the research notes the negligible number of women theatre directors and/or proprietors due to cultural and social reasons than anything else.

Most encouraging was the positive responsiveness, particularly among theatre practitioners and marketers and some sections of the audience, especially the youth. The different marketers and promoters of theatre on the general market were, as always, looking out for opportunities to expand their business enterprises by conquering new markets. The youth might have been eager to respond, and most sincerely, because this is an age of openness. Besides, youth as of now have very little

25 Such artists as Elly Wamala, Albert Sempeke, Nuwa Sentongo, Kiiza Salongo, Moses Serwada, Zadoc Adolu Otojoka, and Rose Mbowa.
26 A discussion of these elements appears in Chapter Five under the discussion of the structure and needs of theatre audiences in Uganda.
stake in Uganda's theatre business and industry, and would, therefore, have very little ideals and practices to 'lose' or protect. Some of the youths alleged to have often been cheated and/or exploited by theatre proprietors and producers. Hence, naturally, they had an axe to grind with their alleged exploiters, and any opportunity that presented itself was welcome.

On the other hand, the responses from the practitioners indicated in explicit terms their present dilemma of operations, which it was also very apparent they had been thinking about. As acknowledged openly by Robert Kalundi Serumaga, the current Director of the National Theatre in Kampala, "the fact that we are here today means that we recognise that there is a problem somewhere, and we are willing, and, perhaps, ready, to work towards solutions." For many, therefore, as was often expressed in the numerous suggestions and recommendations drawn at the end of that and other meetings, it was high time something positive was seen to be done for theatre. One persistent call to the Government, particularly the Ministry of Gender, Culture and Social Development, was "to see to the eventual abolishment and waiver of taxes chargeable on theatre products because theatre is, in concept and practice, an education service." They also called upon the donor agencies, as represented through NGOs, and the business community in Uganda to help boost revenue sources of theatre groups by, for instance, engaging them in development and advertising work requiring theatrical input. The participants never spared themselves either, especially on questions of apparent 'disunity' within the industry and the profession, which tended to worsen with increased liberalisation of the economy. The general feeling was that "all should come together, and work closely for the betterment and development of the industry".

However, the researcher could also observe that sometimes the participants' positive responsiveness and commitment to the workshops and discussions might have been motivated by the good venues, personal allowances, and publicity the meetings entailed. Especially in Kampala, the meetings always took place in good hotels and were always officiated upon by Government and other public officials, or ambassadors. Furthermore, critically aware of the envious, often negative perceptions people outside Makerere University or those who never advanced far in formal education have about Makerere and

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27 Robert Kalundi Serumaga, during a discussion of Uganda's Theatre among selected theatre producers in Kampala, called by the researcher in August, 1998; as part of the process of data collection.

28 At a Focus Discussion Group on "Perspectives on Uganda's Theatre Today" held in September, 1998, at the National Theatre, Kampala.

29 Ibid.
the whole issue of education, the researcher always adopted a coordinating role at the meetings. The chairing of sessions was also either done by one of artist or by outstanding personalities in theatre. Hence, while the general meeting environment was neutral and relaxed, many participants might have seen beyond the gatherings opportunities for personal recognition and business advancement. Therefore, the challenge remains now for the researcher and her assistants to find ways of sustaining the artists’ re-awakened consciousness and commitment to the industry, basically through the realisation of some of the suggestions and recommendations forwarded to government ministries and other associations. Otherwise, the participants might feel they were merely used and become disgruntled, which may be a disadvantage to future research ventures.

The situation in up-country towns, though, was different. Mobilisation was largely done through Culture Officers, and the sessions were normally not as 'official' as it always tended to be in Kampala. Nevertheless, participation in the deliberations was always optimum as long as participants were assured of lunch and drinks. Usually, too, no pressing recommendations were made regarding the theatre industry and business in the country. What most theatre producers and practitioners complained about was the apparent neglect by Government and its officials at the Headquarters in Kampala. The theatre proprietors and practitioners wanted to see a strong industry, which would finance their theatre productions hence enable them to give theatre regularly to their audiences. For the audiences, their complaints lay in high prices for theatre tickets and the irregularity of performances. The average price for a ticket to the theatre was Ug. Shs. 3,500/= (or US$ 3.5), and shows were not guaranteed every week or weekend as it is in Kampala because, in most cases, the private groups that played in Kampala were the same groups taking theatre to up-country towns.

The least cooperation in the research venture was, surprisingly, received from Makerere University and ITEK. Apart from the staff hence colleagues at the MDD Department, the MDD students, a few lecturers and colleagues within the University and Administration, the response of the academicians to either participate in discussions or fill up questionnaires was most negligible. The circumstance may largely be attributed to the busy schedules University employees now usually have to cope with, especially with the introduction of Private and Evening Programmes alongside the regular University programmes. Other possibilities can only be specific and not generalised.
In general, the responses of the survey were relevant and provided insights into how theatre and the market in Uganda come to so relate in the larger context of the national economy, and how its future is likely to be other factors remaining constant. An analysis of what is apparently government's concept of theatre and the liberal arts was also given, which strengthened the researcher's arguments. The issues raised might provide a basis for future research; for example, using the experimental research design, to highlight the specific causes and effects of government economic policies on theatre in a given period.

1.7.3.2. Research Area

In the scope of study, it was stipulated the research would cover Uganda's geographical extent. For easy management of the processes of data collection and analysis, the area of research was divided into five regions: Kampala City, central, western, eastern, and northern region. Efforts were made to analyse theatre activities throughout the country. But, the research progressed, it was inevitable that the study concentrated in Kampala and a few urban centres where theatre activity was more apparent. Nonetheless, the results of the survey are still very representational of the state and practice of theatre in Uganda over the period of study.

1.7.3.3. Sampling Error

Bowen and Weisberg define sampling error as "the error that arises from trying to represent a population with a sample." The case for sampling error in this research would mostly apply to the quantitative methods of data collection. Even then, the error is most difficult to determine or calculate because, first, respondents were not completely selected at random. Second, the size of the samples were not so big so as to cut down the error significantly or to render it indispensably relevant. The biggest single sample of the research was 74 people out of a population of millions. Third, it was not a single but many issues that were being addressed in the survey, and by different means. That would mean calculating sampling errors for every question and method of data collection. For the given reasons, therefore, no sampling error percentages are being provided.

30 See also questionnaire distribution as reflected in Tables 1 and 2 on page 19 of this research report
31 Bruce D. Bowen & Herbert F. Weisberg, An Introduction to Data Analysis, Ibid., p. 14
1.7.4. Data Collection

The study basically employed two methods of data collection viz.; documentation analysis and field surveys. The techniques used included document analysis, description, workshops, interview, inquiry, observation, and questionnaires. Both open and structured methods were used. Descriptive data was gathered by studying records at public and universities libraries, archives at UNCC and other theatre institutions, government ministries, and supplementary data got through letters of inquiry. In the collection of data, two main languages were used: English and German (only during the study visits to the University of placement under DAAD). In the local (Ugandan) settings where the researcher did not understand the language dialects of the respondent audiences or the respondents preferred not to use English, interpretation and/or translation services were sought.

1.7.5. Research Procedures

During field surveys, the basic procedure of data collection, especially for interviews, workshops, and focus discussion groups, was to secure appointments and/or permission with the local officials (LCs) to invite the participants or respondents. Formal permission was also always sought from district officials and area LCs to visit and conduct research in the respective areas. Research assistants and contact persons assigned to each region were also formally introduced to local authorities and the District Culture Officers. In their official positioning, District Culture Officers proved useful resource contacts, and saved the researcher valuable time in the mobilisation and identification of participants.

For most theatre producers and audiences, interviews were conducted any time' during the production/staging of performances or at the individuals' own convenience. Interviews with most theatre directors in Kampala were on appointment. Sometimes, brainstorming on the subject during informal discussions was employed with academicians and theatre practitioners in and around Kampala. Some respondents, in addition, gave the researcher brochures and write-ups on their work.

1.7.6. Data Analysis

Bowen and Weisberg stress the need for a researcher to know in advance the nature of data analysis his/her project would require. Their argument in this is that "some types of data analysis require certain types of data, so advanced planning is required to ensure that the data meet the requirements of the
analysis techniques. The more thoroughly the researcher plans through the desired analysis before actually beginning the research, the more likely it is that the research will be designed to permit the desired analysis.”

Likewise, beside the critical theories and theoretical framework appearing in Chapter Two, the researcher has analysed the data in such a way that discrepancies and variances in the case where quantitative methods of data collection were used have been kept to a minimum to avoid drastic or unrealistic conclusions. That is to say, the researcher has tried to minimise individual biases and subjectivity among informants and respondents whose responses might have been determined more by factors not directly related to theatre practice in Uganda or its market environment. On the other hand, subjective views that are proven facts in Uganda's theatre industry and business have been highlighted. First, because the views are undeniable facts however unappealing they are; and, second, in order that such problems and malpractices in theatre be redressed for a healthy future and prosperity of the theatre profession and business. For data collected through interviews, observation guide, and document examination inferences have been made by systematically identifying the desired information.

From the outset, it was clear the research would not just tabulate survey results or barely re-produce them as a report. There was need for a discursive approach to the study and analysis of the relationship between the theatre and the market on the one hand, and a study of the different relationships existing within the industry and among theatre's own constituencies, on the other. An empirical analysis of factors, mostly historical, impacting on the research variables could also not be ignored. Some situations and circumstances were caused by certain factors that had to be explained or highlighted. All these considerations necessitated planning the research in a way that enabled the researcher to gather much of the data as first-hand information independent of documentary sources. The method was also ideal in lieu of small amounts of critical works on Ugandan theatre amidst invaluable sources of vast knowledge and experience among many Ugandan theatre artists and practitioners. Such an approach would then supplement and/or validate the researcher's own deductions from the research findings. Questionnaires, letters of inquiry, and interviews were, therefore, worded specifically to comment on the situation or factor under survey. Nonetheless, respondents were often given an opportunity to give their knowledge of and

32 Ibid., p. 3
express their views and opinions about the issues. On the theatre's organisation, financing, and distribution suggestions were greatly encouraged.

1.7.7. Ethical Considerations

When the researcher first proposed ethical considerations, she had intended to limit the right to privacy to respondents, particularly from government ministries and departments, or theatre practitioners and other data sources who might have insisted on confidentiality. Such respondents would be assured of the fact, and data obtained that way would be strictly confidentially treated. Those respondents who volunteered information unconditionally would be listed down as informants.33

However, as the research got underway, it was apparent that, in some cases, it was not just the confidentiality of the respondents that was in question, but the process of data collection itself. Therefore, some of the information considered vital to the research, like business habits and practices in private theatre companies, has been recorded under pseudo-names in order to protect the identities of the informants. In some cases, the source of information is not disclosed. Publicity of such sources could easily lead to the loss of their jobs and/or jeopardise their position among competitors. Other respondents did not want to antagonise themselves with their colleagues. However, the practice should not in any way suggest that the findings are subjective, fabrications, or here-says. The aim is to state the facts on the ground while at the same time protecting the sources of information.

Further, for similar reasons, unless warranted by the argument on course, the research did not focus on individual theatre groups and companies as representations of the different methods of theatre production, management, or organisation. Moreover, most theatre companies in Uganda are founded and run on similar management principle and theatre practice. By not naming the concerned theatre halls, the researcher wanted to avoid a situation where such an act might be interpreted as a condemnation or 'arm-chair lessons from the Ivory Tower,'34 or as intended to alienate the groups as bad or disintegrate the membership on allegations of exploitation by their leaders. The criticisms that are so generally put should encourage self-examination within the profession, and help to consolidate the growth of the theatre

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33 The list of interviewees and other informants appears in Appendix I
34 Makerere University is usually enviously regarded and described by the general public as an ivory tower, where its inhabitants are quite out of touch with the realities in the rest of the country. While such a circumstance might have been so in the middle of the last century, the reverse is currently true. All courses and employment terms at Makerere University now emphasise community service outside the University.
industry and business in Uganda. The theatre practitioners and professionals should be able to learn from each other's experiences and mistakes.

1.7.8. Time Frame

The study lasted three academic years of full-time study. This is equivalent to 102 weeks (or 6 semester terms of 17 weeks each) of research and supervision, as shown in the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Activity Implementation Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Registration, Dispatch of Draft Proposal to Supervisors, Discussion of Draft Proposal with Supervisors and Updating Proposal</td>
<td>Preliminary Arrangements to go on till commencement of Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Library Research (outside Uganda)</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Library Visits in Areas of Research</td>
<td>8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Designing and Production of Research Instruments</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Securing local (interview) appointments</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Administration of Questionnaires and Interviews for all respondents</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Coding of Data</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Development of raw frequencies (to categorise demographic and socio-economic data)</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Development of Comparative Frequency Tables</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cross tabulation of Data</td>
<td>1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. In-depth Interviews and focus discussions group</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Data Analysis</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Production of First Draft of Research Report</td>
<td>8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Updating report (crosschecking information and corrections)</td>
<td>8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Editing and Production of Report</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Submission of Report</td>
<td>1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>102 weeks</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Examination of the Report is outside the schedule of 102 weeks.

By the time the supervised research commenced, the researcher had conducted preliminary research on her topic of study, produced a draft research proposal, discussed the draft with her supervisors at Makerere in Uganda and at Universitat Bayreuth in Germany, up-dated the draft and sought registration at the home University, Makerere University. The work plan appearing in Table 3 above did not include the examination of the final research report since the researcher could not determine the examination process.
Due to the support and co-operation the researcher graciously received from her supervisors in Uganda and Germany and from the theatre producers and practitioners involved in the survey, the study has been completed on time. In addition, the researcher had a core of Field Research Assistants, co-ordinated by her husband, and regional resource contacts who worked diligently and selflessly, often amidst shortages of funding, to feed the researcher with raw data throughout the period she was in Germany, and, sometimes, on their own personal expense. Availability of data enabled exhaustive library research and the library sourcing process at Bayreuth.

Furthermore, the eighteen months of library research in Germany where reading, research, writing, and communication facilities were available and easily accessible greatly facilitated writing of the research report. Despite the ever looming and sharp loneliness, the period also provided the researcher a conducive atmosphere of concentrated study away from home and its probable distractions. Nevertheless, there are constraints the researcher met with, which, in one way or another, limited the research processes. These are enumerated here below.

1.8. Limitations to the Study

1.8.1. Most detractions came in the way of uncertain and insufficient funding of the research processes, which, sometimes, disrupted field work schedules and tended to demoralise the field hands, who had, in the first place, already sacrificed much to agree to work on minimal material motivation and almost independently during the researcher's absence. Originally, the researcher had hoped that her own employer and academic institution, Makerere University, would finance the research; as there were indications that research funds were available for Ph.D. study. However, half way into the research, the University turned down the researcher's request for a Research Grant on suspicions that the researcher was, through the DAAD Sandwich Scholarship programme, getting full funding of the research process. This was despite the fact that the Sandwich Scholarship the researcher had won to do library research in Germany was secured through Makerere University in its academic partnership with DAAD, where the University very well knows the terms and conditions of the DAAD Sandwich programme. It took another application and more months of anxious waiting and emotional strain, because of the financial debts the researcher had accumulated, before University funding was granted.
1.8.2. There were also relatively high costs of travel and maintenance incurred in up-country areas, sometimes more than what was originally planned. In addition, there was relative time wastage in mobilising and finally organising respondents in up-country areas for meaningful discussions. Though the researcher, as originally planned, used mostly respondents in and around the main urban centres in the districts, much of Uganda is still not easily accessible, even by road. Much of rural Uganda also being heavily dependent on subsistence economy, some of the respondents were not readily available for interviews and discussions due to heavy schedules of work or list of priorities. For example, morning hours were inadequate for most farmers while day and evening times proved equally incompatible with women's workload and the socialisation habits of men. Such situations, sometimes, eventually increased the research costs of some items, like 'entertainment' and 'good will' to respondents as well as the up-keep costs for the researcher and/or her field assistants, if the originally stipulated number of days in an area had to be increased.

1.8.3. Finances being a sensitive subject, some theatre practitioners and government ministries1 departments did not readily divulge information about the financial statements of their groups or financial votes on theatre. Hence there were difficulties in getting comprehensive sample data on schedule. Further, many Ugandans have in the past been exploited by other people through research. Many respondents were, therefore, usually suspicious of the researcher, and they would not surrender information easily. Also, much of the Ugandan society today is money-hungry. Nothing can usually be given for nothing; sometimes, even for the least amount of information solicited. Besides, crosschecking and updating of data was done during campaign time for the Referendum on the country's system of governance. Hence 'entertainment' and 'good will' in form of drinks, lunches, and 'transport' was mostly mandatory, be it within the City or in up-country towns.

1.8.4. Researchers usually target specific numbers and categories of respondents; but not all are realised. While some respondents may be lazy at, say, filling in questionnaires others just do not co-operate. Government officials are particularly averse to researchers. In the case of this research, however, this was not a serious problem; as already indicated. Only a few negative instances were recorded.
1.8.5. This being largely a historical study it was always difficult to draw specific conclusions on attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour of theatre audiences or measured their impact on the theatre industry and business in concrete terms. However, with the input from outstanding theatre personalities with whom the researcher had many and detailed discussions, she believes the objectivity of her conclusions has not been compromised. Likewise, salient aspects of theatre management and practice in Uganda, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, were ably discussed by the practitioners and professionals living and practicing theatre at the time. Their views could also easily be collaborated by written appraisals in books and journals.

1.8.6. The study has covered fewer theatre practitioners and audiences than are actually existing in the country. That means that conclusions in the study reflect only the representative views of the selected samples. On the other hand, it would not have been possible to get the views of all theatre practitioners and audiences in Uganda.

1.9. Definition of Terms

1.9.1. Theatre

Originally conceived as a building or place where people went to watch theatrical performances, theatre has, over time, also come to refer to a genre of art that is usually performed before an audience either for their enjoyment and entertainment or for educational, didactic, mobilisation and other purposes. However, theatre is also not just the performance of plays and other drama before a paying audience. Theatre embraces different performance art forms like music hence music theatre; culture hence traditional or ethnic theatre; and other issues related theatre like development theatre, political theatre, educational theatre, etc. Theatre is also a profession and career. In this way, theatre is an industry. We find dramatists, critics or writers, producers, stage designers, administrators, marketers, etc. all working for the different components of the theatre industry. Above all, theatre is mostly a social experience, since it does not occur in a vacuum, and exits for the betterment of humanity.
1.9.2. Market

The market is a common place where goods and services are exchanged for value, usually in quantifiable forms like money, bonds, or contracts and licences. Linking it to the theatre industry, the market is the theatre buildings, book fairs, published dramatic works, video tapes, and other objects either containing theatre works or helping to publicise their existence and performance. A market is also an existing need and/or actual demand for theatre in Uganda. This type of theatre market is affected by the structure of its audiences, their occupations, social status, age, and other socio-cultural, political, and economic factors. The market in this study also refers to the general environment under which the theatre industry operates. This aspect includes an examination of national policies in place, whether economic or political, social attitudes and behaviour, cultural beliefs and perceptions, global settings, technological advancements, and the like.

1.9.3. Culture

Culture refers to the ways of living of a people at a time in history. Traditions, social beliefs, values, and material objects can constitute culture, but none of these elements alone is a complete or sole representation of culture. Furthermore, culture is not static but dynamic. Culture has life and it grows, according to the circumstances around it.

1.9.4. “Katomba”

“Katomba,”35 and equivalent words used to mean theatre among Ugandan societies is the equivalent of the English jest, buffoonery, and nonsensical acts as, for example, exist in the popular children’s farce, Mr. Bean. The researcher maintains that theatre and "katomba" are two different art forms.

1.9.5. Community Theatre

Community theatre is a theatre of the people, by the people, and for the people. Community theatre is closely associated with cultural activities and forms the base for traditional or ethnic theatre. Likewise, the researcher argues that community theatre is different from what it is normally conceived to be by development and aid agencies and/or consultants.

35 Katomba is a luganda (central Uganda) word that is also used in Busoga, eastern Uganda, to mean theatre. Corresponding words exist in other Ugandan languages. The terms are discussed in full under the myths and truths prevalent in Uganda’s theatre.
1.9.6. Development Theatre

Development Theatre is theatre inspired by development goals usually larger than those of the recipient community. On the one hand, development theatre is the type of theatre used by development agencies and consultants to propagate issues of development. The development goals may be national, regional, or international thus the wide latitude of subjects development theatre usually addresses and the general fluidity in its forms. On the other hand, development theatre can embrace other forms of theatre that are developmental in concept or form; like political theatre.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

This chapter is divided into two main sections: the review of related literature that reviews and analyses what other scholars say on theatre or the market but in relation to the topic of the present research. The other section discusses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks for this research that form the basis for the methodologies used as well as the interpretation of data given.

2.1. Literature Review

2.1.1. The Classical Definition of Theatre

In his book, The Essential Theatre, Oscar G. Brockett highlighted the difficulties that exist when people try to define and constrict Theatre to one standard expression and/or experience, which it is not and cannot be. Brockett notes that since the original insights into formal theatre were given by Aristotle,

theatre has undergone many changes and followed diverse paths. Its long history (at least, 2500 years old) invites questions about theatre’s fundamental nature - what it is and what its varied manifestations have in common, no matter when or where they have occurred. A also invites questions about the theatre’s appeals - why for so long it has continued to attract audiences. In addition, it provokes questions about how we judge theatrical performances - why we think one production is good another bad. (brackets mine, but the idea is Brockett’s)

Hence, in this section, the researcher reflects on the constituents, ideas, processes, and experiences in theatre that come to influence the theatrical whole. No new definitions of theatre are being proffered; except the new concepts of theatre as are developing in Uganda and/or elsewhere, with the changing social and artistic situations around the globe.

The orthodox definition of theatre, which is derived directly from the Greek word “theatron” or a “seeing-place”\textsuperscript{3}, conceives Theatre, in terms of a place, usually a building, where plays are performed before an audience. Notwithstanding, therefore, many respondents and interviewees involved by the researcher at different stages of the survey tended to echo the classical definition of theatre as “a place or building where plays are usually performed before an audience”. Their response was, most probably, induced by their constant exposure to Western ideals and philosophies of Art. The most frequent argument was that theatre is basically a place, and that what is performed therein is just the art. Accordingly, therefore, there must be a distinction between theatre, the building, and the art performed in theatre. Such an argument consolidates the case for the aesthetic, social, and to an extent, economic existence of Theatre. In other words, a theatre building or hall or any public venue designated for theatre performances qualifies to be so defined when regular theatre performances, commercial or otherwise, are conducted therein, and if audiences gather to watch the performances. Indeed, it makes little sense to have a theatre building or "seeing place" where no performances ever run, or where performances run without spectators.

In spite of the basic definition of Theatre, there still remains critical issues regarding its concept, nature, and form, its distribution methods and consumption patterns; particularly in societies with a similar social and cultural set-up as Uganda. That is, the extent to which "seeing places”, the art being performed, the transmitters of the art, its price, and consumption patterns among its consumers within such societies conform to universal ideals of theatre, are usually molded on Western ideals of performance arts.

Marketers of goods and services generally agree that the venue of consumption of any product or service is a serious factor for consideration; as it may greatly impact on the distribution and consumption of the product or service on offer, especially if the product or service has got to be paid for by the consumer on its consumption. Discussing the

marketing of goods and services in Uganda, Lenny N. Kabunga, then an Assistant Chief
Manager with Uganda Commercial Bank (UCB), noted:

The physical environment within which a consumer may make a purchase is important in marketing. The attributes of a product or service must bear relevance to the physical environment within which such a product or service is offered. This is true to both the marketing of goods and services without qualification. Car spare parts, for instance, can only be sold within the vicinity of garages or an industrial area. Books must be sold near schools, etc. Groceries, retail shops, etc., are found near where ordinary people can do shopping with convenience. Physical environment must also be conducive to purchase. A hotel or restaurant must be clean to attract customers.4

Likewise, theatre must be sold to its consumers not only in a conducive environment but also from an appropriate venue, where the prospective audiences would most easily access and maximally enjoy the service. Apparently, too, attitudes and values of prospective audiences must be critically considered and planned for. Just as supportive social values might be marginalised by poor location or structure of a theatre building, the desired service being distributed from an ‘appropriate’ venue does not necessarily guarantee one of supportive customers. It must be a careful; balance of both.

Elsewhere, Margaret Macpherson has remarked, with regard to the construction of the National Theatre building in Kampala:

We felt the scheme was premature: Ugandan participation in theatrical activities was recent and the audiences were limited to their own cultural groups. Our opinion was that it would have been better to wait. We also felt that the suggested site was too far away from residential areas... As I say our feeling was that this was the wrong design in the wrong place at the wrong time.5

Therefore, the venue for a theatrical performance is likely to affect its general outcome and reception, almost in the same way the location of the distribution point for either goods or services can seriously affect accessibility and price of that particular good or service. For example, a piece of drama being performed in a football field, where the audience is at the mercy of the vagaries of nature like thunderstorms or the scorching sun and other unprecedented interruptions and inconveniences, is most likely to be received and appreciated differently than if it is performed inside a cinema hall or, better still, a conventional theatre building. Like differences in the reception and


5 Margaret Macpherson in her answer to the researcher's Letter of Inquiry to her on Uganda's Theatre, 15th January, 2000
appreciation of performances exist for productions staged inside a church, a school, a bar, or on the beach. Hence there is good reason somewhere to think of theatre in terms of a building, specifically and, one should add, technically, designed for such performances. That is, a building that is fitted with lighting, sound, and other stage effects and qualifiers to accentuate the message and overall meaning of performances. Unfortunately, however, this 'original' and classical definition of theatre has largely been accepted wholesale world-wide to the extent that societies which never had formal structures to be designated as "seeing places" for drama, as in much of traditional Africa, have been assumed to have had no theatre to talk about.6

Such assertions may be true in the Western concept of drama and theatre, where adequate material provisions and adverse weather conditions make it mostly implacable to encourage out-door theatre performances. But the statements are largely irrelevant to and are increasingly being disproved by contemporary scholars on drama and theatre in Africa. Most importantly, historical evidence regarding the respective traditional societies' concept and use of theatre do not necessarily limit it to "seeing places" and buildings but identify theatre mostly in the performance arts themselves.7

Regarding the performance venues or "seeing places" in traditional Africa, these were mostly village squares or arenas, personal hearths and/or individual compounds, or a chief's courtyard, etc., and not theatres in the modern sense of the word. Today, the venues of theatre consumption in Uganda are even broader to include proscenium-arch stages, as at the National Theatre and Makerere University's Main Hall, raised platforms found in churches, schools and colleges, assembly halls in schools, beaches, stadia, hotel lobbies, shop verandas, and of course village squares.

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6 See Brian Crow, Studying Drama, pp. 3-4
2.1.2 The Contemporary Perspectives of Theatre

When Aristotle set down the structural rules of dramatic art and composition, he envisioned theatre, and all literature, to "derive its force from the pleasure human beings experience in seeing a representation of human life expressed in a language which itself is pleasurable to contemplate." Aristotle's views suggest that theatre must not only be artistic, interesting, and theatrically appealing but reasonably intellectually stimulating as well, and many other theatre critics after him collaborate his views. Furthermore, Aristotle considered plot to be the "soul" of tragedy. So, he gave special consideration to factors creating an excellent plot, like catharsis, discovery, necessity, probability, and reversal. He also discussed character in some detail, particularly the nature of the tragic hero.

Depending on its usage, therefore, the word Theatre has, over time, also come to mean a profession—a kind of occupation or industry— for people engaged variously in creating and performing plays. Playwriting, directing, play production, lighting and scenic design, costume design and make-up, stage management and theatre administration are all career professions in the theatre. The artists practice the theatre either as professionals, semi-professionals, or amateurs. Hence, today, one can talk of theatre as not just a building but also as an institution or organisation of theatre practitioners, the providers and performers of the art, and the art being performed to an audience that has paid for it or is watching freely the performance on stage. But, in order for one to experience good theatre, the elements mentioned must be adequately available, and relate meaningful amongst themselves, in terms of each being at the service of the other.

Regarding theatre as the art to be, or being, performed, conventional theatre critics emphasise that good theatre comes through a deliberate ordering of the spectacular,

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10 Ibid., p. 15. See also Aristotle, Poetics, New York; Hill & Wang, 1965, p. 1449b
"larger than life elements" aimed at arousing immediate and spontaneous emotion in the audience through a performance. These "larger than life elements" of a play include both literary elements of drama, as in the formally-constructed play script, and elements of theatre, like stagecraft, make-up and costume, voice, gesture and movement of the people."

Results of the surveys conducted by the researcher in Uganda suggest that "employment of the spectacular elements in theatre is more important and brings out the practical nature of theatre better" than if one just concentrated on literary perfection and intellectual excellence, as in Literary Theatre. Indeed, if one examines closely the theatre environment and play productions in Uganda over the four decades under study, one clearly sees the logic behind the respondents' argument. It is certainly the farcical, intellectually light, and highly spectacular theatre performances that draw wider appeal among the majority of Ugandan audiences. Consequently, that is the type of theatre being promoted most of the time. Serious literary considerations and scholarship have failed to take root mostly for lack of committed practice, both at the literary and market levels.

True, theatre is very practical in nature. A play's actions begin right from the time the ideas are being fermented in and churned out of the dramatist's mind through their tempering by the producers, performers, stage, scenic, and costume designers, and the whole range of the production team, to their transmission on stage and subsequent consumption by audiences. But the practicality of theatre should not be taken for an end in itself; otherwise, its transient and perishable nature would just be emphasised. It should, then, be logical to have a way of storing and retrieving theatre whenever need arises; be that storage in form of written literature or electronic documentaries. In this modern era of technological advancement and the information super highway, such a quality of relative permanence is indispensable to theatre as a social service, a profession, and an art.

The playwrights’ work or theatre performance may be a result of individual dramatic efforts, as is usually the case in Literary Theatre, or a corporate theatrical composition, as in the case of improvisations, which constitute much of Uganda’s Popular Theatre. For much of Africa and Uganda in particular, theatre arts are also part and parcel of the cultural backgrounds of the people, facilitating the coinage of such generalisations like, "the African is a born actor". Aside its often negative connotation and usage, the phrase, if taken literally, invests the art within the individual so much so that, in the end, there is no clear distinction between the African personality as a dramatist or composer and the African personality as a performer or member of the audience.

It is very true that theatrical performances in much of Africa are celebrational hence participatory in nature as opposed to the mostly contemplative and representational nature of Western performance arts. But such universal generalisations on the concept, nature, and form of performance arts have, in most cases, been consciously or unconsciously misinterpreted by many, including the United Nations, to the effect that Theatre is the same as Culture. Such an assumption may be largely true, for example, for many European societies where formal theatre did not grow or develop separately from their cultural ways; but it is certainly untrue for much of Africa and other former colonies of the West where formal theatre was introduced as an alien and Western institution. Discussing the impact of colonialism on ‘African’ culture, J. Scott Kennedy noted:

Then came the schools. And the children were "removed" from their immediate society. And in a very short time they were taught to aspire to become Westernized or "modern". In the real sense they were taught to hate and despise most things African. And this naturally included their traditions, their art forms, and their culture. They found themselves abandoning an African way of doing things and striving for another way, usually a Western way, or the way of imposed culture of the imperialistic conqueror. ... Now that the schools, in a sense, have become a part of an African way of life, a new approach must be found to dispense and teach technique, especially as it relates to African culture, an African way of doing things, and the African mode of expression and communication. He must begin again to appreciate and love his own culture and his own way of doing things. He must find a way to break some of the old imposed bad habits he learned during the period of the coming of the schools. 12

It is doubtful, however, that such ‘African’ authenticity can still be achieved in a global environment. That means that, at best, the resultant expressive art forms or theatre shall

12 J. Scott Kennedy, In Search of African Theatre, ibid., pp 148-149
be a mixture of Western cultures and biases and some indigenous social values and art forms. The present-day African generally despises his/her local culture as 'backward' and aspires more and more towards Western culture and social ideals. Therefore, theatre art forms in Uganda and much of Africa may recall some aspects of a particular local culture or indigenous society, but formal theatre and 'indigenous' culture have not yet realised a meaningful confluence, and remain different entities in their own right.

Furthermore, towards drama or theatre's formal considerations, there is need to recognise that while all drama and plays may become theatre, not all theatre can become drama. There is a wide range of performances conducted before and for an audience that are highly dramatic and captivatingly theatrical but they are not theatre; for example, poetic recitations, public speeches, church sermons, ritual performances, ceremonies, etc. These forms can only be theatre after they have been ordered in a certain literary and time sequence with a primary purpose to be performed before an audience; for, all drama is intended for stage. Besides, and rather unfortunately, some happenings and circumstances which are not theatre but may be described as theatrical because, either they have been fantastically arranged to surprise or they are playful and not serious in intent, or they may merely be a crude joke or hoax, are also usually described as theatre. That is as far as the usage of theatre can go! But, while the primary purposes of a theatre performance may be divergent - for example, artistic entertainment or raising money for individual use, communication of a specific message, mobilisation of the intended audience towards a common cause, employment of redundant talent and the other ultra purposes to which theatre in Uganda is put - the primary purpose of all drama is premised on it being artistic in concept, nature, and form. Drama has as its prime objective to be performed before an audience.

As afore-mentioned, theatre does not and cannot take place in a vacuum. Theatre is directed to and aims at being received by the society for which it is intended hence

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13 Ibid., pp 144-211. See also Elikia M’Bokolo on "The Crisis of African Identities" in "African Cultures and the Crisis of Contemporary Africa" in The Future of Culture Series, ibid., p. 147. The same issue is discussed later on in this research.
adding the audience component to its dialectical existence of the performer and the art, or vice-versa. In this study, theatre audiences form part of the theatre market where, beside their functions and general make-up, they are also recognised for their different backgrounds they usually bring to or into a performance.

On the side of professionalism and performance, however, one notes that the performer, the medium through which theatre is transmitted, has of recent set the precedence in the commoditisation of theatre and what looks like unscrupulous cheating of audiences on the value they have paid for. Some peculiar examples show that the performer is not always a substance made of flesh and blood. Sometimes, the performer is a 'lifeless' technological image whose voice, physical movements and gestures have been, or can easily be, electronically engineered; as in animated films and videos. In Uganda, theatre is also seen as "a profession for all people regularly involved in music, dance, and drama, either for free or for profit."\textsuperscript{14} Such a definition assumes that hawkers of recorded music tapes and cassettes are theatre professionals in the same way as music composers, song - writers, conductors, and performers! Or that a pop dancer and his or her dancing queens are career theatre professionals the same way a dance choreographer and/or performer is! The regular involvement of people in the theatrical arts of music, dance, and drama, therefore, must be accompanied by a purposeful organisation of others or of themselves for literary construction and performance of theatre. Then, they can be described as having professional careers in theatre.

While the researcher acknowledges that there exists no professional theatre in Uganda in the strict sense of the word, there is great effort by some practitioners to be just that. Their only handicap lies in their inability to provide adequately for their subsistence and other material needs, on the one hand, and lack of formal training and exposure, and insufficient finances to cover the theatre's production processes, on the other. In abundance are theatre semi-professionals and amateur groups, all practicing

\textsuperscript{14} This was a common response in the "July 1998 Questionnaire" administered by the researcher
theatre on a part-time basis. Among the other stake-holders in Uganda's theatre today, like the Government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), churches, embassies, and other self-initiative efforts, are opportunists who all turn to theatre only when there is a communication crisis to overcome, a development project or ideal to promote, or, as in case of the opportunists, an immediate financial problem to solve. Whatever happens to the theatre form in the meantime and after is often none of their business.

2.1.3. Universal Definitions Culture

From the outset, the researcher, like many other scholars have done, acknowledges that there is no one single and universally accepted definition of *Culture*. As Jeffrey C. Alexander and Stevens Seidmann state, "culture is determined by forces outside itself, it does not have autonomy in a casual sense."

Therefore, depending on where the emphasis lies, culture can refer to many things in turn. Culture comprises the general behaviour, norms, values, and customs of a people, handed down to younger generations through the years. In that case, culture can easily become synonymous with **tradition(s)**. Philosophers go further to state:

> *Everywhere,* the old initiates the new generation. The new generation in a *society* may be viewed as the material cause on which the old one, **which may be seen** as the efficient principle, works. In educational terms, the young or new generation may take the place of a pupil, while the older takes that of a teacher. Both the pupil and the teacher, like bronze and intellect, belong to the natural order. But the norms, the values, the attitudes, the skills, and the general outlook on *life* and *world-view* which the pupil eventually forms have no facts. There is nothing inherent in them. They are mere products of the human creative mind, and could be other than what they are. They have no logical necessity. They belong to the cultural order which is purely man-made. Man is the logical pre-requisite of culture. So, we cannot deal with culture in the *same way* with natural objects like bronze and gold. **With** natural objects, we can judge which is more valuable without referring to man. But with culture, there is no objective measure to use and make similar calculations and conclusions. The final judge is always that one who knows what his culture means to him.16

In other words, culture constitutes people's ideals and belongs to those respective communities that make it. Culture is purely man-made, and its value is likewise linked to humanity. Through the ages, 'man' or the human **being(s)** make(s) and condition(s)

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16 Ernest Beyaraza, *Contemporary Relativism with Special Reference to Culture and Africa*, Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies Series 34, 1994, p. 37. Beyaraza quotes and discusses more than seven different attempts to define *Culture* which have been universally recorded in Louis Shores ed., Collier's Encyclopaedia, Vol. 7 of 1970
his/her or their culture. In a sense, therefore, culture is a living entity whose sense of life, though not necessarily dependent on 'man's flesh and blood, is nonetheless preserved through 'him'. That concept of culture, explicitly alive as it is, ideally contradicts the views of scholars like Wole Soyinka who argues that,

Architecture (the bronze and gold structures of human creation) is the implacable comment on a people's cultural being. Architecture is one tributary to the fount of culture which cannot be circumvented. It is there. You must cross it, you must wade through it, swim in it, fish in it, cleanse yourself in it, live in it or live with it as best as you can. Of all the various expressions of a people's culture, none manifests its cultural quotient with such immutable authority.17 (brackets mine)

Like Ernest Beyaraza continues to argue, "culture lies beyond material objects and belongs more to realm of values and meanings. Culture also pertains to the usage or function of things."18 Hence linguists profess to deduce a people's culture from their form(s) of language; that is, the nature of a people's verbal language, their speech forms and mannerisms, their body language expressions, etc.19 This perception itself could easily create a people with cultures that are either described as poor or rich.

On the other hand, sociologists mostly view culture as an aspect of the life-style of a particular community or society, whose manner of dress and nature of clothing, food, shelter, implements of work, etc., now form the basis for the definition and/or evaluation of their culture.20 Sometimes, culture has been conceived as being largely psychological hence heavily dependent on the psychological states of individuals, mostly their emotions, which eventually determine the behaviour of societies. Many times, one hears people utter such statements as "If such a people really gets annoyed, it means war!" Or, "the Baganda cry like this during funerals"; "the Basoga will ululate when they are happy"; "women or men react like this or that in this and that circumstance"; etc. Likewise, what or how individual societies cook, eat, work, sleep, etc., is usually perceived to be conditioned by their emotional build and physical states.

18 op. cit., p. 37
20 See Ernest Beyaraza, Contemporary Relativism with Special Reference to Culture and Africa, ibid., p. 38
Limiting culture to an individual's psychological or emotional states, however, greatly inhibits its nature, functions, and roles in society. Culture is very vibrant in nature and has greater permanence and relevance of forms.

Attempting to provide a working definition as governments and development organisations tackle issues of development in the different, innumerable world cultures, UNESCO broadly defined *Culture* as,

\[ \text{comprising the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.} \]

The UNESCO definition is not different from the meaning of culture being offered by the generalists, except in its desire to match *Culture* with modern politics. UNESCO recalls such aspects as "the fundamental rights of a human being," as would be opposed to what is normally described as "the Communism of Cuba or the socialism of the former Soviet Union, etc.," or the organisational chaos and military dictatorships that are often tagged to much of Africa and some other developing societies without the privileged recognition and credibility of Western 'democracies'. What is more? The next time round, UNESCO may broaden the scope and definition of culture to include other global specifications, like market liberalisation and free trade!

Therefore, in the interest of all societies, culture needs to be defined in relation to its components in respective societies. Ernest Beyaraza notes that,

Ontologically, the starting point, or origin of culture is man who creates this culture to meet his needs in time and space. Since time and circumstances change, and since man changes with them, culture, too, changes. Thus, culture is not only relative to individual person's needs, desires, attitudes to life, the specific circumstances, among other differences. This relativism does not only defend African culture against eurocentricism, but also general culture against any cultural imperialism, or cultural *dominancy*.\(^{22}\)

Beyaraza continues to state:

Since man makes culture and gives meaning to it, and since culture is so relative, the terms used must respect this relativism. There must be no room for essentialism in the definition of terms as this will mean that things must mean the same thing to everybody, thus undermining the idea of culture. .... It

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\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 36. See also his whole discussion of culture on pp 34-52
appears, therefore, that terms should be defined bearing in mind cultural groups and even individual personal usages of these terms. This will not bring about confusion, but better understanding of one another, and the concomitant respect and the badly needed tolerance in the world.  

The generalists likewise perceive culture as both human and material, being the means by which the human beings tame their immediate environment to improve their individual human condition. They perceive culture as the cumulative total of life in a particular community, at a particular time in life. That rightly suggests that culture is not static but very versatile and dynamic. It shifts, grows, and, sometimes, changes. Hence the same society can have different forms of culture at different points of history.

But the question still remains: Who usually conditions this growth and change of culture? Is it its original 'owners', the indigenous peoples of respective societies or is it some external and, most probably, foreign force? At the end of the day, would such a society be oriented towards or disoriented from its indigenous culture? These are some of the issues the researcher bears in mind as she discusses the topic of study within its cultural, social, political, and economic contexts where, theatre is often synonymously conceived and treated as culture.

2.1.4. Theatre and Culture: Married or Divorced?

In much of the world, theatre is never given a distinctive and independent existence in socio-economics. It is always linked to the amorphous body of culture. Likewise, communities and respective governments in Uganda have promoted the colonial view by looking at theatre as part and parcel of the ways of living of the people. But, as already demonstrated, theatre and culture are different in concept, form, appreciation, utilisation, and promotion, and should, therefore, be regarded differently.

The communities' view and concept of theatre can easily be justified because the traditional theatrical forms were part and parcel of the social and political set-ups long before their disruption by colonialism. But the governments' concept of theatre as
culture would be highly pretentious since they are aware that the systems of governance they employ are mostly alien to the local society, having been handed down to us along with all the other colonial structural packages.24 As such, the cultural view of theatre cannot prevail when the educational and theatrical set-ups have gone Western and conventional. At best, theatre in Uganda would be expected to embrace a comfortable mixture of the two social experiences when and where it allows, as is always the practice among contemporary theatre producers.

The closest relationship between theatre and culture, in particular theatre in Uganda and Africa in general, is by way of association. The traditional performance arts of music, dance, mime, story-telling, ritual, etc. usually inspire the dramatic structure of plays from the continent, especially those written by dramatists and playwrights who grow up within their indigenous communities. Something close to what J. Scott Kennedy might have had in mind when he wrote:

So today we speak of African theatre as being closely connected to the "culture concept" and the "integrated arts concept." Another way of viewing this is to say that African theatre is closely connected to the traditions in African culture and daily living, and that the theatre utilizes any and all of the art forms for a unified whole called "theatre." African theatre may be viewed as a total creation, a volcanic eruption of the art forms caught in the middle of the culture of a particular African society.25 (underlining mine)

The case for the homogeneity and appropriateness of universal concepts like "African", "Uganda", "European", etc. theatre though often prescribed is non-existent. J. Scott Kennedy himself disapproves of it when he writes:

Africa is...? ... ? ... ? That is to say, when one speaks of Africa, one speaks of a vast continent of many complexities. For within the continent of Africa are many countries. And within the countries of Africa are many nations, tribes, and cultures. Therefore, African drama and theatre may be as various as its tribes or nations, and African ethnic groups or tribes may range in the size from two hundred thousand to twelve million people. Each tribe has its own social organization, political organization, religion, language, music, dance, and drama. Some ethnic groups or collections of tribes have become nations.26

Most importantly, there is no section within the constituents of either global or 'Ugandan' culture that is specifically devoted to theatre. Could theatre be among the "distinctive intellectual ... features that characterise a society or social group"? Or, could it be among that society's or social group's "spiritual, material, ... and emotional features"? What "arts and letters, ... modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs" constitute theatre? Uganda records a total of 56 different tribes, and so cultures, if one decided to call them just that.27 With such wide and varied cultural identities, how does one begin to develop and promote Ugandan, and not tribal, theatre? What components of Uganda's culture, or to be precise, of the tribal cultures, is such a theatre made of?

The problem, therefore, lies not just with identifying what theatre the government should try to promote and develop, but stems from general concepts about the profession, art form, and business. Notwithstanding, budgetary constraints, a disorganised theatre industry, and an unviable business are only obvious. If theatre continued to be seen as one and the same as culture, then, one wonders at how theatre, as we know it conventionally, will ever rise out of all that myriad of components of culture; to acquire its own identity as an art form and perform the roles expected of it in a given society.

It is against such an ambiguity of universally agreed composition of culture and common assumptions about theatre that the Uganda National Cultural Centre (UNCC) and, consequently, the National Theatre of Uganda, have had their independence compromised and their roles and functions weakened, creating structural gaps in the delivery of services and consolidation of their goals. Due to rapid and unsystematic socio-political changes in Uganda, indigenous cultural entities - art, values, and norms - have evolved independently and respectively, towards both developmental and destructive ends. For example, there has occurred significant amounts of cultural and moral erosion due to the invasion of indigenous Ugandan societies by alien, mostly

Western, cultures and life philosophies. But, the clash of cultures has, in some instances, helped neutralise or deal away with undignified cultural practices and prejudiced beliefs like wife inheritance, bicycle riding, chicken or egg-eating for women, etc.

On the other hand, the compromised existence of the National Theatre, has, over the years, created to what Lenny N. Kabunga describes as "a unidirectional flow of ... services, with consumers at the receiving end; an approach characteristic of the two stages of the evolution of marketing: the Production and Sales Eras." 28

Unlike with the market-propelled growth or destruction of culture, theatre has mostly tended to uphold monolithic tendencies in its organisation, production, and marketing practice. Uganda's theatre producers usually adopt a take it or leave it attitude, more so towards the critical voices of theatre professionals and the 'saner' audience. The situation raises doubts as to whether the current market liberalisation and globalisation trends shall positively revolutionise the industry to evolve from its present mass production and selling tendencies to competitive and professional levels. Robert Kalundi Serumaga, the current Director of the National Theatre, observes that "the National Theatre policy is to be a theatre for the people". 29 In other words, the people should have stakes in the Theatre's general business and well-being. That way, the National Theatre shall also reclaim its social dignity by ceasing to exist as "a national theatre" only in name or when it is no longer regarded suspiciously from a distance as a "theatre of the Baganda". These are some of the main challenges facing the National Theatre, carrying the mantle of organising the country's theatre industry and business.

2.1.5. The Concept of Community Theatre vis a vis Development Theatre

Community theatre, as is conceived by the researcher, is at the forefront of social and common life in Uganda. It is that kind of theatre originating and belonging to particular communities or societies of people. It is not the kind of 'mass' theatre as it is assumed
to be by development workers. But rather, community theatre is restricted to and differentiated by the different communities to which it belongs. In its structural sense and ideal existence, community theatre is the sum total of traditional theatre performance art forms, specifically designed by individual communities for their own unique and specific purposes. Community theatre is the equivalent of traditional, ethnic, or indigenous theatre in essence and practice. It is a theatre of the people, by the people, for the people. Once, I. Scott Kennedy observed:

> African theatre addresses itself to an African way of life, stemming from its own unique traditions; it is addressed to African man, to African themes, to African moods, to African expression. In the beginning, there was no need for paid theatre. The theatre went to the people. It was for the people. It was traditional theatre. It took place in the villages and in the centers of African life. It was distinctly people-oriented. It was a cultural, traditional experience.²⁰

Community theatre constitutes aspects of a people's cultural norms, beliefs, and practices that are presented theatrically for authenticity and as a norm and not just for aesthetic or communication effects. The language, time, and place in the presentation of an issue or situation must be fully appropriate as well as real as opposed to the fictional, imaginary world of formal theatre.

On the other hand, as a form of art, development theatre is structured on the principles of communal participation and involvement towards a common goal, usually developmental, identified at a time. In many developing countries, such efforts have become abundant with the onset of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), and have been clothed in such descriptive and catch names as Community Theatre or Theatre for Development (TFD).

In more recent years, TFD as a type of theatre has become fashionable among theatre practitioners, NGOs, and Government ministries. Beginning in 1986 at the MDD Department, Makerere University, the form and its popular use in Uganda was spearheaded by Rose Mbowa. The Theatre "aimed at sensitizing communities on issues of empowerment and community health."³¹ The form is regarded as the most effective

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²⁰ I. Scott Kennedy, In Search of African Theatre, Ibid., p. 38. Kennedy also names such a theatre as "ethnic theatre". Ibid., p. 47
³¹ Rose Mbowa et al, "Uganda" in Don Rubin ed., The World Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Theatre, Ibid., p. 324
way to communicate with rural or urban poor communities, usually also illiterate, and sensitise them towards the desired development goals. In some instances, music forms have been used to perform these roles hence bringing into existence the sub-form Music for Development (MFD).

Therefore, TFD is generally limited to issues of conscientisation and sensitisation of communities on particular development and conceptual issues as opposed to the broader latitude of operation with regard to community theatre. Most importantly, too, the initiative for redress is initiated and designed by a force from outside the community. The development goal is also usually broad and national in nature. Elsewhere, Eckhard Breitinger and Rose Mbowa note:

Theatre for Development, thus, ranges from forms of more handsomely dressed-up indoctrination in the old style of development policies to propaganda that attempts to achieve a consensus with the target groups on the objectives of development projects, to projects that educate and motivate the masses to ideally plays and projects, that are invented, performed and implemented by the common man, as a sign of his/her political maturity and responsibility. Plays and projects, independently designed, autonomously implemented, true self-help ventures, put the common man back into control over his immediate social, cultural and economic environment.32

Most probably, that's the reason development project implementers usually use the form among the poor and hard pressed by life. The propagandist values that the form imbeds can best be consumed by a community unable of or resigned from questioning things due to their immediate circumstances that at the same time inhibit or prevail on them. At best, therefore, TFD shall, in the long-run, become a sub-set of community theatre. Both these forms are exemplified further in Chapter Four.

2.1.6. Theatre and the Commodity Markets

Like theatre, the word market derives numerous meanings. According to *Webster's New World Dictionary*, the Market is a place where goods owned by different dealers are all displayed together on their respective stalls for sale.33 Small-time trade, village, and bigger national or international trade fairs are, therefore, all part of this type of market. In the case

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of theatre, such a market or display corresponds to show promotions and advertisements by way of posters, fliers, handbills, and billboards. Occasional, big book markets or fairs are organised by associations for the benefit of all stakeholders in the book industry. The Frankfurt International Book Fair, the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF), and other regional fairs all over the world are good examples of book markets. In Uganda, trade fairs are usually organised by the Uganda Manufacturers Association. For literature and other forms of creative art, the Uganda Book Trust (UBT) has since 1996 held annual national book fairs where Uganda’s Literary Theatre could easily have found an outlet were it a strong, viable venture. Working hand in hand with these methods are other publicity and/or distribution channels, like radio, television, the Internet, audio cassettes, and posters, through which theatre is regularly marketed.

The display of commodities informs prospective buyers of the types of goods and services available for sale, the prices tagged to each, and the venues or locations where the commodities can be obtained, how, and when. Such displays are also good indicators of the extent and age of the producer or manufacturing industries and their potential or real competitors in business, depending on the nature of alternative products and brands hence the specific choices available on the market. At commodity markets and during trade or book fairs, bargains in prices and future production contracts are normally effected.

Guralnik continues to explain that some dealers specialise in certain products as are often found in shops, stock markets, and other stores or distribution centres.\textsuperscript{34} With respect to the theatre industry and business in Uganda, many of the products that have been ‘branded’ and packaged in books, videos, or documentaries and films are found in bookshops, the National Theatre, and in the other private theatres, all mostly found in Kampala.

\textit{The Wordsworth Thesaurus} further defines the Market as a need or a demand.\textsuperscript{35} That is, the market constitutes buyers estimated to exist or are actually existing for the

\textsuperscript{34} David B. Guralnik, ed., \textit{Ibid.}, 1984, p. 868
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{The Wordsworth Thesaurus}, Hertfordshire: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd., 1993, p. 214
purchase of a particular commodity. On the part of producers, whether of goods or services, the apparent need and ability to demand for the products is the opportunity to sell, or to supply, goods and services to prospective buyers existing in the identified communities. This type of market can be conceived in terms of its age and sex, its geographical location and size, its tastes, its purchasing levels hence ability to demand.

In theatre, this market consists of the various types and natures of audiences, potential or already converted, who are likely to be dispensed towards some or all of theatre’s active products. In other words, these are the theatre’s prospective markets that competitors strive to patronise. Likewise, as is being discussed in Chapter Six, the need and actual demand for theatre by audiences in Uganda are often affected by the audiences’ demographic structure, gender, marital status, academic or professional background, and daily or regular occupations. In addition are influences emanating from the audiences’ individual social and cultural attitudes and behaviour outside theatre. As is usually the distribution process in commodity markets, once the definition and location of markets have been completed, the processes of 'trading' (buying and selling) in specific theatre commodities (or performances), is thus facilitated, and the actual processes of delivery and consumption begin.

According, therefore, the essence of Conventional Theatre lies in "the business of selling art", either as a commodity or as a social service. The majority of respondents revealed that "performers always aim at selling themselves and the play’s ideas to the audiences, and at a profit. The existence of box-offices at theatre halls or the charging of nominal fees and the issuance of receipts for the commercial theatre performances conducted outside established theatres all testify to this utmost intention.”

The operating principle, then, is that the higher or greater the profits the better the business. If profits were not going to be realised as are, sometimes, expectations in any business, the respondents argued, "at least enough income had to be got from a show, 

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36 This was a common response in the July 1998 and subsequent questionnaires administered among the theatre practitioners.
in order to offset the costs of production and give base for further investment, popularising the production, or putting up other productions. Otherwise, the producers would be forced to set up side businesses or engage in other paying activities to get the needed surplus income."

Interestingly, none of the respondents envisaged a theatre for free, although such a type of theatre still exists in Uganda today in the form of Community and, sometimes, Development Theatre, which comes to the consumer through sponsorship and patronage either by the Government or the NGOs. In such cases, the investment costs, though still present and undoubtedly enormous, are neither visible to the theatre producers or the audiences because they are being borne by some other party or stake-holder.

2.1.7. Theatre and its Larger Market

In the case of this research, therefore, the market is seen not just as theatre buildings or blocks of prospective and/or actual audiences for the theatre, but as the larger environment of economic, social, political, and literary factors that may influence the audiences' willingness and ability to afford or demand for the theatre. Hence, at the economic level, the market in this study refers to the legislated nature of Uganda's economy through the years since the country's independence in 1962. Whenever economic policies have been formulated and implemented by successive post-independence governments in Uganda, the policies have, in turn, dictated the nature of the economy in which the theatre industry, like all the other industries, has had to operate. Inevitably, the theatre market has had to have its nature mostly shaped and governed accordingly by the national economy. For example, since 1987, Uganda has run a free market as opposed to the planned or administered economy prevalent in Obote I and II Governments. A purely "Ugandanised" or indigenised economy was the

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37 Ibid.
prime objective of Amin’s Economic War of 1972, which ended up cultivating "magendoism" (black market trade) and speculative market practices in Uganda.

At the political level, some policies significantly influenced, and in some instances, continue to influence the nature and growth of the theatre industry in Uganda; for example, the Witchcraft Ordinance of 1912, the activities of Social Welfare Department soon after World War II, formal education programmes in the creation and practice of art offered at Makerere University since 1947, and the establishment of the National Theatre in Kampala. There is also the repressive political governance as in Obote I and II and Amin regimes followed by years of turmoil. Political repression in Uganda was brought to a halt with the coming to power of Museveni’s Government in 1986. Museveni’s National Resistance Movement (NRM) is generally regarded as a ‘democracy’ both locally and internationally. Even then, politics continues to regulate the country’s theatre industry and business. Chapter Three discusses the impact on theatre of political and economic policies in Uganda since colonial times.

Implications of global market economy on contemporary theatre in Uganda go further than dictating the country’s general market trends or facilitating the introduction of a global culture. Global culture itself comes with a host of choices on offer to the market, which, in turn, escalate the commercial competitiveness among the different theatre groups and their respective art forms. It is the enhanced competitive spirit within the entertainment and leisure industry that impacts directly on the theatre arts. Sometimes, there has been wholesale importation into theatre of values and forms so alien to those of the local market. Many times, though, there has been a tendency for theatre practitioners to plan and structure theatre along the popular forms that are the artistic trademark of amusement arts in the West. Consequently, importation and/or pirating of screened Western World cultures and experiences, including their problems, have been preferred to any kinds of formal literary adaptations. These are some of the concerns discussed in Chapter Five.
2.1.8 Marketing or Selling Theatre?

A study of the relationship between theatre and the market in Uganda cannot be completed without a discussion of the marketing process and functions because marketing is the crucial link between any producer of goods and services and the consumers of the products. Further, marketing whether of goods or services has been identified by leading economic planners and policy makers in Uganda as one of the greatest problems that face most of Uganda's and Africa's public and private organisations. Uganda's current president, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, has, on numerous public occasions continually underscored the role marketing can play in the life of a public or private enterprise like theatre. In one of his broadcasts to the nation over Radio Uganda and the Uganda Television, later serialised by *The New Vision* newspaper, the most widely circulated English daily in Uganda, Museveni observed:

> Uganda's problem . . . (is) not production, but the marketing and logistics that go with it. I appeal to entrepreneurs both in and outside Uganda to develop a marketing infrastructure that leads to the international markets, and to be more efficient and aggressive in marketing the country's produce.

Museveni's primary concern is the attainment of profitable production levels and standards for commodity markets at regional and international levels, which would ensure Uganda's economic development and survival within the global economy. The same can be said of or wished for Uganda's theatre. Currently, too much theatre is being produced; but very little of it, if any; ever finds its way to national, regional, or international markets, be it on the literary or other professional levels.

True, there have been quite a number of breakthroughs to regional and international markets by individual playwrights and musicians. But, apparently, the artists always seem to get silent as soon as they reach the heights, either through natural causes or their own inability to successfully continue navigating the market. For example, credible and outstanding dramatists and playwrights like Byron Kawadwa, Robert Serumaga, Elvania Namukwaya Zirimu, Pio Zirimu, Cliff Lubwa p'Chong, and, mostly recently, Rose

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39 *The New Vision* Newspaper, 2 January, 1992, pp 1 & 16
Mbowa have all been struck down by death in the prime of their artistic and professional lives. The national and international growth and recognition of the other prominent dramatists, for long active on the local scene, like Wydolf Kiyangi and Michael Nsimbi, has been limited by the way they chose to package their plays. Though Kiyangi concerns himself with subjects of national relevance and universal interest and significance, he writes in his mother tongue, Luganda, a language presently 'spoken' by about 4 million of Uganda's 22 million people. Besides, Luganda is disadvantaged by tribal biases and prejudices on the local scene as well as the current national development trends towards regional integration and globalisation. It would benefit the writers to think globally than restricting their works to smaller or tribal audiences and markets. Many other Ugandan theatre artists, like Leonard Ondur, now deceased, Albert Sempeke, Christopher Ntalumbwa, and others, have not been able to write down or document their ideas and experiences in accessible forms. Others like Alex Mukulu, Jimmy Katumba, Stephen Rwangyezi, Fagil Mandy, John Ruganda, Austin Bukenya, Mukotani-Rugyendo, Nuwa Sentongo, etc., who formerly made it nationally and/or internationally, have abandoned mainstream theatre for other professions, political, and/or personal engagements. A few musicians, though, like Paulo Bob Kafeero and Fred Sebatta, whose performances gravitated more towards music drama and theatre, are still riding the market successfully; due, largely, to what seems like their successful management of the marketing process. A full discussion on Uganda's theatre industry and business appears in Chapter Four.

It has also been noted that many people tend to confuse marketing with, and sometimes limit it, to selling; as indeed some theatres in Uganda appear to do. Hence the further need to distinguish between the two words, as both of them shall feature frequently in the discussion of the study.

According to Ted Levitt,

*Selling focuses on the needs of the seller; marketing on the needs of the buyer. Selling is pre-occupied with the seller's needs to convert his product into cash; marketing with the idea of satisfying the needs of the consumer*
by means of the product and the whole cluster of things associated with creating, delivering and finally consuming it.40

One of the questions that would certainly constantly arise with respect to Uganda's theatre industry and business is: Are the producers and marketers of theatre in the country concerned with satisfying the needs of the consumer, hence marketing theatre, or are they pre-occupied with their own needs, hence all the while trying to sell their products at market value, to prospective buyers? Indications are that the practitioners employ both selling and marketing strategies, with greater inclination itself towards selling. Whether such a mixture is acceptable business practice remains to be discussed.

When Philip Kotler discussed the core concepts of marketing, he defined the term as:

a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and exchanging products of value with others.41

David G. Hughes, another marketing management expert, defines marketing as:

Those activities that relate an organisation successfully to its environment. The main activities are the identification of unmet needs, the development of products and services to meet these needs, pricing, the distribution of goods to the market place, and the communication of the ability of the products and services to meet these needs.42

Furthermore, in The Quarterly Review of Marketing, Michael Thomas states:

Marketing is mostly a professional discipline concerned with how to make existing business run more effectively, and is rarely concerned with long-term and strategic planning of issues.43

What comes out explicitly in these definitions is: that marketing is a chain of carefully planned and performed processes involving market identification, research, and definition, product design, product distribution, and the collection of consumers' views and reactions to the products (or feedback); that marketing is a profession, with respective rules of procedure and codes of conduct; that marketing is good business management, performed by individuals or groups of companies; that marketing is a social experience, which operates within real, and not imaginary, social situations,

where it is bound to be affected or influenced by the economic and larger market environment existing in a particular community or society at any one particular time. Due to such changing and unpredictable influences, marketing is a continuous and not a one-time activity.

How far Uganda’s theatre’s industry and business is aware of these issues, and the extent to which the producers and marketers of theatre practice them, is another matter altogether. Nonetheless, in the discussion of the topic of study, the researcher still perceives marketing as a dynamic interaction between the producers of theatre and its consumers, irrespective of the selling tendencies among theatre producers and marketers. Consequently, the study desires that marketing be visualised not just as any two-way process, but as a consumer-oriented activity, having its base in consumer or market research and analysis. For, as Lenny N. Kabunga puts it:

> What business thinks it produces is not of first importance. What the customer thinks he is buying, what he considers “value” is decisive. It determines what a business is, what it produces, and whether it will prosper.44

In addition, and bearing the foregoing in mind, the researcher discusses the theatre industry and the theatre market in Uganda along the main principles that govern the marketing and/or distribution of goods and services in any economy. These are: the nature of the product, its price, its method and channels of promotion on the market, its distribution, and its final destination, or the audiences. In other words, the researcher has sought to establish the nature of theatre productions being offered on the theatre market, how the prospective audiences are usually made aware of those productions, when and where the theatre is being made available, the price of the show tickets, and who the regular attendees of or customers to the shows usually are.

Notwithstanding, therefore, there is conscious consideration of characteristics peculiar to the marketing of theatre as an art, as a service, and as a profession. As art, theatre is a tangible good, but somehow ‘incomplete’, product, sometimes existing on its own and separate from its basic means of transmission or the performer and sometimes

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44 Ijuka Kabumba, et. al, *Marketing Insurance*, Ibid., p. 18
dependent on the performer. In such a state of dependence, the theatre is perishable, and would need unique formal characteristics to operate alongside other 'standardised' forms of literature.

As a service, theatre's value is 'intangible', closely identified with and embedded in its method of transmission, inexhaustible because of its transitory nature, and mostly realised over a length of time. The service value of theatre can, therefore, never be successfully 'standardised' because, first, the theatre experience is received and internalised differently by both the performers and the audiences, according to each person's individual make-up, social and other pressures and/or experiences. Secondly, as it is universally acknowledged, theatre consumption neither begins with the curtain rise nor ends with the curtain call. Rather, the audience begins to consume theatre right from the time market promotions are launched to many days, months, and even years after the staging of the production. The psychological, emotional, intellectual benefits, and damages, from a single theatrical production can, therefore, last a lifetime.

The people involved in processes of 'manufacture' and exchange of products of value in theatre are supposed to be professionals, although one comes across semi-professionals, amateurs, and the other parties interested in theatre for ultra reasons, as earlier noted. Interestingly, some theatre practitioners proudly regard theatre as "a delightful hiding-place" and themselves as "grown-ups who have secretly popped their childhood in their pockets and disappeared, so that they can go on playing until the end of their lives."45 Most probably, such professionals market themselves and the theatre profession as such. All in all, suitable marketing strategies geared towards satisfying the demands of theatre consumers, ensuring the viability of the industry and its business settings, and, at the same time, preserving theatre's conventional roles need to be identified and promoted.

45 A highlighted quotation on the cover of the brochure of Deutcher Bühnenverein Bundesverband "Deutscher Theater" (The German Theatre Association "Theatre in Germany")
2.2. The Critical Theories and Theoretical Framework

To conduct the study to its ultimate aim, the researcher used a number of critical theories as are usually applied in the Humanities and Social Sciences. In some cases, these theories were applied in whole or part as advocated for by their formulators. In most cases, however, the theories were not religiously administered throughout the study but rather as and to when it was necessary, depending on the variable(s) being tested and/or validated. In general, the selection of which theories to use and where to use them was determined by the nature and scope of the research. The theories included:

2.2.1. The Formalistic Approach

Described by Wilbur Scott as "the most influential critical method of our time", the formalistic approach was used to determine the artistic form and value of play productions basically because drama, by its very essence of being an art, is a form of literature. As such, plays are expected to follow a certain pattern or structure, where "the efficiency of the various elements (must be so constructed) to form a unified total meaning." To a large extent, the structural elements consist the six rules of dramatic composition, as formulated by the classical literary critic, Aristotle. Elsewhere, Aristotle states:

> Whatever is beautiful, whether be it a living creature or an object made of various parts, must necessarily not only have its parts properly ordered, but also be of an appropriate size, for beauty is bound up with size and order.

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47 Ibid., p. 179
48 These consist the six elements of drama, which are: plot, character, thought pattern or theme, dialogue, music or rhythm and *spectacle*. Read also: T. S. Dorsch, ed; *Aristotle: Home*. *Longinus, Classical Literary Criticism*, New York: Penguin, 1965, pp 31-73. The elements of theatre, as listed down by Robert Cohen, are: lighting, sound effects, scenic design, nature of the stage (i.e. theatre in the round, open air theatre, proscenium-arch stage, etc.), and production methods. For these, read: Robert Cohen, *Theatre*, ibid., Chapter One
The rule calls for a closer examination of the internal and external structure of Uganda’s theatre pieces, including the total length or overall theatre span of the performances. In addition, one has to bear in mind Elder Olson’s argument that,

in a formal consideration, the form is the end, and since the end renders everything else intelligible, a mark of discovery of the formal principle would be that everything else in the poem would be found to be explicable in terms of it.\(^{50}\)

Such structural conventions help distinguish theatre and drama from other genres of literature, like the novel and poetry as they help define different forms of drama, like tragedy, comedy, farce, melodrama, tragi-comedy, the opera, ballet, and musicals. However, limitations of heavily relying on the formalistic approach to conduct a largely sociological survey like this one are most obvious. Such elements of the research like market indexes, demographic data, social beliefs and behaviour, etc. would not be tested or validated by the formalistic method.

Universally acknowledged structural rules for art reveal two fundamental issues. The literary critics on the method argue for “the high place of art as art, rather than as an expression of social, religious, ethical, or political ideas.”\(^{51}\) The critics advocate the close study of texts of the works themselves. Such a stance puts the present research at relative disadvantage because much of the theatre in Uganda, particularly traditional, commercial, and development theatre, rarely follow aesthetics. There is hardly any place for aesthetics because the mentioned theatre forms are basically commercial in nature or arise out of collaborative effort. The theatre cannot run away from its social, political, and market realities of which it is born. Such theatre is best analysed using the sociological approach to literary criticism, whose main tenets are highlighted in the next few paragraphs.

Secondly, popular theatre, as is being discussed in Chapters Four and Five, follows its own rules of dramatic composition that are dictated much more by the need to survive

\(^{50}\) Elder Olson, ““Sailing to Byzantium”: Prolegomena to a Poetics of the Lyric” in Wilbur Scott ed., *Five Approaches to Literary Criticism*, ibid., pp. 217-218

\(^{51}\) See Wilbur Scott ed., *Five Approaches to Literary Criticism*, ibid., p. 179
rather than a conscious effort to be relevant to the times. At first propagated by the liquidity situation during Amin's rule, popular theatre nowadays is dictated upon by the basic ideals in inter-culturalism and globalisation. In his discussion of the relationship between present-day art and entertainment, Eric Gans states:

The familiar opposition between "high" and "popular" culture, born in the romantic era, is inherently always in the process of dissolving. The justification of the market can never quite satisfy the producers of popular art; but, at the other end of the spectrum, the differential claims of high art are belied by their very need for articulation. Is in this ever-problematic distinction that the founding opposition between the sacred and the profane maintains its experiential relevance for modern culture.52

In Uganda, the battle has been raging on between theatre professionals, mostly academicians, and the producers and promoters of popular theatre. Each group accuses the other of facilitating the degeneration of the country's theatre albeit in different ways. The professionals are accused of being the redundant residues in theatre, where they do nothing to enhance the growth and survival of the industry. They are only best at criticising the practitioners. On the other hand, the popularists are accused of exploiting theatre for their own personal gain, promoting amusement art, and generally doing nothing to ensure theatre's continued growth and development.53

Now, the popular theatre movement has been re-enforced by amateur theatre producers on various contracts and consultancies with government ministries and NGOs in the promotion of development policies. But, as Eric Gans continues to state,

the pejorative notion of the "consumption" of inferior art-work finds no real basis in the practice of the actual consumers of popular art. It would be all too easy if we could distinguish between a great novel and a merely amusing one by examining the residue of a reading to see whether or not the novel had been "consumed". This is not to say that the intuition that associates entertainment with consumption is altogether without merit; but its anthropological basis is more fundamental than can be provided by the on-line condemnation of the "consumer society".54

Furthermore, as to be expected, structural rules of dramatic composition are rarely observed, especially among communities where Community Theatre and Theatre for Development (TFD) are almost solely the regular theatre forms being accessed. The ultimate democratic nature of these two forms as a theatre of the people, by the

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53 Besides what is common knowledge among theatre practitioners, more like views were gathered by the research and are discussed in Chapters Four and Five of the research.
54 Op. cit., p. 41
people, and for the people itself leaves little room, if any, for one to start thinking in terms of literary art. Like Eckhard Breitinger and Rose Mbowa have observed,

Theatre for Development is ... a platform where the people can articulate themselves independently; that is where they can not only talk back to their rulers, but where they can talk with them and make them aware of their views and objectives.\(^5^5\)

It is a theatre that deals, there and then, with the people's various questions, own problems, and aspirations. As such, TFD usually has no room for literary perfection and stylistics. In most cases, the form also embraces a wide range of cultural values, customs, and mannerisms that cannot easily be tamed into conventional literature.

2.2.2. The Sociological Approach

In his introduction to the discourse on sociological criticism, Wilbur Scott states:

Sociological criticism starts with a conviction that art's relations to society are virtually important, and that the investigation of these relationships may organize and deepen one's aesthetic response to a work of art. Art is not created in a vacuum; it is the work not simply of a person, but of an author fixed in time and space, answering to a community of which he is an important, because articulate part. ... literature is the consequence of the moment, the race, and the milieu.\(^5^6\)

Nothing seems to describe better the current relationship between Uganda's theatre and its audiences like Scott's words above. The theatre industry and its market are so interdependent and reflected into each other that one's deductions on one could easily pass for the other. Audiences have tended to influence the form and contents of theatre as much as theatre has, in turn, sought to influence the tastes and literary judgment of its audiences, particularly since the days of Amin's Economic War in Uganda. On the side of national politics and economics, many policies and circumstances as are being discussed in the next and subsequent chapters have greatly impacted on theatre and its market.

Nevertheless, the researcher is aware of serious limitation within the sociological approach. Wilbur Scott reveals that "the Achilles' heel of sociological criticism, as of the moral in general, lies in the area of judgment-the narrowing temptation to praise or


\(^5^6\) Wilbur Scott ed., *Five Approaches to Literary Criticism*, ibid., p. 123
condemn a piece according to the extent to which its social or moral implications are congruent with the convictions of the critic.\textsuperscript{57} Indeed, the researcher's own views on art and her values in life might, in some instances, reveal her moral position on theatre forms and practice in Uganda. She, likewise, cannot separate herself from her sociocultural and literary milieux and personal values. In the end, however, the theatre's own merit and the practitioners' business practice generate the conclusions and recommendations the researcher deduces for the study.

Furthermore, as Wilbur Scott quoting Harry Levin states, "the relations between literature and society are reciprocal. Literature is not only the effect of social causes; it is the cause of social effects."\textsuperscript{58} That suggests the sociological approach is inherently temporal and, to an extent, contradictory in nature. A certain theatrical ideal in vogue might not be so relevant to the needs of a particular society at a point in time or to the cardinal concerns and ideals of the period. But that does not mean that the theatre principle is ineffective or even irrelevant to sections of the same society. Hence, as Wilbur Scott recommends, "what the best sociological critics do (is to) place the work of art in the social atmosphere, and define that relationship. If too narrow an evaluation follows, this is likely to reveal the moral position of the critic, as much as the intrinsic merit of the work."\textsuperscript{59} The elements of the study that have not been subjected to either the aesthetic or the sociological approaches have been analysed using theories and principles of political economy.

2.2.3. The Political Economic Theory (The Historical Approach)

In her essay, "Economics and Counter-productivity in Flaubert's Madame Bovary", Patricia Reynaud argues:

\textit{Literary circles} have so far resisted the use of political economic theory in criticism. To do so is, however, a limitation since the social science of economics can be fundamental in shedding new light on the

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 125
\textsuperscript{58} Harry Levin, "Literature as an Institution" in Ancient, Spring, 1946 in Wilbur Scott, "Literature and Social Ideals" in Wilbur Scott ed., Five Approaches to Literary Criticism, Ibid., p. 126
\textsuperscript{59} Wilbur Scott ed., Five Approaches to Literary Criticism, Ibid.; pp 125-126

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interpretation of canonical works of literature, and the reading and analysis of a text can benefit considerably from the linking of economics to sociology, history and politics. In a study seeking to establish the relationship between the theatre industry and its market, linking the analysis to economics and the political establishment (the State) and some of its policies cannot be avoided. In many instances, past and current economic and other public policies have greatly impacted on theatre as an art, as a profession, and as a social service. The overall impact of the policies on theatre as a business activity can also be validated.

The most prevalent circumstance in the relationship between theatre and its environment in Uganda has been the persistent crises in governance, political management, and development. Ali Mazrui has noted:

Africans have demonstrated that they respond more to sociocultural ideologies than to socioeconomic ideologies. Sociocultural ideologies are ethnicity, religion, nationalism, race-consciousness. These are real African responses in the political process. Socioeconomic ideologies are socialism, labor movements, class solidarity, peasant movements, labor unions, activism. These are relatively weak in Africa.

That has meant that weak economies like Uganda along with other Africa countries have continued to beg for foreign Aid, acquire foreign debts, and in the process succumb to foreign values and culture. The cycle of dependence has now been concretised by calls of interculturalism, modernisation, and globalisation. This has resulted in what Mazrui has termed "Africa's culture of tolerance".

While such dependency, exploitation, and subjugation help writers, academicians, researchers, etc in Africa to critically analyse and protest our social realities there still remains no palatable remedy to or shortcut out of the situation. WE are insufficient in many things aspects that would easily access us a development free of economic and ideological slavery. Further, the current view of governance and politics is that economics constitutes a superstructure upon which all other social relations are

61 Ali Mazrui, "Development in a Multi-Cultural Context: Trends and Tensions" in Ismail Serageldin and June Taboroff eds., Culture and Development in Africa, ESD No. 1, Ibid., p. 133
62 Ibid., p. 134
ordered. Politics, social services and activity are all guided by a system of production, exchange, and consumption, making the economic structure of society and the manner in which individuals organise their social production of prime importance. Ironically, therefore, the nearest hope for Africa out of its economic, political, and cultural crises still lies in foreign ideals of economics and politics. Ali Mazrui continues to argue:

So why is capitalism good news for national integration, culturally speaking? It engenders crisscrossing loyalties between ethnic loyalties and economic roles. It promotes class formation, which begins to erode ethnic allegiance. It promotes greater individualism and at the same time is at the expense of at least excessive ethnic allegiance. At its best, capitalism expands the national cake. The genius of capitalism in history, at least, until now, has been production. No other system in human history has been more productive. So capitalism erodes sectarianism, and it promotes materialism and secularism. Now all these are factors that add up to good news for national integration. And yet capitalism is also exploitative economically. It very often creates selective areas of poverty. Purely on the issue of national integration, however, it is a more efficient way of building nations. Why is liberal democracy, in the short run, bad news in Africa? Because multiparty rivalry heightens competitive ethnic consciousness, ethnicizes political competition, degenerates into physical political conflict, and sometimes heightens separatism. In African multiparty elections, unless precautions are taken, ethnic labels acquire more salience than either policy or ideology. An African voter under a liberal competitive system is a member of an ethnic group first and a worker second, or a bourgeois second.

Elsewhere, in a chapter entitled "Selling the Golden Age", Cedric Watts states:

Given that money thus seems essential to the evolution of civilised societies, and given that in civilised societies literary traditions flourish, we might expect that in such literary traditions the attitude to money would be either appreciative (since without it there could not exist the social circumstances in which the traditions are maintained) or neutral (since, though the use of money may have good or bad consequences, it is itself neither good nor bad but necessary).

The above highlighted approaches to the study have been used in the hope that they shall strengthen the researcher's arguments as she works towards the most realistic and practicable conclusions to the study. For as Richard Blackmur rightly points out,

No critic is required to limit himself to a single approach, nor is he likely to be able to do so: fads cannot be exhibited without comment, and comment involves the generality of the mind... a consciously complex approach affords a more flexible, more available, more stimulating standard of judgement than a single approach.
In any case, the variously inspired and motivated theatre productions in Uganda cannot apparently be uniformly defined in concept, form, and content, although the chief aim(s) behind the performances could themselves be easily classified into a minimum. Theatre in Uganda is either pursued for material and/or personal benefits, as in the case of Commercial or Popular Theatre, or for the general social development of communities, as in the case of some forms comprising Development Theatre; Discussions of the ideals and practices of the different theatre forms within Uganda's theatre industry appear in Chapters Four, and Five.

2.3. The Conceptual Framework

The Theatre and the Market are some of the distinct components of a country's economy that are uniquely interdependent on each other, in the way each influences and/or complements the other. In Uganda, the two fields have continually attracted attention from different sections of society and the economy depending on the factor of interest. Academic researchers and scholars, for example, generally seek to study the Theatre or the Market within the individual framework of their research topics. In one way or another, they look at Theatre or the Market as distinct blocks of social and economic activity divesting themselves in various ways but, at the same time, barely having any significant relationship to and/or impact on each other. Admittedly, the writers and researchers set to work on a definite topic and are not obliged to write on everything. In any case, such an objective would be impossible to achieve, and would cause the authors to lose focus of their primary subject.

Government departments, particularly the fiscal planners and policy formulators, are often drawn to either the Theatre or the Market or to both, during the course of their professional duties. They need the solid data and statistics to plan and draft sound policies for the general development and well-being of society. It is doubtful, however, if

the data and statistics often used reflect best the situation on the ground and for which strategic plans should be formulated. After the departure of British and Indian expatriates in the early years of Amin's rule, theatre ceased to matter in the country's budgetary estimates. First, "the original dream that the Centre (i.e. the National Theatre) could be financially self-supporting in ten years (i.e. up to 1970) was extremely unlikely to be fulfilled."68 Secondly, as Margaret Macpherson continues to note,

if it (the Theatre) operated five out of seven nights of the week, presenting plays likely to attract an audience prepared to pay high prices, it might be possible to make ends meet. But a National Theatre has cultural obligations beyond the bounds of commercial profit-making and so is a fair charge on that section of the government concerned with culture. In any case, in 1965, the slow shift of emphasis from what interested expatriates to what interested Ugandans was only just beginning and, while individual companies could raise sums for charity when all gave their services free, the Theatre could not yet balance its books, and at the same time had to be able to sponsor Ugandan groups.69

The government might have assumed that people's need for formal theatre had ended with the expulsion of the theatre's chief patrons - the British, Indians, and, eventually, the intellectuals. Even economically democratic governments like the present one give no financial votes to theatre. Theatre is recognised as part of the economy and social enterprise but it is planned for as an "extra" agenda or cultural activity. But within culture, theatre is mostly conceived as a liability because of the heavy investment it usually demands in contrast to the income and other benefits it offers. Furthermore, theatre cannot feasibly plan or develop as culture because it professes to exist above and do more than culture. Culture concerns itself with the integration of individuals into their respective communities. But theatre seeks to relate with all individuals in society. It seeks to "transport us from a world of reality to a fantastic but credible theatrical experience. We lose our identity at the magic time in order to find it in a more replenished form after the curtain call."70

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69 Ibid., p. 86
Most recently, on the advice of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), macro-economic planners in Uganda merged the former Ministry of Culture and Community Development with the Gender and Labour ministries to form the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. The gender ministry component might have been used by government as a financial bait to salvage the culture ministry from insolvency and the uncertainties of a free market economy. But the move is no salvation for the theatre industry because not many development partners are willing to invest in culture and the arts, or in theatre for that matter, for its own sake. The investment must generate equal or more profits.

To the practitioners of theatre and its consumers, therefore, the theatre and the market are indisputably very significant, both in the way they normally relate to and/or come to bear upon each other. To theatre practitioners, cultivating and sustaining theatre activity as a viable enterprise at either the literary, or the social, or the business levels is of paramount importance. In other words, the artists' social, literary, and professional lives are heavily dependent on what type of relationship exists between the theatre and its market; that is, the general operating environment and its structural properties. If those engaged in the industry have to remain in business, there is no way they can relax about "studying" and closely monitoring general market trends within the theatre business and the larger economy. Market identification and research are, in that case, almost indispensable to their daily career lives and existence.

On the other hand, theatre audiences, who constitute much of the theatre's material market and financial source, are ever concerned about the theatre's ability to satisfy their desire(s) through a logical exchange of value. In commercial theatre, the value would be in form of the ideas and pleasurable benefits the audiences would have normally paid for with cash, time, and everything else that constitutes the process that finally ensures their physical presence at the show. In non-for-profit, and mostly development, theatre the value is in form of the sacrifices of time, will, and energy the audiences put into the process of producing and consuming the theatre. Nevertheless,
the audiences' wish and will to patronise hence consume theatre is out of desire and not an obligation, the same way professional theatre practitioners and artists are expected to play a social role and be of service to their respective societies.

Discussing core concepts of marketing, Philip Kotler, a world renowned management expert, makes necessary distinctions among an individual's needs, wants, and desires, that bear relevantly to the general goals and objectives of this research. He notes:

A human need is a state of deprivation of some basic satisfaction. People require food, clothing, shelter, safety, belonging, and esteem. These needs are not created by society or by marketers. They exist in the very texture of human biology and the human condition. Wants are desires for specific satisfiers of needs. An American needs food and wants a hamburger, French fries, and a Coke. In another society, these needs might be satisfied differently. Demands are wants for specific products that are backed by an ability and willingness to buy them. Wants become demands when supported by purchasing power. Many people want a Mercedes; only a few are able and willing to buy one.71

Likewise, a member of the theatre audience in Kampala may have come to choose an evening in theatre as a product or service s/he actually needs. Somewhere within his/her biological make-up or human and especially psychological condition, the individual may be in crucial need of theatre without which s/he may not continue to exist, first and foremost, as a 'full', self-esteemed human and social being. Such a "lack" may be in the form of personal company, human contact, the need to belong to a certain class of people, therapeutical, or just leisure and the need to relax. In such cases, theatre and its different generic forms becomes not just the product but also the specific means to satisfying the individual's needs and desires of the moment, respectively.

But, as Kotler continues to argue, "human wants are continually shaped and reshaped by social forces and institutions, including churches, schools, families, and business corporations."72 In the final analysis then, the audiences' reasons for choosing theatre are bound to be lifted from the realm of actual needs and specific gaps to the conscious grouping of individual choices and preferences that have been largely influenced by different forces and players present in the immediate and far away
environments. Note, for example, that, in Uganda, and most probably in other countries at a similar stage of social and economic development, biological factors like an individual's sex or gender, demographic factors like age, cultural backgrounds, educational levels, and one's professional career might all influence an individual's desire for a particular kind of theatre. Often, too, the same factors might influence the individual's willingness and ability to afford the preferred form of theatre. Furthermore, what usually motivates audiences to buy and/or attend theatre in Kampala is quite different from the stimuli in smaller urban centres or in the rural countryside.

Hence just as the audiences' need, desire, and demand for theatre cannot easily be uniformly grouped at any one time so are the means used by the theatre's producers to satisfy the expectations and consumption habits among their prospective audiences. The satisfaction or utility value individuals derive from theatre cannot be likewise the same. While some people emotionally relax through comedies others are only be able to relax through tragedies. Some people are intellectually excited by theatre classics while others are stimulated by 'new' or popular plays dealing with common day to-day issues and/or problems.

The various needs and wants for, and the ability and willingness to demand, theatre existing among prospective audiences themselves dictate that the producers of theatre must offer a variety of theatre products and services by way of specific generic forms and other structural details like the play's content, its message, its medium or language of communication, its length, and the general theatrical appeal. In turn, the producers' projected or real expenditure on theatre organisation, production, and marketing must be so calculated and cost within the ticket (or consumption) price in order to generate a gross income, with a built-in profit index to facilitate future theatre activity. Hence, except in a few instances like Community Theatre or Development Theatre, which are mostly 'free' because the consumption price is either met through other ways or has been paid, upfront, by the sponsoring agency, prospective theatre audiences always relate meaningfully with producers and/or suppliers of theatre through market indices.
The basis for a meaningful relationship between conventional theatre and its market revolves around issues of availability and variety of theatre's products and services, their convenience and accessibility, of distribution, competitive price levels, and the willingness of theatre audiences to pay, upfront, for them.

Such uncertainties in market demand and sustainability dictate that theatre companies and producers, like their counterparts in the commodity markets, "must measure not only how many people want their product but, more importantly, how many would actually be willing and able to buy it." In the final analysis, therefore, the planning, financing, and marketing of any theatre should always focus on the needs of a particular community, as well as on the prospective audiences' wants and actual ability to demand the theatre.

Therefore, in the discussion of the topic of study, the researcher examines contextual realities like the country's economic and socio-political past, theatre's relevance in market economics, and value economics in theatre as constituting the relationship between theatre and the market in Uganda. Through such a close analysis of the theatre market within the general market environment, on the one hand, and of the producer needs, on the other, the researcher should be able to formulate logical conclusions about the theatre industry and business in Uganda. The researcher would have established the nature and type of relationship existing between theatre and its market in Uganda, and why such a relationship always impacted on the planning, organisation, financing, and distribution of the country's theatre. In addition, the impact of economic and other policies on the country's theatre industry and business would have been identified and analysed. To consolidate the researcher's conclusions on and/or recommendations for the country's theatre, comparative data on theatre planning and organisation, its sources of finance, its marketing practice and distribution patterns in other countries, both within the developed and developing societies, has been provided in the relevant sections of the study.

\[73\text{Ibid., p. 9}\]
CHAPTER THREE

The Market Forces in Uganda’s Theatre

This chapter discusses the introduction and development of theatre business and industry in Uganda. It is a survey of situations and policies, political or otherwise, that facilitated the introduction and growth of formal theatre in Uganda. A number of scholars have written on the historical development of theatre in Uganda, and the researcher is least interested in reproducing their ideas. Rather, in this presentation, she seeks to highlight the issues that bear significantly to the current relationship between formal and traditional theatre, on the one hand, and that between conventional theatre practice and the current commercialisation of theatre, on the other.

3.1. Colonial Policy and Socio-Cultural Influences

The idea of conventional theatre in Uganda, which is largely commercial in nature and practice, has its origins in British colonial, social, and education policies in the country. Uganda became a British Protectorate in 1894. But colonial policy in Uganda began way back around 1885, and got consolidated during the days of Captain Fredrick D. Lugard and the British East African Company (BEAC). When the British first came to Uganda, they had almost the single objective of strengthening Britain’s colonial empire as already established in Egypt and the Sudan, through securing the source of the River Nile at Lake Victoria in Jinja, Eastern Uganda. In the process of fulfilling its mission, imperial Britain quickly saw the abundant agricultural potential existing in the large tracts of fertile land and availability of cheap labour in the indigenous population, with which it could “develop a plantation economy on similar lines to that in the West Indies, Assam, and Burma.” In addition, there were minerals like copper and other precious items of trade like ivory and salt which all went

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to feed Britain's manufacturing and/or producer industries. With Captain Lugard at the forefront, the BEAC evolved into a colonial state which saw treaty after treaty get signed between itself and the existing Kingdoms, to the obvious advantage of the colonial state. Lugard himself describes these treaties as,

the farce of acquiring jurisdiction by treaties. It was surely more justifiable for the European powers frankly to found their title of intervention upon force instead of assuming they themselves derived the right of intervention through cessation of sovereignty....

Contemporary scholars and political scientists of Uganda's colonial and neo-colonial history also note of how the treaties often reverted to Buganda's "special interests" thus favouring Buganda over the other Kingdoms and regions in the country. That way, the peoples of Uganda became increasingly antagonised among themselves. The treaties were simply a colonial tactic to keep the country divided hence in the eyes of the colonisers easier to rule!

Buganda Kingdom remained a great ally of Britain since till shortly before Uganda's Independence in October 1962, where Buganda still received a number of favourable political concessions from Britain. Apart from Buganda's own territorial benefits if it managed to conquer or subdue the surrounding Kingdoms, Britain used Buganda both administratively and militarily to crush resistance to colonialism, especially that mounted by King Kabalega of Bunyoro Kingdom in the west of the country. Chief Semei Kakungulu and other Baganda Chii were also used respectively to propagate colonial imperialism in Eastern, Northern, South-Western, and Western Uganda. In appreciation for its collaborative efforts in the partition of Uganda, and particularly in their alliance to defeat Bunyoro's powerful King Kabalega, Buganda Kingdom was in 1896, among other provisions, rewarded with Bunyoro Kingdom's two counties of Buyaga and Bugangaizi. In turn, Buganda 'colonised' the two counties until November 1964 when they reverted to Bunyoro.

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2 Fredrick D. Lugard in *The Rise of our East African Empire* quoted by Elizabeth Nyabongo, ibid., p. 104
4 “Baganda” is the plural for “muganda”, the ethnic Ugandans descendent in central Uganda. Because of their favoured, and later persecuted, history, the Baganda grew very nationalistic over the years, attracting resentment, and sometimes hostility from the neighbouring kingdoms and other peoples of Uganda.
through a Referendum following a High Court ruling on the best method to use to solve the longstanding conflict. Many of the Baganda chiefs and their fellow colonial collaborators among the other tribes were also rewarded with big tracts of fertile land and became landlords where the majority of Ugandans became squatters.5

History further reveals that colonial policy encouraged “the southerners”, including the Baganda, to acquire formal education and, later, became civil servants. The Baganda were also encouraged to engage in profitable agriculture like coffee-growing, and emerged later in the 1950s as a comparative business challenge to the long British-favoured Indian traders.6 The northerners, and the Bakiga in southern Uganda, were demarcated as “reserves for manual labour and the Army”, except the Ngakarimojong of North-Eastern Uganda, who were treated as “worthless subjects of human curiosity.”7

Colonial policy became so entrenched in Uganda that, even after the attainment of self-governance, none of the post-independence governments ever managed to change the status quo in the areas of national resources mobilisation and distribution, including education, commerce, and employment policies. Harold S. Morris tells how administrative rules since the 1940s “prohibited any non-African or his agents from setting up shop outside specified areas. This was re enforced by other regulations which made it impossible (with a few exceptions) for non-Africans to acquire more than a leasehold interest in land anywhere in Uganda.”8 The policy mostly discouraged foreign entrepreneurs from buying land outside Kampala and Jinja. Apparently intended to limit the radius within which foreigners could freely live in Uganda, the policy encouraged and/or facilitated regional economic and structural imbalances, to Buganda’s advantage. Only recently did there occur an attempt to correct these regional imbalances in human and social

6 See Mahmood Mamdani, Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda, Ibid., p. 106 p. 15. See also Samwiri Rubara Ka Rugire, Roots of Instability in Uganda, Ibid., p21
7 Samwiri Rubara Ka Rugire, Roots of Instability in Uganda, Ibid., p.21; and Thomas Patrick Melady, Profiles of African Leaders, New York: The Macmillan Company
development; first, through decentralisation policies initiated by the NRM Government in 1994, and second, through NRM’s economic liberalisation and privatisation policies launched in 1987. Through the Decentralisation Bill of 1992, government legally provides for the equitable distribution of public services and utilities throughout the country, the exercising of political power, and the execution of political decisions. Economic liberalisation and privatisation policies have mostly facilitated private entrepreneurs and international development agencies to access social services and utilities to the people hence supplementing government efforts on national development.

Uganda’s theatre industry is likewise beginning to shake off the rattles of colonial legacy and adopt an independent existence albeit at a seemingly slower pace. The theatre still exhibits a strong sense of tribal identities and nationalism not only in its organisation but in its marketing and distribution methods as well.

3. 1.1. The National Theatre: Politics of Establishment and Administration

As Mahmood Mamdani states, "every institution touched by the hand of the colonial state was given a pronounced regional or nationality character." The theatre arts were no exception. The theatre industry in Uganda was, first and foremost, through the colonial state policies of divide and rule, given this regional and nationality character, right from the way the theatre was expected to be organised through to its marketing and consumption. For example, Uganda’s National Cultural Centre as well as the National Theatre, the only such structures of their kind and magnificence in the whole country, are both located in Buganda, Central Uganda, creating the unsettling impression that Buganda was still the conceived nation, and not the whole country, Uganda. So are the other of the country’s all important public infrastructure like Makerere University, the Parliament, government ministries, and the key processing industries for coffee and cotton, then the country’s leading exports, all of which had a cumulative impact on the growth of theatre in the country. The proceeding discussion deals with these issues.

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9 See the Decentralisation Bill of 1992 & Apolo Nsabambi, Decentralisation Policies in Uganda. Ibid;
On the other hand, not many of the local and foreign theatre practitioners were very enthusiastic about the National Theatre project. The research has already cited Margaret Macpherson, a leading theatre enthusiast at the time, who thought the scheme was premature.** Elsewhere, Aloysius Mulumba writes:

The National Theatre would not have lived to this date without playwrights but first, why was it built and for whom? Did Uganda need a National Theatre or she needed a theatre? ... In Uganda, there had not been minor theatres before. It was too ironical to start with a National Theatre for the sole benefit of both Europeans and Asians, and with no Ugandans in mind in my view. The British who constructed one in 1959 had not had a National Theatre in their country. Their National Theatre came into existence in 1964.12

While it is apparent that Mulumba’s views are tinted with “regional and nationality” characteristics, it is also very true that to plan a “national theatre” for a society that had never meaningfully related with formal or conventional theatre was skipping many important stages in the process of artistic growth, formal art appreciation, and cultural integration.

The ‘original’ vision for a theatre building or culture centre for Uganda was one of “a proper theatre rather than simply a hall with a stage ... (with) ... a seating capacity of sixty ... Some of those interested in drama were consulted however and the number was increased to 460 which would provide accommodation for local societies, and visiting artists. It was to be a place where entertainers could perform to mixed audiences ‘and was to have a canteen where all races could meet and discuss things together.’13 The idealism of the structure and numbers aside, the building also, indirectly, meant to alienate local audiences further from their social and cultural settings as they mixed with other races in the canteen “to discuss things.” The theatre being a formal structure and not a village arena or somebody’s courtyard, the processes of art enjoyment and socialisation were consequently pegged to commerce and the constraints of time.

As the planning and preparations for building got underway, colonialism came to the fore and, naturally, along with it some of its implicit but highly divisive tendencies. For example,

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11 Margaret Macpherson’s answer to the researcher’s Letter of Inquiry of 15 January 2000
13 Margaret Macpherson, “National Theatre and National Cultural Centre” in “The History of the Uganda Theatre”, Ibid., p. 65
the first committee set up by the Governor of Uganda, Sir Andrew Cohen, in April 1952 "to investigate the feasibility and desirability of building a centre for the annual festival of African clubs, the Namirembe Music Festival, music concerts, performances by bands, plays produced by the KATS (Kampala Amateur Theatrical Association) and the drama section of the Entebbe Club..."14 comprised 4 Ugandans, all from Buganda. They were "Tom Makumbi, recently returned Cambridge graduate, Mrs. Pumla Kisosonkole, a (South-African born) very active social welfare worker (and married to Christopher Kisosonkole, the Katikiro or Prime Minister of Buganda Kingdom), A. C. Kawalya, who represented the Buganda Government, and Joseph Lule, at that time lecturer in Education at Makerere."15 The Asian community was represented by three members, and Europeans eight. Margaret Macpherson further notes "it was quite clear no members of the committee were interested in theatre. John Henderson and the KATS at once protested but the Governor desired an unbiased report and doubted the ability of the theatre enthusiasts to produce it."16 One then wonders why, if the theatre enthusiasts were not ready to own a theatre building, the colonial government was so keen on erecting one? Was the modern theatre building such a priority?

The second committee, set up by Sir Andrew Cohen "to explore the need for and the feasibility of a National Cultural Centre", was likewise less representational of local theatre interests and culture needs, except that its chairman, Apolo Kironde, was the Minister for Community Development. The other Ugandans, Cathcart J. Obwangor and George Magezi, were members of the country's Legislature, the Legco. That in itself was a great chance the country had to formulate favourable policies towards the development of theatre and the Arts. But it was not until 1965, when the Theatre was already operational, that an Ordinance on its establishment was set in place. Amendments to the Bill authorising the Centre to promote theatre and cultural activities throughout the country by setting up art

14 This quotation, minus the brackets, is from Margaret Macpherson, "National Theatre and National Cultural Centre" in "The History of the Uganda Theatre", Ibid., p. 64
15 Ibid., p. 65
16 Ibid., p. 65
centres at regional level were also passed that same year, although no arts centre got established.17

Nevertheless, Kironde's committee did its work, and listed among its envisioned roles for the Centre to "encourage the growth of indigenous drama in Uganda and the preservation of traditional songs and dance."18 The committee also emphasised that such a venue as the national cultural centre was desired to "give the different people of Uganda the opportunity of learning to understand and enjoy the culture each has to offer in conditions of common responsibilities and common efforts."19

The Centre's Interim Board of Trustees was appointed in 1956, and had as its Chairman, Peter Winch, described by Macpherson as "a notable theatre enthusiast who had certainly already played a major part in getting things as far as they had reached."20 Other members included "E. M. Kamanyi, Principal Secretary to the Katikiro of Buganda, M. M. Mehta of Lugazi, who could be said to provide continuity since he had been on the investigating committee. He also provided a generous donation. Y. K. Mulondo, Secretary General of Busoga Government, made sure that other areas of Uganda were represented. .... The Advisory Council included many more people directly concerned with drama. Phyllis Warner, John Henderson, Dr. Jayant Thakkar and Remi de Silva, representing Uganda Association of Amateur Theatrical Societies .... Other potential interests in the building were represented by Tom Makumbi for the African Cultural Society, Mrs. Bell on behalf of the voluntary services, Mrs. Hutton for the Uganda Music Society, D.N. Mehta the Parimal Art Academy while Miss Hill represented the Foundation for the Blind and Mr. Hewer the British Council. There was to be a representative from the radio but minutes suggest that no one attended."21

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17 Ibid., p. 104
18 This quotation as quoted by Margaret Macpherson, Ibid., p. 67
19 Ibid., p. 67
20 Ibid., p. 68
21 Ibid., p. 68
When the substantive Board of Trustees was appointed in October 1959 along with its Executive Committee, regional representation was still in balance and did not improve with the attainment of Independence or when Okot p'Bitek, a Ugandan, became Chairman of the Board of Trustees in 1964. Going by their individual presentation, which highlights the criteria of their appointment, the composition of members of the Board and the Executive still bore a strong leaning to Buganda Government and Kingdom. On the Board was Narendra Patel, an advocate and interested in Asian drama, Paulo Kavuma, a distinguished businessman, Christopher Kisosonkole, an official in the Kabaka of Buganda's Government, Barry Tailor, Head of English at Busoga College Mwiri, and Michael Nsimbi, from the Ministry of Education and active in the promotion of Buganda culture. The Executive had George Kakoma, a Ugandan musician and composer of Uganda's National Anthem as its Chairman, and included Byron Kawadwa, whose prominence in theatre arose from his work with the Students Drama Festival he started in 1957 and his performing group, the *City Players*.22

Hence it was no coincidence that at the Theatre's commissioning in 1959, from the 56 main tribes of Uganda and the country's very diverse cultures of theatrical potential, it was only "the Royal musicians of Buganda" chosen to perform alongside the expatriate troupes of Europeans and Asians.23 It was not, for example, the "Uganda Association of Amateur Theatrical Societies (UAATS) (who) played an important part in raising the necessary public money to release the pound for pound contribution promised by the Governor" or "the dancers and musicians from other parts of the country" with whom the Royal musicians had occasionally taken part in Tattoos.24

This apparent colonial arrangement and/or policy has, for a large part, continued to dictate the administration and usage of the Cultural Centre and National Theatre long after

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22 See also Ibid., p. 84 and p. 107
23 Margaret Macpherson, "Makerere: The Place of Early Sunrise" in Eckhard Breitinger ed., *Uganda: The Cultural Landscape. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies Series 39, 1999*, pp. 30-31. Macpherson is, however, contradicted by Aloysius Mulumba who states: "At the opening, there was no African drama group to witness the occasion nor were there playwrights in attendance. In any case, did they exist at all?" See his "Foreword" in "Ugandan Playwrights: A Memoir", Ibid.,
24 Margaret Macpherson, "Makerere: The Place of Early Sunrise" in Eckhard Breitinger ed., *Uganda: The Cultural Landscape*, Ibid., p. 31
colonialism formally ended in Uganda. Up to today, under currents still play never to have a non-muganda as Director of the National Theatre. All the non-baganda who have worked in the position have all left prematurely before the end of their terms of office through either resignations or dismissal. Further, the Theatre’s official and public organisations and trusts like UTIGAA, which works to “bring together theatrical groups and promote theatre standards” and ITI that exists to “promote exchange of knowledge and practice in theatre arts”, list Luganda as the official language of business, including formal meetings, thus technically blocking the rest of Ugandans out of the Theatre and its affairs. However, the country’s socio-political experiences, especially following Obote’s abrogation of the Constitution in 196617 that saw the abolition of the Buganda monarchy and the consistent subsequent persecution of the baganda, incidents that spilled well into the Amin and Obote II regimes, also helped to consolidate Buganda’s prominent presence at, and use of, the Theatre. Irrevocable nationalism, wherever and whenever opportunity presented itself, was the only tool left for baganda to ensure their survival as an entity. The effects of such instances are discussed in relevant sections of this chapter.

There are other reasons that might have justified the establishment of Uganda’s National Theatre and the National Cultural Centre in Kampala. For instance, the colonial Government was constrained financially to be expected to populate the whole country with similar cultural, theatre, and/or other artistic structures. In the particular case of theatre, records show that raising the money for the construction of the Uganda National Theatre itself was not an easy task, and appeals had to be made left and right before realising the initial amount of cash needed for the Government to release its pledge of British 5000 Pounds. Further, not all pledges were honoured or on time. For example, His Highness the Aga Khan made a noble pledge of British 5000 Pounds shortly before he died. His sons finally consented to release the late Aga Khan’s pledge, but not before a lot of personal pleas and letters had been traded between the Interim Board of Trustees of the Uganda National

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25 Facts got through observation and discussion with some of the Theatre’s former and present employees who requested for anonymity
26 See Brochures of the respective organisations.
Cultural Centre and the sons and/or the Executors of the late Aga Khan's estate. Among the theatre’s fraternity, the Uganda Association of Amateur Theatrical Societies (UAATS) mobilised local funders, and organised numerous fund-raising galas and fairs. Other sources of funding listed in the Board’s Minutes included the Music Hall of the Kampala Club (formerly the Standard Hotel), Mikade Group, Film Premiere, the Primal Art Academy, and The British Council.

Besides constraints in funding, it was naturally easier for the State to plan to administer the Cultural Centre and Theatre building if they were located in Kampala rather than in any other part of the country. In the first place, there existed a good network of roads and other social and public infrastructure like electricity, piped water, and telephone services, and educational institutions like Makerere University, which would be a good intellectual hinterland for the type of theatre that was being propagated in the country’s education system. Secondly, if the ideals of self-help were to be promoted, then the location of the Cultural Centre and Theatre was consequently justifiable since most theatre enthusiasts and the chief mobilisers for funding for the construction of the building lived in the City. Third, the colonial Government and its expatriate community were the conceived primary beneficiaries of entertainment programmes hoped to run at the Theatre while The British Council, in addition, envisaged occupying most of the office space. There was also a thriving Indian business community in the City, which would bring money into the theatre, when they came to watch and/or perform the occasional Indian ballet.

A section in the records shows that long debates took place among different political quarters, the Government’s Land Office, architectural experts, and the Board before a decision about the present location of the Cultural Centre and the National Theatre in Kampala was finally made. The debates were necessary because it soon transpired that the

27 Minutes of the Interim Board of Trustees of the Uganda National Cultural Centre, Kampala, 14 April, 1958, p.1. See also Margaret Macpherson, "National Theatre and National Cultural Centre", Ibid., pp 68-69
28 Minutes of the Interim Board of Trustees of the Uganda National Cultural Centre, Kampala, 18 September, 1958, p.1. Margaret Macpherson (ibid., p. 69) reveals other major contributors like "N. K. Mehta of Lugazi and Muljibhai Madhvani of Kakira," who contributed British 5000 and 1000 Pounds, respectively.
29 See Margaret Macpherson, "National Theatre and National Cultural Centre", Ibid., p. 66
The site preferred by the Board for the Cultural Centre and the National Theatre was in the same area being planned as the Civic Centre of the country once the construction of the Parliamentary Buildings got underway. The national broadcasting services under the banner of Uganda Broadcasting Service, to be known later as Radio Uganda, were also already operational in the area. At first, the Trustees "were of the opinion that the question of the ultimate sitting of the new Legislative Council building had no real bearing on the location of the site for the Cultural Centre". Soon, it became apparent, however, that "the sitting of the Legislative Council Building, ... if sited in the civic centre, it might be advisable for the Cultural Centre to be designed by the same architect in order that the design of these buildings form an architectural whole." Finally, once the decision had been made, in October 1956, for the present site of the Cultural Centre, the Trustees "appointed Mr. Bodgine, (at the time) constructing the Legislative Council, Architect for the Cultural Centre in order to obtain an architectural balance between the two buildings."

Next, issues of management and administration of the UNCC and the National Theatre became of paramount concern to the colonial Government that choosing the first Administrator cum Manager was itself a matter of imperial Britain, and not necessarily that of the home country, Uganda, or the theatre's fraternity, as would be expected. Minutes indicate that,

- A discussion ensued as to whether the manager should be of a caretaker nature, the running of the theatre being left to the local theatrical societies, or whether the manager should be of the actor/manager category. It was agreed that the latter was very desirable, and in fact necessary, if the cost of maintaining the centre was to be met. The Interim Trustees were of the opinion that the Trustees should have an educative responsibility and that a manager should be sought whose advice would be available to local theatrical groups, who would, if necessary, be prepared to stage productions and who would have contacts with theatrical agencies in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. The Chairman said that he had been assured by visiting members of the theatrical profession that such trained persons were available and he would like to set initial approaches in train when Mr. Norman Marshall was in Uganda to adjudicate the Drama Festival at the end of October. (brackets mine)

Going by the Board's recommendation above, it is doubtful that there existed local personnel who would in any case easily qualify for the job as the courses at Makerere

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30 Minutes of the Interim Board of Trustees of the Uganda Cultural Centre, 21 April, 1956, p. 1
31 Minutes of the Interim Board of Trustees of the Uganda Cultural Centre, 21 April, 1956, p. 2
32 Minutes of the Interim Board of Trustees of the Uganda Cultural Centre, 12 October, 1956, p. 1
33 Minutes of the Interim Board of Trustees of Uganda National Cultural Centre, 18 September, 1958, p. 5
University then offered no theatre management options. Besides, within the prevailing conditions, where Britain was soon to wind up its political business and grant Independence to Uganda, the colonial administration would not have trusted a Ugandan or another African Manager to foster and nurture policies that in the eyes of the locals tended to marginalise the indigenous population on issues of their culture and Art. Not even Britain-favoured Buganda was trusted to produce a successor manager or administrator. If not for professional reasons, the Baganda theatre fraternity was not in the Governor's golden book having raised grave complaints of marginalisation in the proposed usage of the theatre. When the Uganda Society could not get the space it had demanded, it withdrew its commitment to the theatre, and desired a refund of their contributions so far from the Board.34

At one point, the Board admitted that it "would be very difficult to obtain a 'lack of All Trades' (and) suggested obtaining locally an administrator cum caretaker and, in addition, on a short term contract, a trained person responsible for dramatic activities."35 In the end, there was

a short-list of 7 applicants for the post which was advertised in theatrical and other newspapers in the United Kingdom. The Chairman advised that he, Mrs. Warner, Professor Galloway, Mr. Sherwood and a representative of the British Drama League would be interviewing the short-list of candidates on 30 April, 1959 at Uganda House. It was proposed by Mr. Newlyn and carried unanimously that the Chairman (Mr. P. E. Winch) appoint a Manager on the advise of the representatives of the Executive Committee; after appointment the Chairman to obtain all the necessary immigration permits from the London Office of the Uganda Government.36 (brackets mine)

As expected, none of the Ugandan or African applicants managed even as much as getting on to the short-list. Maxwell Jackson, a British national, was appointed Director of UNCC on contract, and "before the completion of the building so that he could oversee the finishing touches, appoint and train his staff and plan the opening. ... It had (also) been made abundantly clear to him that he would be working with amateurs, a fad which he said caused him no anxiety."37 But, contrary to the Board's expectations and Jackson's own

34 Minutes of the Interim Board of Trustees of Uganda National Cultural Centre, 21 June, 1957, p. 3
35 Minutes of the Interim Board of Trustees of Uganda National Cultural Centre, 30 October, 1958, p. 4
36 Minutes of the Interim Board of Trustees of Uganda National Cultural Centre, 9 April, 1959, p. 1
37 Margaret Macpherson, "National Theatre and National Cultural Centre", Ibi., p. 71
assurances to it, he proved a thorn in the flesh for his Board, Staff, and the theatre fraternity in Uganda. Of Jackson's divisive administrative tendencies, Margaret Macpherson notes:

Before the actual opening the Director had managed to offend a considerable number of companies which had worked so hard to get the Centre built. ... He eventually alienated all the outstanding companies of the three communities so that hardly anyone would work with him. He first offended the Europeans, then the Asians and finally the African groups.38

Ironically, however, Aloysius Mulumba commends Maxwell Jackson's work at the Theatre. Mulumba suggests that Jackson's dismissal was out of malice and ignorance of what was happening at the Theatre rather than the alleged misconduct or inefficiency. Those who wanted him dismissed apparently conspired with the central government and achieved their objective at the expense of the local theatre and artistic talent. Mulumba writes:

The first Uganda National Theatre Director was Mr. G. M. Maxwell Jackson. He was not an Artistic Director and he had been looking after the theatre since 10th June, 1959. This being a colonial era, he largely dealt with the white community at the theatre and, hardly African plays were produced here but European published plays dominated. .... The first eighteen months of Mr. Maxwell Jackson's administration were fairly happy and fruitful ones. He had studied the aims why the National Theatre was built and was trying to implement some of them. One aim was to train Ugandans in the dramatic arts and forms of a truly national flavour. .... He had further attempted to form an African Theatre Company which was to stage plays at the National Theatre, to visit schools and colleges and up-country centres for adults. He received 1320 applications for this purpose. Soon after his dismissal, a cold war erupted between the government and the few African groups that had started using the Theatre and some interested individuals. Among the individuals was Hon. Alihaj Abubaker Mayanja Kakyama who was then a Minister of Education in the Kabaka's government, Mengo. A protest meeting took place at Mengo Social Centre. Another was Mr. Wycliff Kyingi who sent a telegram to the Governor asking him to "reinstate Mr. Jackson, and withdraw the Board of Trustees from the Theatre". Furthermore, an Advisor on African Music to the Theatre then, Mr. Galabuzi Mukasa, ... proposed the African groups to boycott using the theatre. Among the groups that protested was the Kala Kendra which wrote to the Chief Minister, the late Mr. Benedicto Kiwanuka and the Democratic Party (DP) youth wing urged the government to reconsider its decision. Nothing came from the government Mr. Maxwell Jackson was to go. He had loved theatre; he had started to encourage Ugandans to appreciate that it was for them. Slowly, a few Ugandans had started to write and produce short plays to be included in the concert.39

Thus, from the outset, the Theatre found itself in the very centre of managerial crises it was trying to avoid. In addition were internal wrangles and bickering that have since become part and parcel of the Theatre and its fraternity in Uganda. Jackson was eventually dismissed on "10th August 1961, after more than a year of dissention."40

38 Ibid., p. 72
39 Aloysius Mulumba, "Ugandan Playwrights: A Memoir", Ibid "Foreword"
40 op. cit., p. 77
On Jackson's departure, Peter Marsh, the British Council representative at the time, became part-time acting Director until Peter Carpenter was appointed to the post in August 1962. Margaret Macpherson records of Peter Carpenter as "the right man for this time. He had plenty of experience of working with amateur groups, both in Britain, and in Ghana from August 1960 to July 1962. He knew something about African traditions in West Africa and adjudicating two Drama festivals for us had given him an introduction to Uganda, and from his second visit he had learned some of our particular problems." Carpenter remained Director till Okot p'Biek succeeded him in 1967.

Before he took up the job, Okot p'Biek had been Chairman of the Board of Trustees of National Theatre since 1964, and only offered himself for the job after no local theatre practitioner appeared interested and Carpenter had declined to renew his contract for another term. Okot p'Biek was the first Ugandan to hold the post of Chairman of the Board of Trustees as well as the first Ugandan and African to become Director cum Administrator of UNCC. He reported for duty as the Administrator of the UNCC on 1 June, 1967. That was five years after the country's Independence on 9 October 1962. Nuwa Sentogo, a long-time Uganda theatre practitioner as actor, playwright, teacher, and Chairman of National Theatre Executive Committee (1980-1983), notes that the appointment of Okot p'Biek was very important because:

he was the first African/Ugandan to be appointed Administrator of the National Cultural Centre. Therefore his performance was essential as a representative of those Africans. He (Okot p'Biek) introduced African dancers on the National Theatre stage. This means the National Theatre started the practice of having Africans on the stage putting up performances of African characteristics.

Most probably, Okot p'Biek's significance at the Theatre lay more in him being the first Ugandan administrator of the Theatre rather than in his spirited promotion of indigenous theatre. History indicates that by 1961, Wycliff Kiyingi and his African Artists Association had performed his prophetic play, "Wokulira" (By the time you grow up you will have seen many things), at the National Theatre. Other up-coming dramatists then, like Erisa Kironde, Tom

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41 Ibid., p. 77
42 Nuwa Sentogo, "Historical Development of Theatre in Uganda", a paper presented at a Focus Group Discussion/Workshop on Uganda's Theatre organised by the researcher in September 1998, p.23
Omara, Elvania Namukwaya Zirimu, Rose Mbowa, and David Rubadiri, had also made appearances in performances at the Theatre. Elsewhere, Margaret Macpherson notes:

When Carpenter and Hayes (Stage Manager) left, the moment of complete Ugandanisation had come. ... The Director was bubbling over with new ideas. A national choir was to be formed. An outdoor dance arena was cleared with a drum post, and outdoor performances were begun. The Director had been asked to take over the training of the Heartbeat dancers and musicians who were about to tour overseas. He hoped also to begin a National Drama Company. He offered the Centre's facilities to the Jazz Club (who were in fact already using them) but he wanted the British Council and the Alliance Francaise, who had taken over the Uganda Society rooms, out, as not being concerned with Uganda culture. The trouble was that all this cost money which the Centre did not have and the enthusiasm of the Director chafed at the inevitable restrictions. There followed a period of anarchy. Neither the Trustees nor the Executive were summoned to meet and for a year the Centre enjoyed an independent but increasingly impecunious existence, falling further and further into debt.  

Okot p'Biek lasted only four months in office, and got dismissed for misconduct; again breaking the record as the first black Administrator of the UNCC to be fired for abuse of office. The crisis, however, brought other changes in the organisation of the theatre business in the country, and offered clarifications on the role of the Administrator. About the crisis, Sentogo writes:

Some Ministry (of Culture and Community Development) officials were transferred to the National Theatre to put that house in order. These worked in this order: (Sam) Kenyi, (James Baaya) Nabuguzi, and (Nimrod) Masiga, (who handled the affairs of the Theatre from 1967 to 1973 very satisfactorily, and was preferred to remain Administrator of the Theatre except the Ministry required him back). They (the Ministry) even recommended that the post of Administrator be changed to Artistic Director. On first April, 1973, Byron Kawadwa reported on duty as the Artistic Director of the Uganda National Cultural Centre. He was the second African to report as one specifically appointed with the duty of administering the National Cultural Centre.

Margaret Macpherson notes that it took solid years before "financial professionalism ... (was) restored to the Theatre, (by the Ministry officials), and a firm basis laid for further directorial responsibility." Kawadwa remained Artistic Director of National Theatre until his murder by state agents in March 1977. A chronological account of the Theatre's administration in post-independent Uganda and the contribution of Byron Kawadwa and other theatre professionals to theatre development in Uganda are discussed in the next chapter. Otherwise, the impact of colonial policy on the development of theatre in Uganda is still varied and numerously manifest.

44 Margaret Macpherson, "National Theatre and National Cultural Centre", Ibid., pp 88-89
45 Ibid., p. 23. For chronological details of the administration problems and the disciplinary and remedial measures at the National Theatre during its infancy, see Margaret Macpherson, "National Theatre and National Cultural Centre", Ibid., pp 83-89 & pp 105-106; and Aloysius Mulumba's in "Ugandan Playwrights: A Memoir". Mulumba though highly praises Mr. Maxwell Jackson, the first British Manager of the Theatre to be hired and fired.
46 Margaret Macpherson, "National Theatre and National Cultural Centre", Ibid., p. 91
3. 1. 2. The Criminal Law Ordinance Act of 1912

Most significant, too, of the impacts of colonial policy on the establishment and development of conventional theatre in Uganda is the 'moralist' lens through which theatre was defined. The theatre in the country was mainly defined according to what was virtuous or evil in the eyes of the coloniser. For example, with the coming of Christianity to Uganda much of traditional "theatre" was banned as satanic and unholy as has been documented by prominent researchers and scholars on Uganda, among them John S. Mbiti, Rose Mboya, Ernest Beyaraza, Joseph Mukasa-Balikuddembe, Margaret Macpherson, and Christopher Kamlongera.47 The blue seal, however, came in the passing of the Criminal Law Ordinance Act of 1912. A part in Section II reads:

Whoever holds himself out as a witch doctor or witch finder or pretends to exercise or use any kind of supernatural power, witchcraft, sorcery or enchantment shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to imprisonment of either description which may extend to one year or to a fine which may extend to 500 rupees or to both. If such a person shall be proved to be by profession or habit a witch doctor or witch finder, he shall be liable to imprisonment of either description which may extend to five years or to a fine or to both.48

In practice, this declaration meant that no actions that bore resemblance to the real practice or invocation of supernatural powers would be allowed in public, even if in form of an 'innocent' imitation performance as in theatre. It also meant that one could easily be arrested as a criminal (a witch or a wizard) because one performed or engaged in a birth rite like the twin ritual ceremony, a courtship dance, a puberty rite, a marriage rite, a cleansing/healing ritual, a death ritual, an installation ceremony for an heir or King, etc. Yet these rites and rituals often formed some of the most essential parts of an individual's full existence here on earth, and are still practiced regularly throughout the country. The rites and rituals are at the very centre of life, and failure to honour them means the individual has no roots, no culture, and no place in society. At worst, such an individual can never

48 The Criminal Law Ordinance Act, The Uganda Protectorate, 1912
exist in equilibrium with him/herself or with the rest of society or with the supernatural forces that govern the universe.49

Furthermore, the Native Arts Act, the African Arts Act, and the Buganda Arts Ordinance all pronounced themselves on "ungodliness and obscenity of African dances and culture."50 Therefore, a traditional healer trying to use the only local means available to him or her to diagnose and treat a patient51 could also easily be mistaken for a witch doctor hence a criminal who must either pay so much money or spend so much time behind bars while his/her relatives and immediate society continued to be plagued and die from catastrophes s/he could have ingeniously solved. Hence it was always difficult to distinguish between a witch doctor, a traditional healer, or one who was merely dancing a local dance. "And because a number of our traditional rituals and dances could easily qualify as 'witch dances', people feared to practice them freely and openly."52

Over the years, amendments to and repeals against the offending sections of the Criminal Law Ordinance Act and related Arts Acts have been effected. In 1964, the Witchcraft Act was amended in an effort to distinguish between witchery and traditional medicine practice. Witchcraft was redefined to constitute use of supernatural power outside "bonafide spirit worship or the bonafide manufacture, supply or sale of native medicine."53 Distinction was also made among the different offences relating to witchcraft and their respective sentences on conviction so that it was no longer a single punishment meted out for all offences.

50 From a discussion the researcher held with Nuwa Sentongo in August 1998. See also Elizabeth Nyabongo, Elizabeth of Toro: The Odyssey of an African Princess, Ibid., pp 11-112
51 In Kigezi and Ankole, for example, "Okushora" (smoke) and "Nashokye" (a tube), horns, calabashes, and certain drum rhythms formed part of the processes used to diagnose a patient's ailments before adequate treatment could be administered. See Benoni Turyahikayo Rugeya, Philosophy and Traditional Religion of the Bagiga in South West Uganda, Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1983, pp 1-69 for a detailed description of the process. In some villages today, traditional birth attendants still use local 'stethoscopes' made of wood or day to check the status of the foetus in a pregnant mother. The researcher also discusses some of these diagnoses and healing methods in her MA Dissertation on "The Influence of Ugandan Folklore on Ugandan Drama", Kampala: Makerere University, 1990, pp 90-118
52 Nuwa Sentongo, "Historical Development of Theatre in Uganda", during question-time at a Focus Group Discussion/Workshop on Uganda's Theatre organised by the researcher in September, 1998
53 Laws of Uganda 1964, Section 2
Uganda's current Legislature (1996-2001) bases on Articles 20, 24, 26, 29 (2) (a) and 44 (a) of the country's (new) 1995 Constitution to repeal the whole Act. The Articles advocate the fundamental and other human rights and freedoms of the individual. The Anti Witchcraft Law is currently ineffective and no longer restricts people's active involvement in public performances of traditional theatre arts and cultural items. But the same law might one day have a restrictive effect on present or future artistic creativity if it remained valid on the country's legal books.

Who knows? Without such past restrictions and discouragement, the country's local theatre and drama could have developed and evolved naturally over time, as was the case in other parts of the world. For example, Greek Theatre is said to have developed out of the Dythramb rituals to god Dionysius, Japanese Theatre from the Noh plays, Black American Theatre out of the Negro Spirituals, etc. The resultant Uganda Theatre could have likewise competed favourably with or even offered better alternatives to other forms of theatre internationally. Ironically, as Margaret Macpherson notes, "interested expatriates were examining traditional music and songs, and recording myths and legends (despite their) subconscious feeling that such an interest (i.e. in their traditions) among educated East Africans was beneath their dignity."

To replace and play the role of the 'satanic and unholy traditional theatre of the people' was introduced the Western concept of theatre. In its format, the theatre closely followed the Aristotelian principles of drama. The cultivation of the dramatic form was later overseen by Makerere University through such activities like the study of Shakespeare and other Western dramatists; the annual English Competition; the Creative Writing classes; the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre; the One-Year Diploma in Drama course hosted at Makerere's English Department since 1965; and the birth in 1971 of the fully-fledged performance arts

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department of Music Dance and Drama. There was also the building of the Main Hall at Makerere in 1941, complete with a proscenium-arch stage, an opaque curtain and other stage flies, a semblance of an orchestra pit on the platform, light and sound box sets. However, Margaret Macpherson also takes care to mention that Makerere University "played a part in encouraging students to value their own inheritance, to sing their own songs... to learn about the customs and traditions of the whole of East Africa (including Zanzibar and Central Africa) and to see the beauty of their own countryside."57 This particular commitment was in response to the behaviour of "the young men and women entering Makerere who tended to despise their own languages and culture."

58 Before it achieved full autonomy, Makerere University at first had "a special relation to the London University as the senior college in the University of East Africa."59

In other parts of the country, particularly where missionary work was strong, Western ideals of theatre were mostly cultivated through schools and colleges the missionaries run, which were each fitted with Assembly Halls. The Assembly Halls were multi-purpose. During the introductory years of formal school education in the country, the halls were used as dining places for the students, who were then not as many in numbers. Up to today, the assembly hall in some former missionary schools is still referred to as "Old Dining Hall." Sometimes, the same halls doubled as the official venues for meetings between the schools' administration and the student body. At other times, the halls functioned as venues for social and some extra-curricula activities, like Scottish country dancing, table-tennis, balls, and other natures of concerts or schools' celebrations. Most importantly, the assembly halls had a raised platform on one end, often fitted with a curtain and a number of stage lamps. Hence the rehearsals and performances of the English drama texts would take place in an environment resembling a formal theatre building. A few halls like at Kings College, Budo, and Gayaza High School also had a semblance of an orchestra pit on the platform, to cater for the occasional Western opera or Indian ballet performance.

57 Ibid., p. 24
58 Ibid., p. 24
59 Ibid., p. 23
3.1.3. The Social Welfare Department

Outside formal institutions like schools and colleges, the colonial government implemented a plan where the whole country got populated with Community Halls or Social Centres, at the rate of at least one hall per sub-county. This time round, unlike with formal theatre structures, neither costs nor issues of management could play the interfaces because the establishment of these social and ‘cultural’ centres was decidedly multi-intended. The most public and diplomatic purpose of the centres was to mobilise the people towards good farming methods, sanitation, good social conduct, and hygiene; all of which appeared politically -innocent self-help and development programmes. Often, Government organised regular country tours by Welfare Officers, whose main method of programmes implementation in the way of education and sensitisation was theatre, in particular dramatic skits on the topical issues at hand. The "central figure, Kapere, dressed in a checkered black- and white -shirt with shorts, that appeared in all plays, did everything wrong and thus became the medium for instruction and education." Soon, as Rose Mbowa continues to document,

The Social Welfare Department supplied rural community centres and community clubs with radio sets, where people listened to the Kapere radio plays. ... Communal listening to radio at the community centre became a generally accepted social activity. ... Government's primary intention was not necessarily to help the people improve their lives or to directly inculcate ideals of conventional theatre or to take theatre nearer to the people as was the goal of the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre, launched 20 years later. Chief among the objectives in having 'social' halls at such relatively small radii, where the people were expected to go regularly to listen to the Kapere plays and other broadcasts, mostly


62 Ibid., pp 235-236

63 For details on the vision and goal of the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre, see David Cook, "Theatre Goes to the people" in Transition Vol. 5, No. 25, 1966, pp 23-33. See also his article, "The Makerere Free Travelling Theatre: An Experimental Model" in Eckhard Breitinger ed., Uganda: The Cultural Landscape, ibid., pp 47-61
from Government, was to facilitate imperial economic policy. Immediately after World War II, it was not only Britain’s political empire that was on an alarming decline trend, but its economic empire as well. The situation demanded that imperial Britain does something to at least resuscitate its economic empire in all its colonies, as it could not, for example, hope to halt the wind of political independence sweeping across much of Africa.64

In Uganda, without the main cash crops of coffee, cotton, and tea, Britain’s economy would be in problems. In some agriculturally rich parts of the country, though, like Ankole, Kigezi, Toro, and Buganda, there developed a conspiracy among the population, with the aid of their local rulers, to sabotage imperial efforts and only grow the cash crops they would benefit most directly from. Local sources in Ankole have it that the cotton seeds which were given out by Government were always roasted before being thrown into the soil so they could convince Government that the respective types of soils were poor for that (often labour-intensive) crop. Indeed, the Government abandoned the venture after a few trials. On the other hand, coffee and tea were accepted because the farmers could also utilise a great percentage of the crops for domestic and therapeutic needs albeit in raw material form.

After the severe period of economic depression in the West through the first years after the country’s political Independence, the community halls continued to be used for public events, mostly of a social nature like Sub-County meetings, immunisation sessions, and government celebrations. After the fall of Obote I in January 1971, and especially after the declaration of the Economic War by Amin in 1972, the halls were completely vandalised and rooted. Then with increased insecurity of persons in the country due to state-inspired political repression, a biting economy, and shortage of accommodation for civil servants, the halls later came to be used as lodgings by Government for its armed troops and the police. To date, this is the sole improper use to which the original social and community centres are put.

64 See Elizabeth Nyabongo, Elizabeth of Tom: The Odyssey of an African Princess, ibid., pp 116-117
In the meantime, ideals of conventional theatre had been successfully popularised and inculcated widely, particularly in schools, which started organising Music and Dance Festivals. When in 1957, Byron Kawadwa, then a Diploma in Drama student at Makerere’s English Department, initiated the Drama Festival, the reformulation of traditional performance arts as conventional theatre was completed. However, formal institutionalisation of the indigenous performance arts of music, dance, and drama can be said to have occurred in 1959, with the commissioning of the Uganda National Cultural Centre (UNCC) which houses the National Theatre. In that regard, the UNCC is the national symbol of cultural imperialism, and one of the most outstanding icons of colonial power in Uganda. The National Theatre has three distinct areas, each with specific functions: the house, the stage, and the Accounts section. All the three departments are directly or indirectly involved in activities intended to sustain the UNCC and the National Theatre in particular, physically and financially, as a business enterprise, one such main activity being the marketing of dramatic entertainment.

Without realising it therefore, sooner than later, theatre in Uganda, that had thenceforth been largely free and nobody’s commodity, began to take on the more expected colonial idea of conventional theatre along Western/British theatre ideals. The performances were naturally expected to possess not merely the artistic values but also to be of a nature that could pull a paying audience hence viable as business or commercial pieces.

3. 2. Formal Education and Literary (Art) Theatre

This section aims at highlighting local factors that helped accelerate the pace of development and growth of conventional drama and theatre in Uganda. These factors, alongside colonial policy and structure responsible for the introduction of conventional theatre in Uganda, consolidated the growth of the theatre.

3.2.1. Makerere University College and the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre

Makerere University’s permanent imprint on the life and growth of theatre in Uganda did not only come through its Arts curriculum or the provision in its Main Building of a proscenium
arch stage facility, The University's influence on the nature and, later, form of theatre in Uganda also came through increased and steady output of fresh graduates. Andrew Horn notes that "by Independence Day, the locus of Ugandan theatre activity had already began to shift, from the schools to the University. Makerere, as East Africa's first and, for years, only university, had attracted to it some of the best young writers of the second literary generation."65 Horn continues to note that the performance of plays by such writers was always "an important assertion of the University community on Ugandan theatre life."66

Fortunately, many of such graduates soon realised the dangers of their society's crave to substitute indigenous values and norms with Western education and 'civilisation', and began to highlight the issues through drama. Most notable of these playwrights, who are the real cornerstones for Uganda's formal theatre in English and the indigenous languages, are Wycliff Kyingi, Elvania Namukwaya Zirimu, Erisa Kironde, Tom Omara, Okot p' Bitek, John Ruganda, Joseph Mukasa-Balikuddembe, David Rubadiri, Sam Turya-Muhika, and, later, Michael Nsimbi, Nuwa Sentongo, Rose Mbowa, Juliet Muteyo, and Austin Bukenya.67

The idea of a travelling theatre for Uganda and its neighbouring countries was born at Makerere University in October 1964, and the first project came on in April 1965. It was organised by Betty Baker and David Cook, the originators of the idea. Under its broad goal of taking theatre to the people, the project aimed at pioneering popular drama in the general public as well as popularising the form in schools.68 Elsewhere, David Cook notes:

The Makerere Free Travelling Theatre was created essentially as an experiment it was an experiment based on a number of hypotheses. The central hypothesis was that in Uganda, in East Africa - and therefore potentially in any comparable group of societies - there was a vast untapped audience for theatre, beyond the bounds of universities and secondary schools. This was imagined as an audience that would immensely enjoy and readily respond to theatrical experience, and would gain therefrom a new range of awareness which at that time was denied it. There were a number of secondary hypotheses which would also need to be proved true if we ( a 'we' I shall shortly define) were to experiment successfully with taking theatre to parts of this audience in Uganda and perhaps somewhat beyond, given the circumstances we found ourselves. One such secondary hypothesis was that there existed in

66 Ibid., p. 24
67 See also, Rose Mbowa et al, "Uganda's" in Don Rubin, The World Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Theatre, Vol. 3, Ibid., p. 326
our university community a band of students profoundly interested in and committed to performing
drama, with sufficient social and theatrical idealism to be prepared to give up much time and expend a
great deal of effort in making this experiment. That is to try to take drama to a cross-section of this
potential audience who, if they had the chance, would be eager to respond to such performances as we
could present to them. The other vital secondary hypothesis was that it would be possible for such a
band of crazy university enthusiasts to make a success of such a project across the language boundaries
that we would have to take into account.69

First, one notes that noble as the free travelling theatre project was, it was premised on and
influenced by assumptions akin to colonial ideology, with regard to the nature and state of
performance arts in Africa and similar societies at the time. For example, Uganda had
laboured under the colonial yoke for 68 years, a period long enough to re-orientate and
tarnish any foreign good intentions for social development and integration with colonialism
or neo-colonial tendencies.

The general assumption was that there was insufficient or no theatre at all among
indigenous communities, and that the travelling theatre would be redressing this imbalance
wherever it managed to tour. Most probably, such a stance was largely unconscious to the
organisers of the Theatre and its group of committed recruits. Nevertheless, the view was
prevalent among their expectations. That is why the participatory nature of the audience
and its authentic response in form of laughter and other nature of noise during
performances always bothered the troupe on its tours throughout East Africa. In a bid to
‘culture’ the audiences, Makerere Free Travelling Theatre devised ways and means of
controlling the laughter or “moderate its noise”, including halting performances so the
audiences could first be quitened down, until they gave up.70 The Travelling Theatre had
taken their kind of “theatre to the people”, complete with a pre-determined view of
audience behaviour and response. But they were unwilling to receive the people’s own
package for them. It took David Cook a couple of decades to acknowledge the fact and
state:

(there are often) ... serious misunderstandings (with regard to) audience laughter. We know that the
original audiences for Shakespeare’s plays expressed their emotions much more freely than do modern
European audiences, and men were not ashamed to be seen weeping at a tragic climax. This is more

Cultural Landscape, Ibid., p. 47
70 David Cook, “Theatre Goes to the People” in Transition, Ibid., pp 31-32. See also David Cook, “The Makerere Free
Travelling Theatre: An Experimental Model” in Eckhard Breitinger ed., Uganda: The Cultural Landscape, Ibid., pp 54-60

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natural, I think, than the inhibited modern response. When you take a play successfully to different ethnic groups, one finds group responses, controlled by local conventions, very different, specially in the matters of tears and laughter. I believe most popular audiences everywhere respond with natural emotional outbursts when they are deeply stirred by drama. ... I would urge producers and players to hesitate before they attach western or westernised significance to laughter when a popular audience is responding to an intense dramatic situation. In terms of dramatic emotional response, such laughter may indeed be as appropriate as tears? (brackets mine)

The experiences of the Travelling Theatre might have been different, and most probably better, if the theatre had been made together with the people, instead of it being taken to them. Then, the desired integration of dramatic experience, knowledge, and techniques would go beyond audiences 'just coming to watch performances' to audiences being involved in dramatic creation, production, and marketing processes.

Consequently, although audience reaction has mostly remained 'natural' formal theatre in Uganda always assumes and produces 'pre-conceived theatre' in as far as themes and aesthetic worth are concerned. The discussion in Chapters Three, Four and Five reveal that little, if any market research and consultations are done in the process of designing and staging the productions, with particular respect to commercial theatre.

Another area the precursors in conventional drama and theatre in Uganda like the Makerere Free travelling Theatre have influenced the growth and development of Uganda's theatre industry is theatre organisation and administration. On the main, the theatre is either planned around an institution or around an individual, usually a star-performer in the group or the founder/director of the group. Advantages in having the groups build identity and independence that way are marred by sporadic management, financial and patronage problems as in institutional theatre groups and by protectionism and cronyism as in the case of star-performer – founder/director groups. Again, the discussion in the next two chapters highlights these issues.

The organisation and structure of Makerere Free Travelling Theatre was, on the one hand, dictated by the aims and objectives of the project and, on the other, by nature and type of performances, The Theatre was based at Makerere, operating within the academic structure.

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71 Op. cit., p. 57
of the University College and drawing its human resources and credibility from the University. That meant that its membership and patronage, including financial support, was likewise limited or closely linked to the University and its well-wishers. For example, two University teachers and ten students comprised the first team of the Travelling Theatre, and all the planning, including rehearsals and performances, were usually influenced by the University College's academic year calendar. The noncommercial, semi-professional, and part-time nature of the Theatre also meant it could not be self-sufficient in finances. Though the University's Principal, Charitable Fund, and Arts Faculty did contribute funds towards the initial project, the Theatre mostly relied on outside funders and its own fundraising initiative to off-set production and operational costs. The major funders then were Ministry of Planning and Community Development, the British Council, Esso Standard (East Africa) Ltd., Nyanza Textile Industries, Messers Coca-Cola, K. A. T. S., Uganda Theatre Guild, The Makerere Players, and the Makerere Dramatic Society.72

Furthermore, unlike for most formal or commercial performing groups, the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre identified with no particular community of the theatre market hence paying loyalty to none and everybody at the same time. To a great extent, selection of venues of performance were determined by the nature of the repertoire and the willingness of the prospective audiences to host or facilitate the troupe in some ways, like the provision of free accommodation, food, and relative publicity.73 This strategy of theatre management broadened the Travelling Theatre's production scope hence performances, as the Theatre had to take into consideration a number of factors like the diversity of languages and local situations, the general type and nature of performances, and the practicalities of production and performance in non-formal theatre settings. Significantly, the Theatre was setting precedents in the manner of production and consumption of formal theatre within

72 David Cook, "Theatre Goes to the People", in Transition I/ii., pp 24-25. Contradictorily, however, David Cook states in his latter article, "The Makerere Free Travelling Theatre: An Experimental Model" (p. 50) that the Theatre received "very little formal financial support - nothing from the University. In the first year we approached big firms and organisations but got no help for our 'madcap' scheme."

indigenous communities. Today, many theatre groups in Uganda, particularly those involved in Development Theatre, employ the same or similar strategies in the organisation, financing, and distribution of theatre.

In a kind of evaluation of the Travelling Theatre, David Cook notes:

So over the years the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre can claim to have proved all the points it set out to prove. And it achieved another of its initial aims. It sired children. Quite specifically spurred on by what they had seen and heard of the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre, quite a number of schools started to take their school performances out to neighbouring villages. And indeed other university groups have found inspiration from this predecessor, notably the Travelling Theatre of Nairobi University, started by John Ruganda. I found the same thing to be true when up to the last time I was in Kenya in 1991 – 92 at one of the new universities, Moi University in Eldoret. Whether the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre provided one of the springs of inspiration behind the current outburst of popular theatre in Kampala and in Uganda as a whole, I do not know. But I certainly think it can be seen as belonging to the same tradition.74

One direct resultant effort of the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre in Uganda has been the continued involvement of Makerere University in a kind of ‘theatre for the people’ named Peoples Theatre. In the programme, students offering courses at MDD Department run free theatre performances each year in selected localities in Uganda. There is now ripe talk within the University to expand the present Peoples Theatre programme to cover much of the country or to revive the free travelling theatre, but mostly as a publicity tool or marketing gimmick for the University in its current pursuit of prized education. The official argument is that many of the University’s alumni “came to learn about Makerere University and were inspired to read hard to come to the University after seeing performances of the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre.”75 Unlike its precursor, however, the Peoples Theatre project is examinable, and has quite a broader repertoire even if its performances are often limited to particular locations and are constrained by the University’s academic schedule, demands, and provisions, including funding.

Tributary to the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre existed throughout the 1960s and 1970s kinds of minstrel-like traditional and Jazz music and dance groups traversing the country. In Western and South-Western Uganda, solo or group bands armed with traditional and

75 Vice-Chancellor, Prof. John Sebwufu’s Speech at the Faculty of Arts Millennium Party held on 19 May 2000 at St. Augustine Students Centre, Makerere University
The other kind of theatre springing from Makerere was a mixture of two traditions described by Andrew Horn as "the coming together ... of two streams - University and popular - in the founding of Theatre Limited by a group including (Wycliff) Kiyingi and his younger protege Byron Kawadwa, (David) Rubadiri and Rose Mbowa from Makerere, and the professionally-trained expatriate Elizabeth Keeble. The main figure in Theatre Limited was a young actor-playwright recently returned from Trinity College, Dublin, who was to become East Africa's most publicised and widely-travelled writer-producer, Robert Serumaga."  

For two years, the group enjoyed popular patronage both within and outside the University thanks to its mixed theatre traditions and experiences as well as repertoire. In 1971, Theatre Limited was taken over by Robert Serumaga and "turned into a full-time professional company of young actors being trained by Serumaga essentially for the production of his plays."  

Byron Kawadwa went back to his Luganda performing group, the Kampala City Players, and Wycliff Kiyingi to his African Artists Association. Other splinter performing groups were born of the two traditions so that by 1970 Uganda boasted of 20 formal theatre companies and over 300 at the beginning of the 1990s. The picture though is different now, as shall be discussed later.

3. 2. 2. MDD's Establishment and Role

The Music Dance and Drama (MDD) Department at Makerere University was started in 1971 by Atta Mensah, Andrew Horn, and Moses Serwada. The following year Rose Mbowa, a graduate of Literature but drama enthusiast working as a broadcaster at the country's then only radio station, Radio Uganda, joined the trio. Mensah is a Ghanaian lecturer and theatre practitioner closely associated with the success stories at the Africa Centre in Ghana, and Andrew Horn has promoted theatre variously throughout Africa, most particularly in East Africa.

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77 Ibid., p. 25
78 Ibid., p. 25
The chief objective in the creation of MDD Department was to "equip the indigenous practitioner for work in his African context." In addition, Moses Serwadda, one of the founding teachers still at the Department, reveals that "the Vice Chancellor and the Minister of Education at the time were very much interested in raising the standards of performance arts in the country. So they made an investment. They wanted us to train teachers that would in turn teach music in schools." 

At its inception, the MDD Department was also envisaged to host the Diploma in Drama then being run by the English Department and transform the course into the broader integrated study of the performance arts of music and dance as well. This has been the Department's major achievement through the years. The Department is the only such institution in Eastern and Southern Africa. A similar institution is found at Lagon University, Nigeria. Most universities in Africa either teach Drama and Theatre Studies as part of Literature or engage in theatre as an extra-curricular activity.

In its 30 years of existence, MDD Department boasts of having trained students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels who go out to work in different professions within and outside the country. Those of its graduates who are not in regular theatre practice are employed elsewhere as social workers, culture officers, radio and television broadcasters, news reporters, teachers, and public administrators. All staff members of the Department have also been its one-time students.

However, while the Department has made great contributions to social, human, and artist development of the country and the region, it remains the most dilapidated department on Campus. With an annual student population of 120 students, the Department is still housed in the two small residential blocks it started in. The plumbing system is down most of the time, and there are no shower rooms to cater for the practical demands of the courses. The study rooms are hardly equipped for conventional theatre performances or training, and

79 Rose Mbowa, "Trends in Ugandan Theatre Since 1965", in Eckhard Breitinger ed., Defining New Idioms and Alternative Forms of Expression, ibid., p. 201
80 Personal conversation with Moses Serwadda, July 2000
the only acoustic fittings exist in a small piano room and the mirror room. There are no practicing rooms of any nature.

Consequently, any available space, including the lecturers’ offices, have been turned into lecture spaces; of course, with no blackboards or enough seats for the classes. Instrumental and drama practical sessions are normally conducted under the trees. The dance practical is timetabled for the Main Hall of the University. But most times, the hall is unavailable due to large student classes in other courses that eye the same space for lectures. In such cases, the dance practical is also brought under the tree. There are many inconveniences and distractions of teaching or studying in the open. Neither the instructor nor the students gain the needed concentration and patience to impart or master the practical skill when passers-by laugh and jeer at will. Besides, one can guess what happens during the rainy season. There is hope, however, that the proposed Faculty of Arts building to occupy the current site at MDD shall alleviate part of the Department’s space and image crisis. The planned complex also proposes to have a theatre with a capacity 1,000 people.81

3. 2. 3. Landmark Theatre Ideals and Companies

3.2.3. 1. The Formal Luganda Theatre Movement

At present, theatre activity in Luganda is the most paramount in the country, and covers a wide range of subjects presented in a diversity of forms. Luganda theatre is also the most commercial. Many factors like Buganda’s geographical location, the historical, political, and economic incidents in Uganda since colonialism account for the said scenario.

The impact of Buganda’s favourable political agreements and geographical positioning on the country’s social life, including theatre activity, has already been stated. Buganda’s proximity to the seat of colonial power and Western ‘civilisation’ facilitated its fast enlightenment in Western culture and values and, the ‘de-culturalisation’ of the indigenous

81 Construction of the Faculty building should have started in February 2001 but for University Council’s delayed decision to grant the whole space to the Faculty of Arts.
community. When many regions in Uganda still conducted free-of-charge cultural and theatre performances in village arenas, Buganda's local artists were getting together into formal performing groups, and aspiring to broadcast their works over the radio or stage them at the National Theatre. Thus Buganda became the first region in Uganda to cultivate formal theatre alongside traditional theatre performances.

At the forefront of formal theatre in Buganda were two committed artists: Wycliff Kiyingi and Byron Kawadwa who, despite their big difference in age, were great friends and partners at work. Kiyingi was Kawadwa's teacher at Aggrey Memorial School in Kampala, and together they inaugurated the Schools Drama Festival in 1957. Kawadwa "believed that such a competition was necessary since schools were not yet ready to compete with adult expatriate groups and the Namirembe Music Festival did not include drama entries."82

Like its counterparts - the Music and Dance Festivals running in schools annually - the Students Drama Festival envisioned pupils and students in Ugandan schools both as its participants and beneficiaries. However, while the Music and Dance Festivals have, over the years, grown to involve teacher training colleges and culture centres all over the country, the drama festivals in schools have since the 1970s tended to dwindle into oblivion. In that case, it is not easy to measure their impact on the growth and development of the theatre in the country. Nevertheless, drama remains a main component of concerts and Open Days that are organised by schools annually.

Wycliff Kiyingi and Byron Kawadwa had and drew from similar interests and experiences. Both were Baganda and dearly loved their land. Kawadwa was even a proclaimed monarchist.^ See Andrew Horn, "Uhuru to Amin: Uganda's Theatre-The Exiled and the Dead" in An Index on Censorship Vol. 5, 1979, p. 4 & Rose Mbowa, "Luganda Theatre and its Audience" in Eckhard Breitinger ed., Uganda: A Cultural Landscape, ibid., pp.239-245

Wycliff Kiyingi and Byron Kawadwa had and drew from similar interests and experiences. Both were Baganda and dearly loved their land. Kawadwa was even a proclaimed monarchist.83 Both had vast knowledge, skill, and experience in broadcasting. None of the two had advanced formal training in professional Art and scholarly writing yet both were gifted creative artists with deep interest in drama and theatre, Their excellent performance
in theatre was more of a natural endowment and practical experience rather than a result of formal training or exposure. For example, by the time Kawadwa enrolled for the Diploma in Drama at Makerere University in 1966 he had already registered significant achievements on his own. The Schools Drama Festival had been running for ten years and he had written and produced a few play scripts. Nevertheless, the course at Makerere accessed him the opportunity "to study plays from different parts of the world (which) undoubtedly encouraged him in technical experimentation and the exploration of new themes."84

Kawadwa has 8 full-length plays to his name: 2 musicals and 6 straight dramas. They are "Obufumbo Kye Ki?" (What is the Significance of Marriage?); "Tezikya Bbirii"; "Eno ye Kampala" (This is Kampala); "Sitakange" (The Miser); "Mitaafu" (The Trials of Brother Jero); "St. Lwanga"; "Makula ga Kulabako" (Kulabako's Gift/Beauty); and "Oloyimba Iwa Wankoko" (The Song of Wankoko).85

Though there had been earlier attempts by Erisa Kironde and Joseph Mukasa-Balikuddembe among others to adapt foreign plays into and for local Ugandan audiences, Byron Kawadwa's translations of Moliere's The Miser into "Sitakange" in 1969 and of Wole Soyinka's The Trials of Brother Jero as "Mitaafu" in 1970 were the first experiments of foreign plays to be adapted and performed in a local language. The next translation and/or adaptation of a foreign play into a local setting and language came in 1998 when Rose Mbowa translated into Luganda and staged Bertolt Brecht's play, Mother Courage and her Children as "Mama Nalukalala n'ezadde Lye". Ntanda Nsereko, a Ugandan language scholar and consultant currently based at the University of Gabarone in Botswana, is reported to have recently adopted Sophocles' Antigone for the Ugandan stage. His translation covers the characters' names as well.86

84 Margaret Macpherson, "Plays and People: An Examination of Three Ugandan Dramatists: Byron Kawadwa, John Ruganda, and Robert Serumaga" Ibid., p. 5
85 See also Rose Mbowa, Ibid., pp 239-240 and Margaret Macpherson, "Plays and People: An Examination of Three Ugandan Dramatists: Byron Kawadwa, John Ruganda, and Robert Serumaga" Ibid., pp 3-9
On the other hand, Kiyingi, a trained teacher by profession, is popularly known as the father of radio drama in Uganda, him being the first Ugandan artist to write for radio and television. Andrew Horn credits Kiyingi as "the most important single figure in the development of Uganda theatre and in the broadening of its audience. ... He is credited with having introduced to East Africa the idea of a road company to tour local productions in the region, a form of theatre which would later become extremely popular amongst student groups in Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi, as well as Uganda."  

As to whether Kiyingi's touring theatre ideals inspired or arose from David Cook's Makerere Free Travelling Theatre remains unclear. It would also seem that Kiyingi's road theatre company was not as widely publicised or did not survive the times as nothing more is documented or even said about it. Neither is the period of its existence nor its participants known. Kiyingi's most contributions to the development and growth of Uganda's theatre and drama are explicit in the promotion of formal theatre among indigenous communities in Buganda, and the great inspiration he became to up-coming local artists and dramatists in other areas of Uganda.

In 1954, Kiyingi founded the African Artists Association to "promote indigenous drama, written and performed by Ugandan artists and actors in Luganda for Ugandan audiences'. Members were mainly professional people from the city in favour of Ganda culture. As such, they followed a different agenda than the cultural activists from the Makerere University campus. Kiyingi's African Artists Association were the first African Theatre group to perform at the National Theatre and in 1961, Kiyingi was commissioned to convert his stage play Wokulira ... after a successful run at the Mengo Cultural Centre into a radio serial."  

African Artists Association was the first formal indigenous theatre company to be established in Uganda.

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Commenting on the two dramatists, Rose Mbowa noted:

Wydiff Kingi and Byron Kawadwa laid the structural foundation for the growth of formal Luganda theatre. Byron Kawadwa, the major representative of art theatre in Luganda, was a disciple, a close friend, and a follower of Wydiff Kyngi. While Kyngi paved the way for Luganda theatre groups to enter the National Theatre, Byron Kawadwa emphasised the aspect of developing talent in the performing arts by introducing the School Drama Competition in 1957, and also became the first Ugandan director of the National Theatre. In 1963, he added a special Luganda section to the Annual Drama Competition, he founded his own theatre group, Kampala City Players, in 1964, and he represented Uganda at the FESTAC 1977 in Lagos.

Significant to note is that Kawadwa, like Kingi, writes in his mother-tongue, Luganda. Kawadwa chose to write in Luganda in order "to reach the bigger, local audiences (and) was determined that the plays would be set in Buganda and would draw heavily on the strong cultural traditions of that area." As for Kingi, he "aimed at deemphasising expatriate colonial culture and bring majority culture to the centre of the cultural scenery in Buganda."

Together, Kiyingi's and Kawadwa's committed efforts to popularise Western forms of drama among their indigenous people catalysed creative artists in other regions of Uganda to write not only plays, but novels, stories and poetry as well in their respective mother-tongues. Examples of such writers who came to national limelight in the late 1950s through the 1970s are Okot p'Bitek with his famous poem, Song of Lawino, first written in Luo; Benedicto K. Mubangizi with his serialised novella, Abagyenda Bareeba (Those Who Travel Experience Many Things); Festo Kanwemera with his documented history and culture of the Banyankore/Bakiga of South-Western Uganda; and Cosma Warugaba's "Omuhiho" (The Hunt) written in Runyankore-Rukiga. Others include Michael Nsimbi in a Kiganda custom documentation, "Kabbo ka Muwala" (The Girl's/Bride's Basket), written in Luganda; Solomon Mbabi Katana in a Runyoro-Rutoro opera titled "Nyakake" or Nyakato's Marriage; and Joseph Mukasa-Balikuddembe whose plays appear in English, Luganda, and Runyoro-Rutoro. The number of artists writing in their mother -tongue has continued to grow over the years, and the growth of literature, including plays, in Uganda's local languages has continued to grow over the years, and the growth of literature, including plays, in Uganda's local languages has

89 Rose Mbowa, "Luganda Theatre and its Audience" in Edward Brettinger ed., Uganda: The Cultural Landscape, Ibid., p. 239
90 Andrew Horn, "Uhuru to Amin: The Golden Decade of Theatre in Uganda" in Literary Half-Yearly Vol. 19, Ibid., 45
91 Op. cit., p. 236
been most recently facilitated by the introduction of private FM radio stations throughout the country.

In 1965, Kiyingi began to use plays to advance political criticism, a form of dramatic composition that has become popular among modern Ugandan playwrights. Robert Serumaga, Byron Kawadwa, John Ruganda, Elvania Namukwaya Zirimu, Nuwa Sentongo, and Fagil Mandy are some of the most dedicated disciples of the form in its hey days. Adherents to the form in more recent years include Jimmy Katumba in The Ebonies, Alex Mukulu in Impact International, Andrew benon Kibuka in The bakayimbira dramactors, and many others. Kiyingi was also the first artist to be politically harassed for his artistic views and literary style. His radio serial, "Wokulira", was banned by Obote I Government in 1965, and all members of the cast arrested. "Wokulira" resumed in 1986, after the NRM took over government. Most importantly, the serial has kept its political undertones and criticism, depending on the paramount issues at the time.

Lastly, though belonging to and working in the different drama groups they helped to found - Kiyingi in the African Artists Association and Kawadwa in the City Players – the two were the pioneer popular artists in Uganda to seek to work with artists at Makerere in a bid to promote professional theatre in Uganda. In 1967/68, Kiyingi and Kawadwa joined hands with Elizabeth Keeble’s Theatre Limited whose main objectives were:

To discover and develop a theatre form that is truly African, with its roots deep in African culture but at the same time accessible to the wider international audience. In other words, to discover the essence of Africanness and give it theatrical expression; to create a theatre that deals without fear with the problems of contemporary Africa; to have a theatre which would contribute to human understanding.

Such efforts towards a confluence of structure in theatre were apparently necessary because, as Margaret Macpherson notes, "the popular drama could always aim to say rather more than it does and there seems a serious danger at the moment of its getting into a rut. There are too many plays set in bars or on an urban street where drunkenness, prostitution and corruption are handled as suitable topics for farce. And one grows very

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92 From a Brochure of Theatre Limited
tired of that Moliere bastard - Katoto. On the other hand the intellectual Drama is often both rather obscure and somewhat pretentious. There are signs ... that the two forms are coming closer together and it is possible that we are on the verge of a new breakthrough in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{93}

Unfortunately, mostly for reasons discussed in the next chapter, the desired confluence was never achieved and has never been achieved to -date. It is even doubtful if it ever will.

3. 2. 3. 2. The One-Act Plays

Louis E. Catron describes the one-act play thus:

Bold and brassy like a circus band or gentle like a sea breeze with the sunset; rebellious and stubborn like a kid brother or conservative to the point of being reactionary; irritably didactic with the subtlety of an aroused porcupine intent on proving the righteousness of its beliefs, or wide-eyed and innocent as in the hearts of children the week before Christmas - the one-act play is all these, and more. It deliberately defies all literary descriptions: As soon as it appears to be securely walled up inside a neat definition, it bursts free into new territory with a triumphant leap. The one-act is theatre's iconoclast, and damned proud about it. The one-act is to the full-length as the short story is to the novel. It is to theatre as the poem is to literature. The one-act play's strength is in its brevity, and its soul is in its depth of observations. It must make its points efficiently - no wasted motion is acceptable, and no digressions are permitted. Every moment must contribute to the whole. To make a complex writing task more complex, the one-act must achieve all these goals without ever appearing to be rushed or directly obvious.\textsuperscript{94}

One-act plays in English became popular in Uganda in the 1950s and early 1960s as a result of the activities of the English and Extra Mural Departments at Makerere University.

The English Department ran a course in Drama where students not only studied old, established, and mostly Western dramatists but were also encouraged to do creative writing. Later, creative writing fellowships were instituted by David Cook; and Uganda's outstanding playwrights and artists like Byron Kawadwa, Robert Serumaga, and Okot p'Bitek were one-time beneficiaries. The fellowship operated till the mid crisis years of Idi Amin's regime when "funding dried up",\textsuperscript{95} Many foreign governments had severed diplomatic relations with the government.

\textsuperscript{93} Margaret Macpherson, Op. cit., p. 4


\textsuperscript{95} See Margaret Macpherson, "Plays and People: An Examination of Three Ugandan Dramatists: Byron Kawadwa, John Ruganda and Robert Serumaga", ibid., pp 2829
The exercises in writing and the Inter-Hall Drama Competitions aimed to train the dramatists to look at themselves in a three-dimensional role: as "actors, directors, and the audience." That way, the competitions, in addition to the various performance arts festivals already running in the country, encouraged the growth in standards and volume of local literary talent. Other reasons for the Inter-Hall competitions were social. Margaret Macpherson notes:

At that time the students were lodged in hostels, and already competing enthusiastically in sports of all kinds. Now they were invited to compete in writing and speaking. Incidentally, because of the width of Makerere's catchment area at this time, English was the common tongue and used not simply in the classroom but at all times. Each hostel submitted four pieces of written work selected by the students themselves: a poem, a short story, a book review, and a play. The standard varied enormously but a surprising number of writers reached their first public through the English Competition. Plays by Erisa Kironde, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, David Rubadiri, Peter Nazareth, Rose Mbowa, Elimia Zirimu, Rebecca Njau, Nuua Sentongo, Jonathan Kariara, John Ruganda are only a few among the many that enthralled their first Makerere audience and many others since.

Like Margaret Macpherson continues to note, "just as the fine artist learns perspective even if then to discard it, so the writer works within the discipline of form in order to liberate his natural voice." In all ways, therefore, one-act plays form the cornerstone for Uganda's drama in English. Not just because of the plays' conservative and didactic messages or brevity of form. But also because the plays were a kind of response at the time necessary for the nation, Uganda, that was crossing over from colonial rule to independence and struggling to balance, in a local setting, Western cultural influences and values with indigenous ones.

The formal and thematic concerns of most plays point to the socio-cultural threat posed by Western values to the Uganda society at the time. Young graduates shunned their traditions and customs in preference for Western world culture. Others adopted European lifestyles in order to be modern. Elsewhere, the researcher notes:

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96 Rose Mbowa, in an interview with the researcher during her MA research, February 1990
97 See also Op. cit., p. 3
99 Ibid., p. 27
100 See Margaret Macpherson's remarks on the issue already quoted by the author on p. 60*7088888* of this book; and for an analysis of some of these plays see Mercy Mirembe, "The Influence of Ugandan Folklore on Ugandan Drama" MA Dissertation, pp 17-77 and Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare, Uganda Literary Theatre, ibid.
The dramatisation of the legends itself is a commitment by the dramatists to provide the then proscenium arch stage audiences with Ugandan entertainment drama using Western dramatic forms. (The dramatists desired to celebrate certain social aspects) in this case, people's belief about their origin, their instinctive desire to live a meaningful life, and their (personal) contentment at being what they (were).101 (brackets mine)

These and other issues of cultural importance are articulated in plays by Erisa Kironde (Kiriu), Tom Omara (The Exodus), Elvania Namukwaya Zirimu (Keeping Up With the Mukasas), David Rubadiri (Come to Tea), and John Ruganda (Covenant with Death). David Cook and Miles Lee also put out a collection of one-act plays on similar issues.102

In that respect, too, the one-act plays served to bridge the situational gap between Western or modern drama and indigenous drama and performance forms. Local dramas evolve much more from ritual, legends, and local stories directly relevant to their immediate audience while Western drama relies more on individual experiences and creativity. That is the key structural component that distinguishes indigenous Ugandan drama or theatre from Western forms. The theatre is still celebrational rather than being a mere presentation of issues.103 It is possible the rich forms and performance levels abundant in Uganda's indigenous performance forms inspired the local version of the opera, which though still musical in form tends to use substantial dialogue and dance rhythms in its general structure.

Apparently, however, one-act plays have been limited to schools and colleges where they are used as guidelines to train students in playwriting. With the Ugandan society's increased steep in Western world culture and 'civilisation', artistic works have likewise evolved towards western forms, and the present crusade for globalisation and inter-culturalism shall erode the national identities of artistic works further.

3. 2. 3. 3. The Professional Theatre Movement

The professional theatre movement in Uganda came into force around 1970 as one of Robert Serumaga's principles of theatre practice. Unfortunately, professional theatre in

101 Mercy Mirembe, "The Influence of Ugandan Folklore on Ugandan Drama", Ibid., pp 17-18
Uganda seems to have collapsed with Serumaga's flight from Idi Amin and Uganda in 1977, and his eventual death in 1980.

Trained in Economics at Trinity College, Dublin, and having gained theatre experience in Ireland and Britain over close to a decade, Robert Serumaga returned to Uganda in 1967 and joined Theatre Limited. Theatre Limited was a semi-professional theatre group based at Makerere University, Kampala. It was the first local commercial theatre group in Uganda, and it performed in English.

Though not completely professional, Theatre Limited fully operated as a commercial company in that “the actors, producers, and backstage staff were to receive a share of any profits on productions although only working in their spare time and the company declared its aim to stage plays in the National Theatre every three months. It was an inter-racial company in the first instance with a full-time Secretary.”

In 1972, Serumaga propelled Theatre Limited a step further into full-time performance or professional theatre. The move broadened the scope of the Company but inhibited its original idea of narrowing the professional gap between the elite and popular theatre movements in the country. Noting the apparent demise of Theatre Limited, Serumaga renamed the group "Abafumi Company", a Luganda word meaning “the (theatre) company of story tellers”. Serumaga's Drama School "work(d) full-time 5 days a week in the Green Room of the National Theatre under his direction. ... His students receive(d) a small salary and assistance towards their up-keep".

True to its name, the Abafumi Company told stories of Uganda throughout its five-year lifespan though not as a traditional story-teller would have done. The Company told stories through drama and graphic images that were more picturesque than the mere dramatised tales of a traditional narrator. Theirs were stories not of a far-off past often recalled as

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104 Margaret Macpher son, "Plays and People: An Examination of three Ugandan Dramatists: Byron Kawadwa, John Ruganda, and Robert Serumaga", ibid., p. 13
105 Margaret Macpherson, "Plays and People: An Examination of Three Ugandan Dramatists: Byron Kawadwa, John Ruganda and Robert Serumaga", ibid., p. 13
great stores of knowledge, history, and wisdom as are found in myths, legends, and fairy tales. Theirs were stories of the present in relation to its immediate past. They were stories about the realities of living in the Uganda of the time compared to a Uganda people had earlier known. Their stories were the spur of truth in action. They were grim and without that glorified happy or comfortable ending that theatricians recommend must follow the highest point of interest (the climax) in order to satisfy the audience.106

But Serumaga's "present", growing dimmer and becoming grimmer by the day, always pointed to a pointless, non-existent, regrettable future that often got blurred before it was ever lived. Through such drama, Serumaga willingly or unwillingly cultivated the absurd form of drama that soon became popular with other prominent Ugandan dramatists of the decade like John Ruganda (The Floods) and Nuwa Sentongo (The Invisible Bond). Later, Fagil Mandy (in "Drunken Mary Anne" and "Endless Night") and, to an extent, Austin Bukenya (in The Bride), both key dramatists of the next decade, adopted the form.

Important to remember, however, is Serumaga's professional background training in Economics whose impact the repressive regimes he worked and lived notwithstanding could have still influenced his philosophy and structure of theatre, especially, too, that his son who is fondly inspired by his father's theatre career espouses the same views.107 A closer examination of Serumaga's plays reveals a lot of economic considerations underlying both their internal and external structure; notably, the plays' situations, stage design and stage sets, the number of characters, and their costuming. Serumaga's latter two plays, "Renga Moi" and "Amayiriki", exhibit a kind of carefully considered restriction and usage of dramatic dialogue and themes akin to an economist's aversion to inflation. "Renga Moi" takes the form of a ritual and uses a lot of song and dance as opposed to the heavy dramatic monologues and dialogue of his other plays, A Play and Majangwa. "Amayiriki" uses only 17 words. The plays' subject matter and concerns are also limited to a minimum,

106 It is usually recommended that a play's end must come gradually and not suddenly, and the audiences must be adequately prepared for it. See for example, Louis E. Curtin, Writing, Producing, and Selling Your Play, ibid., pp 20-26
107 The views of Robert Kalundi Serumaga, the current Director of National Theatre, Kampala, on theatre planning and organisation in Uganda are recalled in the next and fourth Chapters.
facilitating easy communication of meaning and internalising the message. Both plays are short; the former running for only 37 minutes and the latter, which was originally a one-hour play, was reduced to 45 minutes.  

In his appraisal of Serumaga's literary works and professional career, Andrew Horn noted:

Serumaga's role in Ugandan Theatre has been significantly different from that of Kawadwa. While both writers have been noted for the proficiency and sophistication of their productions, they have appealed to separate constituencies. Serumaga's dramaturgy is complex; his dialogue is intricate and condensed; and his imagery is oblique, rendering much of his latter work inaccessible to large portions of Kawadwa's popular audience. And while both have been identifiable as Baganda, Roman Catholics, and monarchists, there is a Nietzscheanism in Serumaga wholly alien to the more democratic spirit of Makula ga Kukabako, in which a peasant dancer wins the affections of a princess. 

Ironically, though, it is Serumaga's latter works that were nearer hence more appealing to the ordinary, but not necessarily popular, audiences. Leading Ugandan theatre personalities and other theatre critics living at the time all agree Serumaga had reached the end point in his search for a more suitable but safer way of communicating 'dangerous issues' through theatre while he maintained an active rapport with the audiences at the same time. Serumaga's play, "Amayirikiti", won Amin's uninformed favour, and was performed at the OAU Heads of State Summit held in Kampala in 1975.

On his return from the Third World Theatre Festival held in Manila, the Philippines, in 1972, Serumaga started recruiting afresh for Abafumi Company because "he realised that his semi-professional actors were unable to respond to the artistic demands his material and style was putting on them...".

Ironically, Serumaga is known to have recruited mostly "inexperienced school-leavers and (offered) them an extensive programme of training and performance deeply informed by...

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109 Andrew Horn, "Uhuru to Amin: Uganda's Theatre-The Exiled and the Dead" in An Index on Censorship Vol. 5, 1979, p. 4


111 From Serumaga's biographical notes, published on Theatre Limited headed letter, p. 2
the techniques of Stanislavski, Grotowski, and Artaud." Such recruitment bias assured Serumaga of 'uncontaminated', fresh, fully dependent, and committed minds and bodies whom he could then mould into the professional artists and performers he desired. This could well be the first documented case of exploitation of young talent by theatre producers and proprietors in Uganda.

Sources close to Serumaga at the time say the number of trainees/performers in session were always kept at 14. Again, one cannot concretely say whether the relatively small size of Serumaga's group was informed by his past training in Economics or whether it was because he knew only too well the demands of professional practical skills training. Big numbers of amateurs/apprentices can hinder quality achievement in imparting and polishing up performance skills among individuals.

Jane Majoro, Serumaga's late wife and one-time trainee and performer, revealed and explained the nature of routine at Serumaga's school of theatre. "The actors and actresses had rigorous physical and psychological training daily: physical exercises in the morning, story-telling in the afternoons, rehearsals in the evenings, isolation and deep contemplation backstage for a minimum of eight hours before public performances would begin. It is then that the feeling (was) natural and so the art." Dialogue was believed to limit the characters' expression.

While Serumaga's method of dramatic composition in Abafumi Company was closely linked with improvisation it was never as simplistic or unpredictable as most improvisations turn out to be. Drawing from his past comedian experience as an undergraduate in Ireland, Serumaga never just imported the popular tradition of English music halls for its own or for laughter's sake, as seems to be the practice in Uganda's theatre today. The central figures in all of Serumaga's plays and latter theatre always drew laughter and mirth from the audiences as they were easily identified with an esteemed personality or a cherished past.

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113 Interview with Jane Majoro, Kampala, February, 1990.
usually the deposed Bugandan King Mutesa and his kingdom. As the audiences laughed at the apparent foolery of the protagonists they were at the same time drawn, unreservedly, to sympathise and empathise with the characters because they recognised an unmistakeable grain of nobility and grace in them or they simply identified with their predicaments. In short, Serumaga’s characters, even when not direct descendants of nobility, were always noble and dignified, either in person, profession, or vocation. Most importantly, the characters were human. Where the significance of the dramas went outside Buganda, they drew their deepest appeal from the plight of the ordinary Ugandan - usually a civilian entangled in the mesh of civil insecurity, social intrigue, political repression, and dictatorial regimes.

Serumaga is also the only Ugandan dramatist, and artist for that matter, who seems to have simultaneously engaged in academics, theatre practice, commerce, and politics with relative ease and success. From trading in vehicles to spirited creative writing and theatre practice and, later, politician and government minister, Serumaga died in combat in 1980. His Abafumi Company, with which he fled into exile in 1977, never resurfaced in Uganda. Some of its members, however, returned individually and settled in private business.

3. 3. Post-Independence Politics

Politicians often define politics as “the art of managing society.” But society is something that is by no means easy to manage because it is never stable or homogeneous at any one time. Such an art of management, therefore, presupposes that governments would not only see to and order the needs, wants, and demands of its population but also the means by which those variables would be met. That way, politics comes to relate closely with systems of exchange and value as are found in Economics because, for there to be a semblance of social stability hence progress, governments must ensure equitable distribution of resources among its people. But as is commonly stated, “man is a selfish animal” and “politics is a dirty game”; situations which form operating principles in the politics and economies of much of the developing world like Uganda.
Discussing Aristotle's views on Politics and Economics, Scott Meikle stresses Aristotle's desire to distinguish between "the art of possessing... (which) is the art of acquiring food and other things necessary for life... (and) the art of money ... (which) has to do with the acquisition of money. Exchange arises at first from what is natural, from the circumstances that some have too little, others too much."\(^{114}\) Seen in that light, political exchanges between people and their rulers (governments), in principle, aim at facilitating the people to access and acquire basic necessities of life and, later, meet their wants and demands; that is, their needs. However, because money, whether in the form of a standardised currency or goods and services, cannot be ignored or avoided by society, politics often comes to acquire value systems that activate the people's wants and demands towards other ends. The result is a fragmented humanity into discrimination classes of the haves and have-nots, first and third worlds, North and South divisions, super powers and pre-technological states. As Cedric Watts argues,

\[... \text{the monetary system, which prevails because it facilitates the exchange and distribution of commodities, also impedes social justice: in one part of the world pluts of wheat and butter accumulate, while in another millions of people go hungry, because the financial criterion (ability to pay) prevails over the moral criterion of distribution according to need. Whole nations may have a depressed standard of living because of the burden of debt repayments to the banks of wealthier countries.}^{115}\]

The African continent and other societies currently grappling with monetary value systems know the story only too well. Social and technological advancement, human resources development and utilisation, observance of human rights, and the like are often far cries in the wilderness. Inevitably, therefore, Art and all creative potential choke under the yoke of tailor-made policies within the economies and political establishments of respective societies.

### 3. 3. 1. Repression and Dictatorships

To avoid repetitions of material already discussed in other parts of the research, this section only focuses on the effects of post-independence political repression and

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dictatorship on theatre in Uganda. That is not to ignore instances occurring in pre-independence times as well where an errant ruler would be cautioned of the consequences of his actions through "praise poetry" and jesters performed for him. The dramatic performances were the only form of criticism officially allowed against established traditional institutions of governance like kingships and chieftaincies. Naturally, the criticism often went undocumented because tradition regarded the events either as entertainment or counselling sessions with the king or chief who, by virtue of their office, were revered deities.116 Furthermore, formal literacy and documentation are fairly modern in Uganda and like societies. In Uganda, the first objective literary criticism of traditional rule came in 1971 when Byron Kawadwa's play, "Oluyimba lwa Wankoko" was premiered.

Political incidents in Buganda during 1966-167 when Obote won his mortal battle over Mengo and abolished kingdoms in Uganda catalysed the writing of Kawadwa's play. The play's production, detailing the Kabaka's (King's) regalia, music ensemble, and character, was a vent of anger at the ousted Obote 1 regime and a celebration of the immortality of the King and the Kingdom. However, some incidents in the play point to circumstances within Buganda Kingdom, particularly the shortcomings in its administration, which contributed to its collapse.117 Earlier in the 1940s and 1950s, similar popular grievances had led to rebellion and riots against the Kingdom's administration.118

A number of plays, mostly from and on Buganda, were also authored on Obote 1 regime, particularly after the fall out of Kabaka Sir Edward Mutesa, Uganda's Constitutional Monarch and President, and his then Prime Minister, Apolo Milton Obote in 1964. The most outspoken of the plays on the issue include like Wycliff Kiyiingi's "Wokulira", "Sempala..."
Muka Sempala” (Sempala, the husband of Mrs. Sempala), and “Omwana w’Omuntu” (The Son of Man); Byron Kawadwa’s “Serwajja Okwota” (The Master’s Dog); and Serumaga’s A Ply and Majangwa.”

Going by the nature of Uganda’s politics at the time, it was no coincidence that the majority, if not all, of political criticism expressed in literary forms came from Buganda.

By the middle of Amin’s regime, however, political repression in Uganda was indiscriminately spread among the civilians that the creative theatre voices crying against it were broader, and took the whole national setting into consideration. That was also the time the effects of Uganda’s political economy were very apparent in the concept, form, and content of Uganda’s drama. Discussing the impact of political repression on theatre artists in Uganda, Mbowa wrote:

The repressive political regimes in Uganda have given rise mainly to two types of theatre. The first is illusive theatre which communicates at a deeper level, through signs and symbols shared with its target audience, while at the same time masking meaning from the “ears” and “eyes” of the state. The latter are used to looking for meaning at the surface level, watching out for realistic comments and portrayals of characters and circumstances.

The second type of theatre was the domestic comedy, in most cases, farcical in form and aimed at drawing laughter and applause from the audience. It soon became commercial in intent as well. It is most likely, however, that even without political repression, domestic comedy and farce, which now forms the greatest part of popular theatre in Uganda, would have, sooner than later, come into existence for purely economic or commercial reasons. Amin’s Economic War Policy of 1972 especially had the instant impact of commercialising the Ugandan mind, long simmering with grievances of the monopoly enjoyed by the Indian and expatriate community in matters of trade, commerce, and industry. Like Amin had reasoned to students at Makerere University, there was strong belief among the public that “the economic war would create black millionaires (and) everybody would become rich after the economic war was strong.”

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119 See also, Rose Mbowa, Artists Under Siege: Theatre and the Dictatorial Regimes in Uganda” in Eckhard Breitinger ed., Theatre and Performance in Africa, ibid., pp 125-126
120 Ibid., p. 123
121 Mahmood Mamdani, Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda, ibid., p. 39
Hence by 1978, when the banning by Governor Nassur of the popular Kampala City Council (KCC) Football Club brought to National Theatre the "99% Baganda fans ... this Luganda-speaking crowd... bringing with it its love of action, fun, running loud commentaries, tipping or throwing money on the stage in appreciation of excellence as is the case in outdoor indigenous performances," the theatre was already running "hurriedly written, poorly structured and poorly produced (ridiculously farcical) plays." \(^\text{122}\)

The Obote II regime is largely responsible for the continuation of the absurd form of drama, but with another tinge of senselessness as is witnessed in Fagil Mandy's plays, "Endless Night" and "Drunken Mary Anne," where individuals' (civilians') lives were just going round into vicious cycles of violence and deprivation. The absurd form of drama was pioneered by Robert Serumaga in "Majiangwa" around 1971. By 1975, when Serumaga came out with two death-ridden plays, "Renga Moi" and "Amayirikiti," followed by Nuwa Sentongo with his cannibalist play, \textit{The Invisible Bond}, and, later, in 1980 by John Ruganda in \textit{The Floods}; it had clearly dawned on the literary artists that Amin and his government were not psychological cases as was at first thought by Serumaga's in \textit{A Play}; but just power-thirst human butchers in army and police uniforms, the gabs of death, as portrayed by John Ruganda in \textit{The Floods}. The rulers were neither politicians nor had they any more conscience left to appeal to, or even lose. That profession was simply dead.

In particular, during the Amin and Obote II regimes (1971 to 1979 and 1980 to 1985 respectively) in Uganda, the quality and quantity of scholarship among theatre and other artists in the country was greatly limited mainly due to widespread insecurity of persons and property. Government censorship of literary works was at its highest while other public functions like weddings, last funeral rites, etc. and other forms of leisure like the film, football matches, etc. turned out to be unsafe. There was as well a biting economy resulting from the Economic War policies of 1972 and the Government's failure or mismanagement of

\(^{122}\text{Op. cit., p. 132}\)
\(^{123}\text{Ibid., p. 132 (brackets mine) see also Margaret Macpherson, "Plays and People: An Examination of Three Uganda Dramatists: Byron Kawadwa, John Ruganda and Robert Serumaga", Ibid., p. 4}\)
the Structural Adjustment Programmes introduced in 1981 during the Obote II government. The low levels of political and literary consciousness and lack of civic competence in the country meant that the audiences and readers either accepted what was on offer or, as in the case of theatre, left it to those who could take it.

On the other hand, lighter literary stuff was what was needed to fill up the spiritual void among the majority of Ugandans, especially those in very tense social environments like Kampala Ci, where state repression through people's perpetual disappearances, "panda gari" policies, and kondoism were at the highest. Many of Uganda's outstanding dramatists like John Ruganda, David Rubadiri, Robert Serumaga, Austin Bukenya and other intellectuals ended up in exile in neighbouring and far away countries. Those who stayed were either eventually murdered for their literary works, like Byron Kawadwa killed in March 1977, or they compromised their literary and intellectual standards in order to stay alive. It is this latter group that popularised the farce form of drama in Uganda, and propagated commercial theatre in the country.

On the whole, however, it is ironical that the same period of artistic repression in Uganda is what can genuinely be called "the intellectual age of drama in Uganda"; that is, in terms of the literary quality of the works. The few dramatists who risked their physical and intellectual lives were doubly conscious of their political environment as well as of their social and literary obligations. The result were works which were tempered intellectually and aesthetically, although it is also true that some works, particularly by Robert Serumaga, ended up being obscure to the larger Ugandan public. This was mostly because the plays were largely intended as an appeal to those who had the means to do something, in most cases the intellectuals living in the neighbouring African and far away countries and all people of good will, to reverse the plightful political situation in Uganda by raising the issues of concern among foreign governments and the relevant international bodies.

124 "Panda gari", literary translating as "get on to the vehicle" was a component of State of Emergency policies in Uganda. These were arbitrary arrest of people suspected to be collaborators of the then Museveni bush war guerrillas. Where Amin before him instituted night curfews, army road-blocks, torture chambers, and death cells as means of managing society, Obote II, in addition, sanctioned "panda gari". As for "kondoism", this was robbery carried out using big knives (pangas) and big stones (rocks) instead of guns. Victims were always chopped into pili after the robbery.
3. 3.2. Liberation and Democracy

Since the assumption of government by the National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/A) in 1986, there have been considerable changes in the concept and business of theatre in Uganda, which have greatly affected the theatre's form and content. Theatre is no longer seen as an art with an end in itself, but as a multi-purpose activity. Theatre is continually being used for mobilisation, sensitisation, and educational purposes, particularly among the rural communities and the urban poor. Government ministries, parastatals, and NGOs have all employed theatre among their main strategies of programmes implementation. Subsequently, a 'new' form of theatre that is less literary in nature and with pre-determined goals that are usually developmental has emerged. The next chapter discusses these new forms in relative detail.

Since the last two decades of the 20th century, theatre's relationship with politics has also changed dramatically. There is no more government censorship of artistic works before they are publicly performed, and there is fair reception of criticism by the government. Hence an artist can stretch his/her creativity to the farthest end possible. One could also say that there is a steady increase in the levels of political, literary, and economic consciousness among the people due to the Government's implementation of multi-pronged national policies like,

the sensitisation and conscientisation programmes, which were some of the major occupations of the NRM soon after the Bush War in January 1986. These included the de-militarisation of the mind of the general public through political education programmes that always emphasised dialogue and other democratic means of solving political and social differences instead of seeking solutions in the barrel of the gun. Furthermore, through the political education and/or cadre courses, popularly known as "muchaka muchaka" the gun was demystified and redefined as not an instrument intended to instill fear among the ordinary public, cause war, insecurity or death but rather as one of the many means by which governments guard the sovereignty of their
countries. Likewise, the role of the armed forces and the Police, thenceforth spying bodies and torture instruments of the government, was being redefined and clarified as that of protection of the citizens through instilling law and order.

- the making of the New Constitution, which was promulgated in October 1995. Through the gradual process of collecting people's views on how they wanted to be governed, the population was also made aware of its civic rights and obligations, like in choosing their leaders to the different levels of legislature or recalling them in case of their dissatisfactory performance.

- the self-governance of the people through the Resistance Councils (RCs)- now called the Local Councils (LCs)- since 1989 and, later, the people's involvement in the electoral process of the country's first General Elections in 1996. The people could campaign for their candidates freely, without fear of or intimidation from the Government; something that had never happened in Uganda before. Question time at candidates' meetings with the electorate was one of the most reliable measures of the extent of the political and civic consciousness of the people, particularly the ordinary citizens, who were now convinced that their development lay primarily with no other but themselves.

- the decentralisation of state functions, mostly done through the decentralisation policies that have created a semblance of regional 'governments' with independent organs of decision-making at the district level. Every district budgets for and oversees issues of its development and other social services, leaving the planning for and financing of the main social and public infrastructure affecting the country as a whole, like main transportation networks, to the Central Government.

- the diestuure and privatisation of the economy, which has increased competition hence efficiency in the privatised public sectors and the economy as a whole. The success story though has not been uniform as is the case in theatre.

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125 See, for example, Apolo Nsabambi, *Decentralisation Policies in Uganda*, ibid.
- education and health campaigns, prominent among which were the education for all by the year 2000 and halting the spread and probable eradication of the AIDS disease. The former goal was implemented through Universal Primary Education (UPE) where every four children in a family, selected on a gender equality basis, and still within the primary schools get "free education", their school fees having been waived by government. In the higher institutions of learning like Makerere University, all qualifying female candidates get a bonus of 1.5 points as part of the general policy of "Affirmative Action" also applicable in politics. 1/3 of Uganda's Parliament consists of women, over and above those women who contest elections on a general ticket. At the health front, great success has been recorded in the fight against AIDS, malaria, and the six children killer diseases of polio, diarrhea, diphtheria, tetanus, measles, and tuberculosis. Recent figures show a drop in the numbers of people getting infected with HIV/AIDS. The Cost-Sharing strategy though was at first publicly rejected and had to be withdrawn by the Government, only to re-introduce itself later, almost independently, as people's incomes improved and they could easily pay for their medical bill or for the specialised and extensive medical care services now on offer. One could also note that the people were increasingly beginning to look at their health as their individual concern, not waiting for government prompting and/or facilitation.

Basically aimed at stabilising the socio-political life of the country and modernising its economy; the policies have over the years produced a 'new' Ugandan, with a new outlook to life in terms of their economic survival and personal advancement. Many Ugandans, too, now no longer feel ashamed to be publicly identified as Ugandans, especially outside the country. Many are proud and esteemed to belong 'to Uganda. In addition, there is a steady growth of conscious consumption among the public, of both goods and services, where people don't just accept what is on offer. They criticise, evaluate, and seek or advocate for alternatives, and sometimes, change. Even in theatre, where the audience for two decades

126 The UPE programme in Uganda is reportedly the only such successful effort in Africa. See The New Vision newspaper report during Colin Powell visit to Uganda in May 2001
(1970s and 1980s) had adopted literary passivity has long began to assert itself in demanding value for its money. All these scenarios provide dramatists with the means and material on which they mould their appraisals and criticism of the government's performance on cardinal issues. Furthermore, there is hardly any major policy that has not been implemented, in the most part, with the help of theatre, leading to a boost in forms of Development Theatre.

Noticeable changes in concept, form, and to an extent, content of Uganda's theatre came in the mid-1980s through the 1990s. For almost a decade since Museveni came to power in 1986, there were no serious criticisms of his government because, as already highlighted, there were concerted efforts by Government and the communities to rehabilitate the country, generate the new constitution, fight the killer disease, AIDS, and carve out political spaces for the marginalised sections of the society like the women, the youth, the physically disabled, and the children.

First, there was the theatre of liberation, aimed at mobilising and conscientising Ugandans to re-discover their humanity and Ugandanness. The absurdist dramatic forms common during Obote and Amin governments got suddenly replaced by a theatre liberated in form and content that aimed "to cut across cultural barriers through the introduction of multilingual dialogue and the integration of indigenous music, song, dance and ritual ... (and) resulted in a dynamic theatre that promotes national unity through cultural diversity, ... The commitment of government and non-governmental organizations to reconstruct and rehabilitate the country, which was completely shattered by decades of tyranny and excessive repression, led to the adoption of theatre for the mobilization, conscientisation

128 One such a case presented itself in August 1997, when audiences deserted Alex Mukulu, one of Uganda's dramatists ranked 62 on the international scene because they felt what they got from his theatre was not worth the price of his tickets. (This was done by an inside source at the National Theatre) In 1997/98, there also occurred a shift in patronage enjoyed by The Ebonies when one of its most popular TV series, That's Life Mwatu, developed structural inconsistencies. More instances appear in the main research.

district, of 1989 where about 69 civilians were allegedly herded into a stationed rail wagon and suffocated to death by government soldiers. The commander was temporarily relieved of his duties and then re-posted to another station. A similar situation occurred in 1964, following mass riots at Nakulabye, a suburb of Kampala. After the massacre of the civilians, the officer in charge of the operation was transferred, on promotion, to the regional police headquarters in Mbale, Eastern Uganda.

On the economic front, corruption has become like cancer in the Government. Many Ugandans had welcomed the national currency reform of 1987, and were ready to sacrifice for better days ahead. The Government pleaded with the people "to tighten their belts," and the people willingly obeyed. But, in a measure of grim humour and sarcasm similar to that in George Orwell's political satire, Animal Farm, the public suddenly noticed many government officials were not bothering to tighten their own belt, and were instead loosening them. The political cream was growing richer with every improvement of the annual GDP, while many ordinary Ugandans, particularly peasant farmers, were growing poorer. Apparently, 35% of Ugandans today (2001) live below the poverty line, and Uganda still has 52% of its national budget financed by donor/foreign money. Devaluation of the shilling is also recorded to have fallen from 14% in 1987 to 1,400% by 1999. Furthermore, there have been apparent indications that fat jobs in public offices and contracts often go to people from the same region and tribe. The incidents occur despite the existence of the Corruption and Anti-Sectarian Laws the same Government passed a few years back.

132 Reported in the media at the time, the incident was recently referred to in a study by ISIS-WICCE being conducted among victims of rape in the region. See The New Vision newspaper of Tuesday, August 8, 2000, p.15 & 25
133 Samwiri R. Karugire, Roots of Instability in Uganda, Ibid., p 11.
134 H.E Excellency Indian High Commissioner’s Talk at Institute of Certified Public accountants of Uganda (ICPAU) Budget Breakfast, 2000. See also Erich Ogoso Opolot & A. Mutumba Lule, “Uganda Hopes to Clinch $800m Deal with Donors at CG (Consultative Group) Meeting in Kampala” in The East African newspaper, May 14-20 2001, p. 3
135 See Erich Ogoso Opolot & A. Mutumba Lule, “Uganda Hopes to Clinch $800m Deal with Donors at CG (Consultative Group) Meeting in Kampala” in The East African newspaper, May 14-20 2001, Ibid., p. 3. The same source in the same article, however, indicates “Uganda has recorded impressive development, with GDP rising to 6.3 percent in 2000 and inflation kept in check”.
136 Dr. Ezra Suruma, Director of Finance at the NRM Secretariat, quoted by The New Vision newspaper, Saturday 2 December 2000, p. 15
The public's realisation that it was being cheated out on some issues coincided with Government's efforts to broaden the tax base through the introduction of VAT on commercial businesses in 1994. Formal employees were also now required to pay Pay As You Earn (PAYE) tax, in addition to the regular Graduated Tax. But the collection of the taxes, especially the VAT and graduated tax, was not uniform. Some big traders managed to 'escape' VAT, through allegedly bribing the revenue officers. For two days, shop-keepers and wholesalers in Kampala held a sit-down strike. Makerere University dons had staged theirs for "a living wage" earlier, which had ended with threats of dismissal and, later, promises of "a living basket," with some few pairs of trousers and dresses to be supplied on top. With the introduction of private programmes, short courses, and evening classes since 1995, all on a self-sponsorship basis, the situation at Makerere is now different. Most recently, since February 2001, Makerere University, with the help of government, clinched a deal with the Carnegie, SAFEC, and Rockfeller Foundation that aimed at restructuring the university's organisation, operations, and relationship with the larger public. Through the arrangement, Carnegie took to construct and develop certain strategic physical infrastructure like the Department of gender Studies. SAFEC undertook to install and access the ICT facility to the whole university while Rockfeller pledged to integrate the university's teaching, research, and community service programmes in the decentralisation structure. The first phase of the Rockfeller Foundation work strategically coincided with the country's last presidential elections held in March 2001, and a lot of money was allegedly 'dished out for minimal work'; like writing a concept paper for a project research at a rate of US $ 5,000. This stage excludes the pilot study that is itself estimated to be granted "from very little up to a maximum of $ 25,000 (per application) ... Successful pilots will be fully funded for full implementation of up to $100,000".137 Some quarters regard these efforts as strategies for adequately silencing Makerere staff and keep them busy, off national politics.138

137 “Application Guidelines for Funds from JAMAK Com: Makerere University Capacity Building Programme for Decentralisation”, Kampala: Makerere University, January 2001, p. 23
138 The researcher is currently a lecturer at Makerere University, and always hears the comments in informal discussions on the issue.
The threat to social security and political stability reflected in the above socio-economic and political scenarios (outside the most recent) have inspired topical plays among popular theatre groups and dramatists in Uganda. Bakayimbira Dramactors, Impact International, and many of the Kampala-based theatre companies came out with plays on the issues. Within the literary theatre movement, Mary Karooro Okurut produced *The Curse of the Sacred Cow* in 1994. The main question being posed in this parable of a play is: Could it be true that Uganda, our sacred cow, was destined to go back full cycle to the years of self destruction because of material greed and political ambitions of a few individuals? After all, Cedric Watts argues that "a monetary system generates its own contrasting ideology. The ability to acquire wealth (and thus to acquire the power and prestige which wealth brings) may depend on egotism, astuteness, competitiveness, ruthlessness, or even on the success in law breaking. ... But that's the whole trouble with dignity and self-respect ... You just cannot beat the money conspiracy. You can only join it."139

However, having achieved so much in human and socio-political development, there is still no significant pre-occupation with literary quality in theatre as would be expected of a growing economy or a civically-aware population. The priorities of many theatre artists lie elsewhere. Likewise, the local society's appreciation of literature and the arts has not improved. Among the many reasons that may account for the circumstance, one notes that since the 1970s theatre in Uganda has tended to develop more as a commercial enterprise rather than a literary art or social activity. Many theatre groups have been formed with the sole aim of making money.

Secondly, since it came to power, the NRM Government has zealously promoted "science and technology" to an apparent open discouragement of society's independent appreciation of and aspiration towards the arts. In schools, for example, many arts-inclined pupils, either due to peer pressure or at the encouragement of their teachers and parents, offer science subjects in the hope that the future job market is more lucrative among the science professions. While others realise the cut-off points for science courses at

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139 Cedric Watts, *Literature and Money* (Financial Myth and Literary Truth), Ibid., p. 193
universities and tertiary institutions, many fail their exams miserably, and miss out on other university courses they could have easily qualified for had they not been misled.

3. 4. Economic Policies and Social Reforms

3.4.1. The 1972 Economic War in Uganda

Right through to Uganda's political independence in 1962, imperial Britain continued to dominate the country's economy through specific policies similar to those introduced in the region around 1889, and which led to Uganda's formal colonisation through Captain Lugard's battles and negotiations in 1894. As afore-mentioned, the prime reasons for the speedy colonisation, or 'protection,' of Uganda were economic, where the country was designated as another source of cheap labour to produce the raw materials to salvage Britain's producer industries. As soon as Lugard was through with The Battle of Mengo, which he won with mercenary supplies from India, he settled to implement his economic plan. Mahmood Mamdani notes:

In the commercial sector, Britain encouraged the entry of thousands of immigrants from India. Legally barred from owning land, they were purposely channelled into commerce. There were two reasons behind this move. First, Indian merchants who controlled the overseas trade of nineteenth century Zanzibar traded in British commodities. Their penetration into the newly conquered East African inland territories would hence be an extension of the market for British merchandise. Secondly, if the main trading group came from outside the region - from another colony - it would have little historical contact with the colonized masses. The colonized trader learns his nationalism in the market place; his anti-colonialism is a demand for control over the national market. But a non-national trading class which was isolated from the people would fail back on the colonial state for support; it would be politically neutralized. And so it was.140

The co-operative movement of the 1920s and 1930s and the unionist sentiments that led to the trade riots of the late 1940s and 1950s all weakened with the political intrigues and social divisions perpetuated by the sectarian party politics which premised the granting of independence. Hence, as Mamdani continues to document:

In 1962, the year of Independence, the government invited the World Bank to send a mission to Uganda to advise on the drawing up of a development plan. The World Bank, a united front of western imperialist powers, sent a team comprised of 'experts' from a variety of western imperialist countries, chaired by an American agent. The team made three main recommendations. First that everything possible be done to increase output in the commodity-producing sectors, those that produced raw materials for imperialist industries. Secondly, the team recommended that besides earnings from these exports, the government

140 Mahmood Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism A Uganda*, Ibid., p.10. See also Harold S. Morss, *The Indians A Uganda*, Ibid.,
should rely on foreign state and private capital to finance the development plan. Thirdly, the government was asked to encourage the growth of local capitalists actively. All three recommendations were designed to increase the imperialist penetration of Uganda's economy.\textsuperscript{141}

Ironically, the Government's dedication to implement the recommendations to the letter seems to have been the beginning of its economic, and political, downfall. For, according to Mamdhani,

> the more faithfully the government followed the World Bank's economic recommendations, the more it found itself in crises. The year 1969 brought forth a general convulsion, an attack of the disease neocolonialism. Between 1962 and 1969, the government had opened all doors to foreign monopolies and encouraged the production of raw materials for export. The people had worked hard. Twice the amount of coffee was produced in 1969 as in 1962, and 50% more cotton in 1969 than in 1962; and yet there was an economic crisis in 1969. The government was facing a shortage of foreign exchange, although it was exporting more than before. Inexplicably, commodities became scarce, prices rose, and people found it more difficult. Why? Because imperialist exploitation had also increased. While peasants produced more than before, the price of cotton and coffee on the world market went down. As a result foreign exchange earnings from exports declined. At the same time, foreign monopolies began taking more money out of the country than they were bringing in. Without an active political party to organize and channel this discontent, the rightist opposition used the opportunity to try to assassinate the president. The attempt failed, and the regime moved to regain the initiative. For the first time, it tried to reform the system conceived by the World Bank, which it had inherited at Independence. This attempted reform was the 'Move to the Left' of 1970.\textsuperscript{142}

So, when Amin first made his famous declaration of an Economic War in Uganda, it was never totally considered a bad policy nor was it feared it would, in the end, work against him and his Government or dump the country in such an economic abyss and diplomatic crisis. But, different political and social analysts have appraised the economic war differently. On the one hand, are those like Princess Bagaya, one-time Amin's Foreign Minister - the first Ugandan woman ever to hold such a powerful public office - and later his Roving Ambassador, who argue in favour of the overriding principle in the Economic War. She writes:

> When the president had first attained economic power, he had succeeded in "commercialising" the Ugandan mentality - something which the former colonial power had always blocked - but, by 1977, the economy was on the brink of collapse.\textsuperscript{143}

On the other hand, are others like Prof. Mahmood Mamdhani, who think the Economic War was, first and foremost, "the fascist regime's way of rewarding its supporters and expanding its ranks"; second, a trick used by the regime "to identify imperialism with British

\begin{footnotes}
\item[141] Mahmood Mamdhani, \textit{Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda}. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 23
\item[142] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 29
\item[143] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 128
\end{footnotes}
imperialism, and exploitation by local agents with Asian exploitation; and, third, another trick to hide the true political characterisation of fascism hence "allowing the regime to gain temporary support beyond its beneficiaries, especially from small proprietors and parochial nationalists." Among these, the "economic war" created an illusion that some sort of national capitalism could be built in Uganda, thereby giving imperialism a longer lease of life." In political terms, Princess Bagaya records that "the general feeling was that it didn't really matter who replaced Obote; the Ugandan people had suffered so much under Obote's regime that any change of leader and of government was viewed as good cause for hope."

Whatever the case, facts indicate that increased fear and manipulation from some of Amin's own ministers led the economic war policy to assume other, sectarian meanings. Princess Bagaya notes:

when Amin embarked on the first phase of his economic war, the British Asians were given a rigid deadline of three months to leave the country. ... However, disillusionment was to descend with Amin's realization that it was British Banking capital which had been the guiding force behind the Asian assets. This led him into the second phase of the economic war, which was to nationalize British interests (even though one of his first acts when he came to power was to reverse Obote's nationalization measures), while distributing smaller businesses to individual Africans, many of whom were not professional entrepreneurs... the experts who had been given the task of allocating businesses to nationals were replaced by corrupt army officers. Many benefited falsely, acquiring vast riches practically overnight by selling off all the goods in their businesses and then shutting them down. Shops became empty as their new owners had no idea where their stock came from, or how to replace it, and no proper records were being kept. The production and distribution of essential goods fell into disarray, and there was an accompanying breakdown in social services and the professions. Because the Army was demanding a greater share of the handouts, and Amin knew it was imperative for his survival to keep the troops loyal, he formed new committees composed mostly of soldiers to see to the allocation of business enterprises, and shortages of basic commodities and foreign exchange followed.

These scenarios, coupled with the popularist views of the "mafuta mingis" and the "nasorna wa?" meant that the indigenisation and economic war policies worked against the

144 Op.cit., pp 3839
145 Elizabeth Nyabongo, Elizabeth of Tom: The Odyssey of an African Princess, Ibad., p. 89
147 "Mafuta mingi" translates literally as that person overflowing with oil; that is, one who is stinking rich. "Nasoma wa?" (Where did I go to school?) was a term used by those who had gained riches without formal training and employment to highlight their social status. During colonial rule and Obote's Government, formal education was highly valued and its graduates esteemed in society because they could access much of life's pleasures and luxury without financial strain. Most were automatically employed on graduation, and easily got rich by their job salaries and benefits. During the Amin's regime the economy underwent a serious depression and the earnings of salaried employees became useless. Consequently, the prime objective of life, particularly among the youth, became how to make money and enjoy life. The impact of these socio-economic circumstances on Uganda's literary life are highlighted in subsequent chapters.
people in all sectors of life, although Princess Bagaya still notes that "a substantial group of African entrepreneurs did develop which had never been there in the 68 years of colonial rule and the nine years of Obote's rule."\(^{148}\)

Likewise, the Economic War brought significant changes to Uganda's theatre and into the relationship between theatre and its primary market, the audiences. In defence of his policies of indigenising (Africanising) the Ugandan economy and nationalising British business, Amin had declared:

By the time Uganda gained her political independence, her economy, particularly commerce, trade and industry was not at all in the hands of Ugandan citizens... On 4th August 1972, an expulsion order was issued to those non-citizens who were milking the economy of Uganda and the majority of them were British citizens... and Asians... who had the largest concentration in the urban areas of Uganda.\(^{149}\)

Indeed, as already pointed out, the British and Asians were not only controlling commerce, trade, and industry which were Amin's priority areas of indigenisation. Expatriates were also to be found in the medical, education, social, and 'cultural' areas. The discussion on the National Theatre and other issues related to its establishment has belaboured the point enough. After their expulsion however, theatre in Uganda was never the same again or 'liberated' as would have been expected. Like in other public establishments and businesses, it was mostly the British and Asian capital and patronage that had facilitated the introduction and cultivation of formal theatre and the cinema culture in Uganda.

Naturally, therefore, there occurred an organisational and commercial vacuum once the foreign business proprietors departed. More destructive, however, was the whirlwind of commercialisation that hit theatre throughout the 1970s, and which still dictates its activities. Commenting on the after mirth of Amin's expulsion orders to expatriates and the intensification of his dictatorial governance, Rose Mboowa records:

By way of a general statement on the state of theatre in Uganda, one can say that Amin's expulsion of Asians in 1972 greatly changed the direction of theatre by bringing in the commercial element. Having emptied the theatre of expatriate groups, this ushered in the new unskilled theatre practitioner who was zealous to discover and enjoy the privileges long denied him. He also found that he could

\(^{148}\) Ibid., p. 125  
supplement his livelihood by way of the assurance of a regular audience who had no other entertainment option after the banning of the Buganda Express Football Club in 1975.\(^\text{150}\)

The theatre may have discarded the ‘colonial’ chains, mostly in the way of its production and consumption, but certainly not from its concept and form. To a great extent, Western modes of theatre continued to manifest their presence and usage through, for example, the adherence to the proscenium-arch stage, the curtain, and the Box Office, although the business side followed the trend the other commercial ventures in the country took.

The more serious consequences of Amin’s Economic War policies on theatre in Uganda are apparent in the theatre’s retrogressive growth in form and content. With the unskilled theatre practitioner now in control, theatre embraced in its form and content the general market trends largely dictated by the desires of the audience. The market trends which informed the theatre producers’ decision of what to produce were themselves built on the practice of “magendo” (black market) and smuggling and controlled by the “mafuta mingi” and “nasoma wa?” Morals in the public had sunk deeper to applaud open prostitution and womanising as ways of enjoying life. This kind of environment fanned the theatre producers’ pursuit of cash as it did the audience’s desire for something sensuously fulfilling. Critical dramatists no longer had a voice or following in theatre. Rose Mbowa recalls:

In this situation many plays were created and produced in a hurry. They were mainly escapist domestic and social farces complemented with music in the popular or traditional genres. Thematically, they depicted prostitution, corruption, giddy youngsters, city playboys and credulous young girls. The influence of the video also brought on stage speeding cars, helicopters and aeroplanes alongside the stage action.\(^\text{51}\)

Theatre producers were out to sell their products profitably and as extensively as they could. That was the only way they could survive economically as individuals.

Because the theatre practitioners had put themselves completely in the hands of their patrons, they could not now pull out. They had to continue to pander to the whims of the audiences, if only for their economic survival that was, ironically, their physical degeneration


and the destruction of their artistic creativity as well. In his play, *Majangwa*, Robert Serumaga highlights this very situation in the metaphorical existence of Majangwa and Nakirija as the artist and art, respectively:

> I was mad, Majangwa. How did I ever let you make such a public exhibition of us? At Nakulabye market... Katwe market, lunch time. A few strokes of the drum and that depraved crowd forming about us like so many flies around a festering wound, clutching their cocks, mouths open, like interlocked dogs... Five lousy shillings in your pocket and your trousers would go down... and I in my silly spell would prepare to receive you... right down on the concrete, before those gaping eyes to give pleasure to the crowd... after that we had no strength against the audience. We had to beg. Do as asked. What else?... Yes, we were the pus of a very diseased society,... [no] we were the wound; the opening through which society got rid of its excess pus.... Behind us the forest. In front of us, the road. No destiny, and a long way from both the beginning and the end.\(^{152}\)

**Without realising it**, the market had taken significant reign over what could be produced in theatre. It had not only managed to change the form, content, and structure of theatre; it had also broadened its roles and diversified its venues (places) and avenues of consumption. As earlier noted, Rose Mbowa records that the number of theatre groups in the country rose steadily from 20 in 1970, 80 in 1977, 131 in 1980, and 250 in 1985. Cinema halls, bars, nightclubs, sand beaches, stadia, and even church halls were, over the years, converted into performance milieux to meet the ever-rising demand. The picture happens to be slightly different today, with less than 20 regular theatre companies in the country although over 600 groups are currently registered.\(^ {153}\)

### 3.4. 2. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS)

Since 1981, Uganda has implemented structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) aimed at correcting "severe macro-economic imbalances that stemmed from a combination of external shocks, civil strife and distortions in the market due to poor policies".\(^ {154}\) However, the successful restructuring of the national economy through SAPs began with the Economic Recovery Programme launched in 1987. Since 1996, Uganda's economy is said to have stabilised at around 7% annual growth rate. Yet Uganda is far from being described as a rich economy, and it shall perhaps take some more years before such a state of development is realised. While there are visible signs of an increase in the size of the local

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\(^{152}\) Robert Serumaga, *Majangwa*, ibid., pp 12-13, 14-15, 31

\(^{153}\) Interview with Augustine Bazaale, then Stage Manager at National Theatre, Kampala, August 1998

middle class peasants are still the majority. Furthermore, the gap between the rich and the poor is not decreasing, at least not at the same rate as the rich are growing richer. Hence decisions to invest in capital business or to spend on individual wants like theatre are still negligible.

On the other hand, market liberalisation and other economic restructuring policies experimented upon in the country since the close of 1960s have liberalised and monetised the Ugandan public but, to an extent, killed social enterprise. The drive towards a capitalist economy has tended to proliferate the country's theatre industry, instead of the coveted reverse, Uganda's theatre companies are young, and have barely completely and successfully evolved from enterprise formation phase to start thinking in terms of profitable capitalism. Not many would be willing, or even able, to risk commercial losses, in a row, in sacrifice for professionalism and consolidation of business. Not even synergic strategies are currently able to enhance the performance of theatre companies or save them from liquidation. Andrew Benon Kibuka of Bakayimbira Dramactors and Alex Mukulu of Impact International tried it once with unpleasant results. Both companies are now no longer involved with regular theatre, having opted "to retire from active theatre." 155

Therefore, market and economic challenges to Uganda's theatre are ever increasing. Theatre artists have been caught up in the web of competition for audiences with each other and with the amusement forms of entertainment and the other media offering cheaper and more sensational leisure. A large commercial goal now overshadows the social and literally commitment of theatre producers that they have turned all their physical, human, and artistic capital into saleable commodities, bearing different price tags, according to affordability levels among their prospective markets. In such instances, it is difficult for one to imagine that the artists and theatre proprietors would commit themselves to the more acknowledged roles of theatre, that would preserve it as literature, an honourable profession, and a social art.

155 "Retirement" is the word theatre groups use to describe their exit from mainstream theatre. Impact International "retired" in July 1997 and Bakayimbira Dramactors in June 2000. The two theatre companies have since occasionally popped out of retirement with public, and commercial performances!
In his election manifesto of 1996, titled, **Tackling the Tasks Ahead,** Museveni asserted:

> The liberalisation policies will also help create more jobs through foreign and local investment. Therefore, my medicine for unemployment is to create more jobs by continuing to attract both local and foreign investors through a liberal economic atmosphere in which they can make healthy profit and also employ our people.156

Museveni’s arguments are collaborated among others by Alexander N. Tumanov, who states that "...there is no other way out of the situation, since without all sorts of business people the transition to a market economy is impossible..."157 However, it still looks that at this stage of Uganda’s economic development, successful scores of liberalisation in theatre are at best reflected in the seemingly big quantities of groups and performances other than in the quality of the theatre. Theatre planning, management, promotion, and distribution are processes theatre producers either ignore or carry out when and where it is really necessary.

Furthermore, facts show that privatised enterprises, of which Uganda’s theatre is now one, usually become individualised in nature and can easily adopt monopolistic tendencies. They are also not easily monitored or controlled by the people they seek to serve. In the case of most consumer services, efficiency comes through competition from rival companies. Apparently, however, theatre as an art, profession, and ‘social service cannot be successfully controlled by market forces, especially in societies like Uganda, where the audiences’ tastes and wants are still evolving, their power to demand still low, and their accessibility of social and other services still poor.

It would seem, therefore, that theatre is one sector the Government may still want to patronise, however financially costly such a venture is likely to be. In the long run, such an investment is likely to offer the most secure foundation for industrial development and a stable market economy. For, as Nigel Forde says,

> the influence of the creative artist on the human soul, the human will, the human outlook, is incalculably great, either for good or ill...he sees the truth and he speaks it, however uncomfortable it may be.

156 **Yoweri Kaguta Museveni,** *Tackling the Tasks Ahead,* (Election Manifesto), 1996. See also **Yoweri Kaguta Museveni,** *What is Africa’s Problem?* Kampala: NRM Publications, 1992, especially 199-269

Sometimes the world screams back at him and sometimes it sits shamefaced and silent...sometimes the artist is a doctor to the world, pointing out diseases and making a prognosis...sometimes he is a guide and philosopher, taking you on strange and beautiful journeys to places you would never have found on your own. Sometimes he is a down and can show you reasons for laughter and delight. Sometimes he is a teacher—though never without one of the other qualities as well—and sometimes even a healer. (Italicising mine)

3. 4. 3. The Era of Aid Agencies and Development NGOs

Certainly aware of the potential of TFD, as a method towards the development of a particular society and its people, as well as its inherent limitations, Eckhard Breitinger and Rose Mbowa noted:

Participatory planning, active involvement, identification with project objectives, these are the catch-words ascribed to Theatre for Development as a new strategy in development policies. But it is quite possible that a performance presents only a fiction of participatory planning or autonomous, self-controlled project implementation. It all depends on the communicative situation that reigns the relationship between the initiators of the play, the performers and the target audience on the one hand, and the inventors, the activists and the target group of the real project on the other hand. It makes quite a difference, whether the inventors of the play and the inventors of the intended project are identical or not, whether the actors in the play will be the activists in the real project, whether the spectators of the play will be the beneficiaries of the project. Therefore, it is quite important, whether conception, performance, implementation are locally designed by the people concerned—i.e. the intended beneficiaries of the project—or whether the idea for the play or the project was conceived externally, somewhere in a government office or in an international aid organisation, and the local people are just watching a performance, and later on, become recipients of project benefits if any.

It certainly remains debatable whether or not the ordinary citizen, in such massive mobilisation and multi-pronged organisation, is able to meaningfully participate and successfully engage in discussions of broader national and global issues like development, politics, market liberalisation, and debt relief. It is mostly a fact that ordinary people neither understand their own placing in history nor have great interest for issues that barely improve their daily life. The people’s attitudes and behaviour, social values, and norms are also no small or insignificant tasks for promoters of development theatre to deal with. Hence the heavy investment in the form, right from the drawing board through to the project’s evaluation and follow-up processes.

On the side of art, one notes that TFD projects are jointly ‘owned’ by the communities involved, the facilitators of the theatrical process, the providers or donors of the finances.

158 Nigel Forde, Theatrecraft, Ibid., pp 15-16
and the forces, organizational or personal, behind the projects. Likewise, the projects' successes and failures are enjoyed or born respectively by all involved. So are the theatrical processes and experiences. Rarely, too, do the ideas, themes, and final productions eventually become the property of individuals, even when individuals who initiated the idea could be easily identified. In the final analysis, no-one is directly obliged to see to the continuity of development theatre projects as a form of art, as would normally be the case in a community's theatre, commercial theatre, or an individual dramatist's work. Hence development theatre neither usually lives on beyond its intended purpose at a time nor beyond the lives of the targeted participants and spectators.

Secondly, although it tends to integrate the same performance forms as in community theatre within its methodology, development theatre remains an antithesis to the various, and sometimes, appropriate forms of communication and instruction in the respective beneficiary communities. It never invokes all the seriousness, significance, and sense of integration community theatre usually achieves. As is the case in the entertainment and leisure industry, social games, ritual, song, and dance are used by development workers but often as individual items removed from their general social and cultural contexts. The circumcision ritual dance, "Mwaga", might be used in a sensitisation play not as part of the circumcision rite but to celebrate the achievements of the projects. Elsewhere, Eckhard Breitnger and Rose Mbowa have noted:

Many of the practitioners of Theatre for Development utilize elements of Western drama, as well as forms of traditional African performance. Yet the intentions of Theatre for Development activities are often opposite to those of African or Western drama. Traditional forms of performance emphasize the continuity of social and cultural norms, while Theatre for Development aims at effecting social change. Western type of theatre rests on the reconstruction of imagined or fictitious realities, Theatre for Development projects future realities. Its aim is to draft a blue-print for the construction of a new and better environment. In contrast to ritual performance, Theatre for Development emphasizes rational concepts, the cause-and-effect nexus and the logic of empiricism. The conventional educative theatre concept of "learning by acting" is extended to learning by acting and experimenting with real action.160

Other issues at variance in development theatre as a social art, a profession, and a self-supporting enterprise lie in the nature of the theatre's general organisation, promotion, and distribution. While it is true that TFD and mobilisation theatre have facilitated specific

160 ibid., p. E 11
development processes in Uganda, it is also true that development theatre has cultivated principles that are not necessarily helping the country's theatre industry and its development. TFD and its sub-forms of mobilisation, education, and conscientisation theatre are largely 'free', the only requirement of the 'audiences' cum beneficiaries of the theatre being their physical availability and willingness to participate fully in the process of making and managing the theatre. In other words, the audiences or beneficiaries are expected to donate their time, will, and energy to the production process while the financiers provide the money and other logistical resources, like staff, transportation of the facilitators and the performers, payment of token fees to core performers, if not already part of the beneficiary community, and sometimes, see to the hospitality costs of all the performers. Such a practice that is initially intended to help, and not to burden, the beneficiary communities, has no provisions, even in the shorter run, for self-sustenance. Instead, it promotes an instance of speculation among communities, and ends up making them psychologically and physically parasitic on external aid, hence perpetuating the dependency syndrome. Naturally, the communities wait upon another opportunity when the same development project shall return to the area or another one be born. Rarely do the communities propel themselves into broader self-help and development initiatives. Sometimes, the most opportunistic individuals among the initial project beneficiaries would mobilise others into similar theatre performances on purely materialistic grounds.

To some theatre practitioners, the initial project acts as an eye-opener and a launching platform into the lucrative side of business within development theatre. Often, the opportunity is ceased upon not to strengthen the theatre profession or consolidate the development project but, rather, to consolidate their own financial base. The practitioners become 'community theatre consultants' and enter into partnership with the sponsoring agency, with more or less fixed 'fees' or salary, irrespective of whether or not they identify with the needs and desires of intended beneficiary communities, now conveniently described as 'target' communities. Sometimes, too, project evaluation and follow-up programmes last longer than the actual projects.
In communities which receive more than one development project, the beneficiaries are perpetually under the obligation of facilitating the implementation of other people's programmes, leaving them little or no time at all to carry on with their usual occupations, like gardening, participation in social clubs, etc. Besides, with increased donor participation, each donor wanting to create an independent and consolidated impact on the local scene, development initiatives have, sometimes, confused the beneficiaries, not knowing where to focus with each NGO coming with a different programme and message. Other areas never receive any of development projects under the pretext of either being socially insecure or better advantaged than the beneficiary communities. The real reason, however, is that it is usually expensive to run 'free' projects in areas that are not easily accessible by road.

Aid agencies and development NGOs continue to affect theatre's growth in two main ways. Some development partners have directly invested in culture, especially the theatre mode, as a way of facilitating and/or enhancing democratic governance, for example SIDA, British Council, Alliance Francaise, and NORAD. On the other hand, development partners and Aid agencies have helped finance activities of development NGOs where the NGOs list or use theatre as a means of reaching out to their beneficiaries. Consequently, many NGOs front TFD as a method of work. If so many TFD projects by different NGOs are funded there shall be as many TFD theatre groups and trainers going to the communities. The question, however, remains: Is the boost in theatre standards, ethics and value equally tremendous?