THEATRE AND THE MARKET IN UGANDA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THEATRE PLANNING AND MARKETING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC DANCE AND DRAMA OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

AUGUST 2001
Declaration

I, MERCY MIREMBE NTANGAARE, declare that this study is a result of my own effort and that it has not been submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) in another University.

SIGNED: ........................................

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DATE: 31st August, 2001

Makerere University, Kampala
Approval/Certification

I certify that MRS. MERCY MIREMBE NTANGAARE, Registration Number 97/HD/1085, conducted this study entitled, "Theatre and the Market in Uganda", under my supervision.

I certify that this thesis is an original submission and the work of Mrs. Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare.

I, therefore, recommend Mrs. Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare's thesis for submission to the Director, School of Postgraduate Studies, Makerere University, in fulfillment of the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) in Theatre Planning and Marketing of Makerere University.

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Date: 31 August 2001
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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my dearest husband and friend, John Bosco Ntangaare, and to the theatre fraternity in Uganda.
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Abstract

Most times, theatre is understood to mean the performance of plays or drama before a paying audience. The present study conceives theatre not only as drama or plays, for or not for commercial purposes, but also as a profession and a career. Theatre is an industry, and like all industries it undertakes the production, distribution, and or marketing processes. Theatre is made by people for people in order to meet their special needs, wants, and demands. This exchange of ideas and pleasure of necessity brings in issues of commerce and payment. That is how and when theatre begins to relate to the market, and its inherent forces of demand and supply.

In practice, theatre must meet the general expectations of its consumers, leaving the specifics to be met by the theatre’s different forms and presentations. Whether the theatre is commercial, educational, mobilisational, or therapeutic its basic aim remains one: to meet the needs and expectations of its audiences. In most cases, theatre audiences constitute the industry’s primary market, and, consequently, dictate the nature and design of theatre products. Ideally, these processes, as is the case in other industries providing goods and services on the open market, are supposed to be preceded by market research and definition. Inevitably, therefore, theatre is conditioned by characteristics, beliefs, and aspirations of audiences as well as the general environment under which its potential consumers live and the industry operates. Cultural, national, and global issues all come to bear significantly on theatre as an art, a profession, and a social experience. Thus the researcher’s main aim in this study is to establish how the market demands of society affect theatre’s supply in terms of its manufacture (Organisation and management), form and substance (as a product and service), and its consumption (or distribution and marketing).

Chapter One sets the objectives and introduces the main arguments of the study, giving a full concept of theories and facts at the centre of the research. The chapter also offers conventional and contextual definitions of key words and terms used in the research, and highlights the methodology used to gather, code, and analyse the data for the research report. At the end of the chapter is given an overview of the strengths and limitations of the core methods used to gather and analyse data as well as the general constraints to the research process.

Chapter Two contains the literature reviewed in relation to the study. The chapter also discusses the critical theories employed on the research variables, and gives both the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study.

Chapter Three looks at the market forces and demands that have been operational in Uganda’s theatre since the industry’s formal recognition in Uganda in the early 1940s. The chapter plots the history of theatre development in Uganda with particular reference to the impact of colonial policy, literary traditions, post-independence politics,
and economic conditions on theatre's growth and development as an art, a profession, and a business enterprise.

The discussion in Chapter Four is premised on current progressive trends in theatre, which were born of historical circumstances highlighted in the third chapter. Four main constituents of theatre in Uganda have been identified. These are: traditional or community theatre, commercial theatre, education theatre, and development theatre. Festivals have been identified to rotate between traditional theatre and development theatre, depending on where the practitioners place emphasis. On the other hand, the goals and roles of theatre's institutions like the Uganda National Cultural Centre (UNCC), the Uganda Theatrical Groups and Artists Association (UTIGAA), the International Theatre Institute (ITI), etc. have been reviewed in light of specific factors under discussion.

Chapter Five discusses the nature and practice of theatre business in Uganda. Considering the general environment under which theatre survives as a business enterprise in Uganda, the theatre has been found to be mostly commercial in concept and nature. Therefore, the market dictates what to produce, how to produce it, and how to market and/or consume the theatre's products. Consequently, theatre hardly exists as social service, and there is little difference in the marketing of theatre and other consumer commodities on the market. In some instances, theatre practice in Uganda has been observed to abandon conventional methods in favour of market rivalry and blackmail.

Chapter Six highlights challenges and opportunities of doing theatre business in Uganda today. These conditions exist both within and outside the industry, and constitute issues of management and organisation, scholarship, finance, marketing and distribution. The nature and distribution of theatre's primary market—the audiences—are also discussed in relation to their individual or group characteristics. Each major section of the chapter ends with suggestions and or recommendations towards achieving consolidation of the theatre business.

Chapter Seven is the main conclusion to the study. As its title suggests, the chapter aims at knotting together the study's main threads of argument. The main issues raised in each chapter are resolved in relation to the topic of study. An exposition of the theatre's likely future trends in form, content, and business organisation is given as an anecdote to the study.