

## **FROM TEXT TO PERFORMANCE: THE COSTUMIER VERSUS OTHER PERSONNEL IN THE THEATRE**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The basis of this paper lies in the seeming misconception that clothing the actor is the sole responsibility of the costume designer. There are two components associated in the performing arts especially in the theatrical circle; the text and performance. In the text, the playwright puts his ideas together in the literal form and combines, among other things, dramatic elements and spectacle, logically applied to provide a more analytical coordination and also enable the text become intellectually appealing. Though, the onus of interpreting the text to create a character in a performance rests with the director, actor/performer, and designers (costume, make-up, set and light) it is envisaged to be the exclusive duty of the costumier. Using some theories, analysis and interpretation this paper shows how the costumier who, though directly associated with the clothes of performers, achieves this in conjunction with other personnel, especially the light and set designer. Ultimately the study contributes to our understanding of the critical examination for the aesthetic and intellectual intent of a text and the needed collaboration of theatre personnel in creating a believable character. It also makes a contribution to the on-going debates on why some characters are often (mis)represented in some stage/video/film productions.*

**KEYWORDS:** Costume, Theatre, Costumier, Personnel

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the years, performances of various kinds set in different periods have been put on stages across the globe. These range from theatre to dance as well as music. Expectations of enthusiastic audiences during theatrical performances are to a larger extent to witness an aesthetic and intellectual production which does not only entertain but also has the potential to educate and inform. The imprint of theatrical performances is paramount to most theatre practitioners because the thematic concerns of the text apparently bring about social change; hence the need to consider the preparatory stages before feeding the audience.

Even though theatre is believed to be a collaborative art by experienced people, it seems little effort is taken by some practitioners to have an in depth analysis of the text before embarking on the performance. Either through lack of knowledge, inadequate funds, greed or complacency, some personnel work in isolation, causing a lot of blunder during play productions; especially in developing a character. In order to achieve such experience in the theatre, Royce (2004:1) avers

that “we experience art in the most intimate way through the bodies and creative intelligences of performers who have refined themselves and their craft so that they are mediums of presentation and transformation”. It therefore, behooves the theatre artist to translate the written text into visual format using visual elements as Cohen (2000:109) categorizes into three; “scenery, lighting and costume”. These elements cannot be alienated from each other. They must be synchronized to create a character whose colour of costume does not have to struggle with the background of the set. Neither should light give a different interpretation to the costume because of the application of a wrong gel of light. The director’s knowledge of the “playwright’s point of view towards the characters” as well as the actor acknowledging the intent and import of his/her assigned role is a necessary requirement in character development (Wilson 2001:63). This truly underscores the collaborative essence of theatre as personnel who deal with these elements work hand in hand to achieve such an outcome.

Apparently, some designers enter design discussions with diverse viewpoints which are informed, to a larger extent, by their professional practice and previous experiences. Consequently, they come to a compromise on what should constitute the visual piece without consulting the others. This paper, through the analytical methodology therefore examines the role of the costume designer as an individual who achieves his/her aim of creating clothes for a character, in consultation with these personnel, resulting in a successful and aesthetically appealing performance. In the words of Royce (2004: 133), “if the point of art is to move its audience beyond its self, beyond its everyday concerns, to a place where it can glimpse a beauty and truth beyond time, then we must have artists [costumiers] who can take us there.” It is important that to avoid creating questionable characters, theatre artists perform their duties diligently and with critical accent. In this regard all personnel (especially artists in the movie/video sector) should see this proposal as a challenge that needs critical attention in such a fast growing industry.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

### **Theatre: An Art of Collaboration**

An examination of Arnold (2001); Wilson (2001) and Caird (2010) on theatre collaboration points to the needed collaboration that results in a good character presentation. A critical investigation of these scholar’s theoretical and ideological postulations on the concept of character creation also facilitates the idea of integration of specific practitioners as a crucial factor among theatre personnel. Arnold examines the role of the actor as an eminent position that needs all personnel on board. To him: At the center of the theatre is the work of the actor. If everything that was not absolutely necessary to the Theatre were stripped away, we would be left with the actor; a simple playing space, and the audience. The impulse to perform is the essential force of theatre.

The impulse to perform, he stresses, hangs on all other personnel in creating stories for the actor to play; costumes to enhance or define the actor’s body; scenery and light to provide an environment for the action; music and sound to build atmosphere, mood and energy. From

auditioning to the performance therefore is a needed cordiality between the director and the actor so that issues concerning developing character relationship; learning dance sequence; acquiring ascent; identifying speech rhythms; dress and technical rehearsal; scene rehearsal and run-throughs will be easily comprehended by the actor. (Arnold 2001; 349-391)

### **The triangle; Author-Actor-Audience.**

Another pivot of this paper is John Caird's submission in his book *Theatre Craft* (2010), that the core of theatre is a triangular connection between author-actor-audience. And the director's aim and pride lies in effectively achieving this. He mentions that:

...your first task as a director is to learn how to dedicate yourself to the supremacy of the triangle. If you construct the triangle well, it will bear a great deal of weight. If it can't then it stands up without your help it will be the proof of the integrity of your work. If you ignore the triangle or accord it no value, one or two or all, its components parts will turn against you. Directing is therefore considered a collaborative craft that brings together other practitioners to create a theatrical event pivoted by "the triangle of Author, Actor and Audience." (Caird 2010: 227-231)

### **Designer/Director Relationship**

The last leg of our theoretical base, crucial to this paper is the Designer/Director relationship theory which functions in various areas like, space consideration, blocking and style, which originate with Robert Benedetti (1983) that: "theatre practice is a form of alliance." Within the frame of this theory, which tries to encourage inter-personnel relations, or what constitutes good theatre, we find him creating a hypothesis of theatre collaboration which establishes collaboration as a necessary interdependent of the designer and other personnel.

Therefore the script or text analysis is an important aspect or a good springboard for an effective performance. Quoting *Stanislavsky Directs* by Gorchakov, Benedetti, mentions that "solutions to acting problems were inextricable from the scenic design, often cited in a rehearsal; an adjustment in the interpretation of a scene". The actor finding the proper environment in which the action takes place to him largely depends on designers having a good understanding of the action of the scene. To him an actor is more secured and confident of his role:

Once the "correct" design of the action was found, the evolved ground plan and furnishings were reenacted into a complete set and subsequent rehearsals were often on the set usually with lighting and costumes...to consider the environment in which an event occurs is really to consider the event itself from the perspective of space.

The aesthetics of a production is measured by proper coordination and when well activated the set, lighting, costume and action (actor) become one.

With regards blocking of the play he further propose that "it is the set-not the director which will truly block the show." It is therefore the responsibility of the set designer to define a performance context which will maximize rather that distorts communication. To this end he

proposes four qualities for effective designer-director collaboration “(1) the collaboration should be based upon a shared world-view (2) it should proceed from content to form (3) it should be conducted in a dynamic rather than a static mode and (4) we should deal with the material of our collaboration as directly as possible.” There is therefore need for proper recognition of each other’s role as though an independent entity is dependent on the other. For instance a costumier may decide and develop his/her design concept without considering the director’s working image or metaphor and thus use a specific style or work within a period that does not conform to the overall visual expression used by the director. In that way cohesion will not be achieved because the director and costumier will be working at cross purposes. Undoubtedly therefore, there should be a central metaphor that bonds both personnel in their interpretation and representation of a character/s.

### **The Play Text: a Literary Composition that Guides a Performance**

Theatrical experiences, on one hand, begin with the playwright who skillfully craft the play or with improvisation where actors perform without any script, as their guide, but rather act on the spur of the moment. In the text, playwrights put their ideas together in the literal form based on their sources of inspiration characterized with inferred themes. Whereas some ideological underpinnings of the text seek to create awareness on some social vices with a view to change, others seek to project the cultural heritage of a people. Playwrights therefore do not work in a vacuum but draw among others inspiration from socio-cultural conditions, myth, history, legend and folktale as their sources of stimulation.

The literary composition or text is what is achieved usually in scenes, acts or legs punctuated with rich proverbs, idioms and metaphorical nuances of life experiences in its plot. Intuitively, a dramatic text may be described as a way by which playwrights send useful information to readers characterized with dialogue, list of characters and sometimes their role as well as stage directions. Underpinning the text is the language which is the mode of communication from playwrights to readers. In Africa, the issue as to whether plays should be written in the African indigenous languages other than the queen’s language has assumed various dimensions.

This issue is worth debating because the script serves as the basic recipe upon which theatre directors interpret the intents of playwrights for audiences to make meaning. For the text to be academically worthy the playwright;

Has to edit, abridge, condense, give direction and shape, and expunge. At the same time he must bring out the point of view from which he looks at the happenings of real life. The point of view may crystallize as a moral vision approving or disapproving certain kinds of attitudes or actions (Meunier 1993: viii)

The playwright, naturally, tries to adhere to the conventional plot sequence of a well-designed dramatic work moving steadily from the exposition, to the rising action, climax, through to the falling action where issues are resolved. The concept of text to performance paves way for interpretation on stage; for which understanding the script becomes paramount. Interpretation in the words of Waincoat and Fletcher (2010:138) “is creating meaning beyond what is literal or

obvious in the text” And this is where the script or text goes through extensive analysis and interpretation with regard theme/s; plot/s; character/characterization; setting; conflicts; suspense as well as examining the asides, the soliloquys, dramatic ironies and conspiracies as the performance basis for all the personnel.

### **The Performance**

Among the varied reasons for bringing the literary text to ‘life’ is to make it more accessible to a wider audience where the text is considered the primary source and the performance, a secondary. Leach (2008:6) defines performance as:

any piece of behavior/doing/action which is in some way marked off, or framed is a performance. The framing enables us to comprehend it as an entity, and we can think about it in clear terms, such as *where* it happens, *who* is present, how the performance unfolds and perhaps *what* is its purpose, or indeed whether it has a purpose.

Embodied in this enlightenment are the various elements that make a performance to be situated in the theatrical domain. The performance creates an avenue where actors portray the emotions of characters with gestures and verbal communication of culturally diverse meaning for enthusiastic audiences. Here, the actor must not only imitate what he is being taught but should make the effort to achieve the “beauty” in acting. Furthermore, it is also an opportunity for actors to perform to reach their ultimate goal of bringing the character to life through his/her idiosyncrasies, mannerisms, tastes and so on. Royce (2004:6) admits that “to be able to perform consistently at the highest levels, performers in all genres must have mastered the technique of their art to the point where they are freed to think about interpretation and perhaps transparency”. Royce’s enlightenment brings to the fore the need for constant practicing which is a key factor not only in theatrical circles but in all forms of performances. When diligently applied the actor is able to:

transmit a heightened sense of life to the audience. As the actor opens up to greater emotional and sensory awareness, the audience members also experience a heightened awareness. The actor is able to project a sense of character life across the stage space and the auditorium space to reach the audience. The actors invent a world onstage that audience members may also inhabit through their imagination. (Arnold 2001; 347)

The actor reveals dual representation of himself and the character stepping back from the performance to see himself as an audience member in order to make the necessary adjustments and modifications. Significantly, a performance to some extent goes beyond the content of the text in diverse ways.

In some cases, however, there is over embellishment on the part of theatre practitioners with regard to the spectacle and these sometimes make the text to lose its essence. In other circumstances the directorial concept employed in the interpretation may distort the form of the text, apparently changing a tragedy to comedy. It is against these practical backgrounds that some theatre professional do not consider performances as important as the text. Remarkably,

whereas Aristotle places emphasis on the text, Zeami Motokiyo, emphasizes actor training as a critical aspect in theatrical discourse.

The Nigerian dramatist, Osofisan has noted with great concern that some text especially those in the African context when performed in European countries may lose their African flavour and cites the challenges in the performing of *Once upon Four Robbers* in Europe. Issues such as singing songs with the African accent, dancing, and even finding the right drummers from the white people available were among some of the challenges faced in the production in Northampton.(Osofisan 2001:187-193)

Undoubtedly, interpretation on stage is characterized with enormous challenges. Brockett and Ball (2004:4) succinctly state that “theatre’s second ingredient, the performance, is equally complex. It translates the potential of a script, scenario, or plan into actuality. What the audience usually see when they go to the theatre is the fleshing out of a script or plan through the applied creation of theatrical process”. The complexities involved in performances even with the same actors will not be the same in terms of its total spectacle. Equally, when separate directors direct the same play, there will be multiplicity in the spectacle.

The performance presents the audience to witness the content of the text within some little duration other than reading the text at his/her own pace. Whilst acknowledging that interpretation on stage is associated with some challenges, it is important to note that audience reception and participation helps in further understanding of the script. This is because people learn more after seeing what they have been taught. The forgoing is an impetus for the appreciation of performances as a critical area in complementing some readers understanding. It is in this light that the Department of Theatre and Film Studies of University of Cape Coast as well as the Abibigroma Resident Group, University of Ghana shows performances of literature set books approved by the Ghana Education Service to some Senior High Schools within the country. This leads to the transformation of the pictorial formant in the minds eyes of these students into self-visualization with the aesthetics that come with it. Ultimately this experience is achieved with personnel who have a unified focus and thus work hand in hand for it to be implemented.

Unfortunately some practitioners enter the profession with ulterior motives, exhibiting traits that do not foster well for the needed collaboration and its obvious results. Nonetheless to have an appealing performance that leaves imprints on the minds of the audience, committed artist should lead us on. One personnel in this exploit is the costume designer who takes charge of the clothing of actors in a production.

### **The Costume Designer and the Visual Expressions of the Actor**

Prince and Jackson (1997:203) define costume as “an outfit, including accessories and undergarments, worn by an actor”. This definition touches on the clothes and accessories actors wear including their undergarments. This is because as the actor performs he needs to have the required undergarment to prevent him from exposing his nakedness totally to the audience.

Similarly, Campbell (2004:4) defines costumes as “any kind of clothing, or anything at all worn by a performer, including masks and jewelry”. Campbell unlike Prince and Jackson expands the frontiers of costumes to include anything at all worn by actors on stage. From this, it is deduced that makeup also forms part of costumes because it is worn by actors. Prince and Jackson (1997:208) have argued that stage make up is more than just cosmetics application to the actors face or body. According to them, any cosmetic effect that enhances or changes an actor’s appearance on stage might be described as stage make up. Harrison (1998: 148) defines make up as “the application of grease paints, water based paints, false facial hair, prostheses etc. to alter the appearance of an actor’s face”. From primordial era, make-up has been considered the actors responsibility, nevertheless, in recent times the makeup in most cases forms part of the costumier’s duty implying that the twenty first century costumier does not only focus on the clothes of actors but also sees to the application of makeup on actors bodies. In some instances, separate make-up artists are employed to oversee actor’s makeup.

Costumes in theatrical production communicate a lot of information about the wearer to audiences in a non-verbal form. Through the use of appropriate costumes, the time and place, the occupation and lifestyle, the culture of a group of people, the economic and social status, the mood and atmosphere, as well as gender and age of actors, as well as the period of the play are established. (Kwakyee-Opong 2011:39-40); Dennis 2012:13). For the costumier to be able to interpret the text in order to project the inner spirit of the characters on the stage he/she must read the text for the first time to have a fair idea of the story line. The second reading should be done to identify all the names of characters and their characteristics, age, social and economic conditions among others. A third reading helps the costumier to look at dramatic elements such as plot, conflict as well as textual references that denote specific clothes. The plot helps establish conflict and contrast that are applied by the use of colours. Contrasting colors will indicate group affiliation where members of a fraternity are clearly distinguished from each other.

### **The Production Conference**

The director organizes a production conference where all cast and crew come and know the directorial concept as well as the central metaphor or working image, and also if some necessary adjustments have been made on the text. Subsequent meetings are organized for the designers. The costumier then attends both the production and designers’ conference held by the director for all categories of designers to brainstorm on the design concept of the said production. Here, all designers discuss their possible strengths and weakness and settle on the working theme and/or metaphor, style and the colour scheme for the production (Arnold 2001:381)

### **The Action Chart**

The costumier prepares the action chart which is a table with names of all characters indicating the acts and scenes in which they appear and the number of times they appear. This, when properly done, serves as a guide for the costumier to work effectively because he/she will know who is going on stage at a particular point in time. Another important use of the action chart is that, by it the costumier is able to differentiate actors on stage in a particular scene. It also reveals the time line available for change of costume so that if there is limited time he/she finds a way

out. (Kwakye-Opong2001:20) Either the actor will have to wear two costumes; the immediate one on top of the subsequent one that will be used for the next act or scene. Or two or more wardrobe assistance will be put at a strategic place, back stage, to facilitate fast change. Care must however be taken in the former so that the costume underneath will not be exposed to the audience, because by so doing the illusion will be lost.

### **Colour Chart**

The costumier at this point prepares the colour chart for the production depicting colours of every costume to be worn by actors. As noted by Kwakye-Opong (2001:21-22) “having a good insight into applying colour harmonies help to plan for a pleasant combination”. This graphical representation of all colours helps the costumier to have an idea of how colours of costumes will blend on stage. It also portrays the stage picture scene by scene, and helps differentiate major characters from minor ones. (Dennis 2012:39; Caesar 2012:40; Gordor 2012: 39)

### **Rendering**

The costumier then prepares renderings of characters which shows their intended costumes; in colour, swatches of fabric, footwear and accessories including hand items. This is then presented to the director for consideration and approval. At this stage the costumier must explain to the director the rationale behind the use of every costume and the choice of colours as well. When all corrections have been made on the renderings as per the director’s direction, they are presented at a subsequent production conference where actors get to know the style, silhouette, accessories and the colour of their costumes in relation to their characterization and also become acquainted with them (Arnold 2001:359). The costumier then takes body measurement of actors to serve as a guide in constructing the costumes. Additionally, the body measurements informs the costumier of the number of yards of fabric required, as well as other materials needed for the construction.

### **The Budget /Finished Costumes**

The budget for the production is prepared taking into consideration the costume needs of every actor according to acts and scenes and then submitted to the stage manager. When the budget is approved and funds released, the costumier buys all the items needed and start constructing the costumes as soon as possible. Corrections are done where needed. When the costumes are ready actors are invited to fit them, and where necessary they are asked to move in them (especially actors who have peculiar movements) for the costumier to know if the need of the actor has been accomplished. The costumes are then ironed, labeled with characters names and racked in the costume shop where the play director is also called for further inspection, suggestions and approval.

### **Costume Parade/Technical Dress Rehearsal**

When all is set, a costume parade is held for the costume designer to check the colour scheme, and the stage picture scene by scene to examine them against the directorial concept and whether the visual image has also been accomplished with costume. This is then followed by a dress and technical rehearsal. The technical dress rehearsal is conducted to determine if actors’ needs are



achieved especially with the type of stage used. Scene change is a paramount issue here; hence the costume designer critically observes the various scene changes and whether costumes are right on stage in conformity with the rhythm of the production. Another important reason is for the costumier to examine the costume against the set and light to see whether any of these does not drawn or overshadow the costume. Against these principles therefore all the necessary corrections are effected, confirmed, labelled and racked according to character's role and scenes in which he/she appears, and sent to their corresponding male and female changing rooms. Depending on the number of days the production is running, the costume crew should make it a point to either wash or air the costumes intermittently. This is because when these costumes absorb sweat, they smell and may hinder the actors' ability to deliver appropriately.

### **Costumier and Director**

Modern trends of theatrical performances can not exist without a director supervising and coordinating the work of all personnel involved. Tracing the history of the involvement of directors in theatrical performances, Arnold (2001:372) notes that "the position of the director came into being in the western theatre during the nineteenth century". The director needs to communicate to the costumier how he wants the actors to be on stage i.e. their total appearance in each scene as the dramatic action unfolds. Once the production conference is done and the design concept for the production is known by all, the costume designer starts work immediately. As previously stated the costumier presents her impressions of all characters, in sketches, colour, fabric and texture to the director who must check them against his/her concept, working theme and interpretation of individual character to make funds available for construction.

It is worth noting that costuming the actor even at this initial stage needs a collaboration of the director and the costume designer. Both minds are needed at this level to see if their individual perception of a character agrees with the other. If there are disparities, these are ironed out with regard the analysis and interpretation of characters so that the costumier could start work. The director also organizes periodic conferences with the costumier, as well as conduct occasional check at the costume shop on the costumes to see if everything is on course. There is no specified number of times a director should do this, however, care is taken so that the frequent meetings do not disrupt the time needed by the costume designer to concentrate on his/her work in order to meet deadlines. The costume parade and technical dress rehearsal give the director the opportunity to see his characters on stage to ascertain if they are in line with his analysis and interpretation, and also if the costumier has helped in appropriately costuming the actor.

However, in some cases, directors do their blocking and almost complete with every thing before looking for funds for the costumier to execute his/her duties. This unhealthy practice in most cases creates an avenue for costumiers to work under duress. It is also not surprising that some directors choose to add more actors for the costumier to provide costume even at the eleventh hour, neglecting the fact that those added on are not covered by the budget as well as the working plan. It must be noted that the foregoing does not help the costumier to work with much ease thereby making his/her work very challenging. In other to prevent all these; for the costumier to be imaginative, creative and provide the required character and meet the needs of

actors, there should be an established healthy working environment, and a proper communication relationship between the director and the costume designer. Significantly, the director should not impose his/her ideas on the costumier and vice versa. There should always be a compromise even if conflicting ideas arise.

### **The Costumier versus the Actor**

In acting, an individual assumes the role of a character and for that matter is not seen as an individual with his day to day disposition but rather assumes a different one. For instance a sanguine assuming the role of a melancholy in a performance connotes that the actor must behave as such with all its traits that come with it to define the character. Additionally, the actor's costumes also helps in situating him/her in the context of his role. It is in this respect that Campbell (2004:129) asserts that "costumes depict character. The costume designer is trying to give the actor a home for the character, a place in physical space, a garment that restricts and reveals the actor as it would the character". Costumes depicts character in the sense that when an actor appears on stage his totality should give impression of who he is, the geographical location cultural milieu and the kind of period that the costumier is projecting, as well as the playwrights other provision for the character.

In a sense in developing a character the costume designer is not working out of the vacuum, but he /she is guided by design principles and elements together with some basic but required responsibilities (Lauer 2008: 4-84; Cohen 2000:134-137). The designer also makes sure the actor feels comfortable in the costume, unless otherwise stated by the playwright. As a result when an actor expresses genuine concern about a costume it behooves on the costume designer to treat it as a matter of urgency. This is because the actor is pre-supposed to have read the script and learn about the character, hence he/she might have observed something worth noting that has possibly escaped the costumier. To further make the actor comfortable on stage wardrobe attendance are assigned to actors either as individuals or groups. Actors who have several /very quick changes and thus need special attention are given more than one attendant to take care of them. To this end the actor needs to appreciate the work of the costumier and collaborate with him/her ,when the actor needs to wear prescribed costumes; especially period clothes needed to project the intent of the costumier as well as the playwright (Wilson 2001:363)

Unfortunately, some actors sometimes reject prescribed costumes (particularly tattered costumes) especially when they have some close associates coming to watch the performance, ignoring the important fact that the costumier is not dressing the actor (that individual) but rather the character within defined perimeters. Sometimes some actors claim they reject some costumes because they do not feel comfortable in them. Granted, actors' comfort and their movement on stage should be considered before constructing costumes, "however, this does not allow [the actor] to be finicky and demanding". (Tanner1995:194).

Theatre ethics and collaboration require that the actor finds an amicable way to address such issues. To this end, the costumier must attend rehearsals to familiarize himself/herself with the movements of actors such as jumping, sitting with legs opened, fighting among others; which

serves as a guide in designing and constructing appropriate costumes that meet the need of actors characterization. As indicated in in this paper earlier, during performance the costume are laundered as needed to give costumes the ever fresh smell sensation other than an awful odour which will possibly prevent actors from proper delivery of their lines on stage. In sum, the ability of the actor to deliver his/her lines with much ease depends on the cordial relationship created with the costume designer, seeing him/her, as it were, as the personnel who has an in-depth knowledge about the character's clothes and is ever determined to help the actor play and reveal the character.

### **Costumier versus Lighting Designer**

In the words of Pilbrow (2008: 3) "lighting provides the glue that joins all elements of the production together and thus helps to underline for the audience the full emotion and meaning of the play". The personnel in the theatre charged with this responsibility is called the light designer, who:

...conceives a lighting design out of synthesis of many discrete elements: the play, discussions with the director and other members of the design team as the approach or concept of the production, the characteristics of the theatre building,(lighting positions, control facilities, and wiring system), the scenery and costume designs, the movements and behaviour of the actors, and the available lighting instruments (Cohen 2000: 132).

Pilbrow's elucidation brings to the fore, the importance of lighting in theatrical performances one of the elements that can never be done without, for the reason that it cements all the elements of production together. This is because audience reception for the artistic expressions of the scenic designer, costumiers and that of the actor as he portrays his emotions cannot be witnessed without light in the theatre. In the area of costume, the designer must collaborate with the light designer when creating costumes for individual characters. Significantly, the costumier needs to select his costumes and allow the lighting designer to select the appropriate gel to project the intended illuminating effect. This is necessary because:

Stylized lighting effects are often used to express radical changes of mood or event...Merely by switching from full front to full overhead lighting, for example, a technician can throw a character into silhouette and make her or his figure appear suddenly ominous, grotesque, or isolated. The illumination of an actor with odd lighting colors, such as green, or from odd lighting positions, such as from below, can create mysterious unsettling effects. (Cohen 2000:132)

The blending of two or more coloured light, known as additive mixing, can also alter the colour of fabric, hence the costume. For instance "when red rays overlap with light from a blue filter, the colors are 'added', resulting in a red-violet or magenta hue. A single red colour filter, for example, absorbs all other hues from the spectrum and transmits only red". (Parker et al. 2003:193) Abstract characters such as ghost or death are also best achieved with the use of light

There are, however, instances where costumiers have selected their costumes without involving the lighting designer thereby leading to mishaps in the visual impact. To this end, the lighting designer and the costumier must have an idea of the colours they are using and also put the costumes before the intended gels before any production takes place.

### **Costumier and Scenic Designer**

Every period is associated with unique architectural designs that make it distinct from others and the realm of theatre does not depart from this notion. The scenic designer is responsible for “creating the visual world in which a play unfolds” there-by creating a setting for performers (Wilson 2011: 230). This is because there cannot be any theatrical performance which does not take place in a space. Within the space, the scenic designer creates the world for the action to take place. Some of the sets created can be single, double or multiple. The costumier needs to work with the set designer with regards the period, historical background, setting and the status of the character as captured by the play. The style prevalent at the time will also inform both designers about the shape of the costumes to commensurate the architecture. This is because in instances where costumes such as cartwheel or French farthingale are to be worn by actors, double doors must be provided by the scenic designer to allow the actor walk through with confidence (Barton 1963: 220). Additionally, colours of costumes should harmonize with the set and a conscious effect must be made by the costumier and scenic designer to achieve it. This is vital because: “Like other literary forms of drama, is subdivided according to certain formal distinctions, the traditional subdivisions are tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy.” How does this knowledge affect both designers? To the costume designer, the form will determine the colours to be used. For instance a comic play will need bright colours while tragic plays reflect dull colours. Here care must be taken to work according to the cultural milieu of the play. For instance to the Chinese red means peace whilst Ghanaians, relates red to mourning, aggression, and danger. (Kwakye-Opong 2011:54)

Lauer (2008:12) also postulates:

Meaning and utility are least ambiguous when the relationship between form and content is clear and uncluttered. This is true of both images and objects. When such clarity is achieved, we say that form follows function. In this case form is determined by content and function is a priority.

The form of the play therefore helps the costumier establish the appropriate colours that as well correspond with the set designer’s concepts. And as done with the other designers the costumier arrange for periodic meetings with the set designer to avoid clashes in colours that might drown the costume and hence redefine the characters. For instance a brown set will obviously overpower or absorb costumes with the same background; hence both designer must meet and settle on the appropriate colour scheme that will still project the form of the play. Ideally, at this point the best option for both designers is to consider working with monochrome colours that will clearly distinguish the actor from the set.

## CONCLUSION

The role of playwrights in the performing arts cannot be down played for the reason that they provide theatre practitioners with the eye drop for their artistic work. Interpretation of text on stage leads to the engagement of theatre artists with their skills on board. By interpretation, the actor takes the centre stage in delivering his lines or tells the story. The non verbal components in the story on stage are as important as the verbal, as both help in representing the ideas of the playwright. A key designer whose work is directly associated with the actor is the costumier. Although the costumier's duty is linked to the actor, he/she (costumier) must cooperate greatly with other designers to achieve the intent of costuming the actor. As noted earlier, interpretation on stage is associated with diverse challenges, however, the costumier can minimize or prevent all these problems as he/she relates with other theatrical personnel in a more matured and professional way.

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