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Use of Signs and Symbols as Technique in Dayo Liadi's Selected Choreographic Creative Works

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Abstract:

Contemporary Dance choreography is traceable to the contemporary dance genre in Nigeria and has produced various dance techniques and new sets of dancers. Dayo Liadi is one of the leading dancers/choreographers in the Nigerian dance industry. He uses signs and symbols as a medium of communication to convey significant personal and cultural messages through his choreographic works. However, the audience hardly responds appropriately to the dance presentations and techniques due to their lack of/or knowledge of the dance code in the form of signs and symbols. Hence the need to examine the use of signs and symbols in Dayo Liadi's creative works. This paper adopted the quantitative research method involving participant observation and case study content analysis through previews of selected choreographic films of Dayo Liadi. Major findings revealed that Dayo Liadi uses traditional elements in the application of signs, symbols, movements, space, costumes, props, and music to depict mood and emotion that brings self-fulfilment and self-discovery. The paper recommends that dance practitioners and scholars should replicate the use of signs and symbols as dance techniques to boost understanding and further expansion in the cultural and dance industries in Nigeria.

Keywords: Signs and symbols, techniques, contemporary dance choreography, *olori oko*, and freedom dance

1. Introduction

Historically, the concept and the practice of dance have become prominent and synonymous with various African societies and Nigerian ethnic groups and nationalities for over two hundred and fifty years, especially in the traditional and indigenous societies ahead of pre-slavery and colonial Nigeria (Ross, 2013). According to Olomu (2007), 'dance is as old as mankind, although its origin is lost in antiquity. However, dance is believed to be of divine origin.' The author asserts it to be evident in the myths of the various cultures and nations of the world (26). Thus, dance was a tool that captured and documented the history of the African people, especially the Nigerian people during the slave trade for over four hundred years. Eventually, it was exported to different parts of the world during the slave trade era and flourished extensively up to and during the colonial period (Africana.com). According to Johnson (2010), dance refers to the traditional dance repertoire. Movements exhibited are structured in time, knitted to communicate a particular message, and performed in space, at least depending on the reason or need for the dance (16). Yerima (2016) asserts that 'Dance in Nigeria starts with the notion of crawling as a child or of walking as a man' in as much that 'rhythm' is the key element that makes both activities, that is crawling and walking performances' (20). The author further noted, 'Dance is the bond, the link, the power beyond entertainment, or identity.' (Yerima, 2016:8).

However, due to exposition and cultural changes, African dance is becoming a blend of both African and foreign dance steps, which ultimately birthed new musical dance videos (Ross, 2013). Contemporary dance, which is a dance genre, informed originally by the classical, modern, and jazz styles, has elements from many dance styles. Though closely related to modern dance, it has its own unique style. Contemporary dance is a style of dance that combines different techniques, such as controlled legwork of the ballet, the stresses of the torso, the contract-release, floor work, fall, and discovery, and the improvisation characteristics of modern dance (Wikipedia). Thus, dance technique and movement philosophies employed in contemporary dance include a collection of contemporary ballet, dance improvisation, Graham's technique, Humphrey-Weidman, and the technique of Isadora Duncan, who was the originator and the first dancer to break away from ballet and develop her own dance technique which was more of a natural style, i.e., nature and dance. In addition, contemporary dance also incorporates elements of non-western dance culture, such as the bent knee of the African dance that moves more towards the mother earth (Wikipedia).

One of the dance genres that have become popular in Nigeria is 'Contemporary Dance Choreography'. The origin and history of dance choreography are traceable to the 'Modern dance steps' within Nigeria's various ethnic and cultural groups. Its origin is also linked to the cultural practices of the Nigerian people, with some blending with other people and tribes of the world, which differs from culture to culture and nation to nation. The origin and the development of choreography are traceable to the concept and practice of the African 'dance'. African developmental trend is traceable to a blend of foreign and indigenous dance concepts of the post-colonial cultural practices in Nigeria (Udoka, 2016). Again, the

concept of choreography is modern, and it is borrowed from modern dance concepts. Going by the prevalent definition of choreography, one can safely affirm that the early traditional dance creators did choreography their own way (Bakare, 1994).

Consequently, the development of the contemporary dance genre of choreography has produced a new set of modern dancers who are making waves in the Nigerian dance industry. Thus, one of the major players in the modern dance industry is Dayo Liadi, who remains a leading figure in the Nigerian modern dance genre and, thus, is regarded as a contemporary Nigerian dancer. Dayo Liadi, as a dancer, came into prominence with a combination of self-development, personal determination, and training opportunities offered by the efforts of the French Cultural Centre in 1994 through a workshop focusing on the 'Brumachon Claude Technique'. It introduced young Nigerian dancers to European modern dance steps and the art of blending both innate dance expressions, traditional dance gestures, and a stylized modern dance iconic and frozen movement (academia.edu). The training involved many professional contemporary dancers and choreographers from all over Nigeria, and Dayo Liadi was one of many Nigerian dance artists who attended the workshop.

Thereafter, the technique adopted by Dayo Liadi became controversial among some cultural dance practitioners and theatre arts scholars. The communication level of his style of composition/ technique and concept, which hinges on the blend of foreign dance techniques and local cum traditional movement vocabulary, became the source of controversy. According to Douglas (2006), practitioners and scholars believe that the combination of foreign and traditional dance makes communication a rather onerous task. However, Dayo Liadi's response to contemporary dance in the early 90s in Nigeria was that contemporary dance was not a rebellion against the principle of traditional dance or its movement vocabulary but a synergy of cultures, the merging of the old and new, as well as Western and African. This is the style embraced by Dayo Liadi, which is predominant in his choreographies, using the philosophical concept that elucidates the importance of dancing as a means of communication. Dayo Liadi named it the IJODEE Dance Technique (dancefame.tv).

2. Concept of Signs and Symbols in Creative Works

In general terms, a symbol is a sign, token, or emblem that signifies or represents a particular thing, meaning any form of the symbol is a sign (Wikipedia). Some symbols are single, simple, and direct ideas or actions that are visible and found in our surroundings, like road signs. Sometimes, it could exert incredible emotional power, like the national flag, which is a symbol representing the embodiment of the nation's passions. Also, some symbols signify complex actions, ideas, or emotions more profound than the symbol itself (Wikipedia). A good example is the cross, the symbol of Christ and Christianity as a whole. Whatever form a symbol takes, it can represent a nation, a language, a religion, or an idea. Therefore, signs and symbols are personally and culturally significant as a medium of communication, depending on how and where it is situated.

Therefore, communication is central to any theatrical or dramatic presentation. Communication forms a bond between the audience and performance in any given circumstance(s). Communication is a process of creating signs and symbols by people and for people to understand. It could be verbal or non-verbal, with an intended message in any society. Ugolo (1999) rightly states, 'Dance is a universal medium of communication which needs clarity and precision' (35). Writing on Dance as a means of human communication, Doki (2005) explains the urgency of communication to man thus: Man's quest for meaning and understanding of his social environment has propelled his thinking faculty to appreciate and predict certain actions within his domain, making communication central to his existence (12)

3. The Concept of Semiotics and Its Application to Communication

Unarguably, semiotics is applicable to the mode of communication that could be verbal or non-verbal, and dance is not left out. Here a relationship is established through a medium that is well-embedded in signs and symbols. However, for it to be well-understood, the language of dance: movements, messages, and response by the audience, is needed for proper interpretation, like the semiotics of modern choreography, which is the process of creating signs and symbols (signification) by people and for people to understand. According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, 2020, 'In semiotics, the value of a sign depends on its positions and relations in the system of signification and upon the particular codes being used'.

Semiotics is a wide area in theatre arts. However, modern semiotics draws inspiration from the works of Barthes (1967), who argued that semiotics should expand its scope and concern: '... any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits: images, gestures, musical sounds, objects and the complex association of all these, which from the content ritual, convention or public entertainment; these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification' (9). The author asserts that semiotics embraces all systems of signs and symbols, which includes dance, Keir (1980). Also, that semiotics or semiology is the study of signs, symbols, and signification (Tunner, 1975). Loosely speaking, semiotics is the study of signs. 'What becomes difficult is defining what a sign actually is. When we think of signs, we think of something visual as a signpost' (De Saussure, 1967). However, 'signs' are made up of many different components, such as words, sounds, body language, and context. All these combine to create a visual language that helps to understand (11).

On the other hand, Gormy's (2007) definition seems to be the most widely circulated canonical definition of semiotics; it states that 'semiotics is a science of signs and /or sign systems' (10). Therefore, semiotics is a means of considering anything as a sign and sign system; it has everything as its object. Again the author defines semiotics as an application of linguistic methods to another natural language. This means semiotics is a way of viewing anything as constructed and functioning similarly to language, such as gestures, facial expressions, culinary art, religious rituals, etc. Thus, semiotics is a metaphor for any non-linguistic or metaphorical description of anything as language. Furthermore, Gormy concludes that another definition that is best suited for semiotics is that definition by subject. It regarded semiotics

as a science that is institutionalized by semioticians themselves. The token of the semiotic orientation of a given work to the use of conventional semiotic terminology: sign, code, signification, symbiosis with reference to other semiotic works can best be described as the definition of semiotics as 'that which is called semiotics by the people who call themselves semioticians'.

Modern-day semioticians study not only signs but also how meaning is formed and how people interpret a sign and then draw on cultural or personal experiences to understand a sign. In other words, or in that sense, semiotics is about communication. Pierce (1958), an American and founder of modern semiotics, was more interested in how people made sense of the world and was less concerned with the linguistic aspect of semiotics pioneered by Ferdinand de Saussure, a professor of linguistics. Pierce postulated that signs could be divided into three categories: Icon, Index, and Symbols.

On the other hand, De Saussure (1958) proposed a superstructure of what a sign is. The author states that a sign is a combination of a 'signifier' (significant), the form which the sign takes, and the 'signified' (signify), the concept it represents, which stands for or suggests another idea, visual image, belief, and action or material entity.

Semiotics studies (Tunner, 1975) focus on the relationship between the signifier and the signified. It also takes into account the interpretation of visual cues, body language, sound, and other contextual clues. This allows the brain to continuously create meaning, using sensory input and decode symbols through both denotation and connotation, which is highly applicable to choreography and the response of the audience (Encyclopaedia). Since society is not static, the mass media and issues are not static. Hence, the audience is the content 'valuer'. Thus, symbol can be visualized when one hand is pointed to self, and another hand is pointed to a man. A symbolic message to the other becomes a motif as the images become signification. These signify meaning and representation, thus becoming symbols used in the contemporary dance genre (Eco, 1990).

4. Personal and Career Development of Dayo Liadi's Dance and Choreographic Creative Works

Dayo Liadi was born and brought up in Lagos State, though he hails from Ijebu-Ilesa, Ogun State, South-western Nigeria. Dayo Liadi was a member of Lagos educational Drama group, LED, an educational training project, where he was trained as a cultural dancer. Thereafter, Dayo Liadi became an upcoming choreographer for many theatre companies and troupes before his encounter with the French Cultural Centre. All these events/activities influenced his creativity, which made his works more assessable to his audience now, unlike at the beginning, when his works were imitations of the key features of contemporary dance styles, with no technique of his own (dancefame.tv:2018). At the early stage of his career, Dayo Liadi discovered that there were many influences on Nigerian contemporary dance, including jazz, rock and roll, hip-hop, and traditional dance. Thus, the contemporary dance style of Dayo Liadi could be traced to several influential dance masters like Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and Merce Cunningham. It is implied that certain particular styles have key features popularized by Martha Graham, Limon, and later Merce Cunningham (Kansese, 2015) (dancefame.tv).

Again, Susanne Linke, a great devotee of Martha Graham's technique, inspired Dayo Liadi on key features of movements employed in contemporary dance style, first introduced by the French cultural centre (Dancefame.net). Invariably, Susanne Linke became Dayo Liadi's great inspiration and linked to the contemporary dance style technique through several features like the curving, twisting, and flitting of the spine, abstract gestures, response to gravity, and use of floor work. These were all features peculiar to the contemporary dance style. Dayo Liadi was unaware of the strong link with the technique of the great pioneers of contemporary dance until his encounter with the French Cultural Centre. Also, Dayo Liadi did not understand the theory of choreography because he was schooled in the Act. Unconsciously, Dayo Liadi's theory was exact to the French style that emanated from the age-long template of Martha Graham, Limon, and Cunningham (thenationonline.net). However, Dayo Liadi's encounter with the French Cultural Centre was a big exposure to Susanne Linke, who was a great believer in Michel Fokine's theory of reformation. Most of the creativities of Merce Cunningham are based on this theory of reformation (dancefame.net).

Coincidentally, Dayo Liadi met Susanne Linke in 1999 as a student at the Ecole de Sable (International School of Dance and Choreography) in Toubab dia Law, Senegal. She was one of the teachers but took a special interest in him. Dayo Liadi took part in the creation of her choreography, titled 'Les Coq Est Mort' - meaning 'The Cook is dead' (dancefame.net). Later, Susanne Linke invited Dayo Liadi, after a year, to her place, Essen, in Germany, for rehearsals and a tour with her dance production to the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and the USA in 2002 (thenationonline.net). Also, Susanne Linke single-handedly taught Dayo Liadi her technique on how to create solo dance pieces and extreme contemporary dance pieces through intensive dance and choreography classes. It implies that Susanne Linke mentored Dayo Liadi in the key features to enable him to understand the movement vocabularies embedded in contemporary dance.

Over time, Dayo Liadi has opened the horizon of dancers and choreographers to what is obtainable in the global market with lots of useful movement materials available locally through the establishment of the performing outfit of Ijodee Dance Company branded as 'Ijodee Dance Centre'. The company is a legacy that sprouted from the vision and unflinching ideals of a prolific artiste, Dayo Liadi. It is the physical, practical, and exhibitory branch which, for over two decades, has been dishing non-stop mind-blowing, pulse-racing, exhilarating, and world-class performances within and outside Nigeria. The company has undergone several metamorphoses that have shaped it into what it is today. Even though its members may have changed over the years, the dream of its existence remains the same (academia.edu).

Ijodee Dance Company, through the singular efforts of Adedayo Liadi, is proud of the contributions, energy, and growth of its members, who are also its workforce and artists. Some of these young and vibrant individuals have developed their skills not only in dance but also in administration (dancefame.tv). The company stays true to its ideas which include imparting values in the lives of those who come in contact with it through dance workshops, collaborations, seminars, training, festivals, and performances. To date, the dance company has toured the world, showcasing dance

pieces of international standard. Expectedly, the techniques and style of performances emanating from the dance workshops fall within the style of the founder of the company, Dayo Liadi, which is referred to as the 'Ijodee Dance Technique' (academia.edu). This could best be described as taking from the source and giving back, with added value, a reformed version of the old that is well-recognized worldwide, like the techniques of the pioneers of modern and contemporary dance styles.

Specifically, Dayo Liadi developed his techniques as a fusion of movement vocabularies of western and traditional dances and styles. His dance technique is a creative opposition to the stereotypical style of choreography in African dances, using the body as a medium of expression and as an artwork that can be investigated from two perspectives: as artistic alternates and as a medium of expression that is understood and exploited the body, (Kansese, 2015). Therefore, it implies that Dayo Liadi designed his technique using the fusion of these two styles in most of his choreographies. Invariably, traditional and contemporary dance are two different forms of dance with some peculiarities but becoming combined. The difference largely lies in the style and technique adopted in their presentation during performances.

5. Statement of the Problem

Signs and symbols are used by choreographers in communicating their message(s) to their designated audience. The signs and symbols are divided into movement, space, costume/props, and music. Hence, there is a need for clarity in the use of body movements, shapes, images, and other paraphernalia employed in this style, which is called contemporary dance choreography. Moreover, the audience hardly responds appropriately to the techniques employed by contemporary dance choreography due to their lack of knowledge of the dance codes, which are in the form of signs and symbols. In most cases, they only respond to what they see as entertainment in the performances. Hence, the actual essence of the message in the dance presentation is lost.

Again, as the tradition of modern dance lengthens, its past and current practitioners should recognise the need to create a more substantial context for contemporary work, which is dictated by the demand and needs of time and development. This can be achieved by bringing historical precedents into the present repertory. Therefore, the need to highlight and decode the signs and symbols derived in Dayo Liadi's creative works, which could serve as models for the composition of a good dance piece in the contemporary dance genre, especially in the selected choreographic creative works of Ori, Olori-Okó, Aye Asan, Possession, and Freedom.

6. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the use of signs and symbols as a technique in Dayo Liadi's selected choreographic creative works. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Identify predominant movements, context, and uses of signs and symbols in the selected works of Dayo Liadi
- Identify predominant designs, context, and meaning in the selected works of Dayo Liadi
- Discuss facial expressions, gestures, and objects used as signs and symbols in the selected works of Dayo Liadi
- Discuss the context and uses of objects as signs and symbols in the selected works of Dayo Liadi

7. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research:

- What are the predominant movements, contexts, and uses of signs and symbols in the selected works of Dayo Liadi?
- What are the predominant designs, contexts, and meanings in the selected works of Dayo Liadi?
- What are the facial expressions, gestures, and objects used as signs and symbols in the selected works of Dayo Liadi?
- What are the context and uses of objects as signs and symbols in the selected works of Dayo Liadi?

8. Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research method through participants' observation, and textual content analysis of the case study's selected choreographic creative works through video preview of Ori, Olori-Okó, Aye Asan, Possession, and Freedom. The primary source of data for this study was Dayo Liadi's five selected choreographic creative works. A video content analysis checklist for signs and symbols was developed. Moreover, there was a thorough preview to identify movement, space, costume, props, and music in each of the five selected choreographic creative works, whereby screenshots were captured for illustrations.

9. Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study were gathered by using a video content analysis checklist after a thorough preview of the videos of Dayo Liadi's five selected choreographic creative works, which are: Ori, Olori-Okó, Aye Asan, Possession, and Freedom. The main purpose of analysing the five selected dance performances is to examine the use of signs and symbols, which are expressive properties according to the philosophical and aesthetic theory, in the five selected dance works explored by Dayo Liadi. The analysis is presented in tabulations under the sub-headings: movement, space, costume, props, and music, alongside relevant screenshots, captured as figures.

9.1. Research Question One

What are the predominant movements, contexts, and uses of signs and symbols in the selected works of Dayo Liadi?

S/N	Movement	Context	Uses	Dance Piece	Submissions
1	Staccato movement of the head and neck	To create a confused or chaotic loss of stability. Imbalance of forces.	To communicate unconsciousness	'Ori', Possession, 'Aye Asan'.	Facial expression needed for clarity
2	Staccato movement of the head and leg	Transformation, transition.	Transition between scenes and situations, character development, and personality	In-Imagination Ori, Aye Asan. Possession.	Body postures at every stage need clarity
3	Staccato movement of the whole body	Possession. Trance.	To create hyper action, restlessness possession, or spirituality	Ori, Possession, Olori Oko.	
4	Staccato movement of the trunk	Chaotic state of wind. Unstable	Conjunction and discomfort of the mind	Ori, Possession, Encounter	Body posture need exaggeration
5	Percussive movement of the entire body in a sweep	Possession or Confusion	To create crisis, chaos, climax, loss of strength, or end of show	Possession, Ori, Olori Oko.	Facial expression needed for clarity
6	Percussive movement of the back	Strength, body control, and manipulation	To communicate a high sense of control of the body: physically and spiritually	Olori- Oko, Ori In imagination	Scanty costume required
7	Suspended swing movement of the hand	Appeal, conjuring spirit beings, appeasement, Propitiation, homage, atonement.	Commune with the supernatural being, God, or spiritual world	Olori -Oko Ori, Freedom.	Sometimes hands props are required to expatiate the essence of gesture
8	Swinging movement of leg	Boldness, energy strength: show of power	To express strength in man against confrontation	Ori, In- imagination	Movement at intervals
9	Mid-level swing of the hand	Balance of the body	Aid the distribution of energy or force in the body	All dances	
10	Swing of the whole body	Joyful mood. Celebration.	To express excitement	Ori, Possession	
11	Suspension of the entire body	Strength, agility	To communicate stability, control, and enormous strength	Possession, In- Imagination, Ori.	
12	Suspended movement of the body in folds	Transformation	Spiritual character	Ori.	

Table 1: Predominant Movements, Contexts, and Uses of Signs and Symbols in Dayo Liadi's Selected Works

After close studies and analysis of Dayo Liadi's selected creative works as observed by this researcher, the findings, as revealed in table 1, show that his response to contemporary dance in the early 90s in Nigeria was not a rebellion against the principle of traditional dance or its movement vocabulary, but a synergy of cultures, the merging of the old and new; Western and African. This submission agrees with the submissions of Balanchine (1968), which states, 'in ballet, the response to the past takes a different form whereby working within a tradition and using the accepted vocabulary of movement, with the intention to make an old world art form relevant to a new country' (24).

This finding also partially agrees with Balanchine's (1968) submission, which envisages that the transition from the old to new (Modern), which is the response to the past, requires one to work within the confine of accepted traditional vocabularies. However, switching to a new era, style, or system is a big challenge, which leads to a lack of connection and communication between the performer and the audience. From Laban's (1975) submission, which reemphasizes the fact that the body and soul communicate, it is implied that the body serves as a tool, while the soul represents the spirit within. Here messages are transmitted using the tools to connect with the earth and life in totality. The same phenomenon has been experienced in Nigeria, with the emerging trend of contemporary dance genre, from the ritualistic and principled dance vocabulary of traditional dances that have developed over the centuries, such as the concepts of the use of the

natural movement of the body (own bodies) like walking, breathing, clapping, running, etc., for creativity, to develop their own technique or systems of movements, using shapes, figures, sound, images and among others. All of these concepts, techniques, or systems are incorporated into the dance genre of Dayo Liadi, as presented in table 1.

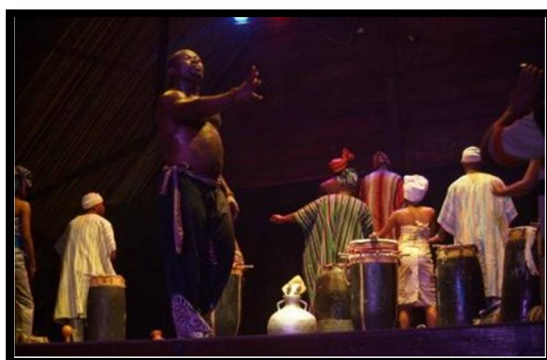


Figure 1: Use of Body Gesture to Articulate the Thematic Preoccupation in the Song 'Olori Oke'
Source: Dayo Liadi, 2017

Therefore, there is also the continuous need for the upgrade of ideas and styles as a reason for the constant change from the aristocratic convention and elaborate codes of steps to the fierceness in gestures of the modern dance vocabulary of the 20th century, just like the American dance became the most renowned of all arts despite its seemingly endless controversies (academia.edu)

9.2. Research Question Two

What are the predominant designs, contexts, and meanings in the selected works of Dayo Liadi?





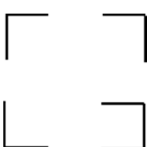

S/N	Design	Context	Meaning	Dance Piece	Submissions
1	 Kinesics' circle	Establishing a setting, local community	Same goal, togetherness	Ori, Olori Oke, Possession.	
2	 Kinesics' curve	Suppleness	To express beauty	Possession, Ori, Freedom.	
3	 Kinesics serpentine	In decision	To express exoticness	Ori; Olori-Oke; In-imagination; Possession; Aye Asan.	
4	 Proxemics' zigzag	Confusion	Search or confused state of mind	Ori, Aye Asan, Possession, In-imagination	
5	 Angle	Viciousness	For Aesthetic effect	Ori, Freedom, Aye Asan, Possession In imagination, Encounter.	
6	 Arc	Incompleteness	Indecision	Ori, Olori Oke, Aye Asan In-imagination, possession.	

Table 2: Predominant Designs, Contexts, and Meanings in Dayo Liadi's Selected Works

Though Dayo Liadi's dance technique seems controversial, it has enormously contributed to the study dance genre in Nigeria. Over the past two decades, professional dancers have been projecting his technique through performances. His technique is also used in training dancers, and workshops, seminars, lectures, and festivals are organised on his dance. Thus, Dayo Liadi has achieved recognition through many works, especially with the dance piece Ori. Also, Dayo Liadi has

changed people's perception of the dance artiste as someone to reckon with and dance as a respected profession. Just as the 1930s constituted a pioneering decade in America, when a handful of visionaries placed ballet in the spotlight (danceus.org), the 1994 experience of the French cultural exchange through organised dance workshops in Nigeria brought the "dance boom" and changed the perspective of dance form as a form of entertainment, that is rigid in vocabulary, with little commercial value, to what it is today in which it is highly commercialized and as such has metaphorically become the salt in the dance industry.

This is an example of what an individual could contribute to developing a profession such as dance. This agrees with what Duncan (Wikipedia), the founder of American modern dance, did with the use of Nietzsche's (springer.com) philosophy on the return to Greek ideals of theatre and glorification of the creative artists while performing barefooted, with loose draped clothing and naturalistic scampering on stage was to express dance aesthetic. St. Denis (www.danceconnectionrochester.com), another renowned American dancer, used glamorous costumes to project the air of mystery on stage, as her individual motif and technique became her contribution to the development of modern dance.



Figure 2: Use of Stick as Signification and Sign of Identity In'olori Oko'
Source: Dayo Liadi, 2017

9.3. Research Question Three

What are the facial expressions, gestures, and objects used as signs and symbols in the selected works of Dayo Liadi?

S/N	Variable	Context	Use	Piece	Submissions
1	Facial expression	True to life represent life	To express an inner feeling in relation to the character played. To enhance an Aesthetic relevance	Ori, In-imagination, Possession, Olori-Oko.	
2	Gestures	Abstracted from real life situation but structured to suit the contemporary style, in an exaggerated but not too far from the real gesture	Body gestures are the main tool of communication. Different gestures according to the thematic preoccupation of each piece	Ori, Olori-Oko, Possession, Aye Asan, In-imagination, Encounter, Freedom.	

Table 3: Facial Expressions, Gestures, and Objects as Signs and Symbols in the Selected Works of Dayo Liadi

Signs and symbols are predominant in Dayo Liadi's language of expression through dance and choreography. Dayo Liadi has choreographed countless dances for over two decades to create awareness for his new style that has become acceptable in other countries. To this end, he has opened the horizon of dancers and choreographers to what is obtainable in the global market with lots of useful movement materials available locally. To this extent, the technique and the style of their performance fall within the style of the founder of the company, Dayo Liadi. This is referred to as the 'Ijodee Dance Technique' through a series of training and dance festivals periodically offered and organised after the establishment of the performing outfit of Ijodee Dance Company branded 'Ijodee Dance Centre'.

Also, Fokine (1942), a firm believer in the communicative power of dance and one of the pioneers of contemporary dance, moved beyond the stereotypical laws and tradition of ballet. The author observed that ballet techniques symbolize nothing, therefore, could be substituted with forms that better express emotions and motifs. At a particular moment, Fokine (1880-1942) believed that tradition often fell out of touch with reality and failed to capture the entire spectrum of human emotions. As a choreographer, Fokine (1914) initiated a reform, shifting the emphasis of movements away from the lower body and towards the body as a whole – a freer use of the arms and torso and a dynamic move where every muscle is used with clever intention. Fokine sought to unify motion with emotion, the body with the

soul, and bring new life to dance as both a language and an art through his philosophical aesthetic theory. His main focus was on aesthetic in creation and appreciation, expressive aesthetic properties that are attached to the work of arts, and like the traditional elements that are symbolic, the perception and attitude, as typified by our case study in his choreographies with the combination of emotion and motion, through artistic experience.

9.4. Research Question Four

What are the context and uses of objects as signs and symbols in the selected works of Dayo Liadi?

S/N	Objects	Context	Uses	Dance	Submissions
1	Sticks	Sign of identity, being in control, in charge.	For signification, To create rhythm, To arrange musical pattern.	Olori Oko, Freedom.	Identity Communication
2	Drum	Cultural identity, symbol of communication.	To summon, to worship, symbol of royalty, authority, and identity	Olori Oko	Identity, communication.
3	Stool	Symbol of rest, seat of power	To communicate the cultural relevance of a traditional stool in man's life, as he continually returns to sit on the stool after many quests and exhaustion, may return to sit or find where to sit	Ori, In- imagination	Rest, station.
4	Flags	Symbols of identity	To represent unity in diversity in Africa	Freedom	Identity
5	Cyclist	Technology	To bring in new innovations in terms of technology and communication	Freedom	Modern life, sophistication.

Table 4: Contexts and Uses of Objects as Signs and Symbols in Dayo Liadi's Selected Works



Figure 3: Use of Drums as Cultural Identity and Symbol of Communication In'olori Oko'
Source: Dayo Liadi, 2017

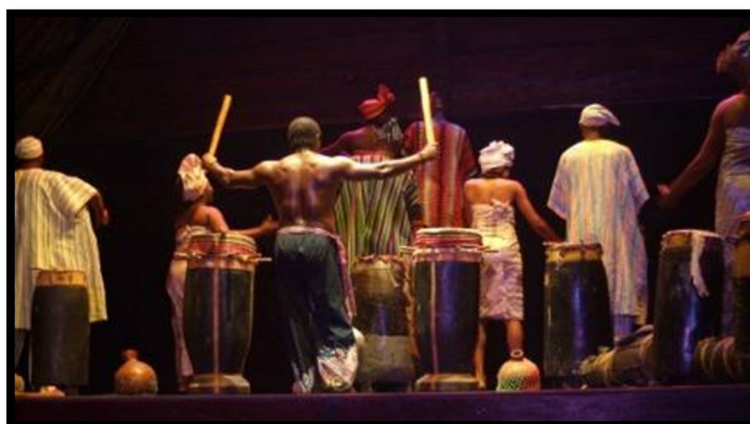


Figure 4: Use of Stick as Motif for Call to Worship in Priesthood In'olori Oko'
Source: Dayo Liadi, 2017

10. Summary of Findings

The summary of findings arising from this study is as follows:

- Dayo Liadi uses traditional elements in the application of movement, which enables dancers and choreographers, in terms of mood and emotion, to go through an exquisite and memorable artistic journey without getting lost either physically or spiritually
- Dayo Liadi, as a choreographer, is the founder of 'Ijodee', in literary terms, meaning "dance has come to life" or simply, 'today's dance'. The dance genre as a concept brings true joy, self-fulfilment, and self-discovery, and unveils a positive and creative mind of the dance artiste's innermost spirit
- Dayo Liadi seeks to unveil the mysteries of African legends and myths through dance movements and expressions composed as contemporary dance for international recognition
- Dayo Liadi, without meddling with traditional African dance as a whole, used the traditional nuances for the benefit of the audience and participants for better communication and understanding through dance and choreography

The content of Dayo Liadi's work dwells strongly on the philosophical and aesthetic theory, focusing on creativity and appreciation of his dance pieces and the use of expressive property in the form of signs and symbols, which are divided into: movement, space, costume, or props and music.

11. Conclusion

Dance has gone through several evolutionary trends since its inception in Africa and other parts of the world. The same trend is prevalent in Nigeria, where Dayo Liadi, a contemporary choreographer, is not left out as he has contributed immensely to the development of dance generally and choreography specifically. Dayo Liadi's choreographies reflect his immediate societal need to express and communicate African cultures through contemporary dance choreography.

In conclusion, it is evident that Dayo's creativity grew wide using various instruments that emerged from the combination of cultural dynamism and modern technology.

12. Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this research, the recommendations are as follows:

- Further documentation of indigenous theatrical concepts and initiates such done in this study should be explored by scholars through academic research in the dance genre of choreography in Nigeria
- The legacies of Dayo Liadi could be replicated by other contemporary choreographers, dance artists, industry promoters, theatrical producers, and scholars to boost further expansion in the cultural and tourism industries in Nigeria
- Dance techniques and styles of Dayo Liadi could be integrated into the theatrical curriculum in the relevant centres, schools, institutes, and departments among Nigeria's higher intuitions

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