Wilberforce Island Review Volume 21, N0 1, March, 2023

Documentation: The Melody and Harmony of Success for Theatre Arts Rites of Passage

Samuel Jackson **UDO**

Abstract
Induction is a norm especially in the Department of Theatre Arts. This rite of passage is always a dexterous blend of melody and harmony, where the playwright skillfully drafts a script, and with the help of a director, and other crew members, the script is given an expertly choreographed transition with the aim of turning the novice inductees into skilled performers. The induction process is rigorous and the rigidity helps in unlocking the inductees' full creative potentials. The documentation of the ephemeral nature of performances and induction processes are inadequate, resulting to scanty literature review on the models of induction ceremony. The study is on the induction documentation and capturing the significance and challenges of induction with the factors that are responsible for the challenges. Using the qualitative research method, the primary data were collected using semi- structured interview, participant observation method and secondary data were collected from textbook and online materials. The theoretical framework is hinged on Performance theory by Richard *Schechner***.** The study concludes that documentation helps in maintaining accurate records of induction activities.
Keywords: Induction, Documentation, Rites of passage, Melody, Harmony

Introduction

Induction is a process where the new artists step into the theatrical spotlight. Therefore, in the journey of creative discovery, induction documentation holds the key. Hence, this study is an induction documentation to discuss the significance and challenges of Theatre Arts induction, from the ethnomusicological perspective. Woolley (2014), submits that, "Documentation serves multiple purposes, including providing a different perspective for artists and allowing audiences to remember and explore performances they may have missed." This study hubs on the 3rd annual induction ceremony, that took place at the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Faculty of Arts and Education, University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State. The ceremony was held on Wednesday 7th of June, 2023 at The University of Africa, Toru-Orua (UAT), Multipurpose Hall by 6pm. Induction is a norm for all the tertiary institution in Nigeria where students enroll for Theatre Arts programme. It is an event where the refreshers are formally welcomed and exposed to the rites of passage as mark of entrance and acceptance into the fold, thus assuming the role of Thespians. Melody is a collection of musical tones grouped together as a single

entity. Harmony are those sounds that are produced when two or more notes are heard simultaneously. For success to be achieved in any composition, harmony must always compliment melodic lines. Harmonization is a beautiful and decorative technique for every finished project and documentation is the preservative techniques for the decorative technique. Induction is a Departmental programme and the metaphorical use of melody and harmony in this context characterizes the functionaries in the performance space both the performer, and the audience coming together in a space for production. Using qualitative research method, the study answered semi- structured interview questions like what are the significance and challenges of induction and the factors that are responsible for the challenges. The theoretical framework is hinged on Performance theory by Richard *Schechner***.** *The theory states that* to perform is to produce valued results. A performer can be an individual or a group of people engaging in a collaborative effort.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is hinged on Performance theory by Richard *Schechner***.** Performance Theory is said to be intricately connected with the practice of Schechner as a director who has staged ancient dramas, plays by Shakespeare, Chekhov, and Brecht at theatres. Schechner is also said to be as a researcher of rituals in different cultures. The theory states thatto perform is to produce valued results. Based on Schechner's analysis, a performer can be an individual or a group of people engaging in a collaborative effort that the end product is to stage a production that will educate, inform and correct. Performances are always expressive in all ramifications. Schechner (2013, p.1212), a University Professor Emeritus at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, writes:

> Performances, whether in the performing arts, sports, popular music, or everyday life consist of ritualized gestures and sounds. Even when we think we're being spontaneous and original, most of what we do and utter has been done and said before by us even. Performing arts frame and mark their presentations, underlining the fact that artistic behavior is not for the first time but enacted by trained persons who take time to prepare and rehearse.

Richard Schechner was one of the first to explore performativity and came to the conclusion that performance is an integral part of life. It accompanies every human interaction: from the expression of emotions at a meeting to the consideration of a criminal case in the courtroom. A person is always involved in playing roles, even if he or she is not aware of it.

Empirical Studies of Documented Induction Programs

It is worthy of note that induction is not just a theatrical affair, other disciplines do instate too. Isdori&Prospery (2023), wrote on the need to document induction and their discussion centered on the role of induction programs for newly employed teachers in improving job performance. They restated that the "inductive programs serve to familiarize newly hired personnel with the company's expectations, performance standards, and organizational culture." They concluded that it is beneficial for individuals to personally acquaint newly hired instructors with their own experiences. Educational Theatre Association demonstrated the need to document induction by publishing models that can be adapted for induction ceremony as follows:

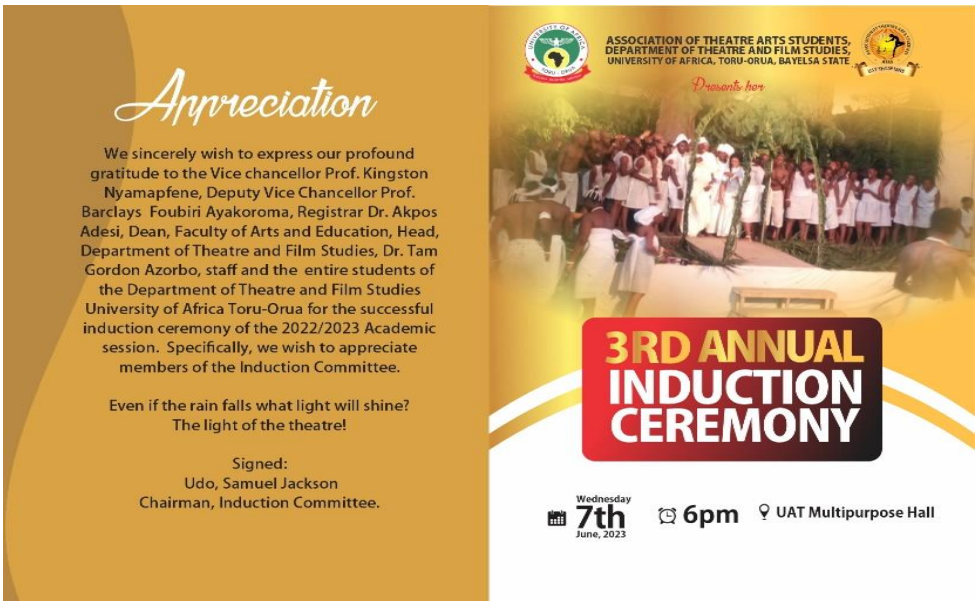
- Standard membership induction ceremony
- Formal membership induction ceremony
- Junior Thespian membership induction ceremony

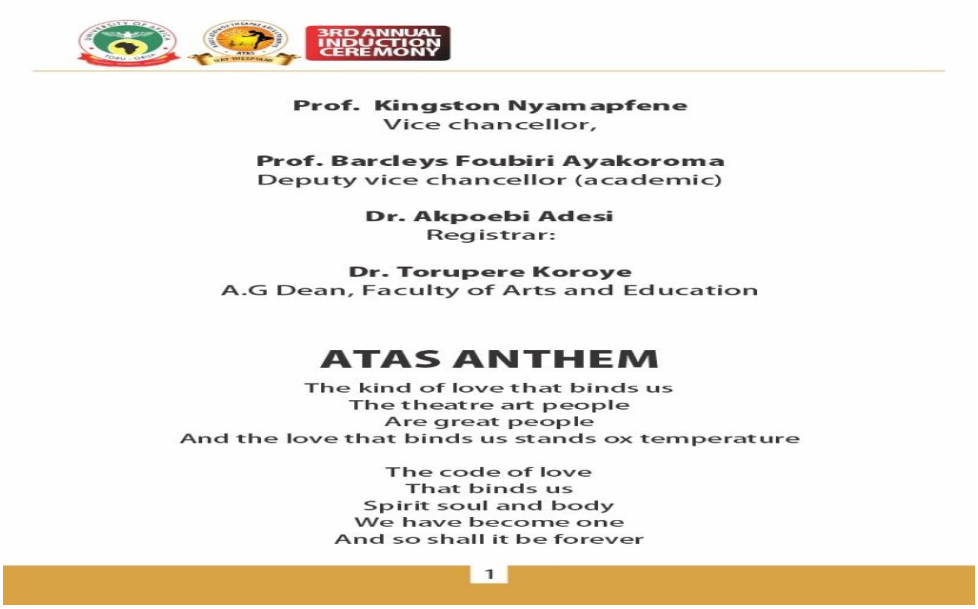
Some thoughts from the authors of Educational Theatre Association, had it that, there is nothing sacred about this ceremony, recommending that the models be considered by the troupe director, as he or she can revise and adapt to suit his or her individual circumstances. In conclusion, they mentioned that an induction ceremony can be part of a general awards night, a short, informal celebration, or a formal event.

Presentation of Data

The data for this study were selected randomly, from the 3rd annual induction program, which comprises the inductee, the dignitaries that graced the occasion, Audience participation and performances.

The Program of the 3rd Induction Ceremony





Source: Association of Theatre Arts Students, UAT (2023).

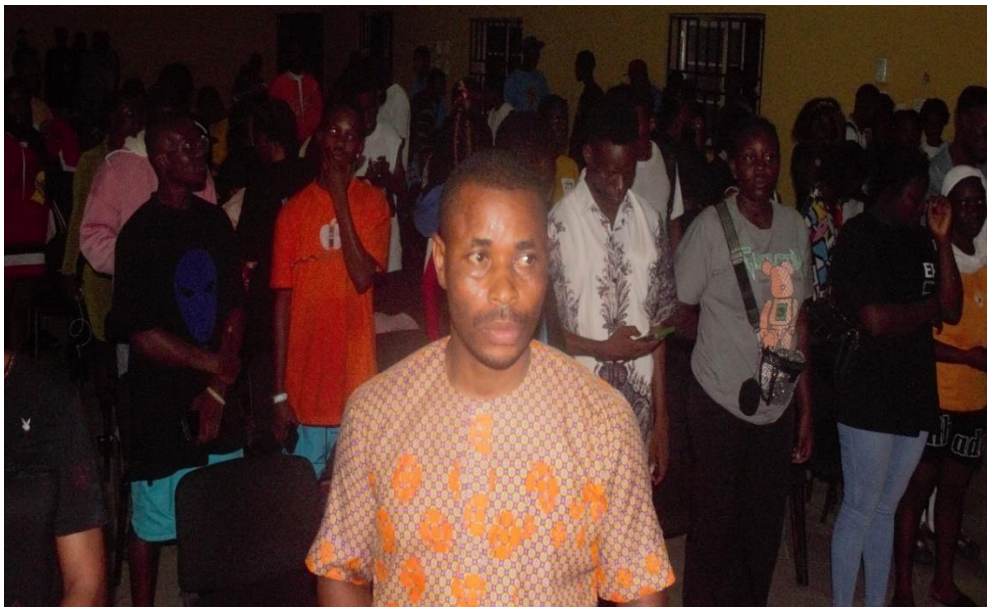

3RD ANNUAL INDUCTION CEREMONY

Program of Event

6pm - Arrival of ATASITES (old and new)
6:30pm - Arrival of HOD and other lecturers
6:40pm - National/atas anthem
7:00pm - Inductee procession to the induction stage
7:30pm - Induction dance by the inductee
7:40pm - Administration of oath to inductee by chief priestess
8:00pm - Induction message by the HOD and formal admission of fresh students into the thespian fold
8:20pm - Franka singing
- Saxophone interlude – Inowei
- Comedy – run of laughter/ Appi performance
- JJ steppers
- South vibe jumans –dance,
- Battle royal –
- Drama skit
- UAT Theatre troup
- Lizzy la que
- Drama skit
- Drinking competition
- Knocking tie, guys tie gele
- Group song fire blaze
8:40pm - vote of thanks by **Samuel Jackson Udo**
9:00pm - closing prayer
Production crew

2

Source: Association of Theatre Arts Students, UAT (2023).



National/ ATAS Anthem to start the Induction Ceremony

Source: Association of Theatre Arts Students, UAT (2023).



Inductee Procession the Induction Stage
Source: Association of Theatre Arts Students, UAT (2023)



Administration of oath to the Inductees by the Chief Priestess
Source: Association of Theatre Arts Students, UAT (2023).

Source: Association of Theatre Arts Students, UAT (2023).





Dance Performances

Source: Association of Theatre Arts Students, UAT (2023)



Certificate presentation by the Deputy Vice Chancellor Prof. Barclays Ayakoroma

Source: Association of Theatre Arts Students, UAT (2023).



Presentation of Certificate by the Dean Faculty of Arts and Education Dr. Koroye to Mr. Bozy Ideri Bozy out gone ATAS President (2020 – 2022)

Source: Association of Theatre Arts Students, UAT (2023).

Data Analysis and Findings

This study presented nineteen (19) pictorial data points from the 3rd induction ceremony of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Faculty of Arts and Education, University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State. The event took place at the University of Africa, Multipurpose Hall on Wednesday 7th of June, 2023. The majority of the photos convey a sense of joy and celebration, indicting a positive and uplifting atmosphere. The dignitaries shown was to capture their support and engagement. The inductee procession and performance photos showcased the departmental harvest of talents and creativity. From the photos, the ceremony successfully conveyed a sense of pride, accomplishment and joy. The photos also show that after the administration of oath to the inductees, the ceremony provided a platform for students to showcase their talent with a range of performances like Music, Drama and Dance among others.

Significance of Documenting Theatre Arts Induction

The data for significance of documenting Theatre Arts induction ceremony was a semi-structured interview discussion between the researcher and his colleague, Mr. Fred Brisibe. Mr. Fred Brisibe is a lecturer at the Department of Theatre and Film studies, Faculty of Arts and Education, University of Africa, Toru- Orua, Bayelsa State.

Interviewer: Mr. Fred, the reason why you are here, is to give us a better insight on the significance of documenting Theatre Arts induction ceremony, thank you for taking the time to honor the invitation.

Mr. Fred: Thank you, Dr Udo for having me here.

Interviewer: Mr. Fred, what is Theatre Arts induction?

Mr. Fred: Theatre Arts induction is an annual ritual usually carried out to induct the fresh students into the Thespian family.

Interviewer: What do you have to say about the significance of documentation of the Theatre Arts induction ceremony?

Mr. Fred: There are many significances of documenting departmental inductions;

1. The documentation of theatre arts induction serves as record of the event and helps to preserve the memories.
2. It helps future generation of theatre Arts students and practitioners to learn about the history and tradition of the induction ceremony.
3. It can be used to promote the ceremony and attract attention to the achievement of the inductees.
4. The photos, videos and written accounts of the ceremony can be shared on social media, websites and other platforms to celebrate the event.
5. It can be used by organizers and participants in evaluating and improving future ceremonies. By reviewing photos, videos, and written materials from past events, they can identify what worked well and what could be improved, leading to a more successful and meaningful induction ceremony in the future.
6. It gives the inductees a sense of history and belonging as the records would also attract them to their root and beginning.
7. Ultimately, it serves as a legacy for the inductees and a thing of pride for them.

Difficulties Encountered during the Induction Process

Documentation offers a history of improvement to future productions and it can also help in improving same ceremony over time. Here are some challenges faced and factors that was responsible for the challenges faced during the 3rd induction ceremony of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies.

1. **Insufficient Funding:** Inadequate funding was a major challenge facing the induction ceremony, as there was no money to construct a standard stage among other challenges.
2. **Inadequate rehearsal:** Although the induction is more of students' affair **not** until the dying minute the inductees did not take their rehearsals seriously.
3. **Limited sponsorship:** the induction ceremony experienced zero external sponsorship.

Recommendations

1. Adequate planning time should be given to the planning of the induction ceremony.
2. A Departmental staff should be part of the induction rehearsals, that way students will be serious.
3. The Department should set up a committee to source for funds.

Conclusion

In conclusion, documentation of all theatrical productions are essential to quality and process control as it help in cutting down duplicated activities, and it also help to increase productivity. The induction process in Theatre Arts rites of passage is a masterful blend of melody and harmony, expertly choreographing the transition of novice artists into skilled performers. Through a symphony of guidance, mentorship and hands-on experience individuals are transformed, unlocking their full creative potential. As they navigate the intricacies of theatre arts, they develop a harmonious balance of technical skill, artistic expression and collaborative spirit. Ultimately, this induction process orchestrates a triumphant rite of passage, culminating in a grand performance that showcases the sweet melody of success, echoing throughout the theatre community. The study recommends that more productions should be documented for future improvement.

References

Asare Bediako and Associates Schechner, Richard (2013). Performance Studies: An Introduction, Third Edition. Taylor & Francis Group. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/mono/10.4324/9780203125168-7/ritual-richard-schechner-richard-schechner

Association of Theatre Arts Students (2023). 3rd Annual Induction Ceremony. (Brochure)

Brisibe, F. (2024). Personal Communication on the Significance of Documentation of Induction Ceremony. (Interview)

Educational Theatre Association retrieved on 16th September, 2024 from https://schooltheatre.org/international-thespian-society/induction-ceremonies/

Isdori C. M. & Prospery, M. M. (2023). Role of induction programs for newly employed teachers in improving job performance. Journal of Educational and Management Studies Volume 13, Issue 4: 49-62. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.54203/jems.2023.6