

Performance Analysis of Yoruba Traditional Beliefs in Lekan Balogun's *Oya (Goddess of whirlwind)*: Art and Cultural Perspectives

Emmanuel Godwin Kalu¹, Babatunde Covenant Olugbenga², Kareem Kolawole Ganiyu³

¹Federal University, Oye-Ekiti

²Department of Theatre Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Osun State. Nigeria

³Department of Performing Arts and Film Studies, Kwara State University, Malete

Email: emmanuel.kalu@fuoye.edu.ng, babatunde_olugbenga@unilesa.edu.ng,

kareem.ganiyu@kwasu.edu.ng

Abstract:

This study explores the interplay of art and cultural dynamics in the Yoruba cosmology, performance analysis of Yoruba traditional beliefs in Lekan Balogun's Oya: Goddess of the whirlwind play. It examines how Oya, Ogun, Sango and Orunmila as deities materialize Yoruba cultural identity and shared values through rituals, myths, incantations, songs, dances, and symbols. Using a qualitative participatory observation method, the research hinges on Richard Schechner's Performance Theory (2003) and Oludanmini Ogunnaike's Yoruba Epistemology (2010) as theoretical frameworks. The research points to the Yoruba universe's dominance in shaping early beliefs, highlighting its central position in ensuring spiritual continuity and social integrity. The research reaffirms the dynamism of Yoruba society, as postulated by Edward B. Tylor, and its adaptability in contemporary pieces of art. Recommendations include further exploring Yoruba performance in the contemporary setting and keeping traditions orally alive to preserve cultural heritage.

Keywords:

Performance analysis, Yoruba, traditional beliefs, arts, cultural perspectives

I. Introduction

Traditional beliefs of the Yoruba people comprises of their traditional religion and spiritual ways of worship. The Yoruba traditional beliefs transcends in their cultural practices. Therefore culture is the way of life of a particular people. Scholars like Edward B. Tylor opine; that culture is dynamic and not a fixed or static entity. Culture as a way of existence of a people has been a bedrock of scholarly research in fields of Arts, humanity, language, history, sociology and literature.

This study examines the interplay of art and culture within Yoruba worldview, exploring the performance analysis of Yoruba traditional beliefs in Lekan Balogun's play Oya. The study further investigate the roles of Yoruba deities like Oya, Ogun, Sango and Orunmila highlighting their roles as a reinforcing metals of Yoruba cultural identity and communal value associated with rituals, myths, incantation, songs, dance and symbols.

Art is the judgment of things that are beautiful. Art is nature; it deals with aesthetic values of human endeavors. Art obviously has correlation with human ancestral beliefs which implies that art is life to human just as culture is the way of life of a particular people. Gyegwe,

Gabriel et al (2016) submits that the term art has a broad sense that may sometimes be confusing as it embrace LS so many areas of human endeavors. This apparently means that art encompasses human day to day activities ranging from the way people eat, dance, dress to the way they cultivate and learn.

Al-Zadjali (2024), observes art as a tool for cultural heritage preservation by stating: the preservation of cultural heritage depends on the Arts. A culture's customs, stories, and symbols are conveyed via traditional art forms including music, dance, and visual arts. Arneil & MacDonald (2016), reports that art initiatives that are collaborative and involves people from different backgrounds have the power to dissolve barriers and boost participation. The above assertions validate the multifaceted role art plays in human society serving as a dynamic catalyst to bridging gaps and preservation of cultural heritage.

Data collection for this study shall be gathered using a Qualitative Participatory observation while harnessing Richard Schechter's Performance Theory (2003) and Oludanmini Ogunnaike's Yoruba Epistemology Theory (2010) as theoretical frameworks to critical analyse the performance of Oya.

The findings reveals that Yoruba cosmos plays a vital role in the traditional beliefs of the Yoruba kingdom as they uphold their deities and respectively pays relevance to their deities as portrayed in the role of Oya in the performance.

II. Research Methods

To ground the analysis of this research, the study has been hinged on Richard Schechter's Performance Theory (2003) and Oludanmini Ogunnaike's Yoruba Epistemology Theory (2010).

2.1 Richard Schechter's Performance Theory

Richard Schechner's Performance Theory is an interdisciplinary perspective that conceptualizes performance as a unifying category that includes not just theatre, but also rituals, social interactions, and cultural practices more generally. Performance, as Schechner describes it, involves "restored behavior" or "twice-behaved behavior," that is, behavior that is itself a performance of some type, a re-doing or re-presenting of some original action, and is more likely than not to possess meaning and value for the participants and viewers. This theory, which incorporates anthropology, theatre studies, and sociology, focuses on the processes of meaning-making, the ways performances create, sustain, manipulate, or shift social and cultural meanings.

2.2 Conceptual Development

Restored Behavior: Not spontaneous; performances are repeated or ritualized behavior selected from cultural memory like Yoruba rituals in *Oya*. Oya's rituals in the play, for instance, such as dances or incantations, function as restored behaviors reminiscent of Yoruba spirituality.

Efficacy and entertainment: Efficacy is a term Schechner uses to describe performances that seek to create a social, spiritual, or transformative effect, for example in Yoruba rituals, as opposed to entertainment, as in theatrical plays. Perhaps *Oya* combines the two, utilizing the medium of theatre to enact cultural and spiritual efficacy.

Performative Events as Cultural Acts: Performances are not just artistic but also social and cultural acts that reinforce collective identity and values. In *Oya*, the dramatization of Yoruba beliefs reinforces cultural identity and spiritual values for Yoruba audiences.

2.3 Theoretical Application

Ritual-as-performance: in *Oya*, Lekan is perhaps utilizing Yoruba rituals (dances, chants, or offerings to Oya) that are in accordance with Schechner's notion of restored behavior. These are ritualized acts to call upon the qualities of the goddess Oya (wind/storms/transformation) and in doing so re-enforce spiritual morals within the Yoruba tradition.

Cultural Preservation: The performance of the play itself becomes a cultural act as Oya's mythos is introduced to contemporary audiences, helping maintain Yoruba identity within a postcolonial reality. Yoruba proverbs or music might, for example, call forth communities as audience members are bound together in a shared cultural resource.

Efficacy in Theatre: Though Oya's story is entertaining, however, the play is efficacious in that it educates the audience about the cosmos of Yoruba belief as well as encouraging... spirituality. The stage space transforms into a liminal ritual space wherein Yoruba social ideals, such as ancestral respect or communal harmony, are reinforced.

In conclusion, applying Schechner's Performance Theory to the analysis of the play, allows for deeper understanding of how the character functions as a cultural performance that is somewhere between theatre and Yoruba ritual practices. It provides the opportunity for the exploration of Lekan's deployment of the components of performance, such as costume, music, and movement, to enact Yoruba spirituality and society – a conversation between traditional belief and modern performance.

2.4 Oludamini Ogunnaike's Yoruba Epistemology

According to Oludamini Ogunnaike Yoruba Epistemology is the Yoruba “system for producing, transmitting, and verifying knowledge” based in part on Yoruba cosmology, oral traditions, and spiritual practices. Yoruba epistemology, according to Ogunnaike, is also integrative, knowledge gained empirically, spiritually, and interpersonally is all important; Yoruba knowledge and values focus on Ifa divination, oral literature (e.g., oriki, proverbs) and Orisa like Oya. Knowledge is seen as not static, but performative and both culturally and spiritually contextualized.

2.5 Conceptual Development

Holistic Knowledge Systems: Yoruba epistemology combines empirical observation, spiritual knowledge, and community knowledge. Knowledge is not merely cerebral but is inculcated in rituals, oral tradition, and performance.

Ifa Divination as Epistemology: Ifa divination provides access to and validation of knowledge in Yoruba existence. It is reading holy texts (odu) and consulting the Orisa, like Oya, for guidance regarding human and cosmological matters.

Orishas as Knowledge Carriers: Orishas like Oya symbolize specific areas of knowledge (e.g., transformation, storms). Oya's position in Yoruba cosmology provides insight into life, death, and change, which are communicated via myths and rituals.

Orality and Performance: Yoruba knowledge is performed delivered through oriki (praise poetry), proverbs, and religious performances. The forms have spiritual and social values, and performance thus becomes a critical epistemological tool.

2.6 Theoretical Application

The Yoruba Epistemology Incorporation: In *Oya*, Lekan incorporated elements of Yoruba epistemology such as proverbs, oriki, or examples citing Ifa divination, to describe Oya's religious significance. For example, dialogue may include oriki that eulogize Oya, illustrating her position as knowledge-bearer goddess.

Ritual as Epistemological Performance: The ritual elements of the play (e.g., dances or invocations) are literally performative acts of knowledge transmission, in line with Yoruba conventions of knowing spiritual things through embodiment in performance.

Oya's Cosmological Role: Oya's attributes (storm, wind, change) symbolize Yoruba ideas of transformation and equilibrium. The plot of the play may symbolize these concerns using Oya's life to define Yoruba epistemological perspectives of death and life.

Cultural Identity and Knowledge: By dramatizing Oya's mythology, the play preserves and transmits Yoruba epistemologies, reiterating cultural identity and religious values for modern-day audiences.

In conclusion, Ogunnaike's scholarly review around Yoruba epistemology gives context to how *Oya* is a vessel for Yoruba knowledge and belief-structure. This permits scholars to consider both the content of the play's narrative and performance, as well as the performance of the play itself as reflective of Yoruba ways of knowing, especially in the case of Oya's spiritual role as well as the employment of oral and ritualistic components. Through this focus, the preservation of Yoruba culture, even within modernity, is of central importance to the play.

III. Results and Discussion

3.1 Performance Analysis

Lekan Balogun's *Oya*, a play performed by group 4 students of the Department of theatre and Media Arts, Federal University Oye-Ekiti as their final year practical project performance and directed by Oluwanifemi Dorcas Olusesan, is a significant work within the epic genre of Yoruba traditional beliefs and cultural practices. This performance analysis examines how Oya (goddess of whirlwind) reflects Yoruba traditional beliefs through its theme, dramatic elements, and cultural aesthetics exploration hinging on arts and cultural perspectives to affirm its engagement with Yoruba cosmology, ritual, and identity.

3.2 Contextual-thematic Engagement with Yoruba Traditional Beliefs

Oya is dedicated to Yoruba goddess Oya, goddess of storms and wind and change, and traditionally one of Sango's wives, the god of thunder, and initially married to Ogun, war god and god of iron. The play highlights her struggle with barrenness, her socio-psychological agony, and her interactions with other gods, such as Orunmila, god of divination. Balogun explicitly used the role of Oya to preach about Yoruba worldviews and culture in reference to the concepts of destiny (ori), divine intervention, and the intersection of human and divine realms.

Yoruba traditional religion is known to evolve around an interdependent cosmology in which material and spiritual realms are interdependent and governed by gods (orisas), ancestors, and the Supreme Being, Olodumare. In *Oya*, this faith is dramatized in the drama of Oya's divine but human-like struggles, which demonstrates Yoruba conceptualization of ase (life force) and gods' power in human affairs. The plot of the drama reinstates omoluabi (an individual of good character) as culturally significant because Oya's search is personal as much as that of society's expectations of fertility, fidelity, and survival. Balogun's portrayal of Oya intersects with Yoruba oral traditions, such as oriki (praise poetry) and itàn (narratives of history), that form the bases of Yoruba performance culture. They are embedded in dialogue and character, both for play realism and in role-playing as a means of cultural preservation. The treatment of Oya's childlessness also highlights Yoruba cultural anxieties regarding ancestry and continuity, at the center of the community's social balance and religious balance.

3.3 Cultural Perspectives and Yoruba Identity

The play *Oya* is a dramatic piece of cultural production that has been used to analyze Yoruba identity in daily life. Through dramatized retellings of Oya's existence, the play emphasizes the Yoruba traditional religious beliefs regarding deities like Sango, Ogun, and Orunmila—each with an underlying focus on a particular cultural value (e.g., Sango's thunderous justice, Ogun's warlike strength, Orunmila's wisdom). Even though the play foregrounds Oya's role as a goddess who battles personal and divine battles, it is more likely to place the theme under the umbrella of the revered role that women have in Yoruba religion, specifically and particularly the very prestigious role of Iyalode, Yoruba female leader. Moreover, *Oya* contributes to cultural conservation by staging Yoruba beliefs in a globalized environment. As in scholarly literature on Yoruba performance and art, these performances are didactic, educating individuals about cultural values and counteract the erosion of indigenous culture under the impacts of modernity. The theatrical presentation inside the Federal University Oye-Ekiti, a significant cultural and academic hub, helps establish its effort towards cultivating cultural consciousness among younger generations.

3.4 Dramatic Elements and Performance Aesthetics

Structure and Plot: *Oya's* plot is a satirical one, being a Yoruba satire play according to reviews of its production at the Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, where it was accorded standing ovations. The action revolves around Oya's battle with abandonment by her husband Ogun due to his warlike ambitions and subsequent meetings with Sango and Orunmila. The system also contains ritualistic elements, such as invocations and divinations, which reflect religious practice in Yoruba religion, such as Ifá divination, whereby priests (babalawos) interpret divine odus (verses) to guide human actions. The rituals drive the action, emphasizing religious content of Yoruba drama.

Characterization: Balogun's characterization of Oya is nuanced, presenting her as both divine and human woman in conflict with societal forces. Her emotional "hysteria" regarding childlessness is reflective of the Yoruba cultural emphasis on reproduction as a marker of identity and wholeness. Orunmila's admonishment of Oya, such as the one that "a woman who desires a child doesn't shut her thighs," silently criticizes gender roles but nods to Yoruba proverbs and wisdom. The staging is true to Balogun's "theory of contradiction," taking from Absurd Theatre but appealing to African mythology, in which ritual silence and music create dramatic tension.

Language and Dialogue: The dialogue in the play is replete with Yoruba proverb, incantation, and metaphor, a witness to the uses of the oral tradition in Yoruba drama.

Balogun's language mediates between the human and divine worlds, since characters like Orunmila use Ifá-influenced rhetoric to express spiritual mandate. Contraposition of Yoruba and English (on stage) bears testimony to the bilingual nature of contemporary Yoruba theatre, accessible without loss of cultural unity.

Music and Movement: In its theatricality, *Oya* employs ritual music typical of Yoruba theatre employed by Balogun to establish the spiritual ambience of Yoruba rituals and festivals. Drumming, chanting, and formal Egúngún (masquerade) performance or orisa worship movement add to the aesthetic value of the play. They are a sensory experience associated with the Yoruba perspective of ase, where art and theatre are vehicles for spiritual energy.

Scenery and Visual Aesthetics: The landscape of the play, possibly a blending of mythic and real locations, is a reflection of the syncretism in Yoruba cosmology's natural features, such as storms and rivers, palaces, and holies, all of which are associated with Oya. Costume, makeup, and props, for example, flowing garments (purple or burgundy) reminiscent of Oya's windy nature or ritual implements used in conjunction with Ifá, constitute a visual reenactment of Yoruba cultural identity. These aesthetics are taken from Yoruba woodcarving and beadwork traditions, which are typically invested with symbolic connotations or meanings.

Oya by Lekan Balogun is considered to be an adventurous journey into the domain of Yoruba traditional beliefs, gloriously harnessed into a bitter-sweet narrative that is both traditional and universal in appeal. The play graphically represents, in its plot, characterisation, diction, and performative aesthetics, the Yoruba cosmology which highlights the interaction of the divine and human spheres of existence and the centrality of ase as well the cultural ethos of omoluabi. In drawing on Yoruba oral narratives, rituals practice and visual language, *Oya* functions as an important vehicle for cultural preservation and education, endowing Yoruba identity with the currency of contemporary life. As a successful staged play ACT, it has firmly entered the canon of Yoruba drama, and is an important text for students and researchers of the work of theatre and performance in the art/spirituality/culture.

3.5 Yoruba Cosmology and Oya's Role: Winds of Change and Ancestral Power

The Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria possess one of the most complex and richly symbolic cosmological systems in West Africa. Their religious beliefs are anchored in a vast pantheon of deities known as òrìṣà, each representing natural forces, human attributes, and divine principles (Idowu, 1994). Among the most powerful and dynamic of these deities is Oya, the orisa of winds, storms, death, rebirth, and the Egungun—the ancestral spirits. Oya occupies a unique and transformative space in Yoruba cosmology, embodying the dualities of destruction and regeneration, transition and continuity (Gleason, 1987). Her influence reaches across the physical and metaphysical realms, making her a critical figure in understanding Yoruba spirituality, particularly as it relates to life, death, and ancestral veneration (Olupona, 2011).

3.6 The Yoruba Cosmological Framework

At the heart of Yoruba cosmology lies a layered understanding of existence; the visible world (ayé), where humans reside, and the invisible world (òrun), the realm of spirits, ancestors, and the divine (Abimbola, 1977). These two realms are interconnected, and their balance is essential for harmony in both the physical and spiritual dimensions. The òrìṣà serve as intermediaries between humans and the supreme deity, Olódùmarè, and each orisa governs

specific aspects of nature and human life (Idowu, 1994; Karade, 1994). Within this sacred order, ancestral reverence is foundational. The Yoruba believe that the dead, especially those who lived honorable lives, continue to exist in òrun and can influence the affairs of the living. These ancestors, known as Egungun, are ritually honored and called upon for guidance, protection, and intervention (Olupona, 2011). The Egungun cult, rich in masked ceremonies and dance, serves as a communal link between past and present (Blier, 2015).

3.7 Oya: Orisa of Winds and Transformation

Oya is often depicted as a fierce and beautiful warrior goddess, closely associated with the Niger River referred to in Yoruba as the Òdò Oya (Gleason, 1987). She is the wife of Sango, the orisha of thunder and lightning, and complements his fiery energy with her turbulent winds and storms (Olaiya, 2023). Oya governs the whirlwind, which is considered a physical manifestation of spiritual disturbance or transformation (Karade, 1994). Her dominion over storms and weather reflects her volatile nature, and her presence often signals imminent change, both destructive and regenerative (Olupona, 2011). Beyond her atmospheric powers, Oya is a guardian of the threshold between life and death. Unlike many other orisha who are tied to one domain, Oya moves fluidly between boundaries between this world and the next, between chaos and order, between past and future (Gleason, 1987). She is a psychopomp, guiding souls of the dead to the afterlife and overseeing their transition (Olaiya, 2023). Her role in death is not as a harbinger of despair, but as an agent of necessary transformation. In this way, Oya exemplifies the Yoruba understanding of death as a continuation, not an end (Abimbola, 1977; Olarinmoye, 2022). However, oya who is said to be the wife of sango (god of fire) was formerly Ogun's wife (god of iron and war) and was barren till she left ogun for Sango .

3.8 Oya and the Egungun: Mediator of the Ancestral Realm

Perhaps Oya's most spiritually nuanced role is her association with the Egungun, the collective spirits of the ancestors. While the Egungun are honored by the living through elaborate masquerade rituals, it is Oya who opens the spiritual gates that allow the ancestors to visit the earthly realm (Gleason, 1987; Olaiya, 2023). She is considered the mother of the Egungun cult and is invoked during ceremonies to ensure the proper passage and return of ancestral spirits. Her authority over the boundary between life and death enables her to mediate interactions between the living and the departed, reinforcing social and familial bonds across generations (Olupona, 2011; Blier, 2015). This sacred role highlights Oya's significance in maintaining spiritual balance. Through her, the Yoruba emphasize the cyclical nature of existence and the importance of honoring one's roots. The Egungun masquerade is not only a spiritual event but a moral one, reminding the living of the values and traditions upheld by their ancestors, with Oya standing at the center as the orchestrator of this sacred communion (Abimbola, 1977; Karade, 1994).

3.9 Symbolism and Worship

Oya is symbolized by the buffalo, a creature embodying strength and resilience (Gleason, 1987). Her colors often a mix of purple and burgundy reflect her association with both the vitality of life and the solemnity of death (Karade, 1994). Worship of Oya often involves offerings of red wine, eggplants, and copper items, as well as drumming and dance that invoke her tempestuous energy (Gleason, 1987; Olaiya, 2023). Temples and shrines dedicated to Oya are places of healing, prophecy, and transformation. Her devotees often seek her assistance in times of personal crisis or communal upheaval, believing that her stormy force can clear the path for renewal (Olarinmoye, 2022). As a protector of women, especially

those in transition (widows, mothers, and priestesses), Oya also represents female empowerment and spiritual sovereignty (Olarinmoye, 2022).

Yoruba cosmology, Oya is more than a storm goddess / goddess of whirlwind; she is the embodiment of transition, a sacred force that commands change while preserving continuity (Gleason, 1987). Her command of wind and lightning mirrors her control over Life's chaotic yet necessary upheavals. As the custodian of the ancestral gateway and mother of the Egungun, Oya ensures that the dead are honored and that their wisdom guides the living (Olaiya, 2023; Olupona, 2011). Her multifaceted role speaks to the Yoruba vision of the universe as dynamic, interconnected, and governed by forces that must be respected, balanced, and invoked. Through Oya, the Yoruba articulate a profound understanding of life, death, and rebirth, revealing the enduring power of the *òrìṣà* in shaping spiritual consciousness (Abimbola, 1977; Idowu, 1994).

3.10 Cultural Identity and Performance

Investigating how Oya: goddess of the Whirlwind Constructs and Communicates Yoruba Cultural Identity

In Yoruba traditional society, theatre and performance are deeply embedded in religious, historical, and social life. These performances are not merely for entertainment but are significant cultural tools for preserving communal values, retelling myths, and embodying spiritual beliefs. Lekan Balogun's play *Oya: Goddess of the Whirlwind*, as performed by the final year students of the Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, exemplifies how Yoruba identity is constructed and communicated through performance. Through its portrayal of divine figures like Oya, Ogun, Sango, and Orunmila, and its use of proverbs, mythic storytelling, and ritual scenes, the play reflects the deep cosmological and cultural framework of the Yoruba people (Balogun, 2018). There are several stories of oya, however lekan Balogun's oya is used as an experiment .

At the center of the play is the story of Oya, a powerful goddess initially married to Ogun, the god of war and iron. However, Ogun dismisses her emotions and prioritizes war over love, calling her feelings "mere." Heartbroken and abandoned, Oya eventually joins Sango, the god of thunder. As the story unfolds, Oya is revealed not just as a devoted partner but as a divine force that helps Sango uncover and control his spiritual power. Her character is portrayed as loyal, nurturing, yet powerful a reflection of the Yoruba conception of divine femininity and the sacred role of women as bearers of life and spiritual insight (Abiodun, 2014). Oya's eventual ability to give birth with Sango after her time of childlessness with Ogun—symbolizes fulfillment, transformation, and divine alignment, central ideas in Yoruba cosmology (Soyinka, 1990).

The performance of *Oya: Goddess of the Whirlwind* is deeply rooted in Yoruba oral tradition. A significant element of this is the use of proverbs, which carry layered meanings and ancestral wisdom. When Oya visits Orunmila, the deity of wisdom, several proverbs are uttered that guide her decision-making and reflect cultural values. For example, "A woman who wants to bear children does not close her laps" speaks to the themes of openness to destiny and the cultural importance placed on fertility and motherhood (Balogun, 2018). The proverb "No animal treads the jungle carelessly, else it strays into the den of the king of the jungle" emphasizes caution and respect for hierarchy lessons that are important in both the spiritual and human realms. Similarly, "When the spirits take away something from a man, they give him another thing as replacement" reflects the Yoruba belief in balance and compensation in life (Balogun, 2018). These proverbs, as used in the play, serve not only to

advance the plot but to encode Yoruba philosophy into the dialogue, making the performance an educational and cultural act (Soyinka, 1990).

Mythology forms the foundation of the play's narrative structure. The mythic love triangle between Ogun, Oya, and Sango is not a mere romantic conflict but a reenactment of sacred stories passed down through Yoruba oral history. These mythic relationships explain natural phenomena, moral values, and even geographic locations—such as Ogun's retreat to Ire after his defeat by Sango. The portrayal of these deities, their flaws, and their transformations helps to humanize the divine while simultaneously reinforcing Yoruba belief in the interconnectedness of the spiritual and physical realms (Drewal and Drewal, 1983).

Ritual is another central component of the performance. The play incorporates symbolic gestures, costumes, chants, and invocations that echo traditional Yoruba spiritual practices. Oya's visit to Orunmila is framed as a moment of divination—an important Yoruba ritual that seeks guidance from the spiritual realm. By staging such rituals, the play transforms performance into a sacred space where the audience engages with living traditions (Abiodun, 2014). The characters become vessels of divine power, and the stage becomes a portal between the visible world and the unseen world of the Orisa's (Soyinka, 1990). Furthermore, performance elements such as drumming, chants, and traditional dress enhance the cultural authenticity of the play. These components are not merely aesthetic; they are deeply symbolic and rooted in Yoruba ritual practices. Drumming, for instance, is believed to call down spiritual beings and create a rhythm that connects performers and audience with the divine (Drewal and Drewal, 1983). The inclusion of these elements transforms the play into more than a story—it becomes a communal ritual that reflects and reinforces Yoruba identity.

IV. Conclusion

Conclusively, Lekan Balogun's play *Oya: Goddess of the Whirlwind* is a powerful vehicle for the preservation and transmission of Yoruba cultural identity, cosmology, and spiritual values within a modern theatrical context. Through the lens of Richard Schechner's Performance Theory (2003) and Oludamini Ogunnaike's Yoruba Epistemology (2010), the study explored how the play integrates ritual, oral tradition, and mythic storytelling in the interface of Yoruba cosmology's visible (ayé) and invisible (òrun) realms. Oya, the goddess of wind, storms, change, and the Egungun, symbolizes the Yoruba understanding of life, death, and rebirth as cyclical and interconnected process. Her role in the play—triumphant of intimate sufferings of sterility and divine roles as psychopomp and negotiator of dead souls—resonates with Yoruba principles of omoluabi (good character), destiny (ori), and social harmony.

The performance study recognizes the manner in which Oya employs dramatic tools including proverbs, incantations, ritual music, drumming, and symbolic attires to recreate a liminal space in which Yoruba spirituality and cultural identity are performed and re-repeated. Through the performance of such aspects within a contemporary scholarly environment in the Federal University Oye-Ekiti, the play resists the decline of indigenous culture in the contemporary globalized world, sensitizing people and fostering cultural consciousness among forthcoming generations. The bilingual dialogue and ritualistic grace ensure access without compromising authenticity, and the play is a rich contribution to Yoruba theatre and African theatre. Oya is ultimately a vindication of the enduring strength of art as an instrument for cultural preservation, knowledge transmission, and the reinforcement of Yoruba cosmological and social values.

To contribute to scholarship on Yoruba theatre and cultural preservation, it is recommended that researchers conduct comparative analysis between Lekan Balogun's *Oya: Goddess of the Whirlwind* and other Yoruba plays, i.e., Wole Soyinka's or Duro Ladipo's, to illuminate the spectrum of Yoruba performance aesthetics; empirically examine audience reception to experiment with the play's impact on the construction of cultural identity among diverse audiences; critically examine Oya's characterization to inform debate on gender roles and women's empowerment within Yoruba cosmology; agitate for Oya's inclusion in school curricula in theatre, African literature, and cultural studies to decolonize educational systems; petition digital archiving of the play's performances to facilitate access and preservation globally; and encourage community-based productions within Yoruba-speaking communities and the diaspora to augment cultural continuity and communal identification with Yoruba epistemological systems.

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