ABSTRACT

AMA ATA AIDOO’S ANOWA: THE IRONY OF A SCAPEGOAT

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This thesis affirms that Aidoo’s play Anowa is an honest exploration of ideological advancement in Ghana and possibly Africa, probing Ghanaians and Africans to re-evaluate their attitude towards African culture and traditions. The first chapter explores the background of Aidoo’s central character Anowa and how her character contradicts the guiding philosophy of the Akan people of Ghana. The second chapter addresses the motivational factors as well as the challenges of a storytelling performance. It further gives an overview and in-depth description of the importance of the traditional Ghanaian storytelling process. Chapter Three outlines the directorial development of the entire storytelling performance.
AMA ATA AIDOO’S *ANOWA*:
THE IRONY OF A SCAPEGOAT

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Theatre Department of Miami University for their encouragement and support for making this project a reality.
**INTRODUCTION**

The path has crossed the river

The river has crossed the path

Which is the elder?

We cut the path and found the river

The river is from long ago

The river is from the ancient creator of the universe

*Kwabena Nketia*

My grandmother told me a story about the circumstances surrounding how a man or a woman was chosen for a husband or a wife many years ago. She told me that in those days, when a boy reached the age of adolescence he was given a goat to rear and a piece of land to till. While the boy took care of this responsibility, his parents and the entire community monitored him. Goats are considered the most stubborn animal among the family of livestock in Ghana. Their attitudes possess a negative quality contrary to what you would expect. For instance, they may break away from the fence where you want them to be and end up in a neighbor’s farm, eating their crops, despite the man’s personal efforts to feed it. It is assumed that the frustrations, humiliations, troubles and the problems that the goat may put the individual through parallels the problems he is likely to face in the near future when he gets married and has a family. Thus, the goat and tilling of the piece of land is a form of examination that parents put their sons through in preparation for the responsibilities ahead of them. Inappropriate management of the two, the goat and the land, is considered a failure and disappointment not only to the parents but to the community as a whole. Members of the community will find it difficult to reason with the individual from this point forward.

Adolescent girls, on the other hand, spend most of their time with their mother at home and learn how to do the household chores and the cooking. Assessment of the girls is done during their puberty rites, and the finishing tactics on how to manage a home is given to them. The parents of each determine when the boy and the girl are ready to have a family.

After this stage, the next step for the girl, now a woman, is to wait for a man to come and ask for her hand in marriage. The boy, now a man, will be led by his father to find a good wife for him. The young man and woman’s families will conduct research to find out the nature and character of the boy or girl and the background of the family into which they are about to marry.
their children. During the research, they find out whether or not the boy or girl is violent, a
criminal, hardworking, or lazy; and whether or not he or she is responsible enough to take care of
their daughter or son. They further investigate the family to find out whether the family has a
history of making good husbands or wives. Other issues that might be considered are: whether
there is a divorce in the family, whether there is madness or an incident of a murder or suicide in
the family, and whether there is any ill health in the family. If the results, after the research, are
positive then the party that falls victim of the research will be denied the mandate to marry the
daughter or son of the other party. All of these precautions are an effort to secure good and
stable marriages for their sons and daughters. This is no longer done. Now, the process reflects
modern traditions. The shift was presumably discerned at the latter part of the 20th century due to
the birth of Ghana as a new nation after independence. The above story gives an insight on how
far the Akan people of Ghana have come with their traditions and culture, a comparison of what
life was like to what they experience in today’s world.

The differences between the USA and Ghana are not too extreme. Western civilization is
evolving; so is Africa. In this chapter, I want to show how ideological advancement in Africa,
particularly Ghana, is presented as a challenge to a Ghanaian woman and emphasize, at the same
time, the relevance and implications of Ghanaian culture with respect to the Akan traditions as
discussed and presented in Ama Ata Aidoo’s play Anowa.

The modernization of Ghanaian traditions from the direction of the arts has undoubtedly
raised controversial issues based on the interplay between antiquity, modernity, the past, the
present and the future. The interdependence of the past, present, and future has left the divine
drummer in contemplation as he drums his thoughts aloud in the epigram that introduces this
introduction. Kofi Anyidoho explains in his discussion of this same text that odomankoma
kyerema, the divine drummer, takes us on a voyage of exploration on which we follow the path
or road as a symbol of the probing … of human civilization. He states that this unique poetic
voyage may be seen as “an investigation of ways in which roadways, bridges, and ferries
translate into significant historical inscription as human aspirations seek to conquer time and
space in pursuit of civilization.”¹ We learn from the text that the road serves as human aspiration

and civilization and the river as the symbol of eternity and of primordial laws of existence and of the universe itself.

Ghana and the entire African community are best known for the unique culture and traditions practiced by the people on the continent. It is these traditions and cultures of Africans that give them unique identities as Africans. However, it is important to note that the people of Africa, in their quest for human aspirations such as modernity and the so-called advance civilization have started a new course in an attempt to redefine certain norms and gender difference as experienced among African cultures. Championing the course for redefining the Ghanaian established way of life, and for that matter Africa, are the art institutions. These institutions are responsible for the promotion of African cultural heritage through formal and informal education, yet they deem it necessary to exhibit the need for cultural evaluation regarding certain social milieu in the African communities.

In view of this, many African scholars, like Ama Ata Aidoo, a Ghanaian playwright, poet and novelist, Wanjira Muthoni, a Kenyan writer and African feminist activist and, Chikwenye Ogunyemi, a Nigerian womanist and literary critic, to name but a few, are all working tirelessly in an effort to redefine and address the role of the African woman and the definite biases towards them in their community. Gay Wilentz in her article “Reading The Critical Writer” noted Aidoo’s revolutionary vision included revisiting the past, with an eye to what women’s role has been pre-colonially, and how we can glean from that position a way to envision a future for men and women together (Emerging Perspective 6). In her essay “Literature, Feminism, and the African Woman Today” Aidoo commented that we believe that we Africans should take charge of our land and its wealth and our own lives and the burden of our reconstruction from colonialism and slavery. For, with that belief comes another awareness. That at least half of the entire populations of Africa are women: and therefore if Africa is to develop, then first, African women too must get the best that the environment can offer for their well being and development (10). This vision is what she portrays in most of her works and what she believes is the way to tackle the controversial issue of reconstructing and shaping the African woman against the patriarchal dominance in the society. The works of these scholars among others explore the realities of the postcolonial African woman. Among the works of these scholars is Ama Ata
Aidoo’s *Anowa*, the centre of my thesis, is interestingly one of the first works of an African woman to be published in English, a colonial language.\(^2\)

Unfortunately, Anowa has received a few critical discussions. Unlike her other plays such as Changes and Killjoy which have received a number of criticisms, Anowa has been left in the dark without much discussion. Taravanta, Assimina couldn’t have said it better in his article “Rethinking the Specter: Ama Ata Aidoo’s Anowa.” He writes that *Anowa* has been neglected by critics, even by those interested in black women’s writings on postcolonial theory. Carole Boyce Davies confirms this in her book *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migration of the subject*. She talks about how Aidoo’s *Anowa* has been exposed to what she calls “politics of exclusion.” She explains that “the work has received little critical attention and as a result occupies a marginal position in African literary studies and feminist criticism.” She reveals again that it is this same politics of exclusion that revels in the constructed binaries of masculinity/femininity, sanity/insanity, home/exile, centre/margin, witch/priestess (59).

Aidoo broke her silence about this issue in her article “Unwelcome Pals and Decorative Slaves or Glimpses of Women as Writers and Characters in Contemporary African Literature.” She declares that “when a critic refuses to talk about your work, that is violence; he is willing you to die as a creative person” and when someone whom you consider a friend refuses to talk to you because of a book you’ve written, then he is trying to drive you insane with speculation (*Emerging Perspectives* 17). Despite the social and academic jibing and jabbing about her text we cannot deny the seriousness of her works. In her article “Reading The Critical Writer” Gay Wilentz one of Aidoo’s finest critics stated that Aidoo has not been afraid to call herself a feminist, since her concerns are the ones she defines in “Unwelcome Pals.” In *Unwelcome Pals* Aidoo proclaim a desire to unfold “a revolutionary vision of the role of women tomorrow as dreamers, thinkers, and doers” (*Emerging Perspectives* 21). According to Wilentz, Aidoo’s works focus on the role of women as nation-builders, while also exploring ways to improve the

\(^2\) Early colonial education in Africa was offered exclusively for males excluding their female counterpart from gaining necessary education that help them contribute to creative literature. One Ghanaian scholar Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey shared concern about this academic crisis. He believed in the all inclusive type of circular education. To him education meant the full development of the human personality. He said, “By education, I do not mean simply learning. I mean the training of the mind, in morals and in a hand that helps to make one socially efficient” … He wanted this training for girls as well as boys; “No race or people can rise half slave, half free. The surest way to keep a people down is to educate the men and neglect the women. If you educate a man you simply educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family/nation (Gold Coast Celebrities 5).
condition of women worldwide, using indigenous, not imported, examples (*Emerging Perspectives* 7). These recognitions by these critics are true and evident in her works.

A playwright, poet and a novelist, Ama Ata Aidoo was born at Saltpond in Ghana, formally the Gold Coast, in 1942. Aidoo was born to royalty, and her father, the chief of Abeadzi Kyianko, acknowledged the power of western education despite neocolonial oppressions at the time and sent his daughter to Wesley Girls High School in Cape Coast, Ghana. She continued on to the University of Ghana to study literature and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in 1964. She spent two more years with the Institute of African Studies as a research fellow at the University of Ghana and also lectured at many universities in the United States and in Africa.

While with the Institute of African studies she published *The Dilemma of a Ghost* in 1965, her first major play to come into the limelight. *Ghost* is also one of the two main dramas she published by the end of the century. It gained popularity and success in Ghana, Nigeria, and most parts of West African because it addresses the complexities of the Postcolonial Ghanaian family, which is also true for the majority of African families. Unfortunately, European critics harshly respond to *Ghost* and this criticism influenced many westerners who branded the text inferior. This is largely because Aidoo merged a traditional Ghanaian drama piece with a more conventional western style (Odamtten 14).

Her other plays include: Anowa, her second play, published in (1969); Our Sister Killjoy (1977); No Sweetness Here (1970); Someone Talking to Someone (1985); and An Angry Letter in January (1992). She has won many awards as well as the 1992 Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book (Africa) for her novel *Changes* (1991).

Aidoo characterizes the women in her plays with strong personalities who break away from the cultural and social expectations of the community due to personal sentiments they share against the community they live in. In most of her plays she addresses issues about marriage, womanhood, children, the family and how these issues are impacted by cultural and communal/societal attitude.

Before I get into details about this discussion I would like to cite one of Aidoo’s most excellent critics Carole Boyce Davies. She is an accomplished writer whose work center particularly on black women writing. Her book *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migration of the subject* is a great apparatus that focuses, discusses, and emphasize the discourse of black
feminism, feminist studies, African literary and cultural studies, postcolonial studies, literary theory, and cultural studies. It is also loaded with virtually all the themes that scholars and critics might consider writing about. It explores, and highlights the significance of inter-related subjects such as re-mapping, re-naming and cultural crossings, tourist ideologies and playful world travelling, gender, heritage and identity, African women's writing and resistance to domination, marginality, gender, language and the politics of location. I propose using a chapter of her book “Deconstructing African Female Subjectivities: Anowa’s borderlands” as a reference to discuss certain aspects of the text of Anowa such as marginality, gender and authority (my emphasis). Her discussion of this chapter provides a broader view on the issue of marginality and authority, construction of femininity and masculinity, the embodiment of African woman and African female subjectivity in the trope of “dark continents,” and the question of witchery and madness.

In Anowa, Aidoo presents the main character Anowa as the symbolic pacesetter and a revolutionary figure among colonial and postcolonial African women. Consequently, the postcolonial African woman is still under oppression of the same force that antagonized the colonial African woman. Anowa in Anowa paradoxically represents the perfect modern idealized African woman. This underscores Aidoo’s vision of revisiting the past to fulfill freedom of the future for women. Anowa might be said to represent women who have seen the light of civilization beyond the horizons and thrive by any means to catch up with it. These women, embodied by Anowa, no longer feel comfortable in their communal space. They perceive every act of social traditions in the community as an oppressive force against their social and personal freedom. To break away from what she now see as an oppressive community, Aidoo reinforces her central character, Anowa, with an attitude, a mindset, that will cause her to rebel against her cultural and social responsibilities as an African woman.

Further, Aidoo succeeds in moving her central character, Anowa, into several geographical locations in the region only for us to realize that these changes of locations do not change the status quo of the African woman. Home (Yebi) is seen as a compulsory domesticity and the enforcement of specific gendered relations. Home is thus seen as a problematic space. This is evident when Anowa said to Ako “I likes being on the roads... there are worse things in villages and towns,” her response to Ako when he suggests she stay at home (p.28,). In other
words there is no comfort and security at home. Villages and towns are thus seen as a contained site for gendered subordination (Black Women 63).

Anowa finds more freedom on the highway where her opinion is much respected and put to use. Ako admits she is the master mind of their skin business and couldn’t have started or succeeded without her (p. 52). On the highway their social relations portray more of a gender balance where they respected each other’s opinion and take each other’s joke lightly and kindly. Their love life is also better and beautiful. Ako treats Anowa with tender love and care. This is noticeable when Ako picks Anowa up in her sleep and carries her gently and lay her down on the leafy bed (p.49).Their social relationship up to this point demonstrates a chance for a newly constructed gender relationship until Anowa challenges his idea of buying slaves and its implications. This challenge unfortunately triggers Ako, for the first time on the highway, to exercise the patriarchal force that they have both known in Yebi (p.51). But even then they both decide not to quarrel but stay at piece with each other.

Earlier in the text Davies implied that the highway that paradoxically is freest for Anowa is contained by the constructions on either end - the village, the house - the sites for gendered subordination. Apparently, the big house in Oguaa is where Anowa could have been happy but the setting of the house fired up with a greater patriarchal force and flooded with slaves is something she strongly detests. The day to day activities of the house is done in accordance to pleasing the eyes of the now master, Ako. At this point he commands authority in the entire region through his wealth. His respect for humanity is bad and Anowa is no exception. His relationship with her has declined drastically. In fact Ako acts as though Anowa is part of his possessions. He expects Anowa to obey her command without any question. He even divorces Anowa without any tangible reason or explanation and without remorse orders her to leave immediately (p.86).

Anowa’s experience through this geographical location went from bad (Yebi) to quite good (Highway) and worse (Oguaa). In other words Anowa’s yearning for domestic, social, economic and political freedom has not been resolved, leaving her in a state of dilemma. This character circumstance of Anowa proves to us that the postcolonial African woman’s quest for

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3 William Bascom in his book *African Dilemma Tales* explain that dilemma tales are prose narratives that leave the listeners with a choice among alternatives, such as which of several characters has done the best, deserves a reward, or should win an argument or a case in court. The narrator ends his story with the dilemma, often explicitly stated in the form of a question, to be debated by his listeners (1).
domestic, social, economic and political freedom cannot be attributed solely to geographical locations rather the situation carries depth and huge complexities. Aidoo therefore challenges both Ghanaians and Africans to go into our individual self and evaluate our attitude towards both social and domestic activities.

Aidoo concludes the play with the death of Anowa the main character. This raises the question as to whether things end tragically for the modern African woman. The ending is critical and controversial but symbolic and can be interpreted in different ways. For instance, her confrontation with Ako serves as the final resistance to her exit in the play that leaves her foe Ako (the patriarchal force) defeated. This can be interpreted as a tragedy of historical closure for the colonized woman. Detail thoughts of her death will also reveal that her tragic exit is a passage from a mere character form to a legendary mode. Anowa thus becomes part of the oral legends around which oral literature is performed. Honoring this merit is the old woman who says in the final commentary of the play: “this is the type of happening out of which we get stories and legends” (p. 88).

According to Davies, recent readings of Anowa see her as a “figure of transformative poetics and politics” a figure of feminist possibility. Therefore one can read Anowa inter-textually with a variety of other texts. She cites that Sekyi Otu sees inter-textuallity between Anowa and Anoa of Ayi Kwei Armah’s work in which Anoa, the historic Akan reference, becomes the spirit of woman as healer/oracle. Thus Anowa who dies in the tragic revolt against enslavement proceeds to the ancestral world and purifies herself. For she has conquered her adversaries as she declares “it matters not what the wise ones say, /For/Now, I am wiser than they” (p. 87). She is reborn in Two Thousand Seasons as Anoa the symbolic influence of the modern woman on society today (Migration of the subjects 62).

The first chapter of this thesis explores the background of Aidoo’s central character Anowa. It also discusses the core values that define the individual as an African and emphasizes the accustomed guiding philosophy of the Akan people of Ghana. The second chapter addresses the motivational factors as well as the challenges of a storytelling performance. It further gives an overview and an in-depth description of traditional Ghanaian storytelling process including my experiences as a story-teller pursuing this project. Following this process in chapter two, chapter three outlines the directorial development of the entire storytelling performance. This is a creative thesis project in directing and is primarily a documentation of that endeavor.
CHAPTER ONE

The Dilemma Of Anowa

Many foreign readers and critics of Aidoo’s play *Anowa* have sided, sympathized and pitied Anowa on the circumstances that govern her life in the play. They perceive Anowa as a victim of presumably the patriarchal force that super-imposed male dominance over women in the African setting. In Ghana though, it is expected that the individual is claimed as a communal entity when he or she is born. This means that every member of the community have a say in the child’s upbringing. This perception is contrary to the western ideology of individualism where parents are the single controlling force of the child. However, an in-depth analysis of the play, with respect to the traditional Akan culture, reveals that there is more to *Anowa* than what some scholars assume.

A Community Affair

An Old Man and an Old Woman, whom together the author refers to as *The-Mouth-That-Eat-Salt-And-Pepper*, starts the play with a prologue. The two serve as a chorus in the play and also a representation of the people in the community. Through their expressions and comments in the text, they provide crucial background information about Anowa and Kofi Ako. They also make known the state of affairs in Yebi, Anowa and Ako’s hometown. Their comments reflect, embrace, and articulate their geographical, political and historical domains. They also discuss the predicament of Anowa based on known and unknown facts available to them. This is apparent in the following conversation by *The-Mouth-That-Eat-Salt-And-Pepper* on (page 25.) of the play text:

OLD MAN: …But what shall we say of our child, The unfortunate Anowa? Let us just say that Anowa is not a girl to meet every day.

OLD WOMAN: That Anowa is something else! Like all of the beautiful maidens in the tales, she has refused to marry any of the sturdy men who have asked for her hand in marriage. No one knows what is wrong with her!

OLD MAN: A child of several incarnations,

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4 Gossip or hearsay is one major characteristic that ties the African community together. This is a way that the community expresses concern or excitement about a given circumstance.
She listens to her own tales,  
Laughs at her own jokes and concern  
Follows her own advice.

**OLD WOMAN:** Some of us think she has just allowed her unusual beauty to cloud her vision of the world.

**OLD MAN:** Beautiful as Korado Ahima,  
Someone’s-Thin-Thread.

A dainty little pot  
Well-baked,  
And polished smooth  
To set in a nobleman’s corner.

**OLD WOMAN:** Others think that her mother Badua has spoilt her shamefully. But let us ask: Why should Anowa carry herself so stiffly? Where is she taking her ’I won’t, I won’t.? Badua should tell her daughter that the sapling breaks with bending that will not grow straight.

In the text above the Old Man and Old Woman express their worry about the unusual behavior of Anowa. Anowa is oblivious, or chooses to ignore the values of the community and the *Mouth That Eats Salt and Pepper* believes there is something wrong with her. Ultimately, Anowa is strange. *The-Mouth-That-Eat-Salt-And-Pepper* makes the audience understand that Anowa has refused to marry any of the sturdy men that have come to ask for her hand in marriage, despite her parents’ persistence and the community’s advice. She chooses and marries her husband, Ako, single-handedly and without her parents’ consent. More often than not, parents and family give their daughters hand in marriage in the African setting.

As a result, Badua, Anowa’s mother, and Osam, Anowa’s father, express their disappointment at her and at the same time inform the audience about the nature and character of Ako the man their daughter intends to marry in the text below:

**Badua:** And do you not know what this Kofi Ako is like?
Osam: How would I know what he is like? Does he not come from Nsona House? And is not that one of the best houses that are here in Yebi? Has he an ancestors who unclothed himself to nakedness, had the unmentionable killed himself or another man?

Badua: And if all that there is to a young man is that his family has an unspoiled name, then what kind of man is he? Are he and his wife going to feed on stones when he will not put a blow into a thicket or at least learn a trade?

Osam: ...She would not allow herself to be married to any man who came to ask for her hand from us and of whom we approved. Did you not know then that when she chooses a man, it might be one of whom we would disapprove?

Badua: But why would she want to do a thing like that?

Osam: …Besides if you think well of it, I am not the one to decide finally whom Anowa can marry. Her uncle, your brother is there, is he not? You do better consult him. Because I know your family: they will say I deliberately married Anowa to a fool to spite them.

Anowa: father Kofi Ako is not a fool?

Osam: My daughter, please forgive me; I am sure you know him very well… (P35-36)

Anowa: You will be surprise to know that I am going to help him do something with his life.

Badua: A-a-h, I wish I could turn into a bird and come and stand on your roof-top watching you make something of that husband of yours. What was he able to make of the plantation of palm-trees his grandfather gave him? And the virgin land his uncles gave him, what did he do with that? (P38)

Anowa: Please, Mother, remove your witch’s mouth from our marriage.

Osam: Hei Anowa, what is wrong with you? Are you mad? How can you speak like that to your mother?

Anowa: But father, Mother does not treat me like her daughter.

Badua: And so you call me a witch? The thing is, I wish I were a witch so that I could protect you from your folly.

Anowa: I do not need your protection, Mother.

Osam: The spirits of my fathers! Anowa, what daughter talks like this to her mother?

Anowa: But Father, what mother talks to her daughter the way Mother talks to me? And now, Mother, I am going so take your witchery to eat in the sea.
Osam: Ei Anowa?
Badua: Thank you my daughter.

While Osam and Badua express bitterness about Anowa’s marriage in the above text, a heated argument ensues between them culminating in Anowa branding her mother a witch. In the African setting this is considered an abomination. Anowa cannot accept Badua as her biological mother and accuse her of witchery at the same time without concrete evidence. This attitude is fiercely seen as a curse by the folks in the community which is bound to rein misfortune on her life until she makes amends with her parents.

The various conversations by the old man and woman, Badua and Osam coupled with Anowa’s quick attack on her parents are sources that help to define Anowa’s character. From these sources we observe that Anowa is easily aroused to anger, she makes hasty decisions, and she is proud, arrogant, and disrespectful. These sources also bring to light the difference in opinions that exists within the community, more importantly, the difference in thoughts between the male and female counterparts pertaining to Anowa and Ako’s marriage. For instance, the thinking of the old man and Osam Anowa’s father parallel each other on the bases of Anowa and Ako’s marriage. Though they are concerned and worried about Anowa’s choice of husband, the old man assume it is better she finally decided to settle down at least. He explains that Anowa and Ako are not the first couple in the world to come together against the advice of “grey-haired crows” as he puts it. In the same vein Osam confirms that Ako’s family has a reputable background and his ancestors are credited with good health and not involved in any murderous act. In fact Osam is quick to defend the men in Ako’s family (Nsona men) when his wife Badua alleged that men of Ako’s family do not make good husbands. He made it known that what Badua said is a lie, that Nsona men have been known to make the best of husbands since time immemorial.

The old woman and Badua, on the other hand, share a different opinion. The old woman vehemently attacks the words of the old man by pronouncing it foolish. She thinks the old man is irrational because according to her, he sounded as though he wasn’t old enough to understand Anowa’s attitude and the repercussion of her marriage. Additionally, Badua will stop at nothing to bring her daughters marriage to a halt. She constantly nags at Anowa about her choice of husband. She even goes as far as telling a lie about Kofi’s family just to discourage her daughter from marrying her found lover. This demonstrates that both the old woman and Badua are not in
any way ready to compromise to the marriage of the two as the old man and Osam does. This analysis underscores the differences in opinion between the men and the women folks in the community concerning Anowa’s marriage. Regardless of their different opinions, the information they provide is valuable to the development of this thesis.

Communal ideology serves as the driving force that empowers the Ghanaian (African) traditions and culture. Anowa’s failure to adhere to her parents and the community’s advice indicates Anowa’s ignorance and failure to embrace her native traditions and customs. As a result, Anowa begins to construct a new image of West African womanhood, which poses a threat to the social structure of the traditional Akan community.\(^5\) Ironically, her reactions towards the social communal norms predetermine her as an opposition against the social responsibility and commitment upheld by the traditional women folk in the community. Above all, Anowa has abused the importance of the aged or the elder as upheld in the Akan society. While it is one thing being accused by the women folk of certain decisions, it is quite another to be recognized by the community for disrespecting elders. The importance of the aged or the elder is held high because of the wisdom they are known to possess. This is evident in the common proverbs that serve as a guiding philosophy of the Akan people of Ghana. Regarding the high esteem of the elder, it is said that *Opanyin ano sen suman* (the word of the elder is more potent than fetish), *Opanyin kye a, na adwo* (when the sharing is done by the elder, there is peace and understanding) and *Opanyin nto obo-hyew nto abofra nsam* (no elder will bake a hot stone and put it into a child’s hand). These are some of the ideal Akan moral codes that govern the well-being of individuals in the community, and it is this moral code(s) that she has abused. It is clear from the last proverb that no parent will sit-down and witness his or her child dip his or her hands into hot water or fire without distress. Such is the situation Badua encountered with her daughter Anowa’s marriage.

The realities of her behavior are that she has denied herself the wisdom of the elders whose advice is potent as described in the proverb above. Her refusal to adhere to the traditions and customs of the community is representative of the social challenges encountered in Africa today, of which Anowa serves as a living text testimony of a bitter life experience based on the

\(^5\) The Akans regard their women folk as the driving force for community growth and development through procreation. They are believed to be the force that instill and teach the children the values and customs of the community. One Ghanaian scholar Dr. Kwesi Aggrey said that If you educate a man you educate an individual but it you educate a woman you educate a nation (Gold Coast Celebrities 5).
bad choices she made. These choices include her attitude, marriage and her disregard for Akan customs. Arguably, one might deduce that bad marriages in Africa and indeed the entire world community, with regards to the high divorce rate in marriages, murder of spouses and children, domestic violence, suicide, infidelity and the like, can all be attributed to the ignorance and failure to adhere to customs and traditions long held in communities today. By this, we deny ourselves the good services of the community through the various investigation and information that they provide about people in the community, all in an effort to safeguard the individual. The consequences are evident in the predicament of Aidoo’s central character, Anowa in the play.

Aidoo depicts Anowa as a character who has misplaced her identity and is in search of it. This adverse character effect boosts her personality and equips her with the nerve of an independent woman. More prominently it creates a new perspective on the way we perceive and receive her. She is now seen as a revolutionary character who is able to bring to Ghanaian culture and for that matter, African marriage and family life, a new image of womanhood. One that protests against the traditional and subservient role expected of the woman in the community (FonTomFrom 43). As a radical, Anowa makes her own choice of the man she wishes to marry rather than accepting her parent’s choice of suitor for her. Further in the text, she is able to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with her husband Ako. She rejects a conventional African mentality that women are subordinates of their husbands and must be submissive to them. Anowa refuses to succumb to Ako’s selfish behavior of acquiring wealth and firmly opposes any form of slavery. Eventually, Anowa ignores her folks’ belief that humans must depend solely on the gods, hence her refusal to visit the shrine as her husband does. These are issues in the text that are worthy of discussing without any reservation. However, it is necessary to draw attention to the simple but important themes in the play. These themes in Anowa include: the consequences of disobeying ones’ parents out of pride, that success in marriage is not about riches and wealth but rather love and care, and finally, all human beings must be treated equally and with dignity.

Earlier in the thesis I explored Anowa’s refusal to marry any of the sturdy men who asked for her hand in marriage, despite her parents’ persistence and the community’s advice. She marries Kofi Ako, single-handedly without her parents’ consent. Apparently, Kofi is considered lazy and good for nothing in the community. Anowa’s mother refuses to accept Kofi as a son-in-law. As a result, Anowa becomes angry, quarrels with her mother, and calls her a witch. This confirms that Anowa does not respect her parents. In the prologue, The Old Man and Old
Woman describe her as a spoilt child, one who does not listen to anyone but herself. Her attitude leads her to an unhappy person in her marriage to Ako. This accentuates the Ghanaian saying that *your beauty will/can take you where ever you want to go but your attitude will bring you back to where you started*. The bottom line of her attitude and inherent pride is the tragic end of her life in the play. Anowa’s predicament is the consequences of disobeying her parents and the community’s advice out of pride.

In Phase Two of the play, Anowa and Ako share a happy time in the rainforest on their way to Oguaa. They express love and care for each other and also enjoy their jokes together, a happiness that will last for a brief moment. Things take a different turn when Ako becomes rich. He is absorbed in the acquisition of wealth and slaves than caring for her. Things fall apart when they loose affection for each other. His slave business coupled with the deterioration of their love life leaves Anowa depressed. The result is her wandering around in the house with nothing to do. Soon Ako decides to divorce her and insists she go back to Yebi. Of course, Anowa is not going down without a fight. She demands reasons for the divorce while Ako on the other hand is not ready to compromise. The climax of the confrontation is Anowa revealing to the public that Ako is impotent, a disgraceful secret that drives Ako to shoot himself. This is a lesson that teaches us that success in marriage is not about riches and wealth but rather love and care.

When Ako becomes rich, his lifestyle is more like a king. He is carried around shoulder high in his arm chair by his slaves. His chair is fanned by young children to cool down even when he is not around. This is a sign of having no respect and dignity for humanity. Ako confirms this when he says “I say once more that Nana is the only man in this world I respect and honor “(p.85). This behavior must not be encouraged anywhere in our society. Every individual should be treated with dignity no matter his or her background. Ako’s arrogance over his fellow men is what leads to his death after he is exposed as impotent. At the end of the play, Ako’s wealth could not buy his family happiness. We learn from his experience that money cannot buy us happiness in marriage. It also illustrates the failure of material wealth, especially a wealth derived from exploitation of your fellow country folk, only brings destruction.

It is evident that Aidoo uses her play as a discussion board to discuss and create awareness of societal principles and values that govern societies. She teaches us that customs, traditions and rituals are an integral part of society and it is this that shapes and straightens the lives and opinions of people in the community. Through Anowa, Aidoo informs us how
traditions rouse emotions within individuals. These emotions, whether good or bad, generate a greater sense of self-consciousness among people in the society. She encourages us to stay awake and endeavor to practice societal norms as a vital aspect of the community. Apparently customs, traditions and rituals are what define us as members of a community.
CHAPTER TWO

Storytelling: Conceiving and Analyzing—Executing a Multicultural Performance

As a director, I have always been curious and interested in plays that deal with the culture and traditions of different communities in the world. While I have the capacity to stage any western play, I feel it is my duty as a director from a different cultural background, to enlighten people about Ghanaian culture. It has always been one of my priorities as a director to stage an African play, a medium to educate my friends and the entire Miami community about my culture. I am fascinated to know how the new culture will respond to mine. Many of my friends and the people I meet day after day, upon learning that I am Ghanaian, become very curious and eager to gain knowledge of my culture. I find encouragement in the different questions they ask me. These questions center on the geography of Africa and more about Ghana in general.

Tolerance happens to be one of the motivating factors for staging my play. Miami University has taken a keen interest in diversity, of which I am a beneficiary. In an effort to expand and build a strong multicultural environment and to improve tolerance within the Miami community, Miami seeks a more global community. The various programs the Office of Diversity sponsors for the student community are worthwhile and worthy of support. Being a theatre student and staging an African play gives me the opportunity to contribute my efforts to promote and educate others about diversity.

In the wake of these motivating factors, directing is a challenge. Learning about, becoming familiar with, and participating in American culture is a challenge to me as a director. The Miami audience, which also represents a typical American community, is even more challenging because the majority of them lack knowledge in West African culture and for that matter, Ghana. Based on my observation, it is dissatisfying to learn that the number of Americans who read African plays is minimal. However, globalization deems it necessary to keep abreast about the issues of other worlds. It is important, therefore, that educational institutions encourage students to learn about different cultures globally. The African theatre director can play a major role in this situation.

Sandra Richards in her essay, “Writing the Absent Potential: Drama, Performance, and the Canon of African American Literature,” highlights a challenge the director may face. She states that, “…the genre of drama, with its components of embodiment through performance, simply spotlights issues of meaning, particularly those related to reader response, implicit in
other branches of the clan” (65). Apparently, the genre of drama does not only spotlight issues of meaning to its audience, but also educates its audience about something new. The genre of drama makes sure the message it carries is clear and understandable to its audience. Meanwhile, her observation implies that the audience can make reasonable meaning of a performance if what they see on stage is familiar to them. In other words, something new may result in a lack of response from the audience. This implies that performances must be culturally familiar; otherwise a performance might be less meaningful to the audience. This is what challenges me as a director-- to work hard to make my vision for the production as clear and meaningful as possible, and to bring something culturally “new” to my American audience.

My original intention was to use storytelling as a means of production to Anowa and if possible Efua Sutherland’s *The Marriage of Anansewa*. These stories are based on Ghanaian folk tales and regional legends respectively. Both playwrights offer folktales that feature the predicament of the disobedient daughter. In such stories, a young woman refuses to marry a suitor, resulting in a disaster. Such is the case of Anowa. She refuses to accept tribal norms, marries the man of her own choice, and these choices result in tribal conflict and the perpetrators are forced to live with the consequences.

Sutherland’s *The Marriage of Anansewa* tells the story of Ananse’s problem of poverty and his determination to solve it. Ananse writes four letters to four suitors he has chosen for his daughter Anansewa. He has promised his daughter’s hand to each one of these chiefs and anticipates that they will respond by sending him gifts that will solve his financial problems. What these suitors do not know is that he has set a competition between them to enable him to choose the most loving and dependable husband for his daughter. Ananse succeeds with his plan and becomes rich, but tension begins to mount. Each of the suitors indicates his intention to honor the head drink ceremony. Ananse convinces his daughter to fake her death, a solution to the crisis. In the final scene, the rehearsed and fake death of Anansewa goes a long way to reveal the intentions and the level of commitment of the chiefs.

While there are obvious differences among these two plays, they share commonalities. These are two witty social dramas embellished with traditional folk music and dance. These are dramas that are true to the Ghanaian culture and are honest explorations of the conflicts between the individualism of westernized culture and the social traditions of Africa. After considerations
of time, casting, and the play’s density, I rested my thoughts and decided to stage *Anowa*. *Anowa* reflects Ghanaian culture in a way which is beautiful and dense.

The majority of Ghanaian and African plays utilize large casts, which in essence reflects the African culture with regards to the extended family. Although *Anowa* is successful and popular in Ghana and throughout Africa, the large cast in this play may cause confusion among the audience who are cultural outsiders, such as the European American audience who might find the extended family on stage a new phenomenon. They may know nothing or little about the culture and traditions the play is presenting to them. This can hinder the understanding of the audience.

Cutting short the cast list can ease the problem of large cast. However, my cultural experience disapproves executing this option. Reducing the number of characters in the play is subject to culturally weaken my production. The characters in African plays are dependent upon each other and each character has a significant role to play. For instance, a drunkard is a very important character in the African community, yet he is disrespected because of his behavior. In spite of his drunkenness, he holds facts of what is going on in the community. In this regard, his character is very significant. The drunkard’s role contributes to the overall understanding of the audience. As a director, I know including every detail in a script is very important to the success of a production. The number of performers in a play can be reduced at the discretion of the director. These casting factors propelled me towards storytelling.

Besides the cultural dilemma mentioned, there are also certain practical issues that need to be discussed. These can be realities of any production. Working with multiple actors can be challenging. For my production, correlating student actors’ schedules for rehearsals a few weeks to examination is troublesome. This is a challenge I knew I would face. To minimize this challenge, I decided to “story tell” *Anowa*, thus, the idea of doing a storytelling performance was born. This is a substitute to the staging of *Anowa* and also a solution to the challenges that might be present in the Western setting.

To execute the storytelling performance, the Ghanaian narrative drama, an Anansesem approach is imperative to my production. Anansesem originated from Ghana, West Africa. It is an art form passed on from generation to generation and can be traced to ancient times. Anansesem forms part of a body of traditional oral literature that includes praise poetry, riddles,

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6 Anansesem literary means spider tales.
proverbs and dirges. These art forms are usually accompanied by music, drumming and dance. Anansesem is usually told by adults in a dramatic and creative manner and enjoyed immeasurably by children, adolescents and adults. Anansesem is essential in the social life of the people in Ghana. It brings the community together and unites them as one people. Since the major occupation of the people is farming, they listen to Anansesem after the hard day’s work for entertainment and to pass time when they come back home from the farm or fishing. More so, young people in the community learn public speaking through Anansesem and finally, it serves as a means to safe guard the community from enemy forces.\footnote{Individuals in the community take turns in the telling of the story. This gives rise to competition among young individuals in the community with each person wanting to be the best storyteller. Through this they learn how to speak in public as they narrate their story to the community when it came to their turn.}

At the storytelling session, usually in the evening, a gathering of families in the community assemble under a bright moonlight or around a low burning fire\footnote{Tribal wars were rampant among African communities in the olden days. Therefore, the community divided themselves into groups and took turns each in a storytelling performance on certain days. Through this they guarded and protected the community from enemy forces. They raise alarm to summon the other community members when they sense danger.}. This provides the right atmosphere for the performance. The gathering constitutes the audience who sit on the floor and on stools for the storytelling. The success or failure of the Anansesem rests on the shoulders of the storyteller who is largely responsible for the enjoyment of the story. Nevertheless, the attention and response of the audience is equally important to the success of the storytelling. The story is successful when the inherent moral is fully realized by the audience.

**Storytelling Performance: The Process**

Using the traditional Anansesem approach for my production requires me to modify it into a more accessible one for the American audience. Nonetheless, the storyteller must have the ability to capture the attention and the interest of the audience throughout the story. The telling of the story must transform the audience from their natural world to the world of the story. This is achieved by establishing a close relationship between the storyteller and the audience. A relationship cannot be established if there is an excessive amount of distance between the storyteller and audience. This is a defect that could hinder the success of the production (See fig. 1).
The thrust stage below (See Fig. 1) gives a picture of the nature of distancing that can develop between the storyteller and the audience. The audience is seated semi-circularly around the stage and the storyteller sits at the centre of the stage and tells the story. To establish a relationship, the storyteller must be close enough to the audience. Eye contact ascertains intimacy between the storyteller and the audience.

**Figure 1**

**Thrust Stage**

The audience responds to certain issues in the story with comments, songs and dance. The American audience, who this production is meant for, might not know how to respond to the story, hence subject to a poor performance.

*Anansegro*

After thorough dramaturgical research for the production, I came across the experimental works of Efua Sutherland. She worked hard to transform the traditional storytelling from the backyard of a Ghanaian village to the theatre. She discovered in her experimental research what she called *Anansegro*[^9], an approach which she found suitable to transform the traditional storytelling into the theatre. *Anansegro* is not any different from *Anansesem*. They have a

[^9]: *Anansegro* is a term used to describe the traditional *Anansesem* that has been transformed from the back yard of the communal setting and enhanced with theatrical conventions for a stage performance.
common name, *Ananse*, in them. *Anansegro* is coined out of *Anansesem*. *Anansesem* is a domestic activity and it is this activity that has been shaped into a theatrical performance. This is how Sutherland states it in the forward notes of her play, *The Marriage of Anansewa*: …this story telling (*Anansesem*) is usually a domestic activity; there are in existence some specialist groups who have given it a full theatrical expression with established conventions. It is this system of traditional theatre which I have developed and classified as *Anansegro* (V). For further clarification to understand Sutherland’s *Anansegro* and the traditional *Anansesem*, Biodun Jeyifo’s article\(^{10}\) gives a clear distinction of the two. He states:

> *Anansesem* is primarily the body of tales about the exploits of Ananse, but the term also embodies the storytelling tradition, the conventions of narration and performance through which the Ananse stories are relayed across the generations.

*Anansegro* on the other hand, is the modern art of theatrical performance that Sutherland creatively extrapolated from the more traditional base of *Anansesem*. (P.25)

This makes *Anansegro* more stylized and more precise in the elements of performance like poetry, music and dance sequence. He reveals that, in *Anansesem*, these elements are more loosely or informally enacted, while in Sutherland’s reconfigurations of *Anansesem* into *Anansegro*, the elements are made more precise, more polished and at the same time more expansively suggestive.

**Players**

Sutherland’s *Anansegro* is immeasurably important to my production. She defined a major theatrical convention known as the *Players*\(^{11}\) in her *Anansegro* experimental process. The *Players* and the storyteller are what shape the narrative drama or the storytelling. The players are a representation of the traditional Anansesem audience on stage. Their presence on the stage establishes a rapport between the storyteller and the audience in the theatre. While some *Players* are given costume, others are not. This technique is utilized to make the natural theatre audience feel part of the *Players*. The players contribute to the story by singing, drumming, dancing and

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11 *Players* are a representation of the natural traditional Anansesem audience on theatrical stage.
clapping at certain times in the storytelling performance. This is referred to as *Mboguo* (call and response).

**Mboguo**

*Mboguo* is an embodiment of the story itself and is performed in context led by the storyteller. As a theatrical convention, *Mboguo* is required to be performed by the players, including the larger audience. It is required that the players and the audience interrupt the storytelling session where necessary to make contributions to the story. However, their interruptions are prompted by an inspirational situation in the performance. These interruptions are good signs of their keen interest in the storytelling. This raises the morale of both the storyteller and the audience, and as a result, establishes a mutual relationship between them. The storyteller also uses the *Mboguo* as a resting moment; he may be tired because of the intense dramatic actions in the narration or he might take this moment to enjoy a drink of water. Most of all, the interruptions help awaken those in the audience who might be dozing.

The importance of *Mboguo* is conceivable in the works of most Ghanaian playwrights such as Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Anowa*, Efua Sutherland’s *The Marriage of Anansewa*, and Martin Owusu’s *The Story Ananse Told*, and many others. *Mboguo* may be performed in various dramatic forms such as miming, dancing or even a thought or a statement from any member of the audience. More importantly, it must be in relation to the subject of the story being told.

**The Storyteller**

Storytelling is a vital means Ghanaians employ to bring communities together on a regular basis. It embodies ideas about the community and expresses the ways in which people approach their lives. In view of this, storytelling is carefully enacted by the storyteller who can either be a male or female\(^\text{12}\). He is considered the owner of the story and the success of the whole story session rests on his shoulders. His success is attributed to the fact that he is able to instantly create the story as he continues to narrate. As the master of the story, he uses various theatrical devices such as proverbs, imagery and even poetry to dramatize his story to make it more interesting. He is able to imitate different characters and behaviors through gestures. This is what makes him humorous, popular and the number one actor in the Akan community. The audience’s response to the narration of the story is desired. Enthusiasm, attention and inquisitiveness are needed from them to make the story attractive and successful.

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\(^{12}\) Gender is not an issue in the narration of the story. It doesn’t affect the meaning or reception of the audience.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the issues and components related to storytelling *Anowa* and *The Marriage of Anansewa*. In retrospect, I have come to the following conclusion about the artistic process. Anansesem is simple and can be performed at any given space one may find him or herself. However, it requires a more technical approach when it becomes a stage performance. Sutherland’s experimental research, *Anansegro*, is paramount as an aesthetic resource tool for a staged performance. For my production, it proved beyond all doubts the best approach for the production which was greeted with success at the end of the day.
CHAPTER THREE

A Director’s Insight & Directing

My first approach to making this storytelling production a reality was reading the text \textit{Anowa}, over and over again until I understood what the story was all about. As a Ghanaian who is affiliated with the Akan tribe, I am very familiar with the traditions Aidoo mentions in her story. With my cultural experience, I feel the height of tension mounted in this story more than a play such as Arthur Miller’s \textit{Death of a Salesman}. In addition, I have seen Aidoo’s \textit{Anowa} performed a number of times, which makes it easy for me to work with this play. In view of this, the way I analyze the play, by asking the necessary questions for a detailed understanding of the text, is very important to me. For instance, finding out what the story is about, who the story is addressing, the kind of audience it is meant for, the language, the historical background and the setting are all important factors to consider. Knowing the background of the playwright is inevitable to the overall success of the production. Aside the basic cultural knowledge I have, I ask myself what works and what does not work for me in the text. Additionally, I think about the necessary research I need to do to understand the text fully. Once I start the research, what motivates me as a director is to be able to give to my audience a different perception of what they think or feel about a play they have read or watched.

As preface to storytelling \textit{Anowa}, I asked myself, what do I want to show the audience about my culture? I delve deeply into the play to bring out the important facts that I want the audience to know in a summary form. Therefore, I placed prominence on the setting of the play. This idea is to give my audience knowledge about the geography of Ghana, and Africa as a whole. The Akan belief system is one thing that I cannot overlook. Religiously, Akans believe in \textit{Odomankoma} (The Architect of Being), \textit{Nana nom} (ancestors) and other supernatural forces or spirits like, \textit{Asaase Yaa} (mother earth), \textit{Nana Bosompo} (the sea god), mountain spirits, etc. Thus, I included the belief system together with the core values of the Akans (that is respect for the aged) in the summary of the text. The play contains a great deal of content, highlighting the typical Akan culture.\footnote{For an extended discussion about the Akan belief system see: Danquah, J. B. (1959). \textit{Gold Coast Akan laws and customs and the Akim Abuakwa constitution}. London: G. Routledge. And Danquah, J. B., & Boahen, A. A. (1997). \textit{The Ghanaian establishment: Its constitution, its detentions, its traditions, its justice and statecraft, and its heritage of Ghanaism}. Accra: Ghana Universities Press. Pg.(3-17).}
While *Anowa* contains a great starting point, there are other factors that need to be added to make the play rich. Music and dance is unavoidable to storytelling. Under normal circumstance, live drumming, singing and dancing is desired for a dramatic performance. However, implementing this live experience is awkward. The insufficient knowledge about the Ghanaian culture leaves the *players* unable to grasp the music and drumming effectively. Regardless of these issues, I made a recorded version of some Akan traditional folk songs with a drum accompaniment that suited my production of storytelling performance.

As Sutherland achieved in her experimental theatre, I too organized my players and rehearsed with them their various roles in the production. Rehearsals included dance practice and how to respond to issues in the story at specific times with comments, questions and laughter. Through this, I hoped and waited patiently for a spectacular performance.

**Designing**

The realities of staging a performance lie heavily and bear on the shoulders of the director. He or she has the vision to determine what the cast and crew may need for the production. The director may communicate his vision of the production to the cast and crew members. However, he must work responsibly and collaboratively with the costume, set and lighting designers in order to bring his or her vision to life. This means staging a performance is a team effort. The director may have the vision but the production crew has a vital role to play. Their efforts have a greater impact in the staging process of the production and the way it is perceived and accepted by the audience.

**Set Design**

Although many directors have successfully used the proscenium stage for the performance of *Anowa*, I desire the thrust stage for my production because of the strong relationship it establishes between the actor and the audience. In spite of this, the thrust stage will be a fine medium for the two different sets I have envisioned for the production. The first set has the storyteller’s stool at the center of the stage while the *Players* sit semi-circularly facing him. (See fig. 1.1). In the second set, the *players* are divided into groups so that they sit parallel facing each other. The storyteller in this case sits adjacent to the *players*. (See fig. 1.2).
Figure 1.1
Circular Sitting Arrangement
Despite the simple nature of the traditional storytelling set, I want my audience to endorse the beauty of whatever they see on stage. The design components brought together can affect the appearance of costume on stage. For instance, when a white costume is lit by a red or blue light it changes to the color of the light. Costumes do not only add to the overall visual system, but also exposes the nature and status of the characters in the performance. Therefore, as a director, I consider how the costumes will work together collectively in the entire performance and how they appeal to the audience.

The costume for the storyteller comes in two pieces. The top is made up of five colors (golden yellow, black, white, and dark blue) of the rich traditional Akan kente cloth sown into smog or togas. The lower pant, togas, is made-up of two colors (yellow and wine) which hang between the ankle and the knee. The dominant color in these costumes is the golden yellow which symbolizes the wealth of the people. The costume is designed for men and it is worn with
native sandals, a special kind of sandals worn by the elderly. The idea of this costume selection is to evoke the richness of the Akan culture and to raise the status of the storyteller among the other actors. In the costume, the storyteller is seen as a respectable and responsible role model for the young ones. For the players, the normal daily cloth is desired.

**Lighting**

Lighting for the production is very simple and effective. A single lighting system that depicts the brightness of the moon was used. It stayed stable as the moonlight from the beginning of the performance to the end.

The use of design elements provides a wide range of meaning for the production. The individual design elements that I wove together were harmonized to created a beautiful design to accompany the music, dance and acting in the performance. The audience, at the end of the day, were able to read what they saw on stage and responded with applaud and laughter.
CONCLUSION

This thesis has served as an eye-opener for me as a theatre director on how to organize and produce a multicultural performance. The various processes I went through has broadened my knowledge of diversity and equipped me with the necessary multicultural experience that is central for a directorial career. The production also provides exposure for the Ghanaian culture while at the same time enlightens readers about the nature of the Ghanaian storytelling session. The emphasis of storytelling in this thesis is unambiguous. True or fabricated stories about individual situations or even the status quo of a given situation in a society is enacted during storytelling sessions to caution or boost the morale of people in the community.

Certainly, Aidoo’s *Anowa* happens to be one controversial African play that addresses the dilemmas of the postcolonial African woman. A thorough analytical view of the play causes us to ponder over the following questions: Although the nature and characterization of Anowa, Aidoo’s central character, contradicts societal norms, would you hold society responsible for her predicament? Or would you rather blame her for her own misfortune, or attribute it to her destiny?

Hopefully, this thesis may serve as a medium to rejuvenate the customs and traditions of our communities today and also serve as a tool to help broaden the scope of analysis, criticism and interpretation of Aidoo’s play *Anowa*. 
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