

# MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL PERFORMANCE AS A SITE OF LIBERATION FROM PERFORMANCE DICHOTOMY: INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper explores the artistic and aesthetic means of disrupting existent performance ideologies in Zimbabwe. It looks into the ways in which festival performance is beneficial through its creation of a platform that cuts across various performance traditions in Zimbabwe. With special reference to the Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA) as a multicultural festival, this paper identifies how the production of Allegations (2009) allows different forms of performance traditions to thrive. It emanates from the realization that, performance in Zimbabwe has been occurring separately with racial binaries marring the performance industry. Through the use of Resistance and Performance theories, I highlight how HIFA through Allegations, discards reduplication of separation by allowing both indigenous and foreign performance traditions to exist in the same performance space.*

## **KEYWORDS**

*Multicultural, binaries, site of liberation*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This article questions the artistic, aesthetic and ideological levels in multicultural festival production. By analyzing the strategies of resistance adopted by actors and performers who participate in HIFA productions, I interrogate how multicultural performances enhance or undermine local aesthetics. Together with the audiences and spectators, 'actors and performers are an important component for a performance to take place and therefore an important component to discuss in performance analysis' (Balme 2008)<sup>1</sup>.

Artistic analysis in this paper involves the directing, acting and spatial choices. Aesthetic implies how the deployments of these values celebrate Afro-centred approaches to the theatre-making. Ideological level includes how HIFA disrupts or reinforces the existing system of belief in performance culture. In exploring the artistic and aesthetic complexities emanating from intercultural staging evident in multicultural production of *Allegations 2009*, I query the extent to which this production can be viewed as a site of liberation and denigration from an aesthetic and artistic vantage point. I attempt to show how the major traditions, that is, Community theatre and European theatre traditions 'clash' and negotiate difference. What I demonstrate in this particular article is that, *Allegations* is biased towards African performance forms combined with Western aesthetics. As such, in the next section I provide both community and western theatre aesthetics in order to enlighten the reader to understanding the constituents of each category, their differences and how these differences are embraced or undermined as I interrogate multicultural performance of *Allegations*.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To interrogate the artistic and aesthetic levels of performance in festival theatre, I deploy theories of resistance and performance as ways of seeing the controversies triggered by inclusion of a variety of performance aesthetics and varied cultural ideologies. Resistance refers to processes of challenging the authority of an oppressive power structure by the subordinate (Vinthagen 2007)<sup>ii</sup>. It is imperative at this juncture to point out that resistance has been conceptualized in different ways. There is radical resistance which is resistance from without. There is also resistance from within. Resistance from within is crucial to this paper. Its operations are based on how imaginary lines of difference have created superiority and inferiority between the former colonizer and the former colonized. It shows 'them' and 'us' where them is meant to reflect the other who is inferior, incapable or weak. This has resulted in performance existing in either black or white, community or suburban in Zimbabwean theatre. The idea of resistance is tied to that of agency and social change, rather than just subversion (Jefferess 2008<sup>iii</sup>, Mzali 2011<sup>iv</sup>). Reframing resistance as transformation of power dynamics opens up new ways of reassessing various ramifications of resistance under colonial rule.

Resistance is therefore important in this study in that, it helps look into the ways in which the 'other' is given agency through HIFA. By focusing on resistance as something akin to liberation (Jefferess 2008), rather than total subversion of hegemonic practices, resistance helps in showing how both ends of the binary end up in the same production space as a liberative move by HIFA rather than a reduplication of existing performance separatism. It points out to the ways in which festival theatre is of service to both the marginalized makers and recipients of theatre in a country where performance has been operating in dichotomies.

It is also important to note that, in resistance everyone can be other in a certain context. Elites are 'others' in the context of community theatre making and reception and vice versa. In this way, resistance shows how power is never absolute (Foucault 1972)<sup>v</sup>. The fluidity of power helps in seeing how power oscillate between black and white or elite and community theatre making and reception through the festival theatre performed at HIFA. It posits power as a site of struggle. This helps in showing how HIFA is neither black nor white and both black and white. Rather than total dispensation, resistance becomes a strategy of recuperation where negotiation and social transformation are key (Mzali 2011). Resistance as transformation fosters a mutual interdependence between self and other rather than antagonism (Jefferess 2008, Shahjahan 2011<sup>vi</sup>). As such, resistance helps this paper to identify how negotiation of difference is made through HIFA in its inclusion of different performance forms as well as the kind of transformation it brings about in performance culture.

Performance theory is utilized to scrutinize *Allegations* (2009) in order to interrogate the existence of local and foreign forms of performance. It concerns how 'performances are generated, transmitted, received and evaluated and in pursuit of these goals, performance studies is insistently intercultural, inter-generic and inter-disciplinary' (Schechner 1995)<sup>vii</sup>. Schechner has remarked on the cross-cultural nature of drama and this offers the paper a base for analyzing how *Allegations* is not only single culture-specific, but cuts across local and global performance forms. It allows an investigation into the multiplicity of performance cultures within the making and the witnessing of festival theatre. This enables the article to 'see' performance as a means to enhance or disrupt performance tradition in Zimbabwe through performers thrown into the same performance spaces.

The two supporting concepts of performance theory are liminality and communitas. The 'liminal' was propounded by Victor Turner (1982) to refer to the 'in-between space, between sites of more conventional cultural activity' (Gerofsky 2006). According to Gerofsky (2006)<sup>viii</sup>, liminality

implies 'a passageway, a space of possibility which is characterized by temporariness'. As such, it is important in accounting for the ambiguities and openness that exists within the HIFA festival directing and acting with Allegations as case study. Ashcroft et al (1998)<sup>ix</sup> underscore that 'it is the in-between space that carries the burden and meaning of culture'. It helps look at HIFA festival as a liminal event which not only transforms individuals who attend but also allows for the analysis into the juxtaposition of both African and Western aesthetics as I interrogate issues of power, visibility and agency in multicultural productions.

Closely linked to liminality is *Communitas*. *Communitas* 'occurs when there is a congregation of liminal people with community spirit, solidarity and togetherness as important characteristics of that particular community' (Turner 1969<sup>x</sup>, 1974<sup>xi</sup>). This helps examine HIFA in the ways in which it allows the whole performance community to share a common experience with performers and audiences from different performance and reception backgrounds getting an opportunity to be together in making and witnessing festival performances.

Performance theory proffers various acting and staging techniques that are critical in establishing African performance aesthetics. In essence, performance theory represents an Afro-centric acting and staging aesthetic. These techniques include half acting, dematrixing, multiple casting, physicalization, and external characterization (Lehmann 2006<sup>xii</sup>, Castagno 2001<sup>xiii</sup>). In addition, performance theory celebrates the blending of different genres such as dance, music, poetry and voice leading to what Castagno (2001) calls the hybrid performance. These techniques, according to Castagno, represent a different aesthetic that dismantles the dramatic text and dramatic acting. Ravengai<sup>xiv</sup> (2011) notes that 'dramatic staging, which is celebrated by elitist theatre houses in Zimbabwe, relies on integral and rigid characterization, linear progression, internal characterization and autocratic directing'. Performance theory then helps to establish African aesthetics in a bid to establish the extent to which HIFA empowers African performance aesthetics.

### **3. UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY THEATRE AESTHETICS**

'Community theatre refers to a post-independence movement whose roots lie in various pre-independence traditions' (Rohmer 1997<sup>xv</sup>). It means that the theatre groups are made up of people drawn from their own community and immediate environment (Wa Mirii 1989<sup>xvi</sup>). With performances highly improvisational, it consists of mime, dance, song, gestures so powerful that even colonialism could not destroy (Wa Mirii 1988<sup>xvii</sup>). Gestures are movements of any type which the actor uses to communicate meaning. This includes movement of the hand, head, leg, arm, foot or shoulder. Community theatre reflects on communal issues by addressing itself to the immediate community needs as well as to the wider society (Rohmer 1997, Wa Mirii 1989). It is performed in the language of the community whose problems it seeks to address.

The relationship with the audience is also important. Since it relies on improvisation, character development is spontaneous. Improvisation is a form of dramatization without the use of script (Lawal 2001<sup>xviii</sup>). There is no structured linear progression of the story. The actor/actress can play many roles knowing fully well that they are performing in front of and is aware of the audience's presence (Elam 1980<sup>xix</sup>). The actor has the leeway to interact with or even include the spectators in the performance. It consists of presentational acting, which according to Weimann (1978<sup>xx</sup>) 'derives its primary strength from the immediacy of the physical act of historic delivery'. Community theatre heavily relies on energy thus explaining exaggerated movements, physical action, use of gestures, and 'noise'.

Community theatre, therefore, celebrates an indigenous model of theatre making and performance which resonates which resonates well with post dramatic theatre aesthetics as opposed to dramatic

theatre (Chikonzo 2014<sup>xxi</sup>). To this end, community theatre does not valorise the autocratic director. It celebrates democratic theatre making that gives the actor the room to explore his or her own proposals in performance. It engenders more interaction between actor and audience or what Castagno (2001) calls 'dematrixing'. Community theatre thrives on half acting, multiple casting, episodic play presentation and concentration on social dystopia. In this article I shall interrogate how HIFA accommodates these aesthetics and the implications of this accommodation or exclusion in *Allegations*.

#### **4. DELINEATING REPERTORY/EUROPEAN THEATRE**

In this kind of theatre, it is as if the audience is not there. The actor stays in-character behaving as if there is a fourth-wall that separates him/her from the audience. This wall maintains absolute autonomy of the dramatic fiction from the reality of theatre. Unlike presentational acting described above, where the 'actor is required to step out of his role and acknowledge the presence of the public' (Elam 1980, Seda 2011<sup>xxii</sup>, Ravengai 2011<sup>xxiii</sup>, Plastow 1996<sup>xxiv</sup>), the kind of acting utilized in this kind of theatre is therefore representational. It 'is vitally connected with the imaginary product and effect of rendering absent meanings, ideas and images of artificial person's thought and actions' (Weimann 1978). It therefore follows Stanislavsky's method acting which calls for the actor to develop a relationship with their character during rehearsal and performance (Stanislavski 1936<sup>xxv</sup>, Seda 2011, Ravengai 2011).

#### **5. MULTICULTURAL COMPLEXITIES IN PERFORMANCE: ALLEGATIONS (2009)**

In this section, I explore cultural complexities and politics of performance in *Allegations* (2009). *Allegations* (2009), a HIFA Direct project, is a play about Spud, a white farmer who loses his farm, father and all of his belongings to farm raiders and starts to despise the black 'other' but shortly recognizes that his 'other' black counterpart are facing the same challenges. Directed by Patience Tawengwa, it stars Everson Ndlovu and Daniel Hargrove. The play was performed on 30 April 2009 at the Standard theatre. This analysis is based on reconstruction.

In *Allegations*, I explore complexities emanating from a mix between suburban and community theatre within a single production. It is important to note that, although Tawengwa has a suburban background, her training is different from that which Hargrove received at REPS. Tawengwa represents theatre institution-oriented directorship on community theatre artists and artists with a European background I therefore explore how festivalization creates a platform that celebrates artistic difference rather than denigration. Difference is the same with plurality and diversity where aesthetic and artistic uniqueness is tolerated rather than denigrated. These artistic differences are, in this case, cultural. Difference helps blurring boundaries which have been marginalizing anything that is not the same with the self which Spivak<sup>xxvi</sup> (1987) has conceptualized as the 'other'. The main question that I answer is, in what ways, at an artistic and aesthetic level can multicultural production of *Allegations* be viewed as a site of liberation and denigration from an aesthetic and artistic vantage point? Ordinarily, it is common for whites to direct multiracial casts and not vice versa. HIFA is the middle ground where different races meet, interact and work together. Tawengwa partners with Hargrove and Ndlovu. It is important at this point in time to give a background of these two actors to show difference in performance traditions that they are used to.

On one hand there is Everson Ndlovu. Ndlovu is a community theatre artist who features in Edzai Isu community theatre plays that take place in the open air, in townships, in workplaces or in the Zimbabwe hall which is in Highfield. He is an associate producer together with James Mukwindidza of Vuka Africa, another community theatre group in Harare (Ndlovu 2013). Edzai

Isu is based in Highfield, one of the oldest high density suburbs in Harare (Muzondo 2013). At Edzai Isu, he is used to improvisation, mime, physical theatre which requires a lot of energy. The Edzai Isu approach where actors pretend to be the characters and there is high involvement of the audience. Apart from that, he has worked with other professional theatre companies such as Rooftop and has featured in TITP productions (Ndlovu 2013). Ndlovu (2013) says that, at the time when *Allegations* was produced, he was receiving three-year training at Harare based Theory X Theatre Initiative Theory X is a multiracial that trains students.

On the other hand, Daniel Hargrove is from the European theatre tradition. He was trained and groomed at REPS theatre, an elite ensemble. Hargrove has worked as the Head of Department (HOD) of the Film Department at Theory X (Hargrove 2013). He is accustomed to realism which calls for life-like presentation of theatre which demands the actor to 'present the character to the audience and be the character' (Turnbull<sup>xxvii</sup> 2008).

These two actors have contrasting backgrounds. Ndlovu is from community theatre whilst Hargrove hails from an elite theatre backdrop. By having both community theatre and repertory theatre artists sharing the same space, neither the elite nor the community theatre artists can claim to own the production as it represents both of them in what Turner<sup>xxviii</sup> (1982) calls a 'limen'. It is 'betwixt and between' to borrow from Turner as I demonstrate in this article.

## **6. COMPLEXITIES AND TECHNIQUES OF INTERCULTURAL STAGING IN ALLEGATIONS.**

### **6.1. Narration**

External events certainly impact on how playwrights understand the world. These similar events also affect directors and actors/actresses. Narration is another resistance strategy adopted by the director of *Allegations*. The whole performance of *Allegations* is a narration. This narration used with non-African approaches of staging not only celebrates hybridity, but also prevents neither culture from being dominant or subordinate. It therefore dismantles ZACT/NTO binaries in *Allegations*. 'We are inclined to think of local cultural resistance as something that draws its symbolic resources from local roots' (Hannerz 1997<sup>xxix</sup>). The use of narration shows how collaborative techniques of play creation and production are rooted in indigenous performance practices blend well with non African aesthetics highlights. Incorporation of African cultural symbols serves an ambivalent function. The co-existence of both races in a HIFA production like *Allegations*, breaks separate development of theatre in Zimbabwe.

Hargrove (Spud) and Reason (Ndlovu) not only tell but enact to the audience about how they were victims of 'the system'. Hargrove narrates and enacts how his farm was invaded, his father was killed and how he lost his dogs to the invaders. He narrates the terror and trauma of seeing his property 'destroyed' without him being able to do anything about it. He narrates how he panicked, phoned neighbours seeking for help and later on ran for his life together with his wife, Claire. Ndlovu narrates his ordeal of how his thatched hut was burnt and how in trying to escape death he was abducted by the 'party' youths for being a sell-out, battered under his feet, on the ribs and all over his body.

Narration is the domain of traditional African theatre. Just like the story-teller in folklore would assume many characters without necessarily changing his/her personality. Just like in traditional Zimbabwe, oral performance reminds the audience of the oral narrative where the story-teller 'engaged' their minds by narrating fictional stories. The irony is that Tawengwa tasks Hargrove to perform a narrative when he is used to realism where narration does not exist. Whilst Hargrove is used to method acting which 'uses more of an inside-out approach' (Turnbull 2008), in order to cater for African aesthetics, she makes Hargrove do the opposite of what he is accustomed to.

This way she Africanizes European theatre tradition which seeks to mute African aesthetics, an achievement which strengthens the desires of Chinyowa and Kavanagh<sup>xxx</sup> (1988) and Wa Mirii (1988). As Chinyowa says of oral traditional Shona narrative, story-telling lives on in modified form (Kerr 2004<sup>xxxi</sup>). The performance is narrated in English though. By marrying European theatre aesthetics through the (English language) with indigenous performance forms (through narration) (Balme 1990<sup>xxxii</sup>), HIFA provides a platform for integration. In the process of shifting towards more empowering options that incorporate cultural mix and permeability (Rajendran 2016<sup>xxxiii</sup>), HIFA negotiates difference in an interesting way. As such, through narration, HIFA celebrates popular forms of drama by incorporating it into multicultural performances.

However, Tawengwa (2013) acknowledges that this had its own complexities. According to Bourdillon cited in Ravengai<sup>xxxiv</sup> (2007), 'change has been taking place in Zimbabwe and it cannot be avoided'. And the same change is evident at HIFA where some directors and artists are beginning to appreciate working together. In an interview, Tawengwa says she enjoyed directing Ndlovu and Hargrove as they represented different communities of theatre performance. Comparing Hargrove and Ndlovu, she states that it took a bit of a while to mould Hargrove since he has been accustomed to presentational theatre. It appears Hargrove's intention was to win the audience's empathy. This corroborates Esslin's<sup>xxxv</sup> (1960) point that dramatic realism creates emotional attachment and identification. His voice was teary and he cried when recounting the death of his dogs, his father and his farm. He was so into his character that it appears he wanted the audience to cry. According to Esslin (1960), 'actors create a world which they want the audiences to escape into'. This is what Hargrove does. This is relevant as a means of defending the European tradition which 'calls for reality on stage' (Stanislavsky 1939, Mitter 1992<sup>xxxvi</sup>). On the other hand, Ndlovu was laughing in between his role. His gestures, movements were larger than life. Ndlovu 'destroys depth of realism in order to curtail emotional attachment, which makes the reality of the play fated' (Chikonzo 2014). Narration helps resist separatism. It becomes both African and European. Globalization has in fact rearranged the architecture of world order (Hoogvelt 1998<sup>xxxvii</sup>). Even performance traditions are broken. In this way, the dividing line is broken by putting two theatre traditions in the same space. As the 'in-between' space that carries the burden and meaning of culture' (Ashcroft et al 1998), HIFA is a space for transformation of different traditions.

## 6.2. Song

Song is one of the forms that falls into the tradition of African performance tradition (Wa Mirii 1988, Chinyowa 2005<sup>xxxviii</sup>, Finnegan 2000<sup>xxxix</sup>). In story-telling, there is frequent occurrence of music and sometimes even rudimentary dance movements (Finnegan 2000). In *Allegations*, the director adopts song as a way of incorporating African aesthetics in this international festival. Oppression needs a new song to inculcate the spirit of hope in the minds of the people (Sirayi 2002<sup>xl</sup>). Whilst realism thrives on presenting reality as it is, community theatre thrives on its desire to bring change. Therefore, in as much as *Allegations* is a performance for aesthetic conflict, it enables African forms of theatre to strive. In order to neutralize the power that has been associated with whiteness in Zimbabwean performance dating back to the NTO days, Tawengwa gives mileage to Ndlovu in the form of song. When Hargrove is narrating the invasion of his farm, Ndlovu sings a liberation war song that denigrates whites to emphasize how charged the invaders were. His singing is magnified. This helps establish African aesthetics in a white-told story. In this way, resistance shows how power is never absolute (Foucault 1972). This is strengthened by Hargrove who *toyi-toyis*. *Toyi-toyi* is the domain of African liberation war vigils which were held to indoctrinate the villagers with political ideology. And as such, singing was a form of hope. In *Allegations*, it helps divert attention from the actual problem. Rather than total dispensation, resistance becomes a strategy of recuperation from the qualms of dividing binaries where negotiation and social transformation are key (Mzali 2011).

This strategy of narration shows the ‘increasing openness of a third space whose borderlands overlap’ (Soja 1996<sup>xlii</sup>). Kershaw notes that true borders work when the members agree to use common symbols, language included (Kershaw 1992<sup>xliii</sup>). HIFA accounts for what Sirayi (2002) identifies as ‘the continuity between pre-colonial theatre and contemporary African drama and with the impact of European drama traditions on contemporary African drama’. At the same time, by focusing on resistance as something akin to liberation (Jefferess 2008), rather than total subversion of hegemonic practices, resistance helps in showing how both ends of the binary end up in the same production and consumption space as a liberative move by HIFA rather than a reduplication of existing performance separatism.

### 6.3. Dematrixing as a resistance strategy

Dematrixing is the process by which actors destroy the distance between the stage and the auditorium (Chikonzo 2014). According to Sirayi (2002), there is always a boundary between the audience and actor, for the actors are on a stage designed especially for them, and the audience is in the auditorium. In realism, these spaces are fixed. Actors stay on the performance space designed for them whilst audiences remain quiet, glued to their seats throughout the performance. As Sirayi observes, the actors do not move to and from the audience. This is the background from which Hargrove hails. It is as though the audience does not exist as they are separated by an imaginary ‘fourth wall’ of the setting (Gattling-Coates<sup>xliiii</sup>). The audience is peaking in on the scene and the actor is unaware of the audience’s presence as Gattling-Coates points out. However, Tawengwa breaks this European tradition. The distinguishing feature of African drama, in its form, is that there is no distinction between the performer and the audience (Manyara 2010<sup>xliv</sup>).

In dematrixing, the actor makes the audience aware of the fact that this is a theatrical presentation; it is only a version of reality (Chikonzo 2014). Even though the performance takes place in a theatre building where audience-performer demarcations are very clear, Tawengwa gives Ndlovu so much physicality. Movement and speech is given not to reflect life but to heighten it (Gattling-Coates 2012). Indeed African performances include a lot of physicality. He goes up and down the rostras, does a lot of running when demonstrating how he fled his homestead. He vigorously mimics the kicks he was given on the ribs and on his whole body. His groanings of pain are larger than life. Even in-between his demonstrations of pain, he manages to sing to dilute pain by mocking Chibhanzi, a rich businessman, brutalized by the youths. He sometimes communicates directly with the audiences especially calling on them to help him sing liberation war songs or mockery songs for the victim of the land redistribution act.

Communitas occurs when there is a congregation of liminal people with community spirit, solidarity and togetherness as important characteristics of that particular community (Turner 1969, 1974). By utilizing a building to demonstrate African and European theatre aesthetics, *Allegations* becomes a liminal where both traditions are momentarily acceptable. It is the ‘in-between space, between sites of more conventional cultural activity’ (Turner 1982, Gerofsky 2006). But in all this, he is still a half actor who does not forget himself (Schechner 1990, Chikonzo 2014). ‘Hybridity displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination’ (Bhabha 1994<sup>xlv</sup>). This way, Tawengwa manages to synthesize African and European performance traditions. Whilst there are instances when Hargrove moves to Ndlovu like when he offers him a cigarette, his movements are not as heightened as Ndlovu’s. As performance intervention, dematrixing in *Allegations* is a means of recuperating various theatre traditions which in Slemon’s (2006)<sup>xlvi</sup> words, ‘deploys them towards a discourse of inclusivity and coverage’. According to (Seda 2011), ‘when such identities emerge in this contradictory and ambivalent space, it makes claim to hierarchical purity of cultures untenable’. This dematrixing

played in a theatre building is an indication that HIFA advocates for fusion of different racial identities.

However, Hargrove (2013) brought with him minimalized movements as part of the European tradition. Ndlovu (2013) appreciated the way Hargrove continued to be calm in spite of him (Ndlovu) going up and down the rostras. Hargrove (2013) is grateful to Tawengwa in that she was not as rigid as the directors he is accustomed to in his REPS and Theory X performances. He says that, 'from experience, you do what you are told to do, and you do exactly that. But with Patie (Tawengwa), I was free to come up with my own propositions, like toned down gestures and movements. This establishes Tawengwa as a 'democratic director' (Hargrove 2013). The quest to defeat, escape or circumvent the pattern of binaries (Tiffin and Lawson 1994)<sup>xlvii</sup> has compelled HIFA theatre producers and directors to strategize on ways to blur these imaginary lines of difference. HIFA not only destabilizes the misconception that Zimbabwe is neither for blacks or whites (Muwonwa 2011)<sup>xlviii</sup>, but it also provides a multi-racial space in performance where both blacks and white can participate. This common space is what Bhabha (1990) calls the 'third space' which opens cultures to a new space.

Hargrove (2013) says that he also ended up laughing together with Ndlovu for example, after finishing smoking cigarettes together. 'Resistance as transformation fosters a mutual interdependence between self and other rather than antagonism' (Jeffress 2008, Shahjahan 2011). As such, this performance helped creating mutual relations<sup>1</sup>. 'Hybridity enables the establishment of communication between cultures' (Dehdari 2013). By being a democratic director, Tawengwa gives performers agency through resistance. The idea of resistance is tied to that of agency and social change, rather than just subversion (Jeffress 2008, Mzali 2011). As such HIFA as a third space is a 'site of renegotiation of cultures and identities' (Mukwara 2016)<sup>xlix</sup>.

#### 6.4. Casting

Tawengwa reverses tradition. In Zimbabwe, performance has been demarcated into elite and community theatre binaries from the ZACT/NTO days. Even though this study is not meant to paint performance in black and white, it is imperative at this juncture to point out that in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe whiteness has been associated with superiority (Zenenga 2012<sup>1</sup>, Chifunyise and Kavanagh 1988, Wa Mirii 1988) whilst blackness implied inferiority. She could have chosen two whites to represent the European performance traditions. She could also have chosen two fellow black artists to defend the African traditions. However, Tawengwa equally represents both African and European traditions by casting Hargrove representing foreign aesthetics whilst Ndlovu represents local aesthetics. Diversity and integration in *Allegations* embodies 'a liminal space of contestation and change, at the edges of the presumed monolithic, but never completely beyond' (Bhabha 1994). This is evidence of 'valuing differences between cultures and seeing them as enriching' (Scircle 2013<sup>li</sup>). Whilst one may want to argue that the ratio of representation is never fifty-fifty, Tawengwa does what Sirayi (2002) postulates as integrating African theatrical elements with European drama traditions. Whilst Sirayi talks of South African Mtwana, the same applies to Zimbabwean theatre. And as such, it can be said for *Allegations* that Tawengwa does not direct nor her actors perform in a spirit of African nostalgia but relates the traditional to modern society. By resisting separate development of theatre, HIFA 'breaks performance borders. It establishes 'a third space' (Soja 1989, Bhabha 1994) which 'is a hybrid space where cultural styles jostle and collide; where culture wars spawn not new resentment but new cultures' (Turner 1982).

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<sup>1</sup>And the production managed to tour internationally after HIFA, winning several accolades.



## 6.5. Language

Language is one form which is appropriated in festival theatre in order to circumvent communication and reception problem. Puritists advocate for the use of indigenous languages to ensure purity and continuity. However, English has also been adopted as a local language in Zimbabwe. 'In fact, every member of the white commonwealth had to develop its variety of English and accent as a way of establishing its separate identity' (Ravengai 2007). But vernacular dominates in community theatre whilst plays from the elite societies are performed in English. As an actor, Ndlovu is more powerful in that he exhibits both township and elite performance traditions. Township theatre is usually performed in the language of the audiences. And Ndlovu is fluent. When it comes to the main language of *Allegations* (English), he is also fluent. It is important to note that appropriating English permits the former colonies to experience the language of the colonizer in the way that suits the colony. Getting Ndlovu to speak in English is a form of Europeanizing African performance aesthetics. This way, Tawengwa weds Africanness with Europeaness through use of both languages. According to Ndlovu, the trainings that he has received from Edzai Isu and Theory X have been very influential in his acting. He says that he can perform anywhere to any audience because these two production houses have equipped him with all the ammunition he needs. And even the director Tawengwa (2013) acknowledges that, whilst it is difficult to cast an artist who is usually accustomed to perform in vernacular to perform in English, Ndlovu was the right candidate. He effortlessly switched from English to Shona. Even though the play is performed in English, it is a mix of the two main languages of Zimbabwe. Therefore, *Allegations* becomes a means of what Chivandikwa<sup>lii</sup> (2010) call 'Shonglishing the stage'. This appropriation allows grasp of all languages. And as such, HIFA beefs up the languages of separate performance traditions by creating a third language which accommodates both popular and elite agency.

The appropriated language is a powerful means of expression. Each time Ndlovu refers to his ancestors, he says *Vadzimu vangu* calling for their help. This emphasis is imperative in Shona in that the Shonas are the ones whose traditions runs back into believing in their ancestors as continuing to exist and looking back on them guiding them even after death. Repetition, which is a domain of African performance draws emphasis to Africanness and disturbs European aesthetics. Even when playing the village youths, he sings in Shona. He repeatedly sings to mock the rich businessman who is battered and burnt as if to ease his pain. This has more impact than it would have had when sung in English. He says imagine singing *vachibhanzi vauya* or *Taimhanya takabata sub tichishingirira Zimbabwe* in English. By oscillating from English and Shona, Ndlovu resists tradition which has associated community theatre with Shona and European theatre with English as residues left by ZACT and NTO. This establishes Ndlovu as an ambivalent artist. According to Young (1995)<sup>liii</sup>, 'ambivalence is the simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action'. It suggests how 'the complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject' (Ashcroft et al 2007). His going back and forth from English to Shona is evidence of the aforesaid 'Shonglishing' of the performance arena. This is evidence that 'no culture operates in isolation' (Sirayi 2002). As such, this ambivalence institutes HIFA as a liminal where there is 'intricate interweaving of the unique and the general, the local and the global' (Soja 1996).

## 6.6. Directing as a strategy for diversity

Tawengwa becomes a better version of a director. By fusing both NTO and ZACT, she destabilizes notions of racial purity and proffers a production which is neither has exclusive whiteness or black purity. By borrowing from both traditions, she becomes the mimic woman who disturbs authority. On the other hand, one may want to argue that Tawengwa's choice of using rostra was a way of celebrating community-based theatre aesthetics. According to the

Schipper (1982)<sup>liv</sup> rostra is a large platform from which orators spoke to the assembled people. Speaking to the audience is the domain of community theatre as discussed below. By using the rostras and theatre in the round which represent the African community tradition Schipper (1982), Tawengwa gives an African feel to *Allegations*. *Allegations* brings a twist to segregational performance relations in Zimbabwe where ZACT defended traditional performance methods whilst the NTO defended European methods. By contaminating the pure (Appiah 2006)<sup>lv</sup>, HIFA productions such as *Allegations* form an important means of forging relations in a country where performance is mostly in binaries of community and elite theatre. Even if these do not become of the mainstream imagining, they provide significant expressions of ...critical questions related to living in pluralistic contexts polarized by 'official policy' (Rajendran 2016). The existence of a black student and his white head of department in the same performance space is an important step in the subversion of separate development of theatre that has been dominant in Zimbabwe. HIFA proffers the establishment of new race relations. Whilst the two had met at Theory X before HIFA, their relations were strengthened at HIFA (Hargrove 2013, Ndlovu 2013 interview). By forging a sense of communal identity (Soja 1996, Turner 1982), *Allegations* becomes a 'liminal activity' (Turner 1982) where magnifying difference is not an option.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, in this article, I have highlighted the benefits and complications emerging from the different relationships that come with working together of different races and performance backgrounds. Whilst HIFA has been labelled as an elite festival, I hope to have highlighted how HIFA strives to highly involve the African forms of performance. It has emerged that there are power dynamics which establish HIFA as a battleground where African aesthetics and European aesthetics strive to get recognition.

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