THE VISUAL LANGUAGES OF DURO LADIPO’S THEATRE IN OBA MORO,

OBA KOSO AND OBA WAJA

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Leeds

School of English

December 2011

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the works of others.

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Acknowledgements

I am eternally grateful to the God of my heart for inspiring, guiding and helping me to complete this research despite all the obstacles I encountered. I thank all the staff of the School of English, University of Leeds who have contributed directly or indirectly to the progress of my study. I am indebted to Emeritus Professor Martin Banham for providing me with some valuable materials about Duro Ladipo’s theatre and for supporting my field work in Nigeria through his African theatre fund.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor, Professor Jane Plastow, who believed in my research and worked tirelessly with me to the end. It has been a great pleasure and honour to work with you. I am grateful to Mr Tim Skelly who supervised my theatrical practical visual explorations in this research.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my friend, Dr Akinmade Akande of the Department of English, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, who took valuable time off from his busy schedule in Nigeria to be my research assistant and host at Ile-Ife during my field work. I am also immensely grateful to his wife, Mrs Iyabode Akande, his dad (baba), the late Chief Samuel Adewuni Akande, who arranged one of my interviews and accompanied me to the interview and Mr Kehinde Akande, my honourable cameraman.
I am ever so grateful to all those who participated in my field work interviews and discussions. Professor Femi Osofisan, Professor P.A. Ogundeji, Professor Wole Ogundele, Chief Mrs Abiodun Duro-Ladipo, Professor Oga Steve Abah, Dr Gbemisola Adeoti, Dr Ayo Opefeyitimi, Dr Sola Ajibade, Dr G.A. Oyewo, Dr J.A. Afolabi, Dr Adewolu Faley, Mr Akinwale, Mr Tunji Ojeyemi, Mr Adewale Abobarin, Mrs Adeola Faley, Chief Ifayemi Elebuibon, Pa Adebayo Faleti, Elder Peter Fatomilola and Chief Ojeleke Ajangila.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to all my network of friends, family and artists for all their moral support and contribution to the progress of my study. Mr Lookman Sanusi, Dr Sola Adeyemi, Dr Chukwuma Okoye, Ms Khadijah Ibrahiim, Mr Joe Williams, Mr David Hamilton, Mr Christopher Lister, Mr Olasupo Ogunyinka, Mr Kola Ogunyinka, Mr Stanley Tamaratere, Mr Kevin Olorunnisola, Mr Biodun Tela, Alhaji Ola Bakare, Mr Olasunkanmi Olunaike, Mr Olalekan Oyeyebi, Mr Adegoke Adedayo and Ms Angela Anderson. I am also very grateful to my children for their understanding and to my brother, Mr Olumuyiwa Ogunjobi, for his love and support. I thank you all, may the almighty cosmic continue to be your guide.
Abstract

This study examines the importance of the visual languages of Duro Ladipo’s theatre in *Oba Moro*, *Oba Koso* and *Oba Waja*, highlighting their significance as expressions of the Yoruba metaphysical matrix, and as a means of preserving Yoruba culture. Through an examination of Ladipo’s productions of these plays I demonstrate their association with the Yoruba history and mythology, how they reflect Ladipo’s understanding of the Yoruba world view and general belief system, and the importance Ladipo increasingly gave to his theatre as an expression of his culture at a time when the socio-political dynamic was moving to marginalise African metaphysics. An examination of the visual aspects of his theatre demonstrates how he imbued his performances with meticulous spiritual significance, and raises the question as to how different audiences might have been able to ‘read’ this theatre.

The study investigates Ladipo’s upbringing as a Yoruba descendant, his family background and influences, the factors responsible for his early interest in music and performance, the theatrical subjects he explored, the dramaturgy he employed and the impact of his theatre on both national and international audiences. Through empirical research and a critical analysis of the theories associated with Ladipo’s theatre, the catalysts and trends that inform his theatrical development and growth are chronologically contextualised. As a distinguished dramatist who explored the Yoruba history, myths, legends and cosmology through his theatre, this study relied on empirical findings, the textual and visual records of his plays, articles and scholarly reviews about
his theatre, in establishing the context of his dramaturgy, his thematic considerations, the
language and elements of his plays and the integrity of their visual dimensions.
Dedication

In loving memory of my late father and first teacher, Mr Francis Babatunde Ogunjobi and my late younger brother, Olugbenga Ayodele Ogunjobi (the left handed giant) who left the market place mysteriously.
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