

**THE VISUAL LANGUAGES OF DURO LADIPO'S THEATRE IN *OBA MORO*,  
*OBA KOSO* AND *OBA WAJA***

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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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**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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