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SCENIC DESIGN IN GHANA: PHILOSOPHIES AND STYLES OF SOME DESIGNERS

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JULY 2017
DECLARATION

I, Neequaye Nash Niikoi with candidate number 10352979, hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own research.

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ABSTRACT

Existing written works in the field of technical theatre have not advanced much as compared to that of dramatic literature in Ghana. A number of researches and publications have been made on Ghanaian theatre and literature, which basically dwell more on the history and development of the Ghanaian Concert Party traditions, the Ghanaian theatre forms, Ghanaian playwrights and various acting troupes or players. However, it appears very little has been said on the technical aspects; the scenic designers, their designs and constructions, which are equally essential in stage productions. The creation of abstract, natural, or realistic scenic designs for stage productions by Ghanaian scenic designers, have contributed immensely to theatre practice in Ghana. This research therefore seeks to examine four Ghanaian scenic designers. It makes use of the historical research approach from qualitative research methodology based on an in-depth interview with the designers in focus, to trace the trends of scenic design in Ghana. With emphasis on historical and philosophical contexts, each designer is examined on areas such as significance of work, motivation of work, key ideas, inspiration, and impact of works on other designers. This paper is in two major parts; firstly, it documents the lives of these Ghanaian scenic designers; John Djisenu, David Amoo, Edu Johnson and Prince Kojo-Hilton in the growth and development of scenic design in Ghana. The second part then focuses on analysis and interpretation; purpose, aesthetic and thematic concerns of their works vis-à-vis their philosophies, styles and innovations. It was revealed that their designs were influenced by both indigenous and foreign experiences and encounter with some art movements.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Almighty God, and to my grandmother (Madam Abiatha Clottey) whose prayers, support and words of encouragement have produced this result.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The research generally aims to document the history of scenic design in the life and works of some selected scenic designers in Ghana, and note as well how various factors and trends influenced their design philosophies and styles. This chapter of the study focuses on the background to the study and the problem that has informed this research. Research questions related to the study are also provided to assist the researcher address the problem statement and the objectives of study. The chapter further examines other areas such as the scope of the study, limitations and delimitation, significance of the study as well as the thesis organization.

1.2 Background to the Study

Current global design trends juxtaposed with reaction from the challenges posed by urgency to produce or suggest distinctive concepts demands that a designer takes up the task of giving a unique design that responds to the needs of the stage performance. Ensuring a good artistic response when a new designing concept is discovered requires that, designers should also stay current; to be well-informed with changes. Therefore, stage designers have employed exaggerated costumes for extreme prominence, stage machinery for special effects, sound effects to enhance reality and lighting to aid visibility. These designers form the technical experts responsible for providing mood and aesthetics for any performance, however, scenic design is the focus of this study.

Design scholars have given emphasis to the functionality, aside aesthetics, of scenic designing to be an important aspect in stage performances. Also, the major focus of the scenic designer is to design and give life to an acting space as well as communicate his
or her intentions and emotions, mostly in agreement with the director and the playwright’s intentions (Gillette, 2000). Scenic designing is not a matter of just constructing an ‘impressive’ design, but fundamentally an appropriate environment that will provide a significant picture to support the performance. Therefore, every scenic designer and the visual representation he or she designs has its connotation. In agreement with Michael Gillette, as posited by Archer, Gendrich & Hood (2010) the scenic designer seeks to establish some effective understanding of the production by carefully choosing his or her working concepts to design different scenic locales. As a result, scenic design contributes to the understanding and enjoyment of the stage performance by providing visual reinforcement to the production concept. In other words, the design creates a locale that supports the performers. These and many other functions of scenic design have contributed to the aesthetic enhancement of stage performances in Ghana that the researcher will unveil.

In addition, any attempt by the scenic designer to fulfil the practical necessities for stage performances in Ghana demands an effective job of providing the production with an applicable scenic locale regardless of any challenges. At this point, the creativity of the Ghanaian scenic designer is extremely motivated by numerous concepts and ideas, enshrined, in different personal ideologies. Basically, a concept developed by any scenic designer could be characteristically similar in elements that other designers can relate to, while proclaiming artistic adventures in their works. However, in identifying the various sources of ideas that distinguishes a Ghanaian scenic designer from another, some investigations about the unique elements that personalise their works are observed. These elements brand the scenic designer’s work, hence, the purpose of this study is to document the philosophies and styles of the designer.
Furthermore, a scenic designer’s design philosophy and style becomes very distinctive in his or her design creative process and final works. To some Ghanaian scenic designers, every stage production is based on their unique design ideology which requires some core elements that depicts the philosophies and styles exhibited in their works. These philosophies are unique and embedded in the designer, and could only be appreciated in the works displayed to the observer. This Popper (1974) attests to when he says, “we all have our philosophies, whether or not we are aware of this fact, and our philosophies are not worth very much. But the impact of our philosophies upon our actions and our lives is often important” (p33), but how artistically we use these philosophies are the most essential aspect this study considers.

This study therefore, takes an approach in identifying and discussing the philosophies and styles in the works of four Ghanaian scenic designers. The findings presented in the study are primary based on an in-depth interview with the designers in focus; John Djisenu, David Amoo, Edu Johnson and Prince Kojo Hilton. Documenting the scenic designer’s life and analysing his design philosophies and styles, in relation to his creative developments revealed some uniqueness. With emphasis on historical and philosophical contexts, each designer was examined on areas such as significance of his work, motivation of his work, key ideas, inspiration, and impact of his works on other designers. Analysing their philosophies and styles revealed concepts of some art movements comparable to their works. As a result, projecting a Total Theatre Designer (TTD), realism, symbolism, asymmetrical balance concepts and portraying a national identity are some examples to the design philosophy and style of the scenic designers in focus.

The study also proceeds to analyse how the scenic designers make use of indigenous or foreign design concepts and how that influences their creativity. According to the four
scenic designers, these indigenous or foreign influences mostly results in the use of some orthodox and or unorthodox approaches that brings out the desired effect that best suits the performance. They usually result to these indigenous or foreign influences consciously or unconsciously during their design process. I considered the scenic designer’s motivation to connect with the Ghanaian indigenous concepts, as well as connect with foreign concepts; how both collaborated physically in shaping the scenic designer’s thoughts. The current state of technology in Ghana offers many advantages in communication fields, which the scenic designer can relate to in the aspects of reference and easy access to indigenous or foreign design concepts. Therefore, scenic designs concepts have now become more mobile which could or may affect other designers worldwide. For the Ghanaian scenic designer, the fundamental idea is to utilize orthodox and or unorthodox approaches in stage performances. Djisenu¹ explains:

The indigenous or foreign concepts are a basis to every designer’s work that requires experience and skill to incorporate a particular aspect in the design. This is done to meet the needs of the people related to the object of the performance. Both concepts refer to different stages of a production process. (Personal interview, 14th April 2017)

In connection with such submission, the influences on the scenic designer’s works affect his or her design philosophy and style. However, in examining the historical development of scenic design in Ghana, it was perceived that the current state of Ghanaian stage designing has passed through many ideologies as well as restrictions and developments related to the design functionality and the period of the stage performance.

Ultimately, interviewing the scenic designers in focus and analysing their works, I affirm that, the task to make any decision concerning their designing would not have succeeded if not for their guiding principles which have now become an aspect of their works.

¹ Djisenu is a design or technology specialist and senior lecturer at the University of Ghana, Legon. (see Chapter four)
These guiding principles form the values that explain systematically the scenic designer’s choice of a design philosophy and style, and aid to illustrate why some design works are different from others. To the Ghanaian scenic designer, these design philosophies and styles act as standard authorities towards their decision making. For the audience or observer, it becomes very necessary to understand the scenic designer’s philosophy and style to enable better knowledge and appreciation to their art works.

1.3 Problem Statement
Ghanaian scenic designers have employed unique philosophies and styles in their various works and provided great difference in the stage production. However, research in Ghana has not focused much on scenic designers and their works; the various technical skills and procedures that motivated the originality of their works have not received much scholarly attention, hence, the need for this study.

1.4 Research Questions
1. What important early experiences contributed to the scenic designer’s personality and personal philosophy?
2. What are the philosophies and styles of the Ghanaian scenic designer?
3. How does the Ghanaian scenic designer employ indigenous or foreign concepts in his or her work?

1.5 Objective
The general objective is to recognize some Ghanaian scenic designers and document their works for stage performances. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:
1. To appreciate the Ghanaian scenic designer’s life and the influence on his work.
2. To identify the philosophies and styles of some Ghanaian scenic designers.
3. To find out the extent Ghanaian scenic designer’s works have been influenced by indigenous or foreign concepts.

1.6 Justification of Objectives

Specifically, these objectives are important for three reasons. First, these scenic designers are significant because their philosophies and styles deal with ideas and questions which can enhance understandings of scenic design for stage performances. Second, the scenic designers and their works would help identify the variation of scenic design in Ghana. Third, these objectives are essential because studying the life and works of the scenic designers will provide the researchers with a ‘tool kit’ about the designer’s informed philosophies and styles and their influences on other designers.

1.7 Significance of the Study

To promote studies on Ghanaian scenic designers, this platform aims to bring together the scattered information on some Ghanaian scenic designers as well as their works. It outlines the scenic designer’s philosophies and styles, thereby making findings in these areas or on their concepts easily accessible.

Moreover, the findings will serve as a reference material for researchers on the subject of Ghanaian scenery design. The outcomes of this study can be disseminated through educational activities (such as seminars or academic workshops) that will aid inform some enthusiasts of designing about yet-to-be-discovered aspects of Ghanaian scenic design.
1.8 Theoretical Framework

This research is supported by theories of creativity that allow various investigations and documentations which contribute to knowledge of scenic designing in Ghana. The study explores a new area of Design or Technology and depends mainly William Thomas’ and Florian Znaniecki’s Life Course Theory; and art movements such as Symbolism and Realism that are enshrined in the works of the scenic designers in focus for this study.

The Life Course Theory, also known as Life Course Approach or Life Course Perspective refers to “an approach developed in the 1960s, for analysing people's lives within structural context” (Elder, Glen, Kirkpatrick and Crosnoe, 2003:4). According to Elder et al (2003), in *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by Thomas and Znaniecki’s, explanations of the emergence of Life Course Theory and methods are provided. The book has its major focus on the analysis and autobiography of human life, which forms a theory for this study in documenting the growth and human development of the scenic designers.

In addressing the life issues of different fields, O’Rand and Krecker (1990) posit that, Life Course Theory “has gained prominence as a theoretical orientation among fields of gerontology, criminology, social history, medical studies, developmental science, educational and social stratification” (p242). This theory for this research fundamentally elaborates the importance of time, process and human development and family life of the four scenic designers. In details, the study documents beyond the scenic designers artistic creations but every aspect of their life endeavours. Elder, et al (2003) explains that:

This scope moves beyond age-specific studies on childhood or early adulthood. Life history typically indicates the chronology of activities or events across the life course (e.g., residence, household composition, family events) and is often drawn from age-event matrices or retrospective life calendars, which record the year and month at which a transition occurs in each domain and are well-suited for event history analysis. (4)
Furthermore, O’Rand and Krecker add that “the life course concept is frequently used to describe a sequence of life events from birth to death…though its more precise meaning refers to an intergenerational sequence of parenthood stages over the life course; from the birth of the children to their own departure from home, work and childbearing” (1990:242). Therefore, this research chooses the Life Course Theory as a framework or orientation for the study of the life of the four scenic designers; their aging and human development (their journey towards becoming scenic designers).

As the first part of the research documents the designers in focus for this study, the Life Course perspective becomes the main aspect that enacts the existence and influences of the four scenic designers on Ghanaian designing; their socially defined contribution over time. The researcher, as a theoretical framework for documentation, considers the Life Course Theory to reveal patterns embedded in the scenic designer’s life and accomplishment. However, the social structures and development of the four scenic designers are subject to differ due to their different historical alterations. These structures and developments vary from kindred and friends at minimum level to the high level of work organizations and government policies. Therefore, the Life Course Theory as a framework identifies analytically the existence expectancy and works of the scenic designers.

In addition, the second part of this research are documentation of some design techniques and art movements with concepts that are inherently similar in acknowledgeable design advocates are identified in the works of the designers. The scenic designers, through personal interview, express various design philosophies and styles that influence their designing. According to Amon-Kwarfo, “in designing, the scenic artist, like his colleagues in sculpture and painting, finds time to research into forms, structure, concepts and ideas that may relate to designing and acting space on stage” (Personal
Conversation, 17th November, 2016). These theories are further utilized in chapter four of this thesis to help better appreciate its import on the research work.

1.9 Scope of the Study

In emphasizing on the importance of scenic design and the need for this research, some limitations were discovered. Basically, historical research by its very nature requires in-depth investigation and extensive content analysis of relevant available materials. Enough works of the scenic designers were accessible, but not much about their lives could be sourced or are available for this study and poses challenges to the research. Therefore, much of the data analysed in this study about the scenic designer’s lives was based on oral information from the scenic designer and some relevant technical theatre experts.

However, for the delimitation of the research, the study settled on scenery for stage productions; works of four Ghanaian scenic designers. This will ensure an effective analysis of their works; mapping out their design philosophies and styles which appears as a unique approach and technique to them. To cover a wide variety of scenic designs, at least ten works of the designers were selected. References were made to other works of these designers when it became necessary. To further reinforce the need for multiplicity in concepts, the designers for the study and their works are categorised into different stage performances; theatre productions, dance-drama performances, musical concerts among others. The choice of tracing the history of scenic design in Ghana for stage performances from the beginning of Concert Party is because that period marked the discovery and better appreciation of scenery in Ghana. The choice of using these selected designers and their works are due to their role in scenic designing for stage performances in Ghana.
1.10 Organisation of the Study

The thesis is in five main chapters. Chapter one primarily gives a general introduction to the work and provides an overview of what the study intends to do. It also focuses on providing the background to the study, the problem that has necessitated this study. Questions have also been designed to assist the researcher in addressing the objectives and problems of the study. Other areas examined in this chapter include the scope of study, limitations, and its significance. Chapter two dilates on related literature and its impact on the study. The proceeding Chapter three progressively gives the methodological approaches the study intends to adopt in bringing about results. The fourth chapter is in two major parts. The first part documents the life and accomplishment of the designers and their role in the growth and development of Ghanaian stage designing. The second part focuses on the works of these scenic designers; here particular attention is paid to the philosophies and styles that influenced their works as well as the innovations employed. The final and fifth chapter concludes the study by providing a summary of the findings. It offers the major outcome of the study (with challenges and recommendations) on how aesthetic elements and practice of scenic design can be maximized.

1.11 Background of Scenic Design in Ghana

To trace the foundation of scenic design in Ghana, it would be inconclusive without the history of drama in Ghana. Drama (stage performance) in Ghana has been a prevailing custom over which some researchers still contemplate the exact period it began. In Lokanga & Sarinjeive introduction to *Pre-Colonial and Post-Colonial Drama and Theatre in Africa* (2001) they write, “Whenever the words ‘Africa’, ‘literature’, and even ‘drama’ are juxtaposed, it does not take long for the discussion to become a heated. For
example, the question of whether or not drama was present in Africa before the arrival of the Europeans in the late nineteenth century is never quite resolved” (p vii).

In a refutation to this assertion, Sophia Lokko (1980) confirmed that theatre has existed in Ghana in various dramatic forms. She asserts that:

“Long before the arrival of European culture in the fifteenth century, Ghana enjoyed a rich culture of pageantry in which gold ornaments and iron played prominent parts... embodied with the arts of drama, music and dance, which mothers sought to pass on as richly as they could. Rituals pervaded these rites which developed into ceremonies like initiation” (1980:309).

In Martin Banham’s preface to the edited version of *A History of Theatre in Africa* (2004), he describes performances in Africans as “immense ranging from dance to storytelling, masquerade to communal festival, with a vibrant and generally more recent ‘literary’ and developmental theatre” (2004: xv) and as such locating African theatre under the Western definition of theatre, becomes indefinable and very problematic. Nonetheless, it is the belief that the Ghanaian indigenous ‘arts culture’ which came in a form of storytelling, impersonations, children’s games, singing, dancing and clapping of hands and are still prominent in the traditional celebration of festivals, rituals, rites of passages, among others, subsisting since time immemorial before the coming of the colonial masters who brought along with them what is known as the western form of theatre.

Lokko (1980) provides awareness to the presence of drama as far back as “when the early tribesman, dressed in the skin of a previous catch, danced and chanted for rain or other benefits. He performed other ritual rites like sacrifices, libation and prayers, ostensibly to invoke other powers to assist in the fulfilment of his needs. Ghana enjoyed elements of drama in the rituals of the early tribesman, as well as in the ceremonies of
rites of passage which include quite a number of prominent ritual observances at home, in the community, and in other situations”(p309). During these performances, consciously or unconsciously, the situated environment is prepared to accommodate the enactment. Examples are the mounting of altars for sacrifice, arrangements of palm branches or leaves for demarcations and the positioning of the performer against a suitable view point among many others. The influences of the colonial masters on the indigenous drama led to the development of the Ghanaian drama.

An example of such development is the Concert Party (popular theatre) tradition in West Africa. This form of ‘popular theatre’, Agovi (1990) accounts as “a product of urbanization and westernization processes, has drawn inspirations from African indigenous dramatic traditions to express and highlight contemporary problems and sensibility”(p1). Although the Ghanaian Concert Party is a product of urbanization, the plays are mostly performed in Akan languages and make use of the Ghanaian historical culture; religious rituals and ceremonies, folktales, riddles, proverbs, costume, political symbolism, magic and songs. The storylines rarely focuses on pre-colonial themes, but “deals instead with issues in contemporary Ghanaian society” (Agbor-Tabi, 168). In a bid to provide clarification on what Concert Party is, the researcher explains it has a tradition that ultimately seems to bear the beginning of documentation of Ghanaian theatre in the early 1900’s. This assertion Agovi (1990) avows that “unfortunately, we have never had the benefit of such comprehensive documentation on the origins of literary theatre in Ghana during the colonial period. Research and publication on the Ghanaian literary drama have almost always concentrated exclusively on the Concert Party tradition” (p3).
The Concert Party became a dramatic form which quickly spread through the entire Ghanaian populace in the early 1920’s. The Concert Party performances mostly featured the impersonation of the “white colonial entertainer with creative and innovative abilities” Djisenu (personal Interview, 22nd March 2017). For Cole (1997), even though much scholarship has been produced on the tradition of the Concert Party, adequate visual accounting on the scenic designs involved is also historically unlimited. Therefore, the practice of scenic designing for Ghanaian stage performances can be connected to the colonial era, when foreign theatrical activities were among others performed by social clubs, mission schools among others, alongside the Concert Party groups. In response to the question, how did scenic design start in Ghana? Djisenu added that:

Before independence, some external agents became an influence on the Ghanaian indigenous drama and, ironically, they were also the factors that promoted stage performance as well as the technical aspect of it. Social Clubs and Mission Schools are a few examples. (Personal Communication, 22nd March, 2017)

He explains that, to entertain themselves after the day’s work, the foreign expatriates created social clubs with homely conditions; made of restaurants, night clubs and performance spaces. Some of them linked up with cultural troupes from their home countries and invited them to Ghana. In most of their performances, they featured western elements of theatre; introduction of scripts, costumes and make-up, sound effects and detailed scenery. These social clubs directly and indirectly brought in new elements into the indigenous Ghanaian drama context, creating a hybrid, leading to what Oscar Brockett (1999) describes as “a dynamic spectrum of performance” (p345). Arkhurst strongly attests to this indicating that, “…of course, scenic design historically originated from Europe; came from their enactment of the medieval and some western plays such as the Shakespearean plays” (Personal interview, 28th October, 2016).
However, Ghana’s attainment of independence in 1957, followed by other African countries in the 1960s, ushered in a booming of playwrights and producers in both indigenous and foreign languages leading to the construction of performance spaces (theatres). Arkhurst (personal communication, 28th October, 2016) further noted that, “a renowned Ghanaian dramatist and scholar, Theodora Efua Sutherland (1924-1996), establishment of a ‘flexible playing place’ known as the Kodzidan (house of stories) boosted theatre performance which encouraged the used of scenery” (p166). As part of her contribution to the development of the Theatre Movement in Ghana, Sutherland instituted a programme which she called the ‘Ghana Experimental Theatre’, an experiment based on the storytelling art in Ghana. Under this programme, a performance space for the preservation of oral literature in ‘Atwia Ekumfi’ in the Central Region of Ghana was built. By 1960, The Ghana Drama Studio was established at Accra with the help and funding from the Rockefeller Foundation of the United States of America.

John Djisenu (personal interview, 22nd March 2017) mentioned that in the 1960s, the various plays produced at the Ghana Drama Studio gained some realistic scenic locales among other innovative technical design efforts. These were observed after the founding of the Efua Theodora Sutherland (E.T.S) Drama Studio located at the present grounds of the National Theatre building, which was later relocated to its current site at the University of Ghana in 1993. The Ghana Drama Studio is an open-air courtyard theatre, structured after the Ghanaian traditional stool and courtyard, and has housed various experimental productions of playwrights who made use of scenic locales. According to Arkhurst, it was the E.T.S Drama Studio that “motivated the literary tradition of theatre within which technical theatre” (personal interview, 28th October, 2016) forms part, developed through the rewarding efforts of pioneers such as Sutherland.
According to Amon-Kwafo² (personal interview, 17th November, 2016), “certainly and obviously, there was no deliberate artistic import then.” What Amon-Kwafo called professional stage, followed and was pioneered by Joe de Graft³ and Efua Sutherland. To him, these people gave professional features or elements to the initial indigenous drama performances. Therefore, the patterns and movements in the latter productions were peculiar; had characteristics of both the foreign and indigenous forms of drama. They were not entirely a reproduction of the Western type of drama; typical classic performances on stage. In this case, scenic designing was also affected in the same vein; a well-structured and appropriate scenic locale was designed and constructed for the performance.

Nevertheless, re-building of the current Efua Theodora Sutherland Drama Studio, after the old one ‘was demolished to make way for the construction of the National Theatre’, at the School of Performing Arts (University of Ghana, Legon) did not hinder the theatrical practices. Moreover, the theatrical training at the School of Performing Arts and theatre practices of the National Theatre of Ghana enhance the understanding and development of Ghanaian literary theatre tradition (Anyidoho, 2007:237). In Arkhurst’s view:

The literary tradition cuts across ethnic barriers with its main language of expression as English. It has also grown over the years in the hand of playwrights, directors, actors, and stage and theatre designers through experiments that draw impetus from the indigenous theatre forms (Personal Interview, October 2016).

² Amon-Kwafo “is a graduate of College of Art, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi. He worked with GTV since 1986 till 2016. As part of his job schedule at GTV, he designed set for Miss Ghana Beauty Pageant (1988-1990), Export Award from (1987-1997) and National Dance Championship from (1988-1990) among others” (Gbormittah, 1998)

³ “Joe de Graft (1924-1978) was a prominent Ghanaian writer, playwright, dramatist and was appointed the first director of the Ghana Drama Studio in 1962” (Kemoli, 1981).
Collaborating Arkhurst’s submission, Djisenu adds that “the Ghanaian literary theatre consists not only of the university theatre genre, but also those categorized as semi-professional and professional”; the individually established groups or the dramatists from private groups. These groups emulate the visions of most well-established institutions to engage the use of scenic designs as a formal structure to enhance their performance and to give a better pictorial aspect of the theme they communicate. Djiseu confirmed that:

The style of performance by these groups in terms of scenic design, costume, stage lighting and sound has followed the pattern of presentations similar to the Performing Arts institutions (mostly Universities). In this same category are others from institutional organizations such as the Ghana Dance Ensemble and Abibigoroma Theatre Company which are seen as agents of cultural promotion in Ghana. In addition, the National Theatre of Ghana in its professional capacity administers the state own troupes that function mainly to promote arts and culture as they entertain audiences during state functions such Independence Day, Workers Day and Farmers Day (Personal interview, 22nd March, 2017).

The stage performance style and scenic design practice in the Ghanaian productions can aptly be appreciated from their portrayals during ceremonial functions that influence their presence. The creation of scenic locale during ceremonial functions presented on stage were mostly hardwood structure which went into symbolic representations and a lot of backdrops and canvas were used mainly because some of the initial efforts were moving around productions that were taken up-country. The sceneries were kept on canvas to allow easy folding and transportation. Jojo Tetteh Quantson states that:

…there was also the influence from the local drama concert party. Their productions were very crude, in terms of scenic design, which used a lot of ‘make-shift’ devices to be able to create the scenarios for telling their stories. The original Concert Party, was done in the small communities on communal basis where people would come together to watch the productions (Personal interview, 9th May, 2016).

Furthermore, Amon-Kwafo, Arkhust and Djisenu stated the innovative use of cloth fabric to cut-off spaces where the performers would go behind the scenes. Also, boxes
were put up for the performers to hide behind to change their costumes. These efforts were the closest to scenic designing that were done traditionally with traditional motifs and representational features. Currently, the National Theatre of Ghana, the various University-based stage productions and as well as a few individuals are the only ones that strongly incorporate technical theatre (scenic design) as a profession.

Complementing the practical situation of scenic design at the National Theatre, Djisenu (personal interview, 22nd March, 2017) says: “most of the facilities at the National Theatre satisfy the needs of modern stage productions, especially with regards to the flying system that enhances scene changes during a performance”. Johnson Edu supports Djisenu’s submission and also adds that “scenic designing in the University style or most literary productions do not have enough scenery components” (personal interview, 13th April, 2017). He assists to elaborate, giving an insight into the fundamental features of sceneries in the literary performing art institutions (mostly the universities):

Basic set units (flats; basic window and door, flats; platforms, steps, staircases, door and window frames; tree trunks and columns, borders, cyclorama effects etc.) are often used in scenic design to provide the traditional functions of aiding understanding and expressing the distinctive qualities of a stage performance. (Personal Interview, 13th April, 2017)

The short-comings of scenic designing and construction at the National Theatre of Ghana are like a ‘magnifying glass’ through which the complications of its practice in the literary theatre establishments, particularly the academic institutions, are enlarged. The University stage performances, more often than not, act as test centres by which the reception and success of most performances are commonly tested by student directors, actors and designers (scenic designers) for their final-year projects. In the words of Anthony Tomety:
…majority of the staged performances of some Ghanaian playwrights produced in Universities were designed and constructed by scenic design students for their academic requirement. The training process and nurturing of many scenic designers depend on the encouragement provided at the various institutions. (Personal Interview, 4th October, 2016)

Currently, at the National Theatre of Ghana, the tradition of scenic design has enhanced since it started with productions from performing companies such as the Ghana Dance Ensemble, the Abibigoroma Theatre Company and other professional troupes in the various performances spaces once it was formally commissioned in 1992. Visiting the main performance space, with a gallery, which functions as space for stage productions alongside as a cinema and consists of thousand five hundred (1,500) furnished seats.

Ultimately, scenic design provides many functions other than aesthetics. Ghanaian scenic designers have designs for play productions that tend to denote acceptance of purpose for varied genre of stage productions. Currently, in an attempt to pursue a better appreciation of a stage performance to the audience, Ghanaian scenic designers have employed varied props and techniques that give scenic environments appropriate atmosphere. These props range from suitable furniture, shelves, cabinets, wall hangings, draperies and carpets among others used, designate a certain locale or gives decoration to a background. It is in the application of these props for better understanding of the performance that scenic design in Ghana is encouraged. All the same, scenic design in Ghana does not exclusively apply to stage performances, but also forms an important component of the film and television productions as far as mood and geographical locations are concerned.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview
A number of advantages go hand-in-hand with reviewing related literature in any study. Apart from serving to avoid inadvertent replication, it informs the selection of methods and provides an important dimension for interpreting the findings of the study. As I aim to find how scenic design in Ghana has evolved over the years, particularly with the works of some scenic designers, this chapter dilates on literature on the general concept of designing, and the history of Ghanaian scenic design. It also reviews literature on the philosophy of some scenic designers, techniques in design, design process and characteristics of sceneries.

2.2 General Concepts of Designing
The researcher deems it important to understand design, and to fully appreciate the concept of scenic design. Design expresses itself through the function it performs in a work of art. David Lauer and Stephen Pentak (2008) explain that, “design is inherent in the full array of art disciplines from painting and drawing to sculpture, film, theatre, graphics, and animation” (p4). Lauer and Pentak basically describe design as a created object and the procedures used to achieve it. Therefore, the purpose of design is to stimulate artistic meaning and aesthetic reasons in order to create new forms of beauty within the environment. Lauer (1990) further defines design “as a planned arrangement of elements to form a visual pattern” (p2). The elements in question include; line, shape, form, texture, and colour. The link of an artwork in conveying visual messages to its recipients are formed by them. From here, it is logical that every designer relies on these elements in organizing a visual image necessary for communication. To effectively use
these elements, a better appreciation of the guiding principles of design is equally important in achieving a desirable aesthetic. The purpose of making the decision involved in designing with the aforementioned elements cannot be successful if not for these guiding principles. In Getlein’s (2002) opinion:

These principles codify or explain systematically, our sense of “rightness” and help to show why certain design works are better than others. For the artists, they offer guidelines for making the most effective choices; for the observer, an understanding of the principle of designs gives greater insight into works of art (p120).

In designing, the guiding principles of harmony, rhythm, balance, variety, contrast and emphasis and perspective (Agoba, 2008), direct a designer’s aesthetic creation. As a result, every designer needs to be aware of principles that aid him or her to fuse successfully the diverse elements of design. For the reason being the distinct features of the varied design elements which harmonises or contrast with one another in creating a three-dimensional picture.

Inferably, design creates meaning and brings about interactions among its users; hence, not just making design a means for beautification. This is supported by Michael Gillette’s (2000) assertion of design as an “artistic planning method that begins with the openness of our minds to opportunities and advances into finding resolutions to any identified or defined problem” (p70). A designer is confronted with the task of finding means of dealing with the problem encountered in order to convey that particular message. Thus, to get a problem solved becomes the aim for designing. Moreover, the stages of design process, elements and principles of design are some aids and guide in the actualisation of every design.
However, I postulate that a designer’s introduction of different visual ideas, often brands him or her as inventive. This trend is occasionally well thought-out to be creative and has motivated the discovery of fresh procedures and ideas in diverse category of design endeavours. The designer unearths designs that illustrate original methods towards acquainted situations; to interpret first-hand problems through different styles of pictorial appearance. This pictorial method of communication is understood as a type of widespread composition through which the designer expresses his or her ideas. According to Ray Faulkner and Edwin Ziegfeld (1987), to communicate an idea, “an artist must engage the observer’s attention and hold it until the message is comprehended” (377). As a result, any pictorial forms of design are, however, imperative to every designer such as the scenic designer for stage production; he or she uses the design to create and communicate as an aspect of visual language.

Furthermore, the pictorial language of stage design then makes the elements form part of the art work and the physical components that create the complete scenery. Faulkner and Ziegfeld (1987) indicate that, “designers use graphic elements such as point, line, shape, space and texture and colour to communicate” (p379). Therefore, these graphic elements (pictorial language) that constitute the design can similarly be referred to as elements of design. According to Gillette (2000), these elements form the fundamental resources used by every designer to attain the pleasing effects or outcomes that support pictorial communication. To all intents and purposes, these are design effects the eyes get accustomed to see both familiar and unfamiliar artworks that take up equally regular and or irregular forms. Considering stage performance in particular, this study considers lines, shapes, space, colours, forms, motifs and textures as the essential elements. To conclude, the process of creating and arranging becomes the designer’s method of separating knots of challenges to arrive at a design solution. This enables stage designers
to put to work their skills and abilities in realising the ideal design that will complement the sound, costume and light design concepts, to ensure the acting atmosphere (scenic locale) is more engaging and stimulating to performers and viewers.

2.3 The Concept of Scenic Design

The initial development of scenery for stage performances is the effort of a number of scenic designers who derive their motivation from architecture over a historic period; from 1508 to 1638 (Brockett, 1999). The Italian Renaissance is acknowledged today as the product and major contributor of theatre scenery. According to Larry Wild (2002) “in 1545, Sebastiano Serlio (1475-1554) published ‘Architetura’, the first work detailing the scenic design and construction of a court theatre performance” (p1). Wild added that:

Serlio's playhouse was erected in a large existing room (a Hall of State) in the court palace, the standard practice of the day. The stage, located at one end of the room, was raised to the ruler's eye level and the perspective scenery was designed to provide the Royal Chair with a perfect view. The front half of the stage floor was level, the rear half sloped up towards the back wall increasing the illusion of depth. The scenery was placed on the raked (or sloped) portion of the stage. Serlio's sets (Comic, Tragic and Pastoral) consisted of four sets of wings (the first three were angled -- one face parallel to the front edge of the stage and the other angled up stage -- and the fourth wing was flat and parallel to the audience) and a backdrop or back shutter. His sets were conceived in architectural terms. They were not meant to be shifted (2003:pp1-2).

From Wild’s indication, Serlio's positioned his playhouse (scenery), at an advantage point to create a perfect view. However, he did not neglect the need for a three-dimensional view; creating a perspective scenery to the audience’s admiration of the playhouse with the illusion of depth. His scenery served the purpose of providing the appropriate locale, a court house, for the performance. In the book, Scenic Design and Stage Lighting, Parker, Wolf and Block (2003), relate that “scene design is concerned with the creation of an environment in which the action of the play will happen” (p10).
In the face of these functions, the primacy of scenic design is to create a desirable environment for a production in a manner that may be unique to a specific play. It also makes a strong initial visual impact which registers on the audiences even before they encounter the other visual components of a play. In agreement with this, Parker et al. (2003) further summarise that “scenic design, the physical and visual environment, is often the strongest visual element that supports the spoken word of a dramatic form” (p11). This posture is shared by Gillette (2000), who affirms that “scenery helps audience to understand and enjoy a play by providing a visual reinforcement of the production concept” (p105). This, Parker and Smith (1979), also describe “as the area present in the theatre which is concerned with the total visual effect of a dramatic performance” (p16). Their description is, however, reinforced by Simonson (1973) who opines that, “the designer’s contribution to a production arises out of a visual response to the dramatist’s words. Ideally it would also be a response to observation of characters and ensemble development during rehearsals”(p9).

The various submissions stipulated by these scholars above positon scenic design in the hierarchy of stage performance, the first point of amusement the audience appreciate that nurtures their curiosity and expectations for the performance. This further expresses and confirms the “applause that often greets a stage setting at the rise of a curtain, measuring the appetite of a public for pictorial interpretation of human experience which modern easel pictures do not provide” (Simonson, 1973:9). Simonson emphasizes that:

The increasing emphasis placed upon stage scenery, is due not only to the director’s reliance upon it but to the fact that playwrights themselves use it more and more as a prop to playwriting and depend on the details of stage setting to do the work that they formerly had to do entirely with words (1973:108).

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To support Simonson’s submission, the researcher considers the need for every scenic designer to remain well-versed thoroughly in designing; equally about the technical and aesthetic necessities of the stage performance and the suitable design. The compositional elements that make up the suitable design express and collectively assist in unfolding the events within the performance. According to Parker and Smith (1979), “scene design exists to bring, solely through the stage setting, visual substance to the dreams of the playwright” (p14).

Furthermore, through these design elements, the scene designer aims to reinforce the visual effect of the performer and convey to the performance space, the end-product of cautious research, notwithstanding the genre; satire, comedy, drama, tragedy, or fantasy among many others (Brown, 1971:107). Additionally, Simonson (1973) states that:

“The stage is part and parcel of the total efforts of interpreting scripts, an integral factor in overcoming the resistance of an audience to dramatic ideas that transcends its stereotyped expectations. In the theatre, as well as outside of it, the designer tries to give to the background of action some kind of design relevant to the experiences that it is supposed to shelter” (p98).

Therefore, it becomes the scenic designer’s responsibility to provide an appropriate space for the performers and a physical scenic setting for the performance in general. In the opinion of Cameron and Gillespie (1989), “the result is the setting which normally acts as the added function of supplying the audience with clues about the play’s locale”(p197). This summarizes the insightful roles of scenic designers as opined by the researcher, stating the most significant function as the manipulation of performance space. This usually occurs in relation to performers (their activities on stage) and how they react with the pictorial expressions on the stage during a production to the audience. Also, bearing in mind any unanticipated limitation towards the usage of the performance
space becomes a decision the scenic designer considers in expressing his or her essential creativity.

2.4 The History of Scenic Design; Influences of Some Designers.

The history of scenic design has experienced influences from many scholars, who have generated varied theories and the diverse trends due to technological advancement. Some of the scholars include Inigo Jones (1573-1652), Stanley McCandless (1897-1967), Joseph Mielziner (1901-1976) and Jean Rosenthal (1912-1969), but for the purpose of this study Adolphe Appia (1862-1928) and Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966) will be discussed.

The Swiss, Adolphe Appia and the Englishman, Edward Gordon Craig, are the two most important scholars and designers recognised for their scenery innovations or movements in theatre (Simonson 1973:18). The two designers revolted against the customary scenic structures and practices for performances during their era. They also protested to a lifelike performer standing realistically on a flat floor painted canvas enclosed within large scale and space. Appia and Craig’s controversial design philosophies and styles became the basis of the modern scenic design concept that is published in numerous books worldwide. Appia commenced with the theory that the central objective of a stage performance was to create harmony. However, Appia observed that the odd placement of “three-dimensional actors in front of two-dimensional settings was exaggerated by the symbolic nature of the performances. He concluded that there were three conflicting elements in production; the moving three-dimensional actor; the stationary vertical scenery; and against the horizontal floor” (Agoba, 2008:58). Clarifying Appia’s observation, Simonson (1973) explains:
We have been assured that the theatre has been regenerated because its new backgrounds emphasize and aureole the actor, then that every form of tangible background must be destroyed in order to give emphasis to the actor picked out by a spotlight from the void (p19).

Therefore, Appia suggested the need to replace two-dimensional scene painting (backdrops) with three-dimensional units or structures with the possibility to be altered in appearance by changing the arrangement of the design to create depth. The solid structures, Appia suggested would create “a bond between the horizontal floor and the vertical scenery and enhance the actor's movements, which were rhythmically controlled by the music of the score” (Johnson & Johnson, 1970:117). Similarly, Beacham (2013) revealed Appia’s directives that “the stage should no longer be a flat picture against which the actor gestures, but a three-dimensional area of ramps and platforms through which the actor moves” (p1).

Additionally, Beacham (2013) started that “Appia devoted his efforts to investigating the implications of stage designing with an understanding of the human body, as it moves in space, for new forms of theatrical arts” (2). Agoba (2008) adds that, “Appia abandoned the traditional provision of external historical or fictive locales to illustrate the stories, and sought instead to derive the settings directly from within the work itself” (p82).

Appia was motivated because most of the performances during his period where mostly Operas. Therefore, Appia attempted to envision a basic setting proposed by music and the required stage action in the performance (Beacham, 2013:1). Beacham perceives Appia’s concept of stage setting; a model that aims to express artistic element and calls for compact scenery as more innovative. In Beacham’s (2013) opinion, “most of what we call innovations is a variation of Appia’s ideas deduced from his original premises” (p64).
Addition to the development and influences on the history of scenic design is Gordwin Craig. Macgowan and Melnitz (1995) posit Craig to be “considered more involved in theatre than Appia” (p437). Craig is similarly perceived as, “the most influential advocate of symbolism” (Agoba, 2008:83) and its usage in scenic designing. However, despite the fact that Appia's designs made use of uninterrupted evolving line, Craig's work was considered as designs created from several experimentations. In classifying Craig’s design concept, Simonson (1973) explains with four groupings; “1) a simplified scene with some representational elements; 2) curtains; 3) architectural vertical masses; and 4) screens” (p125). According to Agoba (2008), Woodruff described Craig as “…a genius of high imaginative gift who along with Inigo Jones effected a radical change in scenic convention. Craig freed the theatre creative possibilities from the outward bonds of realism”(p11).

In contradiction towards the imitation of reality, similar to Appia, Craig visualised a performing atmosphere designed to satisfy the audience’s sensation through pictorial suggestion and the recreation of a symbolical aesthetic. Craig embarked on the quest to explore other design options to enhance creativity in stage productions. A flexible constructed scenery structure made of materials hinged to each other was one of Craig's most fascinating scenic innovations. This invention allowed easy modification of the performance space for the duration of the entire production. Also, a detachable proscenium archway for regulating the stage opening of a proscenium space was an experiment Craig embarked on to assist the aesthetics of a scene in a performance.

At the very inception of Craig’s innovation, he “propounded an art of the theatre in which reality, instead of being reproduced by traditional representational methods, would be transcended and interpreted by symbol. Craig considers outline, form, colour, and
lighting are means of conveying atmosphere” (Agoba, 2008:61). Craig greatest peculiar stage performance notion was to make a scenic locale changeable with portable fragments; “both the floor and the ceiling were to be composed of squares that, under the control of the artist, could be moved up and down independently or in groups within a constantly changing pattern of light” (Agoba, 2008:61). The purpose of Criag’s innovation aims to evoke an emotional reaction within the audience through some symbolical movement. Devlin (1989) states that:

Craig had the idea of dividing the stage floor and ceiling into chessboard and making each square rise and lower. Thus the space became endlessly variable, with the floor and ceiling making stairways, platforms seats, thick walls and wide spaces (p156).

It is apparent that Craig promoted a visual performance all of his life; he continuously encouraged audience to appreciate the visual aspect of the stage performance rather than just the audio part. Our physical presence at the performance instead of just listening, the researcher agrees, informs a better judgment and appreciation of the performance. Many would agree or disagree with Craig, but there is no other perfect means to fulfil the aim of enjoying a stage performance if the participant is not physically present. Stating the significance of scenery for his stage performances, Craig was cited that “theatre should not be a place in which to exhibit scenery...it should be a place in which the entire beauty of life can be unfolded...the inner beauty and the meaning of life” (Devlin, 1989:156). Therefore, structures and elements for scenic design are required to serve as symbols and express profound connotations, instead of them just simply imitating the world. This submission should be considered and encouraged within every field of stage performance, especially scenic design, to provide other methods to connect through some visual messages with the viewer.
To conclude, the varied contemporary conventions of scenic design in modern stage performances have not only been deeply influenced by the revolutionary and theories of Appia and Craig. They have also influenced other design philosophies and styles of some scenic design scholars and practitioners, some of which my study will focus on. These influences, as a result, become aesthetic theories, distinctive design purposes and artistic postulations that indicate unique forms and concepts some of which are used by current scenic designers.

2.5 Techniques in Scenic Designing

The techniques employed by every designer are not just for the fun of it; they are more than a means to an end. These techniques become a trademark or distinctiveness for the designer; the result from years of practices, challenges, beliefs and principles. For the reason that scenic design and construction forms an essential part of virtually every stage performance, however minima, some kind of scenic locale is utilized. The techniques used are what make a scenic designer’s work unique. The designer showcases interesting concepts, new techniques, and unusual materials, whether they are anything between abstract or highly realistic. Therefore, for a scenic designer to be creative and original becomes the most important aspect to consider; numerous inspirations would be derived from different motivations and influences. Under no circumstances should the quest to explore other resourceful design methods that would communicate the pictorial concept of the performance come to an end.

2.5.1 Scenic Designing process

The design process can simply be explained as a means of solving design problems in phases. Michael Gillette (2000) defines it as “… series of steps through which we pursue
the goal of creating what we hope will be a work of art” (p19). These steps do not always unfold on a linear progression, their movements shift “back and forth…as the designer moves through the various stages of the design process as he or she deems appropriate” (Gillette, 2000:19). The design process is not a simple linear progression. As you move from step to step, you must review your previous steps to make sure that you are headed in the right direction. The steps that unfold with the design process are the method for providing answers to questions when designing for any stage production. Therefore, the principal reason for creation of any scenery is to identify the need for it and how best it solves the problem at hand. For most scenic designers, the major problem is creating an atmosphere for a performance not just for aesthetics but also for function. This atmosphere becomes the appropriate environment within which performances exist.

Fundamentally, Gillette (2000) categorizes the design process into seven main fragments; “(1) commitment (wholeheartedly commit to doing the best work); (2) analysis (gathering information that will help clarify and refine the design problem); (3) research (study the historical background); (4) incubation (to allow the solutions to float from your subconscious to your consciousness); (5) selection (sifting through all of the data accumulated and deciding on specific design concept); (6) implementation (this phase begins when you stop planning and start doing); and (7) evaluation (takes place within each step of the design process, and it also occurs when the project is completed)” (p19).

The researcher categorizes three steps as a design process which forms the platform employed by the scenic designers of this study. Attributing unique ideas to the design processes, instructs the researcher as to how to identify the scenic designer’s use of his or her unique design philosophies and style in designing a scenic locale. These three design processes are further explained. However, to every design field, commitment is the most
essential accept in the entire design process. This requires the total assurance of the
designer to take up the design challenge and also guarantees positive results in achieving
the best designs. Observing any design as a task and committing to resolve the problem
that it presents, basically shows how the designer connects with his or her natural instinct
towards nature. The designers, like every human being, aims to survive, succeed and
resolve any obstacle they encounter.

2.5.1.1 Problem-Structuring and Analysis

Problem-structuring and analysis, the first step of the design process, denotes “the
process of retrieving information from long term memory and external memory and
using it to construct the problem space” (Goel, 2009:123). They include accessing the
design brief, recognizing probable means of resolving the problem (sighting the
challenges in the light of an assumed solution). Also, it is very necessary to gather
information to outline all of the limitations that an appropriate design results need to
fulfil. Narrowing to the design process in scenic designing, it basically requires
evaluation of the script or play; the stage of enquiry within designing. If it is a stage
performance, it is recommended that the script should be read at least on three occasions,
each with the aim of discovering something new. The initial reading to some extent is for
fun, second aims at finding and documenting explicit situation within the script that
excite the creative mind and finally for the technical and mechanical necessities for the
performance such as scene changes or any special properties (Gillette, 2000).

Problem-structuring is a common subject matter of research for many design
philosophers. One of the most enthusiast scholars about design problem-structuring is
Donald Schon. In his book The Reflective Practitioner (1983), he refers to this phase as
either problem-setting or problem-structuring which includes case studies of proficient
problem solving methods across varied professions. Schon’s book proposes that experience towards creativity, as regards also designers, is reliant on the individual problem-structuring style. Schon (1983) argues that, “the professionally competent designer constructs the design world within which he or she sets the dimensions of his or her problem space, and invents the moves by which he or she attempts to find solutions”(p28).

In strengthening Schon’s submission, problem-structuring according to Goel (2009) is “a process in which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend to them” (p29). Interviewing the four scenic designers in focus for this study, the researcher observes the similar submissions of the four designers as they connote no ‘strict’ or single method of solution is applicable to all design problems. Therefore, as they pick up a script, they must discover individual approaches for converting the latent problems from the script into applicable conditions. As Goel (2009) and Schon (1983) indicate the need to follow structured analysis towards identifying the problem, specifically to help others describe and understand the design concept. With technological advancement, references are compared to enhance creativity, making the problem-structuring and analysis process more efficient and effective. Currently, the contemporary scenic designing methods rely on the conversion of dialogue from the scripts and stage direction information from the director into functional descriptions and thematic representations of the performance. This submission is evident as a stage in design process used by the four Scenic designers who are focus of this study.
2.5.1.2 Idea Conception and Documentation

According to Goel (2009), the idea conception step “in the design process presents two objectives; gathering of information and documentation” (p125). In executing the first part of the objective, the designer sources for information about the production through the script. Furthermore, as the second phase of the design process, idea conception and documentation become the “alternative solutions generated and explored. Alternative solutions are neither numerous nor fully developed when generated. They emerge through the incremental transformations of a few kernel ideas” (Goel 2009:125). A lot of designers contend that the most challenging aspect of the design process is the idea conception stage. Gillette (2000) posits this stage as, “the step in the design process in which you sift through all the data you have accumulated and decide on your specific design concept” (p25). This submission by Gillette was easily confirmed by John Djisenu, Edu Johnson, David Amoo and Prince Kojo-Hilton (the designers in focus for this study). They all agreed that their idea conception, mostly, starts out with several pages (documentation) of concepts through rough drafts of images. Some of the rough drafts or drawings are absolutely different from others, while some also show identical features. Therefore, as scenic designers, they can use the data collected (documented ideas) to know what is necessary to achieve suitable scenery.

In addition, designers achieve prospective solutions at this stage as they engage in alterations of ideas documented through thumbnails and conceptual sketches. Goel (2009) and Gillette (2013) posit documenting the ideas through rough drafts of sketches from production meetings are good methods of the idea conception within the design process. Preliminary designs are commonly visual, unlike the previous step (analytical phase of problem structuring). Assuming the representation and or functional expectations of the performance, the suitable solutions to satisfy those expectations
become the task. With exceptional focus to scenic designers, most playwrights provide functional demand and stage directive in the script, which is regularly seen as a guide and not a limitation on design creativity. “The idea conception phase is also becomes the primary location of a scenic designer’s creative reasoning” (Goel, 2009:30).

Effective concepts are those which usually satisfy all conditions of the script; in representation and functionality. However, the standard of representation is mostly best labelled with reference to the situation of affordances and availability. Basically, one understands the scenic environment not through its element isolation (size, colour, shape, mass, etc.), but through its connection; the type of effect they produce together. According to Amoo, “as the modern trend of scenic design moved toward more abstract, scenic designers became more oblige to analyse scripts less in terms of their representational needs and more in terms of their function” (personal interview, 19th February, 2017). Usually documented in a sketch form, idea conception is the phase in which pictorial declarations of practical necessities are visually attempted to create a ‘prototype’ scenic locale to identify the limitations of the design. The researcher’s assessment of these submissions concludes on the application of this stage in the design process by the scenic designers in focus of this study. They affirm using the idea conception to enforce their general imaginative, aesthetic and creative transformations on scenic designing problem which could be tested against any other design problem.

2.5.1.3 Design Enhancement and Specification

At this final stage, generating a number of alternative design solutions, the scenic designer selects the best and commits to improving it. Goel (2009) postulate that, “design enhancement reflects how a selected design solution should function and decides on its exact features, whereas specification indicates both dimensioning and the inclusion of
surface detail, ornament, and exacting requirement of shape and form” (p31). Parker et al (2003) also say, “the movement from the rough draft to the finalized ground plan or model has a process of refinement and detailing” (p64). Only through specific dimensions could the scenic designer build an accurate scenic locale. Goel (2009) and Parker et al (2003) assert usage of detailed and elevation drawing and models as examples that exhibit the design enhancement and specifications. In some cases the creation prolongs away from the designer’s working space, studio or room and to larger or suitable space especially executing a first trial beyond in the scenic construction shop.

In concurrence with Goel and Parker et al, these enhancements and specifications, as pointed out by Archer et al (2009) suggests that design enhancement can be externally appreciated through representations (models, sketches, notes) which reveal the specific and embedded design or environment. According to Johnson (personal interview, 13th April, 2017), “representations such as draft designs and models function as thinking objects, in the sense of design concept extension”. The scenic designers in focus considered the structural adjustments, colour choice and materials for special effects (when needed). During this stage in the design process, the scenic designer also affords the “testing of ideas and the comparison of competing ideas” (Parker et al, 2003:65). Moreover, the created scenic locale supports the designer to better comprehend their applications of the specified solution. This stage further enables reflection of problem, interpretation and implementation of solutions. In Goel opinion, it permits “the scenic designer to posit more elaborations of the solution as he or she moves toward the final stage” (2009:126). As a result, these technical drawings form the drafts or plan that describes in details and to scale the appearance of the design. After implementing various mechanical drafting, the scenic designer supervises construction according to
plan. However, at each step of the design process, evaluation takes place until the performance ends.

2.5.2 Structure of the Scenery

The representation of a scenic locale for a production has evolved. The better understanding the scenic designer has of the design concept and how to interpret it in his or her work, the more profound and effective he or she achieves an appropriate scenic locale. When a play calls for scenery, the designer needs to consider its structure. Compared with standard household building construction, scenery construction may seem at first glance, to be excessively fragile and unreasonably complex. Primarily, the scenery must be movable and not heavy, to easily transfer from the construction shops to the stage and vice-versa. During an interview with Edu Johnson (personal interview, 13th April, 2017), it was gleaned that he designed and constructed multiple scenic locales for *The Lion King*, adapted and produced by Tema International School. However, in choosing the appropriate materials for such designs, he relied on the minimal and non-heavy materials in order to generate designs that appeal to the children. Subsequently, to undertake large-scale proportions for better representation of concept, large areas of scenery must be well built with maximum of portability and minimum of structures. All these are executed by means of complementary expenditures against “the weight and structural demands of the needed materials” Parker et al (2003:169). These requirements are considered necessary mainly to the unique demands of the production style on scenery. For the purpose of this study, the various types of scenery utilized by the designers in focus have been categorised into two-dimensional and three-dimensional.

The two-dimensional type of scenery includes all flat scenery such as draperies, flat walls and profile pieces and are categorized mostly only by its length and breadth.
Additionally, two-dimensional sceneries are divided up into two groups; backdrops and projections. Bulk of the scenery used on the stage falls within these two groups. The other pieces of two-dimensional flat scenery that are arranged to form a three-dimensional structure for a stage performance are still categorized as two dimensional. Craig Wolf and Dick Block (2014) state that, “the backdrops are a large-area piece of scenery structure, taking its name from the fact that it hangs on a batten and is dropped in” (p156). For ease of transportation, drops are made to fold (mostly fabrics). Special theatrical paints are flexible enough to withstand folding only if the paint application is thin and kept to one layer. Even then, with age and use, the paint will eventually crack or otherwise show wear and tear. Moreover, the materials used for backdrops are mostly soft textured and many fabrics serve as stage backdrops. Wolf and Block (2014) indicate that:

Drops are commonly made of muslin because it is available in wide widths and is an excellent, inexpensive translucent material. Other materials such as gauzes are sometimes used to achieve a specific desired effect. Theatrical gauzes are particularly useful because they come in wider widths than most fabrics. A translucent drop is painted with dye or transparent paint and is equipped with tie-lines at the top and a pipe pocket (p156).

Ideally, a translucent drop is made by using 30-foot-wide muslin, although this may not be affordable. If seams in a translucent drop are necessary, their position must be part of the design. Wolf and Block (2014) recommend that translucent drops are carefully hidden in the design. Failure to comply produces a distracting shadow line (p156). For this reason, translucent drops are sometimes made with vertical (or sometimes even irregularly placed) seams because the drop will almost certainly be lit from above, so vertical seams are less obvious. The backdrop is typically made with horizontal frontal seams. A weight at the bottom provides enough tension to pull the horizontal seams
tense, stretching the drop into a smooth surface. A drop should also be “stretched horizontally, to assure this smooth surface” (Parker et al, 2003:158).

Additional to the two-dimensional scenery is the projected or virtual sceneries. The largest distinctive modern scenery in stage performances is typically the projection (Gillette, 2000). Currently, virtual projection is the most familiar approach for displaying different scenic locales. According to Prince Hilton (personal interview, 4th February 2017), most commonly, the projection is focused on flat surface called the cyclorama or conveyed through a led screen. The terms backdrop and projection are often used interchangeably, although technically a drop is painted. A bought screen projection is often white but can be another solid colour to create a special effect. The challenge in making a scenery projection is to create a large, uninterrupted and smooth surface with the locale projected on.

2.6 Scenic Designer’s Philosophy and Style

Design concepts have been affected by the norms, principles and statements of varied artistic theories. These artistic theories form the design philosophies and styles employed by every designer in achieving his or her works. Examples are arrangements of scenic structures, unique composition of elements, recognised inspiration, peculiar aesthetic theory and some art movements; expressionism, constructivism, stylization and symbolism. These philosophies and styles of the four scenic designers are closely conjugated with the theories (such as realism, formal balance, symbolism and minimalism) of renowned scholars. These design philosophies can be associated with most designers, as an aspect of their creativity.

Therefore, a scenic designer’s viewpoint on a particular design defines his or her design philosophy; what he or she wants to achieve, and more significantly, what the designer
considers his or her design should accomplish. The term design philosophy is associated with design style to label the techniques that informed the designer’s ideology. A scenic designer’s style may be minimalist; he or she prefers clean, simple and sharp designs, nonetheless his or her philosophy could be designing realistically. Thus, the design philosophy and style could be completely similar or different. As the individual designs minimally for purpose over aesthetics, the philosophy becomes designing for function instead of form, which entirely becomes the design style. The motivation for observing design philosophies and styles for the stage designer is discussed by Cameron and Gillespie (1989):

> Every designer hopes that the design will have beauty. That beauty is a variable should be clear; the romantic loveliness of a magic forest cannot be compared with a construction of a gleaming metal bars and white plastic plates, but that every designer aims at a goal of aesthetic pleasure seems true. Intentional ugliness may occasionally be aimed at, but even we are tempted to say that the result is beautiful because its ugliness is artfully arrived at (p197).

What are these design philosophies and styles that influence the design conceptions of every scenic designer? To answer, a scenic designer’s philosophies and styles have largely been influenced by diverse aesthetic theorists. Scholars, such as Graham Woodruff (1971) honours Craig as an influential activist of symbolism in scenic designing, whereas, Simonson (1973) deliberates on how Appia ‘saved’ stage performance from the bonds of flat scenery to more realistic scenery. Agoba (2008) also assert that “Craig’s and Appia’s theatres connote the aesthetics of the formalist school where abstract outlines, colours, forms, and lighting are a means of conveying atmosphere” (p63). The researcher also relates to how some scenic designers in Ghana have initiated the use of diverse materials and design approaches that directly or indirectly influence the trend of scenic design in Ghana.
Furthermore, every design philosophy and style affects the mood of a performance. To identify the difference in mood of a scenic locale or stage atmosphere depends on the genre of the performance. Parker & Smith (1979) assert that “a tragedy is usually a mood-dominated play as is low comedy or farce” (p20). The scenic designer makes use of elements that reinforce the emotional characteristics of the play. Therefore, it is advisable for the design to have sharp angles, hard lines, and dark colours, if the play is a tragedy, to express the mood that the production concept tends to relay. If a play is romantic or comic, the use of soft curves, and a palette of delicate, bright colours, is implemented to reinforce the romantic qualities of the play.

This submission supports the researcher’s indication that scenic designer should be able to produce designs that reflect the target audiences in content while communicating the messages pertaining to the performance. Comparably, Stankovic & Stojic (2007:72) claim that “constructed elements of the space can support the performers”. In this stream, it is important for the scenic designer to know the physical space; the overall composition of the performance space should be interactive in order to meet the aesthetic and cognitive needs or expectations.

Bell’s (1969) strong postulations, design philosophies and styles, constitute the one quality common to most works of art of a particular designer. Bell further adds that, to understand a scenic designer’s philosophy and style, the audience needs to access their admiration for elements of design and acquaintance of three-dimensional space. Bell’s submission is strengthened by Agoba, who says that philosophies and styles “spawned by the artists of the theatre and by aesthetic theorists have given birth in several ways to different stage and scenic forms which characterize the modern theatres of today” (2008:72).
Further, sceneries have gained the ability to serve between realistic and non-realistic purposes. Wilson (2007) asserts that, “a realistic theatre calls for settings which look very much like their counterparts in real life.” This notwithstanding there should be awareness that theatre is a world of make belief and scenery for that matter should not be focused on producing a duplicate of realistic homes, kitchens etc. but scene design should be suggestive, simple and realistic. Wilson (2007) further adds that, a complete reproduction is an extreme. However, for every realistic theatre, the stage designer is selective about the items to be included in the setting and, for that matter his or her talent and imagination play an important role. The scenic designer’s purpose is not to present real life on stage but excepts of it. Besides, an elaborate and beautiful scenery does not guarantee a good work but rather a simple and concise stage picture that serves the purpose for which is required by the performance. In non-realistic theatre imagination is utilized to the fullest. It affords the designer an opportunity to rely mostly on intuitive or conscious skills. Symbolism plays a key role within the performance, where small animate or inanimate objects are used metaphorically to represent ideas. This projects the varied style in which the scenic designer wants to communicate his or her design.

Many a time, stage designers are tempted to define and classify style in line with period. For Parker, et al (2003), style in theatre is quite difficult to define in specific terms because it is seen, heard and felt. Saint-Dennis (2009), in his book, *Theatre: The Rediscovery of Style and Other Writings*, affirms that style suggesting period is but a secondary meaning. He further explains that an actor who plays a part in a realistic play would show style in his acting. Likewise, the wearing of period costume may not give the actor style. Style is not superficial or merely external but it implies an idea of quality before aesthetic. In effect, Saint-Dennis defines style as “the perceptible form that is taken by reality in revealing to us its true and inner character” (2009:61). Although his
definition also carries weight, the notion that style is linked to period cannot be done away with. The scenic designer considers the period, concept, thematic concerns, among other elements, to inform his/her notion of the style of the play.

Scenic Designing is a progression that leads to expected outcomes or unknown discoveries. As designers discover their design philosophies and style, they also learn what will best clarify and support the story being told. The design itself becomes the series of choices that define the world of the play made by the designer. Every designers choice is not judged inherently worthy or valid, but rather the designer must assess whether in performance they construct a unified whole. Through the enhancement of scenic structures, a scenic designer improves the setting to aid the performers as part of the environment.

Ultimately, most of the submissions made about a scenic designer’s philosophy and style serve as a personal intuition that provides aesthetic and function to the scenic locale. They become very useful when interpreting scripts to supports the performance concept. Also, they point in the direction of various trends and aspects to scenic designing of different periods. Similarly, the scenic designer’s philosophy and style identifies and provides solutions to problems in a stage performance. For the researcher, design philosophies and styles in the long run are useful; the creativity exhibited through concepts and theories are based on the stage performance and the scenic designer. Finally, it is through the scenic designer’s frequent use of his or her innovative techniques to design and construct an appropriate scenic locale that defines his or her design philosophy and style.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter seeks to outline a Historical Research Methodology approach used in the research that focuses on the different procedures employed in establishing reliable data on the scenic designers and their design philosophies and styles. It discusses the principles that guide the study and the methods employed in gathering and interpreting the primary and secondary data. The primary data focused on information obtained from interviewing the scenic designers, hence the interviews heavily forms the major data for the study. Also, secondary data consisting of books, articles and physical examination of exiting scenery were used. Ultimately, the chapter highlights the research design (descriptive and interpretative), population for the study, sampling, recording procedures, protocols observed, data collection and analysis plan.

3.2 Research Design

There are two main survey approaches that researchers employ; the qualitative and the quantitative approaches. Since a vital part of this study documents the artistic philosophies and styles that the scenic designers used as the bases for their works, the qualitative research design was employed. Qualitative research, according to Dawson (2002), “explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences through such methods as interviews or focus groups” (p14). It attempts to get an in-depth opinion from the participants. This explains my usage of interviews, documents and observation to interpret phenomena and experiences in relation to the meanings that the scenic designers brought to bear on their various works. However, this was achieved through
some essential steps in the gathering of the needed data. The research employs five steps of Creswell (2012) in attaining the set goals. He notes that:

The five steps are first to identify participants and sites to be studied and to engage in a sampling strategy that will best help you understand your central phenomenon and the research question you are asking. Second, the next phase is to gain access to these individuals and sites by obtaining permissions. Third, once permissions are in place, you need to consider what types of information will best answer your research questions. Fourth, at the same time, you need to design protocols or instruments for collecting and recording the information. Finally and fifth, you need to administer the data collection with special attention to potential ethical issues that may arise. (p205)

The researcher saw it suitable to adopt Creswell’s five steps through the qualitative method of research in order to gather the needed in-depth understanding regarding design processes and techniques which can enrich knowledge on this study.

As this study documents the scenic designers and their design philosophies and styles, the qualitative approach gave room for a better analysis to be able to determine the developmental stages and distinctive characteristics of their works. Neuman (2003) asserts that, this research design is more effective “…for grasping subtle shades of meaning, for pulling together divergent information and for switching perspective” (p3). This permitted the researcher to select and study specific scenic designers within a given time frame, and after analysis of the result some comparison was made with their works.

3.3 Historical Research Methodology

In employing a historical research approach, this study investigates past events which involve findings that are analyzed and interpreted to appreciate the present. Borg (1963) as cited by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007), defines it as the “systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusion about the past events” (2007:191). Ultimately, this study develops into a
cohesive description obtained mainly with the purpose of presenting a clearer perspective about the scenic designers and their design philosophies and styles. This makes the study to be dependent primarily on resources that are obtained from the scenic designers in focus. Through qualitative data analysis approach, the gathered information was elucidated by the researcher which was guided by a deductive process. In this process, the researcher used the Life Course Theory and Art Movements as theoretical framework of the study to analyse the gathered data.

3.4 Population for the study

The total number of all units needed and are available to be investigated for the research are considered to form the population for a study. Thus, representing the portion of the units accessible to the investigator, and covers the total set of individuals or experiences with familiar characteristics needed for the research (Kumekpor 2002 & Twumasi 2001). For the purpose of this study, the main targeted people are four Ghanaian Scenic designers; John Kwadwo Djisenu, David Amoo, Edu Johnson and Prince Kojo-Hilton. Also, some experts in the field of stage performances were consulted.

3.5 Sampling

As defined by Dawson (2002), sampling is the researcher’s ability to choose “a smaller, more manageable number of people to take part in [the] research” (p47). The study adopted the purposive sampling approach to research. According to Patton (1990), as cited by Creswell (2012) “…in purpose sampling, the researcher intentionally selects individuals and the site to be used. Also the researcher must know if the participants and their works are information rich” (p206). Therefore, three out of the four selected interviewees are alumni from the Department of Theatre Arts, School of Performing
Arts, University of Ghana with at least a second degree in Design and Technology. The other interviewee is a product of the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) with a Diploma in Art Direction. The four scenic designers in focus have gained at least over ten years experience through practice, formal and informal lectures, and presentations and have overall developed in-depth knowledge into the area in this study (scenic designing).

### 3.6 Protocols Observed

In carrying out interviews, a guide was designed to provide formula. This made the interviews easier and successful. Decision for the selection of the interviewees was also decided upon. Phone calls were made to the selected persons who agreed to grant the interview. Date, time and venue were at their own discretion. Creswell (2012) outlines that:

> After identifying and selecting participants for your study, you next need to obtain their permission to be studied. This permission will ensure that they cooperate in your study and provide data. Besides cooperation, their permission also acknowledges that they understand the purpose of your study and that you will treat them ethically (p147).

Ethics are very useful for every type of research; it needs to be strictly adhered to, since some of the issues may be confidential. Adherence to ethics was observed during the interview, since questions outlined for the interview had bearing on the personal lives of the interviewees. Creswell (2012) suggests that, “in gathering data for a qualitative project, a researcher seeks an in-depth description of a phenomenon. Participants may be asked to discuss private details of their life experiences over a period of time”(p230). However, for this study, most of the issues discussed with the participant were not
sensitive and the scenic designers consented to sharing their knowledge on the research topic.

All interviews were held in the offices and or residence of the participants as it was more convenient for them. Though minor disruptions occurred such as a knock on the door, a visit by someone among others, these did not affect the information gathered in any way. Before the interview, a general idea of the whole process was discussed; outline of interview, thesis topic, research objectives and significance among many others. This prepared the participants for what was ahead, what has been found out and what was expected. Results from the interviews conducted were transcribed and this helped the analysis of the work. My use of answer per question asked aided in easier identification of information needed.

3.7 Data Collection and Recording Procedures

During the reading of related literatures on the study, reflexive notes were taken of the salient points found in them that resonated with the research topic of this study: Scenic Design in Ghana: Philosophies and Style of some Designers. Notes were made on the reading materials; in a notepad and exercise book when needed. The instruments used in recording information during the interview were a pen, notepad, audio and video recorder. These were used in conducting the interviews, which informed some of the findings made in the research.

The interview guide was designed on flexible questions, which gave room for follow up questions when necessary. Language used for the interview was English because of the interviewees sampled. The video recorder was used in documenting the interview while notes were taken when deemed fit. The interview gave room to the interviewees to
express themselves. Therefore, the interview guide was not strictly adhered to; this does not mean that unnecessary issues were discussed. Most of the things discussed were captured in the guide. In addition, the free atmosphere used enabled other areas to be covered as they popped up. Overall, the researcher ensured questions were within the range of the guide. In designing the interview guide, the research questions were considered. Findings in the literature review were also used. Another consideration was each designer’s opinion of the other scenic designer in terms of their design philosophies and styles.

Another procedure engaged was the structural documentation on the scenic designers. The scenic designers discussed how their backgrounds influenced their works. Comprehensive work done can be found in the next chapter (four), discussions would be centred on description of their works in the context of design philosophy and style. The section also concerned itself with available sceneries and mechanical drawings of their works. Interpretation also forms an essential part of the chapter as well as how the designers execute the task of solving their design problems.

With reference to Creswell’s suggestion, time and dedication were focused on identifying and reviewing numerous works by the scenic designers in focus before settling on the major works discussed in Chapter Four. Therefore, the major approach used in gathering data for the research was through analysing of the scenic designers executed works; documented copies of their staged productions. The analyses helped in extracting opinions about their design philosophies and styles. The various opinions enabled better understanding with respect to their various works and the need for the techniques employed.
The approach to data collection also involved library research to find analysed concepts on art movements and stage designs by major scenic designers. The research from the library provided data on theories carried by the advocates of inherently similar elements to the scenic designers’ executed works. It also aided in getting into some of the design techniques and art philosophies that exist in Africa and the indigenous performance. The use of the library gave information on other relevant people to interview for the purpose of this study. Some of the libraries used are School of Performing Arts Library, Legon Hall Library, Balme library and Institute of African Studies Library, all on University of Ghana campus, Legon, Accra. Primary and Secondary sources are the two main classifications of data sources in a historical research. Since the existence of four scenic designers in focus of this study cannot be disclaimed and the study is about them and their works, majority of the data gathered was acquired from them. Therefore, more data was gathered from primary sources than secondary sources.

3.8 Primary Sources

Primary sources of data are those items that are archetypical to the study and are regarded as the life blood of historical research (Cohen, et al, 2007). In the researcher opinion, observation of life stage productions would positively support this research during the analysis stage. However, since all the stage performances were past productions, it was practically impossible to use personal experience of the productions ‘to add strength’ to this study. As a result, primary sources were mostly employed. Therefore, the study consisted of physical examination of exiting scenery, available drafted drawings, paintings, pictures or video recordings.

The researcher was also dependent on eye witness’s (basically the scenic designer’s in focus) accounts of the productions using the open-ended question approach. Due to the
enthusiasm and easy accessibility of the scenic designer, the One-on-One interview was best suited for the research.

3.8.1 One-on-One Interview

One-on-One interview is defined by Creswell (2012) as “a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time” (p218). To enable the researcher acquire detailed information about each scenic designer (the respondent) and to find several viewpoints about their design philosophies and styles, a One-on-One interview was utilized. This interview style is ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, who are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortable (Creswell, 2012). These traits the participants exhibited and easily contributed to the success of this study.

3.8.2 Audio-visual Materials

For the purpose of documentation and research, almost every production worked on by the four scenic designers was at least documented (photographed and or capture on tape). Audio-visual materials consist of images or sounds that researchers collect to help them understand the central phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012). Such materials include pre-production and post-production shots of the performance and the scenic locale.

In this approach, participants are shown pictures (their own or those taken by the researcher) and asked to discuss the contents. These pictures might be personal photographs or albums of historical photographs. The advantage of using visual materials is that people easily relate to images because they are so pervasive in our society. Images provide an opportunity for the participants to share directly their
perceptions of reality. Images such as videotapes and films, for example, provide extensive data about real life as people visualize it (Ziller, 1990).

During the interviews with the scenic designers, each designer easily related with the pictures and or videos that were available for discussion. Moreover, some videos provided by the scenic designers, captured the function and aesthetics of the scenic locale; showing how the performers gelled with the scenic structures. In addition, equally observed in the videos were audience reactions which helped to evaluate, to some extent, their appreciation to these performances in relation to the scenic designs. As a result, for each scenic designer assessed for this study, the researcher also had documented aspects of their stage performance which were deliberated during and after the interview sections.

3.8.3 Physical Examination
A physical examination of some available parts of the scenic structures were carried out, by personally visiting the storage sites to compare and take into detail the materials used and they solid structures to ascertain the design style. Some official visits were equally carried out to inspect the performances spaces such as the National Theatre of Ghana, the Accra International Conference Centre, E.T.S Drama Studio and the University of Ghana’s Amphitheatre. These visits were necessary in order to confirm the validity of pictorial evidence accessed from the scenic designer through post-production videos and photographs

3.9 Secondary Sources
The secondary sources of data for a historical research are materials mentioned in this study as providing related and supporting information that serve as indirect contact with
the situations under investigation. Therefore they act as relevant literature or information on a particular subject of research. These sources constitute data which cannot be described as archetypical to event. It helped the researcher to further understand the design philosophies and styles narrated by the scenic designers. Also, on the subject of the study, the researcher was able to draw the similarities and differences in other research findings on the research topic. Therefore, the study consisted of text books (including electronic books) as secondary sources.

3.10 Data Plan Analysis

Analysis of data involves an examination of the data collected in a manner that the researcher is able to establish the patterns and connections between information gathered. Data gathered were arranged in accordance with the constituents involved in the study. They were further grouped according to the similar responses, after which they were studied in order to identify the relevant information needed for the study. The data gathered gave a great deal of information to the researcher as regards a better appreciation of the scenic designers in focus for this study and their works.

Also, the researcher was able to consider the different views and opinions from the four scenic designers about their works and their relevance to the particular staged production. Mention can also be made of the different views derived pertaining to the interviews conducted. The perceptions of other Ghanaian scenic designers like Jojo Tetteh-Quantson⁴, Micheal Amon-Karfo and Anthony Prince Tomety⁵ amongst others were also reviewed. Their contributions revealed significant knowledge about the scenic designer and their works that had not been considered for the research from the onset.

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⁴ Jojo Tetteh-Quantson is a scenic designer and the Technical Director at National Theatre of Ghana, Accra.
⁵ Anthony Prince Tomety is an award-winning production designer in the Ghanaian film industry and currently working as scenic designer at Ghana Television, Accra.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE FOUR GHANAIAN SCENIC DESIGNERS AND THEIR DESIGN PHILOSOPHIES AND STYLES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter (four) is about the scenic designers, John Djisenu, David Amoo, Edu Johnson and Prince Kojo-Hilton and their works. The lives of these four Ghanaian scenic designers are outlined to help ascertain whether their personal lives and beliefs have influences on their works. It provides the analysis and interpretation of the study which delves into the various aspects of the scenic designer’s work, for design philosophies and style. It also highlights their achievements and contribution to Ghanaian scenic designing.

The life and work analysis of the four Ghanaian scenic designers were guided by the research questions, as stated in chapter one, page six (6). The answers from these questions create the focus in this chapter to present, analyse, and discuss the data gathered. Therefore, the outcome below is mainly a documentation of responses obtained through their personal interviews. Also, literature used in chapter two and personal communications with some relevant people for this study are appropriately utilized to support the findings.

4.2 John Kwadwo Djisenu: Life and Works

John Kwadwo Djisenu was born on October 26, 1953. After Kwame Nkrumah\(^6\) enforced the compulsory basic education four years after he was born, right after independence, he

\(^6\) Kwame Nkrumah helped Ghana gain her independence and became the first President.
and others found themselves being forced into Schools. He had his basic education at Nkawkaw Methodist, Kwahu, from Primary to Middle School.

Before completing, his family travelled to Accra briefly before the 1966 coup. He and his family lived at Accra New Town (formerly Lagos Town), where he attended Bethel Middle School which was later taken over by the Evangelical Presbyterian Mission and renamed Evangelical School. After form two at Bethel Middle School, he gained admission to Tema High School (TIS). Due to financial constraints, after one term in Tema, he dropped out and went back to the elementary school and completed form four, unknown to him that he had been awarded a Cocoa Marketing Board Scholarship then. Apparently, an envious cousin had kept the award letter.

His father encouraged him to go and live at Sunyani (Dumasi), with a distant cousin to continue his education. As a bright student, he took his education seriously and with the aid of his teachers, he studied effortlessly and passed the Common Entrance Examination again to Dormaa Secondary School in the Brong Ahafo Region with a second CMB award that was blocked with anonymous letters making false claims to his candidature.

At this point, he knew the profession to engage in, with the knowledge that, apart from Secondary School Education he could go to Teacher Training College because it had no rigid tuition fees (it was virtually free). He graduated from Saint Andrews Training College (now University of Education, Asante Mampong) at the age of 21 with a Certificate ‘A’ Teachers Certificate with Distinction and served his 5-years teaching Bond with Ghana Education Service (GES) at Esase Methodist Primary, Atobie Methodist Middle School and Pig Farm Presbyterian Primary School. He then studied for the GCE O-Level and A-Level as a private candidate and gained admission to University of Ghana to study Theatre Arts. He later went into graduate studies in Columbia, USA, and returned to University of Ghana to serve as a lecturer from 1991.
Answering the question, why he decided to study drama? Djisenu commented that, his cousin who was then pursing his graduate studies at the University of Ghana and a resident at Commonwealth Hall requested his assistance with some domestic chores during the long vacation. He accepted and moved to stay with him for a short while. During his stay, Djisenu was informed by his cousin of an ongoing stage performance at the Commonwealth Hall indoor theatre and if he desired to watch he could gladly give him money to attend. Young Djisenu was very curious and interested even though the environment was new to him and his cousin was not so interested in the performance. He eventually went alone to watch the performance and what he saw there was great; a stage performance, done in the indoor theatre with lights, scenery and very lovely costumes. Also, he saw that the people who came to the performance were mostly African-Americans. He sat among the audience and watched the performance, and after the curtain call there was refreshment for all of them. He followed up to ask question about the performance and most importantly the performers. Djisenu was informed that the products were from the School of Performing Arts. He demonstrated his keen interest to know more about the stage performers through numerous questions. One of the performers advised that he visited the School of Performing Arts during their rehearsal sessions when the University resumed.

As a student of St. Andrews Training College, there was also at Asante Mampong St. Monicas as their counterparts who hosted stage performances. St. Andrews had boys while St. Monica had girls, so both Colleges used to frequently work together with the aid of the two Principals who arranged for this interaction. Whenever each school had any form of school entertainment (dance, drama and other social events) these were mutual invitations. Among the social events, drama was the most patronised. Some of the required reading books then were John Pepper Clark’s *Song of a Goat* and Ola
Rotimi’s *The Gods are not to Blame* among other plays. The students were examined on these reading texts, so they formed the primary texts that their drama performances were based on. These were text that the students usually read along such that as the performers enacted them, saying the lines exactly as found in the texts, they gained better appreciation and understanding of the plays. Djisenu commented that:

> During the performance, the students were seen holding the text and following the activities on the stage; reading after the performers. Sometimes they would read the lines ahead and the performers could give them exactly the lines. The students were usually amazed that these performers were able to amass all those lines in their heads and were acting so well. It was really fascinating; after watching the performance and you looked into the text, the performance came to life over and over again. That was the beginning of my interest in drama. (Personal Interview, 22\(^{nd}\) March, 2017)

Djisenu added that, in the 1970s he had interest for stage performance but did not know how to connect and get into the appropriate institution. He did not bother to find out the details before he graduated from St. Andrews Training College. Djisenu ended up teaching in his hometown, Kwahu, before re-locating to Accra. Moreover, to him teaching was not really a first choice but as indicated earlier his parents could not afford to pay his tuition fee into the Secondary School.

However, his interest in teaching was nurtured at St. Andrews Training College that was why he continued to teach in the Elementary Schools till he has served his 5-years bond. On one occasion, Djisenu visited an old friend in University of Ghana around 1979 who inspired him to enrol in the Theatre Arts programme at University of Ghana in 1980. As a theatre group performed at the Amphitheatre (Commonwealth Hall), the aesthetics of the stage lights, background designs and other technical aspects caught his attention. Memory of this previous stage performance encounter also encouraged him to enrol and study Theatre Arts. ‘I did not care about all the other courses that the University of Ghana offered. All I needed was to get to know something about those performers and
the course they studied’, he said. Djisenu then visited the School of Performing Arts frequently to watch stage performances while he was teaching in Accra where he got a release and relocated.

4.2.1 Djisenu’s Major Works

Figure 4.1: Showtime Series, a National Theatre Production at the National Theatre of Ghana (1993). Scenery and Light Designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)

Figure 4.2: Showtime Series, a National Theatre Production at the National Theatre of Ghana (1993). Scenery and Light Designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)
Figure 4.3: *Showtime Series*, a National Theatre Production at the National Theatre of Ghana (1993). Scenery and Light Designed by John Djisenu. (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)

Figure 4.4: *Showtime Series*, a National Theatre Production at the National Theatre of Ghana (1993). Scenery and Light Designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)
Figure 4.5: ABC MUSIGA. A show in Honor of Dr. E.T. Mensah (King of Hi-Life music in Ghana) at the National Theatre of Ghana (1993). Scenery and Light Designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)

Figure 4.6: Mohammed Ben Abdallah’s The Witch of Moppi. Directed by Mohammed Ben Abdallah at the E.T.S Drama Studio, University of Ghana, Legon (1998). Scenery Designed by John Djisenu. (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)
Figure 4.7: Ngugi Wa Thiongo & Micere Mugo’s *The Trial Of Dedan Kimathi*. Directed by Dzifa Glikpoe at the National Theatre of Ghana (1993). Scenery Design by John Djisenu. (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)

Figure 4.8: Trevor Rhone’s *Old Story Time*, Directed by Anton Phillips at the National Theatre of Ghana (1994). Scenery designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)
Figure 4.9: Yaw Asare’s *The Leopard’s Choice*, Directed by A.W. Tamakloe at the National Theatre of Ghana, Accra (1993). Scenery designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)

Figure 4.10: *PANAFEST ’94*, commissioned by the National Commission on Culture at the Cape Coast Castle Courtyard Ghana (1994). Scenery and Light Designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)
4.2.2 Djisenu’s Design Philosophies and Styles

After a discussion with Djisenu, four major design philosophies and styles were documented. Namely, a total theatre designer, adhering strictly to the script, a well-balanced stage picture and artistic moderation forms the foundation to his works.

4.2.2.1 A Total Theatre Designer

John Kwadwo Djisenu describes his primary design philosophy and style as a ‘Total Theatre Designer’ (which the researcher abbreviates as TTD). He started the practice of theatre as a directing major student. During his undergraduate study at the University of Ghana in 1983, he recalls how successful his final year project turned out. He directed Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods are not to Blame*; the play had not been done in the department for a very long time. His directorial skills impressed his supervisor, Dr. Mohammed Ben
Abdallah⁷, who observed how Djsenu designed the costume, light and scenic locale for the production. He staged the play at the Amphitheatre, a performance space that brought challenges to many directors and designers, yet he used that space. He aimed at originality, so whenever he is designing a scenic locale, he does not compare with similar productions for ideas because it will prejudice his creativity. What he does is very original; he avoids watching the production in any form such as pictures and video to try reproducing similar designs.

He recalls creating a bedroom scene which made it possible for the audience to see from the auditorium a sword piercing the womb of Ojuola⁸, who had gone to kill herself. This he stated was possible with the aid of a well-designed stage light, for which an audience member came to ask how he managed to achieve that. Djsenu answered, ‘you need a good light designer to accomplish such stage effects. Even though he directed the play, he also designed the scenic locale and light, which made the thematic concepts for the production easily achieved due to his understanding of Design/Technology. Also, his extensive readings on the various elements of theatre such as works of George II Duke of Saxe-Meiningen⁹ influenced his theatrical development. Koller (1984) indicates that ‘Saxe-Meiningen studied art with his own established theatre group, which he served as producer, director, financial backer, costume and scenery designer’(p80). Also influenced by the contemporary English theatre, Saxe-Meiningen insisted on realistic lighting, speech, and stage mechanics and historically accurate costumes and scenic designs. In emulating Saxe-Meiningen, Djsenu perceives himself as total designer who

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⁷ Mohammed ben Abdallah “is a Ghanaian playwright and director who lectured as well as became the Dean of School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana in 2003.”(Djisenu: personal interview, 20th April 2017)

⁸ Ojuola is the queen of the kingdom of Kutuje in The Gods Are Not to Blame. When it is revealed by the Ogun Priest that she married her son, she goes to her bedroom and kills herself. (Ola Rotimi,1971)

⁹ George II Duke of Saxe-Meiningen was a director and designer who developed many of the basic principles of modern directing and stage design (Koller, 1984)
also concentrated on designing, directing and as well as acting. This formed the basis of John Djisenu design philosophy, to be a theatre practitioner who would design the scenic locale, light and costume for a production and can also direct or act when necessary. He admitted that:

I took interest in every aspect of the theatre, even though the design area was the first elements that got my attention, I experienced all. So that they will all form a unified whole which has influenced my goal, forming my philosophy. So in every production I work on, I aim at being a Total Theatre Designer. Therefore I don’t design only for set but also for light and costume, and that is the reputation I have accomplished among many theatre practitioners that know me. Most of the major projects I have done for the National Theatre of Ghana, some International schools in Ghana and at the E. S. T. Drama Studio, I worked as a Total Theatre Designer. (Personal Interview, 22nd March, 2017)

Above all, Djisenu theorized Total Theatre Designer as a theatre specialist who has gained experienced in more than one area of design of theatre, and he is able to blend them especially in terms of stage designing. He did directing for his second degree (graduate studies) and also majored in scenic design, therefore, his philosophy is to portray a Total Theatre Designer. He designs not only for scenic locale but for light and costume as well, and that’s how he has approached his career as a lecturer. As shown in figures 4.12, 4.13 and 4.14 among other images of his selected designs, you will realize that even though he was the scenic designer for the production, he doubled also as the light or costume designer.
Figure 4.12: Nabile Yayah Swaray’s *If Only the Night Could See*, Directed by Mohammed Ben Abdallah at The National Theatre of Ghana (1993). Scenery, light and costume designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)

Figure 4.13: Nabile Yayah Swaray’s *If Only the Night Could See*, Directed by Mohammed Ben Abdallah at The National Theatre of Ghana (1993). Scenery, light and costume by John Djisenu. (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)
4.2.2.2 Adhering Strictly to the Script

Furthermore, on John Djisenu’s design philosophy and style, answering the question; what informs his design philosophy? He commented that when any of his scenic designs are critically observed, one would notice some particular motivations behind what he has designed. Each design was based on the production concept mostly generated by the director and he adhered strictly to the script. Parker and Smith (1979) concur that the significance of drama to the designer is evidenced by the fact that the major portion of a designer’s training for the theatre is spent in learning to interpret and expand the ideas of the playwright (p6). This Djisenu adds that, in theatre, a designer cannot do what he or she wants unilaterally without other members of the production. He strongly believes “…theatre is a collaborative art and as a designer in theatre you have to listen to the playwright through a director. You must also indirectly listen to the playwright because every playwright is communicating something”. This is supported by Parker and Smith
(1979) as they attest that “scenic design exists to bring, solely through the stage setting, visual substance to the dreams of the playwright (p14). Djjisenu argues that, usually, even if the director does not like what the playwright is communicating, he or she does not have any business changing it. The director should rather try to interpret the playwright but should not be ‘making cuts or insertions’ to the script. He added that:

Within my general design philosophy to achieve a total design for the theatre, the nature of my work then is never isolated from what the playwright is informing and particularly what the director is aiming at. So I believe every designer should work closely with the director, even though, most directors don’t even have any clue as to the characteristics and structure of how the set should look like. It becomes the sole duty, as a designer and to every designer to remain faithful to the script. (Personal Interview, 22nd March, 2017)

The guiding philosophy ensures that his scenic design interprets the script and aids the work of the director. He has tried to achieve this in all his scenic designs because as a theatre artist, his understanding of the script would aid in a better understanding of the performance and well appreciated by the audience. ‘Either as the scenic, light or costume designer, my design should aid in the understanding and the interpretation of the play’, he said. Also, Djjisenu adds that he strongly supports the need to follow the playwright’s directions because the cast and characters must exit in a certain way. If that is not done, it distorts the play. Some of these directions are worked into the script, sometimes the designer’s needs to be extra smart in interpreting the script. He further posits that, when a designer is also a trained director and he or she is designing for a production, particularly for scenic design, the designer is able to introduce inventive ways for movement on the stage. These inventive ways is to aid in blocking the performers. Therefore, Djjisenu designs scenic locales that maximize the blocking options for the director to find creative ways of moving his or her characters. This design philosophy and style, ensures that no
matter how inexperienced a director may be, once he or she picks a scenic locale designed by Djisenu, the director will creatively block his or her performers with ease.

### 4.2.2.3 A Well Balanced Stage Picture

Djisenu upholds a very well balanced stage picture as his next design philosophy and style. His stage balance refers to balance that is achieved by arranging elements on either side of the focal point of the scenic structure in an equally weighted style. David and Pentak (2008) argue that, ‘balance is essential in a design because it assists the overall aesthetic effect of the design’ (p25). Agreeing with David and Pentak, the various representations of Djisenu’s scenic designs can be thought of as formal in balance. In other words, most of the scenic locales he designs are balanced in height along a central axis. This could be done by arranging the various units symmetrically or asymmetrically, but with visual care to make for stability. Balance is equally seen as that sense of stability which results from the obvious equal distribution of mass on either side of a central axis (Brockett, 1999). According to Brockett:

> …the stage may be thought of as a fulcrum with the point of balance at the center. The scenic elements placed on each side of that line should appear to be equal in weight (1999:560).

Ensuring the achievement of a very well stage picture through balance, the easiest way is to view a perfectly designed locale for a stage performance from the centre. Explaining the importance of a balanced picture in the scenic designing, Brockett (1999) remarks that “all of the elements of each setting should be harmonious and the various settings for the same play should be related, so that all are clearly parts of an ordered whole” (p560). In designing for most stage performances, Djisenu affirms Brockett’s assertion, he was able to achieve almost identical images or have nearly the same visual mass of the design on stage. When the production requires a multiple or simultaneous scenery, the different
locales are represented in equal mass and structured to create aesthetics in the stage picture that would not throw the scenic locale out of balance. To reclaim a near-symmetrical balance, you might need to “add or subtract or rearrange the elements to evenly divide the stage such as a centered alignment or one that divides the stage in even segments (halves, quarters, etc.)” (Gillette, 2000). When a design can be centered or evenly divided both vertically and horizontally has the most near-symmetry. According to Gillette (2000), a balance design generally lends itself to more formal and orderly layouts. They often convey a sense of tranquility or familiarity or elegance or serious thought. Figures 4.15, 4.16 and 4.17 emphasize Djisenu’s aim to create a stage picture which he expresses as ‘a well-balanced stage picture’, because he turns to see the characters and the scenic locale as a ‘melting architecture’. He describes melting architecture to mean, ‘the gradual scene moments transition to other moments that cause a compositions change’ in the stage picture. He said:

When I design a set for a play, that’s how I look at it; moment to moment changes. Every page I turn, I consider how the characters are placed in scene changes because I aim at total theatre design for every production I work on. Also, I get to consider the directorial concept if I am not the director for the production. (Personal Interview, 22nd March, 2017)

He admitted creating balanced pictures with choice of colors in mind; he does not practice the use of bright colors or using colors in their natural state. As a TTD, when he is handling all three aspect of design in a production he turns to blend colours. With this knowledge of the three aspects of design in theatre, even if he is just the scenic designer for a production, he gives consideration to the other design areas such as costume and light.
Figure 4.15: Ngugi Wa Thiongo & Micere Mugo’s *The Trial Of Dedan Kimathi*. Directed by Dzifa Glikpoe at the National Theatre of Ghana (1993). Scenery Designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)

Figure 4.16: *Hamile* (Prince of Tongo, An Adaptation of William Shakespeare’s Hamlet) Directed by Martin Owusu at the E.T.S Drama Studio (1988). Scenery and Lighting Designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)
4.2.2.4 Artistic Moderation

Finally to Djisenu’s design philosophy and style is considering artistic moderation; an artistic restraint on him because he resides in a ‘third world country’. Unlike North America where he trained with enough resources, the insufficient funds in Africa (Ghana) theatre create a challenge for expensive scenic designing. He argued that most of the budget goes into the directing; the needs of the director and the performers. Limited funds are usually devoted to design, specifically the scenic design; it is the last thing that producers think about. He realized that no matter how creative a designer would aim to be, he or she would be restricted by a low budget, so as a scenic designer, he cannot go the full length to present an expensive designs. Hence, as a scenic designer his use of artistic restraints, helps to manage to find other ways to achieve appropriate design with economy of effect.
With artistic restraints, Djisenu resorted to designing suitable and attractive designs locale for his productions with minimum budget in mind. He said:

To meet the budget that mostly isn’t there, I have to pinch and scrape. I make do with virtually anything that is there, as a challenged designer going through this artistic restraint, achieving an appropriate scenic locale for a production becomes possible. (Personal Interview, 20th April, 2017)

When it comes to designing a scenic locale for a production, getting good impact on a minimum budget does not mean as a designer you have to produce a poor or substandard work. It means you can spend a little to get a lot of style for appropriate scenery in return. Every designer wishes for a maximum budget for designing and constructing a scenic locale. However, it is necessary for the designer to know how to utilize a minimum budget.

Following the same design process and having a minimum budget still allows you to establish the main objectives for designing and constructing scenic locales. Michael Gillette (2000) posits the design process as “series of steps through which we pursue the goal of creating what we hope will be a work of art” (p42). Depending on the design process to provide answers to questions of any stage production, Djisenu argues, “some productions designs can be achieved high budgets.” This he affirms were apply to productions such as the Golden Tulip Children’s Playback Show (as shown in figure 4.18) and Ghana International School’s William Shakespeare’s play As You like It (see figures 4.19 and 4.20).
Figure 4.18: A Golden Tulip Hotel Production: *Children’s Playback Show* at the National Theatre of Ghana, Accra (1993). Scenery and light designed by John Djisenu (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)

Figure 4.19: A Ghana International School (GIS) Production, William Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. Directed by Naa Kwaley Dove at the G.I.S Auditorium, Accra (1996). Scenery, light and costume designed by John K. Djisenu. (Picture courtesy: John Djisenu)
Nonetheless, the researcher (a practicing scenic designer) deliberates on the issue of having a high budget in place would, however, limit the number of options available to the scenic designer or the project manager from the outset. Without these budgetary restrictions in place, a scenic design for a production may not be constructed or completed on time if the available funding runs out. Instead, the minimum budget allows the designer to know how much he can spend on any given aspect of the design and construction to complete on time.

To summarize, every designer aims to be original and every scenic designer has a different design philosophy and style in mind when creating a scenic locale for a performance. Currently, all stage performances evolve around unique design concepts that follow different set of rules. Djisenu’s uses his design philosophies and styles to execute a task of aesthetics, functionality and affordability; providing an appropriate
scenic locale even with a low budget. This he deems efficient with the notion that, he
doubles as scenic designer or costume designer or light designer and yet produces an
effective work. Ultimately, Djisenu designs through creative concepts to achieve these
various design philosophies and styles, which are unique for all his productions and are
also familiar to all the directors he has worked with. Also, Djisenu’s current profession
(History and Design lecturer at the University of Ghana) enabled him to train other
design students (such as Edu Johnson, Aaron Annan Yeboah, Jojo Quantson and David
Amoo etc) who, one way or another, are influenced by the impact of his philosophy and
style.

4.3 Edu Johnson: Life and Work

The Ghanaian designer, Edu Johnson, engages in Technical Directing, scenic design,
costume designing, props designing and puppetry among others. To answer the question,
how did you become a scenic designer? Johnson replied, ‘my introduction to scenic
design is a little bit different from most designers. It appears my background, experience
and practice of fine art influenced my decision to become a scenic designer’. To add,
Johnson indicated that he is not just a designer, but also he excels in music, making him
a multi-talented person.

Johnson discovered his artistic skills at a very early age; when he attended Rev. John
Taye Memorial School, at Ofankor, Accra, Ghana. The School is noted for the study of
music, art and mathematics. Therefore, his talent was uncovered at the school. The
director, Rev. Lawrence John Taye introduced the use of music and art in teaching most
of the subjects to the pupils. Most of the pupils who had interest for art were able to
excel in some of the subjects taught. Rev. John Taye used rhythm to teach mathematics,
which increased Johnson’s curiosity to learn more. He explained:
You will realize that especially from nursery, pre-school and kindergarten to maybe class 2, most of the mathematical questions are more artistic. Examples are the use of fruits to count and mostly to explain some equations. Therefore, I came to understand that art is not just for art sake but to ease our understanding and complement our daily activities. Even with this modern era, you will realize that art is everywhere. As we are at the Goil filling station, you will realize that the colour code identifies the cooperate institution. (Personal Interview, 2nd March, 2017)

The use of art to educate Johnson at Rev. John Taye Memorial, through the then director’s initiative nurtured his artistic skills and also helped him to explore various ways to express himself. The director of the school provided a long room of about 40feet for an art classroom, covered the interior wall with long black boards. At any point in time a pupil could go there, draw on the board and write his or her name by it. It was more of a healthy competition for Johnson as he participated regularly. He drew replica images from their reading text. At the end of each week when parents visited their children, they are sent to the art room to appreciate what their children or other children had drawn. Also, at the end of each term, he was among many students who excelled in art and were given prizes to acknowledge their hard work and to motivate others.

After graduating from Rev. John Taye Memorial School, Johnson’s father left him with his grandmother at Volta Region where he attended Senior High School at Mawuli Secondary School. Enrolling as a day student he studied Fine Arts under the Visual Art discipline in their beautiful art studio. Johnson’s experience at Rev. John Taye Memorial School, gave him the opportunity to practise and play about 15 musical instruments such as piano, saxophone, trumpet, drums and flute among many others. This encouraged him to join the school’s choir to play some instruments, especially piano, during their various ceremonies. He took his O-Levels at Mawuli Secondary School with arts as one of his key study area.
While in school at the early stages, he was drawing and designing festive cards (success cards, birthday cards and Christmas cards) for students in form five and A-Level students, and that was how made some income. He had to design and sell because his father believed Johnson’s grandmother will take care of him, which she tried her best with feeding but his school kits were the problem. Life with his grandmother was a major responsibility for him, since she was immobile and required young Johnson’s assistance for basically everything. Right from form two to form five, as the school’s pianist and the only aid to his grandmother, Johnson’s daily domestic chores affected his punctuality to school and full concentration to his studies. To support himself financially, Johnson played some instruments and painted billboards and signposts for churches, cinemas, and other institutions. “In those days we did not have the digital print so everything was manually done and I was glad because it earned me good money”, he said. He graduated from Mawuli Secondary School and attended Aquinas Secondary School at Osu-Accra. He added:

…to continue my passion in art at Aquinas, I did Visual Art and Economics and Government for my A-Levels. There I excelled in art, so the art mistress around 1987-1989 liked me for my hard work, dedication for the art and willingness to help others. (Personal Interview, 2nd March, 2017)

He graduated from Aquinas Secondary School in 1989 and enrolled to Valley View University (Dodowa), although he read architecture at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). He was offered visual arts at KNUST which he was not delighted in because he had considered it to be just a God-given talent. He later gained a diploma in Business Administration at Valley View University in the year 1990. He gained admission to study Dance at the School of Performing Arts (S.P.A), University of Ghana, Legon, after he was persuaded by his sister. While pursuing the
dance program, he encountered other courses such as acting, directing and scenic design among many others.

One day, he heard a soundtrack and was informed it was for a theatre production; *The Diary of Adam and Eve* directed by Prof. Martin Owusu\(^\text{10}\) at the Efua Theodora Sutherland (E.T.S) Drama Studio. Upon Johnson’s arrival to the E.T.S Drama Studio, he saw some scenic design students painting a backdrop. He asked various questions about the production and specifically the backdrop they were painting. His curiosity made the students enquire about his level, area of study and purpose for asking them such questions. He simply answered, ‘I am a level 100 dance student, a fine artist and design attracts me’. Observing their reference point to paint, the image he saw on paper and what they aimed to reproduce seem at par; in relation to similarity in colour scheme, texture and proportion. He informed them of his observation which they reacted as an offense to them but later gave Johnson the opportunity to repaint the design. Through his experience in Visual Arts and practices of branding vehicles, he easily applied that knowledge to achieve the desirable image. This drew the attention of other scenic designers, who stood with admiration observing the techniques Johnson was using to paint and they advised him to join them during other scenic paintings.

During his second year at the School of Performing Arts, Gyesiwa Ansah (a final year drama directing student) requested for Johnson’s assistance with the special effects (make-up) for her production *Black Hemet*. Johnson executed a good job for Ansah which led to his participation in the first student movie project directed in the School of Performing Arts (*Supreme Force*) directed by Ababio Gyebi. As time went by, even as a dance student he was designing the scenic locale for most of the final year dance and

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\(^{10}\) Professor Martin Owusu is a playwright, actor, director, theatre scholar and was a Dean at the School of Performing Arts (University of Ghana).
drama student productions. For almost all his time as a student with the Dance department, he had his name in most of the production brochure as the scenic designer. These accomplishments led to his needed assistance at other institutions such as National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI); occasionally he went to design scenic locales for the students of NAFTI during their final year projects. As his reputation as a good designer circulated, the technical theatre (scenic designing) in him grew as well.

After Johnson’s graduation from the University of Ghana, he was picked with ease to render his National Service at the National Theatre due to his efficiency and effectiveness in the design practice. During the period of his service he worked on numerous productions, doubling as the scenic designer and the make-up artist. He was however assigned to work with a dance group founded by Korkor Amarteifio11 called Dance Factory under the Teens Absorption Program at the National Theatre due to his background in Dance Studies. This led to his encounter with David Amoo (the scenic designer for the National Dance Company), he observed and made suggestions to some scenic paintings when necessary. He was advised to apply for the position of the Resident Scenic Designer for the National Theatre of Ghana, which he did but got the position of the Assistant Scenic Designer instead. He later applied (in five years) and got the position as the Resident Scenic Designer for the National Theatre.

However, Johnson realised Scenic Design at the National Theatre was not similar to what he was taught at school. ‘The design structure and style used when he was a student did not conform to the real world’ he said, because the corporate institutions did not appreciate those designs such as the box scenic design. They wanted “more of flashy designs, silhouette styles and abstract structures with more stage lighting effects”, he

11 In 1993, Korkor Amarteifio was the Director of programmes & operations at the National Theatre of Ghana.
added. His encounter with David Amoo introduced him to new ideas such as the usage of polystyrene, styrofoam and other scenic materials that he was not introduced to at the School of Performing Arts. He remarked:

Frequent productions at the National Theatre demanded for fresh and innovative ideas which became a challenge but I eventually delivered to their satisfaction. Unlike David Amoo whose designs were mostly based on traditional African concept, I design with foreign (European) concept. My skills begun to grow, but what catapulted me was when I engaged in exchange program; staffs from National Theatre travel to other countries for training programs to gain more knowledge in their area of expertise. This boosted my skills. (Personal Interview, 2nd March, 2017)

Johnson got the opportunity to learn more when he travelled to South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom and Germany to polish his skills and gained ideas which he exhibited in the productions he designed and constructed when he came back home (Ghana). He did not limit his skills to only stage productions but also engaged in lots of screen productions. From 1994-2005, he was prominent in the film industry as far as make-up and scenic design were concerned. Additionally, on the popular known film production, \textit{Deadly Voyage} directed by John Mackenzie and shot in Ghana, Johnson was the special effect make-up artist. The fame and reputation as a good designer did not hinder him to further his studies. He enrolled again at the University of Ghana to study Technical Theatre for his Master’s Degree. He has to his credit featured in numerous local and international productions.

Ultimately, Edu Johnson is a multi-talented theatre practitioner who lectures at the University of Education, Winneba and Cape Coast University as a technical theatre specialist. Currently he serves as a consultant in the creative arts while pursuing a PhD in Arts at the University of Education, Winneba. Also, he is the president for the Performing Arts Teachers Association of Ghana (PATAG). Johnson has worked with a couple of international institutions, such as BBC History Unit and Holby City Television
as a designer. Also, he lectured at Edge Hill University (Liverpool, UK) and Cedar Mount High School (Manchester, UK).

4.3.1 Johnson’s Major Works

Figure 4.21: The scenic locale for Pepper Soup at the ETS Drama Studio. Scenery designed by Edu Johnson. (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)

Figure 4.22: The production of Firestorm in 1999 at the ETS Drama Studio. Scenery designed by Edu Johnson. (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)
Figure 4.23: The scenic design for the production of *Ancient King* in 1995 by Abibigromma at the National Theatre of Ghana. Scenery designed by Edu Johnson. (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)

Figure 4.24: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* produced by the National Theatre in 1997 at the National theatre of Ghana, Accra. Scenery designed by Edu Johnson. (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)
Figure 4.25: *Miss Ghana*, a National Theatre Production at the National Theatre of Ghana (1996). Scenery Designed by Edu Johnson (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)

Figure 4.26: *The 1st Royal Awards Nite*, a National Theatre Production at the National Theatre of Ghana (2003). Scenery Designed by Edu Johnson. (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)
Figure 4.27: Ngugi wa Thiong'o’s *Black Hermit* (1968). A School of Performing Arts production at the E.T.S Drama Studio, University of Ghana, Legon (2007). Scenery designed by Edu Johnson (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)

Figure 4.28: The Ghana Music Awards, a Chatter House Production at Chatter House (2001). Scenery Designed by Edu Johnson. (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)
4.3.2 Johnson’s Design Philosophies and Styles

In taking on scenic design, Edu Johnson was not only fulfilling a requirement for his second graduate degree, but also taking an opportunity to grow as a versatile designer. Every chance to design another scenic locale provided him the opportunity to increase his design skills and learn new things. What is your design philosophy and style? Johnson was asked this question during the latter part of the first interview section. He explained that the question was odd since it was the first time he had ever been asked that question. As he fumbled through an answer he realized he didn’t really have an articulated design philosophy, or at least not one that easily came to mind. He commenced with the statement that, “there is art in design.” He explained that “art is about the individual’s communication and its value is fully confined in the art itself. He further stated that, he practiced different forms of art and that has influenced his creativity in scenic designing.

Since his early stages of training and practice, to the best of Johnson’s knowledge:

…his creative expression has always provoked questions which individuals give their own interpretations. From a wider perspective, he perceives the outcome of his scenic designs to be inspiring, emotional, and importantly serves a specific need beyond the aesthetics desire it mostly expresses. (Personal Interview, 13th April, 2017)

Scenic Design, Johnson added, “follows a creative process intended to solve a problem, to fill a need for the performers that will ultimately interact with it”. This affirms Parker and Smith (1979) statement that, scene design is the area in the modern theatre which is concerned with the total visual effect of a dramatic performance (p16). Supporting Parker and Smith’s postulation, Simonson (1973) adds, “the designer’s contribution to a production arises out of a visual response to the dramatist’s words” (p9). This settles on Johnson’s believes that scenic design should not be open to varied interpretations, but instead should be clearly explained to anyone who engages with it and should be guided at each stage. Hence, Johnson’s works create questions and they also produce answers
within a production. As a result, through a comprehensive discussion of Johnson’s major documented works, his design philosophies and style were uncovered.

4.3.2.1 Realistic Scenic Locales

“Scenic design for any given production must be embedded in realism”, has been Johnson Edu’s primary design philosophy and style. To Johnson, realism in its broader sense relates to a simple or sophisticated rendering of set designs in natural forms. However, Cohen (2000) posits the 18th and 19th century marked the foundation of serious challenges to traditional thinking in design which were accompanied by public debates and disputes for new design styles. Cohen adds that:

> It was during these periods that the first major literary and artistic movement, Romanticism and Realism were born as revolts against the international artifice of neoclassic forms. For instance, Realism showed scenery that depicted ordinary living environments that were just as messy and ill kept as their real life counterpart (2000:214).

The past years of scenic design practise affirms Cohen’s statements that, realism has come to mean the presentation of forms and materials that are simply primary representations of things that already exist. It is the scenic designer’s job, therefore, to create a performing space for the actors and a physical environment for the play’s action. In observing some audio visuals on Johnson’s scenic designs (as shown in figures 4.29, 4.30 and 4.31), the degree of realism that forms his design philosophy and style was determined by the degree to which it represents aspects of natural life, especially social realities. In each production some aspects or characteristics of realism in those designs were noted. Moreover, all realistic arts are regarded to have features that recognize and reveal some aspects of life, which within specific conventions determine the aesthetics that are truthfully reflected during a stage production.
Furthermore, the different categories and forms of arts (especially stage productions) make use of “varied forms and techniques to imitate reality” (Faulker & Edwin, 1987:34). Also, since a style of designing is never considered old-fashioned and can be accessed or utilized at any period for a given purpose, Johnson’s usage of the ‘decadent’ style in 21st century brands him as a creative designer. In this sense, Johnson’s philosophy through designing and constructing realistic scenic locales are characterized by his conviction that the core objective of a production depicted the real world. He believes art interprets life truthfully, whether past, present or future, because art has been the oldest form of social expression. Hence, excluding any sort of fact in consideration to the principle of realism raises a question of truthfulness to nature in the expression of his scenery designs.

Ultimately, there are surely several successful attempts to interpret realism in most of the stage production he designs. Observing the painting in Johnson’s design for Efua Sutherland’s *The Marriage of Anasewaa* (see figure 4.20), he reproduced a yellow light painting of the sky in an Africa Sahara backdrop. Also, the major part of the sky is bright orange-yellow, providing a smooth and spectacular texture. Bursts of lighter bits of yellow shine through the orange and create a magnificent appearance of an African sunrise (the setting of the play). A spider’s web craftily woven and well painted mountains stand out in the foreground. A single hut with raffia roof and tree stands shorter. Painted in perspective is the sun resting on the horizon with shadows, providing depth reminding the viewer of the vastness of the land. This shows Johnson’s sincerity in expressing appropriate function and structure in form through the designs that reflects a level of reality in scenic locale. Finally, Johnson’s realistic designs ensure that a clearer understanding of the design to the audience is accomplished and the reality in which a
design will be used is attained. Thus, to fulfil the physical need scenic designs must be rooted in reality.

Figure 4.29: Theodora Efua Sutherland’s *The Marriage of Anansewaa* (1975), Martin Owusu-1999, E.T.S Drama Studio (University Of Ghana, Legon). Scenery designed by Edu Johnson (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)

Figure 4.30: Martin Owusu’s *The Adventures of Sassa and Esi* (1968), Scenery designed and play directed by Edu Johnson at the University of Education, Winneba (2017). (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)
4.3.2.2 The Asymmetrical Balance Concepts

In addition to Johnson’s design philosophy and style, he prefers to design and construct with an asymmetrical balance concept. Asymmetrical balanced designs can be one of ‘the most complex techniques to pull off, but when effectively done the results is beautiful and startling’ (David & Pentak, 2008:26). Johnson added that, asymmetrical scenic design is not a lack of balance as some wrongly assume. Although his definition of asymmetry is ‘the lack of symmetry or equality between two halves’, he noticed most designers or people relate to it as imbalance. Any good scenic designer can use asymmetry to create balance and harmony even though one side of the scenic structure or design does not mirror the other. Breaking from the usual symmetry scenic structure which Johnson considers boring, he deliberates that asymmetry balance concept is another most impactful style in his ‘scenic design toolkit’. He uses it as an attention-grabbing technique in designing and constructing of scenic locale that appears interesting and thought-provoking. He explained that:

…asymmetry can be complicated to practice, therefore, a major reason some scenic designers stay away from asymmetrical balanced sets completely. However, they don’t have to, because using asymmetry is something every scenic designer can do; it just takes planning the balancing. The best place to start is by mixing and matching symmetrical and asymmetrical concepts within a design project. If you break the design into smaller sections there will be parts that contain different types of balance. (Personal Interview, 13th April, 2017)

He added that before he implements an asymmetry, he first considers how best it will work for the stage production. Moreover, knowing what he wants to accomplish with the final visuals helps determine how best he uses the technique to accomplish it.

Also, Johnson desists from the regular symmetry balance and consistently employs asymmetry balance in his scenic designing because of the unusual form created in the design which is very active and grabs the audience attention. Besides, as a scenic
designer, once you have designed something on the performance space, you need to trust your instincts on how it looks or feels (whether appropriate or inappropriate for the intended purpose). For a good asymmetrical balanced design, it should include high equilibrium so that no part of the scenic structure is too heavy for the rest. Johnson achieves the asymmetry balance in his scenic designs by “understanding weight, offsetting elements with space, adding focus with colour, creating emphasis with signals and using a grid for positioning and organization” (personal interview, 2017). Figures 4.32 and 4.33 are productions he designed using asymmetry balance concept.

![Figure 4.31: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o’s Black Hermit (1968), by Association of School of Performing Arts, at the E.T.S. Drama Studio, University of Ghana (2007). Scenery design by Edu Johnson (Picture courtesy: Edu Johnson)](http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh)
4.3.2.3 A Designer’s work is complete only when the performance ends.

Finally on Johnson’s design philosophy and style, is the assertion that design is never finished until the production is over. Right from his student projects onwards to private production, there never seemed to be enough time to finish designing, detailing and documenting everything about a production. Essentially, almost ‘every set design is a prototype until it is used’ (Rothwell & Kazanas, 2011:37). Besides, to put emphasis on every single structure or assemble the scenery units would actually demand him finishing with adjustments. Following a design process to attain the expected design, and combining it with the fact that he aims for a realistic design makes him frequently go back to modify or redesign different parts to improve them or accommodate the inevitable new directorial requirement. Goel’s (1995) posits this phase as the problem setting in design process, he explains it as “a process in which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend to
them” (29). This makes Johnson conclude that scenic designing should be considered as
a never ending cycle until the production ends. He mentioned that even as the set
construction takes place, the built reality may not fully match the ideal locale due to
some unseen challenges, or the director can request alternative additions or suggestions
for the productions. Generally, it comes to a point where an additional modification to
the set becomes so necessary because part of the set may malfunction such as a jammed
door, broken window or weak staircase. It often affects the production, which Johnson
addressee as an ‘unfinished business’.

There have been instances where some scenic designers are nowhere to be found during
the production and an unforeseen malfunction occurs. Does this mean the scenic design
was actually finished? Should it be that in every stage production there has to be points
where certain challenges are encountered, and will only be addressed for significant
reasons? Most scenic designers experience such uncalculated situations but these are not
the only reason a design is not finished until the production ends. Sometimes, it comes to
a point at which the director approves the design, but the challenge is always about what
level of detail the director is authorizing.

Occasionally, many directors like to leave their alterations to the design and decisions to
make changes as late as possible. So as a scenic designer, knowing the possibility of
some alterations to the scenic locale, “it is only advisable to keep my options open and
prepare for the inevitable”, Johnson said. He added that he considers an open option
because:

…some directors can be quite difficult about what they believe they have agreed on, particularly if they want scenic design changes and don’t want to pay extra for them. (Personal Interview, 13th April, 2017)
It is easier for a director to blame the scenic designer than to acknowledge the production concept has changed, which affects how the production functions. Thus, Johnson’s decision to prepare with the frame of mind that the scenic design is never finished until the production ends. He further cited an example from one of his projects; the 2002 Ghana Gospel Music Award (see figure 4.33):

…I had proposed a foreign locale with a contemporary concept. Initially the director and producer really liked the idea and the proposed images presented. Sometime after signing off on the agreed proposed design and well into the detailed design process and construction, I was informed that the director did not want to proceed with the intended design. The director wanted a traditional locale made of two huge horns with focus on three big harps at the centre and two minor ones at the extreme ends of the stage. (Personal Interview, 13th April 2017)


Johnson added that, he later discovered they had decided to amend his design because a new producer came on board, the previous producer’s agreement were dropped and his
guess was that the head of the new production group didn’t like the concept. That is their choice, but why should the scenic designer be the one paying the penalty to go back to the drawing board and start all over? Hence another basis for Johnson’s design philosophy; a designer’s work is completed only when the performance ends. Even with the best planning and designing, administration and state-of-the-art technology among other practices, every scenic designer should know his or her design is never static. A constructed scenic design should never be considered finished until the production comes to an end. Maybe some built scenery units can be complete, but the lightweight elements such as furniture type will always need to change over time. So ultimately, Johnson strongly affirms the scenic designing is never finished until the production ends. Nevertheless that shouldn’t mean that the scenic designer should not aim at meeting the deadline on the proposed design. It is better to have something near perfect out there for the production than to have nothing at all.

4.4 David Amoo: Life and Works

David Tawiah Akushie Amoo was born at Avenor-Accra on 17th August 1953. His father Victor Nii Abodai Amu was a carpenter but later became the chief priest of James Town and was called Nii Amoo Dai II. His mother Mary Aku Yaade was a trader. Amoo got married at the age of 30 in the year 1982 to Elizabeth Alokor Lartey but they got separated after having three children. Art in Amoo’s life can be traced to the roots of his ancestors, who enjoyed and had something to do with music. His grandfather was one of the originators of the Gome dance of the Ga’s in Ghana, which originated from Fernandopoi. His exposure at Fernandopoi, working with others from different African countries who used the colonial masters’ barrels, and boxes as drums to create their music after work steered his grandfather to become a carpenter. In other to create good
drums, Amoo’s father also continued and till date Amoo still practices the family trade. Amoo’s interest for art grew as he got fond of his father’s work. He often recalls his father carrying him onto a piece of wood and used him as weight to support a lumber as his father saws or cuts. “That is what inspired me to go into technical with the craft”, he said.

In August 1969, Amoo left to Abeka a suburb of Accra where he completed primary and junior high school. At Abeka, he pleaded with his mother to send him to a secondary school. Few weeks later, she took him to Odorgono Secondary School (Accra) and he was admitted into the school at the age of 16 years in the year 1970. During his studies at Odorgono Secondary School, his interest was to get a good pass including arts to gain admission into Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) to study fine arts. He graduated in 1975 from Odorgono Secondary School and fully engaged in the art of music and dance. Later, he worked for few months as a factory worker at Millet Textiles now known as Printex at Graphic Road (Accra), until he realized the dangers to his health and resigned. The young Amoo went home and started life on his own, engaging in various trades and crafts in drum making while acting as an assistant to a cargo truck driver to earn some income.

Saving enough to continue his education, Amoo applied to Accra Academy (Kanieshi-Accra) to pursue his advance level in arts. That’s where he seriously polished the arts and craft. He passed the A-Level and O-Level in arts, still with the vision to gain admission into Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). However, somebody said to him “you are good at drumming so use it to gain admission into a dance school”. He considered the advice and made effort towards achieving it. He added:
I used to drum when we closed from driving among the drivers’ union. We were invited to funerals and wake-keeping to drum. In the act of that I was able to build on that because I started getting the technique from Avenor, right from the compound where my mother and uncles grew up. They were trained, I saw them drum, and I saw a lot of activities in Avenor. Every evening you see various drumming techniques practiced, such as ‘Oke’ or ‘Kpanlogo’. So I learnt how to participate and borrow some ideas whenever I found myself among the drummers. That is how I started building my drumming techniques. (Personal Interview, 19th February, 2017)

These are some of the things that influenced Amoo’s creativity in the past; he got them inbuilt right from infancy before he ended up at Abeka in Accra. He could sit and drum till day break at funerals and other ceremonies for a fee. He added that, “people thought I was doing it for fun, but unknown to them I aim to go to the university even though I was performing at societal gatherings”. He knew the need to go back to school, so it was not just for the sake of entertainment but for a greater purpose. When he accumulated enough funds, gained good results from his A-Level and O-Level, he applied for admission at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) twice, yet he did not get enrolled. He was still optimistic until Mr. Vicher (a lecturer) at the School of Performing Arts (University of Ghana, Legon) sent a messenger to inform him of the academic opportunities at the School of Performing Arts. To Amoo, Mr. Vicher was an ‘angel’ sent to him because he did not know him and did not come to meet him in the school either. He accepted the offer and came to the School of Performing Arts with the help of Michael Foli¹².

He applied, took the entrance exams (written and practical) and impressed most of the lectures. He travelled few weeks to Nigeria to visit a sibling and upon returning at the airport, his cousin brought a newspaper and said “congratulations, you’ve been admitted at the School of Performing Arts, Dance Studies. It was during Amoo’s period as a

¹² Foli was the bus driver and the chief drummer of Ghana Dance Ensemble.
student that Mohammed Ben Abdallah formed Abibigromma Theatre Group which he became a member. According to Amoo:

Dr. Abdallah saw my performance and input in the school so he invited me to join Abibigromma Theatre Group. So we were the first batch of students to form group. I was drumming for them, singing, dancing and a whole lot. We were fully involved. We toured with the group to the Northern, Upper Region and came back to Greater Accra. It was very interesting to tour with a performing group, especially from the School of Performing Arts. I was highly impressed. It gave me a lot of opportunities to see beyond what I envisioned. I was there to make sure I got my Diploma Certificate, so I was always working on various productions. (Personal Interview, 19th February, 2017)

David Amoo added that he worked with the dance, music and drama department, acting in productions and drumming for student productions. He was all over the place, so after graduation Francis Nii Yartey, approached and recruited Amoo for his National Service appointment. Nii Yartey introduced Amoo to the entire dance performers has his assistant stage manager for the Ghana Dance Company. Amoo learnt the details of what stage management entails and acted efficiently. He designed T-shirts, letter heads and identity cards for the group aside those provided by the university. He joined the company when they started rehearsals and with their new productions, numerous scenic locales were estimated to be utilized.

Amoo painted his first scenery around 1987 with the help of others, on a graybaft and hanged it for a dance production. It was a village scene with a beach setting. There were huts, coconut trees and thatch houses. He usually sketched from memory and painted in symbolic forms. He later started making props and transformed to look beyond ordinary plywood’s for scenic design. He was then working with other designers in the school and they were using 4ft x 10ft and 4ft x 8ft flats (scenery pieces). Observing the bulky nature

13Francis Nii Yartey was dancer, choreographer and head of the Department of Dance Studies at University of Ghana (Legon) and the acting Director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. Also, he was the director of Noyam African Dance Institute in established in Accra, Ghana.
of the flats, Amoo realized that the company cannot travel with plywood so he developed something that would relief the dance company. He designed a portable scenic locale made of painted canvas well hanged for the production. He took inspiration from the groups numerous travels outside Ghana to improve his works.

Some of David Amoo’s works have foam behind the canvas and then hang on fish nets. He started improving, making sure that he designed scenery that could be folded, put in a bag and easy to travel with. He designed and constructed buildings, baobab trees, big huge mahogany trees, thatch houses using canvas and glued it on the net hang on bars. These were some of the things he created. He clarified that:

I used ropes to create pillars because Roman pillars have vertical lines. And sometimes instead of Roman I gave it African touch. I looked at what exists and put African touch to it. So these are some of the things that I was challenging myself with and I believed in no mediocrity. (Personal Interview, 19th February, 2017)

Amoo saw the need to expand by teaching others craft, he first got one painter (apprentice) and worked with because he could not do everything on his own. He made sure the designs were well scaled for his apprentice and guided him to paint. David Amoo did not abandon his fore-fathers craft of drum making. Therefore, apart from scenic design, he chooses to practice privately at home carving different types of Ghanaian drums. Currently, he has about 300 drums (examples are shown in figure 4.35) engraved with African motifs in his warehouse. His design philosophy to base his artworks on African motifs developed into carving them on doors. Currently, he is developing another aspect to use the African motif for design. David Amoo has always appreciated art, “I loved the arts, especially African arts”, he said and these are some of the things he has accomplished as an artist.

At the moment, Amoo drums and dances but they are just small aspect of his artistic form. He does more of his major art works in scenery painting, carving or sculpture
using porcelain, wood, paper-mashie, plastic and metal among others. He was the first scenic designer for the dance company during Nii Yartey’s earliest production “Bukom”. His long term of working after attaining a degree gave him on-the-job experience and everything he needed to enrich his portfolio. However, he still enrolled for a second degree (graduate studies) in scenic design from 1988 to 2000. When the National Theatre of Ghana was built in 1992, Amoo accepted the offer to join the residence companies at the Theatre. He was determined to work at the National Theatre because of the facilities and how it will help improve his creativity.

“So the facilities there gave me the confidence and exposure”, he said. Before that Amoo and others were selected for a short term training program in China. They were trained in order to aid use the National Theatre’s facilities which Amoo claims boosted his creativity. He was the first, in collaboration with John Kojo Djisenu, to set up scenery for the opening of the National Theatre. He operated and assisted in building numerous mechanical features such as working with the orchestra pit. Apart from being a scenic designer, Amoo worked almost like a technical man at the National Theatre with Djisenu. Hence, moving from the University of Ghana to the National Theatre was a major decision; he wanted to help train others like him for the industry. However, to achieve this aim, Amoo decided to frequently visit the School of Performing Arts and help impart knowledge into students who were willing to know more about scenic and props designing, drumming and dancing among many others.
4.4.1 Amoo’s Major Works

Figure 4.34: Stage props (guns, torches and shields) designed and constructed by David Amoo, for Musu-Saga of the Slaves. A dance-theatre co-choreographed by Nii Yartey (Ghana) and Monty Thompson (U.S.A). Performed at the National Theatre and commissioned for Images Africa Festiva (IAF) in Denmark. (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)

Figure 4.35: David Amoo’s hand carved drums embedded with African motifs. (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)
Figure 4.36: Stage props (chains) for Mohammed Ben-Abdallah’s *The Slaves* (2003), Directed by Mohammed Ben-Abdallah-2005, at the Efua Theodora Sutherland Drama Studio (University Of Ghana, Legon). Props designed by David Amoo (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)

Figure 4.37: Stage props (gold artefacts) for *Solma*, a Ghana Dance Ensemble dance-drama performance. Co-choreographed by Francis Nii Yartey (Ghana) and Jean Franco Droure (France) at the National Theatre of Ghana, Accra (1994). Picture courtesy: David Amoo
Figure 4.38: Large scale designed and constructed Adinkra symbols (Pempamsie) for ‘Asipim’ (Kusum Africa), co-choreographed dance-theatre performance commissioned by East Bay Centre (San Francisco) at the National theatre of Ghana, Accra. Designed and constructed by David Amoo. (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)

Figure 4.39: Designed and constructed dummy bottle ‘Monarch Ginseng Tonic’ by David Amoo, for an exhibition in Kumasi. (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)
Figure 4.40: Constructed stage properties for the opening and closing ceremony of the African under ‘20’ Football tournament hosted in Ghana (*Ghana 99*), at the Accra Sports Stadium (1999). Designed by David Amoo (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)

Figure 4.41: Designed and constructed props (spears and shields) for ‘Asipim’ (Kusum Africa), co-choreographed dance-theatre performance commissioned by East Bay Centre (San Francisco) at the National theatre of Ghana, Accra. Designed and constructed by David Amoo. (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)
Figure 4.42: Scenery designed and constructed for a *Command Performance* in honour of Queen Elisabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh visit to Ghana, at the State House Banquet Hall (1999). Scenery designed by David Amoo (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)

Figure 4.43: *Bukom*, a dance-drama choreographed by Nii Yartey and performed by the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the National Theatre of Ghana, Accra (1999). Scenery designed by David Amoo (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)
Figure 4.44: *Solma*, a Ghana Dance Ensemble dance-drama performance. Co-choreographed by Francis Nii Yartey (Ghana) and Jean Franco Duroure (France) at the National Theatre, Accra (1994). Scenery designed by David Amoo (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)

Figure 4.45: *Nkulunkulu*, a dance-drama performance co-choreographed by Francis Nii Yartey (Ghana) and performed by the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the National Theatre of Ghana, Accra (1999). Scenery designed by David Amoo (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)
Figure 4.46: Images of Conflict, a dance-theatre performance co-choreographed by Francis Nii Yartey (Ghana) and Germaine Acogny (Senegal) at the National Theatre of Ghana, Accra (1999). Scenery designed by David Amoo (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)

Figure 4.47: Scenic designed and constructed for the launching of Castle Milk Stout at the Novotel Hotel, Ghana. Scenery designed by David Amoo (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)
4.4.2 David Amoo’s Design Philosophies and Styles

David Amoo’s main design philosophy and style is that, he opposes the usage of bulky scenic structures and he encourages the use of backdrops. Also, he portrays an African theme in his scenic designs with some symbolic appearances. These are further discussed with reference to some of his works.

4.4.2.1 Opposes the usage of bulky scenic structures

In identifying David Amoo’s design philosophies and styles, through interviews and physical examination of some of his works, the use of non-bulky sceneries forms the fundamental design philosophy to his scenery designing. Amoo recommends the usage of painted fabric backdrops for stage performances instead of the dense scenery made from wood or metal. Above all, backdrops are mobile scenic designs and can be made from lighter materials such as canvas, polystyrene, foam, fishing nets among others. Enrolling into the School of Performing Arts and witnessing huge, elaborate and heavy
scenery, Amoo aimed to make a difference by constructing scenic locales that are compact and portable (such as Figure 4.46). Just as “Adolph Appia and Edward Gordon Craig\(^\text{14}\), opposed the scenic practices of the traditional European acting company” (Siminson, 1973:18), Amoo also renounced the bulky scenic structures that he was introduced to, making sure he designed scenic locales that can be folded, put in a bag and travel easily for a stage performance around the globe. He said that, “the actual scenic design practice in Ghana during the early periods of performances was minimal”. This was experienced during the Concert Party performances; they used backdrops as their scenery. For most part, the performer’s dialogue, music and dance conveyed the story with compact and portable scenery that projected the locale.

During David Amoo’s many travels on the road with stage productions (Ghana Dance Ensemble), he visited some theatre spaces and never missed to notice how backdrops (painted scenes) usually formed the locale of their production. He observed that:

> Backdrops were effectively used in their concerts, dance recitals, parties, theatres and studios. Furthermore, the backdrops came in different shapes, styles and sizes. He also noticed how painted murals, canvas and muslin were primarily used to create these scenery backdrops. The various scenery designed for the productions then created an appropriate pictorial image that can easily be used for the performance anywhere. (Personal Interview, 20\(^{th}\) April, 2017)

Furthermore, designing with backdrops as a technique, is an initiative that finds itself rooted in David Amoo’s design philosophy and style. He has produced backgrounds or backdrops used in productions such as, Nkulunkulu (see figure 4.45), Images of Conflict (see figure 4.46) and Bukom (see figure 4.48) which provided an appropriate and functional visual scene behind the performers. He explained that his backdrops vary based on specific production concepts, which ranges from rural scenes to abstract and functional visual scenes.

\(^{14}\) Discussed in Chapter two.
modern designs in different colours. Even though, others may make use of modern technology to achieve their backdrops, Amoo assures himself to never depart from hand painting his backdrops because that is what makes him unique. Hence, his scenic designs are impressively recommended by dance-drama directors such as Francies Nii Yartey, Oh Nii Sowah, Terry Bright Ofosu (examples are shown in figures 4.42, 4.44, 4.45, 4.46 and 4.48) and others for their productions. So whatever be the location, a backdrop can enhance the design concept or style of the production by providing a compelling visual scene that could well compliment the theme and make the entire performance truly memorable. Moreover, his portable backdrops are mostly artificial backgrounds which are used to convey the feeling of a natural setting such as country-sides, a forest, mountains or any other natural landscape. He stated that:

As a scenic designer, I don’t just create flat surfaces with my portable backdrop but I design with consideration to depth no matter the dimension of the performance space. The backdrops I have constructed for productions over the years are paper-made backdrops, muslin backdrops, painted canvas backdrops, textural backdrops and even very large scale backdrops. However, scenic backdrops depicting a natural theme in its various features are often the most popular ones that get me acknowledged. I even design interior backdrops depicting living rooms or apartments to help the audience to understand the mood of the scene. (Personal Interview, 20th April 2017)

Additionally, as a scenic designer with the aim to design and construct portable scenery for any given locale in a production, all Amoo could think of were measures to reproduce the design style into an African setting. Hence, he produced varied backdrops for productions and most of them are still in good shape if the production is to be staged again. Naturally, Amoo yearns for a representation of an African theme in his scenic designs. This Beacham (2013) perceives as “a unique concept of stage setting; a model that aims to express aesthetics elements and calls for solid scenery as revolutionary” (p64). In explaining the construction of his backdrops, he best describes it as a
representative scenic background of an oversized painting on an expanse of fabric. He normally uses his own treated and prepaid large canvas, and in exhibiting his inherent African setting, he prefers to paint to a neutral or unusual low-saturated colour to the surface. This method is used to produce the appropriate dimensions needed when the backdrop required is very large.

Below (see figure 4.49) is the making of the tree in *Nkulunkulu* backdrop which was detailed and designed by David Amoo. Once designed, the piece was scenically painted by hand to replicate to give the appearance of a real three dimensional tree. The design effect was achieved by stitching onto fishing nets. Shadows techniques and even an aging process was applied to give it a realistic vintage appearance.

![Figure 4.49](image.png)

**Figure 4.49**: A large scale design and construction of a tree for the performance *'Nkulunkulu'*; a dance-drama performance co-choreographed by F. Nii-Yartey (Ghana) and performed by the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the National Theatre of Ghana, Accra (1999). Scenery designed by David Amoo (Picture courtesy: David Amoo)

### 4.4.2.2 Designing Symbolically

Furthermore, many design practitioners have explored varied kinds of scenic designs in stage performances which include the representation of nature (naturalism), portrayal of
fantasy or dreams (fiction), the make-believe (realism), the improvisational (abstract) and then the representative (symbolism). The latter is the design approach which David Amoo focuses on.

Amoo proceeds with an absolute design philosophy and style; designing symbolically with African motifs as an inspiration. He stated that, “the intended message of a performance and the kind of audience response that is desired by the production team, determines the specific style to design the production”. Amoo’s assertion is supported by Macgowan and Melnitz (1995) when they posit: “stage design elements have to function as symbols and communicate deeper meanings, rather than simply reflecting the real world” (p445). Besides, Amoo aims at designing and constructing his scenic locale in a symbolic style because he gets to incorporate the design with African themes. He explained that:

Before the familiar forms of communication were conceptualized, human beings have always communicated with symbols. This means that, centuries old, symbols have played a communicative and interactive role to man in general and Africans in particular; a continent with varied languages. History will reveal that their ancestors must have had their own way of communication and interconnected peacefully. In other words, communication has evolved overtime to what and where it is today. (Personal Interview, 20th April, 2017)

He added that symbols have been natural to man even before formal languages were instituted. For some symbols the meaning or messages they communicate are manifested to the observer at a glance, while with others we are not even aware they exist. Therefore in designing a scenic locale for a production, Amoo considers the progression of the performance and the type of audiences accompanied simultaneously with the aspect of African symbols he incorporates as design concepts. For the reason that, “man’s appreciation of the world, himself and surroundings is characterized and connected with varied symbols, both the conscious and unconscious”, he added. To further strengthen
Amoo’s assertions, some basic knowledge of the African (Ghanaian) symbols, motifs and texture and some interaction with Amoo are required to help appreciate his works. Also, it makes the understanding of the design philosophy and style easier when observing his works. This demonstrates that every symbol is incomplete but the full appreciation relies greatly on explanations from the designer to assure the fullness of meanings to the symbols.

Observing the scenic designs for the various dance-drama productions, how best would he classify his variation depiction of design symbolism that makes up these productions? Answering this question, Amoo categorized his design symbolism in three types namely; direct symbolism, indirect and material symbolism. He explained that:

Direct symbols has the appearance that expresses what he means ideologically; just observing the image one can easily interpret it. Indirect symbols denote images that signify a different meaning which is not immediately recognized in the design, they are usually known through an in-depth reflection. Finally, there are material symbols (figures 4.18 & 4.20) which are expressed through physical objects; the use of stage props as symbols which form an expression in connotation. (Personal Interview, 20th April, 2017)

Interestingly, observing some appearances of Amoo’s designs, it seems they do not always have a complete meaning; occasionally his scenic designs have the tendency of making the audience or viewer look beyond the ordinary. This requires the audience to exercise their acquaintance with African (Ghanaian) symbols in trying to figure out the message within his designs. However, one can also say that his symbolic scenic locales carry meaning that artistically supports the performance; it allows people to read and uncover meanings that are hidden or implied for the production. Figure 4.47 is a typical example to consider; it is a scene designed and constructed for the launching of Accra Brewery Limited’s (ABL) Castle Milk Stout, Ghana, which has a representation of four distinct Adinkra symbols; Nkonsonkonson (which means chain links); Ntese-mate masie
(meaning wisdom); Akoma ntoaso (meaning extension of the heart) and; Ese ne tekrema (the teeth and tongue). The symbolic connotations of these Adinkra symbols are reflections of ABL’s mission statement; to own and nurture brands that are the first choice of the customers. Basically, Amoo’s usage of these four Adinkra symbols are his means of communicating how ABL shows strength in unity by listening to their consumers and appreciating their human relation with deep wisdom through the unveiling of their new product (Castle Milk Stout).

To conclude, growing up, having a chief priest for a father and a high priest for an uncle, Amoo was exposed to varied communications. He witnessed that some forms of the communication with others were also done through a messenger. The response to the message was also sent back through the same or another messenger. He recalls some ‘sign languages’ and physical objects were used to relay some ‘concealed’ messages in his family, and their meaning he grew up to understand better. He added that this form of communication was used in every aspect of his upbringing; examples are “means to convey word of warning or make someone aware of imminent threat, to counsel over disagreements and to advice family members of a death and other information”. These forms of communication presented embedded meanings that were mostly exhibited through symbols and motifs. Embedded here, he associated to mean “what was said and done initially was a mystery to him”. He explained the communication was a mystery because it was shrouded in camouflage; they communicated an expression but had indirect implication. Thus, David Amoo’s motivation to also camouflage some expressions through scenic designing to support a stage performance became his design philosophy and style, which he terms an “African theme symbolism”.  

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4.5 Prince Kojo-Hilton: Life and Works

The final scenic designer in focus, gradually developed in the area of fine art and self-taught himself to become a scenic designer without quitting even with the various challenges he encountered. Prince Kojo-Hilton is a visual artist, an art director and a production designer. A father to eight years old Lindywey Hilton, and brother to two step-sisters; Linda and Lydia Owurado. Born 7th December, 1982 to Charles Owuradu and Leticia Yaa Owurado, he started drawing at a very tender age and encountered series of conflicts with his mother because of his interest for art. Kojo-Hilton passed through various artistic phases which has finally gotten him to become one of Ghana’s renowned scenic designer.

Kojo-Hilton attended numerous basic schools because his mother (single parent) travelled a bit, however, he started school from Reverend Ernest Bruce Memorial Methodist at Accra, Adabraka near the Dance Bar. He then attended the Seventh-day Adventist (S.D.A) SDA Primary for about a year at Ho in the Volta Region. Then went back to Reverend Ernest Bruce Memorial Methodist and got his Junior Secondary School (J.S.S) certificate in 1997, before moving to assist his uncle (Johnson Edu) at the National Theatre of Ghana to paint scenery and design props.

Gradually, he was introduced to scenic designs and construction by Johnson Edu, the then Technical Director of the National theatre. He helped with the painting of the Key Soap Concert Party backdrops, construction of props, doing make-up for performers and other technical areas from 1997 to 2000. He studied Visual Art in senior high school and later enrolled in a Fine Art Diploma program with ICS (International Correspondence Schools USA) to broaden his scope of creativity. He is a product of National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) and majored in Art Direction and Production Design. He
applied to NAFTI in 2013 to do a short program. He was among the second batch of students admitted to study Art Direction and Production which he graduated in 2014.

In 2005, he later moved to Accra and started working as a full-time scenic designer for screen production and film projects. He worked with movie production houses such as Danfo B. A., Venus Films, Apex, Charter House, Jandel Limited, Roverman Production, United Television (UTV), and Empire Entertainment among many others. The following year, he was honoured an award for African best Art Director and Production Designer. He is the founder of Support Arts Foundation (Accra), and the CEO of Hilwood Studio (Accra). He is also the Executive Director of The Arts Legendary Hall Of Fame (Accra). He introduced the Pan African Legendary Hall Of Fame\(^\text{15}\) (2016) and is the Greater Accra Regional Chairman of the Ghana Association of the Visual Artist (GAVA) (2017).

Kojo-Hilton’s contributions to the development of design in Ghana are enormous. He has established teaching materials in NAFTI that aids in training students. Currently, lots of NAFTI Art Direction students come to his company for internships. Similarly, students from Takoradi Polytechnic, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and University of Ghana among many other tertiary institutions had their internships with him as well. “So I am still developing my skill”, he added. To him learning never ends, and he would need to still keep updating himself because even the materials we use each day keep changing and “if you don’t update yourself, or you don’t learn, you will be outmoded”, he added.

Furthermore, Kojo-Hilton is a self-motivated person who works tirelessly to achieve his goals. He has to his credit the first ever man-made volcano created in Africa (2012) for the Guinness Big Eruption Concert (see figure 35) in Accra. His works are best seen in

\(^\text{15}\) Pan African Legendary Hall Of Fame; an honouring event which is used to reach out to all African Heads of States for a common goal of supporting the deprived creative artist and other Visual Arts
Movies, TV commercials, music videos, stage events and many others. He has added to his artistic repertoire a scenic artist with Hollywood directors of the "Matrix"; Lana and Andy Wachowski on the Science Fiction Movie "Sense 8" shot in Kenya. Kojo-Hilton is now a popular freelance production designer in Ghana. He has worked with most of the renowned multi-media firms and film production houses in Ghana who keep recommending him to others because of his dedication, hard work and creativity.

Ultimately, Kojo-Hilton’s aim or vision is to empower the youth; to support the upcoming artist and expose the other areas of art to them as well as establish an institution where artist in Africa will have a multi-complex environment to study. Now, he believes ‘an artist needs a sacred place’. A sacred place is an art college where everything art is been practiced. ‘I have already created my catalogue and have the name for the university’ he added. Kojo-Hilton wants it to be an all-African art university with the name Pan-African State University of Art. He has been trying to establish this with the means of getting all African Heads of States to endorse his idea as well as remind them of the importance of encouraging creativity in Africa.
4.5.1 Kojo-Hilton’s Major Works

Figure 4.50: *Ghana Meets Naija*-1st edition, by Empire Entertainment at the Accra International Conference Centre (2011). Scenery designed by Prince Kojo-Hilton (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo-Hilton)

Figure 4.51: *Ghana Meets Naija*-2nd edition, by Empire Entertainment at the Accra International Conference Centre (2012). Scenery designed by Prince Kojo-Hilton (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo-Hilton)
Figure 4.52: *Ghana Meets Naija*-3rd edition, by Empire Entertainment at the Accra International Conference Centre (2013). Scenery designed by Prince Kojo-Hilton (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo-Hilton)

Figure 4.53: *Ghana Meets Naija*-4th edition, by Empire Entertainment at the Accra International Conference Centre (2014). Scenery designed by Prince Kojo-Hilton (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo-Hilton)
Figure 4.54: *Love Concert*, at the Accra International Conference Centre (2013). Scenery designed by Prince Kojo Hilton (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo Hilton)

Figure 4.56: *The Guinness Eruption Concert*; a dummy Guinness bottle and a man-made volcano, for Gunnies Ghana at the Ohene Djan Stadium (2013). Scenery designed and constructed by Prince Kojo Hilton (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo Hilton)

Figure 4.57: Scenic designed and constructed for the *Utv Morning Show*, at the Utv Studio, Abeka-Lapaz, Accra (2015). Scenery designed by Prince Kojo-Hilton (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo-Hilton)
Figure 4.58: A designed and constructed *Cave Entrance* for the rebranding of Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City at Accra-Ghana (2016). Scenery designed by Prince Kojo Hilton  (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo Hilton)

Figure 4.59: *Back In the Day Concert*, by Empire Entertainment at the Accra International Conference Centre (2011). Scenery designed by Prince Kojo-Hilton (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo-Hilton)
Figure 4.60: The Walt Disney Animation *Lion King* (1994), life performed on stage by Tema International School, at the National Theatre of Ghana (2014). Scenery designed by Prince Kojo Hilton (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo Hilton)

Figure 4.61: The *Freedom Concert* by Empire Entertainment at the Kumasi Sports Stadium (2016). Scenery designed by Prince Kojo-Hilton. (Picture courtesy: Prince Kojo-Hilton)
4.5.2 Kojo-Hilton’s Design Philosophy and Style

After a discussion with Kojo-Hilton, three major design philosophies and styles were documented. Namely, he acts as a contemporary designer, encourages the usage of a virtual scenic locale and portrays a national identity in his works. These form the basis to his designing.

4.5.2.1 A contemporary scenic designer

We exist in an era of technology, different objects surround our life and it would be challenging to picture living without all of those supportive things. Every scenic locale designed and constructed for stage performances in every period is the work of a particular scenic designer. Differences in periods have led to the production of some designs that might seem strange, beautiful and some even astonishing to observers. An observer and or a designer of different eras would interpret the same visual images in their own personal view because everyone recognizes creativity in different ways. The scenic designer in focus like many other designers is influenced by his era of existence, the 21st century.

After accomplishing recognition in the Ghanaian scenic design profession, in the spirit of being unique, Prince Kojo Hilton sets out to explore the other areas in designing for stage productions. The period he currently lives in is characterized by a particular design style which is associated with his scenic designs. This is generally related to modern design trends. Admitting to the fact that there was more to scenic designing than painted scenic structures or backdrops, he was motivated to seek for other interpretations and means to achieve his uniqueness. As a result, he practices what he calls the contemporary Ghanaian scenic design which forms the core element in his design philosophies and styles.
Kojo-Hilton defines his contemporary designs as concepts or art that has been and continues to be created and shaped within or during his lifetime. He believes design is ever changing and it is based on the moment of the designer. Therefore, in portraying his scenic designs, he makes reference to popular design concepts and materials that are currently being used. He remarked:

My contemporary design materials aids in creating diverse locales, because it keeps changing and providing different pieces of scenery and styles for all the different stage productions. (Personal Interview, 9th February 2017)

As a Ghanaian contemporary scenic designer, his scenic designs defines him as a designer of today; he produces designs that situate him in the twenty-first century. His works provides an opening to reflect and appreciate on current scenic design trends, the design society and how to broaden the Ghanaian design scope. Unlike Djisenu, Amoo and Johnson, Kojo-Hilton’s design style is influenced by the current globally accepted fashionable ideas of today’s world. Also, his experiences and exposure to the modern technologically advancing world, influences his design style. He makes use of a dynamic fusion of modern resources and techniques; ideas and themes that defy the ‘old-fashioned’ Ghanaian scenic designing with its limitations and challenge of monotonous concepts. An example is Kojo-Hilton’s usage of virtual screens (modern technology) for most of his stage productions (see figures 4.50 and 4.51) instead of painted flats (as shown in figures 4.15, 4.19, 4.21, 4.24, 4.30, 4.45, 4.47 and 4.48), thereby enabling different scenic locales to be easily projected on the screens.

According to Kojo-Hilton, his works are have “complex appearance yet simple to use”; it projects a sophisticated appearance yet easy to manipulate and serves it purpose. Observing images of Kojo-Hilton’s designs (such as figure 4.54), the complex structures of his design does not distort the artistic value or render the design unappreciated. It
rather provides a state of having many simple scenic structures and which is easy to understand or find the concept it seeks. Also, the findings on his scenic designs demonstrate the method of simple design elements modified to create difference in what might be present in the styles of other Ghanaian scenic designers.

The complex structures of Kojo-Hilton’s design have two important features namely, texture and colour; the appearance or form of the entire work is capable of changing due to these features. Getlein (2002) categorizes texture into what he calls actual texture and visual texture. In his opinion actual texture is literally tactile; a quality we could experience through touch, while visual texture is less literal and has the same properties of real physical touch effect that does not occur naturally (p102). Both categories of texture, as an element of design and well explained by Getlein are evident in Kojo-Hilton’s contemporary designs. Additionally, Kojo-Hilton considers the textures very significant to achieving his design concept due to the end results. The texture gives the physical impressions in his works (see figure 4.58) and brings the smoothness or roughness on the surface of the scenic walls. This artistic ‘touch’ or effect is created by the skilful manipulation with other elements (line, point, shape and form etc.) of design.

Furthermore the texture in Kojo-Hilton’s designs are usually formed by a colour, as a result, texture is equally defined by its appearance or the type of colours it is rendered. For the reason that every element is made of colour, which defines colour as a sensation produced on the eye when light falls on the surface of an object. Getlein (2002) sees colour as “a function of light, without which there can be no colour…and none of the visual elements gives us so much pleasure as colour” (p92). Considering Getlein’s assertion with Kojo-Hiltons design concepts, the desired effect was actualized with the aid of good lighting design; the intensity of the light or the colour. The intensity of the
colour refers to the level of brightness of that specific colour; the addition or mixture to another colour. This differentiates between colours that are closer to its absolute hue and those that have been diluted or made less intense by changing its value. For instance, the particular blue used for the scenic design at Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City (see figure 4.58) is high and low saturated than the other shades of it, if the image is critically observed.

Ultimately, as mentioned earlier Kojo-Hilton’s contemporary design concept makes references to trending ideas and modern techniques to achieve the current era. His contemporary scenic designs, basically does not focus on a single point of view, but covers varied purposes and aims to rejuvenate the world of the production.

4.5.2 A Virtual Scenic Locale

Second to Kojo-Hilton’s design philosophies and styles is his use of a virtual background to create a scenic locale for stage performances. He concentrated on this style of scenic design to make a difference in designing stage performances in Ghana that composes of virtual screens. This is what informs Kenneth Cameron and Patti Gillespie definition of design when they contended that, “good design is daring; it tries new technologies, avoids old solutions, and chances failure” (1989: 205). Also, Kojo-Hilton considers varied scene mechanisms for stage performances that will aid him present a more contemporary concept. Kojo-Hilton explains:

... virtual background as the integration of computer-generated visuals that technologically aids the representations of the scenic environment for progression during the production. Bearing in mind the application of the virtual scenic design, its evident purpose is functioning as the world of the performance. Currently, the merging of physical scenic structures and virtual screens as part of the stage performance is his active area of exploration. (Personal Interview, 9th February, 2017)
Research in virtual backgrounds has focused on the scenic design not only for its function as a scenic environment, but also for describing and managing how best the characters interact with the performance space they inhabit. Technological advancement in stage production has allowed for the creation of different computer-generated autonomous scenic locales that can react and actively participate in a stage performance. Example is the depiction of blazing fire, sound waves and the rising frequency display that was easily represented in the various editions of Empire Entertainment’s *Ghana Meets Naija* (see figures 4.50, 4.51, 4.52 & 4.53) with the use of virtual screens. Although such scenic locale has been created using physical scenic structures in other stage productions, the virtual background made transitions of the scenes rapid with blended with the performance. Also, the purpose of interactive performance moves the role of the virtual design in the production from static contributor to a highly collaborative participant.

Furthermore, Kojo-Hilton’s virtual design seeks to redefine scenic designing in Ghana completely; mostly the method of presentation. The virtual scenic design as Kojo-Hilton already defined as a computer-generated world for the performance, aims to influence the performance of the production; it should create the scenes in the performance as it would within an interactive space and natural surroundings. Easily, a background projecting an image of a living room can be transformed to an office, a forest, a desert, a mountain then back to the living room. He uses it to create a world of his choice and could also easily alternate within the same design concept for an appropriate locale for the performance. Kojo-Hilton considers his exploration with the virtual screens as a “Ghanaian designer who is being innovative”, which Beacham (2013) states strongly that “most of what we call innovations is a variation of Appia’s ideas deduced from his
original premises” (p64). Therefore, Kojo-Hilton is only adding on to the existing scenic design approaches available in Ghana.

Additionally, as the traditional scenic construction that requires collaborative effort of the scenic designer, carpenters and painters, the concept behind the virtual scenic design system is also motivated by teamwork and collaboration. The scenic background is designed with the expectancy that the performance will be a collaborative input of technical members responsible for programming the intelligence to be displayed. The backgrounds are designed vary, making accurate expectations as to where a scene in the performance is situated. Also, it is anticipated that visual elements projected will be designed separately by scenic designer using a virtual software such as Maya or Cinema 4D among others. Similar to traditional Ghanaian scenic design, adjustment and communication between the performers are used to assess and correct any future malfunctions during a rehearsal process before the production.

All scenery representations used in most of Kojo-Hilton’s stage performance follow a design process that featured to some extent virtual displays. He specified that:

…a proposed virtual model is designed indicating the function of the virtual scenic design in relation to the production concept. These visual elements are created by the scenic designer where the emphasis is on aesthetics in addition to function of the set. The virtual backgrounds at the wings of the 3rd edition of Ghana Meets Naija (as shown in figure 52) and the Back in the Day Concert (see figure 59) were designed and created as an extension of the scenic locale to generate diversity in the set design as they keep changing. They were equipped using LED screens with animated structures created and passed on through the computer programmer. (Personal Interview, 9th February, 2017)

A pictorial description of the virtual screen and the specifics of the animated structures provided for display gives a better understanding to appreciating Kojo-Hilton’s assertion. Both the traditional scenic structure and the virtual scenery were introduced and used
during the two performances. Additionally, decision-making about lighting the performance space is considered by both the light and the scenic designer. This meeting is very necessary because the virtual scenic design emits lights and excessive or wrong application of the stage light will distort the scenery. Therefore, during such meetings the direction, intensity, distribution, placement and gel colours of the lights for each scene is defined, agreed and saved as cues used to unfold the performance. Moreover, part of the satisfaction for witnessing a life stage performance is enjoying the beauty of the scenic environment (scenery and lighting). For the reason that, they are mostly the first and last item the audience experience at a production. Even so, many virtual scenic designs unfortunately suffer from poor representations and excessive lighting.

4.5.2 Portraying a National Identity

Finally, Prince Kojo-Kojo-Hilton’s design philosophy and style is to portray a national identity through his works. He believes a designer’s instinct to create unique designs is universal but nothing can be more distinctive than aiming to preserve your identity. Design aims to solve a problem, and has also been a way of expressing philosophies and concepts about different cultural experiences throughout all stages of human development. To preserve national artefacts, Kojo-Hilton uses his scenic designs to provide important insights into past and existing landmarks, helping the audiences to appreciate how others have lived and what they valued. He states that:

Incorporating national identity in design, such as landmarks, helps to reveal and enhance some underlying distinctiveness; the cultural heritage, value and features of the social and physical form of the people. This identity is reflected through the characteristics of the design. Portraying a national identity is not a static concept that involves only scenic design, but is evident in other forms of art such as costume, music and dance among others. (Personal Interview, 9th February, 2017)
He added that integrating this unique Ghanaian identity (as shown in figures 4.51 & 4.61), through design marks the worth in him (the designer) that arises from a concern for his abilities and what he regards as excellent in arts and crafts. However, it evolves and develops over time, reflecting the spectrum of social values within him and his surrounded environments. Imbedding a national identity in a scenic locale gives the audience something to reminisce about. It reconstructs a place, period and feeling for the audience to familiarize with, even if it is only momentary. According to Kojo-Hilton, when he designs with some cultural elements, it moves the performers and audience to places they might have heard, but have never been or to places they never knew existed.

Moreover, this has been a design philosophy Kojo-Hilton wishes every designer will uphold because designing with a national identity speaks of the past, present and the future of the nation. In achieving that, he takes the elements (freedom, festivals, rites and passage etc.) of our daily lives and blends them. “We have lost too much already”, he added. Preserving what is left of our cultural heritage requires the need for not just scenic designers but every designer to continue and give a picture of the Ghanaian cultural heritage from generation to generation. He posits:

Through generations, various design methods have been the constant and pictorial medium in preserving cultures. Therefore, we need scenic designs as a medium that would preserve our nation, culture and the individual as a whole. (Personal Interview, 9th February, 2017)

As a scenic designer spearheading the need to portray Ghanaian identity through design, Kojo-Hilton has successfully preserved historical thoughts and cultural elements of some Ghanaian identity through the use of well-known landmarks in his scenic design for various productions such as the second edition Ghana Meets Naija (see figure 4.51) and the 2016 Freedom Concert (see figure 4.61). Kojo-Hilton incorporated into the design a
replica of Independence Arch at Accra (Ghana) as an element of Ghanaian identity. This was accomplished by Kojo-Hilton stating his personal opinions in contrast to the more display of foreign identity in high demands for scenic designs. These issues tend to personally affect Kojo-Hilton and hopefully others in the society as a whole. Even though he cannot make rapid change, Kojo-Hilton is optimistic for a wider change in the future.

4.6 Summary

The designers in focus shared their life story and touched on other subjects as well. They revealed facts that have proven very useful to this research and others that may follow. It is very interesting to note that there are no in-depth documentations of these Ghanaian scenic designer’s lives and works compared to Ghanaian playwrights, re-echoing the fact that Ghanaian scenic designers seem under appreciated.

The scenic designer works to provide a pictorial aesthetics of a stage performance that can be readily understood from the suggestive expressions of a scenic locale forms the successful part of a stage performance. However, in view of the current shortcomings in the technical development of Ghanaian stage performances, the findings exhibit the effective and efficient contribution of these scenic designers in various Ghanaian stage performances. Considering the financial constraints which some Ghanaian designers face in executing their works, it is difficult to comprehend how they successfully implement this very important aspect of stage performance. Especially, operating within a constrained environment; designing for a production within a performance space that lacks the necessary materials, technical sophistication and or high funding that causes difficulty in realizing the set goal. It is with these concerns that the current chapter has
explored and analysed the findings by investigating four Ghanaian scenic designers and their design philosophies and styles.

The outcome from the study highlights how the scenic designers through a conscious activity are guided by aims and objectives. It denotes the planned and organized action that brings about some suitable or inappropriate outcome from which there may also be expected or unexpected results. Generally, design has always been ‘used and thought of as a means of interpreting the nature of world and life to human eyes and ears (Arnheim, 1966: 7). The Ghanaian scenic designers; Djisenu, Amoo, Johnson and Kojo-Hilton have expressed innovative ways to seeing familiar things, and how to interpret new stage performances and events through other forms of visual expressions. This visual form of expression is “seen as a kind of universal syntax through which artists communicate their ideas” (Ray Faulkner and Edwin, 1987: v). According to Faulkner and Edwin, to communicate his ideas, an artist must engage our attention and hold it until his message is comprehended (1987:377). The visual language of design is, however, imperative for these scenic designers in the Ghanaian industry, using them to create and communicate their design philosophies and styles. Therefore, a scenic designer’s viewpoint on a particular design defines his or her design philosophy; what he or she is trying to accomplish, and, more importantly, what the designer thinks their scenic design should accomplish. Ultimately, the findings from the research have brought further understanding and insight to the study of scenic designing. The various theories and definitions surrounding scenic design in Ghana have been very interesting.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

This chapter concludes my work. Three objectives are listed at the beginning of this research, to ascertain the design philosophy and style that motivates the works of four Ghanaian scenic designers. This was achieved through the observation and analysis carried out on their works. Outcomes of interviews and library research also contributed to the findings. The following is observed in relation to the research objectives.

The first objective is “to appreciate the Ghanaian scenic designer’s life and the influence on his work”. A detailed study into the life of the four scenic designers using the Life Course Theory is conducted to document the stages of their life (from early childhood to present age) and works. All the four scenic designers gave detailed information about themselves and their accomplishments. Individually, lifestyles of the designers in focus differ due to their social surroundings and culture. These differences are evident through their life experiences and the spectacles in their works;

(i) Some developmental stage (economic cycles, social and cultural ideologies) moulded their opinions and choices that altered the course of their development. As unique people, their developing stages are established and changed by conditions or events that occurred due to some historical reasons and environment in which they live. As a continuous process experienced throughout their entire life, the aging and developmental changes of each scenic designer becomes distinctive. As such, the life course reveals the connection of some social and historical influences with the designer’s biography and development within which the study of the scenic designer’s work and achievements becomes central for the first objective.
The background or upbringing of these Ghanaian scenic designers to a stage performance is paramount. Even though like most fine art professions they do not receive acknowledgment equal to other professions, they are still motivated with the works they produce. Besides, these scenic designers contribution from minimal productions (such as school projects) to millions of cedi funded productions are silently supporting performances to achieve required moods and aesthetics through unique styles. These designers reveal through their unique techniques various experiences and historical period in their scenic designs. An example is the symbolic nature of David Amoo’s scenic designs, traced back to his childhood, growing up with two relations as priests (father and uncle). He developed the need to express himself and designs in a figurative appearance. Also, for John Djisenu the smaller the budget, the more creative he is required to design and construct a scenic locale appropriate for the production and appeals to the audience without costing a fortune. Additionally, Johnson Edu’s childhood introduction to art at Rev. John Teye Memorial School boosted his interest in fine arts, hence his affection to scenic design and construction.

A clear motivation could be identifying how the lives of these scenic designers reflect in their creativity. Creativity is evident in their works and forms the basis for their scenic design achievements. These are explained under the documentation of their design philosophies and style.

The second objective set out “to identify the philosophies and styles of some Ghanaian scenic designers”. These four scenic designers have employed unique philosophies and styles in their various works and provided great difference in the stage production. This objective expresses the scenic designers design philosophy and style as set of norms and
procedures which the scenic designers use to meet the conditions of a stage production and the functionality of their scenic structures.

(i) A total theatre designer forms the basis of John Djisenu’s design philosophy and style as a theatre practitioner who designs the scenic locale, light and costume for a production and can also direct when necessary. Also, to him every theatre practitioner should adhere strictly to the script, and so his scenic designs are based on a production concept that is mostly generated by the director from the script. Additionally, he aims to create a stage picture (which he terms a near-symmetry); upholding a very well balanced stage picture in colour and structure. For the reason that, he tends to see the performers and the scenic design as a ‘melting architecture’. Finally, he uses artistic restraint which does not hinder his creativity. Even with the economy of expression obstruction, he designs appropriate and attractive scenic locales, costume and lights for his productions with minimum budget.

(ii) “Scenic design for any production must be realistic”, this is Johnson Edu’s first design philosophy and style. He considers realistic scenery because it represents aspects of natural life, especially social habitual activities. Further, he prefers to design and construct with an asymmetrical balance concepts. To create variation and become autonomous from the usual symmetry scenic structure, he practices the asymmetry balance concept because it appears interesting and thought-provoking. Finally, he considers his job as the scenic designer to be over only when the production ends; the design is never finished even during the production until the production is over. Some additional modifications to the scenery become necessary during emergencies. These unexpected challenge to productions he addressees as an ‘unfinished business’.
(iii) The use of less bulky scenery (backdrop) is David Amoo’s central model for stage performances rooted in his design philosophies and styles. Revolting against elaborate and heavy scenic structures, he aims to make a difference by making his scenic locales compact and portable. Therefore, he encourages the use of backdrops, since they are more mobile scenic structures and can be made from lighter materials. Furthermore, Amoo desires the representative concept of portraying an African theme in his scenic designs. He explains that, his appreciation of the world starts with the appreciation of himself and his surroundings which characterizes or connects him with his home. Thus, his aim is to show more African locales in his scenic designs. Finally, symbolic appearances of Amoo’s scenic locales appeals to many because he incorporates the design with African themes. Significantly to him, the need to present a symbolic appearance in his designs forms a communication between him, the performers and the audience.

(iv) Prince Kojo-Hilton sets out to explore and study the other designing concepts for stage productions. He discovers what he calls the contemporary Ghanaian scenic design that forms the core element in his design philosophies and styles. He believes design is ever changing and is based on the period the design is situated. Therefore, in portraying a contemporary scenic design, he makes reference to popular design concepts and materials that are currently used. His contemporary scenic designs, basically not focus on a single point of view, but cover varied purposes and aims to rejuvenate the world of the production. Further, Kojo-Hilton sets out to define and create intricate scenic locales for stage performances with virtual screens. These form an integration of computer-generated visuals that technically aid the representations of scenic background for progression during the production. Finally, he designs with a national identity in mind. To preserve cultural artefacts, Kojo-Hilton uses his scenic designs to provide important
insights into past and existing national landmarks, helping the audiences to understand how others have lived and what they value.

The third objective is “to find out the extent Ghanaian scenic designers work with indigenous or foreign concepts”. The portrayal of indigenous or foreign concepts in their scenic designs has been very important for this research. The data gathered during the interview proved that some of the findings based on the notion that some internal or external influences on the scenic designers have an effect on the formation of his design concept during the early stages of design process. It was identified that this inspiration is unconscious or at most subconscious to the designer, which influences the scenic designer’s philosophy and style. As a result, a focus comprising of two complementary influences on design concept formulation was manipulated from the scenic designers in order to test the hypothesis that internal or external artistic values influence their design values. The findings suggest that two of the scenic designers (Djisenu and Amoo) had their indigenous preference as a controllable and recognizable element in their designs. Similarly, some external (foreign) factors also influenced the other two designers (Johnson and Kojo-Hilton). As a result, this study is considered as a path to uncover more of the influential factors on the scenic designer’s processes that result in the actualization of his designs. Thus, the scenic design from the design process is manipulated by other uncontrollable variables such as indigenous or foreign concepts.

(i) The indigenous concepts are the scenic designer’s own principles and values, which act as inspirations on their scenic designs and the aesthetical inclinations they bring. They are daily activities, cultural attachments, ceremonies and social upbringing of the scenic designer. The impact of David Amoo and John Djisenu’s design concepts with preferences to their indigenous ideas and values to their scenic design impacts their
creativity. Aspects of their designs, particularly during the concept generation stage, are emphasized in the study as significant to this objective. They also argued that the combination of their design philosophies and styles are based on influences from their indigenous backgrounds that have benefited their scenic designs and creativity.

(ii) The discovery and realization of Johnson and Kojo-Hilton’s philosophies and styles through their design process in achieving their scenic designs is exclusively controlled by influences of foreign concepts. These concepts known to be physical conditions such as structural strength, material properties or production constraints, among others affect the outcome of their scenic designs. Similarly, their works appears to be influenced by unknown and hard-to-manage factors, such as the other cultures and values, foreign exposure, sense of connection with the international scenic designs, sentiments for universal materials, varied aesthetic preferences and other non-physical features. This concludes and suggests that their scenic design are the manifestation of ideas that are both controllable or uncontrollable, known and unknown, fresh or ancient which are not native.

The four scenic designers in focus have more than ten years experience in practice which confirms, with evidence, in their design philosophies and styles in various modern stage productions. The sequence and working methods of each scenic designer varies, but the fundamental tasks of problem identification, mechanical drawings, testing and evaluation, generally transpired in similar techniques with all the designers. This phase of their designing is not only a dramatic occurrence but also observable in design execution in the allied fields of architecture, graphic design, and film production among others. Scenic design developed by becoming less like the visual arts of painting and drawing and more like the applied arts of structural design and manufacturing.
Scenic design in Ghana has been a progression that has led to many discoveries. An example is the use of painted canvas that has evolved to wooden structures and currently electronic screens. The design on the performance space becomes the series of choices that define the world of the performance made by the scenic designer. Every scenic designer’s choice is not judged inherently worthy or valid, but rather the designer must assess whether during the performance his or her design forms a unified whole; a connection that creates resonance with the audience and the performance.

As Djisenu, Amoo, Johnson and Kojo-Hilton use their individual design philosophies and style, they learn what best illuminate and support their concepts of the performance. Their design philosophies and styles, constitutes their various distinctive qualities which can be related to most of their scenic designs. The philosophies and styles exhibited by these designers enhance their artistic theory in several ways on different performance spaces in Ghana. Most of the methods used by them serve as identification and the solution to a problem of a particular stage performances. They appear to be simple but broad. They also point towards the trends and various key aspects of Ghana’s design developmental phases. For the researcher, design in the long run is essentially useful; design philosophies and styles are based on the scenic designer’s discovery of new ways to make stage scenery useful, and in particular, relevant for interpreting scripts that support production concept.

### 5.2 Recommendations

I recommend that the university and more especially the Department of Theatre Arts stock its library with current books on scenic design and construction. As a departmental course and technical area, the study on scenic design and its relevance to the Ghanaian stage performances are unending, therefore, stringent measures should be taken to
upgrade knowledge and also keep students abreast of current trends and literatures in that regard. Basically, these issues must be resolved:

(i) Ghanaian Scenic designers should be encouraged to explore and experiment with new materials. The various Ghanaian art or design groups such as the Art Direction and Designers Guild (ADDG) and the Ghana Association of Visual Artist (GAVA) can annually organize regular workshops to educate the practitioners in the field about the prominence of their work.

(ii). The present enrolment of design students at School of Performing Arts (University of Ghana, Legon) has left nothing considerable to be desired; the student intake of the course Scenic Design and Construction on average has been approximately one is to ten directing students. Performing arts institutions should introduce and encourage students to take up design courses at their early stage.

(iii) The various computer assisted design software’s (such as AutoCAD, Maya and Rhino V5) have made the traditional way of designing models for scenic locales almost outmoded. It is for this reason that, I recommend scenic designers get acquaintance with new developments to satisfy international standards.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Pictures from the Interview Sessions

An interview with David Amoo at the design room, School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. (2017)

Photo credit: Neequaye Nash Niikoi

An interview with John Djisenu at his office, School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. (2017)

Photo credit: Neequaye Nash Niikoi

The researcher was interviewing Micheal Amon-Kwao at his residence, Dzorwulu, Accra. (2017)

Photo credit: Nash Neequaye
An interview with Prince Kojo Hilton at his residence, Dansoman, Accra. (2017)
Photo credit: Neequaye Nash Niikoi

An interview with Sandy Arkhurst, at the School of Performing Arts car park, University of Ghana, Legon. (2017)
Photo credit: Neequaye Nash Niikoi

Photo credit: Neequaye Nash Niikoi
Appendix B: Interviews and Discussion Guide

Topic: Scenic Design in Ghana: Philosophies and Styles of some designers.

Session A: Interview with some theatre specialists.

1. What is your name and occupation?
2. What is your perception of scenic designing in Ghana?
3. Please, inform me of your knowledge about the history of scenic design in Ghana?
4. How many scenic designers have you encountered, their names and influence of work on you?
5. Do you have any significant knowledge about the four scenic designers; John Djsineu, David Amoo, Edu Johnson and Prince Kojo-Hilton?
6. Have you observed the different developmental stages of scenic designing in Ghana?

Session B: Interview with the four scenic designers for this study.

Part One: About the life of the scenic designer.

1. What is your first and last name?
2. What is your date of birth?
3. Any important early experiences which contributed to your personality?
4. What schools did you attend and its location? Any interesting information on your artistic works?
5. Current occupation and when did you enter the field of designing?
6. Have you receive any awards or recognition?
Part Two: About the design Philosophy and Styles of the scenic designer.

1. What are your general knowledge and perception about designing?
2. What is scenic designing?
3. Please, inform me of your knowledge about the history of scenic design in Ghana?
4. What are your major design works?
5. How best do you work with indigenous or foreign concepts when designing?
6. What are your design Philosophy and Styles?
7. What motivated your choice of design Philosophy and Styles?
8. How many scenic designers have you encountered, their names and influence on you?
9. How have you contributed to the development of scenic design in Ghana?
10. Any suggestions or recommendation for this study?