UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND THE MANAGEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL THEATRES IN GHANA, ABIBIGROMMA AS A CASE STUDY

BY

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPHIL THEATRE ARTS DEGREE.

JULY 2014
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research, and that no part of it has been presented elsewhere with all references dully acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

To Happy and the Boys
ABSTRACT

This study is an exploration of the directorial and managerial styles as well as the operational challenges of resident theatres in Ghana, with a focus on Abibigromma, the resident theatre company of the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon, as case study for the research. The goal of the study is to provide an alternative to the dual functions of the Artistic Director; being both artistic and managerial. The study exposes structural and organisational deficits in Abibigromma’s operations as a non-profit professional theatre and provides alternative measures to ameliorate them.

Using the qualitative approach, both structured and unstructured interviews were conducted, involving one hundred and sixty three (163) respondents, current and past stakeholders in the Ghanaian theatrical context. There was also a Focus Group Discussion among members of Abibigromma, and the researcher was a Participant-Observer, having directed two plays in Abibigromma.

Findings indicate that the overriding objectives of research, performance and experimentation of Ghanaian and African Art forms are still relevant. However, these objectives are not fully pursued due to directorial and managerial shortcomings. A structural review and an organisational reconstruction of the entire operations of Abibigromma by the School of Performing Arts in particular, and the University in general, are recommended.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My choice of topic, explored in this study, stemmed from a personal interest in theatre. Writing this thesis had been one of the most challenging endeavours due to the unforeseen obstacles I had to overcome. This notwithstanding, it was a very rewarding experience for my academic career. As I reflect on this journey, I must first acknowledge God, who granted me faith, to keep keeping on, in the face of adversities. Travelling this path, many were those who silently kept faith with me and believed in my ability to finish.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION ..........................................................................................i</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION ...........................................................................................ii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT ...............................................................................................iii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..................................................................................iv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS ..................................................................................v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES ......................................................................................xi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES ..................................................................................xii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER ONE ......................................................................................1

INTRODUCTION ..........................................................................................1

1.1 Introduction ..........................................................................................1

1.2 Background to the Study .........................................................................1

1.3 Statement of the Problem .........................................................................7

1.4 Purpose of the Study ...............................................................................8

1.5 Research Related Questions .....................................................................9

1.6 Objectives of the Study ..........................................................................9

1.7 Justification of the Objectives ...............................................................10

1.8 Significance of the Study .......................................................................10

1.9 Scope and Limitation .............................................................................11

1.10 Methodology .........................................................................................11

1.10.1 Data Collection and Analysis ..........................................................12
2.3.1 Concert/Popular Theatre ................................................................. 29
2.3.2 Institutional Theatres ........................................................................... 35

2.4 Origin and Purpose of School of Performing Arts (SPA) ..................... 41
2.5.1 Directorial Objectives ......................................................................... 47
2.5.2 Efua Theodora Sutherland (1924-1996) ................................................ 52
2.5.3 Martin Owusu ....................................................................................... 55
2.5.4 Mohammed Ben Abdallah ................................................................. 57
2.5.5 Yaw Asare ........................................................................................... 59
2.5.6 Kodjo Mawugbe. .................................................................................. 61

2.6 The Management of Abibigromma as a Professional Theatre ............. 64

CHAPTER THREE ......................................................................................... 70

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA: THEATRES UNDER NATIONAL COMISSION ON CULTURE (NCC), INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES (IAS); AND ROVERMAN PRODUCTION ................................................. 70

3.1 Introduction ............................................................................................... 70

3.2 Professional Theatres of the National Theatre ....................................... 70
3.2.1 The National Theatre Players .............................................................. 81
3.2.2 The Ghana Dance Company ............................................................... 82
3.2.3 The National Symphony Orchestra .................................................... 82
3.2.4 The Ghana Dance Ensemble ............................................................... 83
3.2.5 Commercial Theatre in Ghana Today ................................................ 85
CHAPTER FOUR .......................................................................................................... 90

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS ON ABIBIGROMMA, THE CASE STUDY ........................................................................................................................... 90

4.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 90

4.2 The Resident Theatres: (Ghana Repertory Theatre) ................................................ 90

4.2.1 Abibigromma ..................................................................................................... 91

4.3 Production of The Gods Are Not to Blame............................................................. 108

4.3.1 Challenges ....................................................................................................... 108

4.4 Production of In the Chest of a Woman ................................................................. 110

4.4.1 The Presentation of In the Chest of a Woman, Efua Sutherland Drama Studio .................................................................................................................................. 118

4.4.2 Performance and Educational Tour of the Upper West Region ...................... 120

4.4.3 Schools Covered in the Upper West Region ................................................... 123

4.4.4 Challenges ....................................................................................................... 124

4.5 Focus Group Discussion (FGD), 25th April, 2011. ............................................... 131

4.6 Discussion of Results ............................................................................................. 136

4.6.1 Theatre Infrastructure of Abibigromma .......................................................... 136

4.6.2 Lighting and Sound Equipment ....................................................................... 139

4.6.3 Drums and other Musical Instruments ............................................................. 139

4.6.4 Props and Costume .......................................................................................... 140

4.6.5 Transport .......................................................................................................... 141

4.7 Staffing ................................................................................................................... 142

4.8 Staffing Level ......................................................................................................... 143
4.8.1 Directorial and Managerial style ................................................................. 144
4.8.2 The Need for a Management Committee ..................................................... 147
4.8.3 The Relevance of Objectives and Scope of Work ......................................... 149
4.8.4 Reorientation and Documentation ............................................................... 150
4.8.5 Artistic Impact ............................................................................................. 152
4.8.6 Level of Visibility ....................................................................................... 153
4.8.7 The Level of Training .................................................................................. 154
4.8.8 Research and Experiments .......................................................................... 155
4.8.9 Retaining of Members ................................................................................ 155
4.8.10 Working Environment .............................................................................. 156
4.8.11 Resources and Funding ............................................................................. 157
4.8.12 Staffing Level ............................................................................................ 159

CHAPTER FIVE .................................................................................................. 160
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ....................................................... 160
5.1 Introduction .................................................................................................... 160
5.2 Re-statement of Purpose of Study ................................................................. 160
5.3 Recommendations ......................................................................................... 165
5.3.1 The need for a new Directorial and Management model ......................... 166
5.3.3 The Appointment of a Business Manager .................................................. 167
5.3.4 Appointments ............................................................................................ 167
5.3.5 Employment Drive .................................................................................... 167
5.3.6 Affiliations ................................................................................................. 168
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Staffing Levels of Abibigromma.................................................................143
LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1: The researcher explains a point to a section of musicians during a rehearsal ........................................................................................................ 112
Fig. 2: The researcher demonstrating a movement to cast at rehearsal .............. 113
Fig. 3: The researcher giving blocking to cast at rehearsal ......................................... 114
Fig. 4: A section of the cast arriving for a performance at KIMBU ......................... 116
Fig. 5: A scene from In the Chest of a Woman at KIMBU ........................................ 117
Fig. 6: A scene from In the Chest of a Woman at Efua Sutherland Drama Studio ................................................................. 119
Fig. 7: A scene from In the Chest of a Woman at Tupaso SHS, Wa ....................... 122
Fig. 8: A scene from In the Chest of a Woman at Tupaso with section of the students ................................................................. 123
Fig. 9: Some students of UDS Wa Campus and researcher after a performance ...... 124
Fig. 10: A section of students of St. Francis of Assisi SHS ..................................... 125
Fig. 11: The researcher playing a female character at Ullo SHS ............................... 129
Fig. 12: The front view of the structure that houses Abibigromma ......................... 136
Fig. 13: Part of the yard and shed that house Abibigromma ................................. 137
Fig. 14: Part of the rehearsal space with props and flats ........................................ 138
Fig. 15: Back of the rehearsal space where some felts are kept .............................. 139
Fig. 16: Sets of drums and doors leading to the changing rooms ............................. 140
Fig. 17: The Abibigromma bus and the front view of the rehearsal space .............. 141
Fig. 18: The Abibigromma truck ............................................................................. 142
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The chapter one of this study contains the general introduction of the research. It is made up of Background to the Study, the Statement of the Problem, Purpose of Study, and Related Research Questions. These are followed by the Objectives of the Study, Justification of Objectives, and the Significance of the Study. The next part deals with the Scope and Limitations, Methodology and Research Plan of Study. The Profile of Abibigromma, the case study of the research forms the final portion of the chapter.

1.2 Background to the Study

The significance of theatre wherever it exists cannot be overemphasized since its primary role of reflecting life is so crucial to humanity.\textsuperscript{1} As a distinct and unique art form, it has played significant role in shaping society as well as mirroring the philosophy of the particular society within which it exists. It is universal because there is always an impulse towards it in every society, and it is also transitory in the sense that it presents events that occur through time. It also combines all the elements of art, namely audience, performers, directors, playwrights, viewpoints, objectives and environment to achieve its purpose. This distinctive and unique aspect of theatre sets it aside as a distinct art form.\textsuperscript{2}

Over the years many attempts have been made by Ghanaian dramatists to establish theatre that reflects the socio-cultural beliefs of Ghana. At the forefront of such attempts include pioneers such as Kobina Sekyi, J.B. Danquah, and Rev. F.K. Fia wo, all of whom have contributed their quota to the development of theatre. Their literary works are used as canons to debate political, social and moral issues. These literary works include

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid} p.1
Kobina Sekyi’s *The Blinkards* (1920), J.B. Danquah’s *The Third Woman* (1915) and Rev. Fiawo’s *The Fifth Landing Stage* (1925).[^3]

In 1955, the Ministry of Education and Culture spearheaded the establishment of the National Theatre Movement (NTM), which was charged with the responsibility of drawing a cultural policy which would articulate the need for the establishment of theatre groups. The NTM helped in the development of professionals such as playwrights and directors. These efforts were complemented by hard working and dynamic Efua Sutherland, who was a theatre pioneer whose best known works include *Foriwa* (1962), *Edufa* (1967), and *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975).

Sutherland founded several experimental theatre groups and a writer’s workshop in Accra. In 1958, she created the Experimental Theatre Company. Two years later, with funding from the Arts Council of Ghana and the Rockefeller Foundation in the U. S., she became the moving force behind the Ghana Drama Studio, a courtyard theatre with a proscenium stage on one end.[^4] It flourished until 1990, when the building was demolished to pave way for a new theatre, which is now known as the National Theatre (NT). However, a replica of the Drama Studio was built which is now known as the Efua Sutherland Drama Studio, situated at Legon for the School of Performing Arts (SPA). She also founded the Atwia Experimental Community Theatre, Kusum Agoromba (Kusum Players), a touring theatre group which performed in schools, churches, and training colleges. Sutherland again provided directorial support for Workers Brigade Concert Party.[^5]

One important and powerful legacy of the NTM was the birth of a number of highly sensitised theatre personnel who became the political barometers that used their theatrical presentations or productions to balance political intentions and ideals with popular

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thinking, ideas and sensitivity to the Nation.\textsuperscript{6} These include, dramatists like Mohammed Ben Abdallah, Asiedu Yirenkyi, Martin Owusu, Sandy Arkhurst, George Andoh Wilson and Evans Omar Hunter of 1970s and 1980s.

Following the launch of the Economic Recovery Programme in 1983 by the Provisional National Defence Council, a number of theatre companies sprang up. These included The Talent Theatre Company, Audience Awareness, Theatre Mirrors and Catholic Youth Organisation Drama Group. Theatre experienced a boost at this time with a series of performances.

The organisation and management of theatres have undergone remarkable transformation over the years, from being amateurish to professional and commercial business concerns. The theatre today exists on the stage in multimillion-dollar theatres of the world’s great cities as well as on the simpler stages at schools and in community. As Cohen (2000) says;

\begin{quote}
We cannot evaluate our current theatre with the same objectivity that we can the theatre of the past, even the recent past. Theatre is a business as well as an art, and the flurry of promotion, publicity, and puffery that surrounds each current theatrical success makes a cool perspective difficult.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

The implication, therefore, is that theatre has taken a new dimension and we cannot view it now only as an art form but also as a business. In other words, theatre is now a principal occupation, aside being a source of entertainment. “It is a vocation for professionals and an avocation for amateurs, yet either way, theatre is work.”\textsuperscript{8} It is that body of artistic work in which work and art, improvisation and performance become a cohesive unit. Thus, the work of the director as the manager in bringing these elements together by controlling and developing all artistic elements and investing them with unified vision,

\textsuperscript{7} Cohen, Robert. Theatre, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed. p. 12.
\textsuperscript{8} Robert Cohen. Theatre, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed. p. 13.
coordinating and supervising the entire business of theatre to attain economic and artistic excellence is very crucial.

Nwamuo (2003) agrees that the concept of theatre management is not a new phenomenon and states;

The emerging profession of Theatre Administration is not as new as it appears. It began when man decided to invite an audience, his neighbours, fellow villagers, and townsmen, members of his community, countrymen or tribesmen to watch his performances...\(^9\)

The above position lends credence to the fact that the existence of theatre is closely linked with the art of management.

The managerial practice of theatre in Ghana has taken diverse forms including amateurish and or limited commercial basis as well as governmental sponsorship. Yirenkyi (2000) writes;

Limited form of commercial theatre existed in the management practice of the Ghanaian theatre companies. Concert [parties] applies limited commercial practice in the same sense that their actors are semi professional theatre workers but the commercial motives dominate their operations.\(^10\)

Yirenkyi further points out that, Sutherland in the 1970 and 80s made the effort to fully transform Kusum Agoromba to a full-time professional theatre, but her dream was not fully realised. The Workers Brigade Concert Party formed under the patronage of Kwame Nkrumah, was an example of direct governmental sponsorship of theatre.

For the purpose of this work, professional theatre will refer to all theatrical operations including inputs, productivity and sound business practices and all such theatrical activities directed at achieving the highest artistic and economic objectives in theatre production. It involves personnel who are engaged in theatrical activities as a full-time profession, earning their livelihood from its practice. Falling under this category will be

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\(^10\) Yirenkyi Asiedu. *Commercialisation of Theatre the Ghanaian Experience.* p.70.
the professional theatres attached to the National Commission on Culture (NCC) and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts; and the resident performing groups of the University of Ghana, being Abibigromma and Ghana Dance Ensemble. However, the searchlight will be focused on Abibigromma resident theatre of SPA, University of Ghana, Legon.

The hallmark of any professional theatre should be excellence in all of its objectives, be it artistic, economic, or social. However, these objectives can only be realised when the best management structures exist. There is always the need for combining artistic strategies with good and viable management skills, and the individual with this responsibility is the artistic director who must harness the resources available to him, both human and material, to attain excellence.

Although one can separate the artistic from the managerial functions of the director, as may be the case with some theatres, no clear line of demarcation exists between the two. A strong element of the manager is needed in the execution of all artistic decisions, and managerial abilities are always needed in the director’s work with people. Directors have to be both artists and managers and, as managers, must have high levels of strategic and critical thinking skills in order to operate in the complex environment of limited resources. Yirenkyi (2000) seems to agree with the above position when he opines:

> Theatre practice and management, all over the world, are designed to achieve objectives set by the society. Over the years, theatre practice has been defined for its utilitarian and social or functional role... Theatres, like all other institutions must adjust and face the new challenges open to them...  

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Though, in some cases, the artistic and the managerial duties are separated, most professional theatres in Ghana, as is the case with Abibigromma, have artistic directors who are also responsible for both the managerial and administrative functions.

It is worthy to note that, in recent times there has been an upsurge in theatrical patronage in Ghana especially with the productions of Roverman Productions under the directorship of Ebo Whyte. With sponsorship from some corporate bodies and collaboration with the National Theatre (NT), he has been able to mobilise appreciable audience for his productions. This production house is however not a full time-professional theatre as the artistes work on part-time basis. It can therefore be seen as a vibrant commercial theatre in the Ghanaian context.

The story is different when it comes to audience participation in the productions of the professional theatres, especially Abibigromma. Productions mounted both at the Drama Studio and NT recently failed to attract the desired audience because of poor publicity. The decline in the patronage of these theatrical productions has become an issue of great concern to stakeholders.

There is also a trend of Ghanaian professional stage artistes in general and Abibigromma in particular, abandoning the stage for the screen. Others are also taking up teaching jobs in other institutions rather than the SPA. It is, therefore, imperative that a critical assessment is made of Abibigromma as a professional theatre, in order to identify any shortcoming in terms of managerial and directorial arrangements that might be working against the group. It will also ascertain whether there is the need for an overhaul of the existing structures in Abibigromma.

In this research, the professional theatre that will be studied is Abibigromma Theatre Company, the resident theatre of SPA, University of Ghana, Legon.
1.3 Statement of the Problem

Some educational institutions especially in Africa, that offer courses in theatre arts have resident theatre troupes attached to them where talented graduates are employed and groomed, for the benefit of students and the general public. It also serves as a platform for transforming research in oral traditions into a literary art for the stage. Artistes in these theatres sometimes constitute the core of the teaching staff in these institutions. These theatres also serve as the yard-stick in measuring artistic excellence and professionalism.

Theatre practice has the potential of thriving in educational institutions basically due to the ready audience the campuses offer. Attracting audience for productions in SPA should not be a problem. It is curious, therefore, to note that Abibigromma is failing in recent times to attract audience for their productions. As a resident theatre, it attracts talented and dedicated professionals from the SPA. Again, skilful artistes are employed to complement these graduates. However, it has become very difficult to retain these professionals who normally move on in search of greener pastures; some are now lecturers elsewhere.

In recent times the group has come under some sort of criticism from the media. Some of the critics challenge the artistic competence of members and call for its overhaul. Some question the academic qualification of members. Michael Akenoo, in an article in the Ghanaian Times (16, March 2010, p. 16) attributes Abibigromma’s operational and artistic challenges to the breaking of the group into two and lack of sound training for its present members. This assessment may seem farfetched, if one takes a casual look at the composition of the group, in terms of training and academic qualifications. One can, therefore, ask if these personnel are being managed to give off their best. Furthermore, one also needs to find out if the conditions under which the troupe operates are conducive? What management arrangement exists and how are the managers and in this
case the Artistic Directors appointed as well as the professional criteria applied in the selection of Artistic Directors. Again, why does the group continue to lose very talented and highly qualified personnel? What is the underpinning factor for the decline in the quality of productions, as well as the low patronage of the group’s productions, both by students and the general public?

As mentioned earlier on, the management of a theatre of any kind can be a very complex task and it requires good managerial and directorial structures to ensure that the objectives of the theatre are achieved. Artistic Directors require professional skills to manage theatre. Abibigromma as a non-profit making organisation exists for research and experimentation to promote African theatre, as envisaged by the founding fathers of the group. One may, then ask, whether the directorial and managerial strategies being applied in Abibigromma are helping to achieve its core mandate of research and experimentation.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to find out:

- If the managerial and the directorial arrangements being adopted in Abibigromma are yielding the envisaged results;
- If the existing mode of selection of artistic directors is helpful;
- The best way by which faculty can utilize the rich experience of Abibigromma to the benefit of students;
- The visibility of Abibigromma among students;
- Whether the manpower capacity of Abibigromma is sufficient;
- The technical challenges confronting the group;
- Whether the infrastructural arrangements are conducive and adequate to promote efficiency
1.5 Research Related Questions

The following are the research related questions that this study will be exploring:

- Is the current directorial and managerial style of Abibigromma achieving the objectives of setting up the group?
- What are the criteria for selecting artistic directors?
- Is there a need for reorientation?
- What have been the artistic contributions of directors?
- Is the level of education of the members of the group adequate for membership of resident theatre company of a University?
- Are the research and the experimental objectives of the group being achieved?
- Is the physical environment the group operates in appropriate and conducive?
- Is the group well resourced to meet its financial demands for putting up large-scale productions?

1.6 Objectives of the Study

The following are the intended objectives of this research:

- To come out with a directorial and managerial module that will lead to the repositioning of Abibigromma as a research and experimental wing of SPA;
- To come out with ideas on alternative means of funding to supplement the existing sources of income;
- Use the findings of the study as a basis for the formation of a management committee to act as a supervisory body;
• Capture the past and present state of Abibigromma.

1.7 Justification of the Objectives

An organisational analysis raises provocative questions, illuminates problems, and many times, unveils opportunities that may have eluded the organisation. Most important, a rigorous, objective analysis conducted at regular intervals can help ensure that an organisation remains faithful to its mission.

Secondly, the evaluation of an establishment captures the state of that organisation at a particular moment in time. This situational analysis may include needs assessment and management audit, which will help take stock of what the entity is doing relative to its past performance. Through this analysis, an organisation evaluates its vulnerabilities and opportunities, examining how it works operationally within the context of its mission as well as internal and external environment.

The over thirty years of Abibigromma’s existence as a professional theatre organisation calls for a re-assessment of needs and a management audit, especially when it seems the group is perceived to be suffering from some directorial and managerial deficiencies as well as financial difficulties.

1.8 Significance of the Study

• The study could serve as guide for the selection of future artistic directors in Abibigromma;
• Findings may serve as basis for a number of strategic actions such as restructuring and expansion of the manpower capacity of the group;
• Findings could enable the company strategize to meet the prevailing needs of the stakeholders;
• Recommendations may help enhance the level of artistic professionalism in the group.

1.9 Scope and Limitation

This study focused on Abibigromma Theatre Company as a case study. It also explored the directorial and managerial structures that are in place in the resident theatres under the NCC with emphasis on the operational deficiencies in Abibigromma from 1991 to 2014. The study targeted stakeholders in Abibigromma, including founding members, past and present artistic directors of the various professional theatres, members of the group and students of SPA. Other stakeholders such as theatre practitioners who have a bearing on the topic under discussion were also involved.

This study was conducted within the geographical location of the Greater Accra Region where the professional theatres considered are located, and specifically, Legon where Abibigromma is situated.

1.10 Methodology

The study primarily used the qualitative research method by employing the case study design. The case study, Abibigromma, was evaluated using descriptions and explanations of the phenomenon under study. Data was also collated from both primary and secondary sources including official documents on the professional theatres under review.

The research also used purposive sampling, targeting stakeholders such as lecturers from SPA, artistic directors, and members of the group both past and present, actors, performing arts students, as well as theatre administrators. The snowball/chain method was used by selecting the respondents from the various groupings by interviewing them on their knowledge of the subject under discussion.
The researcher was a participant observer in Abibigromma while undertaking this study. The researcher also made use of Focus Group Discussion (FGG), within the case under study to solicit the views of members, to find out, first hand, the issues and challenges confronting the organisation.

The qualitative methods were most suitable for the purpose of this study. The particular approach was the phenomenological perspective, which is the exploration of an individual’s experience with a particular phenomenon. Abibigromma had been in existence since thirty years as the practical and research department of SPA. Yet, its relevance was challenged and stakeholders were questioning the artistic competence of members in spite of the membership of very experienced performing artistes. One therefore, could ask if all the factors necessary to promote excellence are in place and if Abibigromma is getting the needed support and attention from stakeholders. There was therefore, the need for a holistic organisational audit of the group. This study captured the state of affairs in Abibigromma, the past, present and the way forward from the perspective of members and other stakeholders.

1.10.1 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collected in the form of transcripts from interviews, documents and findings from observations were critically analysed and findings formed the basis for the discussion, recommendations and the conclusions drawn in the last chapter of this research.

The qualitative nature of the study allowed for the use of interpretive method in the collection of data. Data was collected through interviews and a focus group discussion was conducted with the case study of this work. This was to solicit responses on the purpose, the current state and future of Abibigromma. The researcher discussed experiences of artistic directors and other respondents, their challenges and how to improve upon the group’s artistic and economic output. The discussion of the findings
from respondents were analysed according to themes and patterns that emerged from interviews to ensure validity and credibility.

Documents, which were retrieved from various sources including the archives and the Registrars’ office of the University of Ghana, were analysed and documented which was the basis of the arguments advanced and the conclusions drawn.

1.10.2 Population

The targeted population of this study were stakeholders in the Ghanaian theatrical context. Specifically, it focused on performers, lecturers, artistic directors, theatre administrators, students and audiences found within the enclave of the performing arts.

1.10.3 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed in order to focus on the perspective of those who had been involved in the day-to-day activities of the theatre groups. For Abibigromma as the case study, it included members, past and present. Conscious effort had been made to explore individual experiences rather than generalisation. The research targeted all living artistic directors of Abibigromma and founding faculty members (13), Artistic and Deputy Directors of four resident theatre companies (8), the Director and Artistes of Roverman Production (15) and attendees of Roverman shows (50). The rest are students from SPA (47), performing artistes from Abibigromma (25) and other stakeholders in theatre (5). In all, 165 respondents were involved in the study.

1.10.4 Role of researcher

This research was inspired by the interest and the experience of the researcher as a performing artiste. Abibigromma as a viable professional theatre should position itself for the performers and other patrons to be able to derive the maximum benefits. It must be seen to be fulfilling its obligations as the laboratory and practical department which

12 Two Artistic Directors excused themselves due to ill health.
students and faculty, as well as the general public could take advantage of. Practitioners in the company should be accorded the maximum cooperation and recognition to give off their artistic best. These were some of the major driving forces behind this research. The researcher’s contribution to this work is deemed unique owing to his background and experience, which had equipped him to appreciate the problems to be investigated in this study which then, formed the basis of the ultimate results.

1.10.5 Participant Observer

The researcher sought permission from the then artistic director of Abibigromma, through the head of Theatre Arts Department, to undertake the research with the group. The Artistic Director, Akua Abloso agreed to allow the researcher to direct a major play with the group and also be involved in minimal administrative work. The researcher subsequently directed two plays with the group as a participant observer. These were, The God’s Are Not To Blame by Ola Rotimi and In The Chest of a Woman by Efo Kodjo Mawugbe, both of which were set texts for Senior High Schools. The God’s Are Not to Blame was performed at Krobo Girls’ Senior High School to mark their 50th Anniversary. In The Chest of a Woman was performed at the Drama Studio, as part of the activities used to mark the “Home Coming Celebration” of the University of Ghana, Legon. The researcher also took the group on an educational tour of the Upper West Region from 27th February to 11th March 2012.

1.10.6 Oral Interviews

The researcher approached respondents in their various capacities as theatre administrators, founding members of Abibigromma, Artistic Directors and members of Abibigromma as well as students, to grant him interviews and share their opinions on the issues raised by the researcher. The researcher used both structured and unstructured interview format in gathering information. The structured questions included those
mentioned under the research related questions. The unstructured questions were the
follow up questions based on the answers of the respondents. The respondents included
founding members, past and present Artistic Directors, theatre Managers/Administrators,
the Executive Director of the National Theatre and the Artistic Directors of professional
groups of the National Theatre. It also included lecturers and students in SPA, and
Directors of some commercial theatres.

When the researcher approached respondents to inform them about his intention to have
audience with them, after acquainting them with the focus and intent of the research, they
readily agreed and time was set for the interactions. Subsequently, they were able to give
detailed information. With respect to Abibigromma, they provided insight on how the
company was formed, the core mandate of the group, some of its achievements till date,
the challenges confronting it and how the group could be improved. They also touched on
some of the administrative lapses that had affected the full realisation of some of the
objectives of the group.

The researcher wishes to state that two former artistic directors, Asiedu Yirenkyi and
Mohammed Abdallah could not be interviewed on the grounds of ill health. Yirenkyi,
however, made available some of his unpublished papers on the topic under review.

The interviews took place in convenient locations chosen by participants. The length of
time the interviews lasted was dependent on the participants; from one and a half to two
hours. In the course of the interview, the researcher also elicited some of the more
specific answers pertaining to each participant. Additionally, issues important to
participants that were unrelated to the topics under consideration were also discussed.

Permission to record and jot down during the interview was obtained from each of the
participants. Transcription in detail followed immediately afterward to avoid potential
inaccuracies resulting from poor-quality of the audio tape recording, or in the event that
the tape recorder failed to function properly.

1.10.7 Focus Group Discussion

The researcher arranged with the Stage Manager of Abibigromma, for time to be allotted
for the group discussion. The afternoon section of April 17, 2012 was set aside for this
exercise. The meeting started at about 2.15 pm, with 19 members present out of the total
number of twenty-five. Those who were not present included the three administrative
staff and three artistes who were deliberately exempted by the researcher. The exclusion
of the administrative staff and the other three members was to enable the researcher have
separate interviews with them to ascertain the validity of the findings among the staff and
those who were separately interviewed. On 1st March 2014 the researcher met the group
as a follow up. The second meeting was to confirm or correct a compilation of
Abibigromma productions, which the researcher had done from piecing up information
gathered from handbills and members, past and present as well as his own experience of
over eight years with the group.

1.11 Description of Thesis Chapters

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one, the introduction, provides a broad
overview of the components of the proposed study. It includes the Background
information, Statement of the Problem, the Purpose, Objectives, and Significance of the
Study. It also outlined the Research Questions and Methodology utilised, as well as the
Profile of Abibigromma, the case study of this research.

Chapter two, devoted to Literature Review, is organised under five broad headings, which
review, published and unpublished materials relevant to the thesis. These were: The
Theoretical Overview of the Theatrical Context, followed by the organisation of
Professional Theatres. The next part deals with the Origin and Purpose of SPA. This is followed by Directorial Objectives and Artistic Directors in Ghanaian Theatre. The final discourse is on the Management of Abibigromma.

Chapter three is dedicated to presenting and discussing the resident professional theatres under the NCC and Institute of African Studies (IAS) as well as Roverman Production as a commercial theatre. Data was collected through interviews and observation, using interview as the method of inquiry to solicit verbal data. The collected data were transcribed and analysed to gain the perceptions and experiences of respondents, as related to the topic. Documented data obtained had also been transcribed analysed and presented in a narrative form.

Chapter four contains data and findings obtained through the field work involving Abibigromma, the case study. Data gathered through the documentations, interviews, observation and researcher’s participation as an observer are subjected to a thorough examination and presented to reveal the nature and state of affairs within Abibigromma.

Chapter five contains the conclusion and recommendations of this research. The first part deals with a summary and conclusion of this work. The final part provides recommendations based on findings of the research.

1.12 Profile of Abibigromma Theatre Company (The Case Study)

Abibigromma is the resident theatre of SPA. It was established in May 1983 and was to serve as a laboratory for performing artistes, and researchers as well as experimental wing of the School, which is dedicated to the promotion of African Theatre.

Abibigromma derives its name from two African words: Abibiman (Africa) and Agromma (Players). The name also contains the concept of Abibigoro, which closely translated
means, “African Theatre”. It is important to point out that the name Abibigromma is also used by the resident drama group at the NT also known as the National Theatre Players. This occurred as a result of the movement of some members of Abibigromma at Legon to the NT. However, for the purposes of this work, we shall refer to the resident group at Legon as Abibigromma and the group at NT as the National Theatre Players.

Abibigromma reflects a commitment to the creation of a modern African Theatre that draws from, and feeds on, the accumulated resources and heritage of oral and written performance literature of Africa.¹³

Abibigromma has travelled extensively in Africa and Europe to portray Ghana’s rich cultural heritage at international festivals, conferences and fairs, promoting cultural co-operations for development between Ghana and the world at large. This occurs as a result of the bilateral efforts between the University of Ghana and other institutions.

1.12.1 Mission

Abibigromma’s mission is to promote and research into the arts of Ghana and Africa. The group seeks to create and to present, in scripted and unscripted forms, the unique socio-cultural music, plays and dance inspired by the oral and written literatures of Ghana and Africa on stage.

1.12.2 Aims

• Among the aims of Abibigromma is to engage in research, performances and experimentation in Ghanaian and African art forms, paying due attention not only to their roots in society, but also to developments elsewhere in the world;
• To develop adequate professional attitudes, systems and techniques of professional theater management, and provide an adequate and effective outlet for the creativity of the professional staff of the SPA;

• To provide internship for the school with indication towards work in the theatre;

• To provide, through a program of constant performance, an artistic antenna for gauging the nation’s response to creative and cultural experiments, and feeding these responses back into the University, thereby enhancing the school’s capacity to respond to national and cultural needs;

• The group seeks to cultivate in the School, and other educational institutions, the kind of education that will harness the creativity and knowledge of people, to inspire them to look forward to a great future in theatre.

1.12.3 Administration

Headship of Abibigromma is by appointment from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, for a two-year term, renewable for another two-year term. The Artistic Director is answerable to the director of SPA. Currently, Kenn Kafui, a lecturer from the Music Department, is the Artistic Director, assisted by other professionals including:

• General Stage Manager,

• Costumier

• Public Relations’ Officer

• Administrative Assistant

• A Company of Performing Artistes
1.12.4 Engagement Opportunities

Abibigromma works with any institution or organization in order to arrive at an acceptable and meaningful production effort. It is possible to use its services to enhance the image of any institution; to launch, re-launch and market products. Abibigromma, through Theatre for Development (TfD), uses theatre in sensitisation programmes. It also creates and crafts unique dramatic improvisations to suit the institution’s needs.

1.12.5 Cultural Entertainment

The group also provides authentic traditional and exciting dances from all the regions of Ghana as well as Africa, such as musicals, dance-drama, choreographed and contemporary dance pieces and dramatic performances at functions namely congregations, organisational dinners, cocktails, conferences and summits, both local and international.

1.12.6 Educational Outreach Programmes

The company establishes links with other higher educational institutions, national and international organisations to contribute to the development of arts and culture, as well as reach out to basic and second cycle schools through theatre in order to:

- Enrich the cultural curriculum;
- Encourage the appreciation of literature texts;
- Stimulate awareness on the moral and educational value of traditional arts.

1.12.7 Learning and Research

Pupils and students who have some interest in participating in any of the groups’ dance, music or drama forms may find limited attachment opportunities.
1.12.8 Training

Abibigromma helps to prepare students and pupils, as well as churches in cultural displays for various occasions such as speech and prize giving days, as well as Christmas plays (nativity and passion.)

1.13 Conclusion

The success of any organisation and, for that matter, a theatre largely depends on the managerial and organisational structures, and how well a director is able to harness both material and human resources available to attain success. As a professional entity that is a model for others, Abibigromma is expected to be the yardstick for measuring excellence. For the professionalism and competence of the company to be maintained, there is the need for situational analysis.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The first part of chapter two provides a general theoretical overview of the theatrical context, the management and the organisation of professional theatres. The focus is on the Concert Party and Institutional Theatres. The next portion is on the historical overview of SPA. This is followed by directorial objectives of Artistic Directors in general and the contributions of theatre directors to theatre in Ghana. The Final portion looks at the management of Abibigromma.

2.2 The Theoretical Overview of the Theatrical Context

This part of the presentation includes a general discourse in theatre. It establishes the existence of theatre in Africa, pre-dating the period of colonialism. It also describes the context of professionalism, drawing on various examples within the sub region of West Africa in general, and Ghana, in particular.

Theatre is derived from the Greek word, ‘theatron’, meaning a seeing place. In this regard, theatre is a building or open space where dramatic performance or art is given, furnished with a stage for the actors, seats for audience. A place where dramatic events occur; a room furnished with demonstrating bench and tiers of seats, used for teaching and demonstrating the written dramatic literary of a country, period or person.

Burns (1973) looks at theatre purely from the psychological point of view when she describes it as an art in which it is possible to study the manifestations of the social values, forms and conventions of society and also the images of social reality which people of different kinds at times have constructed for themselves. From the above, one can look at theatre as an organised venture involving the practitioners and the consumers.
Beyond its practical and tangible identification as a building, which facilitates the realisation and performance of creative works like dance, drama and music as put forward by Cohen (2000), theatre also refers to a group of people, professionals or non-professionals coming together for the purpose of presenting a theatrical performance with the objective to entertain or educate. One can identify some key elements, namely, the physical environment, the building within which the performance takes place, the performance, the performers and the audience. In this work, however, we shall consider these two dimensions of theatre; one as the building and the environment where theatrical performances take place. Secondly as a convergence of personnel with the goal of putting up theatrical performances. It is important to note that the group of performers may either be amateurs or professionals; however, the focus of this study is on professional theatres.

Generally, different types of theatres exist and may have different organisational structures depending on the existing social and commercial issues. Langley (1980) mentions six main types of theatres namely, Stock Theatre, Commercial Theatre, College or Educational Theatre, Community or Amateur Theatre and Resident theatre.

For the purpose of this work, we shall regard a professional theatre as any artistic or theatrical endeavour, undertaken by trained and skilled personnel who derive their livelihood solely from such activities. In other words, professionalism derives from two things; artistic performance by trained and skilled artistes and when these artistes earn their living from their performances. Professional theatre by extension can also be referred to as commercial theatre. The expression “commercial theatre” refers to a theatre that is run professionally to maximise profit. Theatres found in educational institutions

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are part of the institutions\textsuperscript{15}, and function as professional theatres but not for profit purposes.

A professional theatre may be a profit making one or a non-profit making one. In a profit making theatre, all theatrical activities are aimed at maximizing profit. Remuneration of artistes and day-to-day running of the theatre is taken from gate proceeds and or sponsorship. In a non-profit theatre, the reimbursement of artistes and other auxiliary staff may not come from gate proceeds. The source of funding in a non-profit theatre may come from subsidies from government or other organisations that safeguard the continuous existence of that theatre. Abibigromma as a professional theatre of the SPA was structured as a non profit entity since the members, are not paid their salaries from the proceeds of their productions.

In the Ghanaian context, Asiedu (1999) identifies the following as the forms of theatre, which she traces, from pre-colonial days to the present: Traditional Story-telling, Concert Party or Popular Theatre, Theatre for Development (TfD) and Literary Theatre. Traditional theatre includes festivals, rituals and religious rites, story-telling, traditional dance and music. This form is found in the traditional domain and one feature of this form is that they are in the indigenous community and “highly participatory”. The Concert Party form is an indigenous form of literary theatre, which dates back to the early 1901. TfD also exists as literary theatre and is used for extensive communication purposes. Literary theatre is found in the written and documented artistic and literary works. We will in this work therefore, examine these forms of theatre, found in the Ghanaian theatrical context for the reason that, Abibigromma can be seen as the converging point of these forms. This is because it draws from, and feeds on, the dramatic elements, found in these forms of theatre in Ghana, to provide a total African theatre.

The contention as to whether theatre has been in existence before the inception of colonial governance has been a subject of many a scholarly discourse, with anthropologist either denying or proving the existence of what can be termed as African theatre. A closer look at the argument insisting on the non-existence of pre-colonial African theatre reveals that, most critics impose European conceptions of theatre on African theatre, as Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) intimate;

Criticism of African theatre continues to be largely circumscribed by western critics’ inability to comprehend or even, in some cases, to be willing to comprehend different sets of assumptions. Many such critics have also insisted, however inadvertently, that African drama be classified as contained, known entity that is ‘authentic’ or ‘pure’ according to a predetermined western definition of authenticity ...

Seidu Rashida (2012), attributes this tendency of Western criticism of theatre to what can be termed as colonial mentality and cited Asiedu’s assertion that colonial education has resulted in Africans juxtaposing Western examples and models on what is African, instead of looking within for models which can influence other cultures.

The above position is therefore, attributed to the effect of colonial rule, education and indoctrination which did not encourage the acceptance of traditional African practices as sources of African theatre. Agovi (1990) amply supports this and writes;

Under colonial rule, the non-recognition of the centrality of indigenous African Drama was inevitable. Doctrines of African inferiority and colonial assimilation policies reinforced the cultural isolation of the African past while it encourages a deliberate sense of repudiation of developed African heritages. Colonialism also attempted to consciously manipulate and shape the cultural consciousness of African people on Western lines through educational agencies.

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This assertion is upheld by Abdallah (1989), when he writes;

Colonialism consisted of the total denial of our history, the denigration of our system of values and the replacement of our essential religious, social, political and economic structures, carefully fashioned to ensure the perpetration of the subjugation of our people.

One cannot ignore though, that disparities may exist in form and again that, there are equally common elements associated with African and Western theatre as identified by Wilson and Goldfab (2000), when they draw a comparison between European and African traditional theatres that there is participation, imitation and enactment when leaders and their assistants performed assigned and pre-determined roles in ceremonies and these actions, are reminiscent of those of actors and actresses of dramatic presentations of scripted plays.

Frequently, the inappropriate use of terminology may be misleading in determining African theatre and this according to Kerr (1986) is problematic. Amponsah (2008) agrees with Kerr when he cites Ruth Finnegan (1970) who has asserted that, with a few possible exceptions, there is no tradition in Africa of artistic performances, which includes all the elements which might be accepted in a strict definition of drama.

I agree with Amponsah that limiting or confining African theatre to laid down principles of Western forms may be misleading since the uniqueness of theatre wherever it exists cannot be glossed over as Kerr emphasises;

It is not necessary to limit a study of African pre-colonial theatre to those examples, which fit western dramatic criteria. Even in the western theatre, twentieth century experimental trends such as narrative theatre, epic theatre, one actor theatre and theatre of cruelty point to the fruitfulness of breaking down those categories inherited from the era of bourgeois naturalism.
The argument therefore is that, considering the limitations imposed on African theatre by anthropologists, it is clear that there are enough theatrical elements associated with the social, cultural, and religious as well as communal practices of Africans that constitutes theatre. Banham et al support the above intimation, when they state, “The roots of theatre in Africa are ancient and complex and lie in areas of community festivals, seasonal rhythm and religious rituals as well as in the work of court jesters, travelling professionals, entertainers and story tellers.”

It is therefore, interesting to note that the very root of European theatre is itself imbedded in rituals and religious practices as has been said for African theatre. It is difficult then to assume that African theatre came into existence through colonialism. Again does it mean that it was colonisation that brought rituals and religious practices to Africa? The answer is not farfetched if one considers how Marsh Cassady (1997) describes theatre;

Theatre is imagination. It is emotion and intellect. It is art. It has form, but that form moves and changes as constantly as clouds... through theatre we gain enlightenment and bring order and change to our environment. Theatre embraces all the world’s cultures and perspectives, answers questions, predicts our tomorrows and mirrors our today.

We can then say that African theatre meets all the conditions set by Cassady in the sense that it is art, it has form, it moves and changes, it enlightens, it reflects culture, and social perspective and above all, it reflects the past present and future. That African theatre has gained recognition and acceptance as a distinct art form cannot be glossed over and Agovi (1991) puts it in perspective when he suggests that gradually it is coming to realisation in dramatic criticism in Africa that, contemporary theatre in Africa is firmly rooted in indigenous drama.

African theatre practitioners have demonstrated over the years that there is more than enough in traditional, cultural and social set up of Africa that can be explored, expanded and perfected to capture the past, improve the present and shape the future through theatre. In this regard, Femi Osofisan (2001) argues that, “...Africa, which has once been the cradle of civilisation, can still rise again to be a force to reckon with because Africa was once great and progressive; it was a place of enlightenment.”

Theatre in Africa has evolved over the years from community and amateurish presentations to professional productions. According to Banham and Wake (2001) such activities are found in Universities and colleges, community groups, radio and television throughout the African continent. Countries such as Nigeria, Gambia, Sierra Leone and Ghana in West Africa, Kenya and Uganda in East Africa are among the African countries making strides in contributing to African theatre from within the Universities. Behind this evolution of African theatre are pioneers such as Wole Soyinka, J P Clark, Ola Rotimi, Hubert Ogunde, Duro Lapido, Kola Ogunmola and Femi Osofisan, who have enriched the theatrical landscape of Nigeria. Sarif Easmon of Sierra Leon and in Ghana, Efua Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo and Joe De Graft were the pillars of theatre development. In East Africa, one can mention the names of James Ngugi (Ngugi Wa Thiongo), and Kenneth Watene of Uganda. We also have John Ruganda and Robert Serumaga who have also paid their dues in Kenya. What these dramatists sought to achieve is the creation of an African theatre, removed from the domain and restrictions of European theatre.

One important feature of African theatre therefore, is its distinctiveness. Though it has its roots firmly embedded in traditional performances, it does not however, limit itself to restrictions as can be found in European theatre. Banham and Wake (2001) again reiterate this supplanting of Western theatrical elements on African and point to the uniqueness of

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African theatre which does not restrict itself to rules prescribed by European and American theatre.

2.3 Organisation of Professional Theatres

This part of the presentation deals with the organisation of theatre in the professional vein. The discussion touches on the Concert Party genre and Institutional Theatres.

2.3.1 Concert/Popular Theatre

The organisation of theatre in Africa has undergone different phases. There has been direct Government support as was seen with the colonial system, when theatre was used as a tool to propagate Western ideals. In Nigeria for example, the Yoruba Travelling troupe under Hubert Ogunde enjoyed the support of the colonial authorities when it was used for propaganda and evangelism. However, when it became secular and nationalistic in orientation, it clashed with the colonial authority. One can therefore, argue that the organisation of theatre, especially popular theatre, developed outside the purview of Government during the colonial period. Theatre then had to be taken to villages and towns where there were available audiences because of lack of financial support. This was what has given birth to touring troupes within Africa. The point here is that for a long time now theatre in Africa has to grapple with funding and innovative ways have to be adopted to sustain it.

Theatres exist with different organisational structures depending on the purpose it is created to serve. As mentioned earlier, Langley (1980) identifies six main types of theatres. However, for the purpose of this research, we shall focus on college or educational theatres. Schools and Universities in Africa are finding outlets for vibrant theatrical innovations, by creating theatrical works for education and


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entertainment. These institutional theatres are professional in organisation and structure as can be found in Nigeria and Ghana.

The existence of professional theatre personnel in Africa is not in doubt as Banham and Wake (2001) mention, “professional actors in one sense of the word or another do exist in Africa.” Example of such professional troupes who embark on tours and put up performances are the Yoruba Travelling Troupes of Nigeria. Ayikoroma (2012) traces the origin of Yoruba travelling theatre to the Egungun masquerade. The performers known as Alarinjo, were all men composed of travelling performers. They wore masks as it happened in Egungun rites of the Yoruba and this influence the Yoruba travelling theatre, which was prevalent from 1950-1980. Chief Hubert Ogunde, who was sometimes referred to as the father of contemporary theatre in Nigeria was noted for the Alarinjo and Egungun tradition.

In Ghana and Nigeria again, concert parties were known to have professional performers embarking on extensive tours locally and to other neighbouring countries. Concert performers performed across borders, which gave room to cross-border borrowing of artistic ideas, as could be seen in the concert party genre where concert groups in Togo, were modelled after those of Ghana in the 1960s.

The Ghanaian concert party usually operated as a travelling troupe, a tradition of twentieth-century West Africa. They performed comic variety shows blending materials from American movies, Latin gramophone records, African American spirituals, Ghanaian asafo, and high-life songs. The performers’ costume and make up were similar to Al Jolson and Charlie Chaplin. (Cole, 2001, Barber et al, 1970) One important element Cole mentions about the concert party in terms of form is the fusion of the character of

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Ananse, a mythical trickster figure of Ghanaian story-telling genre. Baber et al (1997) also describe concert party as “a syncretic fusion of western and indigenous elements.” Sutherland as well describes it as “theatre which traces its origin to pre-independence Ghana, as a fusion of Western and indigenous elements.” One can therefore, identify a strong bond between the concert party theatre and the traditional African drama, in the element of oral presentation and the use of the local language as the medium of expression.

Concert was born out of small and semi-urban towns in Ghana, out of the need for avenues for recreational activities in the 1920s and becoming popular by 1940. These towns include Tarkwa, Aboso, and Axim in the Central Region especially Cape Coast where this genre was believed to have originated. Other towns including the cocoa growing towns such as Nsawam, in the Eastern Region became strong centres for the early concert theatre.

The originator of concert theatre in Ghana was Master Yalley in the 1920s when he performed to the educated elites, including Lawyers and other professionals of high standing. According to Agovi (1990), Yalley’s shows were tailored to comic acts of Al Johnson and skits from Charlie Charplin. In the 1930s, Yalley’s format was localised by Ishmael Johnson and the Two Bobs who took the performances to a wider and proletarian audience and performed in the vernacular.

Over the years, popular theatre has taken on new innovations. What began as a one-man skit to trios in the 1930s gradually gave way to performances with large cast with elaborate story lines. This development according to Baber, Collins and Ricard (1997),

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marks the beginning of a new format instigated by the famous concert comedian Ishmael Johnson (Bob), when popular concert party became accessible to ordinary people. Cole (2001) also indicates, the blackface and vaudeville components that were so common with the genre, ceased to dominate after 1950 as large casts replaced small trios.

By 1954, there were about 10 concert parties and for the first time in the history of Ghana a concert party union was formed under the name, Ghana National Entertainment Association of Ghana. The 1960s and 1970s were considered as the peak of concert party with as many as 200 concert parties in existence by 1973.27 It is again pertinent to mention that so powerful was the influence of the concert party that Kwame Nkrumah spearheaded the formation of the Workers’ Brigade Concert Party in the 1960s, with members on Government pay roll. This brought some changes to the composition of concert party. One main feature of the concert party was the use of female impersonators. However, with the inception of the Workers Brigade Concert Party, female actors were included.

Concert performers at the early stages were predominantly men. Indeed performers in general suffered rejection of a sort especially from their immediate families because, they felt concert acting was a ‘foolish’ occupation. Women associated with concert parties were also tagged as prostitutes (Cole 2000). Arkhurst also mentions; “Female actors were regarded as wayward and most parents would not encourage their daughters to pursue such a profession. The first few women who joined concert party were branded as prostitutes.”28

This misconception changed with time and female performers were accorded the right respect. However, it partly contributed to the use of female impersonators, which became

28 Interview with Sandy Arkurst. 14th March 2014.
an indispensable element in concert party. It also gave way to the rise of many stock characters, a novelty of the genre such as The Two Bobs and Their Carolina Girl in which Charles B. Horton was the female imposter.

The management and organisation of theatre in Ghana has taken different forms, ranging from state funding, individual and amateurish promotions to entrepreneurial and commercial organisations. Gibbs (2008) indicates that, down the years, the country has experienced the emergence of different kinds of theatre organisation. Some of these took the form of performances by expatriate groups who performed for charity. Another form of organisation was those who sponsored theatre for the love of arts and were not much interested in the aspect of making profit. Gibbs again refers to this category of promoters as Ghanaians for whom putting on a play was an act of love and of cultural self-assertion, who sought no financial reimbursement. Of this category, one can mention Efua Sutherland who expended a lot of energy in the organisation of theatre, not with the aim of making profit but for her love for theatre. Sutherland was the brain behind some of the theatre organisations like the Kusum Agoromba in post-independent Ghana. Arkhurst identifies with the above sentiment and states thus: “She did it for love, not for money.”

Yirenkyi (2000), also points to some of these individuals for whom the organisation of theatre was for the love of theatre. They include Kofi Portourphy, Evans Hunter and Effah Darttey who were instrumental in promoting theatre in the 1980s. The Theatre Mirrors and The Audience Awareness were promoted through these individuals.

Limited form of commercial theatre existed in the managerial practice of Ghanaian theatre companies, in the sense that their actors are semi-professional theatre workers but, the commercial motive dominates their operations. Cole (2001) agrees and submits that early concert party performers can be classified into two categories, namely; performers

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29 Sandy Arkhurst interview.
who are engaged as full time professionals and those who have full time jobs during the day and turn performers on weekends.

The concert party is a professionally organised theatre according to Barber et al, (1997). They point out that the first truly professional theatre in Ghana, where artist fully depended on their art for a living was the concert parties. It had a nucleus of founding members whilst other members were brought on board as the need arose; especially, the musicians who were normally referred to as ‘bandsmen’.

According to Collins (1994), concert parties sometimes had to rely on rich cocoa farmers who sponsored them. They performed for them and were mostly indebted to these benefactors. They also had to strategize, cashing in on traditional festivals and cocoa seasons. Concert parties planned their itinerary to coincide with festivals and cocoa seasons in the catchment areas, trekking from one town to another until the end of the season.30

The Jaguar Jokers for example, and for that matter other concert organisations, were run by an executive committee members who took decisions for the group. The committee administered the band’s business; hired, fired, and otherwise controlled the bandsmen; and decided on the itinerary. The bandsmen were paid a regular wage, and the executive members shared any profit left after all expenses must have been taken care of. The cost of the promoters sometimes took a toll on the total income of the groups and in order to cut down the cost of the promoters, some of the groups used their own promoters who booked the performance spaces and paid for posters and newspaper advertisements.

Currently, even though concert party exists in the rural communities, they are using the medium of television and have adopted a format that can be accommodated by the

30 Interview with John Collins.
television stations that give them airtime to perform to the audience. One of such attempts was the corporate sponsorship of concert party by Unilever Ghana Ltd. hosted by David Dontoh.\footnote{David Dontoh is the Artistic Director of Kozikozi Theatre Company in Accra.} This was however discontinued, and Dontoh attributed the discontinuation to the sponsors trying to ‘dictate’ the format of the genre, by eliminating the comic skits from the dramatic action, which did not go down well with the audience.

Society is dynamic and so is theatre, which reflects society. With changing social values, theatre must adjust itself to reflect these changes. There is, therefore, the need to find new ways of theatre management in Ghana, since it appears that Government subvention alone may not be sufficient for running professional theatres in Ghana.

\textbf{2.3.2 Institutional Theatres}

Over the years, different theatre groups have come into existence and are mostly functional in their composition. The functionality of African theatre accords it the ability to respond to the immediate needs and purpose for which they were formed. One can say that African theatre has evolved to become more assertive and very flexible in its composition and operations. As Banham says, it is more positive and more functional than European or American theatre,\footnote{Banham. \textit{African Theatre Today}. p.1.} responding to the needs of the community within which it exists, serving educational purposes; especially on campuses as well as providing a source of entertainment.

One significant contribution to the development of theatre in Africa is the emergence of professional resident companies in African Universities in countries like Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. This development can be taken to be sequel to earlier attempts to form amateur and semi-professional groups around universities and community groups as it happened in Makerere and Ibadan Universities. There were others like Soyinka’s Players.
of the Dawn and Orisun Theatre, which were constituted for specific productions. In Ghana, there were experimental theatres set up by Sutherland, Yirenkyi and Abdallah. These attempts have laid solid foundations or models on which the current University based companies have been established.

Banham (2001), maintains that Universities in West, East and Central Africa, now have professional theatre companies, not only with the sole aim of providing entertainment but also carry out research work for academia. Their aim is to promote African creative arts making it serve as a reference point for artistic excellence. In 1962, the University of Ibadan School of Drama (Department of Theatre Arts) initiated a degree course in drama, which collaborated with the Institute of African Studies, in researching into indigenous theatre forms and providing scripts and funding for productions. University of Ile-Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University under the pioneer leadership of Ola Rotimi, was able to establish a close bond with the Institute of African Studies, to conduct research into Nigerian cultures at the grass root level. Foloke Ogunleye, citing an interview conducted with Rotimi by Adeniyi Coker states that Rotimi undertook a lot of research at the grassroots level.33 Another University that promote research in the area of African culture is Ahmadu Bello University. Through the creation of centres devoted to cultural research, they provide dramatic and dance materials, which serve as resource for the performing groups.

With cultural centres providing resource materials for the performing arts, the 1980s saw the emergence of many institutional theatres in Nigeria. In the 1980s, the University of Ibadan set up the Uunibadan Performing Company, just as the University of Calabar Performing Company Cross River State also set up one. This was following the exploits

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of Wole Soyinka’s 1960 Masks and Bode Sowande’s Odu Themes, which were more or less private educational theatres.

The University of Port Harcourt Theatre was established in 1979, with Ola Rotimi as the first Artistic Director. It was at its peak in the 80s, putting up productions regularly within and outside the campus. Rotimi in fact, went on an extensive tour with his play *Hopes of the Living Dead*. Olu Obafemi founded Ajon Players in 1981 at the University of Ilorin, as a theatre laboratory that could harness theatrical potentials to create social change. Other theatre companies include the Samaru Theatre Project, which was started in 1976 at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria by a group known as ABU Collective. There is also Living Earth Nigeria Foundation, which carried out community theatre projects in collaboration with the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Calabar, by setting up community drama groups in many towns and villages.

Ayakoroma (2012) asserts that theatre practice is able to thrive in educational institutions basically because of the ready audience the campuses offer for productions. Banham and Wake (2001) further affirm the above position and cast a glance into the future relationship between the Universities and promotion of theatre that, the universities will remain in the forefront of theatre work in the years to come because they have the advantage of resources, finance and motivation. I agree with Ayakoroma and Banham et al in the sense that the Universities do not only have the resources, but also provide an audience base that is crucial to the existence of theatre. This has been demonstrated by the fact that looking at the professional theatres existing in Africa, the institutional theatres are dominant. In Nigeria for example, there are about forty Universities that offer theatre arts courses, using the platform of professional companies to enrich the theatrical
landscape.\textsuperscript{34} The Unibadan Masques, according to Lyndersay (2006), was able to mount an average of one production per month for two years (1974-1976)\textsuperscript{35}. This is demonstrative of the fact that with the right support, financial and logistics, theatre can be viable. The significance of the impact of the University based theatres is such that many theatre professionals have been produced over the years. Their works help enrich African theatre as referred to earlier.

Literary theatre in Ghana before independence is viewed as a legacy of the colonial Government. This is because post-independence theatre was dominated by Western form of theatre imposed on Ghanaians. The colonial Government encouraged plays that portray western ideals that serve their purpose. There were however, attempts by the forerunners of Ghanaian theatre to depart from western dictated forms as can be seen from the pioneering works of J. B. Danquah, Kobina Sekyi and Fiawo who made conscious effort to project issues associated with Ghana in their works. Angmor as cited by Seidu (2012), describes Danquah’s \textit{The Third Woman}, \textit{The Blinkards} by Sekyi and Fiawo’s \textit{The Fifth Landing Stage} as the seed of literary drama in Ghana.

With the attainment of independence and freedom in almost all facets of life, theatre practitioners were encouraged to create a theatre that will project the post-independent image of Ghana. The challenge then was how to create theatrical works that will reflect and promote African cultural values. It was this quest Agovi (1991) refers to as, “possibilities of liberating the African theatre from its fixation in European form”. The Government recognising its role in supporting the arts created an avenue to rediscover Ghanaian cultural identity. A ten-man Government Committee was appointed to

\textsuperscript{34}Ayakoroma, Barclays. Theatre Practice in Nigeria: To Be or Not to Be. \textit{National Association of Nigeria Theatre Practitioners}. p. 1.

formulate modalities towards a national theatre policy, thus setting the ball rolling for a cultural renaissance. Later, an Arts Council was set up with the responsibility of coming out with policies to establish the National Theatre Movement (NTM). The NTM was therefore, started in 1956 as a committee charged to develop theatre in Ghana. Among its aims were to ensure a theatre that had its roots firmly embedded in the true traditions. It was also to use modern trends in theatre for creative experiments. The movement was to progressively work towards the realisation of its objectives in phases.

The NTM therefore became the platform for the creation of works that portrayed post-independent Ghana and while at the same time, ensuring they were firmly rooted in the traditions of Ghana. This was the driving force behind pioneering works of Efua Sutherland, Joe De Graft and Ama Ata Aidoo. These pioneering dramatists, in response to the ideals of the NTM and the quest to create ‘authentic’ Ghanaian works, took inspiration from oral traditions, blending it with western formats and creating a hybrid of Western and African form. Banham et al (1994) point to this hybridised format when they mention in *The Cambridge Guide to African and Caribbean Theatre* that:

> The literary form that developed in the 1960s reflected in both content and from some Western models, but also showed a strong movement away from these, especially as theatre practice attempted to link the depiction of Ghanaian attitude to the sensibilities of the audiences.

The NTM was not without challenges and the objectives could not be realised in its entirety, after the first phase (10 years) of its implementation. Sutherland had cause to sound a word of caution, and raising issues bordering on creator-consumer independence and financing to stakeholders, when she assessed the impact of the first phase. The

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movement was also not without criticism, and critics argued that the policy stifled artistic creativity and did not promote the spirit of artistic independence. However, with the benefit of hindsight, one can say the NTM did indeed help lay a solid foundation for the development of indigenous Ghanaian, and for that matter, African theatre. It was started by Efua Sutherland in her creation of the *Anansegoro* (Ananse play), and later on replicated in similar or different forms by subsequent Ghanaian dramatists. Amponsah (2008) affirms this and states “It was after this bold and successful attempt by Sutherland, in a bid to create a kind of theatre for Ghana, which paved the way for other playwrights.”

Following the footsteps of the pioneers, dramatists who emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, followed or expanded the frontiers of *Anansegoro*, started by Sutherland and the subsequent advancement of the *Abibigoro* concept with Abdallah as its proponent. It is the *Abibigoro* concept that would become the driving force behind the formation of Abibigromma, as a group dedicated to promoting research into African theatre. Amponsah (2008), again mentions; “Almost all the noticeable, published and influential Ghanaian dramatists like Abdallah, Owusu and Yirenkyi, took up the legacy of Sutherland.”

It is evident then that Abdallah took Sutherland’s concept of *Anansegoro* a step further, by extending the Ghanaian experience to embrace the whole of Africa, creating “balance between traditional and western elements and attempts to place all within the context of the contemporary state of West African theatre.” (Deandra 2002 as cited by Amponsah 2008) Essentially there are other dramatists whose works may not necessarily follow the *Anansegoro* or the *Abibigoro* concept, but are African in the sense that they identify with elements that qualify them as African theatre.

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For the purpose of this discourse we shall categorise Ghanaian dramatists into two namely, those works which fall within the ambit of traditional and oral literature and those who derive their source and inspiration from outside the traditional domain, but reflect contemporary issues pertaining to Ghana. We will again refer to Amponsah (2008) in support of this summation when he writes;

Even though in a way, a kind of convention had been specified for Ghanaian playwrights through the National Theatre Movement, there were others who felt this would stifle the growth of Ghanaian theatre. Thus, some wrote plays, which did not really fit into the Movement’s concept or model Ghanaian theatre.40

One can therefore identify works such as *Sons and Daughters* and *Through a Film Darkly* by Joe DeGraft and *Anowa* by Ama Ata Aidoo and to some extent some works by Owusu, Yirenkyi and Abdallah to be outside the domain of *Anansegoro* while at the same time being essentially Ghanaian. Other examples include Kojdo Mawugbe, Dzifa Glikpoe, Efa Dartey and J. Wartengberg. Other contemporary playwrights are Yao Asare, Ebo Whyte and Daniel Appiah-Adjei.

2.4 Origin and Purpose of School of Performing Arts (SPA)

The discourse in this section seeks to establish the thoughts and ideas that inform the establishment of SPA. It brings to the fore the relationship between indigenous culture and academia. It also explores the role of the National Commission on Culture (NCC) in theatre development in Ghana. The key factor here is the role of the NCC and its relationship with the University of Ghana, ultimately leading to the establishment of Abibigromma.

The need for a model theatre, to serve as the epitome of artistic and economic excellence cannot be overemphasised. Again, one cannot downplay the importance of a ‘theatre laboratory’ for research and experimentation in artistic endeavours. Such a model and experimental theatre, should serve as a reference point for all theatrical endeavours. In order to arrive at a better understanding of the purpose of setting up a performing group in an academic institution, made of departments devoted to academic work, one needs to critically examine the origin and intent of those who established The School of Performing Arts (SPA) and the subsequent creation of Abibigromma. This part of the work therefore, traces the history, purpose and aspirations of SPA, with emphasis on the contributions of some of the forerunners towards the formation of a research and an experimental theatre within an academic set up.

The need for the studies of the disciplines that fall under the ambit of the performing arts can be traced to the formative period of the University of Ghana. Since as early as 1949, the study of African related courses, was part of the early academic departments that were grouped under three broad faculties namely, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Commerce and Faculty of Science. The Faculty of Arts comprised of English, Classics, Geography, History, Mathematics and School of African Studies. Agbodeka (1998), suggests that the need for the formation of a School of African Studies, was as a result of the urge by the indigenous people to make African Studies part of the academic set of courses in the proposed Universities that were springing up the at the time. Among the aims of establishing a department of African studies therefore, was to create a department totally devoted to putting together materials for study through research, since there was not enough material for teaching and learning at that time.

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41 Agbodeka Francis, A history of University of Ghana, pp.53,54.
A three-man committee comprising Peter Shinnie, Ivor Wilks and Kwabena Nketia, was set up to come out with modalities for setting up the Institute of African Studies (IAS). This was because enough materials had been accumulated that could form a basis for studies in African Literature. Subsequently in October 1961, the IAS was established with three sections namely, African Music and related Arts, African Historical Studies and African Languages. African Music and related Arts had J. H. Nketia as head of the department, while Ephraim Amu was charge of music and Manwere Opoku was head of the dance section.

The IAS has the mandate to spearhead the promotion of the studies of African arts and its impact on the entire world. Its main focus is research in African Studies in the higher institutions in Ghana. It is also to serve as a hub for researchers in African studies in Ghana and also as a conduit for scholars and post-graduate students of other Universities in the same field.

As has been stated above, one can see the importance of an institution entirely devoted to the promotion of African arts and also the need for capturing African dance, music and drama from the traditional domain, developing it and promoting it through an academic institution. Again one can see the importance attached to the study of the arts by the authorities through the instrumental role played by the Government, in institutionalising the study of drama in the University, when it facilitated the integration of the Drama Studio, with the IAS to promote the study of Theatre Arts. The Drama Studio, which was originally founded by Efua Sutherland, and built with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, functioned first under the Arts Council of Ghana and later, Institute of Arts and Culture. Sutherland offered it to be absorbed into IAS to facilitate the study of
Theatre Arts, a proposal that was accepted by the Government, consequent upon which funds were released to that effect.\textsuperscript{42}

With the intention of developing the drama section of the IAS, Government had invited Joe deGraft\textsuperscript{43} from the University of Science and Technology (now KNUST) to head the section. Joe deGraft and Sutherland together with the staff worked assiduously towards the consolidation of the Drama School to be devoted to the promotion of African Drama. With the help of the Vice-Chancellor, Nana Kobina Nketia IV (1961-62), the school enjoyed a rapid transformation. \textsuperscript{44}

The development of the arts was not limited to drama. The music and dance sections also enjoyed equal attention with Opoku and Amu leading their sections of dance and music respectively. So tremendous was their effort that Opoku’s work led to the formation of a national dance group, the Ghana Dance Ensemble. The group was dedicated to the research and performance of traditional dances. The result of these collective efforts on the parts of the pioneers was the establishment of a School of Music, Dance and Drama in the IAS in 1962.

Following internal reformation that was carried out after five years of its existence, it became expedient to separate the School of Music, Drama and Dance from IAS. It is important to note that, even though, the study of music, drama and dance were separated from the IAS, the Ghana Dance Ensemble remained with IAS. The question one would ask is why IAS opted to retain the dance group? The answer could be found in the importance of such a group for research purposes. In other words, the Dance Ensemble

\textsuperscript{42} Agbodeka, Francis. \textit{A History of University of Ghana}. p. 169.
\textsuperscript{43} Joe de Graft was the 1\textsuperscript{st} director of the Drama Section.
\textsuperscript{44} Agbodeka, Francis. \textit{A History of University of Ghana}. pp. 169,170.
was retained because it served as a storehouse of research works in dance and an experimental group for the Institute of African Studies.

It is equally important to note that these efforts to establish academic learning in the arts did not take place in a vacuum, rather it dovetailed into the ideals of the NTM. It was as part of these efforts that the Ghana Drama Studio was established and it served as the main training centre for theatre practitioners like actors, playwrights and directors. Importantly, it also provided an avenue for experimentation. It created the opportunity for performance groups to organise on a permanent basis under professional direction in music, dance and drama productions. All these activities Sutherland (2000), mentioned as achievements of the NTM.

It is again evident that the creation of the school for the study of the arts was a direct response on the part of the Government to support the NTM as Sutherland mentions, “This school is undoubtedly a product of the first phase out of whose ground-clearing activities the idea for it emerged.” Furthermore, the establishment of the school was a strategic move to take advantage of the resources, and research works available in the IAS. The school thus utilised, through testing and experimentation to create methods, techniques and teaching text in African music, dance and drama. The above summation therefore, laid bare the underlying factors in the establishment of a school of arts in a University.

With the solid foundation laid by Sutherland and Joe deGraft, the ground became fertile for the establishment of a separate school for the performing arts. The University had begun the process of separation from 1978 by putting in place the structures that will

eventually culminate in the birth of SPA. Funding was secured from National Commission on Higher Education for the development of an elaborate course structure of the School, and this eventually led to the establishment of SPA in 1979.  

The SPA is made up of Dance, Drama and Music departments, reflecting the three arms of performing arts, and thus fostering interrelatedness. The Music and the Dance departments offer diploma courses. Again, all the three departments offer BA courses. There are also BFA courses in the dance and drama departments. In addition, they offer M.A/M.phil and MFA at the graduate level. Students in the School are expected to take courses from the three departments at the diploma and under-graduate levels. The school, offering courses in the three disciplines of dance, music and drama makes it possible for students to fulfil the requirement of cross departmental learning, as required by the University. Students choose courses from the three departments to benefit from subjects within the ambit of performing arts.

The principal officers of the school are the Dean, three Heads of Departments namely, Theatre Arts (drama), Dance and Music, and Artistic Directors of the Drama Studio and Abibigromma. These officers are appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and each serve a two year term in office renewable at for another term. The school is a self-accounting unit of the University, and receives its subvention from the Tertiary Education Division of Government, through the Finance Directorate to which it is accountable.

Another important reason for the establishment of the School of Performing Arts is to equip students with requisite skills in all the three disciplines to reflect the holistic nature of an African performer. As Arkhurst intones, “Like an African performer, you should be able to dance, sing and act, that is the holistic nature of an African performing

46 University of Ghana Agenda for the 82nd meeting of the University Council, 16th January 1979.  
The drama section known as the Theatre Arts Department, offers general courses in the performing arts including; Acting, Directing, Playwriting, Voice and Speech, and Theatre Management as well as other Technical Courses such as Set, Light and Costume Design.

Having churned out qualified theatre personnel for over two decades, the absence of a model theatre to serve, as a model professional theatre and research centre became an issue of concern to both staff and students. Eventually, Abibigromma would be established in 1983 to fulfil that dream.

2.5 Directorial Objectives and Contributions of Directors to Theatre in Ghana

The first part of the discussion at this portion is on the conflicting and overlapping directorial objectives available to theatre directors and the need to create a balance between them. The next section deals with the contributions of artistic directors in the Ghanaian theatrical scene.

2.5.1 Directorial Objectives

The director, originating artistic vision and concept, and realizing the staging of a production, became the established norm in the 20th century. Great forces in the emergence of theatre directing as a profession were notable in 20th century theatre directors like Peter Brook, Peter Hall (Britain), Bertolt Brecht (Germany) and Giorgio Strehler (Italy). These directors were either actors or playwrights who were trained in one discipline or the other and rose through the ranks to attain the position of directors. In this vein, it may appear

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48 Interview with Sandy Arkhurst.
erroneous for persons who have limited or no experience in theatre to assume roles in theatre as directors, which sometimes is the case with Abibigromma.

Tajtakova (2006) referred to Auvien’s work on artistic and economic dichotomy existing in some theatres, where directors have to cope with a wide range of strategic directorial objectives, involving designing program policy and introducing artistic innovation, artiste recruitment, funding questions and economic stability, distribution issues, marketing programmes etc. She points out an interesting relationship between these decisions because they overlap in their objectives. On the other hand, some may be of a conflicting nature, like artistic innovation and marketing strategy. The extent of a director’s priorities of certain strategic choices over others depends on internal directorial factors, or organisational and managerial structure, leadership style and the director’s background. Following these thoughts, and as Tajtakova maintains, two main concerns should be taken into consideration by a theatre director: the artistic theatrical production reflected mainly in artistic innovation, and the economic side of it; meaning first of all, a balanced budget. Thus, prioritising one of them may lead to bad results in others. The challenge for Abibigromma as well, lies in how to maintain the balance between artistic innovation and economic viability. To fulfil the mandate of transforming the African socio-cultural and artistic heritage, or oral tradition into stage expressions and serving as the practical wing of the school may not necessarily be economically attractive. However, to pursue audience development and diversification may lead to deviation from its core mandate. There is the need for a strategic approach in the effort to balance the equation between these two forces.

Tajtakova again identifies four major strategic categories of objectives a theatre must take on board. These are artistic, economic, marketing and social goals. The economic

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50 Maria Tajtakova. Conflicting and Overlapping Nature of Strategic Objectives in Opera Houses.
objectives may overlap to a certain extent with the marketing ones. Similarly, some marketing objectives may be closely linked to social goals. In contrast, the social objectives may be in conflict with economic goals. On the other hand, the artistic objectives may contradict with either economic or marketing goals.

I agree with Tajtakova that the above objectives may compete for attention but one cannot afford to compromise artistic and economic objectives since it is the driving force in any theatrical endeavour. Artistic excellence in Abibigromma is of utmost importance and should be the ultimate goal of the Artistic Director. He or she should ensure that all resources are harmonised to attain it. It is also important that Abibigromma justifies its continuous support by being economically viable due to escalating production cost, as Baumol and Bowen (1966) suggest, to be one of the challenges of performing arts organisations in respect to their earned revenues. To this end, Boener (2002) suggests a mix between profile quality and performance quality in theatrical productions as a mix between experiment and convention. This seems to receive the best acceptance both from the public and professionals.

Towser (1997) explains that the labour costs in the arts tend to increase at the same rate as in other industries, but their scope for utilising labour-saving technical progress is either small or non-existent. This is the main reason for economic problems of performing arts organisations, since theatre is one of the most expensive of the performing arts, with the highest prices of admission, and the largest dependence on subsidies.51

I agree with Towser because non-profit theatres would not survive without an extra market funding. As a result, theatre is now more or less universally subsidised. Abibigromma cannot always depend on the benevolence of the University where it draws funds for its activities. It is also clear that the gate proceeds of Abibigromma can hardly

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51 Towser. R. Baumol’s Cost Disease: The Arts and other Victims.
support its budget. What therefore, should be done is to look at other alternative sources of funding. Nwamuo (2007) seems to support this position when he states that; “it will be a grievous mistake for one to think that because one is in the arts business, one is removed from the realities of existence in a world governed by the matrix of demand and supply, selling one’s product in order to survive.”

It is worthy of note that, with professional theatres in Ghana, it would be difficult to operate without government assistance because all salaries of the personnel are directly drawn from government coffers. On the other hand, prioritising economic objectives implies an effort to improve ticket sales. First, it may affect a diversity of repertoire towards performing mainly popular programmes. Secondly, it can lead to an increase in admission prices. However, the economic goals may be closely linked to some marketing objectives, such as increasing the number of attendees or creating the product of the theatre in the form of additional services provided for the audience.

One can argue that the consumer behaviour typically, is not a driving force in terms of demand, since Abibigromma’s program revenue rarely can cover operating costs taking into account the low level patronage of productions. In addition, patrons may not be interested in having their preferences reflected in product development; rather, they want to be exposed to what is innovative. Despite the clear imperative to develop a wider audience, there is an equally pressing need to withstand external pressure, to encourage modification of the core product in a way that would not dilute its artistic integrity. There is also, no limit to artistic innovation. There are a lot of artistic works in the repertoire of Abibigromma ranging from drama pieces to creative dance sketches, which the group has been performing over the years. The challenge therefore, lies in how the group can improve on these pieces so as to make them appeal to a larger audience without compromising on quality and originality.
Social goals are the most intangible policy objectives that the management of a cultural organisation may choose to pursue. Not-for-profit theatres have a social obligation to the community in which they exit. Professional theatres in Ghana also have this social obligation to fulfil. As stipulated in the objectives of Abibigromma, it is envisaged that its programs of constant experimentation and performances will feed back into the society as well as what has been captured in the traditional domain as a way of responding to the nation’s cultural needs.

The director’s foremost responsibility in the theatre is to imagine and initiate theatrical productions. They imbue theatre with a sense of ensemble. They channel the disparate production elements into an integrated and meaningful dramatic experience. The director’s purpose is to create a living theatre out of the written script, to achieve the playwright’s purpose. Directors must maintain high standards, seeking excellence rather than mediocrity in the selection of the play, and in the technical and interpretative aspects. They must inspire harmonious work with their cast and crew, guiding and encouraging them to fully use their talents. It may, therefore, be difficult for someone who has no experience in theatrical work to assume this role.

Many individual theatre practitioners have contributed in diverse ways to performing arts and theatre directors have emerged over the years within the theatrical enclave of Ghana. These directors have enriched the Ghanaian context with their artistic abilities, producing and directing theatre companies and performances. Notable among them are Efua Sutherland, George Andoh Wilson, Omar Evans Hunter, Martin Owusu, Asiedu Yirenkyi, and Mohammed Ben Abdallah. Others are, Sandy Arkhurst, Yaw Asare, Efo Kodjo Mawugbe, Dzifa Glikpoe and Ebo Whyte. For the purpose of this work we shall pay attention to the directorial contributions of Efua Sutherland, Martin Owusu, Mohammed Abdallah, Yao Asare and Kojdo Mawugbe.
2.5.2 Efua Theodora Sutherland (1924-1996)

Sutherland was a doyen of theatre in Ghana, whose works have helped shape the destiny of literary works among which theatre is one. After five-and-half years of teaching at St. Monica’s Training College, she went to England and studied for a BA degree at Homerton College, Cambridge University. Sutherland also attended the School of Oriental and African Studies, London before returning to Ghana in 1950. She was a playwright, director, poet and researcher. Sutherland was also known for her commitment to the course of children, for which she devoted some of her works. Her works include; Foriwa (1962), Edufa (1967) and The Marriage of Anansewa. Other published works are, Biography of Bob Johnson, ‘the father of the concert party tradition’, Playtime in Africa, The Roadmakers, Odasani, Anansegoro-Story-Telling Drama in Ghana, You Swore an Oath, Vulture: Two Rythm Plays and Voice in the Forest.

She is accredited as the mother figure of the NTM, through her achievements in the creation of experimental institutions and programmes, like the Ghana Experimental Theatre Company, Ghana Society of Writers, and Okyeame, a literary magazine as well as the building of the Ghana Drama Studio with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. One key achievement that marked her as critical to this project was her role in founding professional companies, dedicated to research and as a model for the formation of Abibigromma. The Kusum Agoromba, which she founded, was a full-time drama troupe which performed quality plays in both English and Akan to village and town audiences, especially in the Western, Eastern, and Central Regions. Sutherland played directorial roles to these groups including Workers Brigade Concert Party and the Drama Studio Players.

In her pursuit of the development of African theatre, she agreed with the proposal to merge the Drama Studio with the IAS Legon, when she became a Research Associate in
the school. She laid a solid foundation for research into African traditional theatre and literature. Anyidoho (1996) maintains;

Through the Drama Studio Programme and the Drama Research Unit of the Institute, Efua Sutherland worked with the late Joe de Graft and others to build the foundations of what was soon to become a model programme in drama and theatre studies and practice in Africa.

Arkhurst agrees with Anyidoho and states thus; “Sutherland was very passionate about the creation of African theatre and money was not her priority.”52 The Atwia Project was one of her flagship achievements, where a literature research programme from the IAS was used as resource material for practical experiments resulting in the creation of a community drama project.

Sutherland also believed in inculcating African cultural values in children, and again through her research projects, produced and published collections of children literature including, Ghana Motion by R. A. Cantey, The Perpetual Stone Mill by Togbe Kwamuar, Hwe No Yie (Be careful) by Kwamena Ampah, The New Born Child by Koku Amuzu and The Maid Servant by Joe Manu-Amponsah. Gates to Mother by Kofi Hiheta and Anyidoho’s Akpokplo. Sutherland’s own plays for children include The Pineapple Child, Nyamekye, Anase and the Dwarf Brigade, as well as Wohyee Me Bo.

It is worthy of note that Sutherland’s research and experimentations are paramount to the establishment of Abibigromma in the sense that, it was her earlier experimental works with the Ghana Drama Studio which culminated into Anansegoro through the creation of The Marriage of Anansewa. Anansegoro is an Akan word which means ‘spiders play’, when directly translated into English, and was coined to, ‘represent the written dramatic

52 Interview with Arkurst.
version of *Anansesem*’  a Ghanaian indigenous story-telling tradition. Aggrey (2001) refers to *Anansegoro* as “a community art embedded in oral literature.” One of the indispensable elements of the *Anansegoro* is the centrality of the story-teller, the character *Ananse* (a mythical figure of Ghanaian folklore) himself around whom the story revolves.

Djisenu (2003) also implies the centrality of the story-teller which usually is the character of *Ananse* as a feature of *Anansegoro*;

> The storyteller…, in the actual traditional context is the owner of the story. It is his brainchild and he embellishes it by adding details. Well-versed in oral art, he may use various devices such as imagery, proverbs and onomatopoeic words to give a comic or dramatic twist; an actor himself, he can imitate different accents and voices and dramatize actions through movements, gestures and facial expressions. He does not tell the story- he performs it.

Sutherland offers a succinct glimpse into the interrelatedness of *Ananse* and *Anansegoro* in the foreword she provided for *The Marriage of Anansewa*;

> There is in Ghana a story telling art called *Anansesem* by Akan speaking people… Although this story-telling is usually a domestic activity, there are in existence some specialist groups who have given it a full theatrical expression with established conventions. It is this system of traditional theatre which I have developed and classified as *Anansegoro*.

Amponsah (2008) summarises the central role the resident or the performing groups play in Sutherland’s research and the creation of her works and states thus; “*Anansegoro* was born out of research. It is not as simple as just saying *Anansegoro* is the written down form of *Anansesem*. *Anansegoro* was developed with the help of some specialist groups efforts of adding theatrical expression to *Anansesem.*”

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Arkhurst agrees with Amponsah’s position on Sutherland’s directorial approach and the contribution of the resident groups in the creation of *The Marriage of Anansewaw* and submits;

*The marriage of Anansewa* was as a result of experiments in improvisation. She will give me a scenario and a provisional script, which I will break down and rehearse with other performers. We were then rehearsing at the Drama Studio in town. We recorded everything, then we played it back, analysed it and rehearsed it again correcting and perfecting it. Finally we came out with a draft, which she gave to Krakye Denteh to edit. That was how *The Marriage of Anansewa* came into being.

The *Abibigoro* as conceptualised by Abdallah can be taken as a sequel to Sutherland’s *Anansegoro*. One can therefore, say that the experimental groups such as the Ghana Studio Players and the Kusum Agromba linked to the creation of the *Anansegoro* as Abibigromma is linked to the creation of *Abibigoro* concept of Abdallah. Furthermore, her Atwia Experimental Community Theatre Project, which ultimately led to the documentary film by American Television Network (NBC) *Araba: The Village Story*, is demonstrative of the importance of performing groups to research. It has also laid the foundation for TfD module in Ghana.

### 2.5.3 Martin Owusu

Martin Owusu, PhD. in English and American Literature is the former director of the SPA and an Associate Professor of Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, Legon, University of Cape Coast and Methodist University, Ghana. He has taught English Literature and Drama in many Senior High Schools and Universities, home and abroad and has served as consultant to Ghana Education Service and conducts workshops in Literature in English.

A dramatist, renowned for his artistic works, he has written, acted and directed many plays and films in Ghana. Some of his plays and literary works include, *The Sudden

Owusu has been artistic director of many theatre companies including Abibigromma, where he directed and experimented with his plays. Some of the plays he directed in Abibigromma include, *Okomfo Anoye’s Golden Stool* (1991), *The Story Ananse Told* (1996), *A Bird in Hand* by Saint Alhasan (1994) and *Through a Film Darkly* (1999).

In the mid-1970s, Owusu was the Artistic Director of a theatre group called Oguaa Playhouse, based at the University of Cape Coast. He is also the founder and director of Abibisunsum Theatre. He directed and acted in both African and classical plays. He has also directed classical plays with students in SPA, which were staged at the Efua Sutherland Drama Studio. They include, *Macbeth, Julius Caesar* (in English and Akan), *Tartufe, Dr. Faustus* and *Tobias and the Angel*.

In recognition of his contribution to theatre in Ghana, Owusu was commissioned in 2007, by the Ghana @ 50 Secretariat,\(^\text{56}\) to co-ordinate the production of classical plays as part of the contribution of performing arts to Ghana’s development. Owusu successfully organised some of the experienced directors and performers in Ghana and together mounted twelve productions of ‘Ghanaian classical plays’. Some of the plays put up at the NT include Danquah’s *The Third Woman* directed by Dzifa Glikpoe, Fiawo’s *Fifth...*  

\(^{56}\) The Ghana @ 50 Secretariat was the Governmental agency for the organization of Ghana’s fiftieth anniversary.
Landing Stage directed by Doris Kuwornu, Asare’s Ananse in the Land of Idiots directed by Africanus Aveh and Sutherland’s The Marriage of Anansewa directed by Sandy Arkhurst. The others were deGrafts’s Ananse and the Gum Man directed by Ossei Agyemang and Owusu’s The Legend of Aku Sika directed by Owusu himself. It is important to point out that there were financial issues associated with this production in terms of the secretariat’s inability to disburse payment to artistes and directors involved on time. The issue about payments was resolved, even if not satisfactorily, as the artistes would have expected. The enterprise was a success owing to the efforts of the directors. One set back though, was the poor patronage of performances by the general public.

2.5.4 Mohammed Ben Abdallah

Abdallah can be described as a man of theatre for his contributions as actor and playwright-director and is arguably one of Ghana’s best cultural researchers and creative artiste. A graduate of the University of Ghana’s School of Music and Drama, he subsequently graduated from Georgia University where he obtained a Masters degree in playwriting. In 1980 he obtained his PhD. form University of Texas. Abdallah’s research, experimentation and the quest to expand the frontiers of African theatre led to many creative artistic works, internationally acclaimed as “authentic African theatre”. According to Asiedu (2001), Abdallah is, “a leading contemporary Ghanaian playwright and theatre director, notable in this regard and has indicated his search for what he calls an ‘authentic African theatre.’”57 The Abibigoro concept which translated, means African play or ‘black play’ is one, and demonstrative of his desire to identify with the traditional roots of Africa, from which he draws resource material for his creative works.

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Abdallah’s directorial style is evident in his plays where there is a strong and deliberate fusion of dance, music and dramatic action. When directing his plays, for instance in his first production of *The Trial of Mallam Ilya*, he insisted on the involvement of the three departments in the School. Abdallah in an interview with Asiedu reveals;

I remember when *The Trial of Mallam Ilya* was first done here on campus, when we did it, it engaged everybody in the school, from drama department, the dance department and the music department – everyone was involved. Because, you can see, I insist on collaboration of the three branches. It gave people opportunities, to the extent that I believe there were people doing dance who began to see themselves as actors.58

As actor he was part of the Drama Studio Players and was instrumental in the research work of Sutherland that resulted in the creation of *The Marriage of Anansewa*. He was part of Legon Seven, and took part in the productions put up by James Gibbs. Abdallah also founded the Legon Road Theatre and toured some parts of the country with some of his plays.

In 1983, Abdallah spearheaded the creation of Abibigromma and served as its first Artistic Director and directed some of his plays with the group. He served in the PNDC Government in Ministerial capacity and later, chaired the NCC and was instrumental in the creation of the National Cultural Policy, resulting in the building of the National Theatre edifice. In 1991, he took part of the performing artistes in Abibigromma at Legon, to form the resident drama group of the National Theatre, thereby creating two groups who both lay claim to the name Abibigromma.

The plays he has written and directed are described as reflections of African theatre, because you see dance, music, action and dialogue as raw as it is in its originality. His plays include *The Alien King* (1972), *Slaves*, *The Verdict of the Cobra*, *The trial of*

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58 Interview with Asiedu Awo.
Mallam Ilya, and The fall of Kumbi. Abdallah also wrote plays out of folklore which are, Ananse and the Golden Drum, and Rain God.

2.5.5 Yaw Asare

The contribution of Yaw Asare (1953-2002) to theatre in Ghana had expanded the frontiers of Anansegoro started by Sutherland. He is described as “multifarious”\(^{59}\) by Africanus Aveh, in the foreword to Asare’s play Ananse in the Land of Idiots. He was a versatile playwright, director and choreographer. For his contributions to theatre, he was awarded the Kwame Nkrumah Prize for Excellence in African Studies in 1992 at the University of Ghana, and the Arts Critics and Reviewers Association of Ghana, (Playwright of the Year) for 1997.\(^{60}\) Amponsah (2008) affirms this and states; “These achievements placed him in no mean a position among the dons of the Ghanaian artistic enclave.”

Asare was a product of SPA and obtained a Diploma in Theatre Arts in 1979, a BA degree in English and Theatre Arts in 1986 and subsequently an M.Phil. from Institute of African Studies in 1993.

His works especially Ananse in the Land of Idiots is widely accepted as being grounded in the Anansegoro concept. Asare took the concept a step further in the treatment of the story-telling tradition of Ananse, the mythical Ghanaian hero or villain as the case may be, by using the character of Ananse to draw attention to social issues such as lust, perversion and attitudes that have continued to bedevil our society.

Asare as a versatile artiste, created and directed his plays including, The Leopard’s Choice (1993), Secrets of an Ancient Well (1998), Desert Dreams (1998), Ananse in the

\(^{59}\) Aveh, Africanus. Foreword to Ananse in the Land of Idiots. p.iii.


Asare was Artistic Director of National Theatre Players, 1994-1999. He experimented, directed and choreographed his plays and was very particular with details, correcting, reshaping and rewriting as he directs. Semevor Mawuli, the deputy Artistic Director of the National Theatre Players intimates, “when Asare started a new play, he would change and rewrite new things and seemed not to be satisfied until the whole project took shape.”61 The story was the same when he directed his plays with Abibigromma when he was lecturing at the School of Performing Arts. Vordzorgbe Pius of Abibigromma also described him as full of ideas and very creative.62

Aveh seems to buttress the above position when he describes him thus; “Asare the all-round performing artiste, demonstrates the grasp of craftsmanship with the infusion of rich dance and choreographic movements, music, mime and dramatic action in this play [Ananse in the Land of Idiots]”63

One can say then that Asare created through his knowledge and affinity with African tradition, a total African theatre that was borne out of true craftsmanship, dedication and hard-work which had endeared him to many including critics of Ghanaian, and for that matter, African theatre. It was his directorial abilities and artistic creativity that gave him international recognition such that his Desert Dreams produced both in English and French, was co-directed with Fulbright Scholar Marlon Bailey in 1999.

61 Interview with Mawuli Semevor.
62 Interview with Vordzorgbe Pius.
63 Aveh, Africanus. Foreword to Ananse in the Land of Idiots. p. iii.
2.5.6 Kodjo Mawuge.

Another major Ghanaian icon in the theatre industry was Kodjo Mawuge (1954-2011). A playwright, director, teacher and administrator, who had left behind an indelible footprint of artistic works, that had enriched the theatrical landscape with an array of artistic literary masterpieces. Mawuge was a graduate of the University of Ghana Legon, where he obtained his Bachelors and Masters degrees in Theatre Arts and also took a management course at the Institute of Management and Public Administration. He went abroad where he studied Theatre Management and Events Organisation, 1995 in US and Britain respectively.

As an astute artiste, Mawuge had a deep-rooted tendency for change and as such, derived inspiration from his childhood experience as an impoverished kid coming from humble backgrounds. Instead of being bogged down by his unpleasant experience as a child, he rather used it to his advantage. Firstly, his experience galvanised him and spur him on to achieve greater heights. Secondly, having equipped himself with the requisite skills and knowledge to create and write, he employed it in drawing attention to political, educational, social inequality and many other issues in the society. This is what has placed him among Ghanaian theatre persons whose works do not necessarily fall within the ambit of Anansegoro as alluded to earlier on. This is not to say he was alienated from his cultural and traditional roots, taking cognisance of his contribution towards the promotion of Ghanaian culture on the whole. Indeed one of his plays, Ananse-Kweku-Ananse was an experimental piece based on African folklore, aimed at “making African folktales very contemporary to our times”64

Mawuge’s theatrical works involved the writing of plays some of which he directed himself and have won international awards. Some of his awards included the VALCO

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64 Celebrating the Life of Efo Kodjo Mawuge. Biography.
Literary Awards in 1979, the ACRAG award as Playwright in 1984, Japan Foundation Award-Eminent; Cultural Personalities form Africa-short-Term Visit in 1990 and the third Prize Winner of a BBC African Playwright contest in 1995. He was also recognised by the state and awarded ‘Grand Medal’, one of the most prestigious Ghanaian awards, for his immense contribution to the Arts and Theatre Management.

Mawugbe wrote about twenty full-length plays, which have been directed for stage and television but only *In the Chest of a Woman* had been published. It is refreshing to note that his works are beginning to attract scholarly attention and Seidu Rashida has carried out a study of his plays in her thesis, Dramaturgy of Efo Kodjo Mawugbe, Form and Themes.

His plays include *In the Chest of a Woman* (1984), *Constable No Rank* (1986), *You Play me I Play You*, *Take me to the Altar* (1990), *Tata Amu* (1991), *The Royals* (1992), *G-Yard People* (1994) and *Check Point Charlie*. Others are *Queen Zarita of Zarita* (1995), *Upstairs and Downstairs*, *Acquired Prison Traumatic Syndrome* (APTS) and *Ananse-Kweku-Ananse*. We can also mention *Sitsofe* (the Ewe translation for safe haven), a film script on the attitude of society towards speech and hearing impaired children, *Free Juice For All* a radio drama towards the 50th anniversary of Ghana’s independence which he did in collaboration with BBC World Service.

Mawugbe’s prowess as theatre director is amply demonstrated in the various directorial positions he held in both artistic and administrative capacities over the years. From 1997 to 2000, he was the director at the NCC in Koforidua and from 2002-2006, for the Western Region. As exemplified in his biography, which states, “In his capacity [as Regional Director], he was responsible for the overall administration of personnel, and all

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65 Ewe is the major language of the people of the Volta Region of Ghana where Mawugbe hailed from.
arts/cultural issues in the region and also carried out planning, formulation and execution of cultural programmes.” He was also the director of programs for international affairs for the NCC. The positions he held were not only evident of his managerial and directorial capabilities, but go a long way to affirm his affinity with the traditions and culture of Ghana since the orientation of the cultural centres is for the promotion of indigenous Ghanaian culture.

He also served in the capacity of Executive Director (Artistic) with the National Theatre and became the acting Executive Director in 2009. In 2003, he was the Festival Director for the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC)66, Secretary for the International Theatre Institute and later, a board member for the Playwriting Committee of the Institute in 1991.

Mawugbe, aside serving as the artistic director of state institutions, also held the same position within various theatre groups in the country including Kozi-Kozi, West-Coast Productions House, and Kilimanjaro. He was the Artistic Director of the groups and directed his plays with them. His personality came across as an all round man of the theatre but more importantly, a theatre virtuoso who redefined the meaning of the word theatre as aptly accorded him by Gibbs in his tribute to Mawugbe.

The above statement by Gibbs lends credence to the argument advanced in this work concerning the multiplicity of theatre and the fact that, directors in theatre take on more than one responsibility by creating, directing and managing productions in the theatre. Mawugbe was not only a director but was also interested in research into indigenous Ghanaian traditions, one of the paramount pillars of African theatre. He embarked on research as a Senior Research Assistant and worked with students to explore African

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66 NAFAC is a National theatre festival for local and Diaspora artiste to showcase African arts.
Theatre projects at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology; (KNUST) Centre for Cultural Studies.

We have so far established the importance of the director in the theatre and again the fact that directors are artiste well versed in theatre practice. They are creators who have gone through the mill and understood the intricacies of research and directing. If the above statement throws light on some of the expectations of a theatre director, then it calls into question, directors who do not engage in any kind of artistic research, creation, and directing productions with Abibigromma.

2.6 The Management of Abibigromma as a Professional Theatre

Abibigromma as a professional theatre company was structured to be managed by a constituted Management Committee as specified by the Executive Board of the Faculty of Arts. It is to include the Vice-Chancellor or his representative, a representative each of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts; and the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders. However, the group has been operating without a management committee since 1991.

Currently, the management of the group is the sole responsibility of the Artistic Director who is assisted by an Administrative Assistant. The Artistic Director takes the day-to-day decisions concerning the group. Directors are selected from a pool of lecturers from the three departments constituting SPA on rotational basis to serve a two-year term, which is renewable for another two years. Oh! Nii Sowah,67 of the Dance Department, is of the view that, “the ideal thing, with regard to the management position in Abibigromma is that, anyone appointed to that position should have some form of training, formal or informal.”

Formal training in theatre administration or informal training through experience in the

67 Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah (His official name)
field will greatly enhance the managerial capabilities of artistic directors of Abibigromma. However, it is interesting to note that some of the artistic directors appointed have limited or even absolutely no training and experience in theatre management.

Weihrich et al (2008), as cited by John Ndubuisi states; “management is the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together or in groups efficiently [to] accomplish selected aims” Robins and Coulter (2007) also refer to management as what managers do. It involves coordinating and overseeing the activities of others so that their activities are completed efficiently and effectively. One can ask whether this is the situation with Abibigromma? Again, one can say that some of the directors especially, those who have no experience or orientation in theatre are not coordinating, or overseeing the artistic, and the research components of the group. It is interesting to note that some of these directors do not even sit in, or supervise, rehearsals and thus made no contributions to any artistic endeavour of Abibigromma.

The management of theatre, especially educational or college theatres which Clifford (1974) refers to as theatre that is part of an educational institution, is not without challenges. Ndubuisi identified four major problems associated with the management of educational and for that matter commercial theatres. These problems include, lack of funding, insecurity, polifeariton of home videos and lack of professionalism. Ndubuisi further argues that with the various definitions accorded theatre management, a serious deficit arises in the sense that managers, and for that matter directors, are only expected to manage the human and material resources available for successful productions. It does not mention the need for these directors or managers to raise funds or seek other sources of funding aside what has been provided by the institutions. I agree with Ndubuisi that

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management should go beyond managing what is available but should include professional and innovative methods of seeking additional funds to augment subventions. It is important therefore, that a theatre should have a business manager who will be responsible for the business concerns of the group. However, this does not exist in Abibigromma. Adeoye (2001), suggests that theatre is marketable only when the practitioners consider it from a business angle. It is therefore, a deficit for Abibigromma to operate without a business manager.

In this regard again, Abibigromma is handicapped in the sense that, it does not have a Management Committee to which the Artistic Director is answerable. Policy formulation therefore, is at the discretion of one man, the Artistic Director, a situation that may become problematic if he or she decides to formulate policies that are not in line with the goals and objectives of the group. Above all, there seems to be no concerted effort on the part of directors to seek additional funding.

Currently, most of Abibigromma’s engagements are dance performances, which are put up only on request. The group waits for invitations from patrons but does not initiate their own activities. It pre-supposes that forecasting and planning for medium and long term projects are being relegated to the background. What would therefore, be the implication if these request for performances do not come over a long period of time? One can assume that the group may be redundant in such a situation, hence the need for a business approach to the management of Abibigromma.

In a profit making theatre, management has as its primary function, the satisfaction of a range of stockholders. This typically involves making profit for shareholders or stockholders, creating valued products at a reasonable cost for customers, and providing rewarding employment opportunities for employees in typical entrepreneurial fashion. On
the other hand, for management in non-profit outfits, the key factor is in keeping faith with the donors and sponsors. In most models of management of professional theatres, shareholders vote for the board of directors, and the board then hires senior management. This is not the case with Abibigromma, which has been operating without a Management Committee since 1991, being the period under review in this research. The unique nature of theatrical operations, together with different funding patterns that are available to them, has substantial influence on the management system adopted by a theatre organisation. Funding available may differ depending on the nature and social as well as economic goals of that theatre.

Abibigromma being a non-profit theatre derives its major funding from the University. It is supposed to serve as the practical wing of SPA, to enhance teaching and learning rather than making profit. The management system is based on the general structure found in all other departments of the school and therefore is headed by a senior member. However, due to its complexities, there is the need to have a management committee as envisaged by the founding Faculty. It is therefore a deficit on the part of Abibigromma to be operating without a governing body.

Auvien (2000, 2001), found out that the major problems in managing theatres result from dual organisational structure that exists in arts organisation; one official and economic, and the other unofficial and artistic. The duality is reflected in the leadership style adopted by some theatres. Leadership is not centralised in one hand. It is a shared responsibility between an executive director responsible for the official and economic and an artistic director for the unofficial and artistic. This is the management structure being applied in the theatres under the NCC.
Looking at the stakeholders involved in the theatre, it is clear that it is a very complex art form that must be handled in a professional manner, so as to bring all the various elements together to achieve a cohesive and an uncomplicated encounter. In other words, there is the need for a professional and business-like approach to the management of theatrical endeavours for the attainment of economic and artistic excellence to positively affect the individuals involved.

Taking into account the numerous functions, together with the economic complexities and demands of modern theatre, which must be regarded as pure business, the background of the artistic director is very important and cannot be compromised. Yirenkyi (2001) points out, “Management positions in the National Theatre should go to “Theatre People” and second to “trained Theatre People”.71

Human behaviour, one can say, is learned in interaction with others in the process of communication and artistic values are likewise learned. I therefore agree with Yirenkyi that the director should not only have interest in the arts to qualify to occupy a directorial position in a theatre, but must also have sound training and/or experience.

Nwamuo (1986) describes management as;

The art and science of planning, staffing, organising, motivating, directing and controlling human and material resources in the arts of theatre, and their interaction in order to attain the predetermined objectives of guaranteeing satisfaction, having a full house and maximising profit.72

The emphasis here is on the attainment of laid down objectives. What then are the core objectives of Abibigromma? Again, how is it being managed to achieve these objectives? There are serious implications therefore, with the management of Abibigromma if one considers the above position of Nwamuo. It presupposes that, all things being equal,

maximising profit through the mobilisation of audience should be the hallmark of a well managed theatre and if Abibigromma seems not be attracting enough audience for its productions, then it brings into question whether the managerial machinery of the group is functioning.
CHAPTER THREE
PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA: THEATRES UNDER
NATIONAL COMISSION ON CULTURE (NCC), INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN
STUDIES (IAS); AND ROVERMAN PRODUCTION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the presentation and discussion of data pertaining to the National Theatre Players, Ghana Dance Company and Ghana Symphony Orchestra all based at the National Theatre; and Ghana Dance Ensemble of IAS. The final part provides an insight into the operations of Roverman Production as a commercial theatre venture in Ghana. A broad foundation for the formation and operations of these groups are provided, including the basis and the constitutional provisions that gave birth to these theatres. The Information reveals the managerial, directorial and operational mandates as well as the present state of these theatres.

A narrative presentation of data from interviews and documentations are provided to give a clear glimpse of the activities, challenges and aspirations of these groups. Findings concerning Roverman Production are provided in a way as to reveal what is happening at the commercial domain of theatre. The narratives are backed by quotations from respondents in the field.

3.2 Professional Theatres of the National Theatre

The NCC is the government agency saddled with the responsibility of regulating and formulating the cultural agenda of Ghana. It is the administrative umbrella of the Arts in Ghana and operates with a management board. The Minister for Culture, Tourism and Creative Arts is mandated to be the chairman of the Management Board.
Under the NCC are different agencies representing the various artistic domains in the country. These are independent bodies constituted to seek the promotion of members and are under the leadership of democratically elected presidents. These organisations are autonomous. However, for the purpose of having a united front and to safeguard the welfare of members, the NCC supervises their activities and supports them. These unions are: The Musicians Association of Ghana, Ghana Actors Guild, and Ghana Writers Association. The others are Visual Arts Association, Concert Union of Ghana, Ghana Union of Theatre Societies, Ghana Dance Association and Audience Awareness.

The NCC as the body responsible for the arts and culture is headquartered at the Arts Centre in Accra and supervises the Regional Centres. This coordination is to result in the organisation of theatrical activities at grassroots levels. In other words, there is supposed to be a replication of what pertains at the national level in the regions and districts. It is worthy to note that the commission over the years has established centres which are headed by Regional Directors, with permanent staff that draw remuneration from the Ministry. They are, however, expected to be independent in planning their own activities and generating internal funds. The NCC, through the Ministry provides staff for administrative work. The Eastern, Greater Accra, Ashanti, Volta and Central Region at the time of this research have theatre halls while other regions have them under construction such as the Regional Theatre in Takoradi. According to William Addo, these are resident groups attached to the Ashanti, Eastern and Central Regions. Other centres depend on the amateur groups for their activities. Addo added that efforts are being made to establish resident groups in all the centres.

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73 William Addo was a Director with NCC in the Volta Region.
The Management Board of the NCC at the time of this research is made up of 18 members, inaugurated on the 21st March 2012, under the leadership of Elizabeth Ofosu Adjare, the Minister for Tourism Culture, and Creative Arts.

**National Theatre (NT) of Ghana**

The Ghana National Theatre was established as a body corporate by National Theatre Law (PNDC LAW 238 of 1990), with the objective assigned in article two of the Law which is to promote and develop the performing arts in Ghana. Article three of the same Law also states that for the purpose of achieving this objective, the theatres shall be established in such parts of the country as the council may deem right. Clearly stated, therefore, the promotion of the performing arts and the establishment of more theatres across the country are, by law, two justifiable functions of the NT of Ghana. The resident groups of the NT are under the management of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts with funding from Government and internally generated funds.

The Ghana Dance Company, established in 1962 was part of the National Dance Ensemble based in Legon. The National Theatre Players was also originally founded at Legon in 1983. It was to use the facilities of the SPA, but for purposes of artistic freedom, was put on its own separate budget. The National Symphony Orchestra was formed as the musical wing of the theatre. They were formed to add classical touch to the local high-life music.

We shall now turn our attention to the NCC Law, Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law 238 of 1990, that brought the resident theatres into being. This is to help establish the intent, functions and administrative structures, that are in place to ensure the smooth running of these institutions.

In the wake of the National Recovery Program, launched by the PNDC Government in the 1980s, there was transformation and realignment in many spheres including theatre. Under the chairmanship of Mohammed Abdallah, a cultural policy was drafted in 1989.
Subsequently it was passed into law providing a broad framework within which the arts would operate. Details of the Law is provided in the following section.

Section 1-The Establishment of the Ghana National Theatre

1. There is hereby a body to be known as the National Theatre (NT) of Ghana.

2. The NT is body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal and may be sued in its corporate name.

3. The NT may for the performance of its functions acquire, hold or dispose of property whether movable or immovable.

4. Where there is hindrance to the acquisition of property under subsection (3) the property may be acquired for the NT under the State Property and Contract Act, 1960 (C.A. 6) or State Land Act, 1962 (Act 125).

Section 2-Object of the National Theatre: The object of the NT is the promotion and development of the performing arts in the Republic.

Section 3-Functions of the National Theatre: For the purpose of achieving this object the NT shall establish theatres in any part of the country as determined by the Minister.

Section 4-Board of the National Theatre: The governing body of the NT is the National Theatre Board consisting of:

1. The Chairman and five other persons.

2. The Director of the SPA, Legon.

3. The Executive Director of the Ghana NT.

4. The President in accordance with article 70 of the Constitution shall appoint the members of the Board.
5. A member of the Board may at anytime resign from office by giving two months’ notice in writing to the Minister.

6. A member of the Board shall hold office on the terms and conditions, including the payment of all allowances or remuneration, determined by the President, on the recommendation of the Minister.

Section 5-Functions of the Board: For the discharge of the business and the performance of the functions of the NT, the Board shall;

1. Formulate criteria and conditions to regulate performance by Ghanaian and international artistes and troupes;
2. Establish theatres in parts of the country as determined by the board;
3. Develop and promote a strongly integrated national culture through the performing arts;
4. Assist in formulating an effective export promotion program of workers in the performing arts produced in Ghana; and
5. Engage in any other functions as the President may assign.

Section 6-Meeting of the Board

1. The Board shall meet at least once in every three months at the times and the places determined by the chairman for the dispatch of business.
2. The chairman shall preside at the meeting of the Board and in the absence of the chairman; a member of the Board elected by the members present among themselves shall preside.
3. The quorum at every meeting of the Board is five.
4. Decisions at a meeting of the Board shall be taken by a majority of the members present by voting and in the event of equality of votes, the person presiding shall have a casting vote.

5. The Board may at any time co-opt a person to act as advisor at any of its meetings but that person is not entitled to vote on a matter for decision by the Board.

6. The Board may for the performance of its functions under this Act appoint committees comprising members of the Board or non-members or both and may assign to a committee any function determined by the Board.

7. A member of the Board who has an interest, direct or indirect in a matter that is a subject for consideration of the Board shall disclose in writing to the Board the nature of the interest and shall not participate in a discussion of decision of the Board relating to that matter.

8. A member who willfully fails to disclose interest under subsection (7) shall be removed from the Board.

Section 7- Resident Performing Troupes: The Ghana Dance Ensemble (Ghana Dance Company), Abibigromma (National Theatre Players), and the National Symphony Orchestra are the resident performing troupes of the NT in the areas of dance, dramatic art and music respectively.

Section 8- Ministerial Responsibility: The chairman of National Commission on Culture shall have ministerial responsibility of the NT.

Section 9- The Executive Director of the National Theatre

1. There shall be appointed by the President in accordance with article 195 of the Constitution, an Executive Director for the NT.
2. The Executive Director is the chief executive of the NT and shall have the overall responsibility of the theatres established by the Board.

3. The Executive Director shall hold office on the terms and conditions determined by the President acting on the advice of the Minister.

Section 10- Appointment of Administrative Secretary and Directors

1. There shall be appointed by the President in accordance with article 195 of the Constitution an Administrative Secretary and a Director for each of the following;
   1. Artistic (co-ordination)
   2. Music
   3. Dance
   4. Drama
   5. Technical department

2. The Artistic Director shall
   - Co-ordinate the functions of the directors of music, dance and drama appointed under subsection 1; and
   - Undertake any other duties as directed by the Executive Director.

3. The directors of music, dance, drama and the technical department shall be assigned the duties determined by the Board.

4. The Administrative Secretary is the secretary to the Board and shall be assigned the duties by the Executive Director.

5. The Directors and Administrative Secretary appointed under subsection (1) shall hold office on the terms and conditions determined by the Board.
Section 11 - Other Employees of the National Theatre

1. The Board may engage other employees as are necessary for the proper and efficient conduct for the business and the performance of the functions of the national Theatre.

2. The Board may employ the services of advisors as are necessary for the proper and efficient conduct of the business and the performance of the functions in the National Theatres and shall pay them appropriate honoraria.

3. The employees of the NT shall be appointed under the terms and conditions that the Board may, on the recommendations of the Executive Director, determine in consultation with the Public Service Commission.

4. There may be transferred or seconded to the NT the public officers that the Board may in consultation with the Public Services Commission determine.

5. The Executive Director, Artistic Director and Directors appointed under subsection (1) of Section 10, the Administrative Secretary and other employees of the NT are public officers.

Section 12 –Funding


2. Donations from the general public, institutions, industries and non-governmental sources.

3. Donations from foreign sources.

4. Monies derived from performances organised by the NT.

5. Fees charged by the theatre for the use of the theatre.

Section 13- Borrowing Powers: Subject to article 181 of the Constitution, the NT may obtain loans and credit facilities from a bank or any other financial institution as the
chairman of the NCC in consultation with the Minister responsible for Finance and Economic Planning may approve. The NT may, with the prior approval of the Minister responsible for Finance and Economic Planning, borrow money from any other source. The Minister responsible for Finance and Economic Planning may on behalf of the Government guarantee the performance of an obligation by the NT under this section.

Section 14-Annual Report: The NT shall submit to the Minister, not later than three months after the end of each financial year, a report of its activities during that year, together with a balance sheet showing income and expenditure for the year.

Section 15-Accounts and Audit: The NT shall keep proper books of accounts and proper records in the form approved by the Auditor-General.

1. The Auditor-General shall audit the books and accounts of the NT each year.

2. The Auditor-General shall ensure that the operations of the NT are in conformity with its approved budget and shall examine the annual balance sheet and statement of income and expenditure of the NT and certify that these are in conformity with the records of the NT.

3. The Auditor-General shall submit a report to the Minister on the audit within six months after the end of the financial year to which the report relates.

Section 17-Finacial Year: The financial year of the NT shall be the same as that of the Government.

Section 18-Tax Exemption: Subject to article 174 of the Constitution, the NT is exempted from the payment of the taxes, rates and duties that the Minister responsible for Finance and Economic Planning may in writing direct.
Section 19-Regulations: The Minister may on the advice of the Board, by legislative instrument make Regulations specifying conditions under which performances are to be conducted and as may be necessary for the purpose of giving full effect to the provisions of this Act.

Section 20-Interpretation: In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, “Auditor-General” includes an auditor appointed by Auditor-General;

“Board” means the government body of the National Theatre;

“Minister” means the Minister to whom the responsibility for the Act has been assigned;

“National Theatre” means the National Theatre established by Section 1.

The managerial positions in the NT at the time of this research are as follows:

- The Executive Director
- Deputy Executive Director (Finance & Administration)
- Deputy Executive Director (Artistic)
- Director (Administration)
- Director (Technical)
- Director & Deputy Director (Drama)
- Director & Deputy Director (Dance)
- Director & Deputy Director (Music)

The Theatre also has managers for the various departments as follows

- General Stage Manager
- Manager (Marketing)
- Manager (Programs)
- Manager (Public Relations)
• Manager (Estate)
• Manager (Auditions)
• Manager (Accounts)
• Manager (Front of House)

Sectional heads also exist and are in charge of Carpentry, Technical and Set Design, Sound, Light, Stage Assistants and there are sectional heads for the performing groups.

It is pertinent to point out that all this structures and managerial/directorial positions in the theatre are being pursued with the Resident groups having substantive directors and deputy directors.

On 24th March 2012, Elizabeth Ofosu-Adjare, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts inaugurated new Boards for the NCC and the NT. Nii Yartey74, is the chairman of the eight member Board of the NT and NCC Board is chaired by the Minister and has 15 members.75

At the inaugural ceremony, Ofosu-Adjare reiterates the important role the NCC Board is to play including initiating policies and programs and supervising the implementation of programs for the promotion of Ghanaian culture. The NT Board is also charged with the promotion of the performing arts in Ghana, with the functions that include the development and promotion of a strongly integrated national culture through the performing arts. The Minister again explained that an important expectation of the two Boards would be the search for creative ways to mobilize funds to ensure that the sector maximises its returns in internally generated funds.

Nii Yartey, on his part points out the major focus of the NT Board would be to restructure the NT, and put structures in place that would make it serve its main purpose of tapping and promoting potentials and talents in the creative arts sector.

74 Nii Yartey is Professor of Dance and head of dance department, SPA.
3.2.1 The National Theatre Players

The National Theatre Players is currently under the directorship of Akosua Abdallah, a product of SPA where she obtained a Masters degree in Theatre Arts. The Deputy Director is Mawuli Semevor also a product of SPA. Akosua Abdallah and Semevor are part of the performers who moved from Abibgromma in Legon. There are thirty performers in the group.

According to Semevor, the group plans its activities in collaboration with the other resident groups and uses the marketing department of the NT to advertise their programs. The group also has been embarking on educational tours and currently going round the country, with Mawugbe’s *In The Chest of a Woman*. Annual subventions are obtained from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts. One of the challenges of the group is inadequate funding. Semevor states thus: “there are some projects we will like to embark upon for example holding workshops for other theatre groups in the regions but funds are not available.” Being housed in the NT structure, the group has the state of the art rehearsal facilities including a green room, a rehearsal hall and a scenic room.

3.2.2 The Ghana Dance Company

The Ghana Dance Company was originally part of Ghana Dance Ensemble before moving to the NT. It has thirty-four performers with Nii Tettey as the Artistic Director. The deputy Artistic Director is Stephanie Yiadom. Nii Tettey and Yiadom both hold Masters degrees in Dance Studies from SPA. Both are artistes with a lot of managerial and artistic experience. Yiadom and Tettey have performed at international platforms with NORYAM, a professional dance company founded by Tettey’s father Nii Yartey.

The deputy Artistic Director expressed satisfaction with the artistic competence of the performers. However, she would have wished graduates from the dance department of SPA had interest in becoming members.
One challenge facing the company though, is how difficult it is to attract sponsorship for their programs. It is the wish of the company to put up performances at the regional and district levels. The main source of internally generated funds is from engagements by corporate bodies and individuals where the group offers performances. The group at the time of this research charges between GHC 1,000.00 and GHC 2,000.00. The deputy director mentions that, the company performs at State functions and is regarded as the cultural ambassadors of the Nation.

3.2.3 The National Symphony Orchestra

The National Symphony Orchestra has a membership of twenty-two performers and uses the office of the Artistic Director as their rehearsal space. Annor, the Artistic Director laments this situation and states that they are crowded because of lack of space. The reason for this situation according to William Ashong76 is that the Orchestra’s rehearsal space is the orchestra pit in the main auditorium; however, the auditorium is usually booked for commercial purposes during the day. Another constraint the Artistic Director mentions is the number of musicians in the group. Ideally, a professional orchestra is supposed to have from 80 to 100 musicians but the group has only 22 musicians at the time of this research. Small size orchestra is called chamber orchestra, however, there are no fast rules about the numbers. Annor ascribed this difficulty to an embargo laid on recruitment by the Ministry. He also mentions that they needed exposure to the general public so as to generate enthusiasm in the kind of music they perform. Annor adds;

This is because when people hear of Symphony Orchestra, they think we only perform classical music. But the fact is that we play all kinds of music including folk music. That is why people who know us, engage us to perform at weddings, funerals and others.77

We shall now turn our attention to the resident dance troupe of the University of Ghana, Legon, in the following section

76 Interview with William Ashong, General Stage Manager at the National Theatre.
77 Interview with Annor.
3.2.4 The Ghana Dance Ensemble

The Ghana Dance Ensemble was formed in 1962, as a research group and placed under the School of Music and Drama. The group is to harness the diverse traditional dances from all the regions of Ghana, so that members regardless of where they hail from will become versatile in all dance forms. It is to reflect unity in diversity as far as our cultural heritage is concerned. Another objective of the group is to support research work of the Institute of African Studies.78

The quota for the group as a professional performing group is forty-five performers but as at the time of this enquiry, the group is made up of thirty-six members. There are twelve female dancers, twelve drummers, ten male dancers and an electrician. Currently, the major output of the group is more commercial than research. They give performances on official occasions of the University. The group conducts a three credit hour course in traditional African dance (UGRC225) where students are graded and takes between 100 to 200 students a semester.

The criteria for the selection of artistic directors are qualification and experience. Past and present Artistic Directors were members who were upgraded and consequently appointed as Artistic Directors. The Artistic Director is in charge of all the artistic direction of the group by directing and choreographing all their dances.

According to Ben Ayitey the current Artistic Director, he works with the group by allowing everyone to contribute during rehearsal and states further that; “I don’t believe I know it all so I listen and take suggestions but the ultimate responsibility of the final decision lies with me.”

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78 Interview with Benjamin Ayitey, Artistic Director Ghana Dance Ensemble.
One challenge of the Ghana Dance Ensemble is funding and lack of any means of transport. However, the group depends on IAS for transportation and uses their vehicles when the need arises. Another problem is that members are not graded or promoted for practical work. Ayitey mentions;

We create great pieces of artwork but the academia does not recognise it. I have served on the Faculty of Arts board and Prof. Osai Dodoo and some other members fought for the recognition for practical and creative works that is documented but it did not work. It appears the academia has no respect for us artiste.

It is important to point out that one of the modalities of appointing artistic directors to these professional groups is based on professional consideration. All the artistic directors of the above mentioned groups have served in the groups and rose through the ranks to become artistic directors. The point here is that these artistic directors have a lot of experience through their association with the groups. They are performers, theatre practitioners who are conversant with the day-to-day activities of the groups. They are conversant with the mandates of their respective areas. Artistic directors in these groups are responsible for the artistic direction of their groups. They are responsible for rehearsals, take part in performances and are involved in every aspect of artistic work of their groups. This is not to say artistic directors are supposed to take part in performances. However, the point here is Artistic Directors are artistes themselves who understand every aspect of what is involved in theatre.

The Management Committees of these resident theatres are well constituted and functioning per the provisions in the NCC Law that brought these groups into being. The NT continues to revise the composition or the administrative structure and at the time of researching for this thesis, Emmanuel Agbedu, the Public relations Officer mentions that the NT is in the process of reviewing the managerial structures of the theatre to meet
current exigencies. He cited the creation of the position of deputy artistic directors for the various groups as some of the current restructuring of the managerial structure.

### 3.2.5 Commercial Theatre in Ghana Today

Commercial theatre as it pertains to the Concert Party still exists in Ghana but on the low side, since live performances are giving way to film and video productions. This notwithstanding, one significant development in commercial theatre is the emergence of Roverman Production of Ebo Whyte which is making tremendous strides towards the establishment of commercial theatre, as a viable enterprise in Ghana. For the purpose of this research we shall examine Whyte’s exploits as a commercial theatre director and manager in respect of Roverman Production.

Roverman production is one of, if not the only, viable commercial theatre established in Ghana in recent time by Ebo Whyte; playwright and director of the Roverman Production. Whyte is a graduate of University of Ghana where he studied Statistics.

Roverman Production was established in 2008 after two failed attempts. As Whyte states, “Roverman Production was born out of two failed attempts to set up a commercial theatre.” The first attempt, the Curtain Call Production, produced only one play entitled *The Devil’s Wife* in 1995. The production of that play resulted in a loss, which took two years to offset. In 2006, with the help of family members and friends, *Mr. President Your Move* and *Wedding Behind Closed Doors* were produced. These plays were staged in the auditorium of Christ the King Catholic Church and the Banquet Hall in Accra. This again could not be sustained.

Roverman Production, however, came into being in 2008 with the assistance of Wireku Charles, who opted to sponsor the productions. The first production of Roverman was *Unhappy Wives, Confused Husbands*. With the help of Wireku, Roverman Production has
evolved into a vibrant commercial theatre, putting up one production every three months. There is a repetition of the three plays in the final quarter of the year, which Whyte refers to as “Festival of Plays” running for three consecutive weeks.

Whyte’s career as playwright and director began in 1975. He had no formal training in theatre but trained himself to make up for the requisite knowledge and expertise required of a theatre practitioner. One of such steps was to enrol with the British Council in the early 70s. He mentions;

> Once I discovered I had the talent and want to be in the theatre, I enrolled with the British Council and read almost every book available on theatre there and attended every production put up there and at the Arts Centre. I also watched every show at School of Performing Arts. That was how I immersed myself in theatre to gain what I couldn’t get from going to school.79

Roverman Productions is made up of amateurs and professionally trained artistes from the SPA and other professional institutions. One of the criteria for selection of cast is being a professional in any discipline. Whyte mentions;

> I look for intellectual capacity, I look for people with critical minds because I believe theatre is not meant to be one man’s business, the arts is always a collaborative thing. That is why I don’t care whether you have acted before or not because what you see on stage is a result of the collective effort of those on stage and those behind the scene.

One strength of Whyte as a director is how he is able to blend the expertise of professional theatre practitioners with those from other fields to his advantage. White recognizes potential and is determined to get it from any source provided it adds value to the quality of his artistic endeavours. The researcher had the privilege of sitting in his rehearsals and observed he is open to suggestions from any member of cast, who can stop the rehearsal and make suggestions. He takes on board these suggestions and tries to

79 Interview with Ebo Whyte.
incorporate them when applicable. Even though, this approach is helpful, it sometimes generates lengthy debates leading to unnecessary delays during rehearsals.

The researcher enquired of him to find out which convention or style he adopts in his writing and directorial works. Whyte mentions that he does not follow conventions or styles but he writes and directs to satisfy an audience and leaves it to critics to decide. One can see however, that his plays have three act sequences, segmented into scenes which can be placed within the ambit of comedy. Whyte’s plays are mostly about social issues, relationships, family life and infidelity. It usually would have topical issues, lines and words or anecdotes that are currently being used on radio stations. These are wittingly crafted and used by characters, which the audience readily identifies with.

Roverman Production as a commercial theatre does not enjoy financial subsidy from governmental agencies and is self-financing, deriving its income from gate proceeds and corporate sponsorships. This is one of the driving forces behind the quest for excellence in its productions. To be sustainable as a commercial theatre, there is the need to meet professional standards. This is because commercial theatre survives solely on public reception of productions. Whyte reiterates, ‘if you disconnect from the audience, in terms of quality performance and the story line, then you are in trouble. That is why we go for the highest standards in our technical output”.

The above position could be the reason why Whyte strives to meet the aspirations of his audience, with the kind of story line and artistic work that will appeal to them. His audience is drawn mostly from the middle-income category of the Ghanaian work force. This assessment is based on the researcher’s interaction with some patrons to have a fair idea of the background of the audience, by asking a cross section of the audience involving over 50 respondents. Majority of respondents were working within the
corporate and the public sector while others were either students especially at the tertiary level or people in private businesses.

Ebo Whyte heads the management of Roverman Production. It comprises of an accounts and marketing sections. The administrative staff work full time and are also responsible for the day-to-day running of the group. The accounts section handles issues concerning procurements, payments of the general financial dealings of the group. The marketing section basically markets the group by seeking sponsorship and dealing with advertising issues. The accounts section is headed by a qualified accountant and the marketing section by a professional business manager. It is worthy of note that Roverman Production also publishes a monthly magazine called Roverman Report. It is also worthy to point out that Whyte combines the artistic work of the group with that of the management. He is responsible for the development of scripts meaning that, he must come out with at least three full-length plays within a year.

Another significant style of Whyte’s productions is the incorporation of dramatic elements of the concert party genre. Notable among these elements is the use of a bandstand on stage. Music is an integral part of these shows. The music is not played in isolation but rather characters who find themselves in peculiar situations express themselves through songs. The band joins them and at such moments, the band becomes part of the action on stage.

The cost of production is an expensive endeavour. The average cost of production according to Whyte, is between GHC45.000 to GHC50.000. This is the cost of developing the script, acquiring rights to the script; printing cost of the script; hiring of the NT auditorium; cost of casting and rehearsal; cost of publicity and promotion; cost of design and construction of set; cost of paying artistes; cost of equipment including lights.
and sound; cost of paying crew. It is refreshing to note that with sponsorship from corporate bodies such as Joy Fm, Graphic Showbiz, and telecommunication giants like MTN and Airtel, Roverman continues to produce its shows regularly.

It is again worthy to note, that there are individuals or groups of artistes who occasionally come out with productions. These groups vary in composition depending upon the organisational structures and the purpose of the productions. For example, a group of cast in a student production can come together and get a producer to take the production to the National Theatre. Some of these productions do not break even and payment of artistes is sometimes a problem.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS ON ABIBIGROMMA, THE CASE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the presentation and discussion of data on Abibigromma, the case study. The first part traces the history, the present state and the management of Abibigromma at the time of this research. These are followed by activities undertaken by the researcher as participant observer in Abibigromma. A detailed account is given of the process, including experiences and challenges in directing two plays with the group. The next section gives account of an educational tour to the Upper West Region with Abibigromma. It is followed by the findings from the Focus Group Discussion. The manpower and infrastructural situation of Abibigromma are then provided. The final part has detailed discussion of results.

The presentation of data retrieved from primary and secondary sources is presented in narrative form, for the data to be seen in the story form and from the perspective of the researcher as a participant observer as well as the respondents. The report unfolds as vivid descriptions of participants’ experiences and as willing participants of this research. The narration contains quoted information from respondents’ perspectives as they were given to the researcher for the purpose of this study.

4.2 The Resident Theatres: (Ghana Repertory Theatre)

A major step towards professionalism in Ghanaian theatre was the formation of the Repertory Theatre Company. Yirenkyi (2000) explains that the attempt to organise the
Repertory Theatre Company started in October 1972. The aim of the company was to build a professionally trained troupe attached to the Drama School of the University, to set standard for acting in the theatre, and to become a model acting company in Ghana. Five men and two ladies with School Certificates were selected for six months training prior to joining the company. The training period ended in March 1973, with a successful tour of secondary schools in Accra. At the beginning of the 1973/74 academic year, the Repertory performed in Akwuapem and Krobo Regions, University of Science and Technology. The group also performed to five American College groups. Mr Tamakloe acted as the business Manager of the group.

In mid-January 1974, Nana Yaa Jantuah, one of the leading members of the company resigned. All attempts to get a replacement failed. In the end, a student, Mary Agyare was invited to fill the vacancy. The first major outing of the Repertory was the tour of the Volta Region from 3rd to 31st May 1974.

The Repertory Theatre Company, which was formed as part of the extension work of the Drama Section of the IAS could not be sustained and had to be disbanded due to lack of funds and inability to get female actors after Jantuah left the group. Also, in the absence of the Artistic Director, no faculty member was interested in holding the fort.

4.2.1 Abibigromma

After the SPA has churned out qualified theatre personnel for over two decades from its inception, the absence of a model theatre to serve as a research centre became an issue of concern to both staff and students. In February 1983, a three man committee made up of Mohammed Ben Abdallah, from the Theatre Arts department and Asare Newman and Ofotsu Adinku both of the Dance Department were charged with the responsibility of

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putting together the nucleus of such a theatre, and carry out series of experimental workshops aimed at eventually setting up a resident theatre company.

They came out with a proposal, which was forwarded to the Academic Board of the Faculty of Arts for consideration. Newman states, “Faculty agreed to establish a group that would act as the practical wing of the school.” Adinku also recalls the enthusiasm with which both faculty and students went about the process of bringing the resident theatre into existence. He submits thus:

I was a member of Ghana Dance Ensemble and we were all upbeat about forming the group that will be to SPA as the Ghana Dance Ensemble is to IAS and we selected some of the good students from the three departments to start the programme.

Before the proposal was forwarded to the Academic Board of the Faculty of Arts, there was in place a selected group of students who had started rehearsing, with the intention of becoming the core members of the group after graduation. This was to enable the school start the program on a sound note when approval was given.\(^{81}\) Addo William\(^{82}\) said,

We were all happy that at last the resident group is going to be a reality. I was then a Research Assistant and was assigned the duty of identifying and selecting some students. At that time we had very good performers so it was very competitive. I remember some of them were obvious choices like Dzifa Glikpoe, and Sacky Sowah were some of the people we started with.\(^{83}\)

The importance of a residence theatre for the school could not be overemphasised and the reasons that were advanced by the school before the Academic and Executive boards were very clear.

In line with the general feeling, the consensus and the important role the resident theatre company would play, Sophia Lokko the Acting Director of SPA, in a letter dated 21\(^{st}\)

\(^{81}\) Proposal Document for the Establishment of Abibigromma.
\(^{82}\) Addo William is a founding member of Abibigromma and the 1\(^{st}\) Artistic Director to be appointed by the Vice Chancellor.
\(^{83}\) Interview with William Addo.
February, 1984 urged the Board for its approval adding that, experience and insight had been accumulated over the years and the School was ready for such a laudable programme as part of its developmental needs. Again, the training programme of three years that students underwent, only brought out the potentials in them and there was the need for an avenue that should serve the purposes of polishing up.

It is worthy to note that, the training of specialised personnel to satisfy the manpower needs of units and governmental departments was one of the objectives of the NTM, which in turn could be taken as one of the basis for the establishment of SPA. It is therefore, in furtherance of such objectives, that one would advocate for a research and training ground for professional performers in theatre.

The proposal for the establishment of the professional group therefore captured all the justifications, objectives, composition, source of funding, and the managerial arrangements of the group as presented below.

*Justification*

- After twenty-five years of the establishment of SPA, there is not a single professional theatre group in the country outside the traditional concert parties.

- Among the annual graduate turnover of SPA, there have always been a number of individuals who have the capability and inclination to work in professional theatres. Unfortunately such theatres do not exist in Ghana. It is therefore, safe to say that so far as a truly professional modern African theatre is concerned, a theatre that anticipates the creative contributions of the products of artistic training institutions of Ghana in the evolution of dynamic theatre forms until now, there are no models for the country.
• The need to fulfil the objective of the NTM as stated by Kwame Nkrumah in 1963, to develop new forms of dance and drama, of music and creative writing that are closely related to the ideals and aspirations of Ghanaians.

From mid-February to mid-December 1983, the following guidelines were drawn for the establishment of the resident theatre.

Name: “ABIBIGROMMA”

The resident theatre company of the SPA is to be called Abibigromma, an Akan name derived from the two words: Abibiman (Africa) and Agromma (players). The name Abibigromma also contains the concept of Abibigoro, which loosely translated means “African Theatre.”

Aims and Objectives: The objectives of SPA in seeking to establish this resident theatre company are:

• To create on the campus of the University of Ghana a professional company which will seek a continuous and consistent basis to satisfy the needs of the University and its surrounding communities in the area of theatre;

• To develop, through this company, adequate professional attitudes, system and techniques of professional theatre management in this country in particular and Africa as a whole;

• To provide an adequate and effective outlet for the creativity of the professional staff of the school and of the IAS as well as provide internship and apprenticeship opportunities for those students of the school with the inclination towards work in professional theatre;
• To create a source of inspiration and model for the establishment of more professional theatre companies in the country;

• To provide, through a program of constant performance, an artistic antenna for determining the national response to creative and cultural experiments and feeding these responses back into the University thereby, enhancing the school’s capability to respond to national artistic and cultural needs.

Composition and Leadership: It is desirable that Abibigromma should initially be made up of a small and compact number of highly versatile, well-trained, committed and resourceful performers to ensure flexibility, easy mobility and a sense of togetherness. An annual National audition for Abibigromma will be held to select performers for the resident theatre company.

Criteria for Selection of Performers: Performers will be required to satisfy the following three conditions for selection:

• A good degree or diploma in the performing arts.

• Ability to act, dance and sing or play one musical instrument.

• Pass the annual National auditioning for Abibigromma

It is proposed that Abibigromma, at least initially, should consist of:

• Ten full-time performers to be recruited from among the best of the graduates of SPA and other equivalent institutions. Candidates will be required to demonstrate ability to act, dance and sing or play at least one musical instrument well.
• One Business Manager/Performer: who must satisfy the requirement for a performer and possess the requisite training, skills and ability to assist in the running of the business affairs of the company.

• Stage Manager/Performer: who satisfies the basic requirements of a performer plus the requisite background training to be the company’s stage manager.

• Technician/Performer: who must also satisfy all the requirements of the performer and have the requisite skills and training to be the company’s lighting and Sound technician.

• Typist/Performer: who must also satisfy the basic requirements for a performer and have the skills and training to type and perform other office functions for the company.

• Costume Artiste/Performer: who must satisfy the basic requirement for a performer and have the basic skills and training to design and make costume for the productions to be mounted by the company.

• Drama Director: to co-ordinate dramatic aspects of the company’s creative work. Qualification: minimum of a Master’s degree in drama

• Dance Director: to choreograph and co-ordinate dance aspects of the company’s work; qualification: minimum of Master’s degree in the area of dance

• Music Director: to compose, teach voice training and co-ordinate musical aspects of the company’s work. Qualification: minimum of Master’s degree in music.

• Artistic Director: to manage the entire company and co-ordinate the work of all artistic staff. Minimum qualification: Master’s degree in any of the theatre arts
with considerable experience in the running, directing and management of theatre groups.

Abibigromma will thus consist of seventeen performers and technicians with four artistic leaders, a total of twenty-one (21).

**Scope of Work:** So far as the creative work of Abibigromma is concerned, the ultimate aim is to evolve African theatre of highest calibre. The company will endeavour to create and present works such as plays- scripted works and unscripted-dance pieces and dance dramas inspired by the oral and written literatures of Africa. The company also plays a leading role in the area of experimental work, with the objective of evolving a meaningful African theatre derived from, and fed, by contemporary Ghanaian and African, urban and rural social experience.

Alongside its productions programs, the company will have a built-in continuous training, orientation and educational programs aimed at providing the artistes with opportunities for constant growth and development. Eventually, the company will be able to provide internship program for theatre artiste from all over Africa.

It is also hoped that the company will be able to invite guest artistes of international repute to lead some of its creative projects. Thus established, Abibigromma will be a model and a source of inspiration not only for the theatre arts students but to the development of professional theatre in the nation and throughout Africa.

**Funding:** As already stated, the funds for the initial establishment of the company will be solicited from various areas such as: the SPA, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Arts Council of Ghana, and the Volta Fund, etc. Abibigromma shall however, work towards achieving as much self-support as possible. Funds earmarked for production shall be
considered investments, which would be expected to generate at same level of funds of little more on effective cost return basis.

*Leadership:* Abibigromma will function professionally under the leadership of a Drama Director, a Choreographer and a Music Director whose various functions will be coordinated by an over-all Artistic Director.

*Management:* Abibigromma will have a management committee consisting of

- The Director, SPA as chairperson
- The Finance Officer, University of Ghana, or his appointed representative (Member)
- Representative of the Vice-Chancellor, University of Ghana. (Member)
- A representative of the Board of the Faculty of Arts University of Ghana. (Member)
- A representative of the Institute of African Studies, Legon. (Member)
- A representative of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (Member)
- A representative of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. (Member)
- A representative of National Film and Television Institute. (Member)
- The Artistic Director, Abibigromma. (Secretary/Convener)

The Management Committee may enact by-laws, rules and regulations to ensure the smooth and effective running of the theatre company. The Board will also be responsible for:
• Regulating the appointment, conditions of service, termination of appointments and retirement benefits of the personnel of the company in accordance with the guidelines of the governing body of the University of Ghana.

• Determining the persons who are authorised to sign contracts, cheques and other documents on behalf of the company.

• Approving the theatre seasons of the company.

The committee in addition to the above proposal gave an elaborated account of preparations made by the school pending the approval of the board. The committee reported that following the closure of the University in 1983, some of the students were identified to start the workshop as the first phase of a series of workshops. The use of the Drama Studio in town had been secured and work had begun there. There were fifteen students including three National Service personnel, seven final year students and five continuing students. Abdallah was the Artistic Director and drama director, Newman, the Dance Director, Misonu Amu as Music Director and William Addo as the Theatre Manager.

The school provided an amount of 13.000.00 old Ghana Cedis, (GHC1.30.00), from the school’s production fund to help defray transport costs and procure some costume. In spite of the difficulties encountered in the provision of food and transport, the first phase was completed within three months, from June to August. In late August therefore, the group had successfully gone through all the workshops and training required and were ready to start full-scale rehearsals on Campus. The decision was taken to house the men in Common Wealth Hall and women, in Volta Hall. The Commonwealth Hall lecture theatre was used for the rehearsals.
The Academic Board of the Faculty of Arts, held series of meetings to deliberate and take a decision on the proposal. On December 22nd, 1984,\textsuperscript{84} the Director of SPA and the Dean of Faculty of Arts presented a progress report on the issue. The Board was informed that the proposal had been thoroughly debated and found to be mutually beneficial to the school and Faculty as a whole and referred to the Ghana Dance Ensemble as an example.

The Board however, expressed some concerns with the mandate of the Management Board of the company and asked that the management body should be referred to as a Committee, instead of Board to ensure that decisions taken by such a committee do not conflict with those of the University.

The Board again asked for the clarification of possible areas of conflict between members of the group and the University. The legal implication of establishing a company under the ambit of an academic institution was also to be resolved.

In view of the above suggestions, the Academic Board recommended that the paper be referred to the Executive Committee of the Faculty for their recommendations. The Executive Committee’s meeting held on March 4, 1984\textsuperscript{85} also could not take any decision on the issue because the minutes of the Academic Board were not detailed enough to capture the concerns being expressed. However, the Executive Board also expressed their anxiety about Abibigromma being a limited liability company and whether the University of Ghana Act allowed the floating of such a company. On funding, the major concern was whether governmental subvention would be sustainable and what would the fate of the company be in case of a suspension of the grants, and whether the group could depend solely on their gate proceeds. Subsequently, the secretary was asked to provide detailed discussion of the Academic Board to the Executive Board.

\textsuperscript{84} University of Ghana Minutes of Faculty of Arts Academic Board.

\textsuperscript{85} University of Ghana Minutes of Executive Committee, Faculty of Arts.
The concerns and the suggestions of both the Academic and the Executive Boards were taken on board by SPA and were addressed. The legal issues of Abibigromma being called a company were referred to the Faculty of Law for advice. Based on the advice of the Faculty of Law, the Boards were informed that there were no legal constraints with the group being a company. There was assurance also from the Ministry for their support of the group. The representatives of SPA at the Board meeting reported that Government had already approved the budget for 1984. The Board of Faculty of Arts gave its approval to the proposal to establish Abibigromma as resident theatre of SPA based on the following agreements.

**Funding:** the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Government would provide The University with funds

**Management:** Committees appointed for the theatre company will be answerable to the Academic Board

**Personnel:** Staff appointed to the theatre company will be University staff and subject to appropriate conditions of service of the University of Ghana.

**Legal Implication of Company:** The name “Theatre Company” has no legal implication for University of Ghana.

The group took off on a sound footing with the support of the government and SPA. Under the leadership of Abdallah as the Artistic Director, the group embarked on educational outreach programs to second cycle schools and research especially to the North. Most of the materials gathered from such researches became the resource materials for some of the works produced by the group at the time. One of the legacies of the group was the development of the “Abibigoro” concept spearheaded by Ben-Abdallah. Yelipoe
Cecilia describes this time as very interesting when she states, “The main focus of the group at this stage, was researching into traditional dances of Ghana. Whichever dance is researched into was put on stage as total theatre, where you saw the fusion of dance, drama and music on stage”

One of the flagships of Abibigromma was the annual theatre festival where the group showcased their artistic works. It was usually a three-week event during which they engaged the general public and other stakeholders in workshops and stage performances. A lot of planning went into the preparations leading to these festivals, which were the climax of activities in the year. They put up at least three to four performances in all the areas. It was one of the means by which the group warmed themselves into the hearts of Ghanaian audience. The festival message of the 1989 “Abibigoro Festival” outlines and emphasises the importance of the group;

We have come a long way in the relatively short period of our existence and it is your continual encouragement that has urged us on. Throughout the past five years it has been with your support that we have continued to dig into the depths of our traditions, folklore and beyond to enrich our repertoire. Once again it is time for us to share our experience with you in an exclusive manner.\(^{86}\)

The presentations were based on the outcome of researches into the traditional and indigenous Ghanaian dances, musicals and dramatic forms. Addo mentions;

We travelled from here [Accra] to the North and as you know, the name Abibigromma is to reflect the African experience, music, dance and storytelling. So we went to the places where the dances or music originated from. This is because we want to know the background, origin and the philosophy of the people and the cultural environment. We want these things so that when we come back we try to translate this into scripted pieces.

\(^{86}\) Performance Brochure of AbibigrommaTheatreFestival 1989.
He further explains that some of Abdallah’s plays were based on these researches. These plays reflect the Abibigoro concept showcasing African music, dance and story-telling style. Most of the productions were experimental works.

The focus of the group is to research and document how traditional art forms function in their original environments, so that students or researchers may not have to travel to these places to get information. This will enhance presentations to be as close to reality as possible. Abibigromma therefore, conducted workshops with dance groups, musical groups and story tellers out of which they created scripted works hence the use of the word ‘laboratory’ to depict the role a professional theatre like Abibigromma is to play in an academic institution. One can therefore, say that the term laboratory referring to Abibigromma is as a result of the role expected of the group within the school and beyond. The group is to be a centre for artistic excellence and innovation, to show case the best of art works from the school as well as to dispel the negative mind set of some in academia who have no or little regard for the performing artiste. Arkhurst points out that, “laboratory” was coined to denote a place of research, experimentation and documentation of African theatre for the SPA. Agyemang Osei confirms this and states, “because of lack of respect for the arts, we must consciously build an image for ourselves through Abibigromma.” Again Arkhurst maintains, “We were so conscious to build our image that is why we want Abibigromma to be a laboratory, as a research tool so that we can build something unique that we can use as a reference point.”

It is therefore, an issue of concern that for a group with the mandate of serving as a reference point for research, experimentation and documentation should have little regard for documentation, as is the case at the time of this research. It should be a priority and research and documentation, should be considered as crucial if the group were to stay faithful to its core mandate. Production processes and documentation of how research is
transformed into stage performance may be more beneficial to students and academia than the documentation of the finished stage performance, which may only serve as a source of education and or entertainment.

Another significant feature of Abibigromma during the first decade of its existence was the role of the management committee that was in place. Addo reiterates the important role the Management Committee played and attributes the successes recorded by the group to the help of the Management Committee. Members were people with requisite knowledge and zeal in theatre and gave all the support needed to the group. Addo states;

Before I became Artistic Director, I was on the Management Committee because I was an artiste and the Business Manager for the group. The calibre of members helped us so much. The committee was supportive and endorsed all our programs, facilitated the provision of funds without which we could have done nothing.  

Members of the management committee as at 1989 were, Mohammed Ben-Abdallah as chairman, Kofi Anyidoho, S.D. Asiama, Atta Annan Mensah and Kwaw Ansah as members. The others were William Addo secretary and Asare Newman as an ex-officio member.

If the role of the management committee is thus crucial to the success and smooth operation of Abibigromma, then the question therefore arises, why Abibigromma has been operating without a management committee from 1991 to date?

In 1987, Government decided to demolish the Drama Studio located in Accra, which had been the residence of the professional groups, to pave way for the building of the still existing NT building. The project under the auspices of NCC, chaired by Ben-Abdallah in conjunction with the Government of China was to build a 1504 seater auditorium and 326

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87 Interview with Addo William.
open-air theatre with state of the art halls for exhibition rooms, rehearsal rooms, green rooms and offices.\textsuperscript{89} The design of the edifice was such that it required central air conditioning system and thus resulted in the high cost of hiring.\textsuperscript{90} The decision about the demolishing of the Drama Studio brought about a disagreement between the Government and other stakeholders, especially Sutherland who was a strong advocate of the NTM and the brain behind the building of the Drama Studio. Eventually the University consented to build a replica of the demolished one in Legon for the University with the consent of SPA.\textsuperscript{91}

Following the completion of the NT, an extended dispute on the transfer of the resident groups, Abibigromma and the Ghana Dance Ensemble to the NT ensued again between the University authorities and the NCC. On one hand, the University was of the view that the two resident groups should remain at Legon for research purposes. On the other hand, the NCC maintained that, the two groups were technically “removed” from the University per PNDC Law 521 (1989). Eventually, 15 members of Abibigromma, including the Artistic Director, Addo William, opted to move to the NT. Nii Yarttey as the Artistic Director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble also moved with a majority of the performers to the NT. The University then retained the remaining five members of Abibigromma, and SPA had to reconstitute the group.

The implication of the split can be looked at from two dimensions. The first, being the existence of two different groups using the name, Abibigromma. The other issue had to deal with the resultant vacuum and operational difficulties created since the split; to the extent that, the group on campus was faced with a myriad of challenges. The use of the

\textsuperscript{89} Anthony A. Aidoo, Anthony and Gibbs, James. \textit{African Playwrights and Politics}. p. 86.
\textsuperscript{91} Minutes of the 119\textsuperscript{th} Meeting of the University Council held on 29\textsuperscript{th} May 1987.
name Abibigromma by the two groups had been an issue of concern to Abibigromma at Legon, as has been alluded to earlier on, and needed to be resolved. There were some attempts to resolve the controversy leading to the NT group taking the name National Theatre Players while still using Abibigromma to advertise their programs. Semevor explains that the NCC’s decision to continue using Abibigromma was for administrative reasons.

As mentioned earlier, the division of the group can be seen to create some challenges for the group that remained on campus and has for over fifteen years, has continued to grapple with this, especially with regards to administrative structures. Abibigromma had to start building a new core of actors. With the five performers who remained behind, the group had to get students and performers, some from amateur groups, resulting in Abibigromma employing artiste who were not graduates of SPA as stipulated in the approved proposal document. All the paraphernalia belonging to the group before the split had been taken away to the National Theatre and it was a difficult moment for the group. Yelipoe mentions that the group had to find a means of funding since the research funding came from the Ministry. The University could not immediately raise funds for the group and that began a struggle for survival.92 Aidoo and Gibbs refer to this split and its resultant effect by stating; “The careers of various artistes have been affected and, although employment opportunities in the arts have been increased, there are those who feel that the scheme Ben-Abdallah devised did not always serve the best interest of the arts or the artistes.”

The effect and the uncertainty of the fate of artistes indeed was one of the reasons some of the performers opted to stay on. Ayitey Ben, the current Artistic Director of Ghana Dance Ensemble shares the same view and states;

92 Interview with Yelipoe, Cecilia. April 18 2011
When the group was asked to move to the National Theatre, some of us the old members decided to stay at Legon because we were not sure of the prospects there, especially when the terms and conditions of service could not readily be made known to us.\textsuperscript{93}

The question one may ask then is: could this situation have been handled in a better way? With the benefit of hindsight one can say the issue could have been handled better. Addo opines;

I think what Abdallah wanted to do was not a bad idea only that there were personality clashes between him and the powers that be. I believe if cool heads were at work at the time a better solution or compromise could have been struck. I don’t think the University authorities understood Abdallah. In any case, it was the Government who was paying members so if they want to have them at National Theatre why not, but some politicking came in.

Arkhurst also mentions that Addallah’s intention was to use an already trained group instead of starting all over again at the NT, and most of the original members agreed to go because of better remuneration including free accommodation, which they were promised.

Whatever the reasons for the split might be, once it had taken place and the University had agreed to keep some members on campus, all efforts had to be geared towards revamping the company to ensure it lived up to expectation. As it later turned out, there seemed to be no conflict between the two groups. There have been collaborations involving the two groups as could be seen in the productions of Ghana @ Fifty under the directorship of Martin Owusu. The two groups came together in the production of J.B. Danquah’s \textit{Third Woman} directed by Dzifa Glikpoe and Faiwo’s \textit{Fith Landing Stage} directed by Doris Kuwornu. It is also on record that both groups have had Artistic

\textsuperscript{93} Interview with Ayitey, Ben. Artistic Director, Ghana Dance Ensemble.
Directors who worked with both groups, for example Sandy Arckhurst, Yaw Asare and Ossei Agyemang who became the Acting Executive Director for the NT in 2012. Abdallah after the split had directed some of his plays with Abibigromma, and Nii Yartey who had led the dance group to the National Theatre had returned to the Dance Department.

4.3 Production of *The Gods Are Not to Blame*

This section of the presentation contains the researcher’s experience as director of Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods are not to Blame* and Kodjo Mawugbe’s *In the Chest of a Woman*. It also relates the educational tour of Abibigromma to the Upper West Region.

The researcher for the purpose of this project sought permission from the Artistic Director Akua Abloso, to direct a major play in Abibigromma and was subsequently asked to direct Rotimi’s *The Gods are not to Blame*. The group had been commissioned by Aburi Girls Senior High School to produce the play to commemorate the school’s 50th anniversary.

On 2nd February 2011, the researcher read through the script with the group followed by a production conference. The researcher proceeded to cast the play. Casting the major roles was not much of a problem, however, due to the crowd scenes students had to be taken on board. Five students were invited to join the cast. After the casting, the rehearsals commenced. It is worthy to note that *The Gods are not to Blame* had been performed by the group before. The rehearsals lasted for four weeks and the play was staged on the 5th of March 2011, at the auditorium of Aburi Girls Senior High School.

4.3.1 Challenges

As mentioned above, the cast who had played roles in previous productions were reluctant to adapt to the new blocking. The researcher had to be resolute in making sure
the new movements were adhered to. Finally the cast fell in line with the new direction and played according to the director’s artistic vision.

Constant interruption from other engagements of the group was a major setback for rehearsals. Within the stipulated period for rehearsals, the Administrative Assistant accepted engagements for dance performances without due regard to the on-going rehearsals. These interruptions had a negative impact on the rehearsal schedule. As a result, the cast had to struggle to get the play ready in time.

A week to the performance, the Artistic Director instructed the researcher to finance the production since it was part of his project. This resulted in an argument and the researcher explained that the production belonged to Abibigromma and that the researcher was only directing. He added further that the proceeds from the production would be going to Abibigromma and not Theatre Arts Department. The Artistic Director did not take kindly to the researcher’s position and consequently ordered that no funds be released. She also instructed that the researcher should not be acknowledged as the director of the play. According to her, she would not be able to defend or justify the budget to the Director of the school. The researcher informed Africanus Aveh, the then Head of Theatre Arts Department about this development. He intervened and explained to the Artistic Director that the production belonged to Abibigromma and that the researcher was directing it as part of the requirements for his research. In spite of this the Artistic Director would not change her mind to provide funds for the production.

The researcher in consultation with the artistes decided to use bits and pieces of disused flats and other accessories, to construct the set and then scraped for old costume from the costume department for the production. The costume for the production was gleaned from the old stock of costume from the green room. In effect, the production could not meet the
researcher’s professional and aesthetic expectation. In spite of these setbacks, the play was mounted successfully.

4.4 Production of In the Chest of a Woman

After the successful performance of Ola Rotimi’s The Gods Are Not To Blame, the Artistic Director once again invited the researcher to her office and requested him to direct Efo Kodjo Mawugbe’s In the Chest of a Woman. She explained that the group was requested to present a play on behalf of the school as part of its contribution towards the celebration of the “Home Coming” of the University of Ghana, Legon. The “Home Coming” was celebrated from August to September 2011 and the play was presented at the Efua Sutherland’s Drama Studio, on 30th and 31st August, and again on 1st and 2nd September 2011. The researcher accepted to direct the play with the assurance of the Artistic Director who promised her full support. The researcher chose Mr. Nugah Brightmoore, a senior staff of the group, to be the stage manager.

After going through the necessary processes of reading, analysis, interpretation, casting and production conference, the rehearsals started. The reading through lasted for three days. This was because two hours was allocated within a day on the timetable since the group had other engagements. Moreover, some members failed to turn up on time for the process, especially because the reading was after the afternoon break. On the first day for example, only one hour out of the two was utilised. It is worthy to note that the researcher took up the issue of lateness to rehearsal with the General Stage Manager but he could not do much about the situation. The issue of discipline the researcher observed has to be tackled by the Director. The presence of the Director at rehearsals would no doubt instil discipline among the staff. It is interesting to note that the Director could not sit in any of
the rehearsals even though the researcher invited her to do so. The Director explained to the researcher that she was busy with other engagements.

After the reading, a critical analysis of the script followed where the researcher led a discussion on the various dramatic elements such as the theme, setting and the plot of the play. Together with the cast; a working theme of ‘The Need for Change’ was arrived at.

In Efo Mawugbe’s *In the Chest of a Woman*, an ambitious Princess, Nana Yaa Kyeretswie sets out to prove to men of the Kingdom of Ebusa that women can match men when it comes to courage and leadership. She is therefore, greatly disappointed when her mother bequeaths the Kingdom to her younger brother, Kweku Duah. The Queen before her death also decrees that, any of the children who first bears a son, should be King after Kweku Duah. Nana Yaa and Kweku Duah both gave birth to girls but Nana Yaa quickly disguises her daughter as a boy in order to have her rule as King. Her daughter, Ekua whom she named Owusu Agyemang is found out to be a girl and nearly lost her life, together with Ama Ekya and Nana Opong who all become victims of tradition and custom. In the end the chiefs and elders decide to set aside tradition, thus averting the executions.
Fig. 1: The researcher explains a point to a section of musicians during a rehearsal.

Casting of the play was challenging, especially for the fact that the lead role was supposed to be played by a teenage girl or a young adult woman who would be disguised as male. The challenge lay in the fact that, the characterisation and general demeanour of the one playing the role should be that of a male, until her true identity is discovered. Another challenge lay in the need to have a double cast for the major roles. This was to forestall any difficulty that might arise with the absence of the National Service Personnel serving with the group, who had to leave for further studies at the end of their service. Eventually Nana Pokua Ossei Acheampong and Mavis Abroakwa were double cast to play the role of the male imposter.
During the final stages of the rehearsals, there was a request to mount the play for some senior high institutions within Accra. The researcher conferred with the Artistic Director to ascertain the feasibility of the proposal and it was settled that it could be used as a platform to test the play.

Fig. 2: The researcher demonstrating a movement to casts at a rehearsal
Subsequently, the researcher and the Stage Manager visited three schools to finalize preparations and set the final dates for the staging of the play, and to ensure everything was in order especially, performance space. The schools were Kimbu Senior High Technical School (KIMBU), Presbyterian Senior High School (PRESEC) and West Africa Senior High School (WASS).

At KIMBU, the team met the head of the English Department, who had been detailed by the Headmaster of the school to conduct us around. Due to the large population of students and also the fact that the school auditorium was still under construction, the researcher advised that three classrooms with collapsible partitioning be converted into an auditorium to make room to accommodate the students.
At PRESEC, the teacher in charge of the program informed the team that the date initially slated for the performance would not be possible, as the school was going on break, and on their return, the end of term exams would commence. We therefore, agreed to come back at the beginning of the following term to fix a new date.

When the researcher and his companions got to WASS, the teacher in charge was absent but had delegated the senior and the entertainment prefects to take us to the assembly hall to inspect the performance space. After ascertaining everything was in place, the researcher spoke on phone to the teacher to confirm our readiness.

In the course of visiting the schools, the respective teachers expressed their desire to have the group conduct Literature workshop on the set play for both students and staff. The researcher agreed that a one-hour workshop would be an integral component of the performance.

The researcher met with the Artistic Director to discuss issues pertaining to technicalities a week to the first performance. The Artistic Director informed the researcher that there was no budgetary allocation for the production so for the provision of logistics for the performances we would have to depend on what was available. In effect the group selected costume from the old stock. It is important to note that Abibigromma has assortment of traditional costumes acquired over the years for various productions. As a result, adequate number of costume was obtained which were appropriate for the play. Properties were also taken from the old stock. The set used for the performances however, was not as expected. The researcher had planned to use multiple sets for the three major settings in the play, namely Nana Yaa’s home at Kyeremfaso, the palace of Kweku Duah and a durbar grounds at Nkwanta but the actions had to be played in front of a single set.
because there were not enough flats to use for the multiple set. The situation led to rearrangement of set during scene changes, which affected the tempo of the performance.

The play opened at KIMBU after an hour of workshop conducted by the researcher that took both students and staff through the rudiments of play analysis in general, and its application to *In the Chest of a Woman* in particular. It was a fruitful and lively interaction after which the teachers and students expressed their satisfaction with the process.

Fig. 4: A section of the Cast arriving for a performance at KIMBU
The play was successfully performed, and lasted for two and half hours. Even though the play was long, the students and teachers were highly pleased with the performance.

Fig. 5: A scene from *In the Chest of a Woman* at KIMBU

At WASS also, the performance took place as scheduled. It is, however, worthy of mention that there was a hitch with the organization of the students. The teacher in charge of the program was not present because he was sitting for an examination and had asked a colleague to supervise the sales of the tickets to students. The teacher could not make the necessary preparations before our arrival at the school. It took the researcher, the entertainment prefect and the president of the drama club of the school to go and convince the students to come and buy tickets to watch the play. This development delayed the start of the play for about two hours. In view of this, only fifteen minutes was spent on the workshop before the commencement of the play. Though, less than half of the school’s population came for the performance as a result of the poor organisation, it
was a successful one and the students and the teachers expressed their satisfaction and stated that they had their monies’ worth.

The above situation the researcher observed could be avoided if the group had done series of follow ups to assess the situation before the day of performance but as it was, they depended solely on the benevolence of the teachers to organise the students.

After the two performances, the researcher met with the group for a post-performance analysis. The researcher informed the cast that some of the scenes dragged during the performances and there was the need to strengthen them. There also was a general consensus that there was the need to work on the tempo and rhythm in order to reduce the performance time. With these concerns in mind, a series of rehearsals were held to address them.

4.4.1 The Presentation of In the Chest of a Woman, Efua Sutherland Drama Studio

Publicity for the production started a week to the opening night. Some media houses that carried the advertisement for the play included Joy FM, an Accra based radio station, and Radio Universe at Legon. There was a scheduled radio interview with Radio Universe where the researcher and some of the major cast were to have a discussion on the play. However, the interview could not hold because the time allotted for this exercise coincided with the inaugural ceremony of the University of Ghana “Home Coming Celebrations”. The group had to perform some dances to usher in the dignitaries at the University Ceremonial Grounds.

On 30th September 2012 the play opened at the Efua Sutherland Drama Studio with a full house. Due to the publicity that preceded the “Home Coming Celebration” by the University in general and SPA in particular, the performance was watched by a full house. It is worthy to note that the dignitaries that graced the occasion included the Vice-
Chancellor of the University of Ghana Legon, the Dean of Students, past and present Directors of the School of Performing Arts, Lecturers and Alumni.

![Image](image_url)

**Fig.6: A scene from *In The Chest of a Woman* at Efua Sutherland Drama Studio**

It is also important to state that the performance was a successful one and the cast received a standing ovation at curtain call, with glowing remarks from most of the patrons who interacted with the researcher at the end of the performance. One of such patrons was Mr Damascus, a former student of the SPA now a lecturer at the University for Development Studies, Wa. He was full of praise for the splendid performance and expressed his desire to invite Abibigromma to the Northern Region for an educational and performance tour so that students in the North can also benefit from such a wonderful artistic expression. The researcher advised him to get in touch with the Artistic Director for further deliberations.
4.4.2 Performance and Educational Tour of the Upper West Region

The researcher, Damascus and the Artistic Director on 25th January 2012, met at the Director’s office to explore the feasibility of touring the Northern Region with the play. The Director informed Damascus of Abibigromma’s preparedness to honour the proposal, and asked him to make necessary arrangements, such as accommodation, the organisation of the schools and other logistics for the trip. After a series of correspondence, a date was set. The initial proposal was to move to the Northern Region and within a period of two months, cover the Upper West and East Regions. However, due to the distance between the Regions and financial constraints, Upper West was selected as a pilot Region after which, Upper East and the Northern Region would also be taken care of.

The workshop component of the program necessitated the inclusion of other members to assist the researcher. The members met for four times (one hour per day) where the researcher took them through the rudiments and design of the workshop. The literature workshop has been a component of Abibigromma’s educational outreach programs. In respect of the Upper West educational tour, the researcher relied on the information provided by the Head of the English Department, KIMBU. It is worthy to note that the workshop was originally conducted for KIMBU. The basic requirement was to espouse the major dramatic elements in drama. Therefore, the agreement was that the workshop should cover the dramatic elements of theme, plot, setting, characterisation and dramatic devices (conflict, contrast, flashback, humour and irony) in respect to In the Chest of a Woman. Agbeko Gershon, Esther Offei, and Dawson Esam were finally selected to be part of the team to conduct the workshops. The researcher came out with a handout to serve as a guide.

The researcher did not take any fee for any services provided in relation to any of the productions for this research including the compilation of the handout. It was a project
conducted as part of an academic exercise by the researcher. The members rehearsed during normal working hours (8.00am-1200pm and 200pm-500pm) and were not paid any special allowances aside their regular salaries or any activity leading to the productions. However, overnight allowances were paid to members for the tour. The researcher also received an amount of GHC300.00 for travelling with the group. The researcher was not paid overnight allowance because at the time of this research he was on leave of absence without pay, to undertake this research.

On 27th February 2012, the researcher led Abibigromma consisting of twenty-five members and three drivers to Wa, in the Upper West Region on a three-week tour of workshops and performances for second cycle schools within the Region. The group left Accra at 7 a.m. and got to Wa at about 2p.m. the following day. The journey took that long because the bus broke down on two occasions and had to be fixed. The breakdown of the vehicle as the driver explained to the researcher was due to the weakness of the engine. The explanation from the Artistic Director revealed that the entire school over used the bus; moreover, the budgetary allocation for repairs was exhausted. These incidents delayed the journey for over three hours. That notwithstanding, the group arrived at Waa and settled at the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) hostel where arrangements had been made for accommodation. All arrangements for accommodation was taken care of by Damascus, and it is worthy to note that adequate preparations were made in terms of accommodation at the three centres the group was lodged. Two persons were paired in a room, as was the usual case when the group travels and members checked into their rooms after a short meeting with Damascus, the facilitator, and settled for the night.
The program started after a day’s rest. The researcher and Damascus mapped out the strategy for the performances. It was agreed that because the schools were far apart and some were particularly very far from Wa, our initial base, we would take an average of two schools in a day. The performances were therefore, slated for the mornings and late afternoons. The group moved to Jirapa, the second base, after performing in the schools within the environs of Wa. After Jirapa, the group finally arrived at Lawra before returning to Accra on March 11, 2012. Accommodation at Jirapa and Lawra were pre-arranged by Damascus and his team on the ground and were not different from that of Wa. The rooms were comfortable and members were happy about the effective organisation undertaken by Damascus and his team. It is also important to note that arrangements and payments for accommodation were his responsibility. The arrangement pertaining to the performances within the schools were his duty. Sales of tickets, arrangement of students and performance spaces were as well handled by Damascus.
4.4.3 Schools Covered in the Upper West Region

The following are the schools that were involved in the program.

- 29th February 2012. Wa Senior High School.
- 1st March 2012. Bole Senior High School and Tuna Senior High School
- 2nd March 2012. Lassis Senior High School and Tupaso Senior High School, Waa
- 3rd March 2012. University of Development Studies (UDS), Waa Campus
- 4th March 2012. Rest Day
- 5th March 2012. Queen of Peace Senior High School, Tumu
- 6th March 2012. Travelling from Waa to Jirapa.
- 7th March. 2012. St. Francis of Assisi Senior High School, Jirapa
- 8th Lawra Senior High School and Ko Senior High School
• 9th March. 2012. Ullo Senior High School and Kansec Senior High School

• 10th March. 2012. Eremon Senior High School

Fig. 9: Some Students of UDS, Wa Campus and Researcher after a Performance

4.4.4 Challenges

The researcher would like to put on record that he enjoyed the full co-operation of the entire membership. The Director had briefed them on the purpose of this research and why the researcher needed to assume the role of the leader of the delegation, aside being the director of the play. The researcher assumed limited administrative role to enable him have insight into the administrative and managerial processes of the group. However, the researcher encountered some challenges.
The first challenge was replacing National Service persons who were part of the original cast when they had left at the end of their service. It was however impossible to get a replacement for one of the major female characters, who was taken ill just before the group left for Wa. This compelled the researcher to take up the role, becoming a female impersonator, a component of the concert party genre (Fig. 11). This became one of the ways to whip up enthusiasm among the student audience in some of the schools. The researcher recalls how he was always met with cheers anytime he appeared on stage without even saying a line. The researcher played the role of a gossip in the King’s palace. The lines such as, “A man is at his ugly best when he wakes up from bed” can be
considered as humorous and for such lines to be delivered by a female imposter made it
gmore hilarious.

In one instance, the group arrived at Bole for the performance only to be told by the
assistant headmaster who was in charge of the program that most of the students were not
willing to pay to attend the performance. Some of the students were actually standing
idling by and undecided and the researcher was asked talk to them. Since the performance
was about to start, the researcher was already in costume and had no choice than coming
out with the costume. On seeing the researcher in female dress, the students started
laughing and came closer to have a better look. Eventually, the researcher did not tell
them anything but the students started rushing in to see what the female impersonator
would be doing. From this experience the group decided to use it as a way of getting the
students to watch the play in the rest of the schools visited.

The use of the microphones (Fig. 11) was necessitated not because of problems with
projection or acoustics. Rather it has become part and parcel of the schools programmes
that Abibigromma had undertaken. From experience, it was mandatory to use the public
address system because it is a demand from the schools. It is also a way of selling the
program. Before the performances begin, it is customary for the schools’ entertainment
team to treat the audience to some popular tunes and also after the show there is a demand
for same. It is therefore, difficult to do a performance without the use of public address
system. Though, the educational tour was for academic purposes, one couldn’t divorce
the entertainment component from it.

The use of microphones on stage however, is not peculiar to Abibigromma or the tour. It
can now be found in theatres in Ghana today. Roverman Production for example, uses
lapel microphones on stage. The NT stage also has microphones, which are activated
during stage performances. The Efua Sutherland Drama Studio is fixed with microphones. The use of microphones is becoming a style or tradition similar to concert party; in other words, it can be likened to modern African drama borrowing from concert party style.

It is imperative to state here that the use of microphones and other technical equipment such as light has been in the theatre in Ghana for some time now when concert party was at its peak and even now. Arkhurst mentions that the use of microphones, lighting equipment, musical instruments and so on was a novelty, something one cannot take away from the concert party because audiences may not only be interested in the stage performance alone but also in all other elements that enhance or complement the action on stage.

The equipment for the trip included an amplifier, four cordless microphone receivers, and two speakers. One difficulty was that sometimes our equipment were incompatible with the schools systems and in such cases, we had to hire sound equipment from individuals in the community. Again the group had no lap-top computer which is suitable for travelling so the sound man had to use his personal computer. The researcher asked Plange Fred why he had to use his own machine and he replies, “We have asked the office countless times to procure one for us but they always say we have sent the requisition to the Registry and it has not materialised yet.”

The group’s generator, which was acquired in 2007, could not be taken because a part had to be replaced. This came to light when the researcher requested that the generator be serviced to make sure it was in good condition for the trip. Eshun Maxwell who is in charge then informed the researcher there was the need to replace some part but this could not be done because funds were not available. Eshun also mentions that the condition of
the generator was as a result of over-use by the school. Even though the generator was for
the exclusive use of Abibigromma, other departments constantly borrow it. The
administrative assistant corroborated this and states; “You see when they come for it you
cannot say no because they pass through the Director who has already approved it.
Meanwhile when there is any problem we go for money from our accounts to repair it.”

The researcher enquired of the Artistic Director why such situation existed and she
explained that, Abibigromma is for the school so whatever belongs to Abibigromma
belongs to the school. This situation reflects a sad situation of affairs since this applies to
all equipment and instruments belonging to the group, for instance the use of the
Abibigromma vehicles. The school has no bus of its own, and more often than not
depended on the group’s vehicles when the need arises, including funerals and sometimes
for the personal use of some faculty members at no cost. Interestingly, Abibigromma
alone bears the cost of maintenance and repairs.

The researcher therefore, observed that the collective use of Abibigromma equipment and
transport affects the financial stability of the group. The Finance Officer, SPA explained
that each department has its own budgetary allocation based on their projections.
Therefore, it may seem unfair on the part of Abibigromma to spend their budgetary
allocation on repair of vehicles, which are used by the entire school.
Another major challenge was that, the cast had no crew and artistes had to double as such. They had to off load the truck of all the properties, including very heavy drums and the set for the production, strike and load them back after the performance. This normally wore them down, especially when they had to do two performances in a day; nevertheless, in the estimation of the researcher this should not be an excuse for not willing to pack equipment. The group has always been responsible for chores associated with performances during tours and were very much aware that nobody was there to
perform such chores. It is also known that, travelling troupes like the concert parties were responsible for loading and unloading of equipment that was discussed earlier. It was also established that there were a set of code of conduct for members of the travelling performers and they are expected to abide by them. It is therefore discouraging for members of Abibigromma to exhibit a lackadaisical attitude towards packing and or unpacking. Furthermore, the term of reference in the appointment letter of workers within the University of Ghana stipulates; “Your duties will be laid down for you by the Director or by any other person appointed to act on his behalf.”

One can then say that the behaviour put up by some members of the group on tour borders on indiscipline and disrespect for authority and there is the need to stamp it out.

Another issue was the distance between the towns within which the schools were situated. There were constant breakdown of the bus that had to be fixed and this delayed some of the performances. There was one breakdown from Jirapa to Tumu for example, which was due to an air lock because the diesel got finished. The shortage came about because the driver could not refuel at Jirapa before leaving for Tumu. The filling stations were out of stock and the driver filled the bus from a spare tank, intending to top up at the nearest station. The bus however, ran out of fuel before the next town and it took about one and half hours to get a refill. After the refill a mechanic had to bleed the engine for it to start which took another half hour. When the group finally arrived at Tumu, the program had been delayed for over two hours and the Headmaster was not happy with the delay but the performance was done. In spite of these challenges the tour was very successful and the group returned safely to Accra on the 11th of March 2012.

One important observation is the improvisation and the adaptations that had to be put in place as the need arose. The performances mostly took place in the schools’ auditoriums that are not suitable and big enough to allow the set to be put up. The group had to make do with the limited space available by improvising which is one of the basic elements of the traditional Concert Party of Ghana.

4.5 Focus Group Discussion (FGD), 25th April 2011.

The researcher arranged with the Stage Manager of Abibigromma, Ben Quaye, for time to conduct the group discussion. The afternoon section of April 17, 2012, was set aside for this exercise. The meeting started at about 2:15 p.m. with nineteen members present. Those who were not present included the three administrative staff and two artistes who were separately interviewed.

The discussion began with the researcher explaining the focus of his research and the purpose of the FGD. The members were instructed to speak to the questions posed. After all contributions were exhausted, the researcher then summarised the points as the position of the group on that particular topic or question. The outcome of the discussion follows in the next section.

On the question of whether the objectives for the formation of the group were still relevant, the group was of the view that they were. The objective of having a practical wing of the school is very important as well as researching into the oral traditions of our culture and transforming these into stage performances cannot be relegated to the background so long as we continue to exist as distinct society

The group also reemphasised the importance of the Abibigromma as the research and practical department of the SPA. With the increasing number of student population it
would be appropriate for the school to exploit the potentials within the group by involving them in demonstrations and workshops. If this is not done, the objective of using the group as the practical unit may continue to elude the school.

The next question posed was whether the group was capable of being involved in academic work of the school, taking into account the level of academic qualification of members. They pointed out that out of the twenty-one artistes, fourteen were graduates of SPA and four members have post-graduate degrees. Other members with lower levels of qualifications were also experienced artistes in their special fields and can assist with any form of demonstrations and instructions. The researcher wishes to point out here that, SPA uses personnel other than senior members in practical instructions. There are tutors in dance and music departments who give practical lessons to students and this can be replicated in the drama section. The Ghana Dance Ensemble conducts practical lessons in traditional dance to level 100 and 200 and examines students for IAS.\(^95\)

It was also established that the departure from some of the above objectives was not deliberate but had resulted from many factors, some of them being the unavailability of funds and the lack of continuity when the directorship changes. They cited a recent case where the group had been engaged in a TfD project, which took the group to all the regions. This was in 2007. When the group got to the Northern Region, the Director, Agyemang Ossei, took advantage and asked the group to conduct research into about ten different dance forms of the North. These dances were well documented. When the group returned to Accra, it started the process of showcasing these dances for the school and the general public. However, the process was truncated with the coming of a new Artistic Director. When the researcher asked if a copy of the documented piece could be assessed he was informed that, the recording was still with the editor. The researcher contacted the

\(^{95}\) Interview with Ben Ayitey, Artistic Director Ghana Dance Ensemble.
editor who informed him that he had already given it out. The researcher has decided to raise this issue because this seems to be the way documentation is handled within the group. The keeping of official documents and research materials are currently an issue that need immediate attention.

Members outlined three major engagements of the group that had constituted the focus of the group in the past ten years. It included production of plays from their repertory, which were performed at the Drama Studio. Attempts to take these performances to the National Theatre for the patronage of the general public have continued to prove futile because of lack of sponsorship. It was also sad to note that patronage of these productions at the Drama Studio had been gradually dwindling due to lack of funds to do proper publicity and perhaps, the familiarity of the student audience with these works. Dance performances at functions, inaugural ceremonies and funerals were other engagements of the group.

The group also undertook school outreach programs, and carried out workshops in literature and performances on set books for second cycle schools. An example was the educational tour of the Upper West, which was led by the researcher.

The group also discussed the level of artistic excellence and professionalism in the group. The researcher drew the attention of the group to a publication in the 18th March 2010, edition of Ghanaian Times. On page 16 of the publication, was an article captioned “Abibigromma must be Revived” written by Michael Akenoo, a theatre critic who among other things questioned the artistic competence of the current membership;

…the breaking of Abibigromma Theatre Company into two groups created a big crack which is yet to be dealt with and remedied. Another factor, which is also militating against the advancement of the Abibigromma Theatre Company, is the lack of proper training for its present members.
The group disagreed with the assessment of Akenoo. Members advanced the argument that the declining fortunes of the group cannot be attributed to lack of training. The assertion that, the gap created by those who defected to the National Theatre is yet to be filled was also said to be farfetched. Members supported their position by citing the fact that, most of the current membership included graduates from SPA who are experienced professional artistes. They attributed the falling standard of performances of the group to lack of funds and logistics.

On the mode of appointment of the Artistic Directors, members have no problem with the rotational system of selecting senior members from the three departments of the school. The two year term is also enough since it is renewable. However, they opined that it is not the best when members do not have any input as to who becomes the director of the group.

On the artistic impact of directors of the group, members pointed out that some of the recent past directors left the artistic direction of productions in the hands of members. They mentioned for example that Akua Abloso (2009-2011) and the current director Kenn Kafui (2011-2014) have not directed any artistic work in the group. It also came to light that some hardly attended performances. The researcher as a follow up to this position sought explanation from these directors. Abloso who is from Dance Department on her part stated that she was busy with teaching and administrative work, and so could not actively direct productions. Kafui who also comes from Music Department submitted that he is not well versed in drama and play directing so he leaves it in the hands of performers. Members therefore, were of the view that the artistic background of directors should be considered before appointing them. However, even if the appointees do not have much experience or training in directing, potential directors could be encouraged to
interact with the group, to enable them have an in depth knowledge of how the group operated and what was expected of him or her.

As it emerged, some of the major problems facing the group included the deplorable working environment, issues of promotion, technical and logistic problems, funding, accommodation, to mention but a few. On promotion, some of the junior members stated that they have not been promoted after over twelve years of being employed. Junior staffs are supposed to be promoted every six years; however this is based on the recommendation and assessment of the departmental head. The concerned members made it clear that they have submitted their applications to the director’s office for endorsement and transmission to the Registry. The researcher’s enquiry into this issue revealed that the Director and Administrative Assistant failed to process the forms on time because the Administrator had travelled at the time, resulting in the delay. This explanation, however, in the estimation of the researcher is not sustainable and is a reflection of some of the administrative lapses in the group. Seven junior staffs due for promotion in 2012 had to be promoted in 2013.

Abibigromma had no technical staff to augment the work of the artistes. Only two members of the group had University accommodation. University accommodation is applied for, and granted depending on availability. The point here is that a special appeal could be tabled for staff of Abibigromma taking into cognisance, night performances. Members among other things recommended these challenges to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Faculty should be more involved with the day-to-day activities of the group.

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96 Terms of Reference for Unionised staff of Universities of Ghana.
4.6 Discussion of Results

The proceeding section deals with the discussion of results pertaining to Abibigromma the Case Study. The first part contains pictorial display of some aspects of the infrastructure of Abibigromma and its staffing level. The next portion contains detailed narrative of findings. It is categorised into sections based on the underpinning objectives of this research.

4.6.1 Theatre Infrastructure of Abibigromma

What serves as the rehearsal hall of Abibigromma where it operates its day to day activities is a wooden structure, situated at the Estate Development and Municipal Services Department of the University of Ghana.

![Fig. 12: The front view of the Structure, which houses Abibigromma](image-url)
This yard also serves as a garage and parking lot for the buses of the University. It is a shed that has been enclosed with 1/8\textsuperscript{th} inches plywood and fitted with two doors. It encloses about 45 by 70 feet space.

![Fig. 13: Part of the yard and shed that houses Abibigromma](image)

The enclosure is fitted with louvre blades along the top walls of the structure. The back of the structure is partitioned into 3 sections which serve as male and female changing rooms with the third section for storage of drums and properties. The floor of the shed is cemented and at the time of this research was cracked and in disrepair. It is also dusty and makes the room stuffy during dance rehearsals because the surrounding yard is unpaved.
The space is fitted with 6 fluorescent lights and two Fresnel lights none of which was functioning at the time of this study. The air conditioning that was installed when the structure was made had been out of use for the past 6 years prior to this study, according to the Stage Manager. The interior that serves as the rehearsals place has no stage or back stage and the space is cluttered with all sorts of items ranging from flats to drums.

Fig. 14: Part of the rehearsal space with props and flats

Other bulky stage equipment and properties that cannot fit into the space are stored behind the enclosure at the mercy of the weather.
4.6.2 Lighting and Sound Equipment

There are 6-100w Parpan and 2 Fresnel lights.

The sound equipment is made up of 1 Equalizer, 1 cordless Microphone Receiver, 4 cordless Microphone and 8 Horn Speakers.

4.6.3 Drums and other Musical Instruments

Abibigromma has about 10 sets of drums, which are used in the performance of the various dances in their repertory. Some of the dances include Adowa, Abgadza, Kpalongo, Damba Takai, and Togo Atsia, to mention but a few. Aside the drums, there
are 2 Xylophones and a number of *atenteben*, a locally manufactured flute that each member has.

![Sets of drums, and doors leading to the changing rooms in the background](image)

**Fig. 16: Sets of drums, and doors leading to the changing rooms in the background**

### 4.6.4 Props and Costume

Properties of the group included baskets, stools, calabashes, disused office equipment, assorted tables and chairs, whisks, masks, linguist staffs to mention but a few.

The costume section has an assortment of clothing from which the group selects for performances. It is one of the well organised facilities of the group because it is located in the Drama Studio. The room has shelves and cabinets for holding costume. It is also fitted with one washing machine.
4.6.5 Transport

Abibigromma has one thirty-two seat Tata bus, which was acquired in 2006, and one Tata haulage Pick-up truck purchased in 2007. These two means of transport according to the driver are in need of servicing.

![The Abibigromma bus and the front view of the rehearsal hall](image)

Fig. 17: The Abibigromma bus and the front view of the rehearsal hall

The bus is out of use and is left in front of the rehearsal hall. When asked why this situation exists, the driver, William Ampabeng replied by stating that the authorities maintained that the vehicles had exhausted their annual budget for maintenance so work on the vehicles could only be done the following fiscal year.
4.7 Staffing
Abibigromma has twenty-one performers, three administrative staff and a driver. The following table shows the total staffing level of Abibigromma at the time of this research. It includes the level of academic qualification, rank and area of specialisation of members.
### 4.8 Staffing Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>QUALIFICATION</th>
<th>AREA OF SPECIALISATION</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Production Assistant</td>
<td>Diploma/BA</td>
<td>Dance/Drama/Music</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Production Assistant</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Theatre Arts/Music</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Production Assistant</td>
<td>Diploma in music</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Production Assistant</td>
<td>BFA</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Production Assistant</td>
<td>BFA</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Production Assistant</td>
<td>Diploma in theatre arts</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drummer</td>
<td>Below Diploma</td>
<td>Drumming</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xylophonist</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Xylophonist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>Senior Administrator</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The staffing level of Abibigromma
4.8.1 Directorial and Managerial style

Background and experience in directing and managing theatre has been explicitly stated as fundamental requirements of an artistic director of Abibigromma. However, it appears this had not been considered in appointing some of the artistic directors. The existing practice in Abibigromma is to appoint a senior member from any of the three departments of SPA as director for a two-year renewable term. The mandate of the artistic director is two-fold; one directorial and the other managerial. Former artistic directors who are respondents in this study are of the view that there is nothing wrong with this arrangement. However, it was revealed during the focus group discussion that, some directors were not able to combine the administrative and artistic duties effectively. Most of them ended up being directors in administrative work rather than artistic. It was also revealed that artistic directors who had had previous association with the group prior to their appointment were able to exert better artistic and managerial control than those who had not.

The artistic directors, who had been affiliated with the group as members, were again able to pursue the core mandates of Abibigromma better. In view of this, it is clear that appointing any senior member without recourse to his or her artistic and managerial background is problematic. As mentioned earlier on in the second chapter of this research, theatre practice has been defined by its utilitarian and social role. Theatre like any other institution must adjust and confront challenges facing it, so there is the need for another look at the criteria for selecting any senior member to assume the position of artistic director of Abibigromma without considering his or her artistic background. Faculty members stated that artistic qualifications are prerequisite in appointments; however it appears this consideration has not been factored in the appointment of some of the past directors. It is also worthy to mention that the establishment document mentions
the background and experience of artistic directors in theatre management, however, it appears the emphasis now is on academic qualification in the process of appointments.

Closely linked to the above position is the need for training in directing or theatre management for appointees to the directorship of Abibigromma. Senior member respondents have stated that directing and or theatre management backgrounds would be added advantage but given the fact that the position of the artistic director is not a permanent position, and tenure of office is only two years, formal training cannot be the overriding consideration. They also argue that there are experienced members and administrative staff who can offer assistance to an appointee without these backgrounds. On the other hand, respondents from Abibigromma are of the view that experience, especially in directing should be a prerequisite for appointing artistic directors. Members are also emphatic that directing background should be the most important factor in the selection.

The reason for rotating the directorship from department to department is that Abibigromma is supposed to draw members from the three departments but this can be problematic according to Ben Ayitey, the Artistic Director of Ghana Dance Ensemble. He states thus:

The reason is that if the person for instance comes from music department and does not know anything about choreography and directing then he cannot impact artistically on the group and will just be hanging there. Members can even manipulate him. But in my case for instance I started with the group; I know what they are supposed to be doing. There is no traditional dance that I can’t choreograph.

The above position lends credence to the position of members in the group. As we have established from the analysis of the directorial contributions of theatre directors, one underlying factor is their experience, through the performance groups they were involved
with. One can say this has influenced their knowledge about what is expected of them. It is problematic then to give directorial positions in a theatre to someone who has no experience in theatre. The thrust of the issue here is that teaching courses in drama, dance or music alone should not be the criteria for the selection of artistic directors. Ones experience and affinity with theatre should be the overriding consideration.

Looking at the current state of affairs in Abibigromma, one can associate with the school of thought that advocates that a directing and or management background should be the overriding factor in appointing directors in Abibigromma. This is because the document establishing the group recommended, as part of the managerial arrangements, senior members as heads of the three sections of Dance Drama and Music in Abibigromma to assist the Director. It is evident that this arrangement is not being pursued, leaving both the artistic and the managerial functions in the hands of one person. It will be difficult, therefore, for anyone who has no background in directing and or management to assume this position in a professional theatre. Theatre is an art that requires special skills acquired through training and years of practice. Directing theatre starts with the awareness that theatre management involves management of a special brand of people and their eccentricities. It also involves nights and nights of hard work and sacrifice just to achieve the artistic target. Working in the theatre requires, therefore, one’s personal love for it as well as training and experience.

The researcher, therefore, proposes qualification and or experience in directing or management as a prerequisite for appointment of directors of Abibigromma. It is worthy to note that all the artistic directors in all the resident groups that have been studied in this research, with the exception of Abibigromma, were performers of the group who rose through the ranks to assume the position. As mentioned earlier, this arrangement equips these directors with the requisite skills and experience. Moreover, it is a full-time job and
not a part time one as the case is with Abibigromma where directors combine teaching with their work.

4.8.2 *The Need for a Management Committee*

The research has identified a deficit in the management arrangement of Abibigromma pertaining to the absence of a management committee. It is worthy to note that the Executive Committee of the Faculty of Arts Board, saw the important role the management committee will play in Abibigromma therefore, recommended the inclusion of stakeholders such as, the Director of SPA as chairman, a representative of the Finance Directorate, a representative of the Vice-Chancellor, a representative of the Board of the Faculty of Arts and a representative of the IAS. The others are a representative of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts, and a representative of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. The rest are a representative of National Film and Television Institute and the Artistic Director of Abibigromma as secretary and convener. The group had operated under management committees from its inception until the break in 1991. For instance, Abibigromma from 1984 to 1991 has had a well constituted management committee including Mohammed Ben-Abdallah as chairman, Kofi Anyidoho, S.D. Asiama, Atta Annan Mensah and Kwaw Ansah as members. The others were William Addo, secretary and Asare Newman as an ex-officio member. From 1991-2014, Abibigromma has been operating without a management committee.

Abibigromma is expected to provide adequate professional attitudes, systems and techniques of professional theatre management in this country in particular and Africa as a whole. It is a deficit then that the group should be operating without a substantive governing committee. The functions of the management committee was to formulate policies, draw up seasonal plans for the group, look for possible sponsorship, hiring of staff, and above all, the supervision of the entire enterprise of the group. This is to
safeguard the integrity and the focus of the group. All these functions are currently loaded on the shoulders of the Artistic Director alone who, in some cases take unilateral decisions because stakeholders, including members of the group are not consulted to determine the direction of the group. The focus group discussion has revealed for instance, that the ideas of the current Director are not in tandem with the goals of Abibigromma. The group considered the intention of embarking on drum carving and beads making being proposed by the Artistic Director are way out of scope of the group. Such issues could be overcome if a management committee were in place to determine the artistic orientation of the group.

There are no yearly projections or plans for productions as at the time of this research. Any project that the group execute comes from outside. For example the production of Rotimi’s *The Gods are not to Blame* and Kodjo Mawugbe’s *In the Chest of a Woman* were not initiated by the group. It is pertinent to point out that, the resident companies such as Ghana Dance Ensemble and those attached to the NT are under well constituted management committees.

It is also relevant to point out that Abibigromma is also operating without a business Manager. This deficit has resulted in Abibigromma’s productions not receiving the needed impetus. The duty of the Business Manager, which is to sell and promote the programs of the group, is vested in the Administrative Assistant who has no professional background in marketing and or theatre management. This has resulted in the abysmal organisation of Abibigromma’s programs as was manifested in the near fiasco that occurred during the performance of *In the Chest of a Woman* at KIMBU, which was mentioned earlier on.
4.8.3 The Relevance of Objectives and Scope of Work

The core objective for the formation of Abibigromma as contained in the proposal document establishing Abibigromma is to create on the campus of the University of Ghana, a professional company which will seek on continuous and consistent basis, to satisfy the needs of the University and its surrounding communities in the area of theatre. Again, the ultimate aim is to evolve African theatre of the highest calibre. The group is expected to create and present works such as plays, scripted and unscripted, dance pieces and dance dramas inspired by the oral and written literature of Africa. The group is also expected to play a leading role in the area of experimental work with the objective of evolving a meaningful African theatre, derived from, and fed by, contemporary Ghanaian and African urban and rural social experience.

It was envisaged Abibigromma will be able to invite guest artistes of international repute to lead some of its creative projects. It is supposed to be a model and a source of inspiration not only for the theatre arts students, but to the development of professional theatre in the nation and throughout Africa.

Findings point to the fact that these objectives are not being pursued to the fullest. Within the period under review, the group had not done much in research or experimentation. The group is also not providing techniques and systems as a model of theatre management because the group does not have in place the proposed management structure as contained in the official document that established the group. The directors of music, dance and drama who are supposed to be Masters degree holders are not in place. It is also not providing adequate and effective outlet for the creativity of the professional staff and students of SPA.

Abibigromma is not pursuing the objective of providing internship and apprenticeship opportunities for students of the school with the inclination towards work in professional
theatre. Abibigromma has also not created, facilitated or established professional theatre companies in the country as envisaged by the founding members of the group.

Abibigromma is not providing constant performances of experimental work that can serve as reference point of artistic excellence. Works put up by the group, in recent times, have fallen short of the artistic value expected of a professional theatre, due to insufficient funding. The group is failing in its mandate to enhance the school’s capacity to respond to National and cultural needs.

4.8.4 Reorientation and Documentation

A critical issue the researcher would like to bring to the fore is research documentation and accreditation. In the course of this work the researcher intends to catalogue the documented researches of the group, however, the group can hardly produce any complete documented project. This is because, research and experimentation of any artistic work resulting in a written or documented play, a dance or a musical piece is not credited to the group but rather, the individual director. This is not to downplay contributions and personal involvement of such individual. However, it would be ideal if collaborations leading to written works are credited to, and kept by, the group with the directors duly acknowledged.

For the purpose of this work, the researcher with permission from the Principal Archivist, and the Registrar retrieved documentation on the establishment of Abibigromma from the Archives of the University. This is because these records could not be found in the offices of Abibigromma and SPA. Copies of relevant documents have been produced and deposited at Abibigromma and SPA offices by the researcher. This research has also documented Abibigromma productions from 1983 to date, which are provided in this work. (See Appendix 5)
Abibigromma’s mission, to promote research into the arts of Ghana and Africa is still relevant. This is to result from researches into history, culture, folklore and tradition of Ghana as well as Africa and transforming them into stage performances. However, there is the need to strategize in approach to the presentation of these materials. Respondents have indicated that there is no documentation of most of the group’s research works. There are no recording of past productions, research work and projects in the custody of Abibigromma. It is difficult then, for anyone to conduct a research based on Abibigromma’s past works. It is therefore imperative that there should be proper documentation of all pieces both scripted and unscripted. By so doing, faculty, students and the general public will be able to have access to these researches. It will also create an avenue for the involvement of the members of Abibigromma, faculty, and students. It is surprising that for a group that has the mandate of serving as a reference point for research experimentation and documentation would have such little regard for documentation as alluded to earlier on. Research and documentation should be considered as crucial, if the group were to stay faithfully focused on its core mandate. Production processes and documentation of how research is transformed into stage performance may be more beneficial to students and academia than the documentation of only the finished stage performance, which may only serve as a source of entertainment. In this regard, the researcher had to retrieve information on productions and performances through interviews with members past and present, and artistic directors to catalogue Abibigromma productions over the years.

Abibigromma should not only perform dances, musicals and drama pieces from Ghana but can learn contemporary African theatre, dance and musical performances that can appeal to a larger audience. Members have indicated that, they have learnt and prepared
dance pieces from South Africa and Kenya but could not put them up because the group could not afford the appropriate costumes for these pieces.

4.8.5 Artistic Impact

For one to appreciate the expectations of an Artistic Director there is the need to look at some of his or her basic duties in Abibigromma. It is stipulated in the establishment document that artistic directors are to coordinate the works of the sectional directors of music, dance and drama. This places the artistic direction on the shoulder of the Artistic Director. He is to supervise the day-to-day rehearsals or preside over productions to ensure excellence. The Artistic Director is expected to lead research and experimentation of ideas, creating and directing productions. As a theatre that embarks on educational tours, the artistic director is expected to be part of the team. There may be instances where some of these functions can be delegated to others; however, it becomes problematic if artistic directors fail to deliver these functions throughout their tenure of office, as the case is with some of the artistic directors during the period under review.

Members of the group testify to the fact that the artistic impact of some directors was minimal. Some of the directors have not contributed in any way at all to promoting the artistic goals of the group. Some also failed to support the staff in their effort to promote artistic excellence. This failure was because some of them do not fully appreciate their role in enhancing artistic values. For example, some directors would not provide funds for the procurement of logistics for productions, resulting in the recycling of old and inappropriate costume and sets for productions, thereby reducing the aesthetic values of these productions. The researcher alluded to this shortcoming earlier on while relating the challenges he faced in directing two plays with the group.

Another negative impact is that some members are not prepared to take directions from their colleagues in charge of productions, who demand that artistes give off their artistic
best. This happens when a younger artiste is in charge of a production. This problem can be overcome when Artistic Directors take full responsibility of the artistic concerns of the group and when other members of staff are involved in productions.

It has been revealed that the following artistic directors have exerted relatively great impact on the group and therefore enhanced the research mandate of Abibigromma through the plays and dances they created, directed and/or choreographed: Mohammed Ben Abdallah, Asiedu Yirenkyi, Martin Owusu, Sandy Arkurst, Anson Manu, Yaw Asare, Oh! Nii Sowah, and Ossei Agyemang. The works created and directed by these directors are listed in this study. (See Appendix 5)

The following artistic directors did not direct any artistic work throughout their tenure. Adjei Cecilia (2003-05), Andoh Timothy (2000-03), Abloso Gladys (2009-11) and Kenn Kafui the current Artistic Director. This is not to imply that they did not perform other functions as directors. For instance, it has been established that Cecilia Adjei spearheaded the separation of the group’s accounts from the school thereby making it possible for the group to procure office equipment and the subsequent purchase of vehicles by Ossei Agyemang.

4.8.6 Level of Visibility

The visibility of Abibigromma’s activities among students is very low. As a result of the current location of the group, which is outside the premises of SPA, majority of student respondents in this research are not aware of its existence as a department of the school. Out of forty-seven respondents, only four students were aware of the fact of it being part of the school. Thirty-three others indicated Abibigromma as resident at the NT, taking it for the National Theatre Players who sometimes use the name Abibigromma. Some members of the group alluded to this identity crisis when they mentioned that the
National Theatre Players were still using the name Abibigromma, after they left for the NT. It is high time the school took pragmatic steps to resolve this issue. It has been established that the use of the name was an insistence of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts after the performers moved to the NT, to forestall delays in the processing of documents. The low level of awareness among students about the group’s existence and its activities lends credence to the neglect of the group by the school in experimental and practical work.

4.8.7 The Level of Training

A careful analysis revealed a high level of academic and professional training of its members. The majority of members are trained artistes from SPA. These included four Masters degree holders, complemented by trained performers in traditional dances. These artistes are experienced in all the three areas of theatre.

The above assessment notwithstanding, it is mandatory for the group to undergo constant in-service training as provided in the establishment document. Alongside its productions Abibigromma needs to develop a built-in continuous training, orientation and educational program, aimed at providing the artistes with opportunities for constant growth and development. It is expected the group will be able to provide internship program for theatre artistes from all over Africa. Over the past ten years, no such training program has been organised by the group because there is no clear-cut plan in this direction.

With good directing and management, the expertise of these artistes can be harmonised to the advantage of faculty, students and general public. The assertion that the defection of majority of founding members to the NT had created a gap yet to be filled has some merit in terms of numbers but not in terms of experience, reputation and influence. However, there is the need for regular training for members.
4.8.8 Research and Experiments

These are two of the core objectives of setting up Abibigromma. Artistic directors over the years undertook research and created works based on researches. We have already established how research and experimentation led to the creation of artistic works that were placed under Anansegoro and Abibigoro concepts as direct outcome of research and experimentation to create African theatre. It has also been pointed out how important the existence of Abibigromma is as a research unit. However, findings have revealed that research and experiment are not being vigorously pursued over the last ten years, especially under the immediate past and the current artistic directors. Artistic directors who have produced works that were based on research of the group include, Mohammed Ben Abdallah, Asiedu Yirenkyi, Yaw Asare, and William Addo. The others are Anson Manu, Oh! Nii Sowah and Ossei Agyemang.

Graduates of the school carry out projects in various areas every year, which can be experimented with the group. For example, some of students’ plays, choreographies and musical pieces ought to be taken on by the group. By so doing, these works would become part of the repertoire and serve as a way of preserving these pieces. This could be replicated at the faculty level.

4.8.9 Retaining of Members

Over the years, Abibigromma has been able to absorb very good students to become permanent members of the group, especially at the diploma and graduate levels. Members with first degrees are ranked as middle level employees of the University with Senior Staff status. Diploma and other lesser qualification holders are ranked as Junior Staff. The highest rank in Abibigromma is Chief Performing Artiste, which is the highest level for middle level staff of the University. There is no clear policy of upgrading members who acquire Masters’ degree. For example, graduates who acquire post-graduate degrees after
employment are not catered for within the present framework of job designation of Abibigromma. Therefore, as long as one remains in Abibigromma, one cannot rise to senior member ranking within the framework of the University. The highest level for senior staff within the University is the status of Chief Performing Artistes as the case is in Abibigromma. Junior Staff may be upgraded to the level of Senior Staff through long service. This is the cause of members leaving the group after they obtained post-graduate degrees. Steps should be taken by the school to come out with a clear policy to cater for these categories of artistes. Members should be placed on levels corresponding to their academic qualifications. Currently, four members with Masters’ degrees remain senior staff and may leave the group if the situation remains the same. Members could be seconded to become senior members while retaining affiliation with Abibigromma.

4.8.10 Working Environment

Abibigromma was forced to leave the Drama Studio where they had been resident from their inception to make room for students. No alternative arrangements were made to accommodate them and they have had to use a shed in the yard of the Physical Development and Municipal Services Department. This location is the garage of the University buses and also serves as mechanic workshop. The level of noise that emanates from the activities in the yard is not conducive for theatrical work, not to mention the health hazard posed by fumes from these buses.

The enclosure within which rehearsals are conducted has no stage and the flour is cracked and dusty in spite of periodic work on it. The dust that emanates from the floor and the surrounding yard inhibits rehearsals. The two changing rooms are small and stuffy and can hardly accommodate members. There are no washrooms and places of convenience. Artistes cannot freshen up after vigorous rehearsal sessions. The lighting is bad and visibility becomes a problem when it is raining. The room is also littered with all sorts of
items including properties and flats. Conditions here can be described as depressing for want of a better word and not conducive for effective work. It is obvious the working environment of Abibigromma is not of befitting a professional theatre company of a school within a University that is regarded as the highest level of education. Members on several platforms with various directors have raised this issue. Kenn Kafui for example, explains that he has taken up the issue with the school authorities and the intention of the school is to transfer the group to the Drama Studio, when the new theatre building being constructed adjacent the Drama Studio is completed. Interestingly, this has been the response of the past four artistic directors to this issue. It is however, evident from the focus group discussion that Abibigromma has not made any formal appeal to the authorities, at the School and University levels about this issue. It is interesting to note that, officials of the University visit the group here if the need be. A concerted and official effort to find a befitting rehearsal space for the group will be a step in the right direction.

4.8.11 Resources and Funding

Funding of Abibigromma for its projects is directly sourced from the University. Formerly the group used to operate its own accounts. The advantage of a separate account was that it gave the group a certain level of autonomy and artistic freedom. As alluded to by members and other respondents, the group was able to resource itself and effectively manage the day-to-day activities of the group when they had that leverage. Equipping the office with necessary office equipment and the purchase of vehicles by the group were examples of some of the advantages of a separate account. The group was also able to engage the services of guest artistes.

Under the current dispensation, all proposals for funding must go though the school to the University, causing a lot of delays. This has resulted in cancelation of projects and
productions that were to be pre-financed by the group. Many productions turn out to be substandard in artistic terms as a result of cancelation or reduction of budgets. Repair and maintenance of vehicles and other equipment has become problematic. The group still depends on writing on boards, which is placed in front of the Drama Studio as the major means of advertising its programs for lack of funds. Poor advertisement therefore, is one of the major causes of low patronage and visibility of Abibigromma programs.

One problem with the acquisition of funds for programs is that the group does not have yearly projections in terms of how much will be required within an academic year. University regulations demand departmental projections for the year to be incorporated into the general budget of the University. However, Abibigromma submits budgets for logistics but never for productions. Therefore, it is very difficult to obtain funds for productions when this has not been captured in the annual budget of the group.

It is worthy mentioning, taking into account the high cost of production, that it will be difficult for Abibigromma to depend only on the resources provided by the University for their productions. Non-profit making professional theatres depend on subsidies from government and other benefactors for their existence, owing to the outstanding characteristics emanating from the complexity of its operations and costliness of its activities. There is the need, therefore, for Abibigromma to look for funding outside the University. Corporate bodies and other State Institutions like the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts can be brought on board to help fund or resource the group. This also buttresses the need for a business approach to the group’s operations to be undertaken by a qualified business manager. Any assistance from these bodies should be channelled through the school and used exclusively for the promotion of Abibigromma.
4.8.12 Staffing Level

Staffing in Abibigromma is not adequate for effective work and large scale production. With twenty-one artistes, the group can hardly put up a performance without recourse to guest artistes. In productions that the researcher had to undertake for the purpose of this research, over ten guest artistes were hired to complement the members of the group. This phenomenon sometimes compromises the level of artistic excellence of productions.

This is not to suggest that lesser numbers cannot handle a play, for example, *Woza Albert* and *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* hardly needs a large cast. The point here is that taking into account the kind of works Abibigromma undertakes, (for example, the production of *In the Chest of a Woman* required about thirty casts and crew) it is important to increase the number of the resident artistes in the company.

There are no technical staffs in the areas of sound, lighting, set design and construction, media and publicity and stagehands. Aside these, there is no cleaner, so members themselves sweep and clean their rehearsal grounds. The place is sometimes untidy when no one volunteers to do the cleaning. Members also load and offload vehicles full of equipment before and after performances. Equipment is sometimes left on the carrier of the bus at the mercy of the weather, when artistes are too tired to off-load after long trips from performances outside Accra. Steps should be taken to employ personnel to fill these positions to augment the work of the artistes.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This is the concluding chapter of the research. It begins with a summary of the research, including a re-statement of purpose of study and research related questions. It also provides a review of the methodology and the role of researcher. It is followed by a summary of results and their relationship to the objectives of the study. Finally, recommendations are provided for stakeholders in Abibigromma, the school in particular and the University of Ghana in general.

5.2 Re-statement of Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research, as contained in the introductory chapter, is to find out the following:

- If the managerial and the directorial arrangements in operation in Abibigromma are yielding desired results;
- Find out if the existing mode of selection of artistic directors is helpful;
- Discover the best way by which faculty can utilize the rich experience of Abibigromma for the benefit of students;
- Assess the extent of the visibility of Abibigromma among students;
- Find out whether the manpower capacity of Abibigromma is sufficient;
- Underline the technical challenges confronting the group;
- Find out whether the infrastructural arrangements are conducive and adequate to promote efficiency.
In order to arrive at the above findings, research related questions formulated are as follows:

- Is the directorial and managerial style of Abibigromma achieving the artistic and directorial objectives of a professional theatre?
- What are the criteria for the selection of artistic directors?
- Are the research and the experimental objectives of the group being pursued?
- Is there a need for re-orientation?
- Is there the need for formal training for artistic directors?
- What has been the impact of artistic directors towards the attainment of artistic excellence?
- Is the level of education of members adequate for membership of a resident theatre company of a University?
- Is the physical environment the group operates in appropriate and conducive?
- Is the group well resourced to meet its financial demands for putting up large-scale productions?

In addition to these structured questions, other relevant questions bearing on the subject were also posed to respondents.

In the quest to find answers to the related research questions, the researcher as a participant-observer, directed two plays in Abibigromma and took part in an educational tour of the Upper West Region. The researcher also held a focus group discussion with members and conducted interviews with stakeholders. The research targeted artistic directors of Abibigromma and founding faculty members (13 out of which 2 could not be
interviewed due to ill health), eight Artistic Directors of four resident theatres companies, the Director and performers of Roverman Production (15) and attendees of Roverman shows (50) The rest were students from SPA (47), performing artistes from Abibigromma (25) and other stake holders in theatre (5). In all, a total of 165 respondents were involved in this study. Data from primary and secondary sources bordering on the topic under review was gathered, presented and analysed to provide the basis for conclusions and recommendations. Data presentation and discussion of results was in narrative form as well as visual displays.

As mentioned earlier on in the introductory chapter, this research was inspired by the interest and the experience of the researcher as a performing artiste. The researcher has been associated with the theatre for eight years, especially with Abibigromma as a student in the SPA and as a senior performing artiste of the group. This interest emanates from the complexities of theatre, which is both rewarding and exacting. Abibigromma as a professional theatre should position itself in such a way that stakeholders will be able to derive the maximum benefits. It must be seen to be fulfilling its obligations as the laboratory and the practical department where students and faculty as well as the general public could benefit from. Practitioners in the group should be accorded maximum cooperation and recognition to give off their artistic best and, above all, the need for directorial and managerial structures to complement the efforts of performers. These are some of the major driving forces behind this research.

As a student of SPA, the researcher took keen interest in the group’s activities and was glad when he was subsequently employed as a permanent artiste. However, his perception and expectations were affected when he started working with the group as a full-time staff. This prompted him to ask questions when he became aware of the challenges confronting the group. The researcher is very much aware of the limitations of
Abibigromma, operating within the confines of an academic institution. However, if much attention is paid to the myriad of challenges confronting the group, it can do much better than is currently the case. The researcher again had also tried at any opportune moment either as a director of a play or as a leading member of the cast in productions, to insist on the highest level of artistic and professional standards from stakeholders, but is always beaten back by lack of interest or ineptitude.

The personal contribution of the researcher to this work is unique, owing to his background and over eight years experience with Abibigromma. This has equipped him with some of the pertinent questions to be investigated in this study. He is fully aware of the possibility of being bias. However, as a researcher, he has consciously maintained a position of impartiality in the process of soliciting answers from respondents. This is in order to arrive at conclusions based on findings rather than personal convictions. As a matter of fact, the researcher had no official responsibilities with Abibigromma at the time of this research because he was on a leave of absence to embark on this research.

This research sought to serve as an organisational audit of Abibigromma theatre of SPA as the case study of this project. The study adopted a qualitative methodological approach, making use of interviews and Focus Group Discussion. Qualitative methodology was beneficial for uncovering the challenges of Abibigromma as a non-profit theatre company in an institution. In-depth individual interviews and group discussions were conducted with the respondents who are stakeholders in Abibigromma, to solicit their perceptions and experiences bearing on the activities of the group. The researcher as an observer learnt, first hand, the nature of the challenges as well as the strengths of the group. The shared views of participants revealed Abibigromma as an indispensable and a valuable section of the school. However, its full potential as the
practical section of School of Performing Arts is not being fully exploited to the benefit of the school and the general public.

The research has explored the genesis of theatre in Ghana in general and focused on the historical antecedent of SPA and the subsequent establishment of Abibigromma, to expose the justifications for the existence of a professional theatre in an institution consisting of colleges, faculties, departments and schools. It also delved into the artistic and directorial contributions of major theatre directors found in the theatrical context in Africa in general and Ghana in particular. The managerial structures of professional theatres have been examined generally and the searchlight focused on Abibigromma as the case study of this project.

This study has resulted in a more comprehensive understanding of the core mandates of Abibigromma; to serve as a model theatre and a research unit; to transform written and oral African art forms into stage performances; and to serve as the practical section for the SPA. It also established how the group is meant to operate, how it is operating now and the reasons why it is functioning as it is. It uncovers the drawback in the directorial and managerial structure of the company, and how it has been relegated to the background in the area of academic work. The study also delved into operational challenges of artistes in the dispensation of their duties.

It has been established that there was the need for a new directorial and management module for Abibigromma, to separate the dual functions of the artistic director, because some directors of the period under review had not made any impact on the company in artistic terms. Also the absence of a management committee is negatively affecting the group. The new module should therefore, take on board, the constituting of a management committee to have oversight responsibility over the direction of Abibigromma.
The objectives of research and experimentation are not being pursued fully, and faculty and students are also not using the group for practical work. It has also come to light that there is no provision for members who obtained post-graduate degrees to be upgraded. The physical environment where Abibigromma operates is not conducive, and the staffing level, low especially at the technical level.

Other findings include the lack of continuity when directors are changed and the minimal artistic impact of some artistic directors and that Abibigromma is not well resourced to carry out large scale productions.

It has also been established that reorientation of Abibigromma was needed so the group, could stay focused on its core mandate of being the practical wing of the school. The level of academic and professional training of most members was adequate and can be utilized for practical purposes. Faculty and students are not taking advantage of the experimental component of Abibigromma for practical purposes, resulting in low visibility among students of the school.

The result of this research, therefore, provides a new directorial and managerial model to address the short falls of the existing one. It also provided alternative means of how Abibigromma can be resourced, and positioned in terms of personnel and logistics, to give off their best in artistic and economic terms.

5.3 Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on the findings on the current state of Abibigromma. These recommendations can help arrest the dwindling fortunes of the group and place it on a higher pedestal to achieve its artistic and economic goals.
5.3.1 The need for a new Directorial and Management model

The overriding objective of this research was to investigate whether the existing directorial and managerial style of Abibigromma, was helping it to achieve artistic and economic excellence. Findings indicate that some artistic directors are not carrying out the artistic function within the period under review (from 1991 to 2014). In view of that and the complexities associated with the artistic and managerial functions of the artistic director in Abibigromma, it is recommended that the two functions be separated. There should be an artistic director and an executive director. The executive director should be a senior member who can be placed above the artistic director. The artistic director could be a member of the group with requisite competence and qualification. He should among other duties, be solely responsible for the artistic direction of the group, and coordinate the activities of the heads of the three sections of music dance and drama. He should also be responsible for other technical staff including scenery, lighting, sound and costume. This position should be given official recognition and compensation accordingly.

The executive director should be a senior member who can be placed above the artistic director, and he or she will be responsible for administrative work, fund raising, marketing, audience development, public relations, sponsorship and educational programing issues.

5.3.2 Formation of a Management Committee

The constitution of a Management Committee to oversee the entire operations of Abibigromma is also recommended. The committee among others should specifically be responsible for selecting both the executive and artistic directors, and supervision of fund raising activities, nominations and recruitments, the theatre facility, advocacy and long term planning issues of the company.
Members of the committee could include representatives as contained in the establishing proposal and provided in this project to include representatives of the Registry, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts, and all the stakeholders.

5.3.3 The Appointment of a Business Manager

Appointment of a Business Manager for Abibigromma will go a long way in enhancing its economic viability. The Business Manager should conceptualise the company’s productions from the beginning: drawing up the budget, sourcing for funds and other resources needed, to audience generation, and actual presentation. He or she should carry out promotional work, which may include visiting corporate bodies, schools and colleges to encourage them to get interested in the group’s activities.

5.3.4 Appointments

The study also recommends that, appointment of the artistic directors should not be limited to faculty members only. Instead of the departmental succession being adopted, appointments should be left open and vied for regardless of the department to which the outgoing director belongs. This will allow appointment of directors to be based on merit and competence; instead of viewing the position as a departmental obligation. Qualified artistes within Abibigromma and outside who have the requisite qualification should also be considered for appointment.

5.3.5 Employment Drive

It is also recommended, to augment the current membership of twenty-one artistes and one technical staff to about thirty. It is on record that, between 2000 and 2005, there were twenty-nine artistes employed by the University. Some of the members have left and there is the need to replace them. It is also important because one member had to go on retirement in 2013. There are also four elderly members who can no longer participate in vigorous activities.
5.3.6 Affiliations

It is recommended that the group be encouraged to seek inclusion in the unions registered with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts. This will help the group take advantage of funds meant for these groups registered with them. Abibigromma should also seek affiliation with Ghana Actors Guild. This will enhance their chances to be invited for programs that will expose their artistic capabilities. They will also take advantage of the welfare services that the Guild offers. Members on individual basis could also affiliate with International Guilds.

Exchange programs with other Universities should be instituted where members should go for further studies or attachment in resident theatres. Individual members should be identified and given scholarship for further studies so they can come back and strengthen the research base of the group.

5.3.7 Space

Also recommended is a more befitting space for the activities of the company within the premises of the SPA. They may, in the interim, be allowed to operate from the Drama Studio during holidays, while the school makes arrangements for a permanent working space.

5.3.8 Research Based Workshops and Durbars

Abibigromma should be encouraged to organise periodic workshops and durbars to expose students, staff and the general public as well as corporate bodies to the activities of the group. It will expose the group to the public and make them aware of the activities of the group. This will also encourage students and staff to work with the group.

5.3.9 Alternative Source of Funding

Abibigromma can look for patrons, NGOs, State institutions, corporate bodies and other stakeholders for sponsorship to supplement funds from the University. This should be
spearheaded and supervised by the management committee to ensure proper and judicious use of such funds.

The group should also be given a certain level of autonomy in operating its own accounts different from the general one of the University. As a professional theatre company, there is the need for some level of artistic freedom, which can only be attained if a certain level of independence is allowed.

**5.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, Abibigromma remains an important department of SPA taking into account its core mandate and objectives. It is therefore, important that attention is focused on its operations to re-position it as a model African Theatre Company and a reference point of artistic excellence in Ghana and for that matter the continent of Africa.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Artistic Directors:

- Do you think the directorial and the managerial arrangement of Abibigromma is helping in achieving the core objectives?
- Should others apart from Lecturers be made artistic directors?
- Is there the need for reorientation or re-organisation of Abibigromma?
- Is the idea of employing others than graduates into Abibigromma the best?
- How can the group be helped to move forward?
- Is the number of artistes in the company adequate?
- How can the manpower capacity the company be improved?
- How can faculty and students make maximum use of the potentials in the company?

Abibigromma Members, the Focus Group

- How many new plays were experimented in recent times?
- What is the level of interaction between the group, faculty and students?
- Are the objectives of Abibigromma still relevant?
- Is the working environment conducive?
- Is the work force sufficient?
- Is Abibigromma well resource to carry out research and large scale productions?
- Are the infrastructural arrangements enhancing work?
- What are the major technical challenges of the company?
- What can be done to improve artistic and competence and professionalism within the company?
- What are the major challenges facing the group?

Individual Members of Abibigromma

- How long have been working with the company?
• What is your academic qualification?
• What is your impression about the mode of appointments in Abibigromma?
• What has been the artistic impact of artistic directors?
• What are some of your personal contribution towards the group?
• Are you satisfied with the level of artistic competence of members?

Students
• What do you know about Abibigromma
• Where is Abibigromma located
• Have you watched any Abibigromma productions
• What were your impression about Abibigromma performances
APPENDIX 2

This appendix contains information about the respondents in this research which formed the basis for the discussion in chapters three, four and five of this thesis. As indicated in the methodology contained in the introduction of this research, the researcher approached the respondents in their various capacities, either as past artistic directors or founding members of Abibigromma to grant him interviews and share their opinions on the issues raised by the researcher. The researcher used both structured and unstructured interview formats in gathering data. The respondents included founding members and artistic directors of Abibigromma, Ghana Dance Ensemble and the resident theatres of the National Theatre. Commercial theatre directors were also interviewed. The researcher also conducted a Focus Group Discussion with Abibigromma Members. Students from the School of Performing Arts were also quizzed to ascertain how acquainted they were with the activities of the Resident Theatre.

Mr. Asare Newman on 10th April 2012.

The researcher met Mr. Newman in his office where the interview took place. Newman was one of the three-member committee that formulated the modalities leading to the establishment of Abibigromma. He was the first director in charge of dance in Abibigromma and choreographed productions in the group. He is now a senior lecturer at dance department of SPA. This meeting took place in his office. It started at 10.12 am and ended 11.55am.

Osei Agyemang on 12th April 2011

The researcher met Dr. Osei Agyemang in his office at the National Theatre at 4 p.m. and after exchanging pleasantries set things in motion. He was the Artistic Director of Abibigromma from 2005 to 2009. Agyemang was a member of Abibigromma before
becoming a lecturer in the Theatre Arts Department. He is the Acting Executive Director of the National Theatre of Ghana at the time of this research.

**Olyvia Addy 18th April 2011.**

This interview with the Administrative Assistant took place at the Abibigromma office, within the premises of School of Performing Arts, Legon. The meeting commenced about 1:20 p.m. and ended at 3:10 p.m. Olivia Addy has been the Administrative assistant of Abibigromma from 1998.

**Vordzorgbe Pius on 18th April 2011.**

Vordzorgbe Pius is one of Abibigromma members who were deliberately exempted from the Focus Group Discussion as mentioned earlier. He had his National Service from 1991 to 1993 with the group and was employed as a permanent performing artiste in 1991. He is now a Chief Production Assistant and head of music department of Abibigromma. His association with the group started during his School days at the Music Department. His desire to be a performing artiste and not only a musician, made him join the group.

**Cecilia Yelipoe on 18th April 2011.**

Cecilia was also interviewed separately. She had her National Service with the Abibigromma in 1988 and became a full-time employee of Abibigromma in 1989. She is a Chief Production Assistant, the highest rank for a senior staff. She majored in dance and was one of the few members who remained with group when most of the founding members opted to work with the National Theatre.

**Adjei Cecilia on 19th April 2011.**

Cecilia Adjei is Senior Lecturer at the Theatre Arts Department and was the Artistic Director from 2003 to 2005. She agreed to grant this interview in her office at the Costume Department of the Drama Studio. Subsequently, the researcher met her as
arranged at about 1:20 p.m. The session began with the respondent giving an overview of her experience as the Artistic Director of Abibigromma.

**Mr. Timothy Andoh on 24th April 2011.**

Mr. Andoh lectures in Music. This interview took place in the Computer Laboratory of the Music Department at 3. Pm. Mr. Andoh said he assumed office as the Artistic Director in 2001. He served in this capacity for three years because he had to complete the term of his predecessor who had been relieved of his position.

**Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah on 27th April 2011.**

The respondent was Artistic Director from 1997 to 1991 and is with the Dance Department as a Senior Lecturer. He joined Abibigromma as a pioneer performer. He opted to stay with the group when there was a break. He was also an Artistic Director of Ghana Dance Ensemble. The interview took place in his office in the Dance Department.

**Benjamin Quaye on 5th May 2011.**

Mr. Quaye had been with the group since 2001 and was appointed the General Stage Manager in 2005. The General Stage Manager supervises the day to day activities of the group. He became a permanent staff after serving his National Service term with the group. This interview was a follow up of the Focus Group Discussion. It commenced at 9:45 a.m. and ended at 10.34 am.

**Ofutsu Adinku 4th March 2014**

The researcher conducted this interview at the residence of Professor Adinku on 4th March 2014. Adinku is professor of dance studies now retired. He was founding member of Abibigromma and had written choreographed dance pieces for Abibigromma.
Sandy Arkhurst 14th March 2014

The interview of Sandy Arkurst took place at his residence at Ashaley Botwei, suburb of Accra. The meeting started at 4.50 and ended at 6.15pm. Arkurst is a senior lecturer at the Theatre Arts Department. He teaches Acting, directing and TfD. he was leader of the Kusum Agoroma Theatre company and Artistic director of Abibigromma and the National Theatre Players.

Martin Owusu 17th April 2014

Martin Owusu, Ph D. in English and American Literature is the former Director of the School of Performing Arts and an Associate Professor of Theatre Arts Department, University of Ghana, Legon, University of Cape Coast and Methodist University, Ghana.

William Addo, 4th February 2014

This interview took place in Addo’s office situated at ‘Ghalywood’ (Ghana Theatre and Film Academy) on 4th February, 2014. The researcher arrived at about 2pm after a one and half hour drive from Accra. Addo was a lecturer and the first artistic director to be appointed as by Vice-Chancellor and was the artistic director who led the group of performers to become the National Theatre drama group. He had also served in the capacity of Regional Director with the NCC.

John Collins 14th February 2014

The meeting took place in Collins’ office in the music department, SPA. The researcher had arranged to meet the respondent at 1.00pm. Collins is a Professor of Music in SPA, music department. His special area is popular music has many publications to his credit. He is a musician and had played with popular guitar bands in Ghana and also runs his own recording studio. He has a lot of experience with the concert party in Ghana and played in the Jaguar Jokers Concert Party.
**Ebo Whyte**

Ebo Whyte is the playwright and director of the Roverman Production. Whyte is a graduate of University of Ghana where he studied Statistics. He established Roverman Production in 2008. The meeting with Whyte took place in his conference room of his office in Kokomlemle. The researcher also sat in some of his rehearsals and interacted with the performers of Roverman Production.

**Other Respondents**

Ben Ayitey, Artistic Director of Ghana Dance Ensemble  
William Ashong, General Stage Manager, National Theatre  
Emmanuel Agbedu, Public Relations Officer, National Theatre  
Akosua Abdallah, Artistic Director National Theatre Players  
Mawuli Semevor, Deputy Artistic Director, National Theatre Players  
Nii Tettey, Artistic Director Ghana Dance Company  
Stephanie Yiadom, Deputy Artistic Director, Ghana Dance Company  
Annor James, Artistic Director, National Symphony Orchestra  
Students of School of Performing Arts  
Theatre patrons of Roverman Production
APPENDIX 3

CAST AND CREW LIST OF IN THE CHEST OF A WOMAN

_In The Chest of a Woman:_ by Kodjo Mawugbe. Directed by Bright Tefe

**Cast**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KING KWAKU DUAH</td>
<td>Ben Anum Quaye/John Paul Asiedu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NANA YAA KYREKTWIE:</td>
<td>Esther Offei/Margaret Lamptey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OWUSU AGYEMANG:</td>
<td>Nanaa Pokua Ossei Acheampong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMA EKYA:</td>
<td>Matilda Sowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUEEN MOTHER:</td>
<td>Victoria Assam/Vida Kweitso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABREWANANA:</td>
<td>Cecilia Yelipoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OKYEAME BOATENG:</td>
<td>Nana Boadu Amoah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OKYEAME BONSU:</td>
<td>Gershon Agbeko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NANA OPONG:</td>
<td>Samuel Dawson Essam/Pius Vordzorgbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADWOA:</td>
<td>Jessie Offei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKOSUA:</td>
<td>Magdalene Fynn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFOFI:</td>
<td>John Paul Asiedu/Ben Anum Quaye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OKOMFO:</td>
<td>Albert Dzah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMBRELLA/SWOD BEARER:</td>
<td>Bright Obiarabewu/Fred Plange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YoYAL BARDS:</td>
<td>Maxwell Eshun/Michael Malekpor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELDERS:</td>
<td>Sampson Kuudenign/Ishaak Almuninin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BODY GUARD:</td>
<td>Faisal Mohammed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIONER:</td>
<td>Gideon Adjei</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DANCERS/ACOLYTES: Mavis Abroakwa/Jemira Yaoteley/Nana Pokua Acheampong/Vida Kweitso/Leticia Sackey

DRUMMERS: Jacob Bruce/Raymond Nutakor/Maxwell Eshun/Michael Gidiglo/Albert Dzah

Crew

STAGE MANAGER: Brightmoore Nugah

PUBLICITY: Martin/Quansah/Patrick Asante Antwi/Nii Kwie Nash/Nicole Nunoo/Dzidzorli Nomanyo Mawunya Afordoanyi

SOUND/AUDIO VISUAL: Frederick Plange

LIGHT: Margaret Lamptey/Solomon Dartey

WARDROBE: Magdalene Fyn/Peace Kumah

SET CONSTRUCTION: All performers.

MAKE-UP: Cecilia Yelpoe

PROPS: Jessie Offei/Maxwell Eshun/Naa Yaoteley/Vida Kweetso/Gideon

Cast for *The Gods are not Blame*

KING ODEWALE Ben Quaye
QUEEN OJUOLA Magdalene Fynn
ADETUSA Agbeko Gershon
BABA FAKUNLE Ishaak Al-Mimunin
ADEROPO Bright Tefe
ALAKA Brightmoore Nugah
GBONKA
Albert Dzah

PRIEST Ogun
Maxwell Eshun

CHIEFS
Dawson Essam/Pius Vordzorgbe/Charles Obil

TOWN’SPEOPLE
Sampson Kuudeningn/Jessie/Offei/Esther/Offei/Raymond Nutakor/Michael Gidiglo/Nana Boedu /Cecilia Yelipoe

BODY GUARDS
Michael Gidiglo/Albert Dzah/Sampson Kuudeningn. Nana Boedu
APPENDIX 4

HAND OUT FOR LITERATURE WORKSHOP

Theme

Theme can be defined as the intended lesson, the message, the major or central idea the playwright intends to carry across to the reader or audience. It can also be referred to as the basic idea, which the playwright dramatises through conflicts of characters with one another or with life events.

Plot

Plot is the arrangement of the series of events that takes place in the play. It can also be referred to as the selection and the order of scenes in the play. The playwright determines at what point in the story the plot will begin, what characters will participate in a scene, what scenes will be included and also decides the sequence in which these scenes will be presented, to bring out the conflict as the action develops.

Setting

People exist in a particular time and place. Where we live may contribute not only to our personality, but also to our values, attitudes, and even our problems. In literature, setting refers to time and place of the action, which influence characters and what they do. The time indicates the specific period in history and the place refers to the physical environment the action in the play takes place.

Characterisation

Characterisation can be defined as a playwright’s creation of persons who have the qualities and special behavioural patterns that blends, conforms or is in conflict with the status quo. In other words, characterisation refers to the role and nature of the characters.
in the play. The role is the contribution of the character towards the development of the action, whereas the nature means the negative or positive attributes inherent in the person, which affects his behaviour.
# APPENDIX 5

## PLAYS/DANCES AND MUSICALS IN THE REPertoire OF ABIBIGROMMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Composer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td><em>Okomfo Anokye’s Golden Stool</em></td>
<td>Michael Dei Annan</td>
<td>Marting Owusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>Shadow of an Eagle</em></td>
<td>Bill Marshall</td>
<td>Asiedu Yirenkyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>Love Net</em></td>
<td>Asiedu Yirenkyi</td>
<td>Asiedu Yirenkyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>The Queue</em></td>
<td>Asiedu Yirenky</td>
<td>Asiedu Yirenkyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><em>Dance of the Spider</em></td>
<td>Yaw Asare</td>
<td>Yaw Asare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td><em>Esi</em></td>
<td>Allen Tamekloe</td>
<td>Anson Manu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td><em>Sons and Daughters</em></td>
<td>J. C. DeGraft</td>
<td>David Donkor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td><em>Ananse and the Gum Man</em></td>
<td>J. C. DeGraft</td>
<td>Anson Manu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td><em>The Sudden Return</em></td>
<td>Martin Owusu</td>
<td>Martin Owusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td><em>The Rape of Ramatu Sisters</em></td>
<td>Abibigromma</td>
<td>Cecilia Yelipoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td><em>A Bird in Hand</em></td>
<td>Saint Alhasan</td>
<td>Martin Owusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td><em>Blood and Tears</em></td>
<td>Aseidu Yirenkyi</td>
<td>Asiedu Yirenkyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td><em>The Sudden Return</em></td>
<td>Martin Owusu</td>
<td>Martin Owusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td><em>Woezeck</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td><em>Eternal Idol</em></td>
<td>Ofotsu Adinku</td>
<td>Oh! Nii Sowah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td><em>Merchant of Venice</em></td>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>Martin Owusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td><em>Julius Caesar</em></td>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>Martin Owusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td><em>The Story Ananse Told</em></td>
<td>Martin Owusu</td>
<td>Martin Owusu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td><em>Marriage of Anansewa</em></td>
<td>Efua Sutherland</td>
<td>Margarette Cudjoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td><em>Witch of Mopti</em></td>
<td>Mohammed Abdallah</td>
<td>Mohammed Abdallah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td><em>Verdict of the Cobra</em></td>
<td>Mohammed Abdallah</td>
<td>Mohammed Abdallah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td><em>Tipa Wumli</em></td>
<td>Abibigromma</td>
<td>Abibigromma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td><em>Fortunes of the M</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Barbara/Carlton Moll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td><em>Rejected in Israel</em></td>
<td>Yao Asumanin</td>
<td>Ishaak Al-Muminin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2000  Tukana  Abibigromma  Abibigromma

Dear Lord Remember Me

Our Husband has Gone Mad Again  Ola Rotimi  Vordzorgbe Pius

Man Talk Woman Talk  Ola Rotimi

Ananse in the Land of Idiots  Yaw Asare  Yaw Asare

The Legend of Aku Sika  Martin Owusu  Martin Owusu

Midnight Hotel  Femi Osofisan  Femi Osofisan

Nkrumah Nii... Africa Nii  Femi Osofisan  Femi Osofisan

A Saint in Brown Sandals

Midnight Blackout  Femi Osofisan  Femi Osofisan

2005  The beautiful Ones are not Yet Born  Ayi Koi Amah  Ossei Agyemang

2006  Savings a Must for Wealth Creation  Tefe Bright  Tefe Bright

2011  The Gods are not to Blame  Ola Rotimi  Tefe Bright

2009  This is Our Chance  Ene Henshaw  Naa Adjele

The Fifth Landing Stage  F. Fiawo  Doris Kuwornu

The Third Woman  J. B. Danquah  Dzifa Glikpoe

The Blinkards  K. Sekyi  Dawson Essam

2011  In the Chest of a Woman  Kodjo Mawugbe  Tefe Bright

2013  The Courageous Woman  Tefe Bright  Tefe Bright
Appendix 6

Abibigromma Theatre
School of Performing Arts
Box LG 19
Legon.

2nd February 2014.

The Registrar
University of Ghana
Legon.

Dear Madam,

PERMISSION TO HAVE ACCESS TO OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

I am per this letter seeking permission to have access to minutes of the University of Ghana Senate meetings pertaining to the establishment of my unit Abibigromma, School of Performing Arts.

I am a staff of the University undertaking a research on Abibigromma, the resident theatre group of the School of Performing Arts where I work. I would like to have access to the proposal and the establishment documents that brought the group into existence. However, these documents cannot be located with either Abibigromma or the School of Performing Arts Offices.

I shall be very grateful then if I am permitted to access these documents within the archival outfit of the University.

Thanks for the consideration.

Yours faithfully,

……………………
TEFE BRIGHT

cc: The Principal Archivist
University of Ghana Archives.