

SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS

SCENIC DESIGN IN CHILDREN'S THEATRE: APPROPRIATING COLOURS

FOR PHILIP RIDLEY'S PLAY, *FEATHERS*.

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis project is the result of my own original research of which no part has been presented elsewhere. I also declare that I have accordingly acknowledged any citation, reference and ideas of other scholars in this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

The desire to explore children's colour experiences for their scenic interactions informed this research. In view of this, the study explored colours from the perspective of children by using the medium of appropriation to design a set to complement their theatre experiences. With review of literature, the study discussed the approaches to children's theatre through the eyes of Schonmann. Weincek's guide to scenic design for children was used to examine the nature of their set designs and colour experiences. The approaches to the concept of appropriation were also discussed which helped to place the research within a particular context. Framed by the experiential value of artistic methodology, the representational art concept was employed in creating familiar designs that fall within the children's schema. Subsequently, focus group discussion was employed to seek the colour preferences of fifty children between the age brackets of eight and thirteen years. Their colour choices fell within the polychromatic colour scheme and this was utilised to complement the creation of a set design towards children's total theatre experience. The formalistic approach was also used to describe the elements incorporated in the design with which colours were significantly interpreted. Analysis of the responses from the audiences (children) helped to achieve the purpose of the study. The findings of the research were made available with recommendations for enhancing such practice. In effect, children's colour preferences help to convey their own ideas, emotions, and also enhance communication. They can also make children owners of a theatre presentation which aids them to interpret, interact, and question experiences on their own terms.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty and my beloved family.



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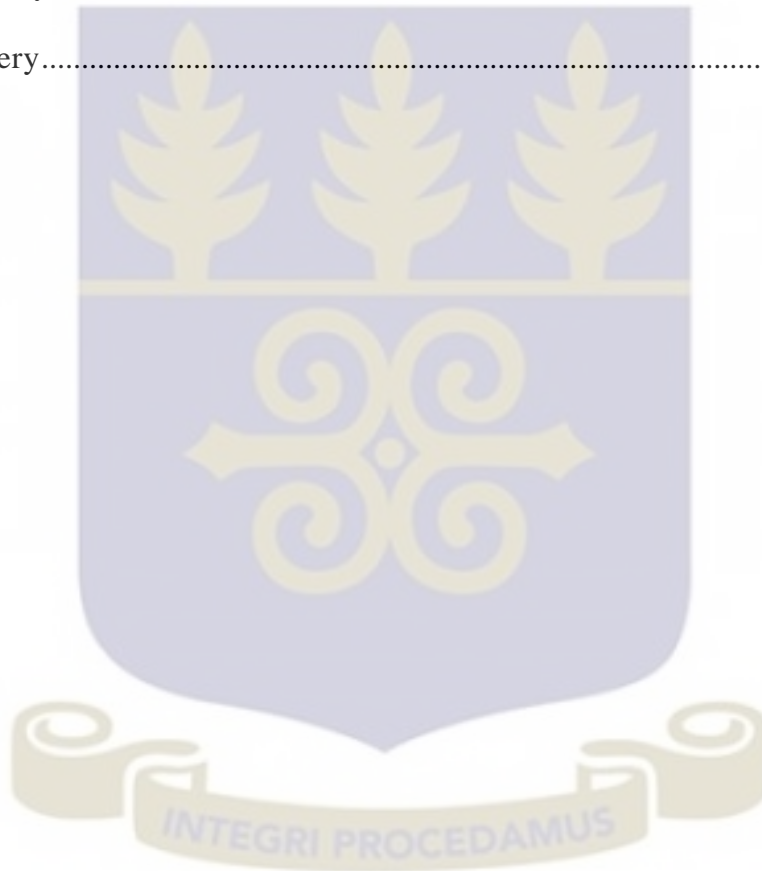
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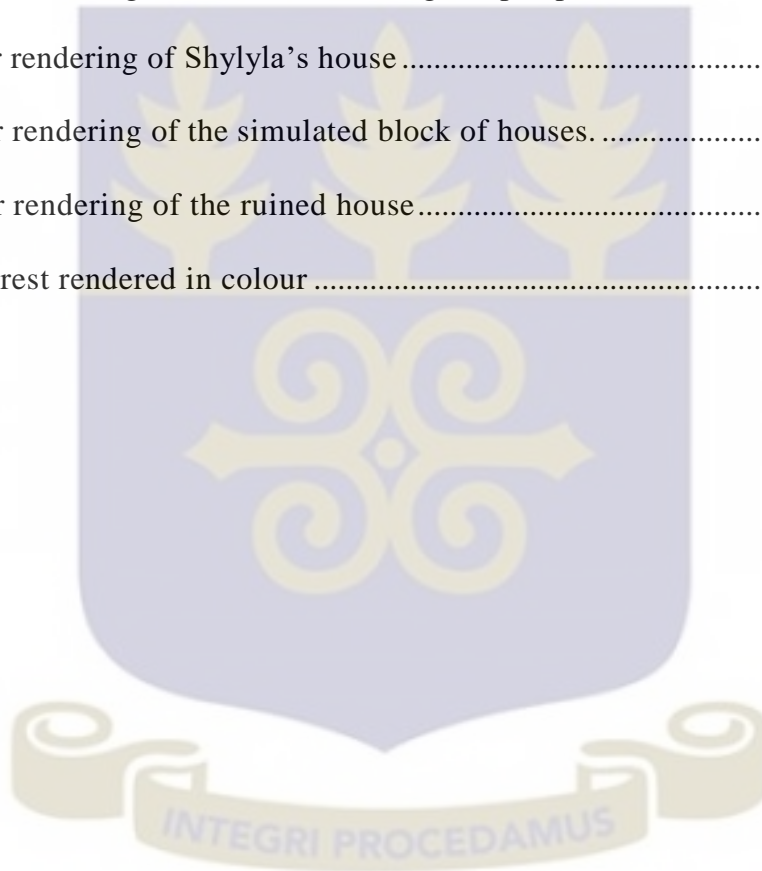
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This study gives an account of Children's Theatre, the function of scenic design in Children's Theatre and how the set designer can explore colours from children's perspective for their own theatre experience. The first chapter of the study focuses on the background to the study and the problem that has warranted this research. Questions related to the study are also provided to assist the researcher to address the problem statement and the objectives of study. This chapter further examines other areas such as the scope of the study, limitations, significance of the study as well as its organization.

1.2 Background of the study

The world of children holds a range of unremitting experiences which can be explored for their delight and benefit. In order for children to realise their full creative potential in the arts, they need to be given opportunities to have regular experience in it. The Performing Arts, especially theatre arts possesses in it a lot of exposure and experiences for children. Their engagement with the arts is of great significance to their aesthetic wellbeing and should therefore be fostered with great interest. Children's Theatre is commonly referred to as Theatre for Young Audience (TYA) Shifra Schonmann (2006). Through the eye of a theatre educationist and practitioner, Sandy Arkhurst, (personal communication, November 23, 2015), Children's Theatre is borne out of children's drama. It is an experience which involves the text, speech and action. He also added that in Children's Theatre, children only come to the theatre to consume a finished product because they are not part of the creative process. Thus, to him, children as young audience are in the theatre to observe, listen, concentrate, and also to make alternatives as regards whatever they

experience in the theatre. The theatrical experience is geared towards developing children holistically, and sometimes to bring to bear on a performance their experiences. Moses Goldberg (1974:5) also claims that Children's Theatre is a "formal theatrical experience in which a play is presented for an audience of children". Accordingly, Children's Theatre is the kind of experience where the young audiences in the theatre contribute their experiences, concentration and imagination and learn through observation, critical thinking.

Schonmann (2006:2) posits that Children's theatre is a journey into a dual territory of educational and theatrical approach. However, the educational discourse has become dominantly ingrained in its practice as compared to its theatrical aspect. In view of this it has been indicated that there have been tendencies to give predominance to the educational and didactic matters as the core functions of children's theatre as compared with its aesthetic and artistic purposes (Schonmann, 2006 & Reason, 2010). This means that compared with the theatrical approach, the educational posture limits children from experiencing a complete theatre where all elements come into play. The theatrical approach explores diverse aesthetic and artistic elements for children to enjoy an inclusive theatre experience of which set design is part.

To this end, set design has the capacity to create interesting environment for children to explore for their artistic and aesthetic benefit. It also holds great potentials to spawn learning among children and also serve as means of enhancing their creative intuition therefore worth exploring. In this regard, Demmery (1978), an advocate of Children's Theatre admonishes its espousers to share their talents to bring another perspective of artistry into children's lives; a dimension that should be able to provide an emotional and aesthetic experience for them.

This signifies the need for proponents to consider artistic activities that meet the primary needs of children and ultimately lead to learning as well as their development. This purpose could be achieved through the exploration of essential design elements such as lines, shapes, forms, and colour that children can easily relate to and can create an ambience that meet the expectations of children as well as encourage their growth.

Colour has the high capacity to influence children's thoughts, and enhance interaction between them and the environment created for the play. With this Oren Parker, Craig Wolf, and Dick Block (2003) and Michael Gillette (2000) affirm that colour is an extremely powerful tool of the designer as it serves as a great stimulus within a design composition. Colour can therefore be estimated as a critical communicative tool for the designer to cause physiological reactions from children while signalling actions. Children are known to have some form of ally with colour; it is the bright side of their experience and the set designer could leverage it for the benefit of their theatre experience and appreciation.

In this respect, children's colour inclinations could be maximised to create an unforgettable scenic experience for them while in the theatre. Such an exercise is very influential in providing a deeper level of essence for their reactions and can serve as their communicator: possessing the power to speak volumes of ideas to them. Cherry (2016), relates that colour can significantly influence children's emotions, disposition, and feelings about an event or encounter. Children's colour choices used in designs can affect their perception and cognition and therefore improve their understanding and enhance their appreciation process, (Cassidy & Zlotkowska, 2014). Inferably, children are likely to recall events and information that are presented through their colour choices and respond to them effectively. Thus, colour exploration is part of their experience, as it leads them to discover more about themselves and their environment. It also helps them to express themselves

and enhances their exposure of a world filled with their choices. In view of this, designers can explore colour, a key aesthetic element, from children's view point for the benefit of their scenic experience and as playing significant role in communicating to them.

Additionally, at any stage, children may depend on their current level of understanding in making meaning out of the things around them. In this regard, there are some needs that are crucial to children's development and these should be considered in relation to their engagement on any platform. The development process of children is a critical component in the wholesome experience of their kind of theatre. Arkhurst (personal communication November 23, 2015) identifies some of these needs to include: children's physical, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. In ensuring the realisation of these needs, Piaget as cited by Kipps (2010), also outlines four stages of children's development of which the third and fourth stages; concrete and formal operational stages are adopted to serve the age group of children who will be engaged in the colour choice process towards the realisation of the designs. The developmental needs of children help to protect their concerns as well as their self-confidence. It is expedient that when designing scenery for children, their developmental needs should be considered and interlocked with their receptive levels in relation to the performances and designs created for them.

This study therefore, takes a theatrical approach in discussing set design as an artistic element in Children's Theatre. A set will then be designed for the play, *Feathers*, by Philip Ridley within the comprehension of Children's Theatre through the exploration of colours. Children between the ages of eight and thirteen years will be interviewed of which their colour choices will inform the colour scheme for the set design. Children will also be interviewed after the performance for their impression of the set especially with the application of colours. Just as performances for adults are organised with considerations for the various elements of theatre as playing significant roles to the complete success of the whole

experience, same must be done with children's performances and even with much specialities expected as possible. This sets the tone for the research which aims at exploring colours through the lenses of children for creating scenic design so as to influence and enhance their understanding of performances.

1.3 Problem Statement

Scenic design is one of the elements for communicating the artistic and aesthetic experiences for children in theatre. It uses several elements in communicating to its viewers of which colour is key. However, it has not been explored fully in terms of how children's colour perspectives can make them owners of a scenic experience and also influence their understanding of the whole theatre experience. This may be due to the routine reliance on the designer's choices of colours and perhaps children have been attuned to the educational or didactic function of theatre as against the artistic aspect of it. Nonetheless, colour is the dazzling side of children and it plays significant role in helping them to express themselves as well as projecting their emotions and creating attention. It must be stated that the use of colours speak a lot towards the enhancement of children's understanding of a play. Concerns must therefore be raised about colours in portraying the appropriate scenery that complement their play environments.

1.4 Objectives

This study reflects the artistic and aesthetic trajectories of children's theatre of which set design plays a complementary role through the use of colour. It specifically seeks through:

1. Scenery exploration to reawaken colour consciousness within children for an effective theatre experience.
2. How colour emphasises, strengthens and supports the messages within the play for children's understanding.

3. How set designs for children contribute to the artistic development of Children's Theatre.

1.5 Research Questions

The research shall be executed based on the questions below:

1. What is the role of colour in creating an effective theatre experience for children?
2. How can colour in set design emphasise and strengthen the messages within a play for children's understanding?
3. What is the role of set design towards the artistic development of children's theatre

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the exploration of colour as the core element in set design towards Children's Theatre experience. It delimits itself to children's reaction to colours; both performers and audience within the theatre experience. This work will experiment with children within the middle and early adolescent age brackets of eight and thirteen (8-13) years. It will however, not consider children's responses to shapes in the scenery as well as colours of costumes and light.

1.6.1 Limitations

The experimentation with diverse materials in creating desirable designs for children greatly affected the budget involved. It was also time consuming. There is limited availability of literature on the aesthetic or artistic functions of Children's Theatre and this challenged the study. I relied mainly on the artistic exploration of children's play environment grounded heavily in western literature.

1.7 Significance of study

The study encourages interdisciplinary research between theatre and psychology. The concept of appropriating colours will expand the borders between children's receptive levels and their colour experiences. It advances knowledge acquisition in terms of designers' appreciation of children's colour preferences so as to create content for their engagement on any platform. It will also help enhance children's understanding and appreciation of colours in set design. This may serve as a guide to designers who desire to explore other elements in set design for children.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

This study comprises five chapters. Chapter one primarily gives a general introduction to the work and provides an overview of what the study intends to do. It also focuses on providing the background to the study, the problem that has necessitated this study. Research questions have also been designed to assist the designer in addressing the objectives and problems of the study. Other areas examined in this chapter include the scope of study, limitations, and its significance. Chapter two dilates on related literature and its impact on the study. The proceeding chapter three progressively gives an analysis of the play, *Feathers*, as well as the methodological approaches the study intends to adopt in bringing about results. The fourth chapter presents the outcome of the research and the various experiences and interviews relating to the study. The final and fifth chapter concludes the study by providing a summary of the entire study. It also offers the major findings of the study with recommendations on how elements of scenery can be maximised towards the promotion of the aesthetic experiences of Children's Theatre.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

In this chapter, some related literatures underlying the research are reviewed to help the researcher determine the relevance of the study. It also puts the work in its perspective to facilitate future studies. It dilates literature on who qualifies to be considered a child and his or her developmental needs in relation to their engagement in theatre. It also reviews literature on the philosophy of Children's Theatre and some boundaries that distinguish it from adult theatre. This chapter further examines works on the concept of design and set design, set design for children, colour, colour basics, its characteristics, perception, its effects, children and colour, as well as colour appropriation for children, and its impact in scenery on children.

2.2 Who is a child?

For the purpose of this study, it is significant to fully comprehend the concept of the child in order to situate and respond to the demands of children's theatre. The definitions for a child have both legal and biological connotations. A 'child' as defined by Article 1 under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is "a person below the age eighteen (18), unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger" (2005). This assertion is further shared by Ghana's Children's Act of 1998 of parliament which states, under Section 1 of the Children's Act 1998, a child is said to be "a person below the age of eighteen years". On another hand, Osakue (2010:59), in *The Parnassus*, states that "a child is a young human being between birth and puberty; a son or daughter of human parents". This definition from Osakue has a biological or natural twist as compared to the legal framework of the definitions by CRC and Children's Act of the Child in Ghana. Both

approaches of defining the child are considered and used mutually wherever children are the focus, of which this study is no exemption. With references to the stated definitions, a child could be said to be a person of either sexes younger than the age of eighteen (18) years. The legal definitions clearly set the upper age of a child at eighteen (18) years; however, it recognises the fact that the age boundary may be set below eighteen years under different circumstances in relation to the protection of the child. Within this context, a child then could be said to be a person; either male or female under the age of eighteen (18) years.

The child is very delicate and should be treated with considerations that have his or her interest at heart. Section II of the Children's Act of Ghana, relates that the concerns of the child shall be supreme in any matter concerning the child. In the same light, the CRC also mentions that "the best interest of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them" (CRC, Article 3). To this end, the needs of children should be of primary consideration in any capacity that they are involved. This is because they are a group of people with special needs throughout their growth process that need to be met. With the exposition on the definition and concept of the child, the next sub section, discusses children's theatre within the right context as regards the developmental expectations of children.

2.3 Children's Theatre

Children's Theatre is a significant and unique art form of theatre purposefully for educating and entertaining children; providing them with opportunities for exploring a world of their own. The idea of Children's Theatre performances being directed toward children is a fairly new phenomenon (Goldberg, 1974; McCaslin, 1978 & Corey, 1974). To this end, it is recounted that the middle of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of Christmas performances, comprised fairy tales that were enacted specifically for an audience of children

(Schonmann, 2011:31). With this, it could be realised that until the nineteenth century when children were engaged in their kind of theatre, they were only engaged in the theatre lives of adults, playing as actors and audience. As the chief mentor of this field for much of its history, Winnifred Ward wrote in her book on *Theatre for Children*; she vividly describes the genesis of it all in the year 1784:

...the place, a handsome country estate near Paris, belonging to the Duke of Chartres... It is performed in the first known theatre for children... more adults there are in the audience than children, yet unlike all theatres which have gone before, this is unquestionably a theatre for children (Ward,1950:1).

From this quote, it is apparent that children played for adults and other children which Schonmann states that Ward uses the term 'Theatre for Children' without any clarification and this has lasted until today (Schonmann, 2011). A critical assessment of this term reveals that Ward did not limit the theatre experience to children only; an area of research which is not within the scope of this study.

Children's Theatre provides an activity that helps to release the creative energies in children and at the same time it makes them confident, gives them a better understanding and appreciation of the world they live in. For instance, in the article, *Competitive Youth Theatre Festivals in Ghana*, Sarah Dorbgadzi (2006:17), sourced some responses from students of Ghana International School Drama Club about their experience with drama. Among these responses include; 'drama makes me express my feelings through the characters'; 'it helps me overcome shyness', it makes me confident when I talk to a lot of people'. These few responses are reflections of quality performance for children. They are evidences of the satisfaction children gain when their expectations are met in such circumstances. Goldberg (1974) in his book, *Children's Theatre- A Philosophy and a Method* states that the goal of children's theatre is to provide the best possible theatrical experience for the

young audience. In this light, Children's Theatre employs some techniques and principles of the theatre to create wonderful experiences that allow children to explore for their own benefit. Inferably, Children's Theatre could be said to be an art form in which the artistic needs of children are explored to create unforgettable moments for them while in the theatre.

2.3.1 The Philosophy of Children's theatre

The word philosophy according to the New World Encyclopedia is "an attempt to discover the meaning and purpose of existence, including through intellectual means, but including also self-reflection, discipline, and religious practice and inquiry" (Philosophy, 2013). It is important to know the rationale, nature, methods, and the concepts that compel the activities of Children's Theatre to be able to attend to the needs of children when engaging them with theatre. This in a way, sets the discourse for analysing the role of theatre in strengthening and developing the aesthetic and artistic dimensions of children.

Children's Theatre is among several other terms such as *Theatre for Infants (TI)*, *Theatre for Young People (TYP)*, *Theatre for Young Audience (TYA)*, and Theatre for the Family (TF) for the kinds of theatre that suggest a departure from the adult world of theatre. According to Schonmann (2006:77), "this kind of theatre as an identifiable field only came into existence with a recognition of a special audience, which needed a different kind of theatre than what was offered to adults". Thus, it is perceived as an entity that is separate from other entities. From this angle, it is important for one to consider the dichotomy involved when defining Children's Theatre to be able to know the classification one intends to adopt in order to place a work in its perspective.

Several known scholars (Goldberg, 1974; Slade, 1973 & McCaslin, 1978) that built the Children's Theatre field as quoted by Schonmann (2006) observe that there are two main

schools of thought about Children's Theatre. In a discussion with John K. Djisenu and Sandy Akhurst (theatre practitioners and lecturers at the School of Performing Arts), they affirmed these two ways of approaching Children's Theatre. One holds that it should be performed by children and for children. This school of thought is of the view that children tend to appreciate drama performed by children much better and best benefit them. Whereas the second school of thought relates that Theatre for Young Audience (TYA) should be performed by skilled adult actors for an audience of children. Sandy Arkhurst (personal interview, 23, 2015), emphasises that adults who perform for children should be able to act in a childlike manner; a situation that will enable children to relate more with them and give them a better understanding of their actions. Both schools of thought are accurate; they both cohere around at least one trait which eventually targets the child as their receptor or audience. They have become conventionally accepted as the major approaches toward any Children's Theatre experience as well as meeting the demands of performing for children.

Further, Children's Theatre theorist; Goldberg (1974:5), posits that "it is a specific sub-group of theatre experience intended for children an audience of children". Similarly, Schonmann (2011:284) notes that "TYA does not exist without children. Indeed, virtually all aspects of the TYA performative explicitly signify the focus on children..." From this definition, the young audience becomes the accent for any targeted theatrical experience: with every aspect of its engagement slanted towards the total development of children. Therefore, it puts the child at the heart of the performance. Hence, Children's Theatre could be delineated as a kind of theatre in which plays are performed by children or adults and targeted towards an audience of children. These notwithstanding, for the purpose of this study, a child performer to a child audience is adopted to give children the room to explore their kind of world in a more creative ambiance which leads to learning. It also gives them the opportunity to engage with theatre in their own terms, thus projecting their own voices

and perspectives in relation to their own performances and in their kind of space.

2.3.2 The Dual Function of Children's Theatre

Children's theatre as a term has two ways of engaging children; mainly for pedagogical or didactic matters and for artistic or aesthetic tendencies. Accordingly, Schonmann (2006), expresses that the educational inclination remains the instrumental function of children's theatre as compared to its artistic and aesthetic merits. In her book, *Key Concepts in Theatre/Drama Education*, Schonmann (2011:2), also suggests that Children's Theatre should not be left to struggle to confine itself within the educational endeavour rather; it is more desirable when it is practiced on its own aesthetic and artistic form. This is similar to what Reason (2010:3) describes that Children's Theatre has always existed within the frame of educational discourse as compared to its aesthetic posture. He intimates that in situations where children's engagement with theatre as art is often not considered, it means that they are being denied arts in their own right. To this point, both put forth a suggestion that Children's Theatre has the potential to perform better on its artistic and aesthetic merits other than trying to struggle to define its legitimacy only as an educational enterprise.

Gronemeyer (1996) as cited by Schonmann wishes for Children's Theatre to do away with the domination of the didactic posture of Children's Theatre and rather find new ways of thinking about its artistic and aesthetic disposition. His wish echoes the earlier suggestion already pointed out by Schonmann (2006) and Reason (2010) which hopes for Children's Theatre to explore more of its artistic disposition for the benefit of children. In consequence, theatre helps in developing the aesthetic and artistic dimensions of children's lives and it must be encouraged to strengthen their critical thinking, exploration and participation. However, this is not to downplay the educational phenomenon

associated with Children's Theatre, rather, theatre will be at its best if both parts are explored together for children so as to develop them intellectually and artistically.

Studies suggest that there are almost no scholarly works on this topic (Reason, 2010 & Schonmann, 2006). Much has not been done in developing theories in this field for the benefit of children which in a way is like a deficiency in their form of art which needs to be encouraged.

Throughout the discussion, it could be established that theatre for children has special qualities and expectations that shape their concepts and practices of the art. They are not simplified adults. Their theatre should not be considered as subservient to adult's theatre. Also, their form of theatre should not be a matter of adapting to the art form of adult theatre or a state of "being better" than the same instead, it should be allowed to thrive and operate based on its own sake; it should develop its own aesthetic and artistic forms. It should also not be tied entirely to the educational ends but rather, it should be given room for artistic exploration. This therefore sets the discourse for the kind of Children's Theatre that the study intends to experiment through Scenic Design.

2.4. The Concept of Design

To be able to fully appreciate the concept of set design, it is important to understand what design is. It concerns itself with the function it will perform in a work of art. In their book, *Design Basics*, David A. Lauer and Stephen Pentak (2008:4) relate that "design is inherent in the full array of art disciplines from painting and drawing to sculpture, film, theatre, graphics, and animation". It could be described as an object created and the process of creating it. Further, Lauer (1990:2), defines design "as a planned arrangement of elements to form a visual pattern". These elements include; line, shape, form, texture, and colour. They

form the network of an artwork in conveying visual messages to its recipients. From this perspective, this study intends to employ colour, the most dominant element, to create a design for children. From here, it is lucid that a designer employs these elements and more in organizing a visual image necessary for communicating to viewers or audience. The purpose of design is to engender artistic meaning and aesthetic reasons in order to create new forms of beauty within the environment. Glen (June 11, 2014), in his article, *The Evolving Purpose of Design* orients that “the purpose of design is for communication, creative expression, and subsuming inspiration”.

Inferably, it creates meaning and brings about interactions among its users, thus, not making it just a decoration. Carr and Pomeroy (1992), assert that design is an artistic planning method that begins with the openness of our minds to opportunities and progresses into finding solutions to defined challenges. Similarly, Michael Gillette (2000:70) defines design as “the process of conceiving and executing a plan”. To get a challenge solved becomes the objective for designing. A designer then is confronted with the task of finding means of dealing with the problem he or she encounters in order to convey a particular message to its viewers. Towards this end, a designer in the theatre could be said to be a person who spawns and organizes the visual aspects and aural effects in a theatre performance. The process of generating and organising becomes the designer’s method of untying knots to arrive at a design solution. These enable designers to put to work their skills and abilities in realising the ideal acting atmosphere that is more engaging and stimulating to its users.

2.4.1 The Concept of Set Design

Every theatrical production requires the integration of many related arts, of which set design is an integral part. In the introduction to their book, *Set Design for Film and TV*,

Bergfelder, Harris and Street (2007) posit that set design is one of the central characteristics of *mise-en-scène* whether by means of true or creating completely artificial spaces for screen. Their concept for set design applies to that of theatre because its intent is to provide an environment for a performance either a bare one or an entirely furnished one depending on its demands. Set design mainly concerns the creation of a desirable milieu for a performance; providing it with an inimitable look peculiar to a particular play.

In the book, *Stage Design and Stage Lighting*, Wolf, Block and Parker (2003:10), also relate that “scene design is concerned with the creation of an environment in which the action of the play will happen”. In the face of these functions, the primacy of set design is to create a desirable environment for a production in a manner that may be unique to a specific play. It also makes a strong initial visual impact which registers on the audiences even before they encounter the other visual components of a play. In agreement with this, Parker et al (2003:11) further summarise that “scene design, the physical and visual environment, is often the strongest visual element that supports the spoken word of a dramatic form”. This posture is shared by Gillette (2000:105), whose set design concept affirms that “scenery helps audience to understand and enjoy a play by providing a visual reinforcement of the production concept”.

Set design as one of the crucial creative forces in the theatre contains the essential element of communication. On this basis, Schonmann (2011:43) notes the communicative role that art takes on when she says: “Art is a way to communicate with others via symbols, images and by creating an aesthetic order in our feelings and thoughts”. Considering Schonmann’s elucidation, set design is a kind of theatrical language; an integral part of art in communicating essential elements among which include the genre of the play, the setting, period, style, status of characters, their ages, background, mood, and atmosphere in

theatrical performances.

Forwarding, set design should be able to send signals to audiences by giving them a pleasing play environment that well complements the status, background, and role of the characters involved. In this vein, it should help convey some factual and affective information about the play such as the mood, the personality of the characters and their essence in the play. In achieving these, it becomes the responsibility of the scenic designer to provide an environment suitable for the play as far as these elements are concerned. To this effect, Bergfelder et al note that at the very basic level:

set design serves in identifying characters, fleshing out and concretising their psychology; and, often helps to create a sense of place in terms of ‘mood’ or atmosphere’ and that evoke emotions and desires that complement or run counter to the narrative. (2007).

In a latter respect, it is evident that set design plays a vital role in complementing other elements of the theatre for effective communication. In effect, it has always been at its most pronounced dominant state where an entire world is created from the scratch to complement and communicate the concept of a whole new play.

2.4.2 Set Design as Children’s Spatial Need

The design of an environment for a performance could be considered as creating a space that will stimulate its audience. Set design serves both the actors and audience; a thrust that connects the audience to the actors’ milieu. This makes set design effective in focusing audiences’ attention while organising what they need to know about the play. With set design as a space construct, it is essential to emphasise it as a kind of children’s spatial need so as to satisfy it within their theatre experience. The creation of an environment is core to any children’s engagement. An evaluation of some studies conducted in the field of

children's spatial need reveals that children's physical environment like their libraries, school environment and play areas have been investigated chiefly in the light of spatial considerations (Feinburg & Keller, 2010 & Hendricks, 2013). However, it was not apparent whether there has been an attempt to discuss set design for children in such capacity. Therefore, making it limited in terms of spatial understanding.

Children's space is part of their overall perception; about how they observe, understand and identify things in their environment. Cohen (1985:33), posits that "knowledge of children's spatial information provides them with the ability to encode spatial cues, to make and transform a mental picture that will enhance performance". Similarly, Cohen cites (Heldmyer & Miller, 1975) who also adjoin that "spatial arrangements have profound impact on conserving their performances". These reflect the idea that considerations for children's acting space provide them with both physical and cognitive development. They also necessitate their involvement in more challenging activities that assist with their intellectual and physical growth. In view of this the set designer for any Children's Theatre needs to consider the significance of incorporating elements into the environment that fall within children's influence and experience. For instance, the compositional elements such as lines, forms, shapes, and colours in the set for children should be arranged in a manner that children can interact with.

In consonance with this, Read (1996), suggests that design elements within children's spaces are considered to have significant effects on their behaviour. Considering this, it is vital for children to experience visual cues capable of inducing their consciousness of the performance space. It also helps them to perceive the relationship between the actions of actors and the environment created.

Significantly, set design should be able to produce designs that reflect the target audiences in

content while communicating the messages pertaining to the play. Accordingly, it enables children to participate in more challenging activities that aid in their intellectual and physical growth. Comparably, Stanković & Stojić (2007:72) posit that “constructed elements of the space can support children and help them with their functioning within limits of their own abilities, and at the same time, they should provoke processes which will lead towards improvement”. In this stream, it is important for the set designer to know the physical space children need to develop them holistically; the overall composition of their performance space should be interactive in order to meet their aesthetic and cognitive needs and expectations.

2.4.3 Set Design for Children’s Theatre

Set design forms part of the constituent elements that are employed in creating a total theatre experience for children. However, it is perhaps not explored in view of children’s productions. To this end, Schonmann (2006), in the introduction to her book, *Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People*, intimates that the basic tendency by authors for Children’s Theatre to give predominance to the education as the instrumental function of theatre over the artistic merits remains strong in contemporary theatre for children. This view point could limit theatre artists from exploring new aesthetic forms that could expand the artistic frontiers of the field.

This reflects the posture that in spite of the contributions of set design in creating aesthetic and artistic experiences for children, it is obvious that emphasis is not given to it as compared to the educational import. For instance, some topics as regards Children’s Theatre have come under close scrutiny by some scholars and advocates; (Goldberg, 1974; Demmery, 1978; McCaslin, 1978; Reason, 2010, & Schonmann, 2006). Their literatures are replete with information on the cultural experience of Children’s Theatre, its conventions, the

boundaries between it and adult theatre, the nature of its audience, theatrical experience, its form and content, and educational function and other inexhaustible topics.

In the area of boundaries, Goldberg (1974) as cited by Schonmann claims that Children's Theatre is basically the same as adult theatre and the separation between it and that of adult theatre should be used only to differentiate between two kinds of audience. However, Schonmann (2006:17) in a rebuttal reiterates that this kind of basis for defining Children's Theatre in the same disposition as adult theatre is "one of the most important causes that prevented theatre for young audience from developing its own theatrical genres". Demmery (1978) as cited by Schonmann also calls for special qualities, training, and experience for children. For her, in order to distinct Children's Theatre from adult theatre, she requests that we bring to bear our talents about another facet of artistry into the lives of children. She espouses that its practitioners need to appreciate the fact that theatre for children should provide an emotional and aesthetic experience children and, if it does not, it is not worth pursuing.

Approaching Children's Theatre from Demmery's perspective reflects the vibrancy that children's aesthetic appreciation can bear on their performances towards their total theatre experience. On the nature of Children's Theatre audience, Schonmann (2006:62), records that children as audience can react openly or covertly depending on their own personality and their stage of development as regards theatre experience. Thus, children's way of perceiving performances is demonstrated in their patterns of participation. For instance, moments of paying less attention, running around, and deep silence all indicate the way young audience perceive and react to performances. In this sense, understanding children's reactions and their need for cognitive and physical communication is an integral part of understanding the nature of their theatrical experience.

Conversely, set design for Children's Theatre has not received equal scholarly attention compared with the relevant extant literatures discussed earlier. The available ones come in fragments with emphasis on the specific works done by some scenic designers rather than an intense exclusive treatment of the subject. Weincek (2009:2), re-echoes this gap as she states that "there are limited sources that discuss the specifics of design for Children's Theatre of which set design is included". In this respect, through series of consultations with experienced Children's Theatre designers, she created a preliminary source to serve as guide for designing for young audience. Comparatively, Allison (2013), a set designer, has also gathered some of her experiences in designing sets for Children's Theatre which could serve as another important reference material for set designers to draw inspirations from. Judging from these backgrounds, set design is part of the whole theatrical experience of Children's Theatre and therefore needs to be given adequate attention to bring it into the limelight of theatre and literature. In this light, the study discusses set design as a critical component for creating an aesthetic experience for Children's Theatre.

Set plays a complementary function in the total theatre experience and this study does not seek to pose it in a way that will make it outdo other elements that make up the complete Children's Theatre experience. Sandy Arkhurst (personal interview November 23, 2015), a lecturer of Creative Dramatics, reiterated that 'every element in Children's Theatre should be seen as an organic part of such experience; none should overwhelm the other'. He adds that if any of the elements overshadows the rest, communication will be reduced and will not benefit the child. Attempt to do otherwise will make set design deemphasise the role of the other elements thereby reducing the holistic achievement of a theatre experience for children.

2.4.4 Characteristics of Set Design for Children's Theatre

Set design presents to its young audience, distinct visual characteristics and aesthetic demands of which Schonmann (2011:42), relates; "theatre for young people...is an art form that should develop its own characteristics, aesthetic language, and invent its own artistic forms to create meaning and excitement." During play performances, children's aesthetic enjoyment lies in the hands of the set designer's ability like the actors and other contributors in the theatre, to communicate with the child. For instance, the choice of design elements such as colour, lines, forms, and shape should imitate children's way of using them; it should be peculiar to the young audience. To this point, Heft (1988) adjoins that decisions [taken when producing Children's Theatre] are to be executed with knowledge of how children exploit colours to read and understand designs.

Waksler (1986), also endorses Heft's opinion as he expresses that implementing these decisions within the scope of children's comprehension will help them interpret their world differently from adults because they see and make decisions about such elements on their own terms. Again, the approach to children's kind of set designs should nurture a sense of playful but meaningful and interactive spaces for their theatrical experiences. This is aimed at inspiring intuitive and childlike interactions among children by harnessing the power of play through such designs. This is captured in Slade's words when he asserts that the best child play does not happen unless when opportunity and support are consciously given to it by an adult mind Slade (1973). A similar point worth considering is captured in the article, *Theatre for Children in an Age of Film*, when Jonathan Levy (1990:10) mentions that "Children in the theatre are a captive audience. They do not choose to come... when they are there, we hold their imaginations in trust". In this regard, designers have the obligation of meeting the expectations of the child's perceptions of the scenery, provided that it corresponds to his mental powers as well as his sensory abilities. Wiencek

(2009:2) summarises this point as “but if the audience, of whatever age, isn’t following your lead, it means we’ve not done our jobs”. This is a situation which every set designer should endeavour to avoid and rather aim to provide unforgettable moments for the benefit of children.

Set designs for children should be simple but very intellectual; capable of provoking their thoughts as regards the play involved. This is evident when Arkhurst (personal communication November 23, 2015) mentions that “design for children should not be complex; it should communicate ideas that will be easily understood by the children”. To this end, the set design for children should be able to supply messages about the period, setting, age of characters among others to young audience. These should be commensurable to their understanding abilities. Thus, children’s kind of scenery should reinforce and reflect the visual messages accordingly for them to grasp. In her guide to designing for theatre for the young, Weincek (2009) suggests some healthier ways to engage children through design. She mentions:

the use of neon colours, objects with moving parts, designs that evoke cartoon-like quality. She also adds that designers should make sure to create designs with softer edges since static spaces could be hard on children. While doing this, it is important that aspects of the design that may seem frightening to the children be scaled off. (2009:4)

These methods, however, helpful and better engaging they may be may all not pass for some age groups of children. Therefore, it would be best for the designer to know the target age brackets of his or her consumers to be able to blend the various elements in a manner that will create a synergy in the design, capable of expressing the intended message to them.

Aside from the set designer employing these characteristics generally, colour, an inseparable element of design could be solely adopted in creating a play's environment that reflects its mood, characters, and atmosphere while contributing to the aesthetic and artistic enhancement of Children's Theatre.

2.5. Colour Basics, Perceptions, Characteristics, and the Impact on Scenery for Children.

With colour as the driving force of this study, it sets forth to find out children's colour choices as would be used accordingly in scenery for their kind of theatre. However, before doing this, it is significant to examine colour in its basic terms, characteristics, perception, and its relation with children. This will help to understand how its use in scenery can impact on children.

2.5.1 Basics of Colour

Colour as a field has varying perspectives within which it functions because of its diverse meanings in various disciplines. It has diverse purposes relative to the endeavour it serves. For instance, Gillette (2000:81), asserts that "colour has a variety of definitions". In this realisation, Parker et al (2003:187), opine that "the artist relates to colour as paint, the physicist refers to it as light, while the psychologist will indicate that colour is an individual perception". This is because no two persons see colour in exactly the similar way. In this consideration, Lauer and Pentak (2008), hold that the analysis of colour becomes a multifaceted report in which many experts competently describe their findings.

2.5.2 Characteristics of Colour

There are three basic variant terms used when discussing colour. These terms are principles of Albert Munsell's colour theory which is based on a three-dimensional model of value, hue,

and chroma where each colour comprises these three attributes (“Munsell”, 2016). This concept affords colours to be used in these three perspectives depending on how a designer wants them to appear in a design. These terms are referred to as “the languages of colour with which theatre designers express their works” Parker et al (2003:188). Comparably, the New Standard Encyclopedia (colour, 2015), adds that the eye can only recognize three characteristics of colour. According to Parker et al (2003) and Stiles & Wyszecki (2000), hold that the position or wavelength of a colour in its spectrum is its hue; for instance, the colour red, yellow, and green describe their hues. A colour’s value signifies the relative lightness or darkness of the colour; and its chroma indicates the brilliance and greatness of a colour. Discussion of these dimensions of colour brings to the mind of an observer or viewer a more consistent image when describing specific colours. They also give the characteristics or quality by which colours are distinguished from each other. These attributes of colour as propounded by Munsell are worth noting by the theatre artist when applying colour to a design. They are also significant for discussing colour as part of a critical analysis of emotional characteristics of a play.

There are two basic ways of adopting colour for use. With this, Parker et al (2003), affirm that colour in the theatre comes from two basic sources: colour in pigment or paint and colour transmitted by light. Thus, in the theatre, the lighting designer is basically concerned with colour in light whereas the costume and scenic designer are more interested in colour in pigment. Clearly then, it is important that the theatre designer, artist, or director understand at least the basic “language” of colour to be able to communicate effectively.

2.5.3 Perception of Colour

One of the basic facts about colour entails its scientific principle involving light, particularly wavelengths in the electromagnetic spectrum called the visible spectrum, and

how they are perceived by the human eye and brain. Lauer and Penkat (2008:256), restate that “the essential fact of colour theory is that it is a property of light, and not an object itself”. Similarly, the New Standard Encyclopedia (Colour, 2015), further adds that colour is a class of sensations made by light. In this regard, colour is light and there is or will be no colour without the presence of light. Thus, colour whether seen in nature or applied through painting or dyeing are caused by light.

In an attempt to define colour, Adams, Lee Stone, and Morioka (2006:8), also posit that “In the physical sense, there really is no such thing as colour, just light waves of different wavelengths”. With this the human eye can distinguish among these wavelengths, so we see the world in colour. The sensation of colour, which happens in our brains, is as a result of our vision’s response to these wavelengths. The visible spectrum can be demonstrated by observing light through a prism (Mollica, 2013:9). Objects in our environment naturally absorb and reflect certain wavelengths or frequencies of the electromagnetic spectrum. The colours we see when looking at an object are the wavelengths or frequencies that are reflected back to us. For instance, a green leaf absorbs all wavelengths in the visible spectrum except those that we see as green. This exhibits the phenomenon that transpires in our brains when we view the green leaf and perceive the reflected wavelengths (Brewster & Shafer 2011:94). Lee Stone (2008:51) also avers that “colour has an impact on humans because every cell in the body responds to light, and colour is light and so we react to it, literally, on cellular level”. This reflects the idea that colour acts actively on human consciousness as it affects our bodies, our minds, as well as moods.

More than colour being a visual phenomenon, it also has varied meanings depending on the culture it has been contextualized. Morioka and Stone (2008:35) affirm that “colour has emotional and cultural dimensions that can enhance or impede communication efforts”.

This is because, colour relates differently to other people depending on the meaning such people have assigned to it. For instance, red in a Ghanaian context symbolises calamity, evil, danger whereas in China, red signifies good luck, celebration and summoning; in India, it also signifies purity, fertility and beauty.

Colour according to Paterson (2003:2) “is the stuff of art and a vital constituent of our everyday lives”. It has become a massive part of our everyday lives because the world today is marked by uses of colour in every aspect of it. Nature is replete with variations of colour that keep us engaged and exploring what our world holds for us (Lascurian, October 08, 2015). It is a given gift to humans to enhance the total experience of the world around them. Barely can we notice or observe an object within our surrounding without coming into contact with its colour. As an attention catcher, colour serves as guide for making sense from our surrounds therefore making it hard not to be observed. Being an integral part of our perceptual system, Porter and Mikellides (2009) observe that colour helps us to recognize and define objects in space and act as a signalling device, which is evident of certain conditions, conveying information about our surroundings.

Colour has prompted most important discoveries and advancements of the twentieth century: it has been studied and applied in many facets of life with proven results showing its significance in such areas; the scientists use it to determine the elements of distant stars, to help animals avoid predators, shows when a fruit is ripe or rotten (Patterson, 2012). It has also been applied in the field of physics, psychiatry, optometry, engineering, and painting. Companies use it in advertising and marketing their products as well as to grab viewers’ attention and to stimulate them. On the internet, colour is the first thing you notice even before you understand which language it is being used or what the message says. Paterson (2012:3), thus, summarises the role of colour as “a powerful shorthand for conveying ideas and information”. Morioka and Stone (2008: 8) also adjoin their voice by saying that

“Colour provides strong visual statements that communicate our clients’ messages”. In this vein, colour could be said to be a significant medium, which holds visual and inherent powers to rouse immediate and marked reactions in viewers and observers. It therefore becomes the best and convenient way of putting across or transmitting messages of which set designers can leverage for its viewers.

2.5.4 The Effect of Colour

An understanding of the diverse effects colour can bear on viewers’ responses is integral to the creation of a design. Colour provides strong visual statements that communicate viewer’s messages. This is shared by Adams et al (2006), who relate that colour used in a design conveys both tone and meaning; which is essential to affecting audience’s judgment and reactions. It also helps to create a believable design that enhances a theatrical experience as a whole. It is further espoused as a catalyst for feelings-about how we look, decorate our home or office, design and plant in our garden (Eiseman, 2006).

Accordingly, colour spawns strong visual statements that communicate messages convincingly to viewers and clients thereby influencing them to patronise some services.

Colour also causes psychological responses, which could elicit judgements about specific colours. Naturally, the human make up comprehends and reacts to colours and could attract one’s attention to a product. The eye perceives colour based on the level of its wavelength. For instance, red could be used to catch attention to a particular spot in a design depending on the size of its wavelength. In affirmation, Allison (2013: 9), further says that “it is important to consider the physiological effects of colour on audience”. For instance, touching an area of blue will seem chilly, but looking at it will induce a feeling of coolness (Lauer & Pentak 2008). Colour also affects volume and depth. It can be used to advance or recede designs or objects depending on the warmth or coolness of the colour used.

To this end, Adams et al (2006:53), relates that “warm colours always advance and seem nearer, while cool ones recede and seem more distant”. A case in point is a primary colour like yellow can be used to advance objects in view as compared to blue which distants the same objects from viewers. In this regard, colour could be said to react based on proximity thereby changing its character. In order for these physical purposes of colour to be achieved, the set designer needs to have an in-depth understanding of colour theory and human physiology. The physical effects of colour could also be used to strengthen emotional links to product or performance so as to cause stimulation in the audience. In consonance with this, Allison (2013), suggests that physiological and physical responses to colour can assist a designer to elicit psychological or emotional from audience.

However, despite the immense benefits of colour to nature, it has its diverse adverse effects as well. It could be very fraught in some extremes because a colour which may appeal to one person may be very disturbing to another person. With this, Adams et al (2008:6) and Sherrin (2012), in their books, *Colour Design Workbook* and *Colour Fundamentals* respectively are of the view that colour is a subject that causes trouble. For instance, a value of red can distant a viewer from an object, while the same tone may be welcoming and soothing for others. The *New Standard Encyclopedia* (colour, 2015) on colour also adds that a colour can be startling, unpleasant, or offensive. Consequently, colour can be said to be subjective, however, a designer can create a best design out of this to the admiration of audience or viewers.

2.5.5 Children and Colour

Colour permeates every facets of man’s engagement of which children are no exception. Children are full of imaginations and always ready to learn with colours and discover new things around them. Lascurain (November 08, 2015), states that children talk of colour as fun,

happy, cool, and beautiful; it is one of the best ways they can reflect different moods, represent and realize their feelings. She further reiterates that colour has become the bright side of childhood that if one wants to communicate with them, he or she should have colour as an ally.

There have been researches in the field of colour that suggest that children react to colour physically, mentally, and emotionally. Empirical researches on colour psychology on children have produced reasonable consistency as regards how colour in children's physical environment impacts on their cooperative behaviour (Read, 1996). Her results suggested that differences in children's wall colour positively affected children's cooperative behaviour and could be used to alert planners in the design of children's facilities for them to be more aware of how changes in the physical space can affect their behaviour. It has also been used as healing therapy for children (Sarah Meyer, 2007). Meyer's research found that children preferred hospital rooms with variety of colours as it provided them with aesthetic appeal and also stimulated their minds by distracting them from the reality of an illness or trauma thereby quickening their recuperation processes.

In the field of architecture, colour has comparably been experimented as efficient pathfinders for children in school environments (Elif, 2007). His research showed that colour helps to provide visual interest that affects the efficiency in way finding and spatial orientation for children. It also gave them visual cues on route learning processes. Further, Cohen (1990), has used colour in assessing its impact on gender and their environment. The outcome of the experiment suggested that as compared with boys who liked less stimulated environment, girls selected more intense colour arrangement, significantly, brighter lighting combinations, and more complex use of scenic arrangements. These

researches are indications of how colour affects children psychologically and physically.

Notwithstanding these prevalent studies, a similar research has also been conducted in theatre by Allison (2013) on the effects of colour in scenic design on audience. However, it does not capture any information in relation to children in the theatre. The audience here could refer to both adults and children but the work does not in any part of its responses give reactions peculiar to children. Hence, to what extent this finding holds highly familiar in the area of set design for children is unclear. Comparably, through observations of some children's drama performances and entertainment shows, colour has not been explored primarily in portraying the desired performance area for children. In perspective is Kiddafest, an Accra International Children's Festival produced annually by the National Theatre of Ghana over a period of three or four days. This kind of festival is embedded with variety of shows, however, compared with Children's Theatre which performs a particular play to an audience of children, Kiddafest is a festival style that comprises performances ranging from drama skits, dance, music, acrobatic displays, and painting. Colours can be used to complement the multifaceted nature of the show; adding to the diverse range of its play possibilities. However, an evaluation of the tradition of sets designed for the show was virtually not apparent as regards colour.

The set designs from the year 1994 to 2014 revealed that the colours used reduced from variety of colours to a plain (monochrome) backdrop. With Edu, (personal communication November 03, 2015), it was gleaned that he designed a set for *The Lion King*, adapted and produced by Tema International School in 2014 and other school productions. However, in the adoption of colour schemes for such designs, he relied on the general perception that children like neon colours in order to generate designs that appeal to them. These, together with limited studies about how children relate to their colour choices as used in scenery have

prompted this research. It therefore opens up the unexplored possibilities that colours from the perspective of children hold in enhancing their performances spaces for their development. Colour is very influential when making decisions about children's environment. It influences their feelings which may be extended as a result of their surrounding impressions. These feelings vary from excitement, energy, and calmness (Elif, 2007). Colour matters a lot to children; it has unique meaning to children. Thus children have a different perception of the world; a perception that may not have the same orientation as that of adults. (Hendricks, 2013).

In a personal interview with Vincent Tagoe, head of Visual Arts, University of Ghana Basic School, he mentions that:

children respond more to polychromatic use of colour. He adds that children get pleasure from using myriads of colours to create and make meaning out of what they do which will be contrary to how an adult may use colours. To them variety of colours signals a place of interest, a healthy varied environment. The brighter and more vivid the colours, the more attention-grabbing they seem to them. (personal communication, October 21, 2015),

Inferably, children love colours and can make use of them to a point that will appeal to their emotions and sense of beauty. To this end, they have different levels of colour appreciation as regards the orthodox meanings to adults therefore, a designer should apply colour with knowledge of children's understanding of colours and leverage it for their benefit.

2.5.6 Definitions and Concepts of the Term Appropriation

It is of great significance if children's colour choices are applied to a set design towards the enhancement of their scenic experience of a play. This enables set designers to use colours

to affect children emotionally, psychologically, and physically thereby making them have control of the scenic experience. In this respect, the term ‘to appropriate’ as regards the intended use of colours needs to be placed in a perspective in order to examine it within the context of this study.

The expression, appropriate, has been observed to have both conceptual and lexical postures depending on how it is intended to be used. According to Schneider (2006:), it is a term derived from the Latin word ‘appropriare’ “to make one’s own” and it lies at the core of successive application of the term. As a concept, it has dominantly been used in the literary, visual, and media arts cycle. Schneider suggests that “appropriation is the direct duplication or incorporating of an image (painting, photograph, etc) by another artist who represents it in a different contest, thus completely uttering its meaning...and authenticity”. Similarly, it describes the process of taking or borrowing pre-existing objects or images that belongs to others and making use of them to serve different purposes and with certain intentions (Kruger, 1999 & Landa, 2005). The understanding of appropriation within this frame allows for one to copy or alter another person’s work to create new content to serve a particular group of people. Schneider points out that “this approach as a practice connotes a contravention of copyright; where an artist may copy another pre-existing image and mark it as his or her own”. It has therefore been adopted to recreate specific symbolic associations and meanings within a new context.

Within a lexical construct, to appropriate means to make something suitable for a particular person, circumstance, or place. (The New International Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary, 2004). On the basis of this meaning, whatever is being suited should measure up to the place, persons or situation in use. This helps to engender satisfying appeal and results from its users or viewers. The essence of quality and the ability of the

appropriated object or element to contribute to the enhancement and understanding of its users underline the core of this expression.

An evaluation of the conceptual and lexical meanings of appropriation shows the differing viewpoints of the word and this helps to situate it within the context of this study. This work does not intend to use or copy anyone's work to achieve its objectives, rather it seeks to ensure the impact of the suitability of colours in scenery on children towards their theatre experience. This therefore sets the tone for applying children's colour choices within a content as would complement the set to be designed for Philip Ridley's play, *Feathers*.

2.5.6.1 Appropriating Colours for Children

To consider the relation of appropriation to colours is to consider how their use or application suits a particular place, person or occasion. The intention of appropriation of colours suggests the arrangement of colours, the amount of intensity involved, and the meaning of such colours to children in ways that contribute to their appreciation and interest. These have the capacity of enhancing their understanding of such environment and their relationship with it. Further, appropriating colours for children depicts a medium that ensures the effectiveness of the intended purpose towards the development of children as it contributes to their aesthetic, physiological, and psychological needs. Thus, they do not merely internalise such meaning but rather, they are able to use them for their interactions within a context.

There are a number of ways in which colour specialists have defined the appropriate use of colours in design. Some of the key elements in their use include preferences, effectively, proper, and suitable just to mention these. There are few of the researches conducted on

colour within the construct of the term ‘appropriate’. In an article, *Use of Appropriate Colours for Children*, Ali Talaei conducted a research on the appropriate use of colours (February 23, 2015). He suggested through his research that colours can be said to be appropriate in designs in so far as they are used against the background of children’s colour preferences. To him, to appropriate colours for children is to have knowledge of their attraction to certain colours and use them effectively to evoke reactions, interactions, and stimulation.

In a similar vein of research, Talaei together with three other authors carried out a study on the *Use of Appropriate Colours in Children’s Rooms* (Abbasi, Rezaei, & Talaei, 2014). Their research was basically on the proper balance of both warm and cool colours in children’s rooms. In doing this, they looked out for the meanings and effects of some common colours thereby applying them in ways that were well balanced and suitable for the children involved. They concluded with a number of positive outcomes of which some include; ‘the proper use of colours for children improved their emotional development, their level of co-operation, and also they made it easier for children to organise their own thoughts which could lead to better intellectual development in the long term’. Significantly, to apply colours with these in mind have the potential of spawning desirable results to the benefit of children.

In a comparable perspective, Curry and Gaines (2011), embarked on a research on *Inclusive Classroom: Effects of Colour on Learning and Behaviour*. Their research was in a bid to examine how colours in the classroom environment could impact on children with learning disability. Their investigation on appropriating colours was based on the effect that functional applications of colours have on them. It was therefore revealed that the functional aspects of colour rather than the aesthetics have the ability to impact the

behaviour, attention, and achievements of student with disability. Consequently, they claimed that their research was perhaps the first to investigate the appropriate use of colours for inclusive classroom design. Comparing these areas of research within the appropriation context, it is apparent that its application regarding colours is contextual, depending on how colour specialists or designers intend to achieve their purpose.

The lexical concept of the appropriation has also been used in ecological psychology in researching children's development relationships with their environment. Göllitz (1998:365) cites Graumann (1990b), who recounts that appropriation was introduced in ecological psychology in the 1970s. He espouses that it refers to the active, interactive, components of the person-environment relationship. Göllitz, adds that "this concept emphasises the idea that appropriated elements in children's environment promote their interactions: what a person knows things to be, what they are called, and how they are being dealt with". Appropriation in this sense reflects the ideas, meanings, and values of elements in children's environment which they use to enhance their communication within such space. The use of appropriation in the area of colour and its subsequent adoption in ecological psychology iterate the idea that appropriation is contextual depending on how its users intend to maximise it for their intentions. Thus, it shows its supreme significance in the well-being of children as regards their preferences of elements, the meanings they make out of them and how effectively they are used in conveying another medium of meaning and appreciation.

Elaboration on the use of this term paves way for the study to be placed in its perspective of appropriating children's colour choices to the set design for Philip Ridley's play, *Feathers*. This will further be detailed in subsequent chapters three and four. It will also help them express the essence of colour in their scenic experience.

Accordingly, appropriation as regards colours delineates its suitability in application,

meaning, and the essence of conveying messages that enhance children's understanding of a piece of work while meeting their artistic needs. Hence, its use should correspond with children's abilities, contribute to their development, and also improve their reactions and interaction within their environment. This exercise helps to improve children's own inimitable expressions which help to discover new approaches of tuning their inner spirits. It also affords them their own experiences and guides them through satisfying moments of the world of the play.

2.5.7 The Impact of Colour on Scenery for Children

Within the scope of this study, the children, scenery, and colours are the crux of communication in designing the set for Children's Theatre. These elements become interrelated and should be considered in relation to how they communicate with one another in the theatre. This triadic angle of communication for children's theatre stands at the core of this study. Each of them plays a critical role in sending signage to the other as well as bringing about new discoveries and development in each of the parts.

As earlier discussed, the aim of set design is to create the physical environment to fulfill a purpose. This may range from just a single chair on stage to a complete and elaborate set up. In both instances, the scenic designer plays a vital role in rendering the acting environment in a manner that serves the unfolding storyline. Parker et al (2003:11), add that set design then brings to the production a visual interpretation that conveys the author's purpose. Colour is one of the major ways in achieving this. It is a language and serves as a tool for communicating between people and objects surrounding them, and should be leveraged to give the desired messages to children through scenery (Crosby & Kaya, 2006 & Morioka, 2008).

As earlier stated, children in the theatre have psychological, physiological, emotional, and

aesthetic needs that require some form of gratification. Colour is a powerful design element that produces profound psychological and physiological responses. Arkhurst (personal communication November 23, 2015), suggests that while colour creates an environment for children, it should be in the capacity to develop them wholly. In this regard, the designer has a huge responsibility of projecting a desirable stage environment that appeals to these needs of children; one that will leave a lasting mark on their imaginations and physical wellbeing.

The theatre is a place where children spend less of their time; they experience brief moments within the time frame of the performance. Zeynep Başıoğlu (2002:37) suggests that “the quality of an environment can have a direct impact on human behaviour”. To this end, the appropriate use of colour in this kind of space can cause children to relax and focus on the coloured environments, because the visual and emotional excitements in such milieu match their spirits and set them at ease. In this sense, colours used should neither make children nervous or anxious while those moments last. This point satisfies one of the three purposes of colour design as outlined by Frank Mahnke, (1996) when he says that colour design should avoid over stimulation and under stimulation. Similarly, Curry and Gaines (2011) espouse that an under-stimulating environment could be harmful to its users just as an over-stimulating one may cause.

Colour can be used to grab children’s attention by creating a focal point or accent that will keep them focused on the scenery. Thus, Başıoğlu (2002:13) and Walker (1991) opine that colour helps to draw attention from the self to the environment or vice versa, which affects the mood of humans. Colour has a great deal of impact on the mood of the audience. With its presence in children’s scenery, the joy of its experience cannot be withheld from children. The stage therefore, should be set with colours that will provide a positive

explorative learning mood. When a designer creates for children, the elements of the design should represent the ideals of the children involved and not that of the designer. The creative power of colour as a tool for children's exploration cannot be simply ignored. In this perspective, the study seeks to find children's colour choices which would be incorporated in the design of a set for Philip Ridley's play, *Feathers*.

Faber Birren (1976) points out two important realms as regards the creation of spaces for children: the visual realm and emotional realm. In the visual realm, Başoğlu (2002) observes that colour in scenery for children can modify the perception of form or space to suit a particular purpose. She holds that colour can manipulate in both physical and mental ways in convincing one to see a different reality. In this regard, the set designer should use colours that would transform a given cold space into one that is stimulating to children. The set should be able to tell children that they are in their kind of world. Therefore, the use of colour in scenic design should dramatically affect children's perception of scenic space and form.

Similarly, as one of the established strong elements of design, it is therefore significant that it provides powerful visual statements in communicating messages in designs. The theatre is one of such places where colour is used significantly to express some form of meanings. In a parallel manner, it projects the relationship between some elements such as the setting, status, religion, culture, and personalities of actors among others and how they interact with one another to give a unified accent to a performance. This is amplified by Dalke et al (2005), that the use of colour in children's environment has the capacity of providing visual interest to supply maximum efficiency for them to navigate. Taking the demands of Children's Theatre into consideration, colour should be employed in a way that would meet the essence of their kind of theatre. As earlier espoused, Demmery, a proponent of Children's Theatre relates that "let us share our talent to bring another dimension of artistry into the lives of children and never forget theatre for children should provide an

emotional and aesthetic experience and, if it does not, it is not worth doing” (1978:21).

Inspired by Demmery’s comment, the scenic designer like the director of Children’s Theatre should bring his or her design to bear on children by appealing to their emotional and aesthetic demands. Following this revelation, colour is very vital in achieving these kinds of appeal and should be applied accordingly.

In reference to the emotional realm of colour in scenery for children, it could be used to cause emotional responses in children in relation to the context of the play. Lauer & Pentak reaffirm this point by saying that “colour causes emotional reaction and its relation to the thematic subject matter is very common” (2008:287). Emotional reactions to colour can introduce sensory stimulation, break up monotony, and establish an interesting change of space. For instance, a colour could be dominantly used to heighten or lower children’s emotional responses to the subject matter of the play. For an effective mental and emotional balance of colour, it should be dynamically used to evoke such reactions. This shows the undeniable force of colour to evoke poignant responses in its viewers.

Leading on from the above, colour gives children an aesthetic experience within their environment and its application could engender them to explore such surrounding to its fullest. Varghese (1985:192), in her book, *Home Management*, avers that “aesthetic appeal is the effect created by colour and it serves as centre of interest”. In a similar vein, aesthetics is an aspect of production design that cannot be ignored. In this capacity, colour can assist children in making judgement about scenery during their initial reactions with it. However, too much emphasis on aesthetics could compromise function. This is also espoused by Mahnke (1996:180), that “Colourful for the sake of colour accomplishes little that is constructive, just as bleak environments accomplish nothing constructive either”. With this Demmery (1978), also pushes that the application of colour should not only be for its beauty

rather it should give children an emotional and psychological experience. Thus colour should not be used in scenery merely to adorn it, rather it should be selected for the purposes of influencing children in terms of how they will relate to it and how it influences their understanding of a theatrical piece. Paterson (2003:2) summarises this thought that “the beauty of expressing a work of art lies in its ability to speak its language through colour”.

With reference to the evidences given in the related literature, it can be inferred that set design is an integral part of the whole theatrical experience for children. It is a kind of technical language that helps in communicating various elements such as the setting of a play, the status of characters, their ages, period of the play, as well as the mood and atmosphere of the play. Several of the cited works have highlighted the role of colour as a design element in meeting the physical, psychological, and aesthetic needs of children towards achieving a wonderful theatre experience for children. Colour has also been established as the bright side of childhood and anyone who desires to engage children in any activity needs to have knowledge of what colours mean to them and leverage them to their benefits. Colours have to be used in ways that are suitable to the children and also contribute to their artistic, psychological, and physical development in every respect of the environment they find themselves.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND WORKING PROCESS

3.1 Overview

This chapter centres on the research design and methodology employed for gathering information that contributed to the realisation of the design for the purpose of the study. It further provides the design concept, design process, a summary of the play, Feathers, scenic demands of the play, the colour scheme, the scenic artistic input, and the budget for the set design.

3.2 Research Design

A vital part of this study is to create an interactive set design for children through the use of colour. In order to achieve this; qualitative research method has been employed to seek an in-depth knowledge on children's perception on this phenomenon and their colour choices which informed the design. Qualitative research method involves itself with attempts to interpret phenomena and experiences in relation to the meanings that people bring to bear on them. Dawson (2002:14) relates; the qualitative method of research "explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences through such methods as interviews or focus groups. It attempts to get an in-depth opinion from participants". This method thus seeks to understand a given topic from the perspective of the local population it involves. It is typically more flexible and the relationship between the researcher and the participants is less formal. The researcher therefore saw it suitable to adopt the qualitative method of research in order to gather the needed in-depth understanding regarding children's preferences of colours which will enrich knowledge in this field especially, when designing for them. This was also by way of reawakening colour consciousness in children for their own exploration.

3.3 Population for Study

The population for a study may be considered as the total number of all units of the experience that are available to be investigated. Thus, representing the portion of the units accessible to the investigator, and covers the total set of individuals or experiences with familiar characteristics (Kumekpor 2002 & Twumasi 2001). For the purpose of this study, the targeted population comprised children between the age brackets of eight and thirteen (8-13) years from Solid Rock Foundation School in Agbogba, Accra.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

The sampling process requires a careful analysis of a selected proportion of the units with regard to the study. This is to extend the knowledge gained from the study to the whole unit. Dawson (2007: 47) defines sampling as the researcher's ability to choose "a smaller, more manageable number of people to take part in [the] research". Due to the homogeneous nature of the units involved, quota sampling method was therefore used to select a sample within the age brackets of eight and thirteen (8-13) years old so as to achieve the objectives of the research. This sampling method allows the researcher to choose the category of people who would most likely experience, know about, or have insight into the research topic. The sample group was a total of fifty respondents within the earlier stated age brackets from the Solid Rock Foundation School. A sub-sample size of ten respondents from each of the age brackets was drawn for the study except the eight and nine years age brackets which had five respondents each. They were grouped according to their ages (see table 3.1) in order to get an in-depth understanding of the disparate pool as regards their knowledge in colour.

Table 3.1: Number of respondents from each age bracket

| Age bracket | Respondents in each bracket | Total no. of respondents |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 8 | 5 | 10 |
| 9 | 5 | |
| 10 | 10 | 10 |
| 11 | 10 | 10 |
| 12 | 10 | 10 |
| 13 | 10 | 10 |
| Total | | 50 |

This sample was chosen because children within these age brackets have the cognitive capacity to express their thoughts very well. They hold the ability to use expressive language and their social interaction skills are quite adequate for discussions. It also represents the developmental middle school (8-11) and early adolescent age (12-13) stages of which Freud & Piaget (1987) saw as a plateau in children's development. In Piaget's theory of development as cited by Kipps (2010:55), he considers children between age eight and eleven years as reaching the concrete operational stage, while he referred to those from ages eleven and thirteen and above as being in the formal operational stage. Zeman (2015), also observes that children of these age brackets retain basic cognitive skills of expressing themselves. She adds that by these periods, they would have also developed a wide vocabulary with which to express themselves, discuss issues and emotional states of themselves. Eccles (1999:32), further intimates that by the middle school age, children had developed a sense of industry and cooperate with their peers. For early adolescent stage,

Eccles reiterates that their cognitive level heightens their ability to reflect on their own success and failures. In affirmation, Zeman established that adolescents become adept (highly skilled) at interpreting social situations. The similar ages and characteristics shared by each of the respondents within these age groups boosted their confident levels and they were able to express themselves freely on the designated topic.

3.5 Primary Data Collection Procedures

For this study, focus group and unstructured interview both under the aegis were adopted in gathering information for the topic of study. Audio and video recordings were taken on each of the sessions with the respondents after which the disparate views were correlated to draw substantive conclusions in aid of the rendition of the final designs.

3.5.1 Focus Group Interview

Focus group as defined by Powell and Single (1996:499) is “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience the topic that is the subject of the research”. The researcher wanted to find several viewpoints about colours from children (the respondents) of which Hennessy and Heary (2005:236), suggest that “focus group is appropriate when researchers intend to gather information about children’s views or perspective of a topic of interest”. Gibbs (1997), also adjoins that focus group helps the researcher to elicit a multiplicity of views and within a group context. It also ensures that the participants possess homogeneous characteristics and similar level of understanding regarding the topic. It became convenient since children within similar age groups namely: the middle ages and early adolescents were used. This work adopted the focus group because it uses less structured interview guide for collecting data from participants. Hennessy and Harry amply hold that this

method is useful when the experiences of children are of interest to the researcher. It therefore appeared the best option for exploring children's experiences with colour, and also to seek their colour choices for the play, Feathers.

3.5.1.1 Procedure

Judging from the limitation that time would pose, ten (10) respondents were drawn from each age bracket (except ages 8&9 which had five respondents each). This was intended to expedite the discussion process although, it is suggested that focus group for children should not have more than eight members (Hennessy & Heary, 2005, & Naranjo-bock 2011). They were categorised into three groups; (A) eight and nine (8&9), (B) ten and eleven (10–11), and (C) twelve and thirteen (12–13). Group A comprised ten (10) respondents, whereas group B and C had 20 respondents. Discussions were held on the premises of Solid Rock Foundation School on the 10th and 11th, and 12th of February, 2016 respectively.

The discussions lasted for forty-five minutes per group in order to avoid boredom and fatigue. Each of the discussions was in two parts; the first phase discussed the basics of colour, children's general perceptions about colour, and their experiences with it. The second phase concentrated on how children appreciate colours. Their colour preferences and the meanings they attribute to those colours were also sought. By way of reawakening the colour consciousness of children as stated in the objectives of the study, the respondents were asked to identify the colours they preferred for each of the locale for the play without the use of a colour chart. This was by way of assessing the children's intuitive level of colour exposure and also to draw genuine responses from their colour choices. Thus, Arkhurst (personal communication June 06, 2016), adds that in engaging children, they should be made to think; a way of enhancing their learning process. Based on the

discussions of the play, *Feathers*, respondents from each of the three groups identified some colours they would appreciate for each of the locales. It was realised that their choices were within the spectrum of primary and secondary colours; blue, red, yellow, orange, pink, brown, purple, black, white, and green. Subsequently, these colours were averagely selected depending on their frequency in preference for a particular locale. This therefore helped the researcher to develop a colour content to complement the set design for the play, *Feathers*. The colour scheme is elaborated in point 3.11 under the sub-topic, Colour Scheme for the Set Design.

3.6 Secondary Data

Secondary data is the analysis of relevant already existing literature or information on a particular subject of research. It helps the researcher to further understand issues on the subject of study so that he or she is able to draw the similarities and differences in other research findings on that particular topic. The study consulted secondary published books from libraries. Information was also gathered from electronic books, scholarly journals, peer-reviewed articles, and encyclopedias on the subject of colour. Further, regulations on who qualifies to be a child, as well as reports from authorities on Children's Theatre, and the characteristics of set designs for Children's Theatre were of help to the work.

3.7 Data Plan Analysis

Analysis of data involves an examination of the data collected in a manner that the researcher is able to establish the patterns and connections between information gathered. Focus group discussion was adopted in collecting information about colour. Data gathered were arranged in accordance with the constituents involved in the study. They were further grouped according to the similar responses after which they were studied in order to

identify the relevant information needed for the study.

With the aforementioned methodology, the data gathered lent a great deal of information to the designer as regards the application of colours according to the various scenic units of the play.

3.8 Artistic Methodology

The artistic methodology under the aegis of qualitative research was also adopted for realising the final designs. Ukala (2006:14), intimates; “artistic methodology allows for reliance on intuition, inspiration and imagination”. Hannula et al (2005) iterates that it allows for artistic experientiality which is core to the research for artistic creation and interpretation purposes. This permitted the creation of a number of exclusive set designs for the play, *Feathers*, which were borne from analysing the script as well as the designer’s intuition. The artistic liberty afforded by this method gave the designer the opportunity to create a concept which informed the presentation of the final designs by engaging some design processes as outlined by Gillette (2000).

3.9 Design Concept

Every production has a style that ties the whole performance together. It is the reason behind any work of art. It is another visual language for the designer which Gillette (2000) identifies as the basic stylistic theme on which the milieu of the production is based. It should reflect in the nature, personality, and status of the various characters in relation to their environment. The design was tailored for children while delivering the play’s content and message. In this respect, representational art was employed to present designs that appealed to them and also reflect their nature. Representational art as stated by Block and Wolf (2013), refers to the art form in which the artist presents pictorial images that

viewers can easily recognise; these could be a tree, a house or a human being. For instance, a tree does not necessary have to be green but can be represented in a way that will easily be identified as one. This concept was adopted to mimic children's form of play. It was also to enable them easily identify with the various designs and their constituent elements according to their similarity with what they experience or observe around them. Therefore, the representational art was intended to stimulate their imaginations and get them to discern the various designs within their own schema.

3.10 About the Play

Feathers is an abridged version of Philip Ridley's play, *Feathers in the Snow*. In this version, Lena, a young woman is loved by two young men; Stefan, a well-meaning suitor and Jared, a young muscular man. However, she has only one choice to make so she accepts Jared over Stefan. This causes the latter to scare the couple's daughter, **Shylyla** which renders her numb with fear. She neither moves nor speaks, and it takes the magical presence of a blazer feather to cure the frozen silence of **Shylyla** and restore her happiness and speech. Jared's love to save his daughter leads him to abduct the Prince's sacred blazerbird. His action also leads to war, the loss and displacement of people. Displaced **Shylyla** and **Blazerbird** meet up with Two two who as a result of hunger from days of war satisfies his urge with **Blazerbird**. **Shylyla** feels lost without her best friend, **Blazerbird**, but she decides to keep the rest of **Blazerbird**'s feathers to fill the void that has been created by its absence.

3.10.1 Scenic Demands of the Play

To be able to create an environment for a play, there is the need to identify some elements and statements that serve its actions. Accordingly, Parker et al (2003:45), suggest that "the scene

designer brings to the production a visual interpretation and author's aim by fusing visual statement and the basic intent of the play into a single dramatic expression". Such of these visual demands include; the form of the play, the place and time, the period, the characters involved, and its general mood.

Reading the play, *Feathers*, it became evident that the play is situated within three locales namely; the King's forest, **Shylyla's** house, and a ruined house which were subtly hinted in the characters' speeches. Brewster and Shafer (2013:123) therefore, relay that the most obvious production objective of scenic design is the place and locale. This piece of information helps to create the physical environment of the play. Nonetheless, regardless of these identified locales in the play, the designer decided to add a path and a block of houses to reinforce the actions of other characters. Again, the play did not have an established period and this gave me the opportunity to shift it to contemporary times to be able to generate designs with elements that are apparent to children and which they can easily relate with. This is affirmed by Anderson and Qvortrup (2004: 59) that "it is important for children to be acquainted with the formal make-up of a play's location in order to help them orient themselves quickly".

While identifying the place and period of the play, it was significant to know the nature of characters to be able to create a connection between them and their surroundings. Characterization bears an important relationship to the environment of a play. In consonance with this, Parker et al (2003:46) opine that "the people in the action of a play react in accordance with, or in opposition to their surrounding as well as one another".

This is also indicated by Gillette (2000); most settings give some indication of what sort of characters will inhabit the environment of the play. To analyze a character, is to critically

consider a number of factors. These include what the playwright says about a character, what the character thinks or says about him or herself, what others say about the character, what the character says about others, and the function of each character towards the development of the play. In *Feathers*, the development of dialogue lends a wealth of information to the designer about the kinds of environment that are needed to project the true nature of characters. This assisted me to create a direct connection between the personality of a character and his or her environment.

It was gleaned that the play's actions revolve around **Shylyla**. She is a beautiful young girl who becomes the best friend of **Blazerbird**. She is depicted as innocent, impassive, numb, and unresponsive and could only be defrosted by the magic touch of the **Blazerbird**. Throughout the play, she relatively shuttles between being cold and happy. This condition gives the play its title as audience travel through the dumb and silent moments of her life until the colourful feather performs the magic of restoring her to normalcy. Further analysis disclosed that her situation has restricted her to the house and that triggers the actions of other characters to engage in actions that could bring sanity to her. For instance, her numbness sends her father, **Jared**, into the King's forest, where he captures **Blazerbird** and this eventually leads to her displacement. She travels across time amidst the ruins of war with **Blazerbird** until she meets with **Two Two**. She camps herself together with him and **Blazerbird** before **Two Two** ends the life of the bird that gives her hope and joy. She only salvages **Blazerbird**'s feathers for the sake of her fond memories with it. These pieces of information therefore identify **Shylyla** as the catalyst of the play around whom the actions gain their profundity of mood.

Jared

He is the father of **Shylyla** who does everything to make his family happy. He is a brave man who dares the consequences of venturing the King's sacred forest and captures the Prince's precious bird just to keep his daughter's condition resuscitated. This creates in him an emotional connection with the forest; however, his actions only bring a moment of temporary joy to his child and this also sparks the heat of war which displaces others.

Blazerbird

It is a bird described by the playwright to have colourful feathers likened to a blazing sunset. It was the Prince's sacred pet and enjoyed its abode in the King's forest until Jared captures it for **Shylyla**. Its presence in Jared's house revives her and also restores her joy. It becomes **Shylyla**'s best friend but unfortunately, this relationship was short lived when rumours about its disappearance bring about a declaration of war, thereby displacing it. It lingered while with **Shylyla** until **Two Two** kills it to satisfy his hunger.

The nature of characters, their actions, and surroundings brought to bear the general mood of the play as being filled with joy, hope-filled, sadness, and fear. They also helped to create an emotional connection between the characters involved and their environment. This, in a way assists the audience to correlate the actions of characters with their environment. In view of this, the dispositions of the characters and their environment through the use of colours as were preferred by the children are amply discussed in the subsequent chapter under the sub-topic; colour scheme analysis and interpretation.

3.11 Design Process

In order to come up with the various scenic units, the designer engaged a number of steps in realising them. Design process is a method for solving design challenge. Gillette (2000:19)

further posits that it involves “a series of steps through which we pursue the goal of creating what we hope will be a work of art” The process involves seven stages namely; commitment, analysis, research, incubation, selection, implementation, and evaluation. These processes enabled the designer to explore many alternatives to create interactive designs for the actors and audience. In executing these processes, it was important that the essence of children as the recipients of the final designs be apparent in every step in order to stay true to the design concept and also to produce the desired results to them.

Commitment involves the designer’s readiness to begin the exercise of finding possible solutions to arrive at possible answers. My desire to create designs for children was enough motivation to begin the journey of creating designs that would place the action for the actors and help audience understand the purpose of the play.

Analysis involves identifying the challenge, gathering information, and sifting through them to arrive at the desired results. Gillette (2000) suggests that analysis helps designers to define the terrain of the challenge they are faced with and identify parts that will require further research. It was at this stage that the researcher actually began the design journey. With the play, *Feathers*, as the prime source of information, the researcher read the script to learn about its storyline, the intent of the play and nature of characters involved. Parker et al (2003) relate that for designers to bring to a play the visual expression of its intent, they read the script and examine the action of the play as well as the characters involved. It was therefore gathered from the script that the play had three main locales; **Shylyla**’s house, a forest, and a ruined house which were discovered through the dialogue.

Apart from these specific pieces of information, the researcher got inspired to add a path and a block of houses to the locales to complement the actions of the actors. While gathering information and conceiving these ideas, it was also essential for me to consider the kind of

audience the final work will be shown to. This helped to create a concept for the design that would appeal to the young audience as discussed earlier under the sub-point **3.10. Design Concept**. The ideas were discussed with the director and he expressed his satisfaction with the overall concept.

Continuing from the above, at the research stage, the designer needed to conduct a research to complement the already gleaned information from the script. There are two types of research involved; the background and conceptual research to serve as source of reference. The researcher searched mainly on the internet for information about the history of the play and its performance. Historical research as defined by Gillette (2000:23) “involves searching for books, periodicals...and reading about previous productions of the play including sketches, pictures, and models of those prior productions”. In consonance with this, the researcher searched more for pictorial records of stage designs for the performance of the play, however, it was gleaned that much had not been done as regards the traditions of stage designs for its previous performances. Most of the performances were done on either a bare stage or with light placing the actions.

The research also fed me with a deeper understanding of the play’s general mood which was of great help in portraying the sober and hope-filled mood of the play. Apart from this particular information, the pictorial searches had less bearing on the designer’s work. Due to the nature of the audience, the play was shifted to contemporary time in order to make it easier and convenient for both the young actors and audience to understand and relate easily with the scenery with respect to the play’s actions.

At the conceptual research level, the conceived ideas for the various locales were captured in rough sketches of two different types. This is iterated by Gillette (2000:24), that “the conceptual research involves devising multiple solutions to specific design challenges”. In

view of this and as designs aimed at young audience, elements that are more children slanted were employed in order to appeal to their visual interest and level of aesthetics. In this respect, elements such as curved, rectilinear, and irregular lines as well as two-dimensional shapes, and three-dimensional forms were employed to imitate objects in nature for them. They were necessary for me to produce designs that fall within the schema of the targeted audience. They were also necessary to enhance communication of the play's actions in relation to the set. The idea of conceiving new more designs did not end at this stage as the designer kept exploring new different ideas in variety of ways to meet the visual expression of the play to the audience and complement the actions of the actors. This exercise was done while the researcher considered the nature of the stage for the performance and the suitability of the various design sketches on the intended stage. The sketches were shown to the director which helped him to block the movements of actors and also to effect some changes to the already blocked ones.

To a greater extent, colour, the core of the study was researched and discussed at this level. The researcher conducted a focus group discussion with some children within the age brackets of eight and thirteen (8-13) years to gain a thorough understanding of their perception of colour. The psychological effect of colour on such children was also needed to connect them with the play's psychological background. It was also intended to enhance their understanding of the play's environment in relation to the actors and their actions. Other visual references as animation movies, pictures and videos of stage performances for young audience were also looked at. These only served as sources of inspiration for me to satisfy the aesthetic appeal of the children.

The conceptual research dovetailed with the incubation stage which Gillette (2000:25) state; it relives the unconscious and relies on time to let ideas hatch. This process was not faithfully adhered to as the researcher rather kept contemplating on the individual

sketches. At this point, it realised that the ability to have a solution-focus approach was very helpful in chasing down the final ideas for the play's actions. By so doing, the researcher visited the performance venue on a number of days to check up on the stage to be certain about the configurations of the sketches on the stage.

Understanding how to work with a specific design began with the selection stage. It is stipulated by Gillette (2000:25) as a process in which you sift through all the data accumulated and decide on specific design concept. With this assertion, the researcher selected the desirable designs for the play and a computer-generated model of them was created which helped to communicate the perspective of the designer's intention. The model was used to complement the discussion on colour with the children (as mentioned earlier under the conceptual research). The selected designs were created with the kind of audience in mind so that they will be best received by them. At this stage, the researcher had explored several colour scheme concepts of which the polychrome colour scheme was adopted in order to meet the diverse demands of the colour preferences by children for the set design. The colour scheme concept is amply discussed in the successive sub-topic in this chapter (3.11).



Figure 3.1. A computer-generated model of the set

Source: Picture generated by Nash Neequaye

The penultimate stage; implementation phase commences when the designer stops planning and starts doing Gillette (2000). At this phase, drafting for the designs was executed after the scenic pieces were constructed to the desired dimensions and scales in a manner that would correspond with the sizes of the children. In view of this the developed designs were further translated into elevation drawings using the scale of half ($\frac{1}{2}$ ") inch to one (1') foot and (1") inch to one (1) foot respectively. For instance, figure 3.2 illustrates the floor plan of the stage that captured the placement of the scenic pieces. Similarly, the front elevation and working drawings of the various scenic units were also drafted to scale as seen in **fig.3.3** and **fig.3.4** respectively. Additionally, the detail drawings of the three- dimensional two-tiered staircase and the huge dead tree were also drawn to show their profile (see **fig.3.5**).

Also, different materials were secured from the market for the construction of the individual scenic units at the School of Performing Arts carpentry workshop. It took about two weeks for the constructions to be completed. It was also around this stage that most of the preferred colours had been secured from the market. It must be noted here that it was a herculean task of acquiring the desired colours. This was because most the local paints did not have some of the hues that were needed and therefore the researcher had to settle on foreign ones which also came at higher prices. This in a way greatly challenged my budget. The constructions of the various scenic units were therefore completed before the scheduled date and coated with white paint to be rendered in colour later.

Finally, at the evaluation stage, the designer checked the designs to make sure they expressed the play visually as desired. All the scenic units as well as the colours were transported to the place of performance two weeks prior to the performance night. Further technical demands required for mounting the set were also considered and added; they were mounted on the stage to check for their steadiness, positioning and convenience as

regards the actors' movements. The stage was an open space with the audience facing the actors, as if watching a performance on a proscenium stage. There were no rooms for sightlines, however, due to the concrete nature of the stage floor, some portions of it were not stable and could not support some of the scenic pieces. A number of heights were therefore created and the necessary adjustments made and tried with the set for several days until they worked well as expected. The scenic units were rendered in colour a week prior to the performance. The painting was actually completed in three days. Afterwards, costumes were introduced to check for colour balance and the needed adjustments and changes to the set and costumes were effected for an efficient performance. The actors also used them for mock rehearsals for three days until the final opening night of the performance.

On the technical dress rehearsal night, all of the other technical complements; costume, light, and sound were brought on board for a preview. Timing for lighting cues was adjusted to suit the flow of actions. The intensity of the light was also checked in order to avoid any inconvenience on the young actors. A summary of the activities and the venues for the set design and construction has been provided in the diary schedule in **Table 3.2**.



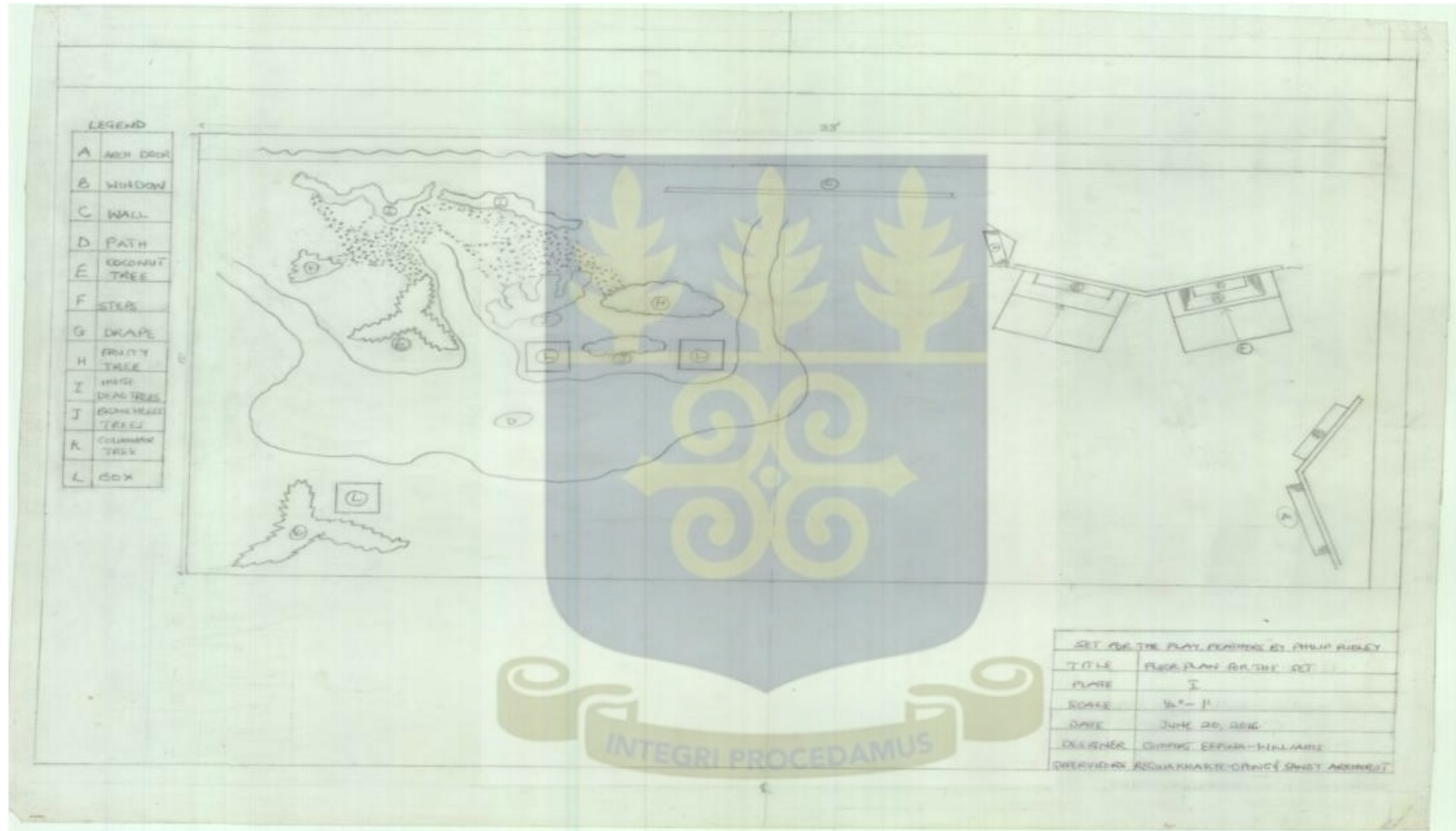


Figure 3.2: Floor plan of the set.

Source: Picture generated by Comfort Effina-William

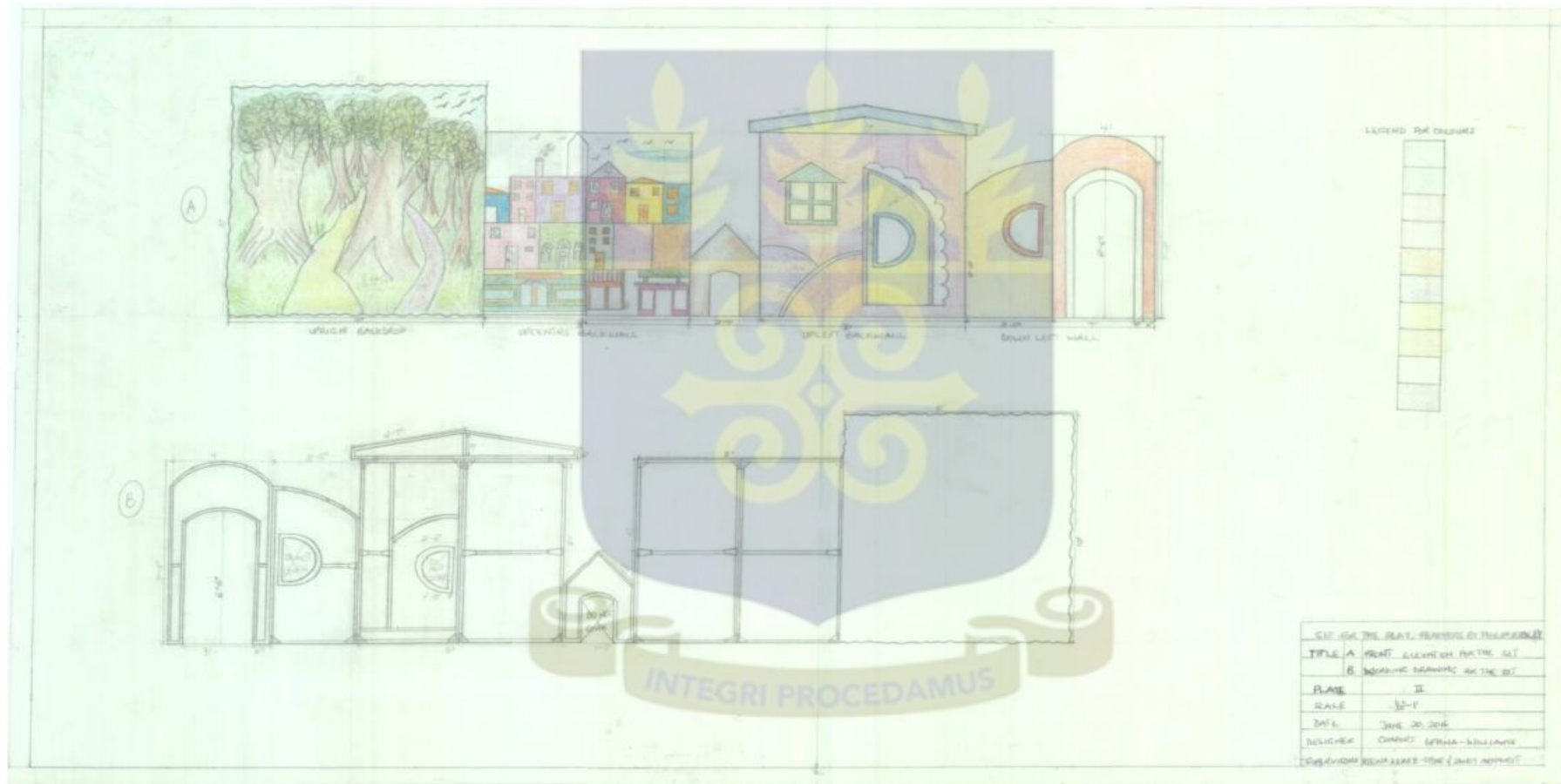


Figure 3.3: Front elevation and working drawing of the set.

Source: Picture generated by Comfort Effina-Williams.



Figure 3.4: Front elevation and working drawing of the trees.

Source: Picture generated by Comfort Effina-Williams.

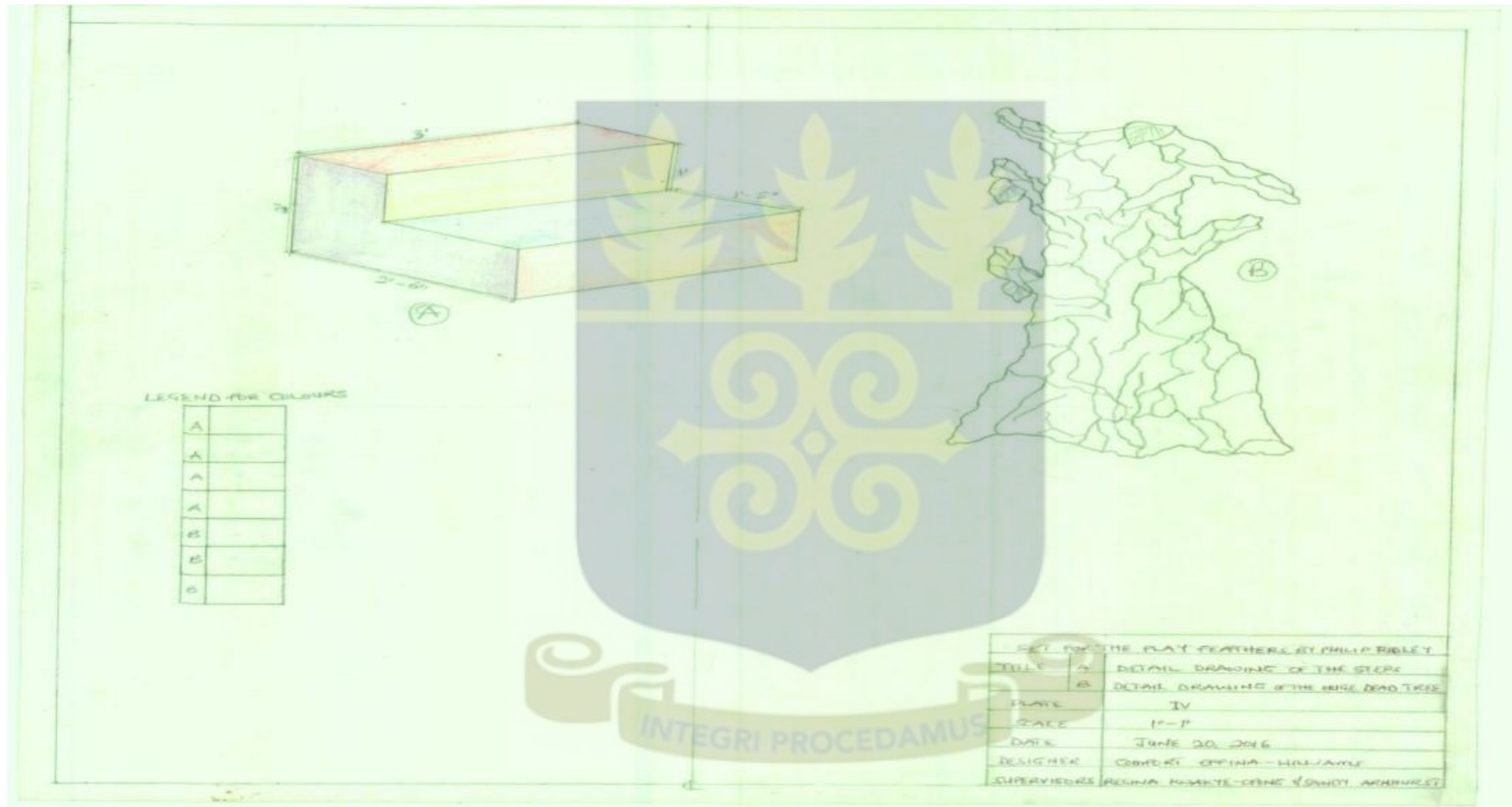


Figure 3.5: Detail drawings of the two-tiered steps and the huge dead tree.

Source: Picture generated by Comfort Effina-Williams.

Table 3.2: Diary of Set Design and Construction Schedule for Philip Ridley’s Play, Feathers.

| DATE | TIME | ACTIVITY | VENUE |
|---------------------------|----------------|---|--|
| 4th- 5th Feb, 2016 | 12.30pm-2.30pm | Script Reading | Solid Rock Foundation School Premise, Agbogba. |
| 8th- 10th Feb,2016 | 1.30pm- 3.30pm | Script Reading (Continued) & Blocking | " |
| 10th-12th Feb, 2016 | 12.15pm- | Discussion of Colour Scheme | " |
| 13th- 15th Feb, 2016 | 10am- 6pm | Generation of Sketches and Model Designs | Scenic Room |
| 16th- 20th Feb, 2016 | 8am-4pm | Purchasing of Construction Materials and Paints | Accra Central |
| 22th- 27th Feb, 2016 | 7am- 6pm | Cutting and Construction of Scenic Units | School of Performing Arts (SPA) Carpentry Workshop |
| 29th Feb –5th March, 2016 | 7am- 6pm | Construction Continued | School of Performing Arts (SPA) Carpentry Workshop |
| 7thth- 9th March, 2016 | " | Coating of the Constructed Scenic Units. | " |
| 9th- 11th March, 2016 | 4pm- 5pm | Application of Paints (Colours) & Transportation of Scenic Units to Performance Venue | Solid Rock Foundation School Premise, Agbogba. |
| 12TH March2016 | 2.30pm- 4.30pm | Set Construction & Technical Rehearsals | " |
| 14th - 16th March, 2016 | 3pm-5pm | Mock Performance | " |
| 17THMarch, 2016 | 4pm- 5pm | Dress and Technical Night | " |
| 18TH March | 6pm- 7.30pm | Production Night | " |

3.12 Colour Scheme for the Set Design

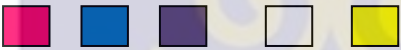




The effectiveness of a design depends on how a designer applies colour. A colour scheme for any design helps to deepen its quality. Colour scheme is a combination of a range of colours selected for a design. Parker et al (2003:197) relate that “colour scheme serves as a guide to the colour composition within a design or throughout a production”. This signifies that a colour scheme serves as a guide for explaining the colour relationship for a piece of work. It also helps the designer to stay true to the design.

The colour scheme was influenced by the children’s colours preferences for the set design regarding the relationship between the characters and their environment. These colour choices were therefore averagely adopted based on their dominancy in preference for a particular locale as provided in **Table 3.3**. Based on the number of these colours, the polychromatic colour scheme was adopted for the design. In the article, *Aspects of Design*, polychrome is the application of five or more colours which may either be related or unrelated to a design (Jackson, December 02, 2008). It allows one to use as many colours as possible to a design. This is to make the design more lively, depict a more realistic picture of the set, and also gives it a vibrant look. Polychrome was adopted to give the children a true representation of their colour preferences; it projected something of their own so as to enable them relate more with the play’s environment and draw conclusions based on their choices. This was also intended to give the children room to explore, think critically as well as to relate the various scenery very well with the actions of the actors. The harmony of polychromatic scheme was therefore intended to radiate the exuberance of children.

As an intended design for children and with the aid of the Munsell Colour System, medium saturated values of the preferred colours were used to suite the exterior ambience of

the setting. The colours were employed to bring out the brightness of their play spaces in a manner that they will be convenient with. Both warm and cool colours preferred by the children were clinically applied to the entire set in a playful manner that appealed to their sense of imagination, retain their attention, and also leave a lasting impression on them. The colours selected, therefore became the crux for communicating to children about the complementary role of scenic design towards the realisation of a play's setting as well as performing aesthetic functions in Children's Theatre.

Table 3.3: Colour swatches for the various scenes

| SCENES | COLOUR PREFERENCES |
|---------------------|--|
| Shyla's House | Pink, Blue, Purple, White, Yellow  |
| King Leondo's House | Green, Pink, Red, Blue, Brown, Yellow, Orange, Purple, White  |
| Ruined House | Orange, Blue, Yellow, Red, Black, White,  |
| A Path | Brown, Green  |
| Block of Houses | Blue, Pink, White, Yellow, Purple, Red, Orange, Violet, Brown, Green  |

3.13 Scenic Artistic Inputs

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Plywood | Manila cards |
| Wawa board | Wood glue |
| Wire Mesh | Foam |
| Brown papers | Paints |
| Transparent plastic | Caco |
| Cardboards | Wood chippings |

3.13.1 Budget

Table 3.4: Paints

| Quantity | Description | Unit Price GhC | Total GhC |
|----------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 bucket | White paint | 100.00 | 150.00 |
| 1 gallon | Pink " | 25.00 | 25.00 |
| " | Yellow " | " | " |
| " | Blue " | " | " |
| " | Green " | " | " |
| 2 " 2 " | Red (Acrylic) Orange | 30.00 " | 60.00 |
| | | | 60.00 |
| 2Bottles | Violet Colorante | 5.00 | 10.00 |
| " | Yellow " | " | " |
| " | Blue " | " | " |
| | | | = 400.00 |

Table 3.5: Wood Work

| Quantity | Description | Unit Price GhC | Total GhC |
|----------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 7 pieces | 1/8" Plywood | 25.00 | 175.00 |
| 6 pieces | Wawa board | 35.00 | 210.00 |
| | Nails | | |
| 1 Pounds | 3 " | 5.00 | 15.00 |
| 4 " | 2 " | 5.00 | 20.00 |
| 3 " | 1 1/2 " 1 | 6.00 " | 18.00 |
| 2 " | | | 12.00 |
| 15 yards | Wire Mesh | 7.00 | 105.00 |
| 8 pieces | Masking Tapes | 5.00 | 40.00 |
| 1 | Mesh cutter | 18.00 | 18.00 |
| 1 | Hammer | 15.00 | 15.00 |
| | | | =628.00 |

Table 3.6: Upholstery Materials

| Quantity | Description | Unit Price GhC | Total GhC |
|----------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 5 sheets | One eighth inch foam | 8.00 | 40.00 |
| 4 yards | Transparent plastic | 6.00 | 24.00 |
| 1 board | Caco | 35.00 | 35.00 |
| 2 boards | Polystyrene | 8.00 | 16.00 |
| 1 gallon | Wood glue | 48.00 | 48.00 |
| 3 cans | Formica glue | 15.00 | 45.00 |
| | | | =208.00 |

Table 3.7: Stationery

| Quantity | Description | Unit Price Gh C | Total GhC |
|-----------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 5 pieces | Pencil | 50p | 2.50p |
| 10 pieces | Manila Cards | 2.00 | 20.00 |
| 5 brushes | Paint brush | 7.00 | 35.00 |
| 15 sheets | Brown paper | 2.50p | 37.50p |
| 1 set | Artist brushes | 23.00 | 23.00 |
| | | | = 118.00 |

Transportation

GhC200.00

GRAND TOTAL**GHC1,554.00**

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DESIGN INTERPRETATION

4.1 Overview

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part presents the analysis and findings of the data collected as regards colours for the design; with special emphasis about children's colour choices. The second part provides analysis and interpretation of the colour scheme and how they complemented the actions of the actors during the performance of Philip Ridley's play, *Feathers*. Colour in reference to mood, set and costume, as well as the effect of light on the colours in the set are also analysed. This section also concludes with audience perception of the production which helped in achieving the objectives of the study.

4.2 Analysis of Focus Group Discussion

The designer did not want to rely on any presumptive perspective of children's relation with colours, but rather to experiment with their colour preferences for the set design for the play, *Feathers*. This, in a way, positioned children as active agents and commentators of their own colour choices for the theatre experience. In order to achieve this purpose, focus group discussion was conveniently adopted because it uses less structured interview guide for collecting data from participants. Also, with the aim of finding several viewpoints about colours from children (respondents), Heary & Hennessy (2005:236), adjoin that "focus group is suitable when researchers want to gather information about children's views or perspective of a topic of interest" This was an opportunity for me to acquire children's standpoints on the subject of colour and also apply it in a manner that will be fluid with their understanding and appreciation of the context within which it will

be placed.

During the opening discussion, the participants were asked about their general perception and understanding of colour, as well as their relationship with it. It was an informal way of getting them involved in the discussion. It was generally gathered from the children that they are aware of the fact that they are surrounded by colours and that enables them to perceive things around them. They expressed that without colour it will be difficult to identify objects for what they are. Respondents within ages eleven and thirteen years, however, articulated significantly that colour is a property of light; it characterises what they see as colour. Thus, they are able to see colourful objects because of light. In view of this Morioka and Stone posit that “In the physical sense, there really is no such thing as colour, just light waves of different wavelengths” (2008: 8).

Colour as a property of light was not popular among children within the middle school age group. They only observe colour as an intrinsic product of what they are able to identify around them but not as a result of the reaction from light. This is buttressed in the article, *Life’s Little Mysteries*, of which Natalie Wolchover (June 29, 2012) contends that “colour perception emerges in our brains in response to our experiences of the outside world”. Significantly, it appeared that the perception of colour at this level lie on a divide; objective and subjective levels. This is where the early adolescent age group (11-13) understands colours, mostly based on the scientific perception of colour as light, whereas the younger ones make colour a product of their mind based on environmental events respectively.

The levels of the children’s colour perception re-echo Piaget’s third and fourth concepts of children’s development as cited by Shaffer & Kipps (2010:55). The concrete concept reveals that children of the middle age group only understand objects that are concrete as

compared to the formal operational concept which suggests that children in the early adolescent group are able to comprehend things in the abstract. Consideration of this point was key for me to note in order to apply colours in ways that will appeal to their sight especially when they will be reflected under artificial light and also in ways that appeal to their external exposure.

From both middle aged and early adolescents, it was further gleaned that colours make them appreciate and associate with objects around them; enabling them to express their inner feelings about things they like and dislike. For instance, it was revealed in a general account that the blue hue is cool and makes them feel calm. Some boys from both sects and few girls of the early adolescent age group actually shared that they like blue and love blue outfits because it reflects their personalities. Majority of the boys within age thirteen (13) loved the black hue, because it made them feel confident and bold.

Conversely, majority of the girls expressed their love and attachment for yellow and pink colours. To them, pink is feminine related and easier for them to associate with, whereas yellow makes them feel elated and as such they find any yellow object very exciting and inviting. Interestingly, a particular boy of age nine (9) expressed deeply, his admiration for yellow because it reminds him of his childhood toy cars and thus loves yellow objects quite a lot. At this level of the discussion, it became apparent that the respondents (children) found it more convenient and pleasing to talk about colours they liked most in order not to call to mind colours that made them feel unusual and moody. Pieces of Information garnered from these perspectives were important to be able to come up with designs that have psychological interventions to the benefit of the group of people involved while helping to express their innate desires towards the preferred colours.

Following the responses above, there were also shared emotional connections between

children and colours which in a way contributes to their mood formation. For instance, a boy of age twelve shared that he liked the colour black the most because he had lost several of his relatives and that reminded him of their death. This he said, kept his bright side as it often kept him in tune with them. This sounded strange to some of his peers, because it is a colour that naturally switches them into a sad mood and also reminded them of death and funerals. The experience of children towards this colour is a reflection of the conscious association which they have been conditioned to make as regards the colour black. In a reaffirmation of this idea, Amoah Labi (2009:45) in the Journal, *Reading the Intangible Heritage in Tangible* relates that “black is thought of in terms of melancholy, death, and tragedy”. Though the meaning of this colour is seen through the eyes of children, it represents the wider Ghanaian notion of what black stands for.

In a reciprocal response, another boy of the same age relayed that the colour pink reminded him of malaria; a colour which means a lot to girls especially. He expressed that he took a course for malaria treatment and the drugs were in pink hue, hence causing this kind of attachment. However, contrary to this feeling, majority of the girls loved the colour pink; it is their favourite colour and it also reminds them of the princess in their much-loved cartoons. This reflects the evocative role of pink as being highly feminine regardless of how it reminds someone of a drug or sad event. This reiterates the idea that colour is uniquely a subjective language (Morioka & Stone 2008, & Eiseman; 2006). Hence, this makes anything with colour extremely personal. A critical consideration of these pieces of information was significant for me to be able to translate colours into an emotional language in a way that will elicit the needed emotional responses as will pertain to the performance.

Further into the discussion, it was revealed that the participants also experienced and related to

some colours based on their natural and social impulses. For instance, they describe how the sky is represented with the colour blue, the vegetation being characterised with the green colour, white for peace and victory, black representing death, brown for earth and funeral, red for danger, and yellow for gold (riches). By these examples, they demonstrated how abstract ideas inherently have colours that make them easily identifiable and easier to be represented in any way desirable. It became apparent that the relationship between the children and these colours was borne from their experiences and cultural backgrounds respectively which Mohd et al (2012), have subtly referred to as ‘conscious symbolism’ where blue represents the sky, and green signifies vegetation. This was another bit of information was considered when creating a desirable content based on the context of the design.

Advancing from the above, a discussion of the play, Feathers, was held. In an earlier meeting with the children before the discussion on colour, the storyline of the play was shared with them to whet their interest. This made it easier for them to understand the play for the second time. They understood the play as interesting, filled with joy and sadness. Basically, the discussion dwelt on the characters, the setting, and the colour choices (end product) of the respondents (children) which would serve the setting of the play. This was also to help reveal the nature of the characters and complement their actions to audience. By so doing, the characters were described and the setting vividly described to them. This was intended to create in their imaginations images of the individual locale required to complement the play’s actions. That notwithstanding, given the pictorial descriptions for the individual scenic units, the participants were able to give some colour preferences that they wish to see on stage. For instance, majority of the participants from both levels chose some specific colours for **Shylyla**’s house namely; pink, yellow, purple, blue, and white.

A further probe into the meanings and reasons for their choices of these colours disclosed that

they generally perceived **Shylyla**'s as an emotionally unstable girl, hence such preferences to echo her disposition. In spite of the common knowledge that pink is effeminate; stereotyped for girls or females, most of the boys also surprisingly preferred it for **Shylyla**'s house. Their choices were not gender bound; a reflection of their understanding of **Shylyla**'s personality. Their reason for the dominance of pink was because she is a little girl and it is universally loved by girls. Their responses to pink echoed a feeling of empathy towards her situation in the play. This important information was necessary for me to consider the trend of colour stereotyping in order to make colour links that are relevant to the targeted children.

Similarly, majority of the participants preferred green hue as the primary colour for the forest. To them green suggests vegetation and nature. Alternatively, it was also suggested by others that aside from the green plants, the forest could be characterised by variety of colours and that will make the forest beautiful and interesting to explore. In relation to this, some of the children hinted that the use of more colours could also imply that **Blazerbird** inhabits it judging from its colourful feathers. The parallel patterns in their submissions became evident that those who chose green did so based on their relationship to their environmental impulses, whereas those who preferred variety in the colour composition were reliant on the arbitrary use of colours in creating scenes for mostly cartoons and animated movies. Considerably, the prevailing colours selected for the path were green and brown resonating how they have ingrained in them the observation of their environment.

With the ruined house in focus, the dominant colours were orange, white, red, black, and brown. Picturing in their minds the nature of ruined house, the spectrum of these colours except orange carries a sad connotation. To them black hue will make the house look like a real 'ruined' house whereas the presence of a red hue will tag the house as a dangerous

zone. On a different note, most girls within the middle and early adolescent age brackets preferred to see the house in orange hue with some notes of white hue; suggesting that the house was perhaps beautiful before it got ruined. Interestingly, their colour preferences were essentially meant to capture the mood of the play, while serving as guide for expressing their relationship between the characters and the locales. This exercise situated the respondents (children) in positions as active co-constructors of this research agenda and also to enable them understand what they would see on stage from both the scenic designer's perspective as well as through their own lenses.

A further reflection of their social stimulation with colours became evident when they chose variety of colours to represent the block of houses. They compared their preferences to the myriad of buildings that they see around them; adding that such buildings are very beautiful and environmentally 'eye' catching. One of the boys (eight years old) had this to say; "it will be interesting to see how colourful the buildings will look when it is put on stage". This and other responses became obvious that their colour choices were also influenced by learned responses that are characteristic of the different buildings in their environment; a reaffirmation of the concept of colour as a conscious symbol. The preferred colours and their meanings have been illustrated in **Appendix A**

The series of discussions therefore revealed that children's relationship with colours is relatively based on their learned or domestic experiences. While keeping up with what is traditionally known to them, children are able to divorce their philosophical association with some colours to make different meanings based on how they appeal to their sense of beauty and their social impulses. Significantly, the colours they chose for the various locations inherently carried some specific moods; thus, the colour constituents for each of the locale represented a kind of mood which helped to create a desirable atmosphere for the performance.

Similarly, the colours also shared some connections with the nature of the characters. For instance, the colours preferred for **Shylyla**'s house would help communicate to the audience her internal emotional and psychological state through a mood-filled set design.

In a mutual manner, the dominant green for the forest echoes it as a product of nature which could reflect the abode of **Blazerbird**. In consonance with this, Parker et al aver that "the influence of the characters on scene design can sometimes be subtle, sometimes obvious, and on occasion symbolic" (2003:46). This quote implies the important relationship characters bear on their environment and vice versa. These colours are extensively analysed and interpreted under the subsequent sub-topic: colour scheme analysis and interpretation to bring to bear the nexus between characters and the kind of environments created for them in relation to the play's actions.

Essentially, knowledge of children's general perception of colour, the philosophical, and learned bases of their meaning making, were significantly noted, thereby making them partakers in the creative process. Naranjo-Bock (2011), describes this engagement as a critical part of design creation process which enables the designer to discover how to provide meaningful interactive design experiences for children within a specific age range. This exercise was very important for me to be able to deliver designs that would stimulate children's thoughts and also contribute to their psychological and physical needs within the context of the theatre experience.

4.3 Compositional Description and Analysis of Design

Every artwork or design is made of elements and principles that constitute what is seen. It is significant that the elements that make up the design be described and analysed to show how they were manipulated through the application of the principles of design. The work

therefore employs the formal approach in analysing the compositional elements and principles which form the visual language of the whole design. The formal approach to a design by Terry Barrett (2000: 26), projects how a piece of art is composed, coordinated and assembled visually. These formal elements include; line, colour, texture, shape, and form. Constructively, Parker et al (2003:38) also adjoin that “the principles of composition are the various ways one can understand how the elements of design are arranged in a cohesive manner in order to bring interest and meaning to a work of art”. These include unity, balance, harmony, proportion, variation, contrast, emphasis, and rhythm.

As children-oriented play, the set was composed of a conscious imitation of these elements to suit children’s artistic expectations. It was also to ground the set in the reality of children’s experience while enhancing their understanding of the play’s environment and actors’ actions. In view of the above, curved lines together with both horizontal and vertical lines were used to create curvilinear and rectilinear shapes respectfully which dominantly created the profile of one part of the set. Also employed were irregular lines to determine the irregular shapes and organic forms of the trees. These were consciously manipulated to convey the energy of children. In affirmation, Edu (personal communication, November 03, 2015), adjoins that children fall in love with rectilinear and curvilinear shapes and should be used to imitate their relationship with them as far as their understanding and recognisability are concerned. Before analysing the design, a brief description of the stage and the seating position of the audience are given to have a fair idea of the general outlook of the performance space and the relationship between the young audiences.

The actors played against a multiple set with five different locales; a house for **Shylyla**, a ruined house, a path, a block of houses, and a forest. Each of these locales was staged on an open ‘proscenium-like’ stage that measured in length of 15’ (feet) by a width of 33’ (feet)

and it appeared the audience viewed actions on stage as though from within a proscenium frame. The larger playing areas were the forest, path, and Jared's house because most of the actions happened against these locales.



Figure 1.14: Set design rendering of the house set design in perspective.

Source: Picture taken by Harriet M. A. Adjahoe

Shylyla's house was located at upstage left from the actors' perspective. It measured in height of 9' (feet) - 3" x 8' (feet) wide. The house was suggested through the composition of three basic lines; curved, angular, rectilinear lines. Slightly angular lines were used to create the shape of the roof impression (at the top) and the top of the cellar. This together with the rectilinear lines which run to the base defined the two-dimensional shape of this house. The arrangement of these lines appeared monotonous, however, contrast was introduced to break the rigidity through the use of the most apparent curvilinear lines. This effect created variation in the design. Gillette (2000:74), suggests that variation creates visual interest.

The use of curvilinear lines was also evident around the door area of the house. The door opening was 6' (feet); 5" (inches) from the base of the house. The outline of the door had a curved line that converged with the vertical line at an angle. A relatively reduced scale of the

shape of the door was repeated at its centre and this created emphasis on the door area as suggested through the use of yellow and blue hues. The rhythmic flow of the curved lines that run along the door as well as those that were joined below the window suggested a sense of movement. They were also intended to reinforce the psychological State of Shylyla. According to Parker et al (2003:28), “line is a path of action and therefore cannot help but take on a sense of direction and sometimes movement”. These lines helped to ground the set into the world of the young audience for effective exploration of the play’s environment.

Adjacent the door was a suggested squared window of 1’ (foot) 9” (inches) high and 2’ (feet) wide. I used both vertical and horizontal lines to create this geometric shape. It was proportionally segmented into four equal parts to create balance in the entire shape. Brewster & Shafer (2011), therefore posit that balance in design provides restfulness or stability. The simulated two-dimensional shape of the window was achieved through painting. To reinforce this impression, an extruding triangular slab bathed in blue hue was placed directly above it. This window together with the two-tiered stairs that stood equidistant to each other gave **Shylyla’s** house a three-dimensional appearance. This effect was consciously created to give the house a tactile appeal. These forms are articulated in Appiah’s three-dimensional concept which Jennifer Low (2015:11) cites that he characterised a three-dimensional object corresponding with the three-dimensional figure of an actor in order to create in the minds of the audience, the physical reality of the actors

The successive arrangement of the contrasting rectilinear, angular, and curvilinear lines blended in with one another to achieve harmony in the design. Curvilinear lines were used to generally denote the emotional quality of the play. The shapes were also significant in capturing the audiences’ attention to actions within this area and also provided them with variety in form.

Two feet (2') off the position of the block of houses was the path which covered from stage centre down to stage right. It connected from the block of houses to the forest. Curved lines were dominantly used for the path and this gave its meandering outlook. The soft characteristics of the lines also made the path take on an attitude and sense of movement as it could carry the audiences' eye along its edges.

The 'ruined' house was also cited at downstage left. From the top of the door to its base was 7' (feet) - 11" (inches) high x 7' (feet) - 5" (inches) wide. Curved lines were expansively employed together with few vertical lines to give the house its two-dimensional shape. Evidence of these lines were found at the door opening which was 5' (feet)- 5" (inches) high and 3' (feet)- wide. The vertical lines injected into the design gave the set its height. They helped reduce boredom and also added variety in its shape. The contrast between these two major lines created emphasis in the design. More so, they were to draw children's attention to the instability that characterised this locale. The broad curves used suggested that the house was once a stable home. The blue vertical lines used on the door area complemented the idea of a stark ruined house. They were also intended to heighten the visual interest of the design in a way that would connect the young audience to the emotional atmosphere of the play. The few jagged lines featured in black hue introduced into the design gave the impression of cracked walls with openings.

The block of houses stood upstage centre, about two feet (2') apart from **Shylyla's** house. It measured 6' (feet) x 8' (feet) in height and base respectively. This locale constituted thirteen (13) different simulated rectilinear and square shapes. It was generally composed of vertical and horizontal lines that gave the imitated houses a sense of height and restfulness respectively on all of the three levels. The proportion of each shape to other created the idea of proximity; a connection of mutual relationship between each of the

neighbours. Also, the proportion of the individual blocks would have produced a regular pattern but by varying the sizes they came together to create visual interest in the design. The varied sizes also created harmony in their order of arrangement. Accordingly, Gillette delineates; “harmony is achieved when all elements of the design fit together in an orderly whole” (2000:78). The mimicked windows and doors were however contrasted using both rectilinear and arched lines to also create variation and interest.

The approach of representational art through the use of geometric shapes towards the design was registered in this area to give the children a picture of what they observe around them in real life. The concept of representational art also shaped the visual composition of the forest locale through the use of irregular lines. It consisted of eight different kinds of movable trees of varied heights against a perspective painted backdrop of varied tree sizes. The forest was located on stage right from the actors’ perspective. The manipulation of foam in creating the two dead trees gave them their irregular forms and tactile feel. This made the trees take on a character that was different from the coconut trees, columnar, fruity, and branchless trees thereby complementing their outlook within the forest composition.

Curvy lines were used to simulate the other trees. These lines characterised the contoured shapes of the trees. For instance, repeated short curved lines gave the two coconut trees their shape and also created interest in movement and could cause an audience’s eye to move along them. Irregular lines were painted on the branchless trees to suggest the texture of tree barks. Variation was introduced into the shapes of the various trees to break boredom. The irregular lines also reflected the emotional stress felt by **Shylyla**, **Two Two** and **Blazerbird** in finding their way out to the ruined house.

The overlapping arrangements of the trees together with the painted ones as well as the thinner twigs used in total gave the forest a sense of depth and also rendered it three-

dimensional in form. In effect, the value pattern in the placement of the trees implies movement which can move audience's attention through its format.

The entire set was created through the use of dominantly curved, rectilinear, and irregular lines. The manipulation of these lines helped to render the design in geometric and irregular shapes and forms in ways that imitate objects in nature. These elements in a whole imitated the flare of children's forms in ways that they would be perceived as relating to their experiences and observations of things around them. They were also used to stimulate children towards an aesthetic and artistic theatre experience. Accordingly, the perception of imitation stands at the core of representational art; something signifies another thing in so far as the former resembles the latter in some significant way (Friggs & Hunter 2010). The arrangement of the total scenic units was such that each of them logically agreed with one another thereby subscribing to the conceptual core of the design.

4.3.1 Colour Scheme Analysis and Interpretation

As an aesthetic medium of communication, colour was used to unify all the other elements composed in the design which helped to enliven the concept of representational art for the set design for the play. Thus, the primacy of colour was intended to bring to the fore the other compositional content of the set so as to pay attention to what is descriptively evident. As earlier discussed in chapter two under the sub-heading, Appropriating Colours for Children, this part of the analysis therefore discusses how children's colour choices and their connotations were set apart to complement the set appropriately for the actors.



Figure 4.2: Colour rendering of Shylyla's house

Source: Picture taken by Harriet M. A. Adjahoe

Colour as the undercurrent of the play, created a strong connection between the main character, **Shylyla**, and her surroundings which was conveyed through the use of medium saturation of the colours. As earlier noted, the preferred colours for **Shylyla's** house were pink, yellow, purple, white, blue, and brown as seen in **Fig 4.2**. The researcher appropriated these colours according to the meanings children assigned to them and also to generally reflect the personality and condition of the main character, **Shylyla**, in relation to the whole action of the play. During the discussion of the play, respondents (children) characterised Shylyla as a little princess who loves colours hence the dominant preference of pink for the house. Eiseman (2006), has identified pink as representing the innocence, love, and sweetness of a child (girl). In line with these meanings, the pink hue was used to fill the expanse area of **Shylyla's** house to create emphasis on her character as well as her condition and also to evoke the idea that she was the princess of the home. It also echoed the love and compassion her parents had for her, while mirroring the emotional connection

between parents and the needs of their children.

A yellow hue was used to wash the door area. This made it appear larger while the purple hue that outlined it made the design cosier. According to the children, yellow means happiness, joy, gold, and brightness. Based on these meanings, the yellow hue was used to create an accent in the design; symbolising the limit of **Shylyla**'s joy and movement only to the house. The complementary nature of the yellow and purple hues created harmony in the design of which Parker et al (2003:189), assert that "complementary colours appear directly opposite each other on the colour wheel". Similarly, the balance achieved between the value of the warm yellow and the off-setting cool nature of the purple made it easier on the young audience while still maintaining the vibration between them. The contrast between these two colours contributed to the achievement of balance in the design. Their combination also made the design convenient and appealing to all sects of audience.

The children thought of blue as representing the sky, being lonely, and very soothing. It was used to proportionally segment the simulated window into four equal parts to achieve balance, of which Brewster and Shafer (2011:106) have posited that "balance in design provides restfulness or stability". Blue was generally identified as cool, calm, and represents the sky. It was extrusively used as a visual metaphor on the play to reflect **Shylyla**'s defrosted or cold situation. It echoed the emotional expressivity of **Shylyla**'s numbness which could only be brought alive by the colours of a blazing sunset as represented by the vibrant pink, yellow, purple and white hues. This therefore is in respect of the opinion shared by Funch (2000) that colour is an outlet of communication and children choose certain colours to express their emotions about a subject matter. Hence, the use of the blue hue to reflect the **Shylyla**'s cold disposition. The recurring white curved lines that run along the door as well as those that were joined below the window were intended to reinforce the

psychological state of **Shylyla**.

The white lines particularly symbolised the revival of hope in **Shylyla**'s unresponsive condition, as such reinforcing her innocence, and also presented her as a force around which the play's action evolved. The relationship between the advancing pink and yellow hues (warm) and the receding purple, white and blue (cool) came together to achieve harmony in the design, resonating what Funch (2000:118) suggested that "to achieve harmony in children's art is to increase their growing sense of confidence". The totality of these variant colours mimicked children's immersion in play while entrancing them with the magic of the sensuous appeal of colour to the whole performance experience.

Additionally, the colours also allowed the children to enter into the protagonist's psychological consciousness enabling them to empathise with her outer reality within the play's action.

In order not for the cellar to be easily identified by the soldiers in their search for **Blazerbird**, it was treated with a single note of contrasting brown hue. This helped to reflect the energetic colours of the house. It also embodied the length **Jared** and Lena could go to protect their daughter, **Shylyla**, from being separated again from her favourite friend, **Blazerbird**. Similarly, it foreshadowed the displacement of the entire family at the end as a result of the presence of **Blazerbird** in their home. In spite of these, it re-emphasises the house as symbolising the emotions and stability that are achieved in the house; a place where basic needs of children are significantly pursued.

In an effort to give a representation for the abode of the neighbours, a select palette preferred by the children was expanded through mixing and blending. The assemblage of these different colours formed the block of houses as seen in **fig.4.3**. The proportion of each shape to other created the idea of proximity; a connection of mutual relationship

between each of the neighbours. The attitude of each shape to another was quite rigid and monotonous; however, the variation of colours introduced helped to express them in harmony. The harmony achieved was intended to avoid a visual experience that was so bland, and rather to engage the children so as to create in them a sense of order and beauty in the design. Block and Wolf (2013), have suggested that harmony in a design brings order to disorder in order to sort unrelated objects into groups that have sequential relationships.

The individual colours and their arrangement also formed a collage image which could move the children's eyes over the variety of colours. The block of houses connotes the value of the environment in influencing children's perception of it as a social hub. They together became a source of representation to the children; which means that each of the neighbours had a home among the block of houses. This is in consonance with what Waddell (2014), further said; children often translate their experiences in a much more impressive way than adults do. There is a level of agreement between the earlier submission and Waddell's which see representational art as the convenient means of communicating easily to children. Hence, Funch (2000) adjoin that art is created to convey certain meanings, harbouring values that transcend their material base.

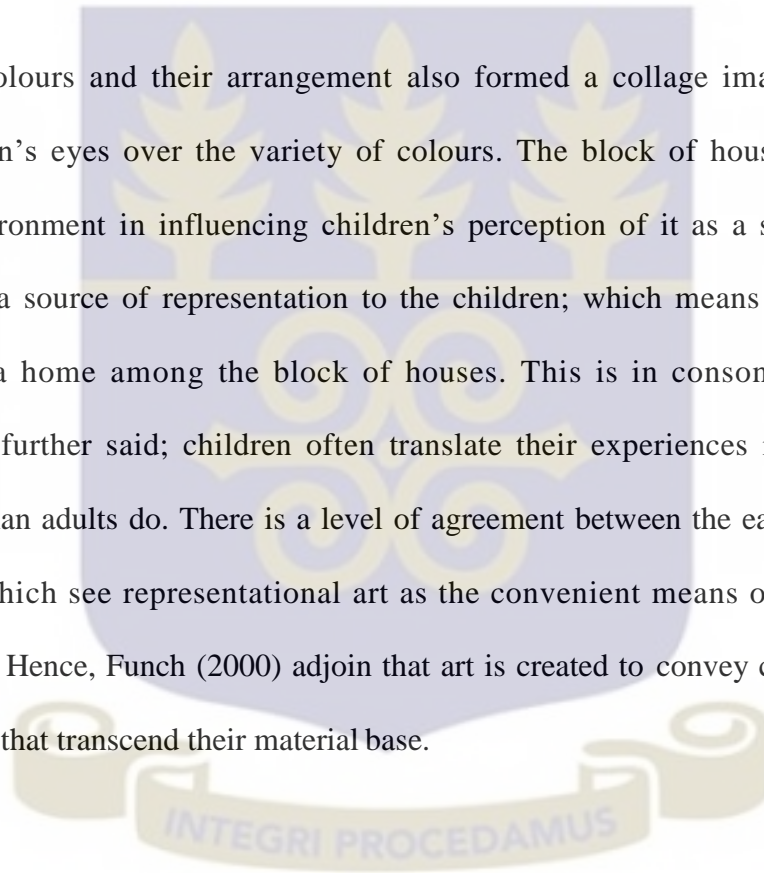




Figure 4.3: Colour rendering of the simulated block of houses.

Source: Picture taken by Harriet M. A. Adjahoe

The colours that characterised the ruined house were orange, orange-red, blue, white, and black. The orange-red and orange hues are analogous, creating a harmonious colour palette which is aesthetically pleasing to the eyes. However, the blue stripes were introduced to complement the orange hue at the door area. One would expect a ruined house to have darker values of hues, intriguingly, it was suggested by some of the children that perhaps the house was once beautiful before being ruined. This was therefore suggested through the colours as seen in **fig.4.4**.

The blue stripes projected the idea of confusion that had beset the occupants of the house as

a result of the unrest caused by the loss of the king's blazerbird. Based on the agreement of featuring the ruined house in orange and white, the thick jagged lines were characterised in black instead, which still spoke loudly and reinforced the effect of a ruined house. Its presence in the harmonious colours created contrast which helped to achieve interest in the design since it did not fit in its environment. It was also intended to evoke a purposeful effect; representing cracks and openings in the walls of the house denoting a house unsafe to live in. The white hue was used to break the orange hue from the red orange to create variation. It also contrasted with the black hue to create emphasis in the design while connoting the idea of a once stabilised home, now desolate by war, hence, rendering its inhabitants homeless.



Figure 4.4: Colour rendering of the ruined house

Source: Picture taken by Ebenezer K. Asime

The path was produced in brown and a darker value of green to make it appear as the ground. The contrast introduced into the colour treatment of the path was almost

unnoticeable; it was not sharp so as to make the path blend in with the colour composition of the forest. Green according to the children symbolises nature, vegetation while brown means nature. The darker green hue was used in patches to give the impression of a once grassy path that had been frequently trodden. This was evident with the frequent meetings of the neighbours' along the path to give comments on the story. It depicts the healthy relationship that existed among the neighbours, while the brown hue stood for the bond that existed between them. For instance, with recourse to the play's actions, the three neighbours met along the path to collect fruits, leaves, and flowers to help reduce the pains of Lena's child delivery. Intrinsically, both the green and brown hues connote the healing effect that the environment has on man and his surroundings.



Figure 4.5: The forest rendered in colour

Source: Picture taken by Isaac Odamptey

The forest theme was treated with darker values of the hues; black, brown, green and higher value of few other hues. As common elements of nature, the trees were emphasised

through their colour treatment to make them child friendly. Green was dominantly used here to depict the idea of a forest, and thereby subscribed it to the representational concept for the design. It also contributed to grounding the play in a believable environment for the children because they are easily stimulated by recognizable elements that they can relate with of which trees form part. This is also shared in the article, *Designing Websites for kids: Trends and Best Practices* by Lazaris (November 27, 2009) who has expressed the idea that children's experiences in life lie in nature; they are mostly familiar with natural elements like trees, water, and animals and designers can simplify these obvious elements to appeal to their visual experience. The two huge dead trees were determined by a darker value of brown to give the impression of lifeless trees. A similar value of green was also used on some of their parts to inject some sort of life into them because of the association green has with life. Green, black, and brown hues were arbitrarily applied to the trunk of the coconut trees, the columnar, fruity, and branchless trees to create aesthetics in the design.

A lighter value of grey hue was also used to simulate the impression of tree barks on the branchless trees thereby making their surfaces appear tactile in feel. Their arbitrariness created aesthetics in the design. It also expressed children's relationship with using colours arbitrarily to make meaning. In this vein, Stewart (2008) has suggested that iconic motives of arbitrary colours in designs are; to facilitate learning, for representation, and also for children's self-expression. In this regard, the green hue together with the brown and black were applied arbitrarily to overemphasise the designs, create variety, and also to confine them to the representational concept for children. The repetitive features of these colours also related the various parts of the design to one another in order to heighten the essence of harmony and unity among them. These colours in effect created focus and interest in the design for children and also rendered the forest a sense of depth which made the image visually appealing and dynamic as seen in **fig.4.5**.

The outlook of the forest in general is hope-filled, furthering the idea of Jared as the focal point of bringing hope to his daughter. It also emphasised his responsibility as a father, thereby heightening his risk of venturing into this forest as against the king's orders. His encounter in the forest is also an exhibition of a daring courage of a father and a strong sensation of a man who will do anything to keep his family safe.

The colours preferred and their constructed meanings by the children were expressively used for the set to show the mutual relationship that exists between the characters and the play's environment. They helped to achieve stimulation and to symbolically represent the nature of people involved in the theatre experience. The colours fell within the children's schema and that assisted in influencing their attention so as to understand the relationship between characters and their environment. As seen in **fig.4.1**, the entire colour composition was produced to give a sense of subtle gradation; from the bright colours that characterised the block of houses, the ruined house, and **Shylila's** house to the lower value colours of the forest. The composition also created balance in the design while inducing a feeling of movement from one end of the stage to another.

The colours helped to reveal the other related elements like the lines, shapes and form in their geometric manner. They further prepared the ambience for the young audience before they encountered the actors; creating an intimate atmosphere for their enjoyment of the performance. The colours used demonstrated their interrelation with the significance of the colours of the feathers in the life of the main character, **Shylila**. Colour served a therapeutic role in reviving the unresponsive condition of the little girl; a true reflection of the healing effect of colours on children in creating an aesthetically appealing environment for their scenic experience.

4.4 Mood and Colour

How colour is used to identify the various components forming the space is critical in determining the mood of such space. According to Gillette (2000:106) “mood is the dominant emotional quality of a production”. The mood of any play could be expressed in its interrelationship of the colour scheme used. Metaphorically, colour was generally used to represent the mood of each of the locale. The play had a general intense sombre emotional tone, however, the set designer decided to reduce its tension by emphasising on the cartoon-like application of colours in the set. This therefore created a sober feeling but with vibrant energy in the visual stage composition before the young audience. For instance, **Shylyla’s** house evoked an upbeat and joyful mood which kept with the emotional flow of the actions whereas the forest reflected a serious and sad mood anytime Jared went into it. The forest also evoked a feeling of loneliness and the struggle one has to go through in finding his or her way out of it. This locale connected the audience to the actors as their emotions and imaginations were carried along with the actor to be able to sympathise with him. The colour tones of the forest also made a comment on Shylyla’s unresponsive mood; while presenting itself as possessing the power to heal her numbness. In effect, the colours helped to determine the emotional and psychological state of the play’s environment.

4.5 Collaboration among the Design Elements: Set, Costume, and Light.

4.5.1 Set and Costume

Costumes contributed significantly in bringing out the colours of the set for an effective performance. In realising this, the compositional arrangement of the colours was discussed with the costume designer after the colour scheme for the set was drawn. This was to ensure a balance between the colours of the costumes she had prescribed for each of the actors and that of the set. Some colours of the costumes conflicted with the colours in the

set; in view of this, such costumes were changed to ensure a beautiful balance between the set and the costumes.

The actors wore the costumes throughout the two days of mock rehearsals and for the technical dress rehearsal night. The colour mixture between the set, costumes, and the ones emitted from light helped me to have a picture of what the final product would be. This exercise also helped to blend the colours of costumes with the set which helped to achieve balance.

4.5.2 Set and Light

An effective set design partnered with a great lighting design helps audiences to focus on the actors within the scenic space. This helps them to perceive and hear the play better by directing them where to look and who to listen to. However, the role of costume in creating balance with the set, the designer depended enormously on light in revealing the desired colours of the set. Parker et al (2008) holds that scenic designer's work becomes visible under the illumination of light, a fundamental requirement for making the image visible to the audience. This helped to create the ambience that was significant for the various locales to also tell the story. In order to achieve this, a meeting was held with the lighting designer to discuss the colour scheme concept and the colour composition for each locale.

After several deliberations and meetings, she suggested the use of LED Red Green Blue (RGB) lights. The choice was that these lights help with easy colour mixing when a particular scene needs specific lighting effect. It was also to help enhance the colours of the set and better reinforce the mood intended for the design to achieve towards the play. Due to the time allocated for the rehearsals, the designer could rehearse with the lights only on the technical dress rehearsal night. A run through of the performance was done to check for

the amount of light distributed and intensity needed for each of the scenes. This is to say that the distributed light at each of the locales independently enhanced the contributive role of the set in telling the story. For instance, the emitted green textured light on the forest scene enhanced its dull and heavy atmosphere as a result of its composition.

Similarly, the soft amber light used to **Shylyla**'s house reflected the brightness of the colours and also enhanced the undercurreing meaning of the little girl's unresponsive situation. Significantly, the total distribution of light on the set aided in bringing out the aesthetics of the entire set up and also projected the overall mood and atmosphere of the play which heightened the psychological and emotional flow of the play. The light also helped young audience to be able to visualise the pictorial composition of each of the locales. Despite the stimulation created by light it was not without some challenges; the limited number of lighting instruments posed a challenge to the play. This caused visual uneasiness as the audiences' focus on the set and the actions against it was not often sustained as a result of the swift movement of the light.

4.6 Audience Responses to Colours of the Set

On March 18, 2016, after the production had come to an end at 7.30pm, it was expedient to seek some responses from the children to find out about their impression and level of appreciation of the colour input. An exercise in this light was significant for me to assess the significance of the research and also to ascertain the objectives that it set out to achieve. Individual experiences of colours depend on how one perceives a phenomenon, however, amidst this subjectivity, there may be moments of common reactions to such colour experiences. Schonmann (2011:51) asserts that "we can observe how differently each individual responds to a theatrical performance...yet there are times when almost all the spectators react alike". That was the case of the young audiences who shared similar

experiences with the colours yet wrapped in different expressions. The responses were collected from some children who participated in the discussion process and those who did not.

There were some immediate responses that were gathered right after the performance and they were generally associated with the beauty in the arrangement of scenic units and colours on stage. This created some form of stimulation in the children because their affinity with the recognisable elements on stage made it easier for them to relate with the performance. This is a significant observation that children's spatial arrangement contributes a lot to their physical and cognitive development. This point reinforces the earlier assertion by Stanković & Stojić that "constructed elements of the space can support children and help to provoke processes which lead towards improvement" (2007:72). Their submissions also favourably reflected their admiration for the composition of the bright and contrasting colours on stage. To the children, the colours created interest and that enhanced their concentration span which also assisted them in understanding the flow of the play's actions.

The children also expressed how the colours gave them a direct connection with each of the scenic units; they could easily identify the individual locales based on the colours and how they were arranged. These colour arrangements are in agreement with the idea that such features indicate the aesthetical judgement of children based on the simplicity, compositional, and unambiguous spatial relations of the scenic units, (Feeney & Moravcik, 1987). This in a way contributes to the development of children's aesthetic needs while in the theatre. On another level, others also realised that the colours directed the actors' actions on stage which to them iconised each of the scenic units and that encouraged the actors movement from one place of colour composition to another in order to make their actions complete.

Following their experience with the variety of colours in the set, most of the children also expressed their desire to see or witness again a performance with similar composition of variety of colours since that gives them a lot to recall the performance for its outlook and its effect on them. This is in reason with Lascurian's claim that "children are enamored by variety of colours" (Lascurian, October 08, 2015). It was further noted that the colours served as sources for their emotional and cognitive satisfaction, allowing them to assume into the play's psychological connection. For instance, the colour combination of **Shylyla's** house evoked a feeling of sympathy towards her personality; which was reflective of a sad moment any of them may have experienced.

Conversely with the arbitrary application of colours, three of the young audiences did not like them because they did not construct what they saw look real. To them the use of a colour like red did not make the forest look real because that evoked a sense of danger and fear. Interestingly, they shared that it made the forest look scary, symbolic of how **Blazerbird** was killed over there. Some of the audience members who were not part of the discussion reacted differently to some of the colours based on their cultural background; an indication of the role of culture in colour meaning making.

The architectural details of the entire set were greatly admired because it flowed with their experiences and receptive abilities. These became another source of reference which Weincek (2009), has suggested that designers for children's theatre need to create a reference point that a young audience can easily relate to.

From the observation of others, the set was very beautiful and suitable for the play, however, they suggested that the arrangement in the positions of the scenic units would have been best if the forest had been placed at the centre since most of the actions happened there. Some also complemented the parallel intents of the play and the set

design because just as the play, *Feathers*, deals with the significance of colours in the life of the main character, so does the crux of the study explores colours in set design for children.

In essence, it was deciphered that however the diverse expressions used by children, there were common responses that were socially and culturally connected which helped to stimulate the audience. The gathered responses from the children further demonstrated that the colours they selected were consciously appropriated by the designer in a way to encourage their understanding and appreciation of the performance. Their responses signify that since the colour palette was from their own construct, the designer was able to create interesting designs that immersed them into the performance space, thereby connecting their emotions with the play's environment.

The collected responses reflected the contributive role of colour towards children's aesthetic, psychological and physical development. Similarly, children's admiration for the elements also reaffirmed Piaget's concept of concrete operations and formal operations; where children are receptive to and think logically about concrete and abstract objects within their schema. In all, colour postures children as supremely masterful of the ideal process of choosing colours which helped to serve the play's environment accordingly for them. This in a way encourages designers to compose designs that regard children as co-composers of their own scenic experience in relation to any theatrical performance.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

This final chapter provides the summary of the entire study. It also presents the challenges encountered during the research, the major findings of the research, the conclusion and recommendations.

5.2 Summary

Scenic design employs a number of elements towards the enhancement of the aesthetic and artistic experience of Children's Theatre. It was against this background that I decided to explore extensively the element, colour, as a nucleus for communicating the complementary role of scenic design for Philip Ridley's play, *Feathers*, for children. The study has provided the background to the study which helped to place the exploration of colours for children within the context of Children's Theatre. This was to measure it up with reference to the research problem, its objectives and questions that underscored the research.

Literature has been reviewed on the concept of who a child is. This significantly helped to place Children's Theatre through the lenses of Schonmann and the role of set design in Children's Theatre within a scope. An attempt has been made to discuss set design for Children's Theatre as a critical spatial need for children towards their physical and cognitive development. With Weincek's guide to set and costume design for young audience, characteristics of set design for Children's Theatre have also been considered. The Munsell Colour Theory which is based on a three-dimensional model; hue, chroma, and value model has been discussed. Colour perception, children and colour, appropriating colours for

children, and the impact of colour in set design on children have also been reviewed.

The objective of the study was to seek through scenic exploration to reawaken colour consciousness within children for an effective theatre experience as regards the play, *Feathers*. This intent has been achieved through the methodology adopted for the study. It employed the qualitative research design under which focus group discussion has been used to collect data regarding children's colour preferences for designing the set for the play, *Feathers*. In view of this, children within the age brackets of eight and thirteen (8- 13) years were involved in the discussion. This helped to adopt basic questions which made the discussion easier and friendly to deal with. In this essence, a polychrome colour scheme was drawn based on the preferences and the meanings the children assign to the colours, and this also helped with the application of colours accordingly to achieve the environmental expressivity of the play.

Similarly, under the aegis of qualitative research design, the artistic method was employed towards achieving the individual designs for the set. The artistic liberty afforded by this method enabled me to rely highly on my experiential value to produce designs that distinctively lean towards the performance. Again, in cognisance of this method, the design process as outlined by Michael Gillette (2000), a holistic, structural approach guided me through the practical process to ensure that every aspect of the design was treated in detail. Representational art concept, as defined by Block and Wolf (2013) was also employed; a vehicle that captured children's ideas, perspectives and experiences through the set designs. This concept further enabled me to adopt other visual elements which complemented the colour scheme. More so, it projected the idea of children's space which helped to sustain the attention of the young audience.

The data gleaned from the focus group discussion has been presented and analysed. The findings on colour which highly informed the colour scheme have been discussed in chapter three. The colours were effectively applied to the set design for the play, Feathers, thereby creating an effective theatre experience for children. The formalistic approach has been efficiently employed in analysing and interpreting the application of colours in the design. The responses from the young audiences have also been analysed. They reflected the powerful role of colour as a communicative tool that enhanced their understanding and appreciation of the play's message. The responses have also proved colour as a contributing element that can improve the aesthetic experiences of Children's Theatre.

Partnership with light allowed for effective shift from one location to another without any set changes. It also helped to achieve the spatial differences between the individual scenic units. A balance in the colours of costumes further helped to achieve the desired colour impression of the set.

5.2.1 Challenges

The height of the entire research was not attained without encountering some challenges. One key challenge was sourcing literature that discusses specific characteristics of set design for children's theatre. Also of plight was securing literary materials on colour appropriation in design.

One of the major challenges encountered during the construction process was human resource to complement my efforts due to the bulky nature of materials used. I relied on the help of some colleagues who could be available only on weekends. In view of this I did most of the work alone which affected me health wise.

Budget for securing tools and materials for the construction of the set was highly blighted. Unfortunately, the cost for most of the materials had been increased few weeks after the budget was drawn and this meant spending more than initially planned.

Another big challenge encountered was getting the desired colours from the market. This was due to the unavailability of some colours being obtained in their actual value among the Ghanaian collections of paints. Nevertheless, this was more than partly achieved with the help of some paints which came in smaller tubes. This also required extra budget which contributed to the deficiency of financing.

A mishap encountered was the performance space. However open it was without sightlines, the windy nature of the environment contributed to some of the scenic units breaking off and others losing their strength. Nonetheless, these were later worked on a day prior to the performance as well as on the final day in order to maintain their strength so as to withstand the pressure from the wind.

5.2.2 Findings

- Children have meanings to colours that may be different from the adult construct and this can be used in such capacity to create interactive designs for them. This helps to customise a play's performance space for their enjoyment and appreciation.
- The colour compositions for each locale for the play helped to code it with a particular mood.
- Colour is significant for creating a connection between children and their understanding of the play's characters and their environment.
- Children are able to symbolise and relate well with colours borne from their learned experiences and their cultural background.

- The use of variety of colours helps children to recall how the set design for the play is visually portrayed. This in a way enhances their visual storytelling or narration.
- Compared with children who can see and differentiate between colours clearly, this research may not serve well for children with colour blindness defect. This could be an area of interest for any future research.

5.3 Conclusion

This study has effectively explored colour from the perspective of children which helped to develop colour content for the set design for the play, *Feathers*. The colours were effectively and purposefully employed which engendered varied aesthetic appeal, psychological and physiological responses in the young audience. Achieving these through the design in a way contributes to the development of children's physical and aesthetic needs. Fundamentally, a consideration of the target audience for a particular production as far as possible helps one to create a set that is meaningful, interactive, and interpretable. The connotations that children link with colours help to create designs that have profound impact on audiences and can also elicit their stronger comprehension of a play. It also reflects set design as contributing to the artistic and aesthetic function of Children's Theatre.

5.4 Recommendations

Children have special needs at every level of their development and it is significant that set designers for Children's Theatre should acquire knowledge of the age brackets of children involved, both performers and audience alike to be able to create designs that are commensurable with the ages of the children involved. This will help to match their cognitive constructs with the visual interpretations they make of the scenic environment.

Facilitators and designers of Children's Theatre should involve children on colour discourse

within the context of any performance. Children's engagement on the subject of colour helps designers to understand their colour preferences and the connotations they link with colours in order to create designs that are fluid with their interactions. This helps to use colour appropriately in designs thereby enhancing their visual and emotional interactions that bring out their inner feelings and thoughts. It also demonstrates an increasing confidence that children's ideas, their inner spirits, and concerns are considered seriously.

□Set design for any Children's Theatre must be considered as children's spatial need to be able to satisfy it within the thrust of their theatrical experience. This ensures practical convenience for actors regarding their movement within adequate floor plans and the placement of entrances and exits towards a smooth flow of the performance. Awareness of this spatial understanding provides children with the ability to encode spatial cues which enhance their visual directions and also boost their overall interactions within the performance space. It further facilitates the young audiences' exploration of the environment by linking it with the situations of actors within the play's actions.

Set design should be treated as a contributive factor for the complete growth of children. Designers have to make sure the treatment of elements is consciously done to enhance the messages in a play but not to merely use them. Everything in the environment should connect with their experiences. This will advance their reflective impact on conserving any theatrical experience for their physical, cognitive, and aesthetic development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Pictures and Illustrations

The children's colour choices for the set design for the play, *Feathers*, and their meanings

| | |
|---|---|
|  | Pink- Beauty, love, princess, |
|  | Blue- Sky, peace, cold |
|  | Red- Blood, fire, danger, funeral, love, fear |
|  | White- Victory, peace, clean, innocent. |
|  | Green- Nature, vegetation |
|  | Orange- Happiness, brightness, beauty |
|  | Purple- Beautiful, happiness, princess |
|  | Yellow- Happiness, joy, brightness, gold. |
|  | Black- Sadness, funeral, death, war, fear |
|  | Brown- Earth, funeral, sadness |

ILLUSTRATIONS OF SET DESIGN



The set designer and her assistants at work

Source: Pictures taken by Akua A. Afriyie



The set designer painting the block of houses and the columnar tree

Source: Pictures taken by Harriet M. A. Adjahoe



The branchless trees, coconut trees and the huge dead trees undergoing construction

Source: Pictures taken by Akua A. Afriyie



The columnar tree and the dead tree (behind)

The fruity tree

Source: Pictures taken by Frederick Quansah



Colour renderings of branchless trees and the dead trees (behind)

Source: Pictures taken by Frederick Quansah



The set designer setting up the stage

Source: Picture taken by Frederick Quansah



The set designer and her assistant setting up the stage

Source: Picture taken by Ebenezer K. Asim



The individual set units and their colour swatches

Source: Pictures generated by Comfort Effina-Williams



The entire set in perspective

Source: Picture taken by Ebenezer K. Asime



The entire set under emitted light in perspective.

Source: Picture taken by Isaac Odamptey



A computer-generated model of the colour rendering of the set.

Source: Picture generated by Nash Neequaye



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HEADMASTER, SOLID ROCK FOUNDATION SCHOOL MS. ELIZABETH A. HAZEL

MS. EUNICE B. HAZEL

STAFF OF SOLID ROCK FOUNDATION SCHOOL ROBERT NIMAKO BREFO

MAGARET LAMPTEY

Dept. of Theatre Arts, UG
IN COLLABORATION WITH
Solid Rock Foundation School
PRESENTS

Phillip Ridley's Play
FEATHERS
Directed by Ebenezer K. Asime

An MFA Project
(Scenic Design)

| Date: | Venue: | Time: |
|------------------|--|-----------------|
| 18th March, 2016 | Solid Rock Foundation School Annex At Agboba | 6:00 pm (Sharp) |

ADMISSION IS FREE!

INTEGRI PROCIDA
Come & Experience A Children's Theatre Amidst COLOURS!

Synopsis

A beautiful girl, Shylyla, remains numb after suffering a scare from her mother's disappointed suitor. Nothing could restore her frozen condition except the feather of a blazing sunset. How would she survive without the presence of this colourful feather?

CAST

RACHAEL ETSIWAH

NORA NORTEY

ABIGAIL KUMI

JOHN HOUPER

JOHN E. YEMPEW

HALIMATU ABUBAKARI

SANDRA BANFRO

DAISY T. FORSON

CALDORA AGODJOR

VERONICA ADWOA

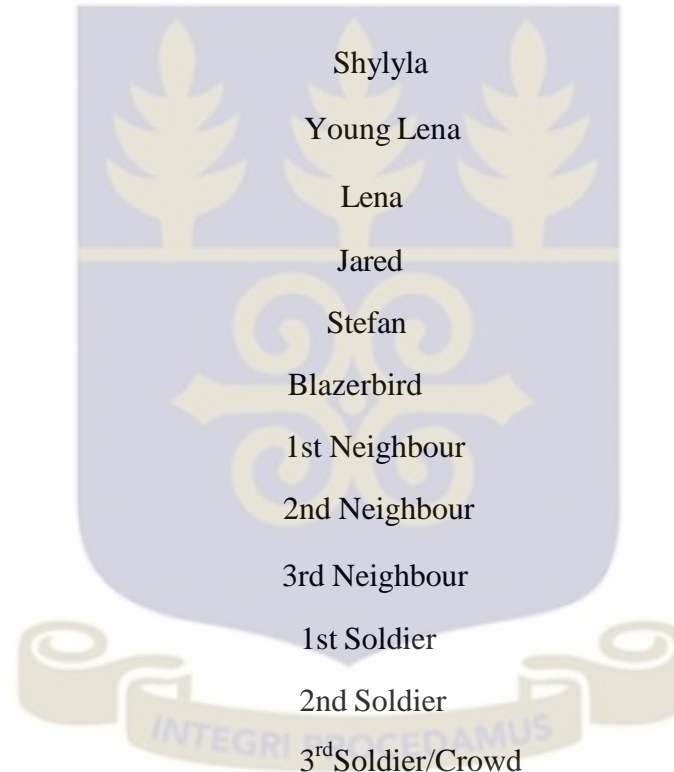
ENOCH TEKPER

GAD KONADU

RICHMOND MWINIE

AKOTO M. SAMUEL

EMMANUEL NSIAH



Shylyla

Young Lena

Lena

Jared

Stefan

Blazerbird

1st Neighbour

2nd Neighbour

3rd Neighbour

1st Soldier

2nd Soldier

3rd Soldier/Crowd

1st Youth

Town Crier/2nd Youth

Two Two

SET DESIGNER

Comfort Effina-Williams

DIRECTOR

Ebenezer K. Asime

Wendy Akusika Mamiya

TECHNICAL CREW

Harriet A. Adjahoe

Alex K. Appiah

Frederick Appiah

Lydia M. Dotsey

SOUND

Mr. Opong

Frederick Appiah

LIGHT

Richard Opong

CHOREOGRAPHER

Daniel Anyim

SUPERVISORS

Dr. Regina Kwakye-Opong

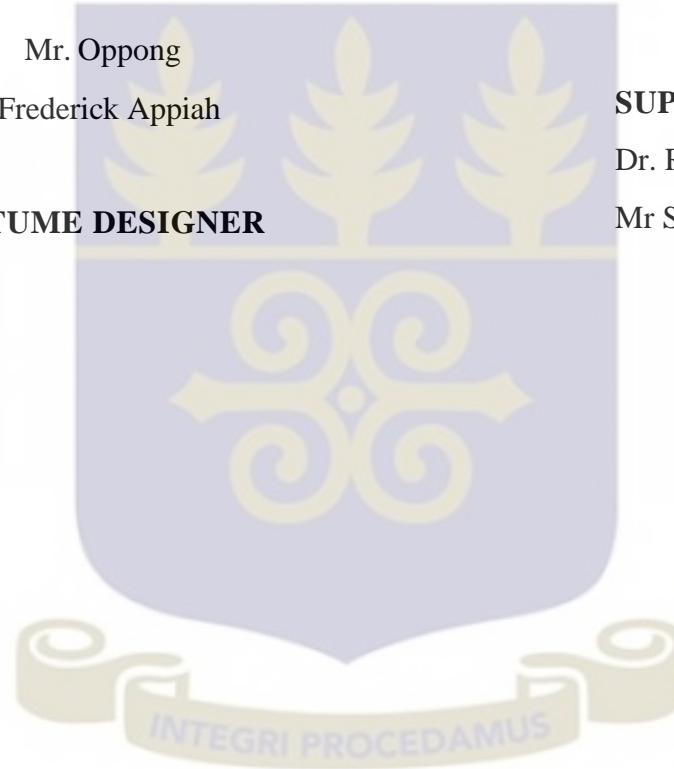
Mr Sandy Arkhurst

PROTOCOL

Akua K. Afriyie

Brenda Odoi

COSTUME DESIGNER



Appendix B: Interviews and Discussion Guide

PERSONAL COMMUNICATION (INTERVIEWS)

Sandy Arkhurst – Lecturer, School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana. (23 November, 2015)

Johnson Edu- Lecturer, University of Education, Winneba & University of Cape Coast. (November 03, 2015)

Tagoe Vincent- Head, Visual Arts Department, University of Ghana Basic School, Legon.(October12, 2015)



APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

AN INFORMAL FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE ON COLOURS 18/2/16

Question: What do you understand about colours? What is your general perception of colours?

Question: How do you experience colours within your environment?

Question: What are your favourite colours? How do these colours influence your choice of items?

Question: What colours do you dislike? How do you feel when you encounter these colours?

Question: How do you understand the play, Feathers? What is the nature of the characters in the play?

Question: What colours would you choose to show the relationship between the characters and their environment?

Question: What colours would you prefer for the various scenes? What are the meanings of the colours you have chosen?

