



Article

The Slow Integration of Sustainability into Contemporary Theatre and Performance Practices in Cameroon

The Slow Integration of Sustainability into Contemporary Theatre and Performance Practices in Cameroon

By *Kenneth T. Nsah, Lisette N. Malung and Noella M. Ngunyam*

Introduction

In this essay we intend to gauge the extent to which Cameroonian theatre (and performance) practitioners are integrating sustainability into their theatrical activities in today's context of alarming climate change, ecological breakdown, biodiversity loss and resource depletion. Drawing on the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report entitled *Our Common Future*, we consider sustainability as “development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (Thomsen 2013). Moreover, sustainability pays special attention to issues of social equity and economic development, and it is thus hinged on the equitable continuity of the trio of environment, economy and society.¹ Therefore, in this essay, we are interested in uncovering theatrical and performance practices in Cameroon, which promote the sustainable management of natural resources (the commons) as well as equity and justice for both humans and nonhumans. Our scope of discussion is the Cameroonian theatre (and performance) landscape, including both the Anglophone and Francophone spheres. Broadly speaking, we will examine the emerging inclusion of sustainability in theatre and performances in Cameroon. Specifically, we will discuss the ways in which choices of costumes, stage props, makeup and, occasionally, thematics reflect and seek to promote the sustainable management of the commons, or natural resources in neoliberal capitalist terms. Methodologically, we use a limited survey sample, that is, we use information gathered from five current theatre troupes in Cameroon, including written interviews conducted with some Cameroonian theatre practitioners, and the personal experiences of (some) co-authors who are also current theatre practitioners. After this introduction, we will begin by discussing earlier environmental drama and theatre in Cameroon. Then, we will highlight the vibrancy of theatrical activities in Cameroon, albeit marred by underfunding. Next, we will examine the slow integration of sustainability sensitivities into theatre practices in Cameroon, with special attention paid to the choices and deployment of costumes, stage props, makeup and thematics. Finally, we will make some recommendations aimed at ensuring sustainability in Cameroonian theatre, discuss the way forward in terms of further research, and then conclude the essay.

Earlier Environmental Drama/Theatre in Cameroon

The integration of sustainability considerations into theatrical activities in Cameroon seems to be timid, as we will discuss later, but environmental drama/theatre is not new on the Cameroonian theatrical landscape. Within the framework of theatre for development (TfD), alternatively called community theatre, people's theatre, popular theatre, political theatre, theatre for sensitisation,

1) For example, see “What is Sustainability?” on the website of McGill University (Canada), available at (<https://www.mcgill.ca/sustainability/files/sustainability/what-is-sustainability.pdf>) (accessed on 7 September 2022).

theatre for participation, theatre for empowerment and so forth (Nsah 2021b, Inyang 2016, Ngomssi 2013, Funfe 2011, Doho 2006 [2002], Lamko 2003), environmental concerns have been addressed by many Cameroonian playwrights and theatre practitioners in the colonial languages of English and French since the twentieth century at least, if we exclude environmental sensitivities in the performances and rituals of Cameroonian orature, much of which predates European colonisation.

For instance, Gilbert Doho and Ekpe Inyang are some of the foremost environmental dramatists and theatre practitioners in both Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon. Before moving to the United States where he is currently an associate professor of French and Francophone studies, Gilbert Doho had conducted theatre workshops on environmental problems in his native West Region in Francophone Cameroon and elsewhere (Doho 2006 [2002]).

Anglophone Cameroonian playwright, poet and environmentalist Ekpe Inyang for example, has used community theatre in conservation efforts in the Bayang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary in Southwest Cameroon (Inyang 2016 and 2015). Inyang has been instrumental in the creation of theatre clubs in some secondary schools in Cameroon and has also collaborated with other prominent earlier Anglophone Cameroonian theatre practitioners such as Bate Besong (Nsah 2021b). In published plays such as *The Hill Barbers*, *The Last Hope*, *Water Na Life*, and *Beware*, Inyang has also dealt with environmental issues (see for instance Nsah 2021a, 2021b, 2018).

It is also worth mentioning is *Green Hills: A Play on Environmental Protection* written by Anglophone Cameroonian military officer Ayang Frederick Enoh. As Joyce Ashuntantang notes in a 2012 review of the play, Fred Ayang had been a stage and TV actor prior to joining the Cameroonian army. Ayang is therefore not a novice on the Cameroonian theatre landscape. Another popular Cameroonian theatre practitioner is playwright and stage director Osée Koagne from Francophone Cameroon, who has dealt with environmental issues in Cameroon (since 1995) and Congo-Brazzaville (since 2001). Koagne is co-author (with Henri Djombo) of an environmental play entitled *Le Cri de la forêt* and recently translated into English by Nsah Mala under the title *The Forest Must Scream*. He also runs a Brazzaville-based troupe called Théâtre de l'Environnement and manages a pro-environment NGO called Association pour la Culture de Protection de la Faune et de la Flore (ACPF).

Overall, there is indisputable evidence that Cameroonian theatre professionals have been grappling with environmental and sustainability issues since the 1990s through the early 2010s. In this regard, there is little wonder that despite numerous challenges there is a vibrant theatre landscape in Cameroon, although its integration of sustainable practices is rather slow. Perhaps this slowness (to which we will return later) could be partly explained by the financial and infrastructural challenges faced by contemporary Cameroonian theatre practitioners.

Cameroonian Theatre Today, Vibrant but Underfunded

From our research for this essay, it emerges clearly that the contemporary theatre landscape in Cameroon is quite vibrant but not without its share of problems. But before we proceed to discuss the vibrant but underfunded theatre landscape in Cameroon today, it is important to briefly trace the origins and evolution of Cameroonian theatre practices. Theatre in Cameroon, like in most African countries, can be traced back to pre-colonial times with the practices and performances of rites, rituals, song and dance, and traditional ceremonies (Diakhaté and Eyoh 2017). The theatricality of this orature consisted of elements such as live audience, actors and/or performers, bonfire stage, song and dance, and dialogue, and so forth, which though often oral and unscripted

served as some sort of script (Omotorhe n.d.). In Cameroon, as elsewhere in Africa, theatre grew from this oral stage through the imitation of Biblical stories during colonial times (Kom 1998) into theatre for development (TfD) which was, and largely remains, a movement for social change and socio-economic development in the post-independence era, notably in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Decades after the euphoria of independence in the 19960s, names have emerged in Cameroon as key theatre practitioners, and the unyielding practice of theatre in the country has continued to reflect mostly socio-political grievances. In the minority English-speaking part of the country (former British Southern Cameroons or present Anglophone Cameroonian regions of the Northwest and Southwest), after pioneer playwright Sankie Maimo's 1959 play *I am Vindicated* and later works, second-generation playwrights such as Bole Butake in *Family Saga*, Victor Epie-Ngome in *What God Has Put Asunder*, Bate Besong in *Beasts of No Nation*, and John Nkemngong Nkengasong in *Black Caps and Red Feathers* devoted a good part of their writing to reflect and challenge the marginalisation of minority Anglophone Cameroonians by the respective Francophone-dominated regimes of Ahmadou Ahidjo and Paul Biya (Ngwang and Usongo 2016, Harrow 1982). Meanwhile, female Anglophone Cameroonian playwrights such as Anne Tanyi-Tang, Pochi Tamba Nsoh, and Emelda Ngufor Nsamba have sought to address gender-related and other social issues in their plays and theatre practices.

Contrary to the largely protest literature and theatre in Anglophone Cameroon by second- and third-generation writers, in the French-speaking part of the country (former French Cameroun or present Francophone Cameroun), Guillaume Oyono Mbia in his renowned plays *Notre fille ne se mariera pas* and *Trois prétendants... un mari* and female playwrights like Marie-Charlotte Mbarga Kouma in *La Famille africaine* and *Le Mariage de ma cousine* accorded more importance to social aspects of life at the time such as early marriages and the conflict between tradition and modernism (see for instance Kouma 1974, "Les interviews d'Amina"). Other Francophone Cameroonian playwrights like Jacques Fame Ndongo and popular Francophone comedians Oncle Otsama (Daniel Ndo), Jean Miché Kankan (Dieudonné Afana Ebogo), Dave K. Moktoï (Dieudonné Kemseu) and Essindi Mindja have explored other societal issues (Ambassa Betoko 2010). Some current popular comedians and stand-up performers in both Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon include, among others: Auntie Felicia (Kwoh Elonge); Richard (Godisz Fungwa) and Michael Fonyuh; Caro (Lilian Mbeng Nkemasong) and Copees (Lover Lambe); Moustik le Karismatik (Hubert Martial Tagne Tagne); Ulrich Takam, Diane Nama, Guylene Anabou, Raissa Chimala, Nadege Guetta; Rosine Nguemgaing; Fingon Tralala (Serge Tchami), Nikechuè/Niketchuè (Christelle Falonne Chrisfa Djeudi), Black Oya (Alain Stéphane Weldjou Mengue); Major Asse, Valery Ndongo, and Man No Lap (Jean De Dieu Tchegnebe).

In the years after independence, Cameroon had a promising history of a thriving theatrical environment full of potential with the support received from foreign cultural institutions such as BBC and RFI which were organising competitions for radio plays and the financial and technical hospitality of foreign cultural institutions and diplomatic missions, such as German Technical Cooperation GTZ (now GIZ), the Goethe Institute, the US Embassy in Yaoundé, the then French Cultural Center (now Institut Français) and the related Alliance Franco-Camerounaise network, in the country which funded many theatre for development projects (see for instance Doho 2006 [2002]). Such foreign institutions are still currently the main funders of cultural and theatrical activities in Cameroon (and elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa) and are often criticised for the perpetuation of neo-colonial practices (Bekolo 2022). Unsurprisingly, among the five troupes whose

members we interviewed, three of the troupes disclosed their foreign sources of funding, which include Goethe Institut, Israeli Embassy in Cameroon, and Nestle Cameroon. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that theatre troupes in Cameroon began with the creation of the National Theatre Troupe by the Ministry of Culture in 1976 which was copied by educational institutions afterwards and the Yaounde University Theatre Club was a significant example (Butake 1988).

Fast forward to 2022: today, many theatre troupes exist across Cameroon, although the art form seems to be mostly championed by individual and independent professionals who are passionate about the stage, with very little material support from the State. For example, all the seven people involved in this study, including the three co-authors, have obtained a minimum of a Bachelor's degree, while some have Master and PhD degrees, in areas such as comparative literature, translation, African literature and theatre, theatre production, performing arts and cinematography. However, despite the availability of qualified practitioners, Cameroonian theatre largely suffers from many challenges. Some of these challenges include a scarcity of theatre halls and a lack of funding in the sector alongside the country's repressive political climate (Harrow 1982). For instance, out of the five active theatre troupes (Cameroon National Theatre – CNT, Visionary Theatre Troupe – VTT, Emintha Theatre – ET, Compagnie Ngoti – CN, and Ideal Theatre Troupe – ITT) we surveyed for this essay, three disclosed their biggest sources of external funding so far, which include the Cameroonian Ministry of Arts and Culture (MINAC), Goethe Institut (German), Embassy of Israel in Cameroon, and Nestle Cameroon (a multinational company) in addition to members' contributions, while two did not disclose their sources of external funding (other than members' contributions). Except for such external funders, it is clear that most theatrical activities are self-sponsored by individual theatre practitioners in Cameroon today. Limited funding also explains the unavailability of professional theatre halls in the country. Despite these financial and infrastructural obstacles, theatre in Cameroon remains active and ambitious (see for instance *Howlround Theatre Commons*, (15 May 2020)). Apart from the five troupes we surveyed for this essay – the oldest of which dates back to the 1980s while the newest dates back to 2016, we also identified over 26 other active theatre troupes in Cameroon (see Appendix). All the five surveyed troupes have been legalised by MINAC and the number of plays they have performed since its creation ranged from about five (VTT), through about ten (ITT), sixteen (ET) and fifty (CNT) to 150 (CN). According to the respondents, the theatrical activities and genres of these troupes are wide ranging and include the following: classical theatre, contemporary theatre, historical theatre and theatre of the absurd, storytelling, poetry performances, social drama, tragedy, comedy, slam poetry and spoken word, singing, dancing, filmmaking, stand-up shows, and visual arts, among others.

Nevertheless, it goes without any doubt that the vibrancy of Cameroonian theatre today is mostly considered in terms of the sheer number of existing theatre troupes and the audience turnout at performances (see for instance *Cameroon Tribune*, 11 January 2022) while actors still struggle and fight on an almost daily basis to have professional performance spaces. This lack of funding and infrastructure is even more acute these days as government authorities have little interest in cultural and educational investment (as compared to military spending for example) and seem to consider theatre as a secondary activity. In fact, Cameroon's ruling regime currently seems to focus more on ongoing socio-political conflicts such as the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist sect in the three northern Francophone regions (Adamawa, Far North and North) and the civil war in the Anglophone regions (Northwest and Southwest) coupled with issues such as chronic corruption and alarming rates of unemployment (see for instance *Howlround Theatre Commons*, 15 May 2020). It should be noted that even prior to these conflicts and issues, the

Cameroonian government has never invested substantially in cultural and theatrical activities, neither in terms of funding nor infrastructure. Our interviewees corroborate our assessment of the challenging funding and infrastructural situation of theatre in Cameroon. In this regard, Francophone Cameroonian playwright and stage director Hermine Yollo (Francophone), one of our interviewees, observes: “Sometimes to put up a play on stage, you have to use people’s courtyards, houses, private residencies for rehearsals as there are almost no official theatre grounds for theatre performers in Cameroon.” Furthermore, in a city like Yaoundé, Cameroon’s political capital, for example, one cannot presently count up to five theatre halls, while some of the most professional theatre halls are foreign cultural centres and institutes, notably those of the Goethe Institute and the Institut Français. Such challenges, we suggest, could partly account for the slow integration of sustainability awareness into Cameroonian contemporary theatre practices.

Slow Integration of Sustainability into Cameroonian Theatre Practices

Despite the fact that our survey sample was rather limited, it has enabled us to gauge the extent to which sustainability is integrated into theatre practices in Cameroon today. And our overall observation is that the integration is slow. Out of the five theatre troupes we surveyed, only four respondents from three troupes confirmed that they are aware of climate change and environmental problems and do integrate sustainability considerations into their theatre practices such as script or play writing and stage performances. Anglophone co-authors Malung (founder of VTT, actress and script writer) and Ngunyam (actress for CNT and script-writer) affirmed that they have not been considering sustainability in their theatrical activities, although they have committed themselves to start doing so henceforth. Similarly, co-author Nsah (Anglophone) who was last active on the Cameroonian theatre landscape as the president and director of the CCAST Bambili Drama Club in 2009, about 13 years ago, does not recall any sustainability considerations in their work at the time.

That said, we sought to know from four respondents from three theatre troupes if they were aware of current climate change and environmental problems threatening the Earth and whether they considered sustainability when conducting their theatrical activities such as script writing, play directing, choice of props and costumes, and even in their thematic orientations. In terms of awareness of the global climate and environmental crisis, all the four respondents as well as co-authors Malung (Anglophone) and Ngunyam (Anglophone) confirmed that they had heard about climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, although the definition of sustainability or sustainable management of natural resources by two respondents was found wanting.

Although none of them reported any pressure from any of their external funders to integrate sustainability into their work, four respondents from three troupes viz ITT, CN and ET revealed that they were integrating sustainability into their theatre practices, and this excludes VTT and CNT, with which Malung and Ngunyam are affiliated, which have not been integrating sustainability into their activities. Moreover, Landry Nguetsa (Francophone), script writer, fundraiser, casting manager and stage director at the Yaoundé-based Emintha Theatre (ET) says he “only use[s] biodegradable objects/accessories,” but does not elaborate further and does not explain how this translates into thematic, prop and costume choices. It is therefore difficult to really gauge the extent to which ET considers sustainability in their activities. The other three respondents are more convincing in their responses to demonstrate their integration of sustainability into theatre as they elaborate their responses and even provide some photo and video evidence. For instance, Hermine Yollo (Francophone), actress, stage director and a writer for Compagnie Ngoti (CN), based in the

The Slow Integration of Sustainability

Francophone city of Yaoundé, seems not to pay much attention to sustainability when printing and rehearsing her scripts, as she sometimes prints only on one side and other times on both sides of paper; but she is more alert to sustainability when producing her plays: “When producing a play, I think about recycled objects or reusing or modifying objects and accessories/props used in previous plays. It’s economic and it allows [you] to avoid wasting things. Most of the time, I think about buying and crafting things (with wood, aluminium, iron, stainless steel, plastic, etc) that are sustainable, so that they can be used in the long run in different productions. The same sometimes goes for costumes. Concerning communication, most of it is done through the Internet; it is less paper, less ink, less glue, less tape, less energy, less money. Technically, we reuse the bulbs and lamps we bought for previous plays in new plays to address the issue of independence in terms of energy and economy.”

However, Yollo says her choices of things such as props and costumes depend mainly on factors such as context, setting, theme, costs and prices, and stage directing, although she says they never adjust their budget in order to ensure sustainability. This implies that such factors often overshadow their commitment to sustainability, and even when they are conscious of sustainable practices, they do not extend this consciousness into their budgetary or financial planning. Thus, they seem oblivious of the unsustainable activities involved in making and raising financial resources. Nevertheless, according to Yollo, some examples of unsustainable stage props include glass objects, paper and cardboard objects, while some examples of sustainable objects to use on stage include tableware, furniture, working and cleaning tools, wooden toys and objects, cuddly toys and objects, stainless steel objects, hard plastic objects and toys... Despite some apparent contradictions in her answers, we deduce that Yollo is quite aware of and committed to sustainability in her theatre practices, including the choices of props and costumes (they hardly use makeup, according to her). To this effect, she generously provided the two photographs below, which illustrate their reuse of certain props: one shows the clothes used as a wall sheet in the performance of the play *Il avait plu sur la Rose*, written by Nicaise Wegang, directed by Serge Fouha and produced by CN in 2011 (photo 1) that is later reused as a tablecloth on an altar in the performance of the play *Juste savoir...*, written by Joel Amah Ajavon, directed by Hermine Yollo, and produced by CN in 2014 (photo 2). This practice of reuse helps to avoid wastage, thus promoting sustainability, in their theatrical and performance activities.

Furthermore, some of the themes that Yollo and her team address in their plays are mainly social and political and include issues such as gender equity, women’s rights, justice, human dignity, freedom, peace, governance, corruption, neo-colonisation, alienation, oppression, war, capitalism, mass migration, etc. Although these themes are not explicitly environmental or climate-related, Yollo thinks that they still contribute to sustainability and environmental friendliness: “Are these themes environmentally friendly however? I think they are, because they are all about restoring our humanity to look at ourselves as part of the environment. We must heal ourselves and get back to see ourselves as part of the Earth and not as its masters. Capitalism, along with technology, is one of the concepts that has gotten modern man to think they are the masters of everything around them. Addressing the themes mentioned above is a way of making ourselves aware of the fact that we are not fine and we need to change as deep and fast as we can to save ourselves and save the place we’re living in.” And we agree with Yollo given that sustainability is not only about environmental protection and management but also about equity and justice for human and nonhuman societies or ecosystems.



Il avait plu sur la Rose by Nicaise Wegang.
Stage director Serge Fouha, produced by La Compagnie NGOTI in 2011.
Photograph Hermine Yollo/Compagnie Ngoti.



Juste savoir... by Joel Amah Ajavon.
Stage director Hermine Yollo, produced
by La Compagnie NGOTI in 2014.
The cloth on the altar is one of the sheets
used in *Il avait plu sur la Rose*.
Photograph Hermine Yollo/Compagnie Ngoti.

The Slow Integration of Sustainability

Like Yollo's Compagnie Ngoti (based in Yaoundé), Ideal Theatre Troupe (ITT), based in the Anglophone city of Buea, is another Cameroonian troupe where sustainability is taken seriously. Joseph Ade Oru (Anglophone) is artistic director and co-founder of ITT while Melvis Ndifor (Anglophone) is founder and coordinator of ITT as well as set designer and actress. Ade Oru opines that they sometimes adjust their budgets to align with sustainability demands – e.g., they adjusted the production budget for a play entitled “Fointama.” According to him, they had to choose less expensive costumes, set design and props. Yet his colleague Ndifor thinks otherwise. Despite this point of divergence, both of them affirm that they are aware of and consider sustainability in their theatre practices just like Yollo. Both Ade Oru and Ndifor consider theatre as a tool for both entertainment and education, including environmental and sustainability education. For example, Ade Oru admits to writing to educate people on environmental problems: “Most times, we find people doing things without knowing the consequences of such actions. Thus, it's our place as writers to educate them. Secondly, when producing a play, we take this into consideration. We know [that] people learn easily from what they see, thus we take this into account to produce plays which will not encourage the abuse of our environment.” On her part, Ndifor states that they consider sustainability when planning their activities: “For us, it's a yes. This is so because we at ITT Buea use every theatre production to pass across a message and intend [to] change mind-sets which could impact the basic pillars of sustainability: the environment, culture and the economy.” And she adds that they often consider “exploring areas on environmental protection which have not been touched by playwrights or directors like poaching.” In this way, we consider that their theatrical and performance activities align with education for sustainable development (ESD).

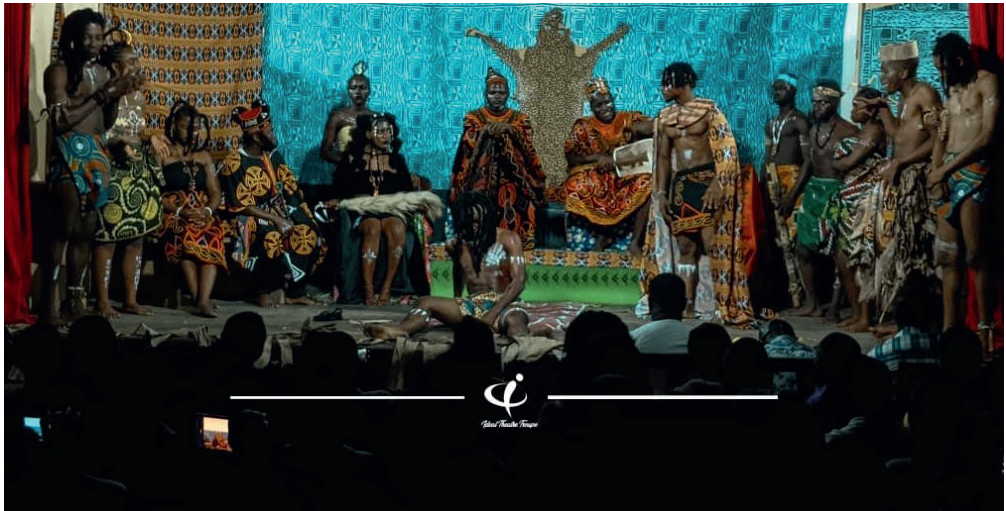


Photograph: Joseph Ade Oru/Ideal Theatre Troupe..

Unsurprisingly, both Ade Oru and Ndifor have been exposed to and participated in the staging of popular Anglophone Cameroonian environmental plays such as Frederick Ayang's *Green Hills* (2012) and Bole Butake's *And Palm Wine Will Flow* (1990). Against this backdrop, it becomes easy

to understand their commitment to sustainability, especially environmental sustainability, which is demonstrated through their choices of themes, props, costumes and makeup. Among others, they engage with themes such as gender-based violence, drug abuse, and environmental issues. Some of the strategies they adopt at ITT in order to ensure sustainability through theatre include: limiting the use of costumes and props which are destructive to the environment (e.g., using nonverbal communication and symbols for things like trees, drawing or painting plants and animals on posters and backdrops, using fabrics instead of leaves or backs of trees and animals, using new media to enact plants and animals on stage, using cartons instead of wood, etc.); constructing and designing stages without destroying the platforms as far as possible; being cautious not to destroy the stage when using props such as machetes; and so forth. Ade Oru and Ndifor also generously provided photos and links to YouTube excerpts of some of their plays, which demonstrate their attention to matters of sustainability in their work. Photos 3 and 4 from Ade Oru bear testimony to most of their sustainability strategies as sketched out above. The first photo (see below) comes from a play called “Sanctuary” (written by Ade Oru and directed by Fox Camille) and shows, among other things, the use of dry leaves to represent plants and greenery on stage.

In the same vein, the second photo (see below) demonstrates, among other things, the use of an animal skin on the wall not only as a stage prop but also as a symbol and in replacement of live animals. There is also the predominant use of fabrics in this photo. And the sustainable practices embodied by these photos corroborate Ade Oru’s words on sustainability: “We avoid the usage of costumes which are a threat to the environment. For instance, in realisation of a traditional play where costumes have to be made from leaves or back of trees, we do our best to substitute such costuming and go in for more environment friendly costumes like fabrics.”



Photograph: Joseph Ade Oru/Ideal Theatre Troupe..

Ndifor and Ade Oru provided the links to two excerpts of YouTube which also attest to the serious integration of sustainability in the theatre practices of their troupe. In this video excerpt

of a play called “The Crossroads” there are writings and paintings on the backdrop.² In this other excerpt of a play called “Mr License,” written by Joseph Ade Oru, a local hunter is brutalised for hunting in a sacred forest and killing animals outside the categories he is allowed to kill according to his permit.³ In both excerpts, props are represented by symbols, drawings, and paintings, in order to avoid environmental destruction and ensure sustainability. Thematically, the play in the latter video excerpt also promotes environmental protection and animal rights, thus encouraging ecological sustainability. In a nutshell, all the above point to the slow but promising integration of sustainability into theatre and performance practices in Cameroon.

Some Recommendations and Suggestions: Towards a Conclusion

In view of what precedes, we will wrap up by discussing some recommendations aimed at ensuring more integration of sustainability into Cameroonian theatre as well as some suggestions for further research. Almost all our respondents either explicitly or implicitly admit that art and theatre are essential instruments for education and societal transformation. In this regard, we join most of our respondents in recommending collaboration and networking among Cameroonian theatre practitioners, across linguistic and geographical borders, in order to effectively integrate sustainability into their practices, especially through aspects such as themes, budgeting, props, costumes, makeup, etc. We believe that Cameroonian theatre has a crucial role to play in achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and other efforts aimed at halting climate change, environmental breakdown and biodiversity loss in Cameroon and in the world. In the same vein, we recommend the organisation of conferences or virtual (online) events during which Cameroonian theatre professionals can brainstorm on ways to make their work more sustainable for the planet Earth and all its inhabitants, both human and nonhuman. As co-author Malung puts it, “the environment has been gravely destroyed by us human beings and so any sort of measures should be considered in preventing further earth destruction. Art, they say, is the perfect vector to stir up change.” And, of course, Cameroonian theatre is part of art.

Once more, we acknowledge that our survey sample was too small due to limited time and other constraints. For this reason, our observation that the integration of sustainability into Cameroonian theatre is slow should not be taken as a conclusion. Instead, it is our hope that this essay will provoke more robust research and discussion in this direction. Whether slow or not, there is evidence that some Cameroonian theatre practitioners are beginning to embrace sustainability in their work. That said, extensive empirical studies are required to test our observation and the list of theatre troupes appended to this essay could be a good starting point. Finally, we hope that this essay will not only ignite further research on sustainability on the Cameroonian theatre landscape but will also stimulate more Cameroonian theatre professionals to integrate the sustainable management of the commons (natural resources) into their activities as much as possible. As Ndifor opines, “We believe theatre has a lot to contribute to the development of Cameroon and the attainment of sustainable development goals, when theatre groups become cooperative through the organisation of workshops, festivals, and outreach programmes which will bring in sponsors to the theatre industry in Cameroon.” Accordingly, our ultimate hope is for this essay to contribute its own quota to this sustainability agenda on the Cameroonian theatre landscape.

2) See video excerpt here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIuqcYYKxWI&t=125s>).

3) See video excerpt here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGBIptxUL7Y&t=168s>).

Kenneth T. Nsah (whose pen name is **Nsah Mala**) is a playwright, actor, poet, writer, children's author, language teacher, translator, communicator-journalist, and literary scholar who writes and publishes mainly in English and French. His research interests include post-colonial ecocriticism, postcolonial studies, decolonial and indigenous studies, sustainability studies, conservation and environmental humanities, medical humanities, Anglophone and Francophone African literatures, migration studies, theatre and drama studies, the climate-environment-migration nexus, Congo Basin, climate-environmental communication, youth climate activism, oral literatures, and creative writing. Nsah holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from Aarhus University (Denmark).

Lisette N. Malung is a writer, actress, director and producer for theatre and cinema. Lisette is also co-founder and president of the Visionary Theatre Troupe-VTT. She has written ten plays and five short stories, and her films and plays have been screened or performed in Cameroon and Egypt. She has won prizes from the Cameroonian Ministry of Arts and Culture, Goethe-Institut Kamerun, and Red Feather Awards. Lisette has collaborated with UNICEF and an Indian-based Power Transmission Line company called KALPATARU. She currently works as a tour guide at the National Museum of Cameroon in Yaoundé. Lisette holds a Master degree in Performing Arts and Cinematography from the University of Yaoundé 1 (Cameroon) where she is currently a PhD student in the same field.

Noella M. Ngunyam is a theatre actress, scriptwriter, filmmaker, spoken-word artist, communications professional and podcaster. She performs with the Cameroon National Theatre and also works as Communications Assistant at the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), one of the oldest conservation NGOs in Africa, where she contributes to building brand awareness and thought leadership goals through media engagement and also ensures organisational visibility. Noella holds a BA degree in Performing Arts and Cinematography from the University of Yaoundé 1, and has performed in numerous plays in Cameroon. Noella's interests lie mostly in women and girls' empowerment and the role of film as a medium for sustainable development in Africa.

Bibliography

- Ayang, F. E., 2012. *Green Hills: A Play on Environmental Protection*. Awah Publishers.
- Betoko, A. M.-T., 2010. Le théâtre populaire francophone au Cameroun: (1970 - 2003) - Langage – Société - Imaginaire. L'Harmattan.
- Butake, B., 1988. "Play Production in Cameroon." In B. Butake and G. Doho (eds.), *Théâtre camerounais, Cameroon theatre: Actes du Colloque de Yaoundé*, pp. 236–246. BET.
- Byam, L. D., 1999. *Community in Motion: Theatre for Development in Africa*. Bergin and Garvey.
- Diakhaté, O. and Eyoh, H. D., 2017. "The Roots of African Theatre Ritual and Orality in the Pre-

The Slow Integration of Sustainability

- Colonial Period." *Critical Stages: The LATC Journal* – June 2017, No. 15, (<https://www.critical-stages.org/15/tag/by-ousmane-diakhate-and-hansel-ndumbe-eyoh/>) (accessed 28 June 2022).
- Doho, G., 2006 [2002]. *People Theater and Grassroots Empowerment in Cameroon* (trans. Marie Lathers). Africa World Press.
- Funfe, A. G., 2011. "Theatre: Panacea for HIV/AIDS Education in Cameroon?" MPhil Dissertation.
- Harrow, K. W., 1982. "Cameroonian Theater: The Dialectic of Modern and Traditional." *The French Review*, 55(6), pp. 846–854, (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/390651>) (accessed 28 June 2022).
- Howlround Theatre Commons, 2020. "Segal Talks: Edouard Elvis Bvouma and Hermine Yollo, An Update on the Situation for Theatre Artists in Cameroon." 15 May 2020, (<https://howlround.com/happenings/segal-talks-edouard-elvis-bvouma-and-hermine-yollo>) (accessed June 28 2022).
- Inyang, E., 2016. "Community Theatre as Instrument for Community Sensitisation and Mobilisation." *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 53(1), pp. 49-159.
- Inyang, E., 2015. "Theatre for the Sensitisation and Mobilisation of Local Communities for Conservation: Lessons from the Bayang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary in Southwest Cameroon." In: N. Alembong, O. C. Labang and E. F. Fombebe (eds.), *Ecocultural Perspectives: Literature and Language* (pp. 293-310). Ken Scholars Publishing.
- Kamlongera, C., 2005. "Theatre for Development in Africa." In: O. Hemer and T. Tufte (eds.), *Media and Global Change: Rethinking Communication for Development* (pp. 435-452). Nordicom and Clacso.
- Kom, A., 1998. "Théâtre et censure au Cameroun." *Matatu*, 26 April 1998, (https://brill.com/view/journals/mata/20/1/article-p169_12.xml?ebody=previewpdf-49929) (accessed 30 June 2022).
- Kouma, C. M., 1974. "Interview de Mme Charlotte Mbarga Kouma." *Les interviews d'Amina*, September 1974 (AMINA Mbarga Kouma (uwa.edu.au)) (accessed 30 June 2022).
- Lamko, K., 2003. "Émergence difficile d'une théâtre de la participation en Afrique noire francophone." PhD dissertation.
- Ngomssi, R. P. N., 2013. "Théâtre et cinéma pour le développement au Cameroun: production, promotion et diffusion." Master dissertation.
- Ngwang, E. and Usongo, K., 2016. *Art and Political Thought in Bole Butake*. Lexington Books.
- Nsah, K. T., 2021a. "The Ecopolitics of Water Pollution and Disorderly Urbanization in Congo-Basin Plays." *Orbis Litterarum* (pre-issue), 6 September 2021, (<https://doi.org/10.1111/oli.12323>) (accessed 28 June 2022).
- Nsah, K. T., 2021b. "Can Literature Save the Congo Basin? Postcolonial Eccocriticism and Environmental Literary Activism." PhD dissertation.
- Nsah, K. T., 2018. "'No Forest, No Water. No Forest, No Animals.': An Ecocritical Reading of Ekpe Inyang's *The Hill Barbers*." *Ecozon@* 9(1), pp. 94-110, (<https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2018.9.1.1581>) (accessed 29 June 2022).
- Omotorhe, O. C., n.d.. "Understanding Traditional African Drama and Theatre." *Motivation.Africa*, (<https://www.motivation.africa/understanding-traditional-african-drama-and-theatre.html>) (accessed 30 June 2022).

Thomsen, C., 2013. "Sustainability (World Commission on Environment and Development Definition)." In S.O. Idowu, N. Capaldi, L. Zu, A.D. Gupta, (eds) *Encyclopedia of Corporate Social Responsibility*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8_531.

Appendix: List 26 Other Active Theatre Troupes in Cameroon

1. Zouria Théâtre (Garoua & Yaounde);
2. Compagnie Rouge (Yaounde);
3. Compagnie TRANSIT;
4. Sassayée Théâtre (Douala);
5. Compagnie BENA ZINGUI (Yaounde);
6. Compagnie FEUGHAM (Bafoussam);
7. Compagnie He'Mel (Yaoundé);
8. Compagnie Crâne d'œuf (Douala);
9. Compagnie Annoora (Maroua);
10. Les Menestrels (Yaoundé);
11. La Compagnie Albatros (Garoua);
12. La Compagnie Brin de Soleil (Yaoundé);
13. Théâtre en Folie (Yaoundé);
14. Rainbow Theatre (Yaounde);
15. Theatre and Cinema for Social Change (Yaounde);
16. National Travelling Theatre – NATT (Yaounde);
17. Noble Arts Entertainment (Bamenda);
18. Théâtre sous le Manguier (Yaounde);
19. Yaounde 1 University Theatre (Yaoundé);
20. Kozart (Douala);
21. Mulango Drama Group (Kumba);
22. Musinga Drama Group (Buea);
23. God-given Idiots (Bamenda & Yaounde);
24. University of Bamenda Theatre Troupe (Bambili);
25. University of Yaoundé I Theatre Troupe (Yaoundé);
26. Compagnie OTHNI (Yaoundé).