

# THEATRE AND THE MARKET IN UGANDA

MERCY MIREMBE NTANGAARE

BA A(HONS.) MUK; MA (LITERATURE) MUK

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN  
THEATRE PLANNING AND MARKETING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF  
MUSIC DANCE AND DRAMA OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

AUGUST 2001

## Declaration

I, **MERCY MIREMBE NTANGAARE**, declare that this **study** is a result of my **own** effort and that it has not been submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) in another University.

SIGNED: mmntangaare .....

Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare

DATE: 31st August 2001 .....

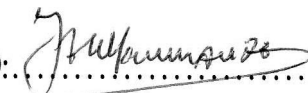
Makerere University, Kampala

## Approval/Certification

I certify that MRS. MERCY MIREMBE NTANGAARE, Registration Number 97/HD/1085, conducted this study entitled, "Theatre and the Market in Uganda", under my supervision.

I certify that this thesis is an original submission and the work of Mrs. Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare.

I, therefore, recommend Mrs. Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare's thesis for submission to the Director, School of Postgraduate Studies, Makerere University, in fulfillment of the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D) in Theatre Planning and Marketing of Makerere University.

SIGNED:  .....

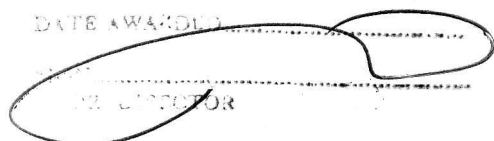
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Justinian Tamusuza

SUPERVISOR

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT  
THIS THESIS SUBMISSION  
WAS ACCEPTED BY SENATE  
FOR AWARD OF A HIGHER  
DEGREE OF MAKERERE  
UNIVERSITY

DEGREE AWARDED .....

DATE AWARDED .....

  
.....  
DIRECTOR

DATE: *31 August 2001* .....

Makerere University, Kampala

## Dedication

I dedicate this work to my dearest husband and friend, John Bosco Ntangaare, and to the theatre fraternity in Uganda

## Acknowledgements

Some people have marveled at how 'fast' this research has come. Indeed, compared to my MA research, this study has been done in record time. With a very supportive, loving, and selfless husband, my work has come out smoothly. I am greatly indebted to him.

Of course, neither John Bosco nor myself would have worked wonders were it not for the equally supportive, committed, and hardworking research assistants and contact people I had. To Mr. Godfrey Neema Katetsigwa, Mr. Joseph Mugasa Apuuli, Mr. Charles Mulekwa, Mr. Diplock Segawa Katumba, Ms. Harriet Kabajwahya, Mr. Joseph Kanyonyore, and Ms Sylvia Awori I say a resounding "thank you!" Mr Neema, thank you also for your material support.

I do not forget to thank my loving and tireless supervisors at Makerere University, particularly Assoc. Prof. Dr. Justinian Tamusuza, and Prof. Dr. Eckhard Breitingner of Universitat Bayreuth, who ensured I worked hard on my research. They never allowed me to distract myself with other engagements. In addition, Prof. Breitingner unreservedly supported my application for the DAAD Sandwich Scholarship that greatly helped the writing of this report. The efficient research system at the Universitat Bayreuth made the processes of data coding and analysis very manageable.

I thank Makerere University Research and Publications Grants Committee and the Faculty of Arts Research Grants Committee for the financial support extended to me.

I am also greatly indebted to my parents, sisters, and brothers on both sides who patiently stood by us during the period I was away on study in Germany. IRINA Kocher, "der Flüß Kocher, des Friedens, Katarina die Größe", of Mannheim, Germany, God Bless You richly for your constant love and friendship, and for making "old Man'heim a home away from home." Dagmar Menke and Stefanie Kolbusa in Bayreuth, Isolde Lange and Christine Preuss in Frankfurt, and all "that bunch of Africans at the Universität Bayreuth" I thank you for your pleasantries and company that made life in a foreign land more bearable.

To all and others, friends and well-wishers, I have not mentioned in person, God bless you!

# Table of Contents

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| Declaration   |      |
| Approval  |      |
| Dedication  |      |
| Acknowledgements  |      |
| Table of Contents   |      |
| List of Tables  |      |
| Abstract  | i    |
| <br><b>CHAPTER ONE: Introduction</b>                                  |      |
| 1.1. Background to the Study  | 1    |
| 1.2. Research Problem   | 4    |
| 1.3. Research Questions   | 4    |
| 1.4. Research Objectives  | 5    |
| 1.5. Scope of Study   | 6    |
| 1.5.1. Time Scope   | 6    |
| 1.5.2. Geographical Scope   | 7    |
| 1.6. Significance of the Study  | 7    |
| 1.7. Methodology  | 8    |
| 1.7.1. Research Design  | 8    |
| 1.7.2. Discussion of Sample Survey Methods                            | 11   |
| 1.7.3. Sampling Strategies  | 17   |
| 1.7.4. Data Collection  | 24   |
| 1.7.5. Research Procedures  | 24   |
| 1.7.6. Data Analysis  | 24   |
| 1.7.7. Ethical Considerations   | 26   |
| 1.7.8. Time Frame   | 27   |
| 1.8. Limitations of the Study   | 28   |
| 1.9. Definition of Terms  | 30   |
| <br><b>CHAPTER TWO: Review of Related Literature</b>                  |      |
| 2.1. Literature Review  | 33   |
| 2.1.1. The Classical Definition of Theatre                            | 33   |
| 2.1.2. The Contemporary Perspectives of Theatre                       | 37   |
| 2.1.3. Universal Definitions of Culture                               | 42   |
| 2.1.4. Theatre and Culture: Married or Divorced?                      | 45   |
| 2.1.5. The Concept of Community Theatre vis a vis Development Theatre | 48   |
| 2.1.6. Theatre and Commodity Markets                                  | 50   |
| 2.1.7. Theatre and its Larger Market                                  | 53   |
| 2.1.8. Marketing or Selling Theatre?                                  | 55   |

|        |  |    |
|--------|--|----|
| 2.2.   | Critical Theories and Theoretical Framework        | 60 |
| 2.2.1. | The Formalistic Approach                           | 60 |
| 2.2.2. | The Sociological Approach                          | 63 |
| 2.2.4. | The Political Economy Theory (Historical Approach) | 64 |
| 2.3.   | The Conceptual Framework                           | 67 |

### **CHAPTER THREE: The Market Forces in Uganda's Theatre**

|        |  |     |
|--------|--|-----|
| 3.1.   | Colonial Policy and Socio-Cultural Influences                        | 73  |
| 3.1.1. | The National Theatre: Politics of Establishment and Administration   | 76  |
| 3.1.2. | The Criminal Ordinance Act of 1912                                   | 88  |
| 3.1.3. | The Social Welfare Department  | 92  |
| 3.2.   | Formal Education and Literary (Art Theatre)                          | 94  |
| 3.2.1. | Makerere University College and the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre | 94  |
| 3.2.2. | MDD's Establishment and Role   | 101 |
| 3.2.3. | Landmark Theatre Ideals and Companies                                | 103 |
| 3.3.   | Post-Independence Politics   | 116 |
| 3.3.1. | Repression and Dictatorships   | 117 |
| 3.3.2. | Liberation and Democracy   | 122 |
| 3.4.   | Economic Policies and Social Reforms                                 | 130 |
| 3.4.1. | The 1972 Economic War in Uganda                                      | 130 |
| 3.4.2. | Structural adjustment Programmes (SAPs)                              | 135 |
| 3.4.3. | The Era of Aid Agencies and Development NGOs                         | 138 |

### **CHAPTER FOUR: Uganda's Theatre Industry: The Constituents**

|        |   |     |
|--------|---|-----|
| 4.1.   | Community Theatre: The Case for Traditional Performance Arts                | 143 |
| 4.1.1. | Transmission of Cultural, Social, and Moral Values                          | 144 |
| 4.1.2. | Provision of Education  | 147 |
| 4.1.3. | A Viable Means of Communication   | 150 |
| 4.1.4. | A Mobilisation Tool for Communities   | 151 |
| 4.1.5. | Documentation of Historical and Social facts                                | 153 |
| 4.1.6. | Effecting Therapy and Release of Psychological Tension                      | 153 |
| 4.1.7. | Validation of Social Institutions, Religious Rituals, and Family Structures | 157 |
| 4.1.8. | Provision of Entertainment and Socialisation Opportunities                  | 160 |
| 4.2.   | Development Theatre   | 163 |
| 4.2.1. | The Theatre for Development Model   | 165 |
| 4.2.2. | The Music for Development Model   | 173 |
| 4.3.   | The Uganda National Cultural Centre (UNCC)                                  | 179 |
| 4.3.1. | Prominent National/Cultural Festivals                                       | 180 |
| 4.3.2. | The Uganda National Theatre   | 184 |
| 4.3.3. | The Commission for Culture  | 191 |
| 4.4.   | Commercial Theatre  | 193 |

|         |   |     |
|---------|---|-----|
|         | CHAPTER FIVE: The Economics of Theatre in Uganda                            | 195 |
| 5.1.    | Creation of Stars and Stardoms  | 198 |
| 5.2.    | Extensive Use of the Spectacular  | 202 |
| 5.3.    | Playing Loyal to Audience Demands and Expectations                          | 206 |
| 5.3.1.  | Disan Mubiru and His Goat   | 207 |
| 5.3.2.  | The Dramatic Music of Pius Bakeebwa   | 210 |
| 5.4.    | Introduction of Theatre Brands and Packages                                 | 214 |
| 5.4.1.  | Invocation of Traditional femininity  | 217 |
| 5.4.2.  | Women Stereotypes   | 220 |
| 5.4.3.  | Women as Commodities and Symbols of Exchange                                | 225 |
| 5.4.4.  | The Modern and Truly Liberated Woman  | 229 |
| 5.5.    | Creating Around or Writing About Topical Issues                             | 231 |
| 5.6.    | Re-Staging Popular Shows  | 237 |
| 5.7.    | Public Launching of Plays, Complementary Ticket Offers, and Media Patronage | 240 |
| 5.8.    | Aggressive Publicity and Lurid Advertising                                  | 242 |
| 5.9.    | Price Cuts in Show Tickets  | 244 |
| 5.10.   | Diversification of Theatre's Products and Conventions                       | 246 |
| 5.10.1. | Collaboration with NGOs   | 246 |
| 5.10.2. | Shopping for Advertising Contracts  | 248 |
| 5.10.3. | Collaboration with the Tourism Industry                                     | 251 |
| 5.11.   | Blackmail and Espionage   | 258 |
| 5.12.   | Abuse and Exploitation of Amateur Talent                                    | 259 |
|         | CHAPTER SIX: Challenges and Opportunitites to Uganda's Theatre Industry     | 265 |
| 6.1.    | Local Attitudes to and Perceptions of Theatre                               | 265 |
| 6.2.    | Prevalent Myths in Uganda's Theatre   | 269 |
| 6.2.1.  | Theatre: The mythical Goldmine  | 270 |
| 6.2.2.  | Theatre is Mere Entertainment and Cultural activity                         | 273 |
| 6.2.3.  | Anything Theatre is Commercial  | 277 |
| 6.3.    | Position of Theatre on Government's Priorities List                         | 279 |
| 6.4.    | Structural Challenges and the General Market Environment                    | 286 |
| 6.5.    | Formal Training and Scholarship   | 308 |
| 6.6.    | Business Management and Entrepreneurship                                    | 312 |
| 6.6.1.  | Market Research and Information Management                                  | 312 |
| 6.6.2.  | Market Identification, Definition, and Retention                            | 314 |
| 6.6.3.  | Managing Competition in Theatre   | 317 |
| 6.7.    | Economic Liberalisation   | 318 |
| 6.8.    | Finance and Patronage   | 320 |
| 6.8.1.  | Diplomatic Missions, NGOs, and Theatre                                      | 320 |
| 6.8.2.  | Conventional Fundraising in Theatre   | 321 |
| 6.9.    | General Organisation of the Theatre Business                                | 324 |
| 6.9.1.  | Membership to and Sizes of Theatre Groups                                   | 324 |
| 6.9.2.  | The Structure of Theatre Performances                                       | 325 |



|        |  |     |
|--------|--|-----|
| 6.9.3. | Play Promotions and Advertising                            | 326 |
| 6.9.4. | The e-Commerce Challenge and Opportunity                   | 327 |
|        | <b>CHAPTER SEVEN: General Conclusion: Tying the Knots</b>  | 332 |
| 7.1.   | Nature and Types of Theatre in Uganda                      | 332 |
| 7.1.1. | Commercial Theatre   | 332 |
| 7.1.2. | Traditional/Community Theatre                              | 333 |
| 7.1.3. | Development Theatre  | 334 |
| 7.1.4. | Education Theatre  | 334 |
| 7.1.5. | Literary ( <b>Art</b> ) Theatre                            | 335 |
| 7.2.   | Theatre's Responsiveness to Market Forces                  | 336 |
| 7.2.1. | Theatre and Socio-Cultural Transformation                  | 336 |
| 7.2.2. | Theatre and Globalisation                                  | 337 |
| 7.2.3. | The Economic Value of Theatre                              | 338 |
| 7.2.4. | Theatre and Politics                                       | 340 |
| 7.3.   | The Theatre's Finance and Patronage                        | 343 |
|        | Bibliography   | 345 |
|        | Appendix I: List of Informants                             | 355 |
|        | Appendix II: List of respondents to Letters of Inquiry     | 356 |
|        | Appendix III: Samples of Questionnaires used in the Survey | 357 |

## List of Tables

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution among Respondents | 19 |
| Table 2: Geographical Distribution of Respondents     | 19 |
| Table 3: Activity Implementation Schedule             | 27 |

## Abstract

Most times, theatre is understood to mean the performance of plays or drama before a paying audience. The present study conceives theatre not only as drama or plays, for or not for commercial purposes, but also as a profession and a career. Theatre is an industry, and like all industries it undertakes the production, distribution, and or marketing processes. Theatre is made by people for people in order to meet their special needs, wants, and demands. This exchange of ideas and pleasure of necessity brings in issues of commerce and payment. That is how and when theatre begins to relate to the market, and its inherent forces of demand and supply.

In practice, theatre must meet the general expectations of its consumers, leaving the specifics to be met by the theatre's different forms and presentations. Whether the theatre is commercial, educational, mobilisational, or therapeutic its basic aim remains one: to meet the needs and expectations of its audiences. In most cases, theatre audiences constitute the industry's primary market, and, consequently, dictate the nature and design of theatre products. Ideally, these processes, as is the case in other industries providing goods and services on the open market, are supposed to be preceded by market research and definition. Inevitably, therefore, theatre is conditioned by characteristics, beliefs, and aspirations of audiences as well as the general environment under which its potential consumers live and the industry operates. Cultural, national, and global issues all come to bear significantly on theatre as an art, a profession, and a social experience. Thus the researcher's main aim in this study is to establish how the market demands of society affect theatre's supply in terms of its manufacture (Organisation and management), form and substance (as a product and service), and its consumption (or distribution and marketing).

Chapter One sets the objectives and introduces the main arguments of the study, giving a full concept of theories and facts at the centre of the research. The chapter also offers conventional and contextual definitions of key words and terms used in the research, and highlights the methodology used to gather, code, and analyse the data for the research report. At the end of the chapter is given an overview of the strengths and limitations of the core methods used to gather and analyse data as well as the general constraints to the research process.

Chapter Two contains the literature reviewed in relation to the study. The chapter also discusses the critical theories employed on the research variables, and gives both the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study.

Chapter Three looks at the market forces and demands that have been operational in Uganda's theatre since the industry's formal recognition in Uganda in the early 1940s. The chapter plots the history of theatre development in Uganda with particular reference to the impact of colonial policy, literary traditions, post-independence politics,

and economic conditions on theatre's growth and development as an art, a profession, and a business enterprise.

The discussion in Chapter Four is premised on current progressive trends in theatre, which were born of historical circumstances highlighted in the third chapter. Four main constituents of theatre in Uganda have been identified. These are: traditional or community theatre, commercial theatre, education theatre, and development theatre. Festivals have been identified to rotate between traditional theatre and development theatre, depending on where the practitioners place emphasis. On the other hand, the goals and roles of theatre's institutions like the Uganda National Cultural Centre (UNCC), the Uganda Theatrical Groups and Artists Association (UTIGAA), the International Theatre Institute (ITI), etc. have been reviewed in light of specific factors under discussion.

Chapter Five discusses the nature and practice of theatre business in Uganda. Considering the general environment under which theatre survives as a business enterprise in Uganda, the theatre has been found to be mostly commercial in concept and nature. Therefore, the market dictates what to produce, how to produce it, and how to market and/or consume the theatre's products. Consequently, theatre hardly exists as social service, and there is little difference in the marketing of theatre and other consumer commodities on the market. In some instances, theatre practice in Uganda has been observed to abandon conventional methods in favour of market rivalry and blackmail.

Chapter Six highlights challenges and opportunities of doing theatre business in Uganda today. These conditions exist both within and outside the industry, and constitute issues of management and organisation, scholarship, finance, marketing and distribution. The nature and distribution of theatre's primary market-the audiences-are also discussed in relation to their individual or group characteristics. Each major section of the chapter ends with suggestions and or recommendations towards achieving consolidation of the theatre business.

Chapter Seven is the main conclusion to the study. As its title suggests, the chapter aims at knotting together the study's main threads of argument. The main issues raised in each chapter are resolved in relation to the topic of study. An exposition of the theatre's likely future trends in form, content, and business organisation is given as an anecdote to the study.