

# Betty Okotie and the Birth of Solo Play Production in Post-Colonial Nigeria

by

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He has also served as Social Secretary and Business Manager for the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists. His Monodrama (*The Prime Minister's Son*), was first performed in 1991 at the NYSC Secretariat Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria; after which he performed it nationwide, touring almost all the States between 1991 and 2000. Amidst several other academic awards, his eco-drama, *Wake Up Everyone* (2011), took the first prize at the Inter-Universities' Research and Development Competition organized by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 2012. In 2017, he received the Sustainability Award in recognition of his outstanding contributions in environmental education by UNN/Shell-CEMAC (Centre for Environmental Management and Control). Mbajiorgu was the Co-editor of *Songs of Gold, a Golden Jubilee Text marking 50 years of the works of JP Clark-Bekederemo* (1961-2011). He is also the editor of *Water Testaments: Anthology of Poems on Water and Water-related issues* (2008). He has also published numerous Journal articles and book chapters. His other creative works include: *Hands of Fate* (Drama: 2000), *Wota na Wota* (Drama: 2003), *Beyond the Golden Prize* (Drama: 2013), and *Dancers from Africa* (Drama: 2015). Mbajiorgu was also the Arts and Culture Consultant for British Council, Enugu (1998-2002) and Copy Editor, Independent National Electoral Commission's 2011 and 2015 General Elections Report. He has on a number of times served as a member of the Panel of Adjudicators, National Festival for Arts and Culture, and has received many other national awards. He has written commissioned plays for African Innovation Foundation, Switzerland; ATPS, Nairobi, Kenya; African Institute for Applied Economics, and Seat of Wisdom Secondary School, Enugu. His play on the electricity crisis in Nigeria (*Towards a New Dawn*) commissioned by the presidential task force on power was performed at the presidential banquet hall, Aso Rock Villa, Abuja, in 2010 for His Excellency Goodluck Jonathan, the former President of Nigeria. Mbajiorgu is the Founder/Project Director, Centre for Solo Theatre Research and Conservation, Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

## Abstract

This study attempts to trace the origin of the art of one actor performances on the modern Nigerian stage as Beckett's *Acts Without Words*, which is discussed along with Okotie's inability to consciously preserve and document her work. Hence, it is argued that the apparent obscurity and inconspicuousness of the gains of solo drama and solo acting in Nigeria is caused by an ignorance or perhaps an unavailability of library materials on the subject, and also by deliberate acts of subjugation rooted in neglect, disregard and a dislike of radical and revolutionary art movement by conventional artistes who constantly place a road block for any radical art movement that attempts to question the established status quo in between the theatrical order.

## Introduction

From numerically-based evaluatory study, the ratio of the involvement of women in the evolving art of one-actor drama in Nigeria is four women to sixteen men. A roll call of Nigerian actors and actresses, playwrights, directors and designers who have contributed significantly to the growth of this sub-genre of theatre include the following: Betty Okotie (director) 1966; Wale Ogunyemi (actor) 1966; Tunji Sotimirin (actor) 1987; Funsho Alabi (actor) 1988; Greg Mbajiorgu (actor-playwright) 1991; Tunde Awosanmi (director) 1995; Hafiz Oyetoro (actor) 1995; Bayo Alawiyi (actor) 2001, Dele Ogunsola (director) 2001; Femi Fatoba (actor) 2001; Inua Ellams (actor-poet) 2008; Benedict Binebai (playwright) 2012; Rudoph Kansese (director) 2012; Akpos Adesi (playwright) 2015; Eni Kenneth (technical director and designer) 2015; Kaka Benson (actor) 2015; Rachael Tuodonye (actress) 2015; Ndubuisi Nwokedi (actor) 2016; Watari Sarah Jonah (actress) (2016) and Blessing Diepreye (actress) 2016.

Out of the twenty names listed above, only four are female – Betty Okotie, the veteran director – who in 1966 at the University College, Ibadan, sowed the seed that germinated and blossomed into a theatrical flower that we are all proud to celebrate its Golden Jubilee today; Miss Rachael Tuodonye – a 2015 graduate of Theatre Arts from the Niger Delta University, Wilberforce, Island, who happens to be the first Nigerian actress to star in a one-woman show (*Karina's Cross*) that is currently touring selected cities in Bayelsa State Nigeria; Blessing Diepreye, who has also acted *Karina's Cross*, and Watari Sarah Jonah, who premiered Akpos Adesi's one-woman play, *Whose Daughter Am I?*

The rarity or exiguity of a female soloist in a theatrical style that was launched on the nation's Arts Theatre by a woman is ironical and inexplicable. Again, the fact that it took forty nine years for another woman to emerge as a solo actress is frankly inappreciable and unimpressive. It is on this background that this study seeks to examine the factors that have undermined the pioneer effort of this woman who undisputedly laid the foundation for the growth of solo drama performance on the Nigerian Theatre scene.

Before x-raying these factors, we will start by discussing the difficulty posed by solo mimes. After that, we will attempt to trace the origin of solo drama in post-colonial Nigeria. In addition, we will briefly re-examine critical reviews centering on the French solo mime that made its debut on the Nigerian stage in 1966.

## **Solo Mime as an Uncommon Art Form**

Mime plays are difficult to write and hard to come by, and many play directors run away from directing such plays because of the difficulties and challenges that go with realizing such productions. Since the 1957 world premiere of *Acts Without Words* which was directed by Samuel Beckett himself, the only other production of this play that I have read of is Betty Okotie's 1966 production at the University College, Ibadan. One is of the view that play directors run away from this play because of its complexity and its non-verbal features. It is one of Beckett's works renowned for its very scanty production records. Even after the play was adapted into a film script and directed and produced by Karel Reisz for the 2001 Beckett on Film project, this mime play is yet to become popular among contemporary play directors.

It is pertinent to mention here that Betty Okotie is not the only Nigerian theatre artistes who has gained high acclaim for her successful production of solo mime on the Nigerian stage. Femi Fatoba, a veteran Nigerian actor and theatre scholar has also, on the present researcher's request, performed his thirty minutes improvisatory solo mime, *Chasing the Butterfly*, the British Council's Great Talents Forum, Enugu, in 2001. This hilarious mime which centered around an old man's frantic and rigorous effort to catch and imprison an imaginary beautiful butterfly kept the British Council audience at Enugu bursting out with endless laughter. After a tedious and tactful struggle, the old man traps the butterfly in his hands, but just as he tries to throw it into an imaginary encasement, the butterfly escapes and the endless struggle is started all over again.

However, one wonders why it took 35 years after Okotie's staging of Beckett's solo mime for Femi Fatoba to embark on another fascinating mime project. The fact that Femi Fatoba's improvisatory mime was performed in 2001, thirty-five years after the first and only major mime play was formerly staged on the Nigerian stage, is a re-affirmation of the fact that it is hard to produce mime as a full-blown solo production.

## **Factors that Undermined Okotie's Legacy**

Among artistes, it is commonly believed that it is the business of the craftsman to create, and the business of the critics and scholars to criticize, analyze, document or chronicle the impact of works of the creative artistes. In line with this school of thought, Konstantin Stanislavski once stated that "there is nothing more tedious than an actor's biography and that actors should be banned from talking about themselves." (Wikipedia: 2017)

On this very issue, the researcher begs to differ from Stanislavski's point of view. It is because the practical works of actors and directors are not carefully preserved and documented that the written works of their colleagues such as playwrights or composers have remained our only handle for studying past activities of liberal artistes. Because Directors, Actors and Dancers find it so hard to give a detailed account of their stewardship, we tend to take for granted the serious roles they play as professional artistes. Contrary to his earlier view that actors should be banned from talking about themselves, much of what we know about Stanislavski today are the things he wrote about himself and about his art. In this sub-section of our study, we will use Betty Okotie to illustrate how Nigerian Directors fail to keep record of the great works of art they produce.

### **Okotie as Poor Diarist or Chronicler of Her Artistic Projects**

As part of the data collection for this study, we explored not only library resources but all available options on the internet such as Google search engine, Google Scholar, Wikipedia, etc., but we were unable to find relevant data on the arts of Betty Okotie or Betty Edewor. The miscellaneous information obtainable from the internet about her were reports on her role as the National Vice President/State Coordinator of the Niger Delta Women's Forum and a few social media gossips about her marital life or her stakeholder role in community development activities, particularly her involvement in the Niger Delta Government take and rehabilitation of her community hospital at Eku, Delta state in 2009.

As prominent as she was on stage and in the broadcasting media, we were astonished to observe that even when she passed-on on the 5th of December, 2009, her historic and eventful life on earth, particularly her life as a theatre artiste, failed to attract eulogy and tributes on the social media and from the arts community. It is painful to note that if one Googles "*Tributes to Betty Okotie or Mrs Betty Edewor*", one will find nothing. Not even a single paragraph of encomium was found. The only reference material available that can boast of preserving a historical record of Betty Okotie's contributions to the development of the global theatre industry is in Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe's *Who's Who in Contemporary World Theatre*. In this famous text, Okotie's outstanding accomplishments as a leading Nigerian actress and director in the 1960s is documented or profiled as follows:

Nigerian Betty Okotie (now Mrs. Edewor) was one of the original members of the Orisun Theatre Company founded by Wole Soyinka and Bola Ige. She has featured significantly and very memorably in many of Soyinka's plays. Her major roles include the fine performance as Sidi in Soyinka's 1964 production of *The Lion and Jewel*; she was Wife in Childe Internationale ... she played Segi in the 1965 production of *Kongi's Harvest* with Dapo Adelugba as Daodu; and she played the Chatterbox Amope in a 1966 production of *The Trials of Brother Jero* with Wale Ogunyemi as Chume. She has since directed or choreographed other productions including Samuel Beckett's *Acts Without Words* (1967) in which Ogunyemi and other Orisun players took part (227)

Although we celebrate Meyer-Dinkgrafe as the author of this unique archival source book on world significant theatre artistes that critics and historians have largely ignored, I cannot also fail to point out a few errors on his entry on Betty Okotie. The first is on the actual year Okotie produced Beckett's *Acts Without Words*. The date on Okotie's production play-bill is November 24th and 25th, 1966; erroneously, what we find in Meyer-Dinkgrafe's *Who's Who In Contemporary World Theatre* is 1967. The error must have been caused by his research assistant or consultants who served as his principal informants. This is clear because he is not a Nigerian and was not in Nigeria at the time of that production thus, his source of data must have been a secondary source. Another error is his omission of the cast and crew of Okotie's production. One thought also that Meyer-Dinkgrafe should have mentioned that Beckett's *Acts Without Words*, which Okotie directed, was a solo mime that starred Wale Ogunyemi as the first Nigerian actor to do a one-man show on the modern Nigerian stage and that the other Orisun players who took part in the production, such as Jimi Solanke and Tunji Oyelana, and the rest were more or less back stage artistes or crew members.

However, despite the shortcomings in Meyer-Dinkgrafe's entry on Okotie, the book is the only major source material available on Okotie's historic life as a formidable theatre artiste.

### **Exclusion of the 1966 Production in Ogunyemi's Professional Profile**

Another major gap in theatre history is the downplaying of Wale Ogunyemi's profile as the actor that Betty Okotie chose for her 1966 production. One had expected that Ogunyemi's website will contain information on this aspect of his professional career, Sadly, this is grossly omitted.

Structurally, Ogunyemi's professional profile is neatly laid out in five distinct sub-sections. Sub-section One is Introduction; sub-section Two focuses on Wale Ogunyemi as an Actor; sub-section Three concentrates on Ogunyemi as a Playwright; and sub-section four features his Major Works as a Director while sub-section five re-examines Ogunyemi's Envious Accomplishments as a Family Man.

We will review sub-section two of Ogunyemi's professional profile in detail to show how he deliberately or erroneously omitted one of his most historic accomplishments that marked him and Okotie out as exemplary among the few innovative live theatre artistes on the modern Nigerian stage. This production which celebrates a historic moment in the development of a radical approach to stage acting and directing in Nigeria was inauspiciously neglected, ignored and critically unorchestrated not only by theatre critics and scholars but also by Betty Okotie and Wale Ogunyemi, who failed to preserve and document all tangible materials or information related to that very production that highlights the climax of their original contribution to the growth of the art of acting and directing in Nigeria.

Reading through sub-section two of Ogunyemi's profile, one is amused observing that he spent two paragraphs recounting or chronicling his activities as a tender-footed infant in Standard One at Agurodo Elementary School where he played the part of a Chorus in his school's dramatization of the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Even the usual teenage theatre game they played as young boys was carefully recorded in his official profile as a veteran Nigerian actor as follows:

In Ibadan, he joined the gang called the "Cowboys" and on Easter Mondays, they would dress like Texan Cowboys and go to picnic and do all sort of things that would attract people. They danced and re-enacted scenes they saw in Cinemas... (wikipedia:2017)

Other crucial information contained in his acting profile includes:

1. The kind of life he was exposed to by his family;
2. His accidental recruitment into the Western Nigerian Television Theatre Company in 1959;
3. His collaboration with the Tayo Ayorinde Theatre Group;
4. His recruitment into Soyinka's 1960 Masks;
5. Ogunyemi as one of the leaders of the Nigerian Theatre Group;
6. Ogunyemi as a foundation member of Wole Soyinka's Orisun Theatre Company;
7. His involvement in international theatre festivals that took him to Dakar (1966), France (1967), and Algiers (1969).

In profiling his enviable career as an actor, Ogunyemi did not forget to chronicle all the extensive training workshops he participated in at the Eugene O'Neil Memorial Theatre in USA (1981). His key role at the International Arts Festival in Valhalla, New York (1982), and even his star outing as a member of the Nigerian showcase ensemble in Philadelphia, USA and his theatrical tours to Holland, London, Japan, Germany and Los Angeles, were all listed. The only period omitted in Ogunyemi's profile is the historic period when he dabbled in radical unconventional acting experiments in 1966. Under the directorship of Betty Okotie, Wale Ogunyemi starred as a solo actor in Samuel Beckett's *Acts Without Words* on the nights of 24th and 25th November, 1966 at the University College, Ibadan. Then Ogunyemi was a Diploma student in the School of Drama, University College, Ibadan.

In 2001, while conducting research on the Art of Solo performance, my curiosity to find out why Ogunyemi chose to perform this play at the time he did yielded the following response.

I did not choose to do *Acts Without Words*, I was asked to do it by Betty Okotie... however, realizing this play was not an easy task for me and my director, but I was happy to be able to convey the meaning of my acts to the audience. Again, one being alone on stage with so many people back stage facilitated my performance that relied on music and movements. (Ogunyemi:2001)

That Ogunyemi enjoyed his experience as Nigeria's pioneer soloist is interesting in a paradoxical sense, considering the fact that in the modern Nigerian theatre scene, solo drama or solo acting is neglected, disliked and disregarded not only by major playwrights and theatre directors but by leading actors as well. This explains why Ogunyemi, despite enjoyment of his 1960 star role in Samuel Beckett's solo mime, did not include it in his official professional profile.

Added to Ogunyemi's obvious disinclination to carry on as an itinerant soloist, Betty Okotie's only effort to preserve and document this historic production for posterity is the fragile note contained in her brief Director's remark, which is the only useful information in her little play bill. As "The Brief Director's remark: "Acts without words is an absurd theatre of gesture that shows the bewilderment of man in an irrational world" (Okotie, 1966). Another factor which affected the 1966 production was logistics. Betty Okotie was a student of the University College, Ibadan when she directed that play, and like most student productions, poor funding must have limited publicity as well as production profiling or packaging.

### **Brief Historical Background of The Play, *Acts Without Words***

Wikipedia, an on-line encyclopedia, provides for us a concise summary, background and thematic insight into Beckett's *Acts Without Words*. According to Wikipedia:

*Acts Without Words* is a short solo play by Samuel Beckett. It is a mime, like many of Beckett's works. The play was originally written in French (*Acte Sans Paroles I*) and later translated into English by Beckett himself. It was written in 1956 following a request from the dancer Deryk Mendel and first performed on 3rd April, 1957 at the Royal Court Theatre in London. The original background music was written by John S. Beckett (Wikipedia: 2016)

## A Brief Synopsis of *Acts Without Words*

Wikipedia also provided for us a brief synopsis of *Acts Without Words*. As gathered from the online source:

The action takes place in a desert illuminated by a dazzling light, the cast consists of just one man, who at the start of the play is flung backwards into the stage. After he lands, he hears a whistle from the right wing. He takes the sound for some kind of call, and after a bit of reflection, proceeds in that direction only to find himself hurled back again. Next the sound issues from the left. The scene is repeated from the reverse. There is clearly no exit. He sits at the ground and looks at his hands a number of objects are then lowered into this set beginning with a palm tree with a single bough...a caricature of the tree of life. Its arrival is announced, as is that of each object which follows, with the same sharp whistle. On being made aware of its existence, the man moves into its shade and continues looking at his hands. A pair of tailor's scissors descends from the skies but again the man doesn't notice them until he hears the whistles. He starts to trim his nails. Over the course of the play, other items are lowered from above: three cubes of varying sizes, a length of knotted rope and – always just out of reach – a tiny carafe, to which is attached a huge label inscribed WATER.

The rest of the sketch is a study in frustrated efforts. Armed with two natural tools, which separate him from lower orders of animals, he tries to survive, to secure some water in the desert. The mind works at least in a part: he learns – small cube on large; he invents, or is given invention – scissors, cubes, ropes. But when he learns to use his tools effectively, they are confiscated: the scissors, when he reasons that in addition to cutting finger nails, he might cut his throat; the block and rope, when he discovers that they might make gallows.

Eventually it looks as if he's given up and he sits on the big cube. After a while, this is pulled up from beneath him, and he is left on the ground. From this point on he refuses to play the game any further; even when the carafe of water is dangled in front of his face he does not make to grab it. The palms open, providing shades once more, but he doesn't move. He simply sits there in the dazzling light looking at his hands. (Wikipedia:2016)

Despite the fact that *Acts Without Words* is not one of the regularly produced works of Samuel Beckett, Wikipedia furnishes us with enough insight into this difficult mimodramatic text. Below is a brief interpretation of the text from Wikipedia:



The play on one level is a behaviourist experiment within a classical myth; that of Tantalus who stood in a pool of water which receded every time he bent to drink it, and stood under a fruit tree which raised its branches every time he reached for food. Tantalus was punished for stealing ambrosia and nectar. It is not certain that the man is being punished for a crime other than that of existing in the first place.

The play is a parable of resignation; a state one reaches after a series of disappointments. The man has learned “the hard way” that there is nothing he can rely on in life other than himself. ... the climactic ending of the mime may signify not a pathetic defeat, but a conscious rebellion, man’s deliberate refusal to obey ... ironically ...the protagonist is most active when inert, and his life acquires meaning at its end. (Wikipedia:2016)

## **Wole Soyinka’s Disciple as the First Director of a Solo Play in Post-Colonial Nigeria**

In 1963, the first school of drama in Africa was established at the University College, Ibadan, the premiere University in Nigeria, founded on November, 17th 1948. As observed by Charles Akinsete: “... the combination of Soyinka and the University of Ibadan has birthed untold products with significant outputs especially in relation to the field of literary studies and Theatre Arts.” (64) Betty Okotie is one of such outstanding products of that phenomenal interaction between Wole Soyinka and Ibadan. Her extensive tutelage under Soyinka helped to solidify her profile as one of the most impressive actress-directors of the mid-sixties. It therefore came to no one as a surprise when she was shortlisted amongst the 27 candidates admitted as pioneer students in Africa’s first School of Drama which opened at the University College, Ibadan in 1963 – precisely fifteen years after the University College was established.

Having earlier acquired professional theatre experience as an artiste of Orisun Theatre (a prestigious and estimable travelling theatre company founded by Soyinka and Bola Ige), no one was astonished when she emerged as one of the few university students selected as pioneer members of the School of Drama acting company which Soyinka founded in 1967 when he was appointed the Director of the School of Drama at the University College.

Okotie remained one of the most trusted disciples of Soyinka even at the most problematic and challenging periods. As gathered from Wordpress:

While Soyinka was barely one month in office, and while he was yet still drafting the objectives of the School's Acting Company, the Federal Security Agents arrested him during the long vacation of 1967 and clamped him into detention where he remained till October, 1969. While Soyinka was in custody, Dexter Lyndersay deputized for him as Acting Director of the School of Drama and Dapo Adelugba took over the guardianship of the acting company. In 1967, before his arrest, Soyinka had engaged Betty Okotie as a foundation member on the modality of organizing the troupe with a mandate that Mr. Adelugba is to organize the training scheme, assisted by Miss Sowunmi and Betty Okotie. (wordpress: 2013)

As earlier pointed out, Betty Okotie had acquired profound experience not only as an actress but also as a play director. In 1966, a year before Soyinka was appointed Director of the School of Drama, Okotie had already gained substantial limelight as play director. It was in the same year that she started rehearsing and preparing one of her multi-talented colleagues, Wale Ogunyemi, for her planned production of Samuel Beckett's play, *Acts Without Words*. On the 24th and 25th of November, 1966, Okotie staged Samuel Beckett's solo play, which she directed and produced. It starred Wale Ogunyemi as the pioneer soloist on the modern Nigerian theatre scene.

### ***Acts Without Words: A Drama of Gestures, Movements and Silence***

*Acts Without Words* is an intriguing stylistic solo mime. This well-structured drama written as sequences of the playwright's detailed outline of dramatic actions and stage directions for non-verbal single character performance is Samuel Beckett's first published solo mime. In the experimental text, what we find is neither the usual drama of dialogue nor the usual explanatory street-life gestural theatre that characterize most pantomimic productions. In *Acts Without Words*, the story unfolds mainly through a single character's explorative use of back stage support, music, songs, and background technical effects.

In order to effectively realize this unusual drama on stage, Okotie's super objective as the play director was nothing else but exploring the depth of gestural and postural expressions. Through these means, she was able to heighten the aesthetic and expressive beauty of gestural and kinesthetic abstractions by exploring all possible techniques of theatrical minimalism. As Patrice Parvis observes, mime as gestural poetry extends its means of expression by expanding the depth of "gestural connotations that each spectator can interpret freely" (212).

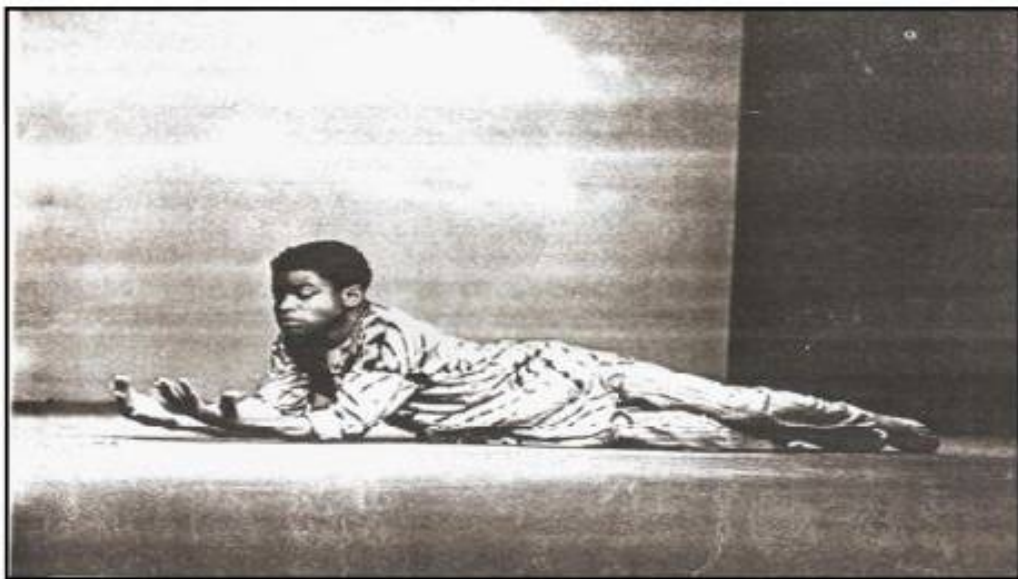
Samuel Beckett's *Acts Without Words* like most mime plays weaves a story around series of loose gestural episodes that are structurally linked. In this play, the gestural episodes do not imitate familiar situations or circumstances borrowed from our everyday activities. Beckett's objectives in this experiment is not to show a series of happenings that the spectators will naturally recognize as events in their day to day lives. Rather, his aim is to offer the audience or spectators an artistically well-conceived, gesture-driven dramatic piece that only the truly experienced and audacious creative directors like Betty Okotie can visualize and interpret excellently on stage.

Beckett's mime, though dramatic in structure, is extremely non-verbal, the kind of non-verbal blueprint that outlines the basic features of the unfolding story or narrative despite the fact that it conveys nothing of the spirit of the intricate actions the audience experienced during Betty Okotie's production of it. According to Dapo Adelugba,

Beckett's mimodrama came alive as a result of the creative effort of Miss Betty Okotie, the play director. Through Okotie's creative interpretation of the fragile script, the complexities, nuances and colours of Beckett's narratives became clearer and interesting to her audience. This she accomplished with the aid of a skillful and an ingenious actor Wale Ogunyemi and her replicable technical crew that heightened the beauty of the production with functional and colourful lights, scenery, costumes, makeup, props, music and well-choreographed sound cues and sound effects. (Personal interview, 2001)



Femi Fatoba on stage with his solo mime 'Chasing the Butterfly'  
British Council, Enugu, 2001



Wale Ogunyemi on stage, performing Samuel Beckett's *Acts Without Words I* at the Arts Theatre,  
University College Ibadan, 1966

## Conclusion

In this study, we have attempted to trace the origin of the art of one actor performances on the modern Nigerian stage. A major production discussed in this paper is Beckett's *Acts without Word*, which remains the very first one-man show staged in Nigeria's arts theatre since the dawn of post-colonialism. This study has also shown that Okotie's inability to consciously preserve and document her work is the main reason why her contributions are undermined, forgotten, or omitted in our theatre history books.

We have equally shown in this study that the apparent obscurity and inconspicuousness of the gains of solo drama and solo acting in Nigeria is caused not just by ignorance or unavailability of library materials on the subject but equally by deliberate acts of subjugation and deep rooted neglect, disregard and dislike of this radical and revolutionary art movement by conventional artistes who constantly place a road block for any radical art movement that attempts to question the established status quo in the theatrical order. In spite of this neglect, the one man theatre movement as a sub-genre is growing by the day. More and more artistes and practitioners with intrinsic acting, directing or scripting talents are turning to this sub-genre, and making a success of it. Several new inspiring textbooks and solo plays are now available on-line. Inua Ellams, Benedict Binebai, Rudolph Kansese, Akpos Adesi, Kenneth Eni, Benson Kaka, Rachael Tuodonye, Watari Sarah Jonah, Blessing Diepreye and Ndubuisi Nwokedi are among the distinguished Nigerian theatre artistes who are making original impacts as upcoming professionals in this regard.

So far, the words "actor", 'one-man', 'one person' or 'one-actor plays' have been used in a neutral sense to accommodate both male and female practitioners. However, it is necessary to point out that on the Nigerian scene at the present, there have been very few female one-person performers. This study wishes to advocate the importance of the female performer in the overall African performance context and to state that the Nigerian one-person female performances are desirable and should be encouraged. This is even more expected when we consider the fact that it was a woman and not a man that inaugurated this style of theatre production on the modern Nigerian stage.

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