

**APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT IN MANAGING A  
FESTIVAL: ISI FESTIVAL IN PERSPECTIVE.**

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BENIN CITY.**

**MAY, 2024.**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE  
ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF  
ARTS (B.A.) IN THEATRE ARTS.**

**MAY, 2024.**

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this research was carried out by me in the Department of Theatre Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin under the supervision Dr. J. N. Bardi (arpa) and that the information contained in this project is a product of my research, and where the opinions of others were used they were duly acknowledged.

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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research was carried out by Osadiaye, Divine Osasogie under my supervision.

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**Dr. J. N. Bardi (arpa)**  
*Project Supervisor*

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**Date**

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**Prof. V. O. Diakpomrere**  
*Head of Department*

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty for his strength bestowed on me, I have learned and I have become the best version of myself .I am forever grateful to for his unweaving guidance and blessings .This project is dedicated to my father Osadiaye Julius Imriabe and to my Mother Osadiaye Helen Amenze.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My immense gratitude goes to God Almighty that has been there from the beginning to this very day. To my wonderful supervisor Dr. J. N. Bardi who despite his tight schedule, made out time to carefully supervise and edit this project work. God bless you sir

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To my mommy and daddy I sincerely appreciate you both for the financial support and love. To my Late aunty Ozabor Esohe may your beautiful soul continue to rest in peace. To my beautiful cousin sister Ozabor Blessing, and to my lovely Boss Ikhuwu Stephanie aituare. To all my beautiful Imade and Osadiaye family I appreciate you.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research explores applying the principles of management in managing a festival, using Isi festival as a case study. The aim of this research is to find out how management can be applied in a festival. This study was conducted in Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria. The survey research design was employed using questions to elicit responses from the people of Isi community. Research analysis revealed that majority of the respondents in this study attested that management is important in every festival in order to ensure a smooth and successful festival. Since our indigenous festivals have been classified as Theatre, then a trained manager is required to manage it by employing the tool of careful observation, prompt action and clear communication in pursuit of a smooth festival production process. For Isi festival, the researcher functioned as a manager as she is involved in every phase of preparation to the D-day performance. The festival manager begins working before the major players ever begins and continue even after the event kicks off. The functions, duties and role of a festival manager to employ strategies to manage this event cannot be down played nor over emphasize. It is highly recommended that the festival manager serve as an open line of communication between all players and active participants and crew. A tripartite methodology of literary, artistic and sociological was used to realized this research.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

One of the keys to successfully manage a theatrical performance is the ability to understand and apply modern management principles and techniques effectively. Managers must develop an in-depth knowledge of past and present models, theories and processes in order to manage effectively and intelligently. Contemporary management practice is pervasive in every aspect of human life within all types of organizations, although in this research endeavour special focus is on the theatre. Basic management techniques have been traced to the city of Ur (Iraq) in 3000 BC where Sumerian priests were the first to keep written records as a means of recording business transactions. Translations from early Egyptian papyri, dating back to 1300 BC, recognized the importance of organization and administration in bureaucratic states. Similar records have been found for ancient China. Moses is credited with employing his father-in-law, Jethro,

as a management consultant. Jethro helped design the organization through which Moses ruled the Hebrews in the desert.

Around 400 BC, Socrates defined management as a skill separate from technical knowledge and experience. Plato in his *Treaties on Ideal Republic*, also recognized management as a separate art and promoted principles of specialization. In *The Republic*, Plato describes how carefully selected young men should train so that they would develop the appropriate personalities and skills necessary to serve as leaders. Diocletian, a Roman Emperor in AD 284, initiated organizational hierarchies when he reorganized his empire into 101 provinces and grouped them into 13 dioceses. This marked the beginning of delegation of authority and chain of command.

Although ancient Rome's management records according to Brockett (178), are incomplete, the complexity of the administration influenced the development of managerial techniques. Using the scalar principle and the delegation of authority, the city of Rome efficiently expanded to an empire. Attila the Hun, king over the royal tribe around AD 433 as documented in Brockett (179), successfully merged all of the independent Hun Nish tribes into a single nation. Attila considered leadership to be a privilege. He accepted the responsibility of directing the actions of others to achieve the goals of the organization. He delegated authority at varying levels and with accepted

accountability for successes and failures. His principles of leadership still stand firm today in modern management.

It was Gerrard (88) who opined that “the oldest and most widely accepted school of thought among management practitioners is normally called the *Classical Management Movement*. This approach to management arose between 1885 and 1940 in an effort to provide a rational and scientific basis for the management of organizations”. Its beginning stems from the industrial Revolution when people were brought together to work in factories as opposed to the handicraft system whereby people worked in small shops or in homes. Industrialization created a need for efficient planning, organizing, influencing and controlling of all work activities.

Furthermore, the Classical Management Movement according to Gerrard, has two fundamental thrusts – “scientific management and general administrative management”. Scientific management centres on ways to improve productivity. Administrative management theory examines organizations as total entities and focuses on ways to make them more effective and efficient. The frame of reference normally used for the classical management movement runs from 1895 to around 1940. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in classical management theory as a method to cut costs, increase productivity and re-examine organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Whereas scientific management focused on employees as individuals and their tasks, general

administrative management theory dealt with total management organization. General management theory was an attempt to develop a much broader theory concerned with administrative management functions and is considered the forerunner of modern organization theory.

In the Nigeria community theatre setting, theatrical performances can be presented in different spaces, from streets, squares, private residences, churches, bars and other social meeting places, to spaces constructed specifically for this purpose. These structures, which we will generically call “theatres”, may have extremely different spatial configurations: highly varied size, fixed or mobile stages, and differing positions of the audience with respect to the stage, along with other variants. The same occurs with their technical equipment: very simple venues coexist with other, ultra-modern facilities equipped with sophisticated stage sets, acoustics, lighting and sound, safety and air conditioning systems.

According to Brookes (123), all that is required to have a theatre performance is “...an actor who walks across an empty space with an audience there to watch him”. The above definition of theatre performance by Peter Brookes holds true even in our indigenous festivals which have also been classified by Oscar Brockett in his *History of the Theatre* as theatre performances. This is the reason this research sets out to use a local festival (Small Isi Festival) as a paradigm by applying the principles of management in managing a festival: Isi Festival in perspective.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

A major problem that this research attempts to solve is to correct and change the negative narrative about Isi Festival, as most Christian faithful in my community do not want to observe or participate in the festival due to the festival's perceived fetish practices that tends to go against biblical precepts. This research will attempt to show that the entire events of the festival is just theatre and a re-enactment of past events.

Another problem is the lack of interest for participation by younger generation due to the crude and unrefined manner of presentation, which actually posed a threat for continuity and future sustainability. This is another problem this research seeks to address.

## **1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The outcome of this research will eventually showcase to the world the cultural wealth and beauty of Isi Festival thereby attracting government and private investments, intervention and collaboration for future events. It will also encourage the Christian faithful and younger generation of Isi community to fully embrace and celebrate Isi Festival as our cultural pride and heritage.

## **1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The objectives this research sets out to achieve are as follows:

1. To examine the processes involved in Isi festival.

2. To examine the kind of festival Isi festival is.
3. To know if there are serious spiritual undertones and implications.
4. *To know if Isi festival is rigid stereotypical practice or it is flexible with provisions for modern touches.*

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following are research questions that will aid this academic endeavor:

1. What are the processes involved in Isi festival?
2. What kind of festival is Isi festival?
3. Are there serious spiritual undertones and implications?
4. *Is Isi festival rigid stereotypical practice or is it flexible with provisions for modern touches?*

## **1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This work concerns itself with exploring Isi Festival by using managerial skills and tools with a view to examine challenges and prospect in all ramification. This study is confined to Isi community and its festival only.

## 1.7 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This research work employs a tripartite methodology: literary, artistic and sociological. The use of such materials as textbooks, Journals and articles accounts for the literary methodology. The artistic methodology springs from the live performance and examining of Isi Festival while the sociological methodology encompasses all the oral interviews with some leaders of Isi community.

The primary sources of data collection are the interviews and the researcher's personal experience drawn from her interpretation and understanding of Isi Festival. Whereas textbooks, online archival materials and articles make up the secondary sources.

## 1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

➤ **Festival:** A festival according to Wikipedia's definition says it is an extraordinary event celebrated by a community and it is based on some characteristic aspect or aspects of that community and its religion or cultures. It is often marked as a local or national holiday, a festival constitutes typical cases of globalization, as well as the high culture-low culture interrelationship. Festivals often serve to fulfil specific communal purposes, especially in regard to commemoration or thanking to the gods, goddesses or saints: they are called patronal festivals.

- **Theatre:** According to Wikipedia definition, theatre<sup>1</sup> is a collaborative form of performing art that uses live performers, usually actors or actresses, to present the experience of a real or imagined event before a live audience in a specific place, often a stage. The performers may communicate this experience to the audience through combinations of gesture, speech, song, music, and dance. It is the oldest form of drama, though live theatre has now been joined by modern recorded forms. Elements of art, such as painted scenery and stagecraft such as lighting are used to enhance the physicality, presence and immediacy of the experience. Places, normally buildings, where performances regularly take place are also called "theatres" as derived from the Ancient Greek θέατρον (théatron, "a place for viewing"), itself from θεάομαι (theáomai, "to see", "to watch", "to observe Performance).
- **Ritual:** According to Wikipedia definition, ritual is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, actions, or revered objects. Rituals may be prescribed by the traditions of a community, including a religious community. Rituals are characterized, but not defined, by formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, sacral symbolism, and performance.
- **Principles:** According to oxford dictionary, it defines principles as a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning. Example, the basic principles of Christianity.

- **Perspective:** According to Oxford Press dictionary, perspective is the art of drawing solid objects on a two-dimensional surface so as to give the right impression of their height, width, depth, and position in relation to each other when viewed from a particular point.
- **Managing:** The word managing is an adjective that means having executive or supervisory control or authority over a place, event or a thing. For example, playing to be role of *a* managing editor.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. MEANING OF MANAGEMENT**

Management is a unique field of study that is taught across different disciplines at colleges and universities. Prominent major degree programme in management include Business Administration and Public Administration. Social scientists study management as an academic discipline, investigating areas such as social organization, organizational adaptation, and organizational leadership. In recent decades, there has been a movement for evidence-based management.

According to (Remi 88) “Management is a science and art at the same time because it deals with organizing and coordinating human resources and behavioral pattern into achieving organizational set goals and objectives.” Koontz et al (154), say that “Management is about managing the administration of organizations, whether they are a business, a nonprofit organization, or a government body through business administration, nonprofit management, or the political science sub-field of public administration respectively”. In a simple term, management is the science of managing the resources of businesses, governments, and other organizations. In addition to the above, management can also be defined according Smith (145) as “... a process of getting the work or the task done that is required for achieving the goals of an organization in an efficient and effective manner”. Management is done through a process that implies the functions of management to a particular organization. Effective management according to Richardson (88), “entails completing tasks and achieving goals with minimum cost and resources”. Thus, management can be seen as the process of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling such that the goals of the organization are achieved successfully with minimum cost and resources

## **2.2. HISTORY OF MANAGEMENT**

Management has a humble origin. According to Koontz et al (115), “development of thought on management dates back to the days when people first attempted to

accomplish goals by working together in groups”. Though modern operational management theory dates primarily from the early twentieth century with the work of Fredrick Taylor and Henri Fayol, there was serious thought of management many years before.

Steven (432), says “during the nineteenth century business as an occupation was held in low esteem that is, it was regarded as a degrading occupation”. Hamilton (97) says “Aristotle characterizes buying and selling as “unnatural” money making, and Napoleon castigated England referring to them as “a nation of shop keepers”... are evidences of the fact. It is only in the past half century that businessmen began to hold a place of respect.

Early political theorists were slow to turn their attention to the problem of administration and like the economists, were preoccupied with policy making on a national and international level, thereby overlooking the executive process.

Hamilton (232) says “by 1929, the great depression brought forth such symptoms of human unrest as the new deal and national unionism, which served to alert business people that, among the deficiencies American industrial development, perhaps the greatest was the concentration of mere manipulation of resources”.

Though it is pertinent to note that before this time interpretations of early Egyptian Papyri, extend as far back as 1300BC. According to Eugene (115) “these early Egyptian archival material indicate the recognition of the importance of organization and administration in the bureaucratic states of antiquity”.

Furthermore, organizational management was witnessed in the Roman Catholic Church during the medieval era in Europe according to Brockett (211), noted that “during the medieval period, the church displayed a most effective formal organization in the history of western civilization. Its long organizational life has been due not only to the appeal of its objective but also to the effectiveness of its organization and management technique”.

Some of the most important principles and practices of modern business management have been traced to the military who have been, ever since man has had need for self defence. Not forgetting the Cameralist who were a group of German and Austrian public administrators and intellectuals who generally held from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

The evolution of management would be incomplete without the mention of Henri Fayol, the father of modern operational management. A French industrialist whose acute

observations on the principles of general management first appeared in 1916, in French, under the title: Administration Industrielle ET Generale.

### **2.3. PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT**

The act of management is executed by a manager. The Principles of management can be described as those laid down guidelines that controls what managers do to help organizations achieve set goals and objectives, equally attaining excellence and top performance.

The principles of management was outlined by Henry Fayol, also known as the Father of Modern Management Theory. He gave a new perception on the concept of management by introducing a general theory that can be applied to all levels of management and every department. He envisioned maximizing managerial efficiency. According to Fayol (223), there are fourteen principles of management which he created and they are outlined below:

- 1. Division of Work:** Fayol believed that segregating work in the workforce amongst the workers will enhance the quality of the product. Similarly, he also concluded that the division of work improves the productivity, efficiency, accuracy and speed of the workers. This principle is appropriate for both the managerial as well as a technical work level.

- 2. Authority and Responsibility:** These are the two key aspects of management. Authority facilitates the management to work efficiently, and responsibility makes them responsible for the work done under their guidance or leadership.
- 3. Discipline:** Without discipline, nothing can be accomplished. It is the core value for any project or any management. Good performance and sensible interrelation make the management job easy and comprehensive. Employees' good behavior also helps them smoothly build and progress in their professional careers.
- 4. Unity of Command:** This means an employee should have only one boss and follow his command. If an employee has to follow more than one boss, there begins a conflict of interest and can create confusion.
- 5. Unity of Direction:** Whoever is engaged in the same activity should have a unified goal. This means all the people working in a company should have one goal and motive which will make the work easier and achieve the set goal easily.
- 6. Subordination of Individual Interest:** This indicates a company should work unitedly towards the interest of a company rather than personal interest. Be subordinate to the purposes of an organization. This refers to the whole chain of command in a company.

- 7. Remuneration:** This plays an important role in motivating the workers of a company. Remuneration can be monetary or non-monetary. Ideally, it should be according to an individual's efforts they have put forth.
- 8. Centralization:** In any company, the management or any authority responsible for the decision-making process should be neutral. However, this depends on the size of an organization. Henri Fayol stressed on the point that there should be a balance between the hierarchy and division of power.
- 9. Scalar Chain:** Fayol, on this principle, highlights that the hierarchy steps should be from the top to the lowest. This is necessary so that every employee knows their immediate senior also they should be able to contact any, if needed.
- 10. Order:** A company should maintain a well-defined work order to have a favorable work culture. The positive atmosphere in the workplace will boost more positive productivity.
- 11. Equity:** All employees should be treated equally and respectfully. It's the responsibility of a manager that no employees face discrimination.
- 12. Stability:** An employee delivers the best if they feel secure in their job. It is the duty of the management to offer job security to their employees.

**13. Initiative:** The management should support and encourage the employees to take initiatives in an organization. It will help them to increase their motivation and morale.

**14. Esprit de Corps:** It is the responsibility of the management to motivate their employees and be supportive of each other regularly. Developing trust and mutual understanding will lead to a positive outcome and work environment.

Fayol's outlined fourteen Principles of Management forms the pillars of any organization that is determine to succeed. They are integral for prediction, planning, decision-making, process management, control and coordination.

#### **2.4. MANAGEMENT IN THE ARTS**

Theatre Arts as a discipline in the humanities needs management as it is an ensemble which requires the effort of a number of different individuals coming together for the bringing to life of a performance. In the theatre, the efforts of the director, actors (cast), the lighting designer, the costumier, makeup artist, stage manager, and the stage hands (crew), are required. Also the theatre as a structure, is also managed by the theatre manager and the other staff who include: The publicity manager, technical team, commercial managers, personnel managers etc. From my personal experience as a student, the Theatre discipline deals directly with people who basically are difficult to manage. In the presentation of any production the director who has the creative vision,

visualizes and interprets the script's idea, he chooses the style of production and interprets it, he then goes on to the next step of choosing his cast and crew members, ensuring he picks those appropriate for the roles. After selection of cast and crew members which also covers the stage manager, then the rehearsals kicks off. The director alongside the stage manager help to creatively bring out the best out of the actors. Artistically the director is liken to the general manager while the stage manager is under his leadership and control. In the theatre the director works hand in hand with the stage manager and house manager who ensures that all the facilities are in order and available. The director also shares his ideas with his costumier, the scene designers, lights man and make-up artist. This is why the theatre is an ensemble i.e. coming together of different individuals to achieve a common goal which is the basis of management. According the Steven (287), who upheld the above thought thus: “the task of all managers is to desire and maintain an environment conducive to the performance of individuals who are working together in group toward the accomplishment of some pre-selected objective”.

## **2.5. MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

Management strategy according to Remi (34), defines it as “the determination of the basic long-term goals of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals”. Adewale (180) says “Management Strategies are established to set direction, focus effort, define or clarify the

organization, and provide consistency or guidance in response to the environment. Strategic management involves the related concepts of strategic planning and strategic thinking”.

Management strategy may also refer to control mechanisms used to implement the strategy once it is determined. In other words, strategic management happens around the strategic thinking or strategy making activity. Adewale (181), further says “Management Strategy is often described as involving two major processes: formulation and implementation of strategy”. In the theatre management strategies involves the formulation and implementation of the major goals , objectives and initiatives taken by a business and stage manager on behalf of the director and other stakeholders, based on consideration of resources and an assessment of the internal and external environment in which the theatre company operates.

Management strategies provides overall direction to an enterprise and involves specifying the organization's objectives, developing policies and plans to achieve those objectives, and then allocating resources to implement the plans.

In addition to the above, Awodiya (120), says “Academics and practicing managers have developed numerous models and frameworks to assist in strategic decision-making in the context of complex environments and competitive dynamics”. Strategic

management is not static in nature; the models often include a feedback loop to monitor execution and to inform the next round of planning. According to Porter(98), he identifies three principles underlying successful implementation of management strategy creating a unique and valuable market position making trade-offs by choosing "what not to do "creating fit" by aligning company activities with one another to support the chosen strategy.

Adewale states that Management strategy involves answering key questions from a portfolio perspective: "What type of production should the theatre company produce for a particular audience in a geographical location or environment? "How do we compete with rivals in this business"?"

Management strategy and practice is concerned primarily with improving efficiency and controlling costs within the boundaries set by the organization's strategy. It also covers analyzing the environment in which the organization operates, then making a series of strategic decisions about how the organization will compete. It further ends with a series of goals or objectives and measures for the organization to pursue.

## **2.6. RITUALISTIC ORIGIN OF THE THEATRE**

The origin of theatre started as a ritualistic activity in Athens Greece at the foothill of Acropolis where music, dance and dramatic performances were used to celebrate the

City Dionysian Festival of wine and fertility dedicated to the Greek god Dionysus as documented by Brockett (113). During this festival as documented in Brockett's *History of the Theatre*, plays (a trilogy that comprised two tragedies and a comedy) were performed as it was a competition and the winner gets a goat as the prize which he used to sacrifice to Dionysus. This ritualistic rites of sacrificing to the gods continued as it gave birth to playwrights like Euripedes, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes, whose works and creative inputs laid the foundation of what we termed as Theatre. In the West, dramatic performance has not varied substantially over the last 2500 years, since the live show is, ultimately, a direct encounter that transmits and generates emotions between the performing artists and the audience. From this viewpoint, the functions at theatres in Ancient Greece had many aspects in common with performances today. The Greek theater on was, and continues to be, a "place for contemplation" where comedy, tragedy, dance and music reflect the spiritual mood, concerns, conflicts and interests of society.

## **2.7. MANAGING A TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL**

In managing a traditional festival, immediately the actors or players/ active participants have been known by either selection, nominations or appointment, then the ceremony is set to take shape and form. The next phase is call for rehearsals. The rehearsal process is a period of constant changes, practice and preparation. It is the manager's job to record everything that happens during this time. Generally, to begin this

process, there will be a round table meeting of all selected active participants, during which the festival manager will have to read out a written direction and scope of the festival. This is a well-defined written order of the activities of the festival. Since the small Isi festival basically involves re-enactment of heroic deeds of some notable characters of the past, the onus lies on the role player to interpret it convincingly. Transforming Isi Festival into a theatrical performance is the goal of this research. With the requisite managerial training, it becomes the duty of the Isi Festival manager to skillfully and creatively define the performance space, audience sitting arrangement, entry and exit point and duration for each performances. The orchestra is an integral part of this team as the songs and drums must blend with the improvised drama that clearly shows the origin of the Festival and its importance to the people of Isi community and the need to ensure its preservation.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **MANAGING ISI FESTIVAL CEREMONY**

#### **3.1 HISTORY OF ISI FESTIVAL**

Isi community is located in Ovia-North East Local Government Area of Edo State and to a large extent one can say it is under developed due to a visible absence of government presence. Electricity supply is still a dream and earnest prayers by the good

people of Isi, they are earnestly waiting for it to be answered. According to oral tradition, which was passed from one generation to another until it gets to this researcher's father. He it was that gave the historical evolution of Isi Festival the origin of Isi annual festival called *Odiwiwun* started during the precolonial era when eastern and western slave traders invaded and laid sieged to the community in a bid to carry sons and daughters of Isi land into slavery. The protective spirits of the land called *ihiwmin* appeared like a thick dark smoke and cloud over the entire Isi land. For 7 days the enemies could not see the pathway into Isi land, as they were groping in the woods for several days, until they were all captured. The enemies confessed that immediately they entered the forest of Isi land the entire place became so dark that they roamed around in circles without making any headway. Whereas to the people of Isi it was the normal day and night. These same raiding band had almost empty other neighboring communities by capturing both the young and old, male and female. According to this oral account, Isi community is the only land where raiders and bandits were unable to successfully attack and raid. The raiders were all killed by the warriors of Isi. A massive celebration and jubilation was organized by the community leaders to celebrate this victory as well as appreciate the spirit of their ancestors' *ihiwmin* for their intervention and deliverance. As a result of the above, an annual festival was created *called Odiwiwun*. The festival is between October and December of every year and last for seven days to commemorate the seven days the

raiders spent in the forest before they were captured. The festival is characterized with singing, dancing and dramatic re-enactment of how the raiders were caught and ultimately killed by valiant Isi warriors. Today, Isi festival is celebrated with much pomp and pageantry by all sons and daughters of the land.

### **3:2 ARTISTIC PERFORMANCES IN ISI FESTIVAL**

Change in life is constant and how we adapt to change is likewise important. With the influence of Western education, internet explosion and social media activities saturating the air, every single human endeavour somehow finds its way to different social media platforms. It becomes imperative to truly reshape and restructure how Isi festival is performed. This is to expunge every element of barbaric and fetish undertones in order to make it appealing to all a sundry.

According to Oscar G Brockett in Theatre History, where he documented several festivals and traditional ceremonial activities in Nigeria as theatrical, it becomes necessary to allow a touch of modernism have an impact on Isi festival. This is so in order to bring out the elements of theatre embedded in it. In addition, to demystify the spirituality of the festival so as to make it a celebrative spectacle worthy of showcasing and promoting. Since our indigenous festivals have been acknowledged by Western scholars as theatrical, the onus lies on us to fully explore provisions prescribed by theatre

experimentalists like Peter Brook in his Empty Space. Brook outlined the four vital and important elements to have a theatre performance. These four elements formed the basics for accessing and analyzing any performance, namely, the actor, the acting space, an audience and the performance. Isi annual festival is basically a re-enactment of certain feats by the gods of the land to save the entire community, therefore both those wearing elaborate masquerade costumes to depict the gods, those dressed like warriors and the ones posing as bandits and invaders all falls into the category of an actor, the rest of the community members and visitors makes up the audience and spectators, the actions re-enacted becomes the performance while the village square becomes the venue of the performance.

### **3.3. PROCESSES OF MANAGING ISI FESTIVAL**

Indigenous traditional festival in this part of the world has been woven around deep ritualistic activities and beliefs, and it's mostly done in the rural areas. Isi Festival activities starts from the four quarters of Isi community, namely: Idumo-Isi, Otokhime, Idumo-uwa and Idumo-nekaka. The above listed four quarters or sub-villages present the Odionwere's family who organizes and lead the festival annually in their quarter. This researcher is from Idumo-uwa and her father is the Odionwere of the quarter, so it becomes our family responsibility to organize and lead this year's festival. The first three days of the festival is done at the sub-village level which is also called small Isi Festival.

Then the last four days is done at the village square in front of the Enogie's palace. Some key stakeholders from the researcher family wanted a difference in this year's event so this researcher was invited for a meeting on how it can be better since they all know she is studying Theatre Arts. Since it is basically a communal outdoor event, this researcher wasted no time to outlined factors that can affect making Isi Festival theatrical and what can be done to change the narrative. Below are challenges that ultimately militates against a smooth stage managing the festival.

- 1. TIME:** One key consciousness of every theatre practitioner is time factor. We were introduced at the beginning of our programme about call time and kick-off time which means we must be there before the said time and the theatre starts at the exact time. It is indeed a monumental challenge when a programme scheduled to kick off by 12noon actually starts 5hours later. This obviously can disrupt other engagement and even destabilize the management team. It becomes more pathetic when the persons one is working for sees nothing wrong in it but rather would say "this is Africa man's time". Surprisingly, even some guests and villagers also started coming exactly 5hours later as though it was a generally agreed time by all that my team wasn't aware of.
- 2. FETISH/ RITUALISTIC PRACTICES:** It still baffles me while embarking on this research, that I discovered that over 90% of festivals in this part of the country all

have certain degrees and levels of rituals and fetish practices. This is a challenge as most invited guests who are of the Christian faith actually turned down our invitation owing to the fact that there are “demonic activities and initiation” during the event. This affected the number of our expected guest.

3. **WEATHER FACTOR-** Another challenge is the weather factor. Since this is an outdoor event which largely rely on hope and faith to have a fair or perfect weather, in order to prevent rain fall one has to go and appease and acknowledge every known “rain-maker” in the community. Failure to do so means the event will suddenly be visited with heavy rain fall and destructive wind. It becomes a challenge as the stake holders was very mindful of paying or settling every known rain maker around. Ironically, after appeasing the known rain-maker in the communities a certain rain-maker in another neighbouring community felt slighted that he wasn’t acknowledged. So he sent rain to disrupt the day one. But as soon as they knew he was the one , they quickly went to appease and settle him financially. Interestingly, immediately this rain maker was paid some amount of money, he entered into a small hut and came out in less than 5 minutes and the rain stopped immediately. The dark stormy weather became clear. For someone that is not familiar with such practices will certainly have a weather disrupted event.

**4. AUDIENCE CONTROL AND PARTICIPATION-** It is important to note here that during a Isi Festival, the type of audience present are described as active participatory audience. It is expected that the songs and dances that characterized different stages of the event are done collectively by every single person present. Unlike in a conventional theatrical event where the audience are only supposed to observe, which makes controlling such easy.

But in this case the audience are all active, everyone is involved in the ceremony and everywhere is the stage. During the course of the event for example, at a point I was trying to hush some persons during the age grade performance. Little did I know that every single person under the said age grade is meant to sing and dance along from where ever they are and not just those at the centre. This made the entire event performance space rowdy and uncoordinated.

### **3.4 MANAGING THE PERFORMERS**

For this research endeavour, the art and scope of managing the performer during Isi Festival involves both the Odionwere (who is the researcher's father) and other family groups whose activities makes up part of the overall event. Having successfully established the core duty of a theatre manager in the previous chapter, it is the sole duty of the manager to ensure that everything needed to have a successful ceremony is available and in place. Also, the manager plays another major role by preparing the

costume and makeup of the Odionwere. As a trained make-up artist, it ultimately aided the researcher effort in this regard. Also every items listed will be provided and arranged in the right order awaiting for the moment when it will be required. Furthermore, since there are some other activities that make up the overall event like ritual dances by different age grades, it is the duty of the manager to ensure that the various dances to be performed are well rehearsed and perfected by all involved, while the costumes and props required for each dances are available for performance day.

### **3.5 MANAGING THE PERFORMANCE**

It is within the scope of the manager to attend rehearsals of the various dance group and make constructive and creative suggestion where needed. For example, the manager ensures that in the community maiden dance it is strictly done by maidens of the community and not visitors, outsiders and those above the age bracket. The manager also regulate and control the various performances for the event.

### **3.6 MANAGING THE VENUE/ PERFORMANCE SPACE**

The theatre event manager plans several important roles and duty which ultimately leads to a successful ceremony. Getting the venue ready for the event is as important as getting the recipient ready to receive his chieftaincy title. This is owing to the fact that

everything happens within a defined space and time. The venue or location for the event must be prepared and ready. As for this particular case study it was done in a primary school on a Saturday where there is no academic activity for the students of the affected schools. The field was cleared of weeds and grasses, some unlevelled ground was equally levelled, canopies and tents rented and erected, chairs and table well arranged.

### **3.7 MANAGING THE SPECTATORS**

One unique thing about the calibre of spectators one see during a festival ceremony in comparison to a standard theatre audience is that the former are active and lively, they are all collectively part of the overall event. Unlike a conventional theatrical event where the audience are mainly spectators, observing and enjoying the unfolding happenings on stage, making no input to the performance. Whereas in Isi Festival the audience are all involved in one way or the other. Songs and chants are mostly required by the audience to do. Also it is at the height of the thunderous clapping by the audience that the newly installed chief does his first and last titled solo dance. Managing such calibre of audience is a herculean task, in order not to make the place disorganized and unruly. The audience are only expected to react when it is necessary and stop when it is over.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE THEATRICALS IN ISI FESTIVAL**

#### **4.1 UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF THE FESTIVAL**

One of the first step in stage -managing a play production according to Awodiya (67) is“...studying the play text over and again, then have a background knowledge of the calibre of expected audience”. Having an in depth knowledge about the audience and the script will ultimately sculpt and shape the final product on stage. The same principle applies here. As a theatre manager, the first step to be taken is to understand the nature of the festival. A thorough research about the nature and scope of Isi festival must be conducted. Also several visit to the community should be made in order to gather fresh firsthand information that will help in planning and preparing for the event at the family level (sub-village level celebration). Understanding the nature of the event will help the theatre manager adjust where necessary. There is a clear cut difference between managing event in an urban area and a rural settlement. Understanding the nature of the ceremony affords the opportunity for cultural integration and projection.

This is the fundamental when embarking on a project such as this. At this initial stage, certain questions will be raised and adequately answered in order not to run into a ditch during the event proper. For this research endeavour where my service as an academic theatre manager was engaged by the researcher’s family for the small Isi Festival celebration, painstaking efforts was made to understand the entire festival, what it entails and how it can be modernized and made a theatrical spectacle. What are the processes involved? Who are the major players? Is it an indoor or outdoor event? What

are the factors that determine what time of the day and week is most suitable to have the event? Who are the audience? Is it fetish, ritualistic or just a re-enactment? Are there serious spiritual undertones and implications? Is it a rigid stereotypical practice or its flexible with provisions for modern touches? All these and more were raised and answered by this researcher which consequently gives a full-scale understanding about the festival.

#### **4.2 PLANNING AND ORGANIZING-**

According to Koontz et al (117) “it is the duty of the manager to plan and organize events to ensure it comes out successful, this can be seen under the functions of management in institutions. At all levels of every institution, management is an important factor in the running process. The manager(s) are expected to design and maintain an environment in which the workforce work together for growth”. Koontz statement means Management is very essential to ensure the coordination of individual efforts. Therefore institutions such as small and large scale businesses, theatre events, social ceremonies, churches, schools, governments, universities and even the military as seen in the old days need management for certain functions ‘which include:

- **Planning:** This involves selecting objectives and the strategies, policies, programs and procedures for achieving them, either for the entire enterprise or any organized

part thereof. In a nutshell it could simply be called decision making as it involves selecting from among alternatives.

- **Organizing:** This involves the establishment of an intentional structure of roles through determination of the activities required to achieve the goals of an enterprise and each part of it, the grouping and assignment of the groups to the manager, the delegation of authority to carry them out, etc.

For the purpose of this research, this researcher had to plan every single aspect of the festival and carefully and creatively executed the plans to ensure maximum satisfaction by the persons who entrusted her with the herculean task. For example, it was during the planning phase that provisions were made on how many dances will be performed by the various age grade, the timing was determined. Without effective planning and organizing for any program or event, disaster will definitely set in at the end of the day. For this particular ceremony, it was during the planning stage that we determined the refreshments and entertainment for the guests and well-wishers. How many guests did we invite and how many are sure to come? How many uninvited guests can we anticipate to come? Provisions have to be made to accommodate all. Under the planning stage was when we decided the type of food to serve and jollof rice was picked to feed at least 300 persons inside a nice plastic disposable pack. Also, 150 wraps of pounded yam will be prepared for those who like it “local or swallow” and ogbolor and

egusi soup will be used as accompaniments. The drinks are not left out as adequate plans covered the numbers of drinks and water to buy, and most importantly the brands and type. In addition, provisions were made to chill the drinks and water. Finally, under planning stage, members of my team and I as the leader planned the dance of the researcher's father, where friends and guest will do the traditional act of spraying monies. We decided the number of selected persons who will pick up the sprayed monies and who to hand it over to finally while provisions made for adequate security during the duration of the entire programme. It is crystal clear that the pivotal role of planning and organizing cannot be over emphasized.

#### **4.3 COUNTING THE COST**

After the planning stages the next important stage is counting the cost. As nice and beautiful as the plan may appear it needs money and human resources to execute. Counting the cost entails knowing what it will cost to execute the plans to the letter. For example, how many bags of rice will be sufficient in feeding 300 guests, how many yams will be pounded to produce 150 wraps? How much is the current cost of rice, yam and other items needed? Furthermore, to engage the service of security operatives during the small Isi Festival how much will it cost? These and many more questions and answers comes under counting the cost. Ultimately as the local adage that says "to have a sweet and tasty soup means good money was spent". It is the amount of money available for

execution of the plan that will determine the final outcome whether good or bad. Interestingly, for this event we had more than enough financial provisions to adequately execute every single aspect of our plans to the letter.

#### **4.4 PREPARATION FOR THE EVENT**

As the D-day draws closer, preparation was intensified which is a core function of management. First, the venue for the event had to be prepared by clearing weeds and grasses from the open field, get sand to fill up pot-holes, evacuates dirt's and debris. As part of preparation is the setting up of canopies, chairs and tables as well as decoration of the entire arena to befit the status of the Odionwere. Everything needed for the event to be grand and successful is at the stage available.

#### **4.5 QSTRATEGY TO MANAGE THE EVENT**

Since we are expecting a large crowd at our quarter, it became imperative to prepare crowd control mechanism. After deep consideration of the nature of the event and the attitudes of the locals during such events which is mostly audience active participation, in order not to make them unruly thereby turning the event to a chaotic mess, we had to engage the service of a crowd control company that have hefty able-bodied men to ensure the guest are not unruly during the entire programme. This

provision is besides the men of the Nigeria Civil Defense and Local Vigilante group whose services were also engaged.

#### **4.6 THE D-DAY**

In the theatre before the D-day for the performance, there is dress and technical rehearsal which is actually the performance without an audience. This practice gives an exact picture of how the play will all appear on stage on performance day. With my training and experience of the theatre, I suggested to the stakeholders who are members of the researcher's family that we should have a "dress and technical rehearsal" which was unanimously accepted by all. So the eve of the D-day we work through all the event we will be having on the next couple of days. This helped to fine tune certain aspects that were not ready. On the first day of small Isi, there was fair weather and thanks to the rain makers and their team who got their honorarium to ensure no single drop of rain. Some days earlier it had rained cats and dogs, with flood everywhere. And the locals said it must be so in order to enjoy a very good weather all through the event. The audience and guests turnout was overwhelming as there was no visible vacate seats. The security operatives were actively on ground to ensure there was order while the crowd control guys controlled the crowd. The nicely dressed ushers numbering 20 where placed strategically so they can be of help and service to the guests. The procession of the royal father and his chiefs was very colourful and a theatrical spectacle indeed. The various

dances by age grade and ritualistic dance by the Odionwere was another round of heightened and embellished spectacle.

The high point of the event was when the Odionwere and Enogie had to do a creative Solo dance which attracted thunderous cheering and applause from excited guests. This dance equally attracted rain of monies on them.

#### **4.7 APPRAISAL OF THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT**

This festival event which, besides been an opportunity to explore my stage management training was also an academic research attempt to show that management is the breath and spine for any event to record any level of success. During the entire event of the three days of small Isi, it became easy sailing through because management helped to anticipate and project what may happen as a result poor adequate preparation. All thanks to managerial skills and acumen of the researcher and her team which helped to avert such. There was no record of security breach throughout the entire programme, the food and drinks was more than enough as it was distributed evenly. Indeed what Koontz echoed in his book that all human endeavor requires effective management to succeed holds true from my personal experience and encounter during the November 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> 2023 small Isi Festival.

#### **4.8 THE RELEVANCE OF ISI FESTIVAL TO THE SOCIETY**

Without much ado, from my personal experience and encounter during 2023 small Isi Festival, it is the opinion of this researcher that the theatrical display, the re-enactment and energetic dances with wonderful songs and musical accompaniment is a national treasure that needs to be preserve and showcase at a global stage. Other countries of the world who celebrate similar festivals knows the cultural significance and larger economic benefits it can have on the country at large by attracting tourists and investors. Let the ministry of culture and tourism take note of this festival and many others across the country by supporting and bringing government presence into it.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, OBSERVATION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

Managing a theatrical event whether in an urban or rural settlement in contemporary Nigeria society can be a difficult task as problems are bound to arise at one point in time or the other, but the ability of the manager to solve the problems is what makes him or her unique and a total quality manager. All organizations have their various problems and challenges, no doubt the case is not different with the theatre business. During the course of my research I discovered that in exploring the principles of managing festival event, one could face unprecedented resistance and opposition. Many persons don't see the need to engage the service of a theatre manager because such event was previously or known to be done by collective efforts with no one at the helm of affairs directing and calling the shots. As stated earlier in the previous chapter that the theatre is serious business and demands a serious approach when exploring its subtle tools to manage events, nothing should be taken for granted and never allow popular views or opinion to overshadow logical and pragmatic laid down managerial precepts, principles and strategies.

As a result of this research, it is the opinion of this researcher to state unequivocally that management has the tool and wherewithal to embellish local content to become world class entertainment as was the case of small Isi Festival that was transformed into a theatrical fiesta.

## **5.2 OBSERVATION**

During the course of this research, it was observed by the researcher that every event has its unique requirements and peculiarities, and at such demands a different approach. The above statement was prompted as a result of my initial insinuations to use my stage production management strategies for Isi festival. The outcome initially was a monumental disaster. From experience it was discovered that when dealing with persons with theatre knowledge and background for an event is totally different from dealing and working with illiterate and core Africa traditional practitioners. Whereas in the former there are laid down straight jacketed rules you must abide with in order to get the desire results but in the latter the people are the rules. They decide what to do, how to do it, when to do it and whom to do it for. For example, during the final day of the small Isi Festival celebration, at late evening when it is dark then the Odionwere alongside some family chieftains offered libations and sacrifice by slaughtering and he-goat then pour the blood on an effigy. According to my findings, this is the most important of all the rites and it is done because it is what the spirit eats and drink. At that exact moment the elders

and leaders of the community will announce that all the females should leave a particular area, and every light put out. After the announcement, at that point as a female I was compelled to leave not knowing what is going to happen next. The most annoying part for me about this particular rite was that it was the most important and significant in the entire process, and those males who are permitted by tradition to observe and participate are forbidden to narrate or tell anyone what happens during that ritualistic rites which actually empowers the Odionwere to become an authority and a deity. No one is permitted to talk about it which actually makes it mysterious. But as an academic researcher I feel those laws barring the female folks from participating in such traditional activity is an injustice and outright marginalization of the female gender, a deliberate and calculated attempt to oppress, suppress and relegate them to the background, to appear weak and inferior and at same time create some imaginary spiritual mystery around such rite.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion the researcher would like to state that a good knowledge of theatre management is important in the running of any establishment most especially in managing theatrical events or activity. If management and its principles, which include: planning, staffing, organizing, leading and controlling are integrated into every theatrical

events then we can be at par with our counterparts in Europe and America when it comes to theatre content and activities.

The researcher hopes that this project will be of value to all theatre managers, scholars, artists and management students in the university as well as the nation in general. That the project will conscientiously affects the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, so they can realize that the Art need not be neglected but rather should be boosted and supported at all levels.

#### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Management according to Weinch (178) “...is the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims.”

The author make us understand that apart from the functions of managers which include planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling, the aim of managers is to be productive and create effectiveness and efficiency in an organization. It is essential for profit and non-profit organization managers to apply certain strategies, to be able to accomplish their aims and objectives.

As a Theatre manager in training, the aim of the researcher is to open a new vista in managing certain indigenous ceremonies by making them more viable, to enable it record

unprecedented success, and achieve desire goals and objective. To do this some of the problems facing most rural communities should be first and foremost dealt with and thus the researcher recommends the following:

**(a) Government should make funds available to promote the arts and create its**

**awareness across our urban and rural communities:** In the researcher's view, the first step is creating a wide publicity about the festival, so people can be aware of it.

**(b) Provide Rural Electrification:** From my research it was discovered that most rural

communities are yet to enjoy electricity, this is predominantly the reason there is extreme darkness in our rural communities at night. Unlike urban centres where people can afford the luxury of using a generator or solar light which gives alternative power to lit up the streets at night. Due to lack of electricity in the community I carried out my research, they appeared backward in terms of development.

**(c) Beef Up Security in the Rural Community:** One of the functions of the manager is

to provide a conducive atmosphere favourable for working as well as relaxation. It should be noted that people care a lot about their safety and security of their lives and properties. Therefore for the Theatre to thrive in our rural communities, the researcher recommends that security be beefed up. For example, most of the special guests and dignitaries invited couldn't attend due to security concerns. The only police station in

the community is under staff with no sufficient arms to fight crimes and provide adequate security.

**(d) Planning is important:** In the management of any theatre, big or small planning is important because it bridges the gap between where one is and where one intends to go to. The managers must come together to strategize on what they want to achieve at every point in time. They should draw up mission statements and work towards them, as this will prevent them from derailing halfway into their targets. They should set standards and always aim high.

**(e) Government must Realize the Importance of the Arts:** Both the Federal and State Government must realize that “the arts is important to our cultural heritage and its preservation as well as our self-image projection to the outside world. The Arts inspire a sense of personal achievement and teach such important skills as character-building, self-confidence, communication, team build, development of critical assessment, problem solving skills as well as creative capabilities. The Arts has power to move the soul, lift the spirit, and expand the mind” and any government that wants to produce active and useful citizens will promote the Arts. In America for example President J. F. Kennedy believed that “art comes first before public good and that it contributes greatly to the development of the human spirit”. President Lyndon Johnson declared in 1965 at the National Endowment for Arts that “Art is a nations

most prestigious and precious heritage” , if this is so, then why does the Nigerian Government at all levels neglect the Art, our most precious heritage? The government of Europe pump large sums of money into the arts, which in turn produces large profit. Therefore, if the Federal Government wants to generate revenue from the Arts then it must invest in it. As the saying goes “what a man sows, so shall he reap.”

**(f) Media Publicity:** Theatre management practitioners must realize that every theatre activity needs massive publicity whether in city or rural community. Advertising is the promotion of ideas, goods and services. It is to inform the public about available services and correct false images and perspective.

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## APPENDIX 1

### ***Interview Questions for this Research***

*An oral interview was conducted by this researcher where some critical questions was asked the Odionwere of Idimo-Uwa Chief Ikponwonsa Osadiaye about Isi Festival also called Odiwiwun Annual Festival. Below are the questions asked during the interview.*

#### ***Question #1: What are the Processes Involved in Isi Festival?***

*Answer: The festival is done in ten days. Five days for the unseen spirit, five days for seen spirits. And in five days, cooking of the native food (usually pounded yam) is shared among groups daily. When cooking this food for emphasis, three large native pots are usually used. One contains the old yam, while the other two pots for the new yam. The reason for this is because the classes of yams cannot be cooked together or mixed up. When the yam gets done, some vibrant male youths in the land are mobilized to pound these already cooked yam.*

#### ***Question #2: What kind of festival is Isi festival?***

***Answer:** There are some fetish and ritualistic practices before, during and after the festival. Again Isi festival is largely a re-enactment of heroic deeds of our ancestors and the intervention of the god or spirit of our forefathers called Odiwiwun.*

***Question #3: Are there Serious Spiritual Undertones and Implications?***

***Answer:** Well, during those years I would say there were serious spiritual implications, but with the coming of Christianity one can be rest assured that there is really no big deal participating in the festival.*

***Question #4: Is Isi festival rigid stereotypical practice or is it flexible with provisions for modern touches?***

***Answer:** Isi festival is flexible, there is provisions for modern touches. Every single year we see a difference from the previous year. It keeps getting better.*

## *APPENDIX 2*

*Some Pictures captured during the festival*





