

## Introduction-

R. Efiiong Johnson, current Head of the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, has become a well-known name in theatre circles. He has six published plays - *Generous Donors: A Dramatic Expose on AIDS* (1997), *Son of the Land* (2000), *The Flight Has Just Begun* (2001), *Frogs at Noon* (2001), *Not Without Bones* (2001), and *the Stolen Manuscripts* (2001).

In addition, Dr. Johnson has two pedagogic works, *Playwriting: The Fundamentals* (2000), and *Play Production Processes* (2001). *Visions Towards a Mission: The Art of Interpretative Directing*, which is now receiving its baptism, is his third pedagogic work.

The seven chapters of *Visions Towards a Mission* are very well conceived and well ordered. While chapter one deals with the large vista of visions -» the society's vision, the playwright's vision, the director's vision and the vision of others (theatricians, readers, and audiences, alike) - the second chapter ably tackles the background of the directorial art, and establishes substrates, and levels of meaning in directing. Types of directors, the qualities that are desirable in a director, a director's functions, and those of his associates, are ably dealt with in this chapter.

In the remaining five chapters of *Visions Towards a Mission*, Dr. Johnson takes the reader through the details of the art of directing, sweetening the arduous task with

charming anecdotes and jokes. Chapter three shows a variety of directorial approach, including the author's own approaches which he has christened 'The Impact-Contact Aesthetics', and that one of his colleagues in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Uyo, Dr. Inih Ebong (immediate past Head of Department), which he calls 'The Cosmo-Homo Symbiosis'. In chapters four, five, and six, Dr. Johnson gets down to hrm tucks, zeroing in on the title and the information on the blurb of the published play. The cover design, the foreword, the introduction, theme, dialogue, dramatic action, characteristics, ideas, tempo, mood, rhythm, suspense and tension in chapter four, and the aesthetic yardsticks of movement, the essence of pictorialism, composition, balance and picturisation in chapter five; and in chapter six, the interpreting and directing of lines for meaning and the emphasis on lines, would be found particularly challenging by the reader.

Chapter seven deals with the novel topic of Directing the Audience, and recommends post-performance discussions by cast, crews and audiences. The issue of documentation is bravely tackled and the need to rescue the ideas of creative directors {who must, like all mortals, die sooner or later} from eventual disappearance through lack of proper documentation is stressed, even if slightly over-stated.

The provision of "Appendix: Combating Criticisms," with a barrage of questions the director needs to consider on the director to do a thorough job. -

Dr. Johnson gives us a well-chosen "Glossary of Directing-Related Terms" and his "Bibliography" is relevant and up-to-date. He has a set of questions at the end of each chapter of this new book for the diligent reader to answer. My advice is: answer those questions; you would learn a lot from doing so.

What makes Dr. Johnson's new book on directing different from the earlier works that have appeared is the fresh eye he brings to the analysis of the director's tasks and the methodical way in which he states each of the tasks. No one can read *Visions Towards a Mission: The Art of Interpretative Directing* without emerging as a more competent director. I earnestly recommend the work to both the young and the old, to both learning professionals and those who just love the theatre.

Professor Dapo Adelugba

Department of Theatre Arts

University of Ibadan

Ibadan, Nigeria.

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