

# **SOCIETY OF NIGERIA THEATRE ARTISTS (SONTA)**

## **CREATIVE WRITING AND MUSIC COMPOSITION AWARDS 2015**

On June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015, the Executive Committee constituted us into a Panel of Judges to adjudicate in the First ever SONTA Creative Writing and Music Composition Awards. The Panel of Judges was made up of:

- |                               |                              |   |             |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---|-------------|
| 1. Dr. Barclays Ayakoroma     | - NICO                       | - | Chief Judge |
| 2. Prof. Victor Dugga         | - Fed. University Lafia      | - | Member      |
| 3. Prof. Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh | - Nnamdi Azikiwe Univ. Awka- | - | Member      |
| 4. Prof. Chris Ugolo          | - University of Benin        | - | Member      |
| 5. Dr. Stephen Olusoji        | - University of Lagos        | - | Member      |

All judges participated in the process of adjudication.

SONTA Executive set the criteria and officially advertised the awards in four different categories:

1. **SONTA - Olu Obafemi Playwriting Prize** for unpublished plays (to encourage the art of playwriting among young writers for the theatre)
2. **SONTA - Chris Iyimoga Master Playwright Prize** (to stimulate continuous creative output among established playwrights)
3. **SONTA - Chris Iyimoga Dance Libretto Prize** (for unpublished dance librettos to create more awareness on scripting for dance theatre)
4. **SONTA - Chris Iyimoga Art Music Prize** (for unpublished Art Music compositions to promote art music composition)

A total of nine (9) entries were received in the following categories:

<b>SONTA - Olu Obafemi Playwriting Prize</b>	–	3 entries
<b>SONTA - Chris Iyimoga Master Playwright Prize</b>	–	2 entries
<b>SONTA - Chris Iyimoga Dance Libretto Prize</b>	–	1 entry
<b>SONTA - Chris Iyimoga Art Music Prize</b>	–	3 entries

1. **SONTA - Olu Obafemi Playwriting Prize** for unpublished plays (to encourage the art of playwriting among young writers for the theatre)

Three plays were submitted for consideration under this award. These include:

- a. *The Pact* by Tosin Kooshima Tume  
(Published, violates the criteria for selection)
- b. *When Women Go Naked* by Nwagbo Pat Obi
- c. *Specks in Our Eye* by Jerry Alagbaoso  
(Published, violates the criteria for selection)

### **Decision**

The award is given to *When Women Go Naked* by Nwagbo Pat Obi.

A play on an outmoded form of patriarchy that is impervious to social change. Ogana, the protagonist is a wealthy man who uses his wealth to become the king of Umundiagu. It is however the domestic narrative of his refusal to give Udenkwo, his orphaned niece's hand in marriage to Udunna because he was less endowed. His great struggles to establish a dynasty for himself leads to the tragic death of his only son, Akubuike.

The writer weaves an interesting cultural setting in which the play takes place. The actions are amenable to staging but the stage directions appear more in tune with screen scripts that tailored for the stage. The play has prospects especially with good editing.

**2. SONTA - Chris Iyimoga Master Playwright Prize** (to stimulate continuous creative output among established playwrights)

Two plays were submitted for consideration under this award:

a. *Death and the King's Grey Hair* by Denja Abdullahi

b. 'If wishes were Horses' by Bolaji Jonathan Folasayo  
(Unpublished play with prospects but violates the criteria for selection)

**Decision**

The award is given to *Death and the King's Grey Hair* by Denja Abdullahi.

A play set in Jukun society at a time when it was customary to have kings reign only for a short time. In the play, the current king, Esutu outlives the expectation of the kingmakers. They deploy several strategies but fail in their antics to get the king to willfully take poison and end his reign. This is where the semblance to a well-known play with a similar title starts and ends. The writer subverts the tradition by moving the story from the normal diatribe on transition from one reign to the other to inject a clamor for change to tradition when he infuses the play with pro-democracy activism. The play is laden with amusing proverbs, dramatic ironies and well-developed characterization. It harvests Jukun tradition in a well-researched manner complete with songs and dances thereby opening up new vistas to appreciate the rich cultures within Nigeria. The play is grammatically sound and was published in a collection titled *Death and the King's Grey Hair and Other Plays* in 2014 by Kraft Books, Ibadan

**3. SONTA - Chris Iyimoga Dance Libretto Prize** (for unpublished dance librettos, to create more awareness on scripting for dance theatre)

Only one script was received in this category: *Tribal Marks* by Tosin Kooshima Tume.

**Decision**

It is published already in a collection of Librettos, which disqualifies it. One of the criteria for the award is that the script should be unpublished. It is however honorably mentioned to encourage dance artists to develop and write down their scripts as a way of preserving ideas and providing a repertory of dance performance scripts.

**4. SONTA - Chris Iyimoga Art Music Prize** (for unpublished Art Music compositions to promote art music composition)

Two candidates presented three materials for the art music segment of the maiden edition of SONTA competition. The two entries were received from Chinedu Osinigwe and one from Olupemi Oludare. We noted that one of the guidelines for assessment is that there must be at least three entries for an award to be given but we had three entries from two composers. The Panel recommends that the prize be awarded to the most deserving of the two entries in this aspect of creativity to kick start competition in this segment.

The two candidates presented varied materials of good musicological standards and theatrical elements:

1) Olupemi Oludare's entries are scored as follows:

- a) Harmonic content 14/20
- b) Melodic content 13/20
- c) Form. 15/20
- d) Theatrical Elements 13/20
- e) General impression 14/20

**Total 69/100**

2) Chinedu Osinigwe submitted two well-arranged indigenous folk songs. One was sacred and the other secular. They are scored as follows:

- a) Harmonic content 12/20
- b) Melodic content. 10/20
- c) Form. 09/20
- d) Theatrical Elements 00/20
- e) General Impression 09/20

**Total. 40/100.**

The Prize in this category of Music composition is awarded to 'Ojo L'oko Agbado' by Olupemi Oludare.

Olupemi Oludare's entries are programmatic music, which combine vocal, orchestration with suggested stage adaptation. It is a pan-Yoruba neo-classical) art music composed for Western orchestra and African instruments. The instrumentation is soothing and malleable to filmic sound tracking.

### **Observations**

- a. The awards are certainly useful to stimulate and reward creativity among Nigerians.
- b. Dance Libretto category could not be awarded in this maiden edition.
- c. The publicity for the awards may have started late. The fact that it was mostly online may account for the low patronage in terms of entries in this maiden edition. With more enlightenment and better publicity, next year's awards should be more competitive.
- d. The awards should especially be open to harvest from creative works submitted as academic works by postgraduate students and senior undergraduate students.
- e. We are grateful the Sponsors and to SONTA for instituting the prizes and for giving us the opportunity to adjudicate in the first ever SONTA Creative Writing and Music Composition Awards.

Signed.

**Professor Victor S. Dugga**

For: Panel of Judges