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## All Hail AE-FUNAI, Host Of SONTA 2021

Casmir ONYEMUCHARA

The Department of Theatre Arts, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State has secured the hosting right for the 2021 Conference of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA).

This news was made known yesterday by the Acting Head of Department of Theatre Arts, Dr.

Charles Okwuowulu when he led a team from the department to pay a courtesy call on the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Sunday Elom, to congratulate him on his selection as Vice-Chancellor, and pledged their support to his administration.

He noted that SONTA is an umbrella body for all Nigerian Theatre/Film and Cultural Studies lecturers in tertiary institutions in the country and abroad, adding that these professionals would be congregating in AE-FUNAI for their 2021 conference.

Dr. Okwuowulu further explained that one of the prerequisites for granting a hosting right to an institution is that the hosting department must have a state-of-the-arts theatre complex, and



Ag. Head, Department of Theatre Arts, Dr. Charles Okwuowulu (L) handing over a copy of his speech to the VC, Professor Sunday Elom during the visit

SONTA News is an annual publication of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA). All article, news reports, play/film reviews, picture stories, and updates should be forwarded by email to [sontaeditor@gmail.com](mailto:sontaeditor@gmail.com). Editor: Barclays Foubiri AYAKOROMA (BFA)

commended the immediate past administration of the University for ensuring that the Department of Theatre Arts, AE-FUNAI, has a modern arts theatre.

He added that the Department of Theatre Arts of the University which was started about four years ago, has recorded more successes than many Universities that have been in existence for over two decades, stressing that the achievements recorded by the department endeared the national executive of SONTA to award the University the hosting right for her 34<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting and 2021 International Conference. He pointed out some of the achievements to include two film productions – *The Lost Soul* and *Tara's Diary*.

Dr. Okwuowulu also used the opportunity to request the approval of the University Management for the two educational films to be made available to students for a token, to prepare them for life on campus, and equally informed the Vice-Chancellor that the executive of SONTA would be visiting the University on Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2021 to assess the preparedness of the department for the forthcoming conference.

While welcoming them at his conference room, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Elom commended the Department for their various achievements so far, especially in the production of the two films and securing the hosting right for the 2021 Conference and 34<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of SONTA, and approved the hosting of the events in the University.

“We are proud of you for making remarkable achievements, especially in the successful production of those two films. I also commend you for securing the hosting right for 2021 SONTA Conference and Annual General Meeting.”

The Vice-Chancellor further encouraged the Department to keep making the University proud, and approved the sale of the two films to fresh students, hoping that the students would learn moral lessons from them.

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VC, Professor Sunday Elom (6th R) and some principal officers in a group photograph with staff of the Theatre Arts Department led by their Head, Dr, Charles Okwuowulu (5th L), during the courtesy call



# AE-FUNAI: THE ROAD TO HOSTING SONTA 2021

Casmir ONYEMUCHARA

memorable one.

Consequently, Dr. Okwuowulu swung into action and inaugurated the Local Organising Committee (LOC) with Dr. Ruth Epochi-Olise and Mr. Casmir Onyemuchara as Chairperson and Secretary, respectively, among other sub-committees, ranging from media and publicity, fundraising, transportation and accommodation, and welfare, among others.

On Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2021, the SONTA

The news of getting the hosting right for the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention and International Conference of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA) was received with joy amidst fanfare.

The founder of the Department of Theatre Arts of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, and current Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) of the University, Professor Ameh Denis Akoh, who broke the news to members of staff, was highly elated as he felt it is a great feat and achievement to have come out successful in the highly contested bidding with most of the elite institutions in Nigeria.

He therefore charged the Head, Department of Theatre Arts, Dr. Charles Okwuowulu, as the convener, to take advantage of the opportunity to make AE-FUNAI SONTA '21 a



Executive, led by the President, Professor Alex Chinwuba Asigbo, paid the maiden visit to the Department of Theatre Arts of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo (AE-FUNAI), to ascertain the level of preparedness.

In the interactive meeting with the LOC, Prof. Alex Asigbo congratulated AEFUNAI for emerging as the host, which according to him, is not a mean feat considering the fact that the Department is very young; and reiterated that much is expected from the host institution and.

He commended the Convener and HOD, Dr. Charles Okwuowulu, for catching up with the tide, especially the timely constitution the LOC; and he charged members to be up to the



onerous task as there are benchmarks that have been set over the years for hosting SONTA Annual Conferences.

As a statutory provision in the Society, the President handed over to the LOC a cheque



for the sum of *one hundred thousand naira* (N100,000.00) only, as seed money, informing that the token knowing that the LOC has put in place the mechanism to raise the necessary funds.

At a courtesy visit to the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sunday Elom, which followed, Prof. Alex Asigbo congratulated the VC on his appointment as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-Chancellor of AE-FUNAI and applauded the developmental strides in the University as well as the Vice Chancellor's love for the theatre profession, which, according to the SONTA President, has endeared the Society to present him a distinguished leadership award during the conference.

The elated Vice-Chancellor heartily thanked the SONTA Exco for choosing AE-FUNAI for the SONTA Annual International Conference 2021; and reaffirmed his resolve to support the department and SONTA in general, where possible, despite the fact that the University is still a budding one.

In attendance at the Vice-Chancellor's Board room were the SONTA Exco led by Professor Asigbo, the Head, Department of Theatre Arts, Dr. Charles Okwuowulu, and members of the LOC and Principal Officers of the University including Professor Ameh Denis Akoh, DVC (Academic).

Not known for taking things for granted, the SONTA Exco, led by the President, Prof. Alex

Asigbo, returned to AE-FUNAI on Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2021, for final inspection and assessment of the level of preparedness by the Department to host SONTA 2021.

During this visit, the SONTA Exco met with the LOC to tidy and tighten all the grey areas for the hosting of a hitch free conference.

The LOC chairperson, Dr. Ruth Epochi-Olise, informed the Exco that the Department Arts is 95% ready for the Conference as most of the items on the checklist as presented to the LOC by the president and his Exco had been addressed.

The SONTA Exco had no doubt with the level of preparedness and thanked the DVC (Academic), Professor Ameh Denis Akoh, and the Head, Department of Theatre Arts, Dr. Charles Okwuowulu, for their support and prayed for them to succeed.

*The journey of a thousand miles, they say, starts with one step.* AE-FUNAI has taken quite some steps towards actualising SONTA 2021. With God on our side, we will deliver!

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# UAT Librarian Appreciate Theatre Arts Department For Books Donation

The Librarian of University of Africa, Toru-Orua (UAT), Dr. Mrs. Rose Okiy, has stressed the importance of books in the educational and academic development of lecturers and students in any institution, saying the availability of quality books will be invaluable in the forthcoming accreditation exercise in the University by the National Universities Commission (NUC).

Dr. Okiy stated this on Wednesday, 28 April,

2021, in her office, when staff and students of the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Africa, Toru-Orua (UAT), led by the Head of Department, Professor Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma, donated a second set of seventy three titles of books comprising textbooks, plays and journals, to the University Library.

The University Librarian said the strategy of Professor Ayakoroma in networking to get books from his theatre colleagues is ingenuous and exemplary, hoping that senior academics in UAT will borrow a leaf from the unique approach to enhance the status of the University Library, considering the fact that Government cannot do it alone.

According to her, the library is the heartbeat of any academic institution, and that the University will face challenges with the pending NUC accreditation if the Library is not well equipped to a considerable level.

She assured Professor Ayakoroma and his team





that the books and journals that have been generously donated will be properly documented and displayed on the shelves so that lecturers, students and external researchers can put them to very good use.

Earlier, while making the presentation on behalf of staff and students of the Department of Theatre Arts, Professor Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma said, as he had noted in the earlier donation of books to UAT Library, the gesture was informed by his commitment to improve book and reading culture in the Department and, by extension, the University community.

“The donation of books for a second time is a reflection of our commitment to academic excellence in our young University; and we believe that other senior colleagues will be challenged to emulate this approach to improve the state of the UAT Library. We

promise to continue to use our contacts to continuously donate books and journals to the UAT Library”, he said.

Professor Ayakoroma also use the occasion to deliver copies of five authored books by Chief Emmanuel Guanah (now late) that were donated by his first son, Raymos B. Guanah Esq, Senior Special Assistant on Political Matters to the Deputy Senate President, Senator Obarisi Ovie Omo-Agege.

Professor Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma was accompanied by Messrs Gift Benue Zibima, Ebifaghe Owei Fawei, Samuel Jackson Udo, Tari Waripamo Ineritei, and some students of the Department of Theatre Arts, UAT.

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# UAT Bayelsa Theatre Inducts New Thespians

Students of Department of Theatre Arts, University of Africa Toru-Orua, under the umbrella of Association of Theatre Arts Students, on Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2021, organised what they called, “**Induction 2021**,” at the Civic Centre, Toru-Orua in Sagbama Local Government of Bayelsa State, Nigeria, an event to formally welcome seventeen (17) new students into the UAT Thespian Family.

Welcoming guests to the occasion, Head, Department of Theatre Arts, UAT, Professor Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma, noted that the theatre profession, which was seen as an ignoble profession, as of the time he went to study the course, has assumed a different dimension, especially with the positive strides recorded by the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood.

He expressed joy that both old and new students of the Department showed serious commitment to the programme, stating that the platform has provided an impetus for the Department to mount public theatre performances possibly every month to keep members of the University and host communities entertained.

According to him, the audience is key to any theatre performance and that theatre performance can only take place with the living presence of an audience; stressing that the presence of staff, students and members of the host communities is an indication of the bright prospects of UAT Bayelsa Theatre, which has already opened a YouTube channel: [uatbayelsatheatre](https://www.youtube.com/channel/uatbayelsatheatre).

In his remark, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Education, Professor 'Demola Jolayemi, said the place of theatre in entertainment and leisure cannot be overemphasised, stating that it was imperative for lecturers involved in production preparation and performance to ensure family members shared in the dramatic experiences for them to better appreciate the efforts.

The Induction, usually performed by whom they called, Chief Priest, was superintended







by Gift Benue Zibima (aka Geebonz); and it traced the history of the theatre profession to 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, where Thespis was acclaimed to be the first actor in choral performances at the Acropolis in honour of the Greek god, Dionysus.

The Induction was followed by a performance package, titled, “A Nite in the Theatre,” which kept members of the audience entertained,

including the Registrar, Dr. Akpoebi Adesi; University Librarian, Dr. Mrs. Rose Okiy; Dean, Faculty of Basic and Applied Sciences, Professor Francis Sikoki; Acting Dean of Students Affairs, Dr. Benson Dunu; Acting Director, ICT, Dr. Balamurugan Easwarn, and many other UAT officials and students.

Expressing appreciation after the event on behalf of staff and students of the Department, Prof. Barclays Ayakoroma, thanked all those who found time to attend, specially the Vice Chancellor, Professor Kingston Nyamapfene and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Admin.), Professor Iwekumo Agbozu for their support, assuring that the Department will work assiduously to actualise its vision of a sustainable UATBAYELSATHEATRE, which will be strategic in ameliorating boredom in the UAT family as well as the host communities.

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# Igbinedion University Celebrates Lancelot Imasuen @50

Perekeme ODON



It was a truly special and memorable experience as Nigeria's premier and leading private university, Igbinedion University, organised a colloquium to join the country festival in honour of an iron-jawed icon of the Nigerian motion picture industry, Amb. Lancelot Oduwarene Imasuen's 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary celebration at the Main Library Conference Hall, Igbinedion University, Okada on Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2021.

The golden colloquium also marked Lancelot Imasuen's 25 years of excellent service as a distinctive filmmaker with style that manages to navigate both mainstreams Nollywood, and African independent cinema.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Lawrence Ikechukwu Ezemonye, in his introductory remark, informed that the Benin Film Academy (BFA) under the watchful leadership and supervision of Amb.



Lancelot has received over 50 local and international awards, including the Zuma International Film Festival Finalist's Best Film, titled '*Depression*', and Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival finalist Best Short Film.

"It may interest you to know that for 25 years now, this creative artist that we celebrate today remains an accomplished filmmaker and director. Amb. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen popularly known as D'Guvnor, and crowned in this university, 'The Living Legend' has transverse solemnly the chosen field of his endeavour with so much success."

He gave God the glory and eulogised a man who has productively given so much to the entertainment industry, adding: "No amount of recognition, or honour bestowed on him by the Igbinedion University to this 'Living Legend' and icon of the creative industry would be too great."

Prof. Ezemonye primed that it is instructive that all Lancelot Imasuen's films, his endeavours, creative writings and actions have given the Nollywood industry, and the academia a point of reference both of growth and visibility, saying: "Today, the works of this icon that we celebrate have received accolades both locally and internationally too numerous to mention, and they speak volumes."

The Vice-Chancellor reminded everyone about the university's Nollywood Project 101, functioning under the auspices of the award-winning Benin Film Academy in affiliation with the Igbinedion University headed by Amb. Lancelot Imasuen, fits into this bill, and is well positioned to enhance the skill acquisition of the Theatre Arts department of the great university, as well as other willing departments to create and carve a niche for them through this exemplary programme.

Speaking on the theme, *“Cultural 'Revival through The Screen”* include guest speakers Professor Irene Isoken Ogunloye, Professor of African Drama, Gender, Women and Film Studies, University of Jos and Professor Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma (BFA), Head, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Africa, Toru-Orua (UAT), Bayelsa State, who took turns to pay glowing tributes to Amb. Lancelot, and emphasised the need to embrace, promote and sustain Nigeria's rich cultural heritage.

According to Prof. Ayakoroma, “we looked at the works of Amb. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, D'Guvnor, as we call him, and how he has promoted culture through his works, and these are words on marble that would be remembered forever.”

Prof. Irene Ogunloye also affirmed in an interview that, “the summary of my lecture in Lancelot Imasuen's work is that culture is man-made, and therefore it can be deconstructed and reconstructed for the good of humanity.”

Other contributors were Brandi Cullum, Founder/CEO Brandi Cullum Group International, Georgia, USA; and Prof. Tunde Agara, Dean, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Igbinedion University, represented by Dr. James Eshiet, Head, Department of Theatre Arts, who said the Colloquium was another great feat of the

Institution that will positively impact and inspire students.

Amb. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, whose signature style is to tell quirky, slightly other worldly but culturally-oriented stories, often character-driven, but in a very visually distinctive way, expressed deep appreciation to the Principal Officers, Management and Staff of Igbinedion University, for the honour, and pledged his support to drive excellence in the art.

“I feel really loved, by giving God the glory and salute the talent he has given to me, and the way He has directed me to use my talent that has attracted this kind of huge celebration to my person. I salute Igbinedion University and all other institutions, and places that did celebrate me;” the world renowned film maker said.

Sensational Nollywood actor, Nosa Rex, who was present at the occasion to honour Lancelot Imasuen said, “Lancelot is great and a living legend; that's why we are celebrating him. He has





done so much for us, created a niche for himself and making us proud.”

Also speaking, another of Nollywood's finest, Diamond Okpechi said, “Lancelot is a father and one man I don't joke with. He is a man I've got so much love and respect for. So, celebrating him is like celebrating my father.”

The President, Directors' Guild of Nigeria (DGN), Sir Victor Okhai, appreciated the Vice-Chancellor for the step taken by the University to choose a very credible partner in Amb. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, saying: “There is no greater honour than one that comes from home. Amb. Lancelot Imasuen is a beacon of light in which we are proud of.”

Born 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1971, Lancelot Oduwarene Imasuen is a Nigerian film director, scriptwriter, film producer and CEO of the Benin Film Academy, an institution set to groom young talents in the movie industry. His ability to perceive and depict the tone of contemporary society is shown in his movies, ranging from *Yesterday*, *Issakaba*, *Last Burial*, *Private Sin*, *Masterstroke*, *ATM*, *Gbege*, *Wede* and *Invasion 1896*, to mention only a few.

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## Partnership Deal – Igbinedion University And Directors' Guild Of Nigeria

Perekeme ODON

Nigeria's premier and leading private university, Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State, is partnering with the Directors' Guild of Nigeria (DGN) in the area of training and capacity building to enable its students acquire sustainable entrepreneurial skills.

The Vice-Chancellor of the institution, Professor Lawrence Ikechukwu Ezemonye, made this known in his opening remark at the Main Library Conference Hall, Igbinedion University, Okada, on 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2021, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary celebration in honour of an icon in the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, Ambassador Lancelot Oduwarene Imasuen.

Prof. Ezemonye acknowledged the contributions of the world acclaimed film maker and said the historic event afforded a distinctive prospect for the institution's theatre arts students not only to tangibly





interrelate with experts of the creative arts but also benefit from the Master Class that will trail as a major outcome of the Colloquium.

He said: "Today is a unique day and this is a token of our reflection on industry-academia interface. As the pioneer private university in Nigeria, established in 1999, 22 years old and still counting, this University has a firm commitment to academic excellence, scholarship and desire to equip our graduates with the tool of survival."

The President, Directors' Guild of Nigeria (DGN), Sir Victor Okhai, expressed appreciation to the Vice-Chancellor for choosing a very credible partner in Amb. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen; adding that he was presenting an award on behalf of DGN to the celebrant in recognition of his works, and as co-founder of the professional Guild.

"There is no greater honour than one that

comes from home. Amb. Lancelot Imasuen is a beacon of light of which we are proud. We're happy to be associated with this University and to partner you in the Nollywood Master Class as you have the authentic resources to tap from. The creative head of any production in the film industry is the director. It is his vision and everything starts and revolves around him. Everything you see is the director's signature; that's why it is called the director's film;" he informed.

President Okhai extolled the institution, saying: "You have done something very special and unique, and the first to affiliate with an authentic Nollywood Guild. By your partnership with DGN, you can be sure that your students will not only be receiving lectures but as a matter of duty be mentored by members of the Guild. There are so many universities that have an opportunity to do what you're doing, but they probably never saw tomorrow."



The DGN President stressed about the guild establishing student membership to evolve students into practising directors, emphasising that the DGN Annual Academy Conference as a synergy between town and gown would be implemented soon to afford the Guild a unique opportunity and veritable platform to tell the genuine Nollywood story with a publication that would be widely accepted globally for the advancement of academics, and for our people to tell the authentic Nollywood story.

Reacting to the DGN President's remark, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ezomonye, asserted that the University will sponsor the hosting of the maiden DGN Annual Academic Conference in furtherance of the creative aspect of the University's goals for academic excellence.

“I will like to remind you, and let you know of our posture that this is the first private

university in Nigeria; and in keeping with that first position, we are providing you an opportunity to host your 1<sup>st</sup> DGN Annual Academic Conference here in Igbinedion University, Okada;” he affirmed.

The Vice-Chancellor further officially announced the signing of an MOU with the Directors' Guild of Nigeria (DGN) in collaboration with the Igbinedion University, and requested the guild to present the roster of the Master Class presenters and when to commence, announcing that the first set of facilitators would be Professor Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma (BFA), Professor Irene Salami-Agunloye and Brandi Callum; assuring the Guild that the University will provide the facilities and logistics for the classes, which will be duly incorporated into the Institution's credit units.

He averred thus: “Mentors and mentees are the hallmarks of academic settings, and we



have to bring them back. As a University upholding creativity as a device of every human developmental quest, the Institution deems it fit to expose her students particularly in the Departments of Theatre Arts, English and Literary Studies, and Mass Communication to the world of experiences honoured by the great Nollywood stars who are present. Beyond that, we shall also be expecting certification of skilled programmes.”

Present at the event were Amb. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen and his wife, Mrs. Aimuamwonsa Lancelot Imasuen; Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Igbinedion University, Prof Mrs. Deborah Omotsefe Odejimi; Representative of the Deputy Governor of Edo State, Hon. Zibiri Muhizu Marvellous; Head, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Africa, Toru-Orua (UAT), Bayelsa State, Prof. Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma; Director, Centre for Gender Studies, University of Jos, Prof. Irene Isoken Agunloye; National Secretary, DGN, Mr. Uchenna Agbo; National PRO, DGN, Perekeme Odon (*Perewinkle*); Chief of Staff to the DGN President, Mr Famous Otakponwem; and Director, Benin Film Academy (BFA), Ossa Earliece.

Nollywood stakeholders present at the occasion include Jeremiah Onoge, Lovebest Igie, Nosa Rex, Diamond Okpechi, Moses Ino-Jonah (PRO AMP, Edo State), Iyobosa Enaibe Osifo, Amen Imasuen, staff and students of Igbinedion University, Okada (IUO).

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# Reinvent Theatre For Societal Development – Professor Saviour Agoro

Etete ENIDENEZE

**T**he Ivory Tower is the fountain of knowledge; thus the task of university dons is to develop or redevelop knowledge for the advancement of mankind and society. And it is importantly so, for Nigeria, which is enmeshed in lack of effective leadership, social vices, criminality, disunity, insecurity and economic downturn.

One ritual at which, the academia receive and unveil newly generated theories or ideas and solutions to problems of a country willing to adopt, is Inaugural Lecture. The event is about the



most prestigious in the career of a professor who is invited to present a lecture on his or her major research feat(s), embodying all that has been done by him or her in a specialised area. The university also takes pride in rolling out its erudite scholars to take turns in addressing the community.

So, it was the turn of Prof. Saviour Anari Agoro, pioneer lecturer, and pioneer Head of Departments of Theatre Arts and English and Literary Studies, simultaneously, in Niger Delta University (NDU), Amassoma, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. His outing was the 38<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture of NDU. It took place Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2021 at the University's Auditorium.

Prof. Agoro's lecture, titled, "The Practice of Alternative Theatre in Nigeria," is important, considering the challenges facing theatre arts and the need to reinvent the conventional theatre and theatre Arts, especially, through new media technologies.

A Professor of Dramatic Literature and Theatre Arts, Agoro, took a critical look at trends in the discipline, and proposed what he developed over the years and calls, "the Ultimate Theory of Theatre." He espoused the concept of *alternative theatre* and advocated its adoption as a means to meet audiences' and society's needs, beyond entertainment purposes, which he criticised, often debases culture and moral values.



By tradition, a professorial inaugural lecture is taken hook, line and sinker, as the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Samuel Edoumiekumo, observed at the occasion as there is no room for questions and answer session. Yet, one will do a bit of journalistic featuring and analytical reporting, though within the academic context of the lecture and current developments in media and communication.

Indeed, Prof. Saviour Agoro's lecture is timely in view of the initially-threatened, but now-expanding theatre arts, as physical stages for performances were going extinct due initially to the cinema convention, and later, terrestrial television, satellite and digital broadcasting, new media technologies, general system mobile (GSM) phones, and social media platforms. Really, the frontiers of theatre arts has, expanded. It has moved farther from its traditional stage performances and film-based presentations of plays in cinema halls. Currently, more of the legacy media of radio, television and new multimedia technologies, have helped to step up drama presentations and movies. The new technologies, have provided access, cheaper production, faster and wider dissemination of contents to larger audiences or where need be, to target recipients of entertainment messages, with better quality.







The initial threat to conventional theatre arts is like the case of mass communication discipline and its sub-professions, especially, journalism and advertising, let alone public relations, which rather quickly took advantage of the ICTs trends. And the threats, still appears to be so, but both Theatre Arts and Mass Communication are undergoing multidisciplinary transformations and taken on aspects of other disciplines within the humanities, social sciences and Computer Science.

In what appears to be identity and boundary conflicts, Theatre Arts, English Language, English Literature, Linguistics and Mass Communication are all broadening their curriculum and practice domains to, aspects of Media Arts, Communication Studies, Media Studies, Public Relations and Advertising, Journalism, Cultural Studies, Film Studies, Multimedia Studies, Development Communication, Social and Behaviour Change Communication, and so on.

Additional names are being added to the identity of the departments in order to sustain relevance. The trend also seems to be a way of marketing the different, but related programmes to candidates. It is also to tailor the programmes to the employment needs of graduates and employers.

Yet, to know which is which programme is beginning to constitute a problem, especially to those who wish to take any of them at the undergraduate level, and somehow, at postgraduate level. To know who is who in academic and professional practice specialisation is equally a problem, even though the media industry is a vast one that needs various professionals.

Aside these issues analysed by me, Prof. Agoro is evidently on track in his permutations. For instance, as he underscored in his inaugural lecture, entertainment has not only become big business, but it is also the driver of tourism and economies in many societies. And this trend is giving more hope to theatre and dramatic arts, which comes in handy in the aspects of film, video, stand-up comedy; carnivals; popular culture, stardom, celebrity-ship and fan-dom, and so on, that are now easily produced, disseminated and propagated to both global and small audiences.

These trends have enhanced commercialisation of entertainment, to audiences through various channels and different patterns of charges and means of payments. Added to this is the issue of monopoly of the dramatic entertainment industry by guilds upon guilds in their different

areas of control, as rightly pointed out by Prof. Agoro. His emphasis on commercialisation and union-based monopoly have indeed become serious issues of concern in dramatic and theatrical performances, same as in mass communication in which even news coverage is paid for by sources, against theory and ethics.

Therefore, Prof. Agoro's theories and advocacies are important for Theatre Arts to take advantage of the trends; to further reposition its discipline and practice for societal benefit, and above all, to the glory of God, as posited by him.

Prof. Agoro who has traversed the territory of Dramatic Literature and Theatre Arts, a journey he began from the early 1980s to now that he is at the apogee of specialised knowledge, spoke with his usual calmness, yet in a firebrand way, at the NDU's Auditorium, to the applause of the audience. He authoritatively submitted that, dramatic and theatrical performances must glorify God, a perspective, he summed up as the Ultimate Theory of Theatre, propounded by him, from a pool of academic studies and professional



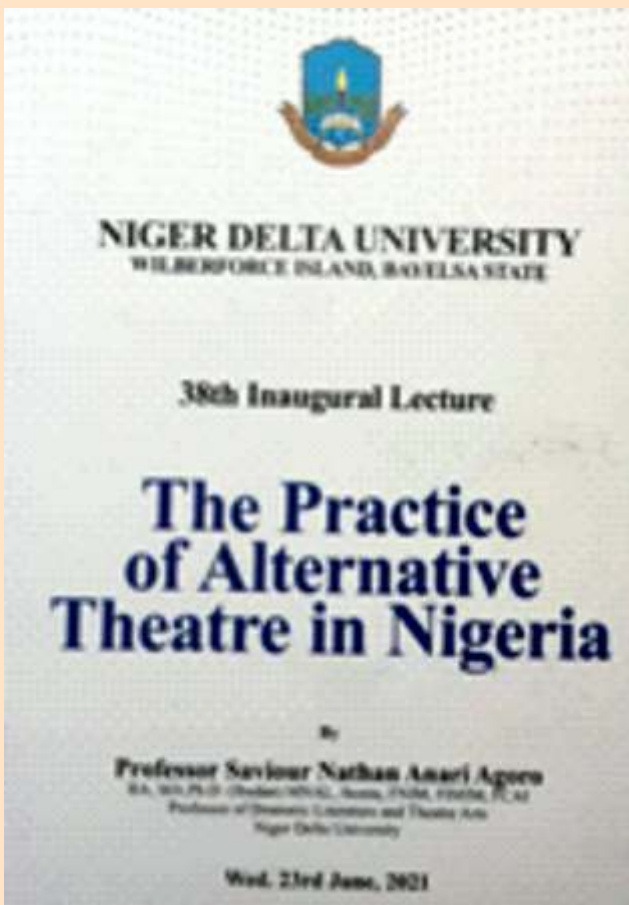
practices, over the years.

“As I was introduced, I am also a Man of God. I am an ordained pastor in Greater Evangelism World Crusade. God has been helping me. So, I have to help in promoting God, through my academic and professional callings.”

From his hand bag of artistic humour, he cited an instance of how God protected him. He narrated that, he would have been killed in the farm, when as a baby, he crawled away from the mat his mother had laid him to sleep into the bushes; and a famer mistook him to be an animal in the foliage and was looking to a way to kill him with a machete, but for the quick intervention of his mother. This was during the Nigerian-Biafran War, when they had taken refuge in the bush. For the fact that he grown up to become a professor, according to him, it was a good reason to glorify God with his knowledge.

“I cannot promote Devil. What has the devil given to me, that I will promote him?” he humorously and rhetorically asked.

Prof. Agoro harped on the need for theatre and dramatic writers and practitioners to use their works and skills to give contents beyond entertainment, so as to promote God, as well as offer lessons, which will make human beings and society better. He posited that, a potent way out of the economic and profit-motive factor; debacle of monopoly by guilds and culturally and



morally debasing contents, is alternative theatre.

Alternative theatre, according to him, encapsulates dramas produced without real or no commercial interest at all, and are independently produced cheaply, then presented to audiences, free of charge. They serve entertainment purpose, but go beyond that to criticise and correct socio-political ills; promote morality and foster the common good of society.

He contrasted alternative theatre with commercial or mainstream theatre, mainly, that the latter are large organisations set up by businessmen to make profit; hence, entertainment goal goes with commercial intent, which could bring about contents not really meant for the good of society. Commercial theatre falls into the same category of mainstream or established theatre, which are owned by government. He contended that these mainstream theatre organisations, pander to the interests of their owners, thus are less critical of the ills of those funding their productions.

Agoro's perspectives are useful, thus, his call for Inclusion of the Ultimate Theory of Theatre and Alternative theatre as a course and an area of specialisation in the curriculum of the discipline is appropriate. This is more so for the Department of Theatre Arts, NDU.

After all, as he put, ordinarily, a theatre arts graduate is trained to create entertaining performances, and be able to work independently, even though, he or she could get employed in theatre companies, cultural centres and elsewhere. But that, the scenario of monopoly by guilds, as in the Nollywood and exploitation of young talents by the financiers of films and inadequate theatre and performing companies, make it difficult for graduates to get engaged in the trade to utilise their potential.

Today's theatre department, that of NDU, in particular, as recommended by Prof. Agoro, thus, need to adequately teach, learn and practice alternative ways to writing, producing and disseminating drama-messages to audiences. To this I would like to add, that Agoro's submissions

are workable, with the use of new media technologies.

To produce competent Theatre Arts graduates who could practice to earn a living, Agoro called for discipline on the part of lecturers and students, to avoid use of sexual and other forms of gratifications to give or get marks for assessments. He identified feasible aspects for alternative practice as community theatre; educational, children, developmental, religious or Christian and political, ethnic and feminist theatre, besides performing art, as niche areas. These areas, he noted, would impact positively on society, and glorify God, the Ultimate Being, more than the commercial and government-sponsored productions.

To subscribe to Agoro's views, I reiterate that the new multimedia technologies and convergence, that is, combination of the old models of dramatic theatre with current models/new technologies, will boost alternative theatre practice in Nigeria, and even other African countries. Note that the inaugural lecturer, is not dismissing mainstream commercial and Government theatre or profit-based entertainment. He is rather of the stance that, independent and non-profit modes should be encouraged to exist with the commercial and government-owned models, for the interest of the commoners, good of society and to the glory the Almighty God.

Indeed, his grand theory of Ultimate Theatre, as well as the advocated alternative theatre practices, ought to serve as one potent solution to the plethora of moral, leadership and economic decay in Nigeria, where fear of God has been jettisoned.

**Edited News Story Culled from:**

*<https://theperiscopeglobal.com/2021/06/26/reinventing-theatre-for-societys-good-prof-agoros-ultimate-theory-and-alternative-practices-to-the-rescue/>*

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# Rich Muse (A Poem)

Michael Bassey IREM

Things of the spirit are not for canal men  
They are done by rich mused men  
In literature, for reasoning  
For reciting, for reading

Things of the spirit are unique, they stand out  
Seeking, searching for the vector to pull out  
Out of Nigeria as a no homogenous nation  
And any, every other heterogeneous nation

Are the above lines obscure?  
Am I not just on cue?  
I know why I say what I said  
Listen below to why the said is said

When I read *War of the Tin Gods*  
I saw the wrestling of Nigeria's demi-gods  
In the arena of orature  
Yes! In the vicinity of literature

Confused pen manipulators of Nigeria  
With clashing solution to problems of Nigeria  
The text has an eventual end  
But the burden seems to have no end

Are the above lines still obscure?  
Am I still just not on cue?  
I still know why I say what I said  
Yet, listen below to why the said is said

I once read *Once Upon a School*  
Days and years back in school  
I saw politicians and politics in dangerous practice  
Watering and nurturing young minds for the antics

I saw what I read in where I live  
I never concluded about where I live  
Till I saw what I read in schools of Nigeria  
Then I knew that what I read is about Nigeria

I believe I am now not obscure  
I believe I am now on cue  
You now know why the said is said  
Wellm if not, just listen yet to why it's said

I saw the ancient steps to the present  
The past, which affects the present  
Yes! Because if it's a million years of history  
It can never be thrown behind in a hurry

You can understand this in *The Reign of Pascal Amusu*  
Only if the history of Nigeria, you are used to  
Not cultural but military and democratic history  
That is the truth no matter the used theory

Am I not far now from ambiguity?  
For now, I am far from obscurity  
My meaning has been unveiled  
Read further if it's still veiled

In *The Reign...* are billion words in few pages  
Well compressed for all sexes and ages  
But Nigerian personalities are given masks  
Contorted anagrams of their names form the mask

So, armies' invasion will not be just  
He never mentioned Awka, Oyo or Jos  
A rich mused man exhibits wisdom  
To protect his head and chiefdom

I now have a boundary with obscurity  
There is a barrier between I and ambiguity  
If you don't think so  
Read and you will see it so

I said all with my interpretative licence  
So, I am not expecting python dancers  
Rather, the desired and expected change  
Not this federal, state and local chain

Who wrote these and *Obidike: The Last Warrior*?  
Who is this whose pen is like a terror?  
Most lips clap the name, Asigbo  
I tried to look beyond the name, Asigbo

Anyway, I'm now understood.  
Or am I not still understood?  
Okaym, read further below



Clearer, I am below

Then I saw a sophist as a man  
Man, myopic men may not see as a man  
Then I stand bolder  
As I looked at Asigbo's shoulder

Then I saw there, not his loads  
Dropping them on the changed road  
Through educational theatres  
Not through empty fiestas

You now know what I know  
You know I know you now know  
My message  
That I envisage

Those who fought him from high olive branches  
Saw his style of *Fighting from the Trenches*  
As his superior profession mothers all Arts  
And no profession is void of Arts

Then I concluded that Alex is the man  
I was convinced that Asigbo is the man  
The man with rich muse  
That we need to put in use

### About The Poet



The poet, Michael Bassey **IREM**, is a 200-Level student of the Department Theatre Arts, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo (AE-FUNAI), Ebonyi State. He has many published poems to his credit. His play, *Triskelion: Untraceable Identity*, published under the pseudonym, Ebirem Ovai, is currently in use in many higher institutions of learning in Nigeria.

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# Prof. Sunday Enessi ODODO: A Worthy SONTA Ambassador

Gbolabowale OJOKOLO

Occasionally, the Government gets it right in appointments which can be gauged from the feedbacks of the stakeholders, industry players and the public that greet such appointments. A recent example of round pegs in round holes was that of Prof. Sunday Enessi Ododo, *fsonta*, *FNAL*, which came in September of 2020. This came on the heels of his stellar performance as the 8<sup>th</sup> President of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA).

With a Fellow of SONTA at the helm of affairs at the National Theatre, Iganmu-Lagos, the editorial crew have focused on the happenings at the iconic building. This is an x-ray of some of his milestones at the National Theatre and key events since Prof. Ododo took over at the agency of government as General Manager/Chief Executive Officer.

### States of Affairs when he Took Over

A core mandate of the National Theatre, commonly known, is to promote, preserve, and present the cultural heritage of Nigeria. However, the National Theatre is also to be run as a commercial entity, which is the less known and not often cited mandate of the Theatre. This perception of the National Theatre, as just existing to promote, preserve, and present cultural heritage without seeing the agency as a commercial entity, is a fundamental problem that has dogged the National Theatre since inception. This misconception was not limited to the patrons/clients and users of the facilities in the National Theatre; it was prevalent among members of staff as well. There was thus the urgent need to redress this anomaly.





### Workers Capacity Building Sets the Tone

A penchant for addressing issues as expeditiously as possible is one of the traits that is most perceptible in Prof. Ododo. Hence, having identified the problem mentioned above, he went on to organise a capacity building workshop for management and staff of the National Theatre. The workshop which lasted for two days from the 30<sup>th</sup> of November to 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 2020, was the first of its kind in the history of the iconic national edifice. The theme of the Workshop was “Repositioning and Marketing the National Theatre Brand in the Post COVID-19 Era.” Not a man to do things in half measures, the calibre of facilitators at the capacity building was a credit to the GM/CEO. He also delivered a paper

which charted key policy action plans for the National Theatre.

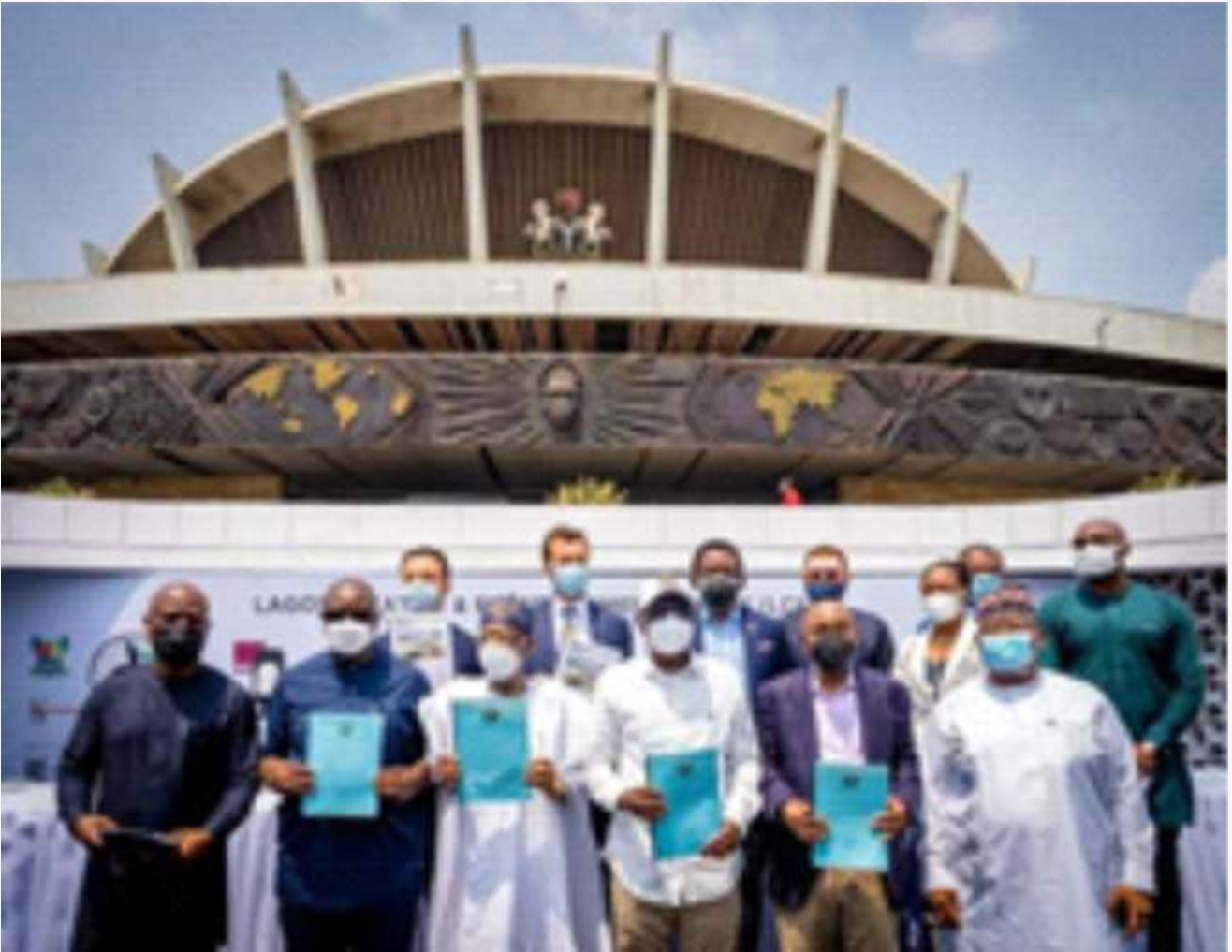
### National Theatre “Festival of Unity”

Speaking on the reason for staging the first ever “Festival of Unity,” Prof. Ododo, “Nigeria has been beset by two ‘Ps’ – Pandemic and Protests – it is now time for Peace.” In what was another epochal moment at the National Theatre, the “Festival of Unity” held from 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> December, 2021. The well-publicised event and well-attended programme had multiple events taking place simultaneously indoor and outdoor. Theatre veterans and upcoming acts all had platforms to perform – the National Theatre was well on the right path to becoming “the No. 1 Event Centre in Nigeria,” for all theatre practitioners and patrons again under Prof. Sunday E. Ododo. The Command Performance of the Festival was such a success that it was the Front-Page picture on such flagship newspaper like *The Guardian*.

### Restructuring the National Theatre

Structures are the sure footing and foundation upon which visions are erected in any organisation; and where these structures and foundations are lacking, then the need to build them becomes germane. Hence, the GM/CEO created the Production and Technical Theatre Services Department to provide supports for





programmes and events at the National Theatre.

### **CBN, Bankers Committee and Lagos State Sign MoU to Fix the National Theatre**

Nigerians and indeed stakeholders in the culture and tourism industry had inundated Government with calls for interventions in fixing the National Theatre through whatever modalities that will remove the shameful eyesore that the once resplendent National edifice had become. It is to the credit of Prof. Ododo that, under his watch, the National Theatre is going to have a breath of fresh air with the signing of the MoU for the renovation, revamping and rehabilitation of the complex.

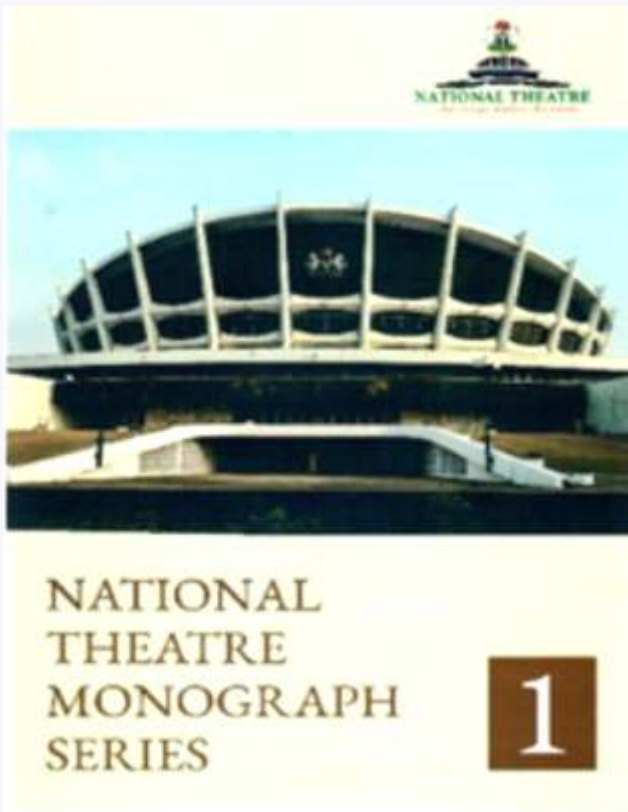
### **Tinkering with the Box**

As the work to fix the National Theatre continues in earnest, the operations of the iconic edifice have been hampered in no small measure; but this has not deterred Prof. Ododo from creating profitable contents/concepts, which are keeping the workers engaged while the revamping is

ongoing. Not only is the National Theatre still providing locations for video and photo shoots, the ample outdoor spaces around the vicinity are well maintained and available for use. One such content is the **Play Reading**.

### **The National Theatre Monograph Series**

It gratifying to note that during the last budget defence at the National Assembly, the GM/CEO of National Theatre and Fellow of SONTA, Prof. Sunday E. Ododo, *FNAL*, proposed and got approval for the *National Theatre Monograph Series*, as one of the programmes of the establishment. This Monograph Series by the National Theatre, which will be a melting pot for “Town and Gown,” will fill a critical gap in knowledge sharing, as it promises to be a reference point for a compendium of trends in theatre theory and practice. Succinctly put, it will be a platform for the presentation and preservation of knowledge. This is very commendable of the GM/CEO of National Theatre.



### Bringing Play Reading Experience to the National Theatre

Since when it was commissioned for use in 1975, the National Theatre has successfully staged a plethora of events and activities which its versatility adequately equips it for. But it has not held *Play Reading*. *Play Reading* is a very important step in the process of playwriting, as the feedbacks from both private and public readings add to the quality of the final publication. By steering the National Theatre in this direction, Prof. Ododo is indeed bringing theory to practice in the way the cultural agency is going to be actively involved in those crucial aspects of theatre that hitherto were not the foray of the agency. Venturing into this crucial aspect adds value and creates relevance for the National Theatre in the culture and tourism as well as the entertainment industries.

### Industrial Harmony and Workers Welfare

“If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulder of Giants.” This quote is apt, as the successes that Prof. Sunday E. Ododo, *fsonta*, *FNAL*, has recorded in so short a period of stewardship can be attributed to the industrial harmony which he continues to pursue in the National Theatre.

The workers of the National Theatre interviewed were very open to state some of the ways in which the GM/CEO has broken new grounds in staff welfare. Many mentioned the gifts of rice and oil to them during the Salah festivities in 2021. This many confirmed had never happened in the history of the organisation; and to think that despite the ongoing renovation, the GM/CEO still saw the need to put smiles on the faces of his workers. Even in staff welfare Professor S. E. Ododo, *fsonta*, *FNAL* is scoring a first in the National Theatre.

### Conclusion

The foregoing constitutes a synopsis of the achievements of Prof. Sunday E. Ododo, *fsonta*, *FNAL*, since he assumed office as the GM/CEO, National Theatre, in September 2020. These few were featured as they are the tangibles even though many others like the National Theatre Academy, full digitalisation of the operations of the National Theatre, and many collaboration agreements, are yet to be operational due to the ongoing revamping work. The intangibles are worth keeping an eye on when the iconic edifice is back running at full throttle.





# Governor Okowa Mourns Literary Icon, Sam Ukala



Delta State Governor, Sen. (Dr.) Ifeanyi Okowa, has expressed sadness over the death of Nigeria's literary icon, Professor Sam Ukala, describing his passage as a monumental loss to Delta State, Nigeria and global literary community.

Ukala, who died Monday night after a brief illness, was a Professor of Theatre Arts and Drama at Delta State University, Abraka, until his recent retirement. He was aged 73 year.

In a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Olisa Ifeajika, on Tuesday in Asaba, Okowa eulogised the late author and actor for his immense contributions to the growth and development of literature in Nigeria, Africa and beyond.

He said that the works of Ukala promoted Delta state particularly, the country and Africa, adding that he would be remembered and celebrated by lovers of literature across the world.

The governor described Ukala, winner of the NLNG-sponsored Nigeria Prize for Literature in 2014 and the ANA/British Council Prize for Drama in 1989 with his bestselling books, *Iredi War* and *Akpakaland* as a consummate patriot, great literary icon and teacher par excellence.

He said that with the demise of the legendary academic, death, the inevitable, had dealt a devastating blow on the literary community and left a lacuna that may be difficult to fill.

“On behalf of the government and people of Delta, I commiserate with the Ukala family of Mbiri, the Ika nation, and the entire literary world, over the demise of the cerebral writer.

“The late Ukala propounded the theory of 'folkism,' which was to base literary plays on indigenous history and culture, composed and performed them in accordance with African folktale, which has gained significant global recognition.

“Until his death, he was a member of the Governing Council of the three new Universities we recently established and contributed his best in ensuring that the Universities took off as planned.

“It is my belief that the late Sam Ukala will be long remembered and honoured for his huge impact not just in African folktale but dramatic arts,” he said.

Okowa prayed that God would grant eternal rest to the soul of the departed Professor Sam Ukala and comfort his family and all who mourn him.

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# Good Night, Ogbegun

Rasaki Ojo BAKARE



While extreme sorrow and tradition will not allow me to attend the funeral of a loved son, I owe him a few words as public acknowledgement of all we shared when he was on this side of existence.

Early 1993, I arrived Lokoja, the capital of the newly created Kogi State, courtesy of the newly appointed State Director of Arts and Culture Dr. John Egwugwu Illah (now Prof.); and my assignment was to recruit and train 35 versatile artistes to be employed in to the State Performing Troupe.

As we combed the State in search of talents, news filtered to me that a certain Ebira boy, who grew up in his mother's home town of Ososo in Edo State, is a freelance dancer with Gwape Dance Troupe in Minna, Niger State. We quickly empowered our informant to fetch this dancer for us. Usman travelled to Minna and brought Suru Damisa to Lokoja. Suru's infectious smiles, sense of responsibility, humility, sense of humour and hard work soon marked him out and I made him the Troupe's Dance Captain.

While many of the trainees saw my approach to dance training as stressful, Suru defended and explained it as "break and mould." (He later wrote and published articles on this as a dance scholar) . When we were done with dance training, we moved to the second phase of the training programme and the focus was Drama. I also soon discovered the good actor in Suru. This got him the role of the Narrator, Ogbegun, in the premier performance of *Drums of War*.

Suru's 7-star performance in *Drums of War* convinced me that he could do better than working with a Secondary School Certificate. I, with the institutional support of my boss, Prof. Illah, mounted pressure on Suru to go for further studies. He agreed.

Suru remains a study in perseverance and tenacity. After the first 4 years in the University, it was discovered that Suru was actually swindled and given a fake admission letter! The University kicked. Suru returned to Lokoja with no degree.

However, instead of allowing that to weigh him down,

Suru put himself together, sat for another Jamb, and got genuinely admitted this time and began afresh. He got his degree, took a master's degree, became an academic and later got a PhD.

Indeed, we are not defined by what life throws at us but by our response to it. Till his demise, Suru never forgot that fate once brought us together and we played our different roles. One of the most humble, caring and generous humans I have ever met, an Omoluwabi per excellence, Suru was specially endowed with sense of gratitude.

Suru would pick his phone and call me very early in the morning just to say: "*Mo kan ni ki n gbo hun yin ni o;*" meaning: "I just wanted to hear your voice so as to be sure all is well with you." He did this at least once every week. What of the huge hospitality he extended to me each time I visited Keffi! (And I visit often). He spared no amount in making sure I and my entourage were well taken care of even when Hajiya Lantana Ahmed, Prof. Emman Dandaura and other colleagues would have done the needful. Suru wouldn't be happy until I accepted his efforts to spoil me.

And then ... two weeks after I told him he would be working with me on the Opening Ceremony of NAFEST 2021, I got the shocking news of his demise! I feel like a Father who lost a Son; like a General who lost a loyal, gallant Officer; like a brother who lost a brother.

My condolences to our colleagues in Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK); the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA) family; and in particular, members of Association of Dance Scholars and Practitioners of Nigeria (ADSPON). May premature death permanently cease in the House of Theatre and Dance.

Journey well, Ogbegun. I will continue to love you.

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# SONTA News 2021 Updates



## Appointments

Prof. Gowon Ama DOKI	– Member, Governing Council, BSU, Makurdi
Prof. Christine O. ODI	– DVC (Academic), NDU
Prof. Victor S. DUGGA	– Dean, PG School, FULafia
Prof. Ahmed P. YERIMA	– Provost, PG School, Redeemer's University

## Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL)

Prof. Duro ONI	– President
Prof. Emmanuel S. DANDAURA	– Assist. Secretary
Prof. Sunday E. ODODO	– Bulletin Editor
Prof. Mabel E. EVWIERHOMA	– Fellow
Prof. Ahmed P. YERIMA	– Fellow

## Rank of Professor

Adeiran Kayode ADEMIJU-BEPO	– UNIJOS
Clive Ilami KRAMA	– UNIPORT
John Ebimobowei E. YESEIBO	– UNIPORT

## Heads of Department

Prof. Adediran K. ADEMIJU-BEPO	– Dept. of Theatre & Film Arts, UNIJOS
Dr. Bifatife Femi ADESEKE	– Dept. of Philosophy, FOUYE
Prof. Kenneth ENI	– Dept. of Mass Com., NDU, Amassoma
Prof. Miriam Asabe IYEH	– Dept. of Theatre & Media Arts, AAU, Ekpoma
Dr. Rasheedah LIMAN	– Dept. of Theatre & Perf. Arts, ABU
Dr. Laide NASIR	– Dept. of Religious Studies, FOUYE

## Acting Heads of Department

Dr. Sunday ABRAYE	– Dept. of Theatre Arts, NDU
Dr. Boniface ANYANWU	– Dept. of Theatre Arts, DELSU
Dr. Lilian BAKARE	– Dept. of Theatre & Media Studies, FOUYE
Dr. Ranti JULIUS-ADEOYE	– Dept. of Theatre Arts, REDEEMERS'
Dr. Tochukwu OKEKE	– Dept. of Theatre & Film Studies, UNIZIK
Dr. Charles OKWUOWULU	– Dept. of Theatre Arts, AEFUNAI
Dr. Maureen Ada UCHE	– Dept. of Perf. Arts, UniDelta
Dr. Solomon Obidah YAMMA	– Dept. of Theatre Arts, PLASU

## Successful PhD Defences 2021

Millicent AHUPA	– ABU
Sylvanus DANGOGI	– ABU
Elisha Rwang DARENG	– ABU
Jennifer Nguevese GUMH	– ABU
Ifeanyi HARRIS	– ABU
Blessing ADJEKETA	– NDU
Tosan ADEWOLE	– UI
Sesan OGUNGBESAN	– UI
Bernard ORJI	– UI
Guma Emmanuel ANULE	– UNIABUJA
Obiora Vin CHUKWUMA	– UNIABUJA
Kayode O. IDEBI	– UNIABUJA
Francesca A. NWADIGWE	– UNIABUJA
Theresa I. ORESANYA	– UNIABUJA
Leon H. USIGBE	– UNIABUJA
Oghenemudiaga Praise AKPUGHE	– UNIBEN
Ese EMAKUNU	– UNIBEN
Affiong Fred EFFIOM	– UNICAL
Lucy Michael ISEYEN	– UNICAL
Michael Abe NDIFON	– UNICAL
Joseph Abraham OCHOLI	– UNICAL
Abiola Olunmi ADUMATI	– UNILORIN
Michael Olanrewaju AGBOOLA	– UNILORIN
Ikechukwu Albert ODUM	– UNN
Uzodinma C. UMENYILORAH	– UNN
Patrick AGHA	– UNIPORT
Remigius ANYANWU	– UNIPORT
Ifeyinwa UZONDU	– UNIPORT
Emmanuel EBKWE	– UNIZIK
Anthony EBIRIUKWU	– UNIZIK
Anthony NNALUE	– UNIZIK

## Inaugural Lectures

Prof. Saviour N. A. AGORO – *The Practice of Alternative Theatre in Nigeria*. 38<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture, NDU.

Prof. Solomon O. IKIBE – *So it's Sol in Music as Man Uses Science in Communication*. 203<sup>rd</sup> Inaugural Lecture, UNILORIN.

## Transitions

Prof Sam UKALA DELSU, Abraka  
Dr. Suru DAMISA NSUK

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## FELLOW OF SONTA (fsonta)

### PROFESSOR GBEMISOLA ADEREMI ADEOTI (SMN: 0253)



Gbemisola Aderemi ADEOTI obtained his B. A. Dramatic Arts and M. A. Literature in English degrees from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Nigeria. He later bagged a PhD in English with focus on Dramatic Literature from the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. He was once a Reporter/Researcher with *The News Magazine*, Lagos, before joining the Department of English, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, as a Graduate Assistant, rising to become a Professor with effect from Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2010. His areas of teaching and research include: Dramatic Literature, Contemporary African Drama, Shakespeare, Literary History/Theory and Popular Culture.

Professor Gbemisola Adeoti is the author of *Naked Soles* (Poems), *Voices Offstage: Nigerian Dramatists on Drama and Politics*; *Aesthetics of Adaptation in Contemporary Nigerian Drama*; *Nigerian Video Film in Yoruba*; *Politics and the Urban Experience in Postcolonial West African Literature*; and *Literature and the Art of Shaving a Man's Head in His Absence* (Inaugural Lecture delivered in 2015). He co-edited (with Femi Osofisan) *Playwriting in Nigeria Today*, the proceedings of the First Playwrights' Conference in Nigeria in 2013.

He is also the editor of two critical studies on Ahmed Yerima's dramaturgy: *Muse and Mimesis: Critical Perspectives on Ahmed Yerima's Drama* and *One Muse, Many Masks:*

*Reflections on Ahmed Yerima's Recent Drama*. He served as the Editor (and now General Editor) of *Ife Studies in African Literature and the Arts* (ISALA) and *IFE: Journal of the Institute of Cultural Studies*. He is a reviewer and member of Editorial Advisory Boards of several national and international journals.

Professor Adeoti was a British Academy Visiting Fellow at the Workshop Theatre, School of English, University of Leeds, United Kingdom in 2008; and a Postdoctoral Fellow of the African Humanities Programme in 2009. In 2012, he was awarded the Presidential Fellowship of the African Studies Association (ASA), Philadelphia, USA.

A member of professional associations such as Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA), and Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL), he was Director, Institute of Cultural Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, from 2011 to 2015; and Dean, Faculty of Arts from 2015 to 2019.

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# FELLOW OF SONTA (fsonta)

## PROFESSOR JOSEPHINE NGOZI MOKWUNYEI, FANIM, PHF, JP (SMN: 0040)

Josephine Ngozi MOKWUNYEI is a Professor of Theatre Arts at the University of Benin, Benin-City, with a specialisation in Performance Arts and African Musicology. She is from the Royal Lineage of Issele-Uku Kingdom, in Aniocha Local Government area of Delta State, Nigeria, who traced their genealogy to the ancient Kingdom of Benin. She graduated from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka with a Second Class Honours (Upper Div.), Bachelor of Arts degree in Music with a Bendel State Special Female Award. She holds a Masters' degree in Theatre Arts from the prestigious University of Ibadan and a PhD in African Studies, from the University of Ghana, Legon, on Ford Foundation Scholarship.

Her name goes into history as the first female Head of Department, first female Professor and first female Inaugural Lecturer at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Benin. She is a two-time Head under whose tenure the Theatre Arts Programme got the first full NUC Accreditation after over 20 years of existence. She also has the credit of graduating the first PhD in Theatre Arts candidate from the University of Benin.

Professor Josephine Mokwunyei has attended numerous national and international conferences, where she presented scholarly papers and keynote lectures. She has published widely in local, regional and international journals. Her publications include over 43 journal articles, chapters in books, a monograph, over 300 solo and many group theatre/music performances, including:

- Recorded solo album, entitled, *Boys and Girls* (as Joe Moks) under DECCA West Africa label.
- Co-directed the Command Performance of *Nekeghidi*: Edo State contribution to NAFEST



2019.

- Directed a Command Performance of Femi Osofisan's *Midnight Hotel* recently at Edo State Government House.

Professor Mokwunyei is a member of several learned societies and associations of Theatre Arts and Music, which she has served in various capacities:

- National Vice President, Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA)
- Member, Editorial Board, Nigerian Theatre Journal: A Journal of Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA)
- Regional Vice President, Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education (PASMAE)
- Founding President, PASMAE WEST AFRICA
- Regional Vice President, International Music Council (IMC) (2010 to Date)
- Member, Nigerian League of Women Voters at the National, State and LG levels.

She is a two-time Life Time Achievement Awardee of SONTA, a Paul Harris Fellow (PHF) of Rotary International (RI), a Jerusalem Pilgrim (JP), a Fellow of Association of Nigerian Musicologists (FANIMO), an Awardee of Conference of Music Educators of Nigeria (COMEN), as well as a profound actor, arts director, producer and singer. She is currently the Director for Gender Studies, a Centre for Excellence at the University of Benin, Benin-City, Nigeria.

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## FELLOW OF SONTA (fsonta)

# PROFESSOR JULIANA OMOIFO-OKOH

(SMN: 0056)

Professor Juliana Omoifo-Okoh, a theatre artist, social activist and educationist, obtained her BA degree from Loyola University, Chicago, USA; MA from the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada; DEA and PhD degrees from the University of Bordeaux III, France. She was Fulbright Scholar at Smith College, Northampton, USA, where studied Feminist Theatre.

Julie Okoh (as she is fondly called), has taught courses in Dramatic Theory and Criticism, Theatre History, Playwriting, Comparative Literature, Feminist Theatre, as well as Women and Cultural Studies. She was instrumental in introducing Feminist Theatre and Women Studies to the curriculum for BA, MA and PhD programmes at the University of Port Harcourt.

She served as the Head, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Port Harcourt (2002-2004); and as Director, Institute of Arts and Culture, Uniport (2011-2017). In 2015, she was appointed Celi & Joe Ajenka Chair for Arts & Culture, University of Port Harcourt. She is currently Dean, Faculty of Humanity, Social and Management Sciences, Edwin Clark University, Kiagbodo.

Professor Julie Omoifo-Okoh has supervised numerous BA, MA and PhD candidates in Theatre and Film Studies. She has served as an external examiner at the undergraduate level and assessed academic staff for promotion to the ranks of Reader and Professor for some Nigerian Universities. She has also been on NUC Accreditation Panel to many Nigerian Universities since 2013.

As the founder and chairperson of the Uniport branch of NAWACS, Prof. Omoifo-Okoh mentored several female academics in Uniport by facilitating vibrant intellectual activities for the women group on campus, and also encouraging them to participate in networking internationally. As a professor of theatre arts, she has also mentored several young theatre scholars and artists. Also, as Director, Institute of Arts and Culture, Uniport (2009-2017), she organised workshops on playwriting for young dramatists.

Professor Omoifo-Okoh's publications include four books, 35 journal articles and 20 plays. Using the



theatre medium, she has consistently campaigned against harmful cultural practices and injustices against women in Nigeria as evidenced in her plays, such as: *Mask*, *The Mannequins*, *Edewede*, *In the Fullness of Time*, *Aisha*, *Closed Doors*, *The Trials*, *Our Wife Forever*, *Cry for Democracy*, and *In Our Own Voices*, among others.

She has also contributed to the Nigerian movie industry by creating pedagogical screenplay: *Who's Afraid of Job Interview*. She contributed to the public enlightenment on the novel Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, as she wrote and acted in a video film skit, titled, *Corona Virus is Real*. Furthermore, versatile film maker, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, has produced the screen version of her play, *Edewede*, under the title, *Wede*.

This theatre amazon is on the Editorial Board of some national and international journals. She is a member of several associations including Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA); Nigerian Literary Association (NLA); Association of Nigerian Female Authors (ANFA); Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID); African Literature Association (ALA) U.S.A.; and Black Theatre Networks (BTN), U.S.A.

She has won several awards and recognitions: *Who's Who in American Colleges* (1974); *Totale Compagnie Francaise des Petroles Award* (1988); *Senior Fulbright Scholar Award* (2000); *ANA/NDCC J.P. Clark Prize for Drama* (2005, 2007); *SONTA Life Time Achievement Award* (2011); *IPS Merit Award* (2013); and *Distinguished Dramatist Award* (2014), to name a few.

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## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

# PROFESSOR EMMY IKANABA UNUJA IDEGU

SMN: (0057)



Emmy Ikanaba Unuja IDEGU lectures at the Department of Theatre and Media Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar, in the South-South region of Nigeria. Born on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1962, Idegu is a holder of the Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre Arts (1984) from the University of Jos, Master of Arts in Drama (1989) and PhD also in Drama (2004), both from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State.

Emmy Idegu has so far published about 24 books and over 50 articles in peer reviewed national and international journals. His play, *Omodoko*, was selected out of several entries, for the National Troupe of Nigeria 2<sup>nd</sup> Play Reading Session, which took place on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2000 at the National Theatre, Iganmu-Lagos. He was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Nigerian playwright to be so recognised and honoured after Professor Chinweizu.

One of his plays, *The Legendary Inikpi*, has received accolades and wide acceptability by both Nigerian and foreign audiences, where the play has received great ovations. *The Legendary Inikpi* was produced as Command Performance by the African-Israeli Stage and the Academy of Performing Arts of Israel in ZAO Theatre, T26 Eben-Geviol Street, Tel-Aviv, Israel, in collaboration with the Nigerian Embassy in Israel on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2012 to mark the 20 years of renewed

diplomatic relations between Nigeria and the State of Israel and to also mark Nigeria's 52<sup>nd</sup> Independence celebration in Israel.

Professor Emmy Idegu is a rising voice in theatre scholarship in Nigeria and a tested playwright-director. Recently, he propounded the Experiential Testimonial Creativity (ETC) Theory recommended for the critiquing of creative works. This erudite professor of Playwriting and African Indigenous Performances is also an ordained Minister of the Gospel. He is the Presiding Labourer of the Odolu Soul Hunt Ministry, with the headquarters in Odolu, Igalamela/Odolu Local Government Area, Kogi State, in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria.

Reverend Professor Emmy Ikanaba Unuja Idegu is happily married with children.

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## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

# PROFESSOR METHUSELAH JEREMIAH

(SMN: 0225)



Professor Methuselah JEREMIAH, presently on secondment to National Film Institute, Jos, as Rector, has BA (Hons.) and MA, all in Theatre Arts, from the University of Jos (1987-2004). He proceeded to the University of Abuja, where he earned his PhD in Theatre Arts (2011), specialising in Gender and Women Studies. He was National President, Nigerian Universities Theatre Arts Students Association (NUTASA).

Professor Jeremiah's academic career spans about three decades beginning from the College of Education, Gidan Waya, where he was employed as Assistant Lecturer in 1993. He was Public Relations Officer of Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU), Gidan Waya branch in 1996; and Chairman, Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU), Gidan Waya, before he joined the then newly established Kaduna State University in 2005 as one of the pioneer academic staff members. By dint of hard work, he rose to the rank of a Professor.

As an academic and administrator, Professor Jeremiah learnt the rubrics of academic life and management given the rare opportunity he got at Kaduna State University. He has literally held every post in the Department, namely,

Registration Officer, Examination Officer, Level Coordinator, Project Coordinator, Postgraduate Coordinator, and ultimately, Head of Department.

Apart from these departmental positions, Professor Jeremiah has also been Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Arts, a position he held for more than 5 years (the longest record in KASU to date); Member, Faculty of Arts Screening Committee; Chairman, Faculty of Arts Exams Validation Committee; Convener, 1<sup>st</sup> Department of English and Drama International Conference; Chairman, Faculty Accreditation Committee (2017-2020); Chairman, Faculty Seminar Committee (2016-2020); LOC Chairman, Faculty of Arts 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference Committee (2018); Member, Curriculum Review Committee of BA Theatre Arts, Department of English and Drama (July 2019); Chairman, Faculty Research and Publication Committee (2019-2020).

At the University level, he has served as Member, Junior Staff Appointments and Promotions





Committee (2006-2017); Member, Central Accreditation Committee (2008); Member, Committee for the Recruitment of Permanent Staff, KASU School of Basic Studies (February 2009); LOC Chairman, International Colloquium on Abubakar Imam (2009); Member, Examination Validation Committee (2008-2011); Member, Matriculation Committee (2010-2012); and Chairman, Faculty of Arts Festival of Arts (March 2011).

Other assignments he has carried out include: Deputy University Orator (2015); Member, Central Accreditation Committee (2015); Member, Publicity Subcommittee, Convocation Ceremony (2015); Member, Library Development Committee (2017-2020); Member, Committee on the Review of Theatre Arts Curriculum (March 2018); Chairman, Committee on Validation of First Semester Examinations, Department of Chemistry; and Chairman, Central Examination Validation Committee.

At the National Film Institute (NFI), Jos, he has had the privilege of sitting in on sensitive committees as member including, The Tenders Board; Chairman, Emerging Talents (2020); Zuma Film Festival (1-7 December, 2020); Member, Committee on Departmentalisation of National Film Institute (2020); Chairman, Committee on *NFI Journal* (2020); Secretary, Implementation Committee for Proposed Independent Degree Awarding Status of NFI (June 2021); and Chairman, Committee on Collaboration with NTA College, Jos.

Professor Jeremiah has travelled far and wide attending conferences and other academic meetings. He is well published in both national and international journals. He is the founding editor, *Voices: A Journal of English Studies*

(Department of English and Drama, KASU); editor, *KADA: Journal of Liberal Arts*, Faculty of Arts, KASU; and founding editor, *FULGENT: Journal of Film and Video* of NFI, Jos. Apart from being an editorial consultant of many journals, he is co-editor of two books: *Snapshots of the Female Ethos: Essays on Women and Culture* (co-edited with Professor Mabel Ewrierhoma); and *The Akurmi People of Central Nigeria: Their Heritage and Hope* (co-edited with Elisha Madaki).

Professor Jeremiah's pedagogical exploits have spanned the gamut of studies from undergraduate to postgraduate levels where he has taught variously over the years. He was co-convenor, the Akurmi Studies Group, a think-tank of the Akurmi Cultural Committee; and education director of Seventh-Day Adventist Church, North-West Nigeria Conference. He has given public lectures, had Radio/Television discussions on academic and cultural issues, and was resource person in many other community based and academic outreaches within and outside the country. He is married with children.

Today we celebrate Professor Jeremiah for a life of service, for doggedness and the spirit of resilience.

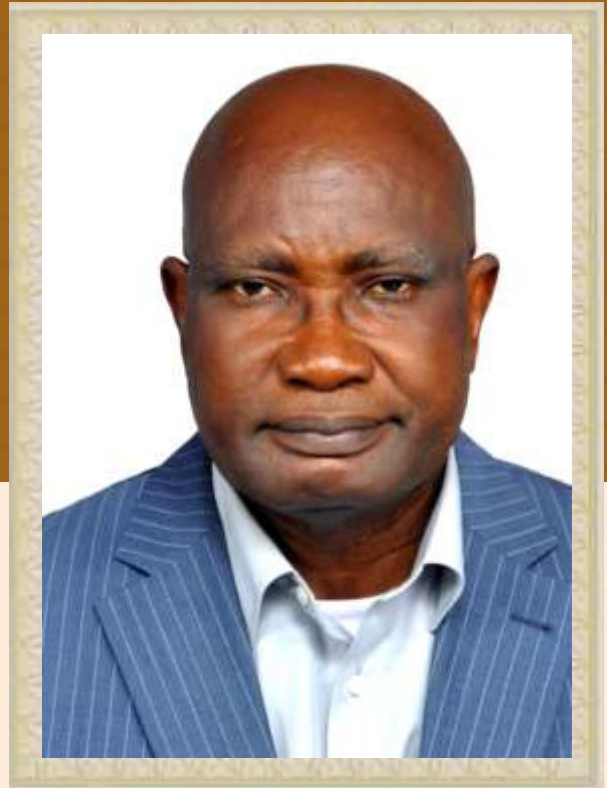
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## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

# PROFESSOR FEMI OKIREMUETTE SHAKA

(SMN: 0228)



Professor Femi Okiremuette SHAKA studied Theatre Arts at the Universities of Benin and Ibadan, respectively in Nigeria. In 1991, he won the prestigious Commonwealth Scholarship for his doctorate degree in Film Studies at the University of Warwick, Coventry, England. After his studies in the U.K, he took up appointment at the University of Port Harcourt, where he helped to pioneer the Film & TV Studies programme of the University.

In 2001, Shaka won the Fulbright Senior African Fellowship, which enabled him to teach and conduct research at the Africana Studies Programme, New York University. The fruit of that one year residency was the publication of his 'magnum opus', *Modernity and the African Cinema: A Study in Colonialist Discourse, Post-Coloniality and Modern African Identities*, published by African World Press, Lawrenceville, New Jersey in 2004.

Professor Femi Shaka is a widely read scholar, whose articles have been

published in several reputable national and international scholarly journals. He is a well-known strong advocate of the cinema as a tool for national development. In this respect, he has regularly mounted campaigns for the establishment of Departments of Film & TV Studies across the six geo-political zones of the country to help professionalise the teaching and practice of both sectors of the creative industries. He was a one-time Dean, Faculty of Humanities, as well as Member, Governing Council of the University of Port Harcourt.

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# DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP AWARD

## PROFESSOR SUNDAY OGE ELOM

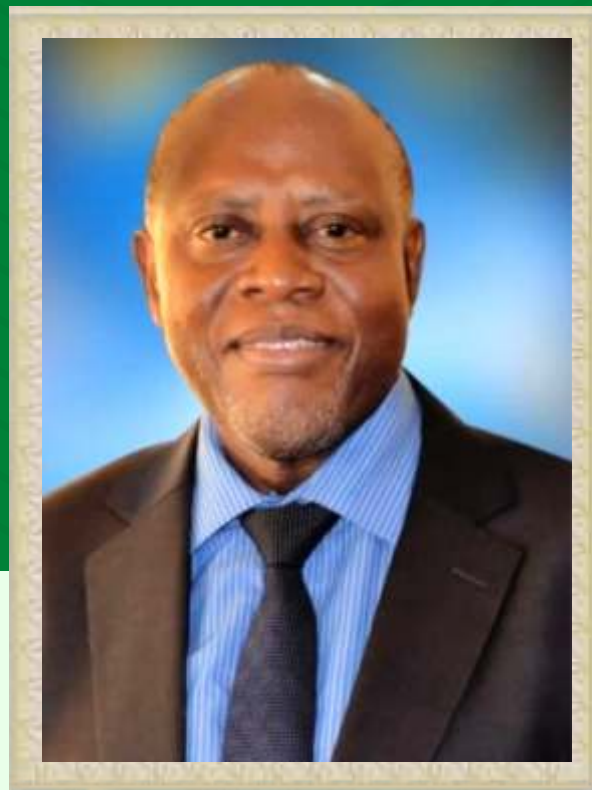
Sunday Oge ELOM, a Professor of Medical Biochemistry, is the Vice-Chancellor of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State. He was born on Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 1961, at Ekwashi, Ngbo in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

He has over 14 years of post-professorial and uninterrupted academic and administrative experience in the university system, having bagged his PhD in Medical Biochemistry from the Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, in 2006. Before then, he had a Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree in Molecular Biology from the Vruue University, Brussels, Belgium, in 1992 and a First Class Honours' degree in Biochemistry from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Professor Elom has had an illustrious career as a member of the academia, spanning over three decades. His journey as an academic started in 1987, when he served as a Research Assistant in the Department of Applied Biology, Anambra State University of Science and Technology (ASUTECH), Enugu campus. He however rose through the ranks in different universities in Nigeria and became a professor of Medical Biochemistry in 2006.

He has published over 50 academic papers in top-tier and high ranking national and international journals with impact factors. He has also published many books, books chapters and monographs, as well as many conference papers. More so, he has served as external examiner and assessor to many universities.

Apart from being a thoroughbred and seasoned academic, Professor Elom has occupied several administrative positions in the Nigerian university system, where he has brought his administrative



astuteness to bear, ensuring that the vision and goals of such institutions are achieved.

He was first appointed the Head, Department of Medical Biochemistry at the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) in 1984 and rose to become the Dean, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences of the same university in 2009. Later, he became the Dean, Students' Affairs, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki and the Dean, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences of the same institution in the year 2000 and 2014, respectively.

At the Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, he was the Interim Dean, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences from 2012 to 2016 and later a two-term Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), from 2016 to 2020. He has also chaired many important university committees.

A member of many international professional bodies, chief among them is the British Biochemical Society, London, Professor Sunday Oge Elom is married to Dr. Chinyere Elom, and their marriage is blessed with four children.

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# DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP AWARD

## DR. BABATOPE MICHAEL AGBEYO



**D**r. Babatope Michael AGBEYO has a B.A. (Hons.) in Dramatic Arts from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Master's Degree in Media and Communications from Birmingham City University, United Kingdom, respectively. Upon graduation from the university, this illustrious son of Usi-Ekiti had a short stint working as a Theatre and Media practitioner bringing his knowledge to bear, especially on the Yoruba movie industry, before foraying into the business world, where he has cut a niche for himself as one of Nigeria's most creative and dynamic entrepreneurs of his generation.

Dr. Babatope Michael Agbeyo is the Chairman of **Cornfield Group of Companies**, a group of multinational businesses that have presence in Europe and Africa and expanding to Asia. A leader of men, he started many successful businesses to cater for the needs of both government and private organisations. His company, Cornfield Group of Companies is the holding company of **Botosoft Technologies**, an ICT company that caters for the needs of educational, security, health, pharmaceutical and identity management needs of the society; Media Concept and FOAM Studio Nigeria Limited that

provide arts and media services globally, among others. These companies have produced cutting edge solutions and services to millions of people and major organisations around the world.

As a true lover of the arts, he has supported several theatre, music and film projects over the years. He is currently the patron of Theatre and Motion Picture Practitioners of Nigeria (TAMPAN). As a philanthropist, his impact on the society has been felt both nationally and internationally; he was awarded Doctorate Degrees (*Honoris Causa*) by the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) and Joseph Ayo Babalola University (JABU) in 2017.

In the same year, the State of Georgia came to Lagos to deliver a resolution, by both the Georgia Senate and House of Representatives, to recognise and commend him for his dedication to public service and support for people around the world and Georgia in particular. In March 2018, he joined other world leaders at the 5<sup>th</sup>



Commonwealth Africa Summit in London, where he delivered the keynote address at the opening ceremony.

Dr. Agbeyo is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Resources Management and Politics (CIPRMP) Ghana, and also a Fellow, Institute of Data Processing Management of Nigeria (IDPM). A proven innovator with in-depth thinking capacity for strategic performances, he has continuously surpassed expectations with exemplary leadership, vision, commitment, awareness and integrity.

His ingenuity has won him several awards locally and internationally, Nigeria, United Kingdom and also USA. His network of partners and influence spans across many countries including USA, UK, Germany, South Korea, China and other African countries. Dr. Babatope Agbeyo's humanitarian service has earned him several awards in Nigeria and abroad. Some of these are:

- Special Gold Award in Corporate Media and Communication in Africa, Presented by the Council of Chartered Institute of Public Resources Management & Politics (CIPRMP), Ghana, June 2018.
- Outstanding contribution to Enterprise Award at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Commonwealth Africa Summit, London United Kingdom, March 2018.
- Offer of Honorary Citizenship of Newark, New Jersey, USA, for his humanitarian activities in Nigeria and as a good employer of labour, 2018.
- Theatre and Motion Picture Practitioners of Nigeria (TAMPAN) Man of the Year Award, 2018.

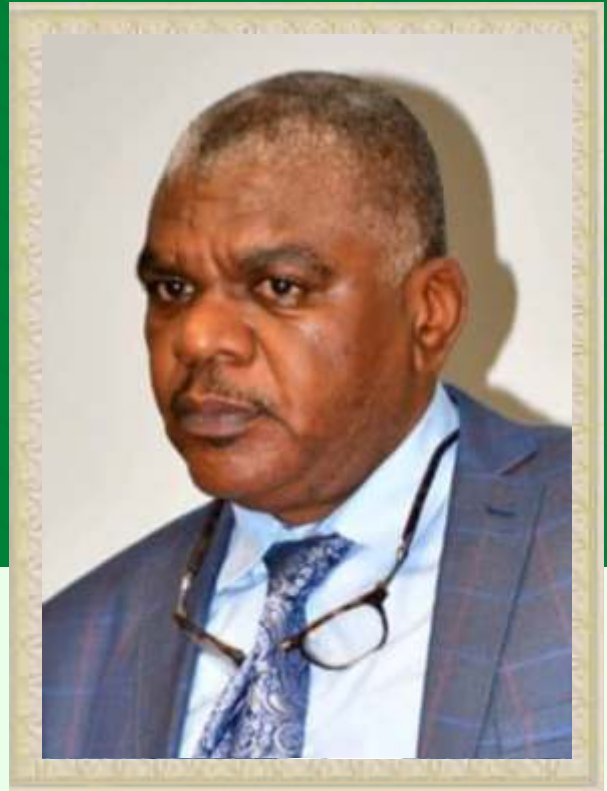
- Resolution for recognition and commendation for his efficient, effective, unselfish and dedicated public service by Senator Gloria Butler District 55 and Representative Sharon Beasley-Teague District 65, October, 2016.
- Resolution for recognition by the Senate and Georgia House of Representatives November 2016.
- ACI Awards Atlanta for human development through his various philanthropic activities and the desire and willingness to create a new path in technologies. A lifetime achievement in human development, 2016.
- Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Oyo State Chapter, Award of Excellence and Exemplary Leadership, November 2016.
- National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS) South-West Zone, Philanthropic Award for outstanding contribution towards the development of education and humanity in Nigeria, October 2015.
- Award of Excellence by Dramatic Arts Student Association (DASA), Obafemi Awolowo University in recognition of his outstanding contribution in DASA, OAU, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2015.
- Nigerian Humanitarian Icon Award (NHIA) 2015, in recognition of his humanitarian services to Nigerians, 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.

Dr. Babatope Michael Agbeyo is a man with great wealth of ideas and experiences, yet unassuming. He is happily married with children.



# DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP AWARD

## HON. ROBERT AONDONA TYOUGH



In many ways, Robert Aondona TYOUGH, *the eternal public servant to watch*, could be described as a political enigma who would fight passionately for the interest and well-being of his people. With the benefit of hindsight, he has demonstrated this commitment to the positive cause of his people everywhere he has had the opportunity to serve.

Of course, many people whose path have crossed with him will testify to the truthfulness of the fact that they have either benefitted from his financial and political benevolence, or have gotten job placement in his numerous business outfits or government establishments. Such benevolence is what endears Bob as he is popularly known to both old and young as well as friends and foes alike.

Being aware of the limitation to turn around the fortunes of his protégées, he deemed it wise to delve into party politics so as to get a large platform to bridge the gap of physical and human development that exist in Kwande/Ushongo Federal Constituency. Apparently, he has been well-equipped for the task only to be stopped by destiny for three consecutive times until the recent divine approval backed by the support of the majority people of Kwande/Ushongo.

Born on Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 1972, the new brand

House of Representative member for Kwande/Ushongo Federal Constituency schooled at Government College, Makurdi, where he obtained his General Certificate in Education (GCE) in 1985; after which he proceeded to the Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo, for a Certificate Course in Account and Audit, as well as a Diploma in Law at same institution in 1989.

The quest for a university degree took him to the University of Jos between 1991 and 1995, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in Theatre Arts. Not yet done, he returned to the classroom. This time at the University of Calabar for both the Post-Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) and a Master's degree in Business Administration. He started work with Abba Memorial College, Jos, Plateau State, between 1990 and 1991, as Administration and Account Officer.

On completion of his University education, Robert Tyough participated in the compulsory National Youth Service Corps Scheme (NYSC) in Port-Harcourt in the Year 1996, where he served with Aiker Ray Nigeria Limited as Public



Relations/Marketing Officer.

From 1996 to 2000, he was the Head, Operations and General Manager, and much later, the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of Professional Cleaning Services, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The desire to expand business frontiers spurred him to incorporate Steltoo Services Ltd Port-Harcourt where he has remained the Managing Director/CEO from 2000 till date.

A very astute Manager of men and resources, Tyough was appointed a member of the Board of the Federal Medical Centre, Makurdi, Benue State (1997-2011), and elevated as Chairman, Management Board, Federal Medical Centre, Asaba (2013-2014).

He has held various leadership responsibilities chiefly among them; Coordinator, University Theatre Troupe, University of Jos (1993-1995), National Speaker of the General Assembly for Nigeria Universities Theatre Arts Students Association, NUTASA (1993-1995), Coordinator/Director, NYSC Orientation Camp, Ndele, Rivers State (1995) and Chairman, Tiv Committee of Friends, Port-Harcourt Chapter (2003 till date).

A recipient of countless awards from several students, communities and faith based organisations, Robert Tyough who has published research projects to his credit has instituted academic Prizes for Best Graduating Students in Theatre Arts, Accounting, Law and Business Management at the Benue State University Makurdi as well as those of Electrical/Electronic Engineering, Computer/Statistics and Agricultural Engineering at the Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi.

His hobbies include: Reading, Squash, Music, Travelling and Meeting People

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# CALL FOR NOMINATION FOR SONTA FELLOWSHIP 2021

## Criteria for Admission as a Fellow of SONTA

- 1) A candidate for consideration for Fellowship of SONTA (*fsonta*) must be a trained theatre/media arts professional and has had not less than fifteen years relevant professional working experience, at least five of which must have been in positions of managerial responsibility;
- 2) He/she must have a track record in research, publication or outstanding contributions as theatre/media arts professional. His/her professional activities and achievements shall justify his acceptance as an authority in his/her field;
- 3) The candidate should preferably be a paid-up member of SONTA;
- 4) A nomination package must include copies of the candidate's current CV, clearly indicating his or her academic field and full bibliographical details of his or her publications and/or professional practice. The package is to be forwarded to the Secretary of SONTA Fellowship Screening Committee on or before the submission deadline advertised. 10 hard copies and an electronic version on CD ROM are required to be submitted to (**Professor Mabel Evwierhoma**, P.O. Box 7968, Wuse Post Office, Abuja-FCT. Email: mabtobrhomahoma2002@yahoo.com);
- 5) A candidate being nominated must include a Personal Statement on his or her contributions to the performing/theatre/media arts;
- 6) A candidate must be duly sponsored or nominated by two financially up to date SONTA Fellows, with one proposing and the other seconding. Nominee and nominators are to provide their SONTA Membership Numbers in all documentations.
- 7) A SONTA Fellow shall not **nominate** and/or **second** more than ONE candidate in each season of nomination exercise;
- 8) Not more than **three** candidates in any one year shall be admitted into the College of Fellows/SONTA Council;
- 9) Self-nomination is not acceptable; a sitting SONTA President, SONTA Council Chairman or Screening Committee members cannot nominate/second applications; and
- 10) The investiture of successful candidates shall be at the **2022** Annual Convention of the Society.

**Submission Deadline, Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2022.** Applications shall NOT be accepted after this date.

## SONTA Fellowship 2022 Screening Committee:

Prof. Olu OBAFEMI	-	Chairman
Prof. Charity ANGYA	-	Member
Prof. Emmanuel EMASEALU	-	Member
Prof. Alex ASIGBO	-	Member
Prof. Mabel EVWIERHOMA	-	Member/Secretary (08037879362)





# SONTA Creative Writing Competitions, 2022

## CALL FOR ENTERIES



The Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA) hereby invites entries for the following creative writing competitions:

- a) **SONTA-OLU OBAFEMI PRIZE for Playwriting – Prize Worth: N100,000.00**
- b) **SONTA-CHRIS IYIMOGA DANCE LIBRETTO PRIZE – Prize Worth: N100,000.00**

These prizes are, for now, endowed by Professor Olu **Obafemi** and Dr. Chris **Iyimoga**, respectively, to encourage creative writing in the performing arts and shall be awarded to the author of the best creative work in each of the categories listed above. The competitions are open to unpublished works only by Nigerian creative writers domiciled within and outside Nigeria.

### Submission Procedure

Seven copies of the play texts/manuscripts being entered for the competition are to be submitted by the authors and their electronic copies, if available. Entries should be submitted to the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA), the host and administrator of the prize, on or before the stipulated deadline. Comprehensive contact information is required: Full postal address, home address, email address and telephone numbers should accompany each submission. An author is entitled to make only one entry under each category. Any work that has previously won any other competitive award cannot be entered.

**Note:** Officers of SONTA Executive body are not eligible to compete. Failure to meet the stipulated

conditions will lead to the disqualification of the entry.

### Panel of Judges

A panel of at least three judges shall be appointed by the SONTA executive body to assess all the submitted works. They shall be respected performing artists, theatre practitioners, dance librettists, and dramatists/playwrights, known for their objectivity and broad knowledge of the performing arts mechanics.

### Prize Presentation

The winners will be announced by the judges at the next SONTA Annual International Conference in **2022**.

### Close of Entry

All entries must be received by **Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2022**. Late entries will not be honoured.

### Entries shall be sent to:

The General Secretary  
Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA)  
National Secretariat  
Tel: +234(0) 803 622 8131

**For further information, please visit SONTA website: [www.sonta.org](http://www.sonta.org).**

**Prof. Alex C. ASIGBO, *fsonta*  
President, SONTA**







# SONTA-THEODORA TOBRISE YOUNG FEMALE THESIS ASSISTANCE GRANT, 2022

**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS**



The Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA) hereby invites applications from eligible female SONTA Members for the **SONTA-THEODORA TOBRISE YOUNG FEMALE THESIS ASSISTANCE GRANT – 2022**. This Grant Award is instituted by Professor Mabel Ewrierhoma in memory of her mother, **Mrs. Theodora Airenvwinkiekie Ewemade Tobrise** (Née Aiwerioghene) to mitigate some of the challenges faced by young female Theatre Academics.

The grant is essentially meant to help the recipients word process (type) and bind their theses/dissertations. The Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA) holds the right to administer this grant, which covers both the Master's and PhD degree programmes. The grant is available to qualified applicants annually to assist them in the production of their postgraduate research theses/dissertations. Only two applicants in each of the categories can benefit from the grant annually. The Grant for Master's degree programme is worth **fifty thousand naira (N50,000.00)** only each, while the PhD degree programme is worth **one hundred thousand naira (N100,000.00)** only each.

### Eligibility

The *SONTA-Theodora Tobrise Young Female Thesis Assistance Grant* covers only registered female SONTA members who are undergoing studies in Theatre Arts or its equivalence at the Postgraduate level (Master's and PhD degree programmes) in any NUC approved universities. To qualify, a candidate must be a registered SONTA member; not more than **35** years or **40** years old, respectively; have not previously received this grant; must successfully defended your proposal; and currently registered as a student on either an M.A. or PhD programme.

### Application Procedure

Applicants shall download an application form from SONTA website ([www.sonta.org](http://www.sonta.org)); complete and submit application form with copies of all the required credentials and documents to the SONTA General Secretary by the stipulated deadline. Failure to meet the stipulated conditions will lead to the disqualification of the application. Every applicant **must read the Grant's Guidelines** before completing the form. The guidelines document is also available on SONTA website: [www.sonta.org](http://www.sonta.org).

### Screening of Application and Disbursement

A Board of Trustees shall be constituted for the grant by SONTA Executive body. Upon the expiration of the submission date of applications, the Board of trustees shall screen and consider the various applications for the grant; a list of successful applicants shall be submitted to SONTA President for announcement and disbursement. The decision of the grant's Board of trustees shall be final and **NOT** contestable under any legal process. The Board of Trustees shall submit to SONTA President a comprehensive report on every award exercise and this shall be made public on SONTA website. The grant shall be released to the beneficiary lump sum. Selected Master's degree students beneficiary shall receive the sum of **fifty thousand naira (N50,000.00)** only each; while the PhD students beneficiary shall receive **One hundred thousand naira (N100,000.00)** only each.

### Members of the Board of Trustees

1. Representative of SONTA Council – Chairman
2. Representative of SONTA EXCO
3. Representative of SONTA Congress

### Award Presentation

The winners will be announced by the SONTA President at the SONTA Annual International Conference in 2022.

### Close of Application

All applications must be received by **Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2022**. Late entries will not be honoured.

### Completed application documents shall be sent to:

The General Secretary  
Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA)  
National Secretariat  
Tel: +234(0) 803 622 8131

For further information, please visit SONTA website: [www.sonta.org](http://www.sonta.org).

**Prof. Alex C. ASIGBO, fsonta**  
President, SONTA



# Presidential Address

## Professor Alex Chinwuba ASIGBO

9TH SONTA President



**D**istinguished Colleagues! When you gave me your mandate to lead during the University of Port Harcourt SONTA Conference/AGM on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2017, I had knowledge of the enormity of work required to keep taking our dear Society higher in the scheme of things. Having been in the Exco since 2001, I can modestly claim to understand the workings of SONTA and what needs to be done in order to make SONTA not only relevant to the Nigerian socio-political space but also to our needs as Lecturers and Practitioners. This, I insisted, can be achieved through strengthening our license to operate and building strong institutions.

With my Exco, we set out to identify and pursue specific goals all intended to mainstream our Society and bring it at par, if not above other Professional Associations. I can gladly report today that we have gained more visibility for SONTA on the National stage. Our accounts have been audited and filed with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) up to Year 2020.

Dear Colleagues! We all know the story of the Theatre Arts Practitioners Regulatory Council Bill (TAR), sponsored for us by Distinguished Sen. Victor Umeh, OFR. As we all know, the 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly passed that Bill at the tail end of their tenure; hence, the requisite concurrence from the House of Representatives could not be got before the expiration of that Assembly. Undaunted, we have reintroduced the Bill in the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly; but this time, through the House of Representatives. Honourable Barr. Ifeanyi Momah is sponsoring it for us. The Bill has gone through the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Readings on the Floor of the House and is presently at Committee stage.

I must tell you that the Bill is generating a lot of mixed reactions from colleagues and our brothers in NANTAP. We are handling situations as they arise. TAR is supposed to make the profession Chartered, like our brothers in Law, Medicine, Accountancy, etc. It will stop non-professionals from teaching and practicing

our profession without any form of certification. It will ensure better job security for our ever increasing products. Our consultations have necessitated the inclusion of Honourables, Bob Tyough and Buhari as co-sponsors. I encourage all SONTA members to join in the advocacy towards ensuring that we not only scale through the House of Representatives but also get the necessary Concurrence from the Senate. This we can do by educating all Theatre/Film and Culture graduates that the Bill can only make our profession better and stop moonlighters from rubbishing our trade.

On the issue of indexing *Nigerian Theatre Journal*, I am happy to report that we have progressed considerably in that direction. We have passed the initial screening and hurdles with African Journals Online. The on-line e-ISSN is the only cog on our wheel presently. Hard and soft copies of *NTJ* produced during our tenure have been sent for sighting, any moment from now, uploading of our back issues as well as current ones on AJOL will start. For now, soft copies of the 2021 editions of *NTJ* are on our website, [www.sonta.org](http://www.sonta.org).

As promised, we have expanded our publication potentials so that instead of just *NTJ*, we now also have *Theatre Scholarship Dialogue Series* as well as *Scene Dock*. The Editor will give further briefing on this; but suffice it to say that SONTA is being repositioned to be a catalyst and stakeholder in our individual successes.



The proposed unbundling of Theatre Studies, into a Faculty of Creative Arts, is progressing satisfactorily. We are hopeful that very soon, the final approval will be out. The contributions of Professors Olu Obafemi and Victor Dugga to this effort cannot be glossed over. As you may also know, SONTA signed an agreement with Plume and Partner on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 2020, for a partnership, code-named, *Project Hostage* or *Harvest of Stage*. When fully operational, each participating Department will be given *five hundred thousand naira only (N500,000.00)* to help it come up with good screenplays on different genres. It is intended to bridge the gap between the Stage and the Screen and provide hands-on training through Boot-camps for our students. The novel COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainties of the Nigerian State have been delaying the take-off. When on stream, it will provide content for a dedicated Channel on Television, even as Departments, adjudged outstanding, will get the benefit of full camera chains.

On SONTA Website, I am happy to report that we are up to date on our obligations towards our Web Host. Our Journals, Books of Proceedings and other Publications are promptly uploaded on our website. Some of the papers submitted for the 2020 SONTA-Zazzau Conference, which could not hold as a result of COVID-19 and security challenges, have been published in *NTJ*, vols. 21.1 and 21.2; and they displayed in this Conference.

This year's conference on the theme, "Theatre and Media Praxis in a Pandemic Era" promises to be quite enriching and we are confident that our interface with the Nigerian Government through its agencies will soon start yielding the desired results. We have no doubts, whatsoever, that the Keynote Speaker, Professor Victor S. Dugga, and our lead paper presenters, Prof. Christine Odi and Dr. Chuks Okoye, will deliver on their mandates, creditably.

Dear Colleagues! It has generally been a good year for our members with Prof. Tor Iorapuu emerging as the Vice-Chancellor of Benue State University; Prof. Sunday Ododo emerging the General Manager/CEO of the National Theatre, Iganmu-Lagos; Prof. Jeremiah Methuselah being appointed the Director of National Film Institute (NFI), Jos; Prof. Olu Obafemi appointed as Chairman of Council, FUT-Minna; Prof. Duro Oni elected as the President of Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL); and Prof. Ameh Akoh emerging as DVC (Admin), AE-FUNAI.

Of course, many of our Members are serving as Deans and Directors in their respective institutions, among other success stories. Professor Sam Ukala retired and got appointed an Emeritus even as Professors Edde Iji

and Julie Okoh retired meritoriously from active service and have *Festschrifts* done in their honours. SONTA participated fully in these events and in the Inaugural Lectures of Colleagues.

These modest strides would not have been possible without the support of the Immediate Past President (IPP), Prof. Sunday Enessi Ododo who is ever ready to bend over backwards to meet our persistent requests. Not to be forgotten is the Chairman of our BOT, Prof. S. O. O. Amali, Prof. Olu Obafemi, Prof. Mabel Ewvierhoma, Prof. Emmanuel S. Dandaura, as well as members of my Exco who at great personal sacrifices have been shouldering the responsibility of moving SONTA forward. I must acknowledge the Editor, Prof. Barclays F. Ayakoroma (BFA), who has spent sleepless nights and man-hours in trying to keep our *NTJ* and *SONTA News* going.

It has not all been rosy as we lost Drs Praise-Daniel Inim, Shina Ayodele, Suru Damisa and Prof Cyprian Obadiogwu. We pray God to grant their souls, peaceful repose in his bosom. Amen.

Finally, let me thank our distinguished members, especially the Professors, who in spite of having reached the zeniths of the profession, continue to identify with SONTA and its programmes. Over these four years, SONTA Fellowship (*Fsonta*) awards have been bestowed on Professors Rasaki Ojo Bakare, Emmanuel Calvin Emasealu, and Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh (2018); Professors Saviour Nathan Agoro, Emeka Nwabueze and Tor Iorapuu (2019); Professors Matthew Umukoro and Henry Leopold Bell-Gam (2020); while Professors Josephine Mokuwunyei, Juliana Okoh and Gbemisola Adeoti will be getting the Fellowship for 2021.

SONTA Life Time Achievement (*Hsonta*) awards for 2018 went to Professors Akanji Nasiru, Edde Iji, Mathew Umukoro, Idris Amali, Olusola Fosudo and Daniel Omatsola; while Professors Innocent Ohiri, Osita Ezenwanebe, Julie Umukoro, Ted Anyebe, Mariam Asabe Iyeh and Dr. Teddy Hanmakyugh got it for 2019. Professors Femi Shaka, Emmy Idegu, Christine Odi and Jeremiah Methuselah are getting it for 2021. I congratulate all of them and encourage them to continue with their support for SONTA. With your support, I assure you that it can only get better. As we exchange batons, I encourage you to give my successor all necessary supports.

I Thank YOU and God Bless YOU ALL!

**Prof Alex C. ASIGBO, PhD**  
(*FSONTA, FACLS (AHP), FCAI, MNAL*)  
**9<sup>TH</sup> SONTA PRESIDENT**



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