

THE GHANAIAN AUDIENCE RESPONSE AND BEHAVIOUR
TO A THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE OF POETRY AND MUSIC

by J. Scott Kennedy*

The object of this project is to investigate the nature of the Ghanaian response and behaviour in respect to a theatrical experience of poetry and music.

The subjects of the investigation include male and female students from fifty training colleges and secondary schools throughout Ghana, including the North and the South, as well as the East and the West. The subjects make a total of twenty thousand (20,000).

The method embraces a one hour performance of a theatrical experience of poetry and music with movement and dance, followed by a question and answer period which usually runs another hour. The performance is later analyzed and interpreted in respect to the question and answer period. The music and dance utilize an African experience in language in respect to the music (drumming and flute music), and dance. The poetry utilizes an American experience in language in respect to American poetry, the poetry of Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, and Carl Sandburg. In short, the investigation is a dramatic excursion in the Ghanaian audience's response to the known experience (African music and dance), as well as the unknown experience (American poetry).

Under focus in this study is the listening behaviour of the subject in respect to the following:

- (1) hearing the 'new' American English sounds and words,
- (2) listening to the rhythms, ideas, and 'new' frame of reference, and

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- (3) understanding the idea, as well as the experience beneath the idea.

The analysis uses as a point of departure the discipline of the Professional Actor, Writer, and Director for the dramatic script and performance, and the discipline of the Specialist in Communication in the language area and areas of response and behaviour in respect to the 'performance response' as well as the 'subject response' in respect to the question and answer period.

A basic rationale is included in the design and study. It is stated as follows: The audience behaviour should include the behaviour of the listener and the questioner. The audience must first hear; it may then listen. If the audience is interested and tries to listen, it may listen with understanding. If the audience understands some of the experience it may be prompted to ask questions. The questions will then lead to an open dialogue and discovery in respect to this particular kind of dramatic experience.

The approach and check includes a specific design and analysis based on the 'Tune-In' and 'Unlocking' Process from the point of view of the use of language, audience behaviour and participation, and a dramatic experience.



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