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BEYOND THE AESTHETICS OF TEACHING AN AMATEUR THEATER: AN EXAMINATION OF AN UNTITLED PERFORMANCE BY THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF IUT

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Résumé

Le présent article traite du rôle du théâtre dans la formation des étudiants de l'Institut Universitaire de Technologie (IUT), un institut de l'Université des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Bamako, au Mali, dont la durée de formation est de trois ans. Il a pour objectif de montrer que le théâtre amateur universitaire, en ayant recours à une esthétique langagière spécifique et à une thématique appropriée, est un vecteur essentiel de sensibilisation et de motivation des étudiants. D'autre part, le présent article vise à sensibiliser pour un changement de comportement et de mentalité vis-à-vis de l'art dramatique qui ne doit pas être l'apanage d'un groupe social. Il est toutefois surprenant de constater que peu d'intérêt et de place est accordée au théâtre dans les salles de classes. Certaines hypothèses peuvent alors être formulées pour expliquer ces assertions. Afin de présenter ces hypothèses, l'article est articulé en trois parties principales: (1) la pertinence d'intégrer le théâtre dans l'enseignement au niveau supérieur; (2) présentation/analyse de la pièce montée par les étudiants de l'IUT; et (3) la pertinence du rôle des artistes dans l'éveil des consciences.

Mot clés : *éducation, genre littéraire, mise en scène, pièce de théâtre, théâtre amateur*

Abstract

The present paper deals with the role of theater in the training of students at *Institut Universitaire de Technologie (IUT)*, a three-year training institute at Université des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Bamako, Mali. Its main objective is to demonstrate the extent to which amateur theater, thanks to the use of specific language aesthetics and appropriate themes, is a crucial vector for awareness raising and motivation. A specific objective of the paper is to achieve a change in behavior and mentality in approaching dramatic arts which is misperceived as a monopoly of a particular social group in Mali. Surprisingly, drama as a literary genre is not given due interest and importance in the classrooms. Some hypotheses can therefore be formulated to explain the aforesaid assertions. In order to present these hypotheses, the text is divided in three parts: (1) the relevance of introducing drama into higher education in Mali; (2) presentation/analysis of the play put on by IUT students; and (3) the relevance of artists' role in awareness raising.

Keywords : *amateur theater, drama, education, literary genre, staging*

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Introduction

In its literal meaning, the word *theater* comes from the Greek term *theatron* which means “Le lieu où l’on regarde” (Bernhard, 2016) i.e. «*The place where one looks at*”. This definition tells about two elements: the viewer and the place from where he is performing the action of looking at something. From this perspective, Guibert (1994) highlights the fact that theater is beneficial to both the comedian and the viewer.

Some authors, in particular Jenger (1975), distinguish theater from play. For them, theater is based on a written text by an author, while play implies an improvisation. Verdeil (1995), analyses the origins of theater in schools. According to him, the origins of theater in schools can be traced back to the sixteenth century, when the Protestant, Jean Sturn, proposed a new program of studies in which the cultural and literary contribution of theater was brought to the fore. However, educators carried out the progressive introduction of theater into school. The purpose was to “fix” those students said to be “difficult” or “turbulent”. In that, Schmidt (2006) argues that dramatic expression promotes students’ learning.

In the domain of education, Mayor (1991), Dolz & Schneuwly (1998), Joronen and colleagues (2012, p.6), Mages et al., (2007), Cohen (2001), Simard, Duays, Dolz-Mestre & Garcia-Debanc (2010) and Perrenoud (1991), approached theater in education, from different perspectives: behavioral, communicative, and active, among others. According to Joronen and colleagues, for example, “the fictional world provides opportunity for independent, cooperation, for a healthy release of emotion to build social awareness”. As for Cohen, “Identification with the characters portrayed has been presented by some as a prerequisite for attitudinal and behavior change perceived realism and authenticity”.

As it can be seen, from ancient times to modern and postmodern eras, theater has served a variety of ends in human societies. In Africa, and in Mali, in particular, theater belonged to mystic practices performed in the framework of secret societies. However, with the integration of works by Moliere, Shakespeare, and other world figures of drama and literature into school curricula, theater has taken on a new and stronger dimension. In addition to its recreational role, theater is increasingly resorted to for other purposes encompassing the cultural, social, and educational domains.

This paper is based on a play by students of IUT. As university teachers, well versed in literature, my colleague and co-author of this paper and myself were invited by the administrators of IUT to be members of a jury in charge of assessing the students' performance of the play. We accepted their collaborative approach. Being teachers at the English department, we were invited by our colleagues whose working language is French. Soon after the students' graduation, we received a call for proposals from the organizers of an international colloquium in Lomé. As the topic fitted well with the performance of the students, we decided to use the opportunity offered to us; hence, the idea of this paper. The play has merit in many respects. Firstly, it is a local amateur play staged by a recent graduate assistant, Abdoulaye Sissoko. Secondly, it is played by first-year students, all enrolled in the Staging Major, to rise the curtain of a show on completion of Licence³ studies. Thirdly, the play was drafted (not published or edited; therefore, the absence of a title) by two well-known playwrights (Boubacar Koné and Antonin Sambaly Keita)². Lastly, the whole work is supervised by two seasoned and experienced actors of Malian theater: Boubacar Belco Diallo and Aguibou

¹ Licence 3: third and last year of studies at IUT.

² Boubacar Koné and Antonin Sambaly Keita: well-known playwrights for their participation in the Malian cultural and artistic biennials.

Dembélé. Taking advantage of their experience, the two professionals share their knowledge and know-how with the students enrolled in the art and drama course, during the lectures they give. Therefore, examining this performance makes a good fit with the Lomé Colloquium³ aspirations focused on “mutual exchanges between the academic world and the cultural and artistic circles, through theater and education.”

In Africa, except for Conservatories and specialized schools in the maintenance and perpetuation of dramatic arts, novel remains the most widely taught literary genre in the majority of school programs. It is followed by poetry and essays. As for drama, it has been put in the background. Such prioritization that downgrades drama can be explained by the composite nature and the complexity of dramatic art. In fact, this genre is made up of a diversity of disparate and heterogeneous components, interacting with other arts such as painting, sculpting, lighting, music and dance. Therefore, its implementation requires more means and commitment: stage, actors-comedians, audience, didascalia, décor, accessories, costume, curtain, backstage, deuteragonist, warners and prompters.

³ Lomé International Colloquium: the present paper is a workout version of a communication at Lomé Colloquium (February 2-4, 2020).

Unlike the majority of former French colonies, who have borrowed the name “Ecole des Beaux-Arts”⁴ and have it engraved on the pediment of their artistic training centers, the newly independent republic of Mali, under the leadership of Modibo Keita, in the framework of his national education reform policy and as part of his dynamics of deconstructing the colonial system, founded the Institut National des Arts (I.N.A.)⁵ in 1963.

The I.N.A., because of its geographical location in the Grand Marché⁶, was a springboard for a new generation of self-employed artists with the regular students. After a four-year basic education, the graduates had the possibility to be employed as teachers in the same institute, after a two-year internship, or enter competitions in order to register for the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers Multimédia/Balla Fasséké Kouyaté.⁷ Since 2016 this Conservatory modeled its program on the LMD system. Since the academic year 1997 – 1998, the University of Bamako opened the “Dramatic Arts” course, a four-year course of study leading to a master’s degree. The first two years constitute a common core curriculum. The specialization course in theatrical or staging studies starts the third year. The students, all of whom are civil servants, are

enrolled in competitions they participate in as art professionals.

In 2011, the University of Letters and Humanities of Bamako (ULSHB) was created, following the splitting of the University of Bamako into four entities. This change will lead to the creation of I.U.T., which has adopted the LMD system, offering a professional license degree and receiving the high school new graduates, unlike the classical Maîtrise system.

The relationship between theater and education is differently addressed in literature. In a paper on teaching through theater, Joannie Dubois and Ophélie Trembley (2015) explain:

In fact, teaching through theater has some advantages. For example, in a larger perspective than a French classroom, the integration of arts-related-activities (such as theater) into school is very beneficial to the learner. Such activities will have a positive impact on the learning of those disciplines learnt at school, especially science (Dogru, 2010). They will also play a positive role in the development of the student’s social competencies, more particularly concerning empathy, the regulation of emotions (Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2014) and self-esteem (Kamaruddin, 2010).

⁴ Ecole des Beaux-Arts: School of Fine Arts

⁵ Institut National des Arts: National Institute of Arts

⁶ Grand Marché: Central market of Bamako.

⁷ Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers: Conservatory of Arts and Crafts

Allen Crafton (2009) takes a different stand. The author opines that in “our colleges and high school the work in drama usually falls into two categories: classroom courses and public performances.” According to the author, “in neither category do we have a clear objective which meets with general acceptance.”

A new awareness of the importance and educational reach of staging has led to the integration of teaching dramatic arts into graduate and postgraduate levels, by bringing academics and professional artists together, thus fostering exchanges of skills. ULSHB introduced at I.U.T. a License training course in Staging in 2012, some modules of which are the following: history of African theater, history of art, aesthetics, technique of stage expression, foreign theater, sociology of art, and communications technology.

It is this synergy between theoreticians and experienced artists that gave birth to a trial effort which became a triumphant one. The language used is hybrid French mixed with bamanankan⁸

Of all literary genres, drama is the most deictic because of the stage performances inherent to it. It covers the visual, auditory, tactile, and even olfactory senses altogether. From another perspective, in Mali, and in many other West African countries, drama

was the prerogative of a social group, which limited its social dimension. In fact, art, in general, and dramatic art, in particular, is traditionally classified in the caste socio-professional groups, the *Nyamakala*; therefore, it was restricted to the initiated ones among these endogamous groups.

Describing this situation, Oumar Kamara, in an article intitled “Paper on the problematic situation of art schools in francophone Africa (Malian Studies No84/2017: 203-219) ascertains: ‘While initiating to moral values and to the most general knowledge of codes governing the society concerned all levels and strata of society, the carrying-out of artistic-related activities [...] was reserved for strata belonging to a given caste within the community.’”

Drama is approached from a variety of perspectives in literature. This paper deals with drama and education. It goes in line with Schifra Schonmann’s (2011) approach, which is extensively discussed in her book entitled *Key Concepts in Theatre/Drama Education*. In this book, the author explores three domains of knowledge: drama, education and the modes of education. The author advocates for an interconnection and a junction between diverse skills in the following words: “inter-dependent topics of aesthetics and ethics, curricula and history,

⁸ Bamanankan : a national language in Mali

culture and community, narrative and pedagogy.”

1. The relevance of introducing drama into higher education in Mali

As stated earlier, the I.N.A. was created to train self-employed artists, though some of the graduates had the possibility to become teachers in the same institution, after a two-year internship. Artists-to-be enrolled in the institute with the D.E.F. Diploma⁹. The duration of the studies was four years. Apart from the degree of teacher, the young graduates were conferred on other degrees like those of socio-cultural organizers, comedians, designers, musicians, visual artists, dramatic artists and instructors. They graduated as professionals of elementary level. There was no other perspective for artists to go further to higher education in Mali.

In Mali, one of the prerequisite to access higher education was and still is the Baccalaureate exam. Students who successfully finished high school and who wanted to pursue higher studies could either decide to enroll in a Malian higher institution or choose to study abroad, if he or she had the opportunity. Before the creation of the University of Bamako in 1996, the choice of Malian students, holders of the

Baccalaureate was limited. There existed only four higher educational institutions, most of which were built in the framework of the cooperation between Mali and the former Soviet Union: the Ecole Normale Supérieure, the National Engineering School, the National School of Administration, and the Rural Polytechnic Institute. The first three schools were all located in Bamako. As for the Rural Polytechnic Institute it was located in Katibougou for practical purposes.

There was no higher school institution for the training of comedians, artists, musicians and other art professionals. For over three decades, from the late sixties to the mid-nineties, Malians art professionals with advanced level were, therefore, trained abroad: Cuba for musicians and sportsmen, and the former Soviet Union for plasticians, painters, designers, filmmakers and comedians. The happy few students, who benefitted from this training in the domains of arts, were either beneficiaries of the Malian government grants, or those whose parents had enough financial means to pay for the studies of their children.

Studying abroad has a cost, and with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the government of Mali had to find alternative ways to train its students locally; hence, the creation of the University of Bamako in

⁹ D.E.F. Diploma: diploma of fundamental studies.

1996. Since the academic year 1997 – 1998, the University of Bamako opened the “Dramatic Arts” course, a four-year course of study leading to a Maîtrise degree. After the first two years, students can take a specializing course in theatrical or staging studies. The students, all of whom are civil servants, are enrolled in competitions they participate in as art professionals.

Later on, in 2011, the University of Letters and Humanities of Bamako (ULSHB) was created, and the I.U.T. is one of its institutes. Students with the Baccalaureate level or art professionals who want to get a high-level degree can also enter competitions in order to register for the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers Multimédia/Balla Fasséké Kouyaté. Today, with the creation of I.U.T. and the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers in Bamako, both holders of the Baccalaureate and professionals of the arts can pursue their studies in Mali and became well trained professionals in many domains of art. Besides, the graduates of these schools are employed in many sectors that are crucial for the development of a country: film industry, music, and mainly dramatic and education, where they contribute to entertaining and training other professionals.

Another advantage of opening these schools for dramatic art is the fact that many Malian citizens can be trained locally, with reduced

costs for the training, and it favors a more democratic access to higher education.

2. Presentation and analysis of the play put on by IUT students

The performance is divided into three parts, representing the three acts of the drama.

2.1. Presentation

3.1.1 Hurly-burly in the marketplace

The first part, or act I, describes the marketplace, where three sellers: one buyer and one representative of the government are the main actors. In fact, the sellers—two women and one man—are heartedly complaining about the absence of prospective buyers and the slump in sales. An illustration of this crisis is in the following words by the first saleswoman: « I have sold nothing, since the beginning of the day ». She pretends to have three species of good quality rice i.e. ‘Gambiaka, Bon Goût, and Malomisin—small grain rice.’

Yet, despite the price hike, the State is not acting as a price regulator. The buyer ultimately understands that there is collusion between the sellers and the representative of the government (Directorate for Competition and Internal Trade). Besides, the State agent is corrupt for he accepts bribes from the sellers and, as a consequence; he lets them sell their

commodity at three different prices for one kilogram.

The man seller comes in rescue to the lost and desperate buyer by saying to him, in a sarcastic tone: “Did you not hear about the so called twin system? Some traders are subject to tax by the government for the goods they import, other economic operators fraudulently introduce the same goods into the country, though they benefit from exemption. Should these two categories sell at the same price?”

The young buyer comes to the conclusion that the marketplace is a jungle that cannot be endured and calls his fellow citizens for an uprising.

3.1.2 The Grin

In the Malian culture, a Grin is a platform where people of the same generation meet on a regular basis to exchange views and socialize.

After he has come from the marketplace, the young buyer, who is also the chief of the Grin, was in a bad mood. He found that his mates did not understand them. They did not seem to be moved by his account of what has happened. Because of his misfortune, the atmosphere was tense and restless and the other members of the Grin did not know what to do. Finally, all of them had

¹⁰ Ngoni : a traditional string instrument played by griots and singers-hunters

embraced the chief’s disappointment caused by the evils of the society and the lack of accountability of the State’s agents.

At this crucial moment, one of their friends appeared on the scene, playing his traditional ngoni¹⁰, so that the group can relax. Since he failed to reach his goal, he, too, started to complain about the fate reserved to artists in his country. For him, the role of artists includes, but is not limited to: awareness raising, sensitizing, educating through the dissemination of information, storytelling. However, he regrets that this role is overlooked today. As a result, dancers, carvers, and public entertainers are looked down on.

3.1.3. Security crisis in Mali today

The third part of the play, or act III, is a report on war in Mali, truth revelation to artists, by a soldier.

The soldier in question is a survivor of what is referred to in Mali as the “slaughter of Aguel’- hok¹¹”. In her depiction of the war and its atrocities, she fingers at the management of the army. In fact, many Malian soldiers were killed because they ran out of ammunition. They requested some support from their hierarchy; without any success. The attackers took this opportunity

¹¹ Aguel’hok : au début de la crise malienne, en 2012, des soldats maliens ont été égorgés par des islamistes

to kill a dozen soldiers with members of their families.

While fleeing, the survivor soldier confessed to have seen a soldier of her unit discussing with one of the attackers! Even worse, listening to the news, she heard that support had been sent and that there were only five victims. The soldier therefore denounces a masquerade from the military leaders. She ultimately implores God to save her country.

The young members of the Grin, having listened to this report, call for revolt for enough is enough: injustice, unemployment, and nepotism are destroying their country. However, an old and wise man entered the scene. He warned the young against any ill-considered behavior. For him, they should refrain from any act of violence that could worsen the situation. Peace should be preserved at all cost, as it is absurd to combat injustice by committing injustice. In his speech, the old man uses a specific rhetoric aimed at convincing his audience. Such speech template is not isolated in the play. In the next section, we will discuss the specificity of the language used.

2.2. Language aesthetics

From the incipit of the play, a Bambara song sings: *Donni donni yan bèla, min mana mangoya o ta bè fo* [we all have flaws; only when someone is disavowed, his/hers will

be exhibited]. However, in the Bambara version, the flaws are not explicitly expressed; they are implicitly referred to by using a hint *donni donni* (little by little) which can be at the same time a euphemism, an allusion, and an insinuation.

In his aside whispered to the audience, the rice salesman introduces himself in the following terms: « It is me Mr. Good Price! » This rhetoric, is an *antonomasia*—a figure of speech which indicates an actor with a common name supposedly expressing his character.

To attract the young customer, the salesman hails him in the following terms: « *na an ga tyè féré kè...rice is CFA francs per kilo, kôpô rô a ta kan!* » [Let us do a male sale ... rice is 500 CFA francs per kilo, not a cent more]. Such sexist expression is in common use in bamanankan and hints at the very laborious bargaining between saleswomen, in general, and their clients to get the best price for the goods at sale. On the other side, the expression implies the so-called pragmatism of men, who, in real life, are easy preys for sellers.

During a routine inspection Mr. Traoré from the Directorate for Competition and Internal Trade was easily corrupted by the saleswoman, who played on the social chapter of pleasant cousinship: *Traoré kè nin, é ma shô dun sôgômadaina* [little Traoré, it can be seen that you did not savor your bean dish this morning]. Bean dish is

considered to be the Bambaras distinctive meal. Nowadays, in Mali, the practice of pleasant cousinship is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it is a societal value that helps contain divergences between people; thus bringing them closer together. On the other hand, it is a subterfuge, which some ill-intentioned people resort to, in order to cover up their misdemeanor and ensure impunity. This postcolonial and ill-advised use of *Sinanguya* perverts the true meaning of the message of this age-old practice.

Due to the two-headed system of double standard oftentimes used by politicians, the sellers also grant themselves the right of liberalizing the prices for their own benefit. This profit making is expressed in the following bambara saying: *A bè fô ntori ma Bagayôkô yôrômin, a bi brin yén* [the toad will croak only there where he is welcome], which is equivalent to the French expression *la chèvre mange là où elle est attachée* [a goat grazes there where she is tethered] or *être comme un poisson dans l'eau* [to be in one's element].

To give to their speculative practice more legitimacy, the sellers resort to a rhetorical question: *Andé yé fasso nan bon wa?* [Are we responsible for spilling the common soup?], so as to plead that they cannot accept to be «the wretched of the earth»; they cannot accept to be no more than spectators of the ongoing tricks; they, too, want to get

their share! The Bambara expression *to spill the common soup* is an idiom to name the worst curse of all and which can be an equivalent to the idiomatic expression: «to be taken for a ride».

The exhausted buyer, overwhelmed by the words of the sellers and by the despicable behavior of Malian political leaders, exclaims in French: «Where are we going?». Used in this context in its conceptual meaning of being at a loss, the sellers also resort to it in its true sens. they reply in unisson: *Where are we going? An bè sougoula yan!* [We will not desert this market!]. The speech figure used is antanaclasis (or a syllepse), which is based on words' polysemy. It consists in using the same word in a sentence twice, by conferring to it two different meanings.

In the second act of the play, the same buyer debriefs his friends on his misadventure. The latter, not the least surprised, tease him about being so naïve to want things to change for the better. To a question by a member of the Grin about the share reserved to them –the poor – what can they get from the wheeling and dealing between traders and politicians? The griot, after a mirthless laughter, answers: *Fali kaya ! An ta yé fali kaya yé ! Ni ya diéni ka gnè o bè minè i la !* [The balls of a donkey! That's our share! And if they are well braised, they will be taken away from you!]. This expression, which symbolizes an individual's

uselessness or his inanity, when given the metaphorical meaning ‘the donkey’s scrotum, is similar to the French expression: “ne pas valoir un pet de lapin” [not worth a rabbit’s fart or to be a dead loss] or “ne pas valoir tripette”, [not worth a light]. This reference to a « pet », as inanity, is expressed in the play and is attributed to artists that are also compared with the «goat’s fart» (*Baa bo finyè*), due to the contempt decision-makers—the misdeeds of whom they criticize—usually show for them.

From another perspective, which is different from inanity, reference is once again made to « fart » in the play, in the following way: *Oh là! Bo tyi ra bougouridiè la!* [Someone farted in the ash]; in other words: «the game’s up », to depict an awkward situation the outcome of which is both uncertain and perilous. In fact, in the play, the soldier is caught in a trap at the front, lacking ammunition and support, faced with terrorists who fear neither God nor man. The outcome is well known: many soldiers got killed.

As a result of the irresponsible behavior of politicians, often using stereotyped language, practising misinformation or the misholding of information, the outraged young people are revolting: *Digui dan yé dènè yé* [you cannot carry on with pushing against a wall], which means: «to have enough of» or « to have it up ». They rise up

against the symbols of the State, before being stopped in their destructive impetus by a wise old man, who first lectures them on good behavior, then provides them with food for thought, using the following Bambara interjection that warns: *If we lose the national unity of this country! Houn !houuun !houn !* Hence, the young demonstrators pull themselves together, having remembered the following precept: *Bamanaw ko tén, houn !houuun !houn ! tè fô bo souma doron na* (a bambara saying goes: « houn !houuun !houn ! », which is not only aimed at being repulsive to unpleasant smell of a fart). A similar French proverb goes: *Plus on remue la merde, plus elle pue* [The more you turn over the shit, the more it stinks]: the more you dig further a nasty question, the more you will uncover unexpected hidden things.

3. The relevance of artists’ role in awareness raising

Theater is an age-old cultural practice which has played and continues to play an important role in the lives of people throughout the world. This crucial role is discussed by authors, who often depict the impacts of theater from several perspectives: from the point of view of the writer, of the audience, or of the performers, among others. Awareness raising is one aspect and an area where the role of artists, in general, and of theater, in particular, is scrutinized

and is expected by proponents of change in most societies.

Akgul (2011) depicts the social impact of theater in the following terms:

This branch of art has acquired a privilege with its educational priority in the realization of smooth and natural flow of the social transition which takes place during the journey from the traditional to the universal with political, religious as well as economic concerns.

From the ancient times to the present, attempts to educate society through theatre have assumed considerably potential role as a means employed in circumstances where dominant systems of thought were intended to be disseminated into broad areas.”

Similarly, artists’ role is emphasized in the play by I.U.T. students.

First of all, the first actor to enter the scene, in Act I, is an artist, a musician who plays his traditional guitar, opens “the ball” and tries to open the eyes of the buyer on the collusion between the government agents in the marketplace and some economic operators. He says, to the perplexed and lost buyer: “you don’t understand what the double-head system mean? Let me explain this to you!”

In playing this kind of pedagogic role, the speaker does not only address one person. Instead, he warns the whole population against the wrongdoing that is taking place and the authors of which are some corrupt

agents of the government with their accomplices in the marketplace. In fact, using red tape, some economic operators benefit from exoneration but they sell their rice at the same price as those who pay some taxes to import their commodity. By explaining this situation to the buyer—an activist, as he is the chief of the Grin--, the artist is conscious that his message will go very far and reach the large population. In fact, as soon as he left the marketplace, the buyer went to his Grin to inform his friends about the unbearable experience he had just went through, and they all found that strong measures should be taken against the system.

Secondly, the floor is opened by another artist, in Act II of the play, a musician, playing and dancing a rap song. Since he failed to bring up the chief of Grin’s spirits, another player enters the scene, playing a traditional ngoni. He, too, soon gives up, since the chief of Grin is not reacting. After they have listened to the complaints of their chief about his misfortune in the market, the artists themselves pondered on their role in society. The musician’s comments summarized: “You artists, you play a prominent role in awareness raising, in sensitizing, and in delivering information to the population, through theater.”

His description of artists’ role is followed by a comment from another musician who recalled an old saying: “No country can

develop without a cultural influence.” And that is the reason why, according to him, those political actors, who love their culture, provide substantial budgets to ensure its development.

Lastly, when the surviving soldier had come from the front, her first step was to go to the Grin and account the events to the artists. In fact, her story is a hot topic for the Government of Mali and its armed forces. At the beginning of the security crisis in Mali, in 2012, many Malian soldiers with members of their families were killed. However, as in most tragic events, the large population was given a contradictory account of the number of casualties, and oftentimes, a misrepresentation of information from the front. As a witness and an actor of what had happened in Aguel’hoc, the soldier, who has lost confidence in the government representatives, was convinced that only the artists will relay the true information and, ultimately, get the population involved and be interested in finding alternative solutions to the ongoing war and its atrocities.

CONCLUSION

In this piece of work, the authors have depicted the scourges and flaws of Malian society through the performance of the students. What can artists do to bring about change, as they do not always have the means to implement their policy?

Artists are aware of the role they have to play and the expectations of the majority of Malians who have lost confidence in their political leaders and in the capability or the willingness of the military hierarchy to disseminate true information about the security crisis in the country. The presumptions of the old wise man proved true: the country is divided since 2012, despite the presence of international troops and of French soldiers. As goes a Bambara proverb: *Mogokoroba kouma yé sourgou bo yé. Na mènà a bi diè* [the word of an old wise man is like the hyena’s shit, the longer it is in the open air, the whiter it becomes].

Any art should first of all reflect the knowledge, the know-how, and the need of the people that create it. After that, it can internalize the know-how of other people to derive a benefit therefrom for the well-being and the development of its own people.

For this purpose, for the sustainability of the results achieved, and as part of the building of capacities and skills, ULSHB organizes teaching and expertise missions for the Staging major with professionals, as well as teachers-researchers of the sub-region (Abidjan, Bouake, Dakar, and Saint-Louis).

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