

ADDRESSING CONTEMPORARY ISSUES THROUGH CULTURAL CREATIVE DANCE EXPRESSIONS

The cultural creative dance has been a constant performance feature in the Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festival repertoire. Established in the 1981 edition of the annual festival, the dance, in a big way signalled the advent proper, of Traditional African theatre elements in a fete therefore characterised by performance of European plays. Throughout the years, the cultural creative dance has evolved to not only exude aesthetic elements, but has incorporated and encapsulated the messaging and tackling of a myriad of contemporary and emergent issues that affect society. Through its dramatic and storytelling features, the cultural creative dance provides a space - in an indigenous language of expression - to probe, critique and evaluate the society that makes it, and leads in finding best solutions for the issues thereof. As such this paper explores the various socio-economic and political issues that the sampled cultural creative dances have advanced as thematic concerns and episodes of dramatisation in the quest to having societal dialogue. To understand this, the paper delves into the techniques of dramatisation in the dances, contextualised in their cultural and creative contexts. The synthesis of these concepts was propped on aesthetic theory, semiotics and discourses on African performance for the description of style, themes and messaging. The study was framed on qualitative design to analyse purposively sampled cultural creative dances on various chosen themes and cultures. The data was analysed using content analysis. The study finds that indeed cultural creative dance performed in the Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festival tackle various themes that are derived from various issues the Kenyan society is grappling with including corruption, environmental degradation and ethnic strife, social inequalities, family intrigues, erosion of indigenous customs and values, corruption, drug abuse, health issues, social cohesion and integration interalia.

Keywords

Dance, dramatization, theme, theatre, cultural creative dance, storytelling, societal issues.

Primary author: THUKU, Gabriel (Kenyatta University)