

The Challenges of Realistic Costuming in Nigerian Christian Films: A Study of Select Mount Zion Films

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Generally speaking, Nigerian Christian films face the challenges of realistic and appropriate costuming. This is also evident in many films produced by the Mount Zion Drama Ministries, a popular Christian film production outfit in Nigeria, with over three decades of stage and film productions. We however observe a recurrent challenge in the trend of costuming many of their films; one that has not been significantly surmounted in their recent productions. This, we speculate is resultant of little consideration and priority they give to this important theatrical phenomenon, especially in scenes with dense secular undertones. It is against this background that this study investigates the guiding principles they employ in the planning, designing, execution and deployment of costumes in their film productions. To approach this, we employ interview and existing literature as primary sources, while the secondary approach is a critical analysis of costumes in two Mount Zion films; *Haunted* (2016) and *Last Man Standing* (2017). The study thereafter submits that the foremost objective of Mount Zion Drama Ministries is “evangelism”; their guiding principle in costume design, “spirituality” and their target audience's preference for the “message” is not compromise for realistic and spectacular costuming. We therefore conclude by recommending that Mount Zion Drama Ministries should engage resident costume professionals to manage their costume department, they should minimize forcing visual depictions of highly secular scenes, adopt the use of symbolic costuming and lastly, endeavour to engage camera manipulations, sometimes. This way, a soft landing between realistic costuming and Christian ethos may be achieved without endangering the objectives of their films.

Background to the Study

Observing the trend in Christian films in Nigeria, costumes do not often conform to the fundamental functions of realistic costuming in productions. This is because, the guiding principles of costume design (stage or screen) is not often adhered to. Due to this trend, costumes often fall short in advancing plot, convincing audience and aiding characterization, among several other functions that costume plays in productions.

Narrowing down, Mount Zion Drama Ministry falls within this enclave. Founded by Mike Bamiloye, an evangelist, in 1985, it is one of the pioneer Christian film production ministries in Nigeria. Over the decades, numerous television productions and films have been released by this production outfit, making it a popular production outfit among Christian believers in Nigeria. Some of their movies are: *The Beginning of the End* (1990); *The Last Generations (now the Bride & The Devil)*; (1991); *Lost Forever* (1992); *Ewu Igba Ikehin* (1992); *Agbara Nla 1-5* (1993); *The Ultimate Power 1-8* (1994); *The Rapture* (2017); *A Virtuous Wife* (2017); *God has a Standard* (2017); *The Riddle* (2017); *God of Shiloh* (2018) and many others, some of which are produced in conjunction with other Christian drama ministries. But in many of these movies seems to follow a pattern of costuming, which hardly conforms to the principles of costume design, thereby justifying this study.

Extant studies like (Hitchcock 1936; Okoye 1986; Brockett 1988; Cohen 1999; Wilson 2001; Thorne 2001; Utoh-Ezeajugh, 2009; Lyndersay 2011; Downs et al 2013; Badeji 2000; 2013 & 2019; Shuaib 2014; Adeoye et al 2017) and many others have addressed costumes extensively as a major theatrical element that has been a revered since the Greek Classical age when plays were enacted as part of the worship of Dionysus around 500 B.C.E. Although in this period through the Medieval, costume was symbolic, in the Renaissance, it was spectacular, elaborate and aesthetic; pleasuring the visual sensibilities of the audience rather than add conviction to the characters and play story-telling functions, by the 19th century, theatre enthusiasts like the Stanislavsky, the Duke of Saxe-Meningen and David Belasco began the advocacy for realistic costumes (New Caxton Encyclopedia, 1969). These arrowheads of realistic costuming argued that costume for theatrical performances should be designed to conform to the realities of everyday clothes, since theatre is imitation of man's experiences in life. Since that period, realism is the concept that is most widely used in costume design.

Statement of the Problem

Although (Downs et al, 2013) state that in design, the concepts a designer can adopt are: Naturalism, Realism, Symbolism, Minimalism and Fantasy, as earlier mentioned, realism is mostly used in most theatrical stage and screen productions because of its many advantages, especially its story-telling function; depicting real life situations and experiences. Many Christian film production outfits in Nigeria like the Mount Zion Ministries do not seem to consciously integrate realism and other technicalities of costume design into their production concept as evident in most of their films. This study argues therefore, that minimal attention is steeped in the costume design considerations of their films, inadvertently leading challenges in the effectiveness of costumes. Often, this trend leads to erroneous depiction of characters and situations in their film, and it is therefore expedient to ask the following research questions.

1. What is the concept of Christian films?
2. Is the Christian ideology responsible for minimalism and unrealistic costuming in Mount Zion films?
3. What factors influence costume design in Christian film productions?
4. What research methods do costume designers in Mount Zion films adopt?
5. What challenges do realistic costuming pose to Christian ethos?

The beginning and concept of Christian drama in Nigeria

Many Churches in the present day Nigeria have a drama department or unit which handles the spiritual exhortation of the congregation through drama presentations. Over the years, drama has become an integral aspect of Church programmes, whose primary objective of is evangelism and soul winning and are often referred to as “ministration” and not drama or theatre. By the same token, the actors and actresses are referred to as “drama minsters” and “themes that weave around “God's ordinances, Christ, holiness, and heaven” are central to their presentations, while “the message; evangelism” is preached through entertainment for soul-winning. That summarizes their mission and vision.

Like the liturgical plays of the medieval era in Europe, evangelical drama steeped in biblical stories and Christian morality and ethos, consciously engineered to act on the conscience of the congregation to effect salvation. Thus, Christian drama, which can also be referred to as “evangelical ministration” exists under strict rules, regulations and guidelines. It is not an independent body, and because it is seen as a powerful tool in explaining aspects of the Bible, sermon and gospel propagation for soul-winning, theatrical elements, especially acting, costumes, makeup, dance and other visual components are mainly used to bring their stories to life to life, while spectacle is secondary to their mission.

The early beginning of Church drama in Nigeria, is reported by (Adedeji, 1973) to have began in the African Church, Lagos, but were highly indoctrinated. By 1910, the debut performance of the Lagos Glee Singers as a “non-sectarian, semi-professional organization” (who were hitherto, under the control of the African Church) for a fund-raising effort towards “winning the war” at the Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos led to a dispute between the two afore-mentioned parties, the African Church and the Lagos Glee Singers, which led to their parting way. Although the leaders of the African Church still controlled the theatre, their failure to truly indigenize it had adverse effects on the Nigerian theatre.

The actual beginning of theatre in Nigeria is however credited to Hubert Ogunde, with the performance of *The Garden of Eden* and *The Throne of God* in 1944 for a fund-raising event organised by his Church, performed at the Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos. As reported by (Clark, 1980), the performance mixed biblical themes with traditional Yoruba dance-drama. She further revealed that the production cast were members of his Church. The success of this production propelled him to write more Church operas like *Africa and God* (1944); *Israel in Egypt* (1945) and *Nebuchadnezzar's Reign and Belshazzar's feast* (1945).

Realistic costuming in the theatre

Discussing realistic costuming, (Thorne, 2001) advances that realism, and contemporary life made the functions of costumes important in defining the sociology and psychology of the actor. (Brook, 2008) further argues that in rehearsal, the texture of the costume, the brightness of the light, the quality of emotion, matter all the time. The stage, he submits, is a reflection of life. He further explains that: The stage is a reflection of life ... He further explains that:

... if the theatre is essentially artificial, then the stage door reminds the actor that he is now entering a special place that demands costume, makeup, disguise, change of identity and the audience also dresses up, so as to come out of the everyday world along a red carpet into a place of privilege.

In this study, we discover that realistic, elaborate and spectacular costume design is not prioritized in Mount Zion films, and since the audience cannot be ignorant of clothes and their functions in real life, it would be erroneous to assume that they will not be able to relate with them in productions. It is essential therefore, that costumes are right for role or situation depiction, and give audience aesthetic pleasure. (Badeji, 2014) supports that costumes should aid the overall visual environment of the theatre by relieving the eyes; providing visual balance and aesthetic to the production. Corroborating, (Oladeinde, & Fabeyo, 2016) in *Inside the World of Nigerian Costumiers* also point out that: The most important thing is that professional costume designer needs to be artistic, creative and detail oriented. This usually contributes greatly in bringing out the inner meaning of a film production, through the use of appropriate costume. The costume designer therefore establishes the identity and personality of characters by designing the production.

Similarly, (Adeoye et al, 2017 citing Odule) state that costumes in the theatre must be aesthetically pleasing to the audience. Its beauty must arrest the attention of the audience in order to communicate fast information based on the aim of the portrayed action. Therefore, costume design in the theatre must play the role of life-wire of a production.

Downs et al (2013) also perceive realism as a style of theatre that attempts to seem life-like, with authentic- looking sets, "honest" acting, and dialogue that sounds like everyday speech. Thus far, the movement that had the most pervasive and long-lived effect on modern theatre is, beyond question, realism.

The challenges of realistic costuming on Christian ethos

Wells in his view of Church drama interjects that "God is central to the plays acted therein". He however also points out that these plays cannot be done without other characters, despite God being the "invisible central character". He states that other visible characters are also important in the production, and everything about them, from dialogue to costumes must be taken seriously. This provides the interface for this paper because evangelism and salvation are upheld at the expense of visual elements like costumes, which is an indispensable element in performance that must be carefully

orchestrated to be in sync with the entire production. This is controversial in Christian films because a “born-again” drama minister is prohibited from wearing accurate costumes for the realistic depiction of his/her roles, as this might be unedifying and present them as sinners, thereby defeating their evangelic mission; denting the image of the Church and entire Christian body in the process. This dilemma confronts realistic and professional costuming in Mount Zion films.

Functions of Costume in a Production

Gaskill (2001) in foreword to Thorne's *Designing Stage Costumes* submits that: “you can do a play without a set but you can't do it without the costumes. Well, you can but the audience will feel deeply cheated”. This reveals the importance of costume in a production, although, Gaskill should have used the phrase, “appropriate costumes” since what an actor/actress wears on stage is generally referred to as costume, inappropriate or not.

Realism and the detailed presentation of contemporary life have made the functions of costumes as important as the plot of any production because of its story-telling functions, among others. In this and also in defining the social existence of characters and their precise psychology, (Holt, 1988) states that: “Costume has another dramatic function: it helps tell the story. The clothes immediately show us where the action is set. They place the play in a historical and social context. They tell us about the progression of a character up and down the social scale as the drama progresses. Equally, the changing psychology of a character can be described in clothes. A designer can tell us a great deal about the inner man or woman”.

Also, (Utoh-Ezeajugh, 2015) corroborates that costumes can be seen as items of clothing, accessories and ornamental worn by the actor or actress for the purpose of defining character and establishing the circumstances of the character's existence; by situating him/her in time and space. It also refers to the artistic design of clothes and accessories appropriated or described in a play.

When a costume designer is derailed in his/her understanding and analysis of a script, characters and fails to follow the procedure and process of costume design for stage or film productions, the entire production is set to fail because the audiences' understanding derails and there will be difficulty in understanding the story. Corroborating, (Oladeinde & Fabeyo, 2016) exclaim that “truth be told, costumiers are very important and they could make or mar an entire production process”. In failing to do conduct a thorough research and putting his/her intuition and creativity to play, the entire production can fail. For example, the interpretation of a particular role or story depends largely on the costume designer who is tasked with carefully designing appropriate costumes.

The concept of costume Design in Mount Zion Films

Generally, the Nigerian Film Industry has witnessed tremendous growth and development the last two decades. This assessment is not far-fetched considering the

sophistication, glamour, international collaboration, popularity box office success and academic attention it is enjoying. After Hollywood and Bollywood, Nollywood is the most popular film industry. Although, this is not to say that it is without its challenges, in comparison, the Nigerian Christian film is still lagging behind in many of the variables. One of these is spectacle, of which unrealistic costuming is one. In some situations, attempts are made at realism, but in depicting secular and technical roles, symbolism and minimalism are adopted unprofessionally, thereby derailing the essence of the character and the scene. On the contrary, professional costume design is creative, artistic and detailed, has good finish, and enhances the beauty of a story and the insight and outlook of the actors and situations; establishing the personality and the identity of the characters and relating them to situations in the story.

Costume design in select Mount Zion Films

Mount Zion film producers are likely to disagree with Oladeinde & Fabayo because designing costumes for films seems to be misconstrued with wardrobe handling; giving clothes to actors to wear in productions. The author, (Badeji, 2019) enumerates the role of each stakeholder in what she terms as “the costume enterprise chain”. Here, she summarizes their roles as well as the skills required for each designation. Overall, the costume designer heads the chain as a trained skilled professional in costume design, who interprets and conceptualizes the costumes in the production, using the laid down principles, tools and procedures to execute designs. He/she is whom the others in the chain report to. In Nigeria, however, many untrained personnel misrepresent themselves as costume designers, or are mistaken as one, thereby endangering effective costuming. This is even more pronounced in Christian films. To ascribe this to spirituality might be debatable since earlier Christian films like Apocalyptic film, *A Thief in the Night* (1972) is also aimed at evangelization. Why then do Nigerian Christian films not really prioritize visual presentations especially, costumes in their films? Our analysis of two Mount Zion films, *Haunted* (2016) and *Last Man Standing* (2017) shall throw more light to the trend, while the methodology adopted for this study shall attempt to answer the research questions.

Synopsis of Mount Zion's *Haunted*

Rebekah, a young lady, who lost her mother at a tender age and is forced to take to the streets; steeping in nefarious activities in the company of a gang she joined, called “the Stray Rats”. She is however hunted down by the law. The film tells two overlapping stories simultaneously; the story of Rebekah and “The Johnsons”, a missionary couple who lost their only daughter and in a bid to allay the pains, adopted Rebekah, who is haunted by her past.

Analysis of costumes in *Haunted*

In *Haunted*, many errors in the costume design are spotted, but some are mentioned in this paper. One of these is that in the second scene, Rebekah, the heroine in the movie sustains a gunshot on her right thigh, but the only indication of that injury is the red painted cotton-wool placed on her right thigh, on her black trousers as indication of the

incident. There are no traces of blood on the wounded leg and her trouser is neither soaked with blood, nor torn, which is a far-cry from reality.

In the following scene, Rebekah's wound is tied with a white bandage around her thigh with her black pair of trousers still intact without any hole, making the audience wonder at where the bullet passed to enter her thigh. In the first instance, Rebekah ought to have worn a pair of knickers, to reveal the gunshot wound, or her black pair of trouser should have been artistically ripped in the process have been treated for her thigh to be free. Also, the bandage on her bullet wound was wound around her black pair of trouser, as if the latter is what is been treated.

Similarly, the costume designer was able to get the right size of uniform for the police officer, but did not make an appropriate name tag for him. Instead, the costume designer wrote his name on a black tape, with a white marker and placed it on the uniform. Also, the shoulder flap (rank-tag) in one of the scenes was almost falling off the Police officer's shoulder, which the costume designer should have fixed before the scene was shot, as this is not permitted in the Police Force.

Finally, the badge on the cap is far from the norm in the Nigerian Police Force. It simply makes a mockery of the entire ensemble, which could have been better designed were a more indepth research conducted and closer attention paid to detail and finish. Also, many of the costumes in the production were rough, ill-styled, unfitting and inappropriately applied.

Synopsis of Mount Zion's *Last Man Standing*

This film is a collaboration between Mount Zion Film productions and Bethel Campus Fellowship. The film tells the story of a college evangelist, David, who on observing his colleague, Shila's anti-social behaviour decides to move closer to her in order to observe her closely. Unknown to him, Shila, who was raped in her earlier years tests positive to the Humane Immune Virus, HIV. Shila became bent on taking vengeance for her rape by spreading the virus. She takes to prostitution in a bid to make good her vow and altogether infect thirteen (13) men who came in contact with her. Kay, a supposed young Christian, (whose fiancée refuses to become sexually involved with him until their marriage is consumated) meets Shila and gets involved with her. This act cost Kay his job, his future wife and he also tests positive to HIV. Meanwhile, David, the college evangelist tries to win Shila to Christ, but his efforts were futile, and at the end, she gets arrested for an attempt to murder, Eric, her rapist. She is prevented by David and arrested by the Police. She was charged to court and found guilty after legal actions. She is sentenced to jail terms and in the course of serving her prison term, she gives her life to Christ, while David takes her through that process of being a Born-again Christian.

Analysis of costumes in *Last Man Standing*

Like many other Mount Zion films, we are again confronted with the stereotype interpretation for costuming roles like armed robbery, rape, cultism and other devious

ones, that is, putting them in black hooded garments. This does not conform to the guiding principle of costume design which is “diversity”, “creativity” and “variety”. This not to say that a character cannot wear a hood in a play, but there must be cogent reasons why it must be worn; it must tell a story and must be functional. In a situation where the hood becomes a regular costume in depicting a bad character in every production, variety is lost, suspense terminated and eye-fatigue sets in. In *Last Man Standing*, a prospective rapist, (Eric), is wearing a black hooded jacket while still at home. In reality, hood is outdoor clothing designed to keep the head and ears warm, and we further argue that one does not have to wear a black hooded jacket to be a rapist, besides, not everyone who wears hooded clothing is a criminal. (Holt 1988) however differs that:

Costume has another dramatic function: it helps tell the story. The clothes immediately show us where the action is set. They place the play in a historical and social context. They tell us about the progression of a character up and down the social scale as the drama progresses. Equally, the changing psychology of a character can be described in clothes. A designer can tell us a great deal about the inner man or woman.

In the film, the costumes of the prostitute did not add conviction to the character. The concept of costuming a prostitute who lives in the United States, who is still in bed with a man in a casual shirt with a black tube underneath is not realistic enough. A prostitute in real life would likely dress in revealing or suggestive clothes. This kind of technical scene should not be visually captured if the costume designer does not add conviction to the character. In a related scene, an actor who is in bed with a prostitute wears a pair of jeans, a shirt and an unbuckled. A bare chest or sleeveless shirt would have been more appropriate for that role. The scene could have also been ended with a fade-off on the actors giving the impression of taking off their clothes, or resumed with the finishing touch of dressing up.

Effectiveness of costumes in Mount Zion's *Haunted* and *Last Man Standing*

Despite the challenges of costumes in these two productions, the costume designers were able to accomplish some successes. In the two films, the pastors' costumes were well thought out by the costume designer. In many 21st Pentecostal Nigerian Churches, the trend is Western style of corporate dressing, while Christian women favour long, loose fitting outfits, hats and other head coverings.

Also, in *Last Man Standing*, Eric's as a rapist, to a large extent, is adequately costumed to depict his dark character in the film. It helps to conceal his identity. Although, a hood is an outdoor cloth and he is seen wearing it indoor, it however, lends credence to his mood and role as a rapist. It also gives an insight into the plot and the general setting of the production.

Finally, the costume designer establishes relationships among character, and helps them affiliate to one another in the films. For instance, the prisoners in the United States, (*Last Man Standing*) men of the police force, pastors and Christian brethren (*Haunted*)

established strong relationships in their roles. The costume designers in the two films attempted to put their creative instincts to the fore in replicating some of the costumes and accessories. But from many indications, several restrictive measures put the costumers in a Christian Film Industry in check as this study revealed.

Findings and Conclusion

As established, costume is important in a production process and should be integrated to aid an entire production process. It is however discovered that:

First, the Mount Zion Drama Ministry has no resident professional costume designer and many of the costumes are handled by volunteers whose intention is to evangelize through their works. On some occasions, actors wear what they deem fit, because, the stakeholders have no real interest in realistic or appropriate costumes.

Second, spirituality, to a substantial extent, is the guiding principle of the costume designer who are careful not to offend the faith and sensibility of the audience. Their audiences are dominantly Christians and those they feel will accept the gospel of Christ (Prospects). Therefore, rather than conduct in depth research, the costume designers pray their way for revelation on the costumes to be used in the film production.

Third, the primary objective of the ministry is evangelism. There is careful attempt not to send wrong notion to the society whose souls they are meant to win. In fact, they revealed that their audience are indirectly involved in costume design for the actors, as they wield a great influence in what they see in the movies through feedbacks. As such, their costume department works under very close restrictions and supervision, to protect the mission and vision of the ministry.

Fourth, for their productions, many actors bring their personal clothing to execute roles. Also, existing wardrobes are recycled, which limits the designer's creativity and originality. Consequently, the budget often allocated to costumes is negligible and this, in most cases, deters costumer's work.

Finally, the overall consideration in their productions is the "message or evangelization". Therefore, spectacular and realistic costuming is not prioritised. This way, there is a strict adherence to the biblical teaching of "modesty, moderation and minimalism". This is the costume design style adopted in Mount Zion film productions. Despite the minimalism approach, the audience is still often horrified and recommend further reduction in the spectacle.

Recommendations

For professional and realistic costume design culture in Christian films however, this study recommends that:

First, a resident professional costume designer who can put his/ her wealth of knowledge in the technicalities of costume design into use in their films is recommended. Such a professional will be able to use costumes to depict characters and situations more

appropriately without horrifying the audience, while also making it have aesthetic appeal to a larger audience.

Second, there should be a regulation and minimum attempt to visually depict highly secular roles and scenes, that is, obscene and suggestive roles and scenes need not always be visually depicted. In the alternative, such scenes can be replicated with sounds, dialogue, or camera manipulation.

Third, visual elements like makeup, props and lights should be used to suggest roles and to aid costumes in situations where realistic costuming might become heavy on the sensibilities of the audience, or offensive to the ethos of Christianity.

Fourth, the director and costume designer should pay closer attention to hygiene by looking out for inadequacies and irregularities in the costumes that are either presented by the actors, or the ones procured from them. This is important for detail and flawless finish.

Fifth, originality attracts creativity and novelty. In view of this, every production should aim at something new, and costumes should be beyond prediction by the audience. As such, the costume designer must be a researcher and lover of novelty.

As concluded by (Gassner, 1953) “clothes make the man, at least in the theatre, a costume designer must be resilient in conceptualising, planning and executing costumes for a production, stage or screen. This is even more technical in film productions, because once a film is released; the opportunity to reverse what is not appropriately done is sealed; becomes impossible. With this in mind, all the stakeholders in Mount Zion Drama Ministries and other Christian Film outfits especially the director and costume designer must be proactive in giving close attention and consideration to costume design in order to aid characterization, advance plot and work to the overall advantage of the entire production.

Appendix

Excerpts from the interviews held with Pastor Segun Adegbiyi and Evangelist Yemi Adepoju on March 23rd, 2018 & April 8th, 2018, respectively.

Interviewer: Are factors that influence costume design in secular films different from Christian ones?

Pastor Segun Adegbiyi: No, they are non the Christian film and the secular film, it is the same influence for the costume. The Major difference is the character, the costume is not born again, it is the character that is born again. The word of God influences the costuming in a Christian film. The word of God has a lot of influence on it. For instance, when the Word of God says “Let your moderation be known to all men”. In fact, the message of the drama of the Christian film is different from that of the secular film because you see, the Christian film actors are not called actors they are called Drama

ministers. So the costuming in the area of nudity, the way the costumer in the secular drama will portray somebody that is nude is different from how it will be done in the Christian film because of the influence of the word of God. The Christian costumer has advantage of revelation of knowledge. She/he will pray, just like the producer will pray, the playwright will pray and receive messages. So those are the areas of the major influence of Christian films costuming. In some Nigerian Christian films you would see faults because some of these costumiers pick it up as a ministry and do not have any formal education in theatre. So some of all these details we are talking about, they might not even be aware of them. They are just passionate about making sure they use it to preach and the audience of the Christian film are not only Christians as people think. Just as people go out to evangelise, so do we use drama to evangelise and preach to outsiders and so you must package the message so they will be able to receive it. Because they pick it up as a unit of evangelism, there might be a level of lack of professionalism in the Christian films.

Evangelist Yemi Adepoju: When it comes to costuming, depending on what I want. If I design something and it goes in line with what I conceived, I think it interprets the script the way I want. That's what I think works. And of course this is a faith based production. It's not as if there is a budget somewhere or someone is footing the bills. So, I mean you have to look at the best way of getting your results and still having to convince the audience.

We have produced some films where we had prostitution scenes. When you are talking about Faith based productions, there are limitations involved. What I mean is that, we have an audience and our audience are majorly Christians, so we have to be careful in portraying some characters like nudity. I mean, we don't have to be too graphic when it comes to certain roles but at the same time, you need to be convincing. For example, prostitution, I think my own interpretation as a director, I think we should work more, on acting, even if the person is wearing the right costumes.

Interviewer: Are Christian films less films because of their genre?

Pastor Segun Adegbiyi: No, nevertheless. In some Nigerian Christian films one would see faults because some of these costumiers pick it up as a ministry and do not have any formal education in theatre. They are just passionate about making sure they use it to preach and the audience of the Christian film are not only Christians as people think. Just as people go out to evangelise, so do we use drama to evangelise and preach to outsiders and so you must package the message so they will be able to receive it. Because they pick it up as a unit of evangelism, there might be a level of unprofessionalism in the Christian films.

Interviewer: Is the Christian ideology responsible for this trend of minimalism in Mount Zion films?

Evangelist Yemi Adepoju: No, they are not, but Christian films have limitations involved. That is, we have an audience and our audience are majorly Christians, so we

have to be careful in portraying some characters like nudity. I mean, we don't have to be too graphic when it comes to certain roles but at the same time, you need to be convincing. For example, prostitution, I think my own interpretation as a director, I think we should work more, on acting, even if the person is wearing the right costumes. He speaks further, we are producing films but yet we are Christians, but a film that is non-Christian can go to any length. But there are certain lines we need to draw. In trying to convince people, we shouldn't also bring in some exposure. Even the ones we are doing some say it's not exposing, while some say it is too much. So that is where we need to strike a very good balance. So that in trying to pass across the message, we don't at the same time confuse the minds of those watching the films.

Interviewer: What factors influence the costume design in their productions?

Pastor Segun Adegbiyi: In the Christian film and the secular film, it is the same influence for the costume. The Major difference is the character, the costume is not born again, it is the character that is born again. The word of God influences the costuming in a Christian film. The word of God has a lot of influence on it. For instance, when the Word of God says "Let your moderation be known to all men". The Christian film will want to design the costume of a wealthy man, they will forget about all the trinkets, the codes and remember the "word of God and not put "Gold" on the wealthy man". Same as designing for a wealthy woman, "the word of God about plating of hair, the embroideries too must be avoided". Well, in the Christian film costuming and the secular film costuming, there are lot of similarities in terms of influence, between costuming for the Secular films and Christian films. Now you would already know, being a student of the theatre at the university that the function of costume is the same; the elements are the same, therefore, the costumier for the secular film and for the Christian film or stage drama may be the same person. I just want to go through the similarities first and I will just tell you a few differences of where the influence as you call it may be different. Let me go to the specifics where we draw our influence. The first one is, the message of the drama of the Christian film is different from that of the secular film because you see, the Christian film actors (in fact the actors are not called actors they are called Drama ministers). So the costuming in the area of nudity, the way the costumier in the secular drama will portray somebody that is nude is different from how it will be done in the Christian film because of the influence of the word of God.

Interviewer: Are Christian films exempt from realism in the theatre?

Pastor Segun Adegbiyi: Christian films are realistic. It depends on the theme, the subject that is been treated. What happens in our films like I have said before, we have costumiers who do not have the opportunity of having their background in the theatre, they might just be people that have decided to pick it as a ministry and if they pick it as a ministry, it is from their experience that they will know. They will look at it from a realistic point of view, that what will the person wear normally and that might also influence their visits to such places where the character that they are trying to portray resides. More or less, their emphasis will be a realistic theme. Talking of symbolism, it may not really be an everyday use with film producers, because not all Christian film producers or costumiers are men of the theatre as it were.

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