BODE OSANYIN FOUNDATION

THE ARTIST AS A
DREAMER AND A REALIST:
RE-ASSESSING BODE OSANYIN
WRITER'S RESORT

Bode Osanyin Memorial
Lecture Series II

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BY

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INTRODUCTION

My nomination to present this year's Bode Osanyin memorial lecture, second in its series, I must admit, came to me as a surprise. This is because among the late Osanyin's colleagues, associates and professional friends, there are many who are eminently more qualified to be on the spotlight for this intellectual assignment. Apart from being a great honour therefore, it is a good opportunity for me to pay a special tribute to a man who played a pivotal role in my choice of career and in my sojourning into the cultural communication industry.

I wish to thank the organizers of this annual lecture, especially the Bode Osanyin Foundation and the Bode Osanyin family for their relentlessness and their resolve to keep the memory of Bode Osanyin alive in the minds of his fellow theatre artists and compatriots. At least, what the state has failed to do for a professional icon and a theatrical statesman like Hubert Ogunde who virtually lived and died for the theatre in Nigeria, this young Foundation and the Osanyin family have achieved. My hope and prayer is that this memorial flag of honour which has been hoisted will be kept up flying.

I have chosen the topic The Artist as a dreamer and a realist, with the example of Osanyin's Writers resort for discussion, for two reasons. Firstly, I wish to search into the ideologies belying the true function of the artist in the society. Secondly, I desire to
discuss the failure of the Nigerian state to turn the arts into a "goldmining" and "soul-mining" agent, capable of civilizing and refining the citizenry. Beyond this, however, I wish to applaud the efforts of artists such as Bode Osanyin who have braved all odds to establish some enduring legacies which are not meant to press for selfish interests, but which are more or less community gifts to society. It is not easy. But it is possible only if there is the kind of unusual commitment, courage, passion and doggedness evidently displayed by the late Olabode Osanyin.

This essay is divided into three parts. The first part shall dwell briefly on the definitions of major terms such as art, the artist, dream, reality and vision. The second part shall discuss the relationship between the arts and other disciplines and explore the work and functions of the artists in society to determine whether they are dreamers or realistic contributors to the course of societal evolution and development.

The third part shall briefly examine Bode Osanyin and his works as a writer and theatre Artist. Here also, we shall discuss the writers resort as a real, physical and existing structure conceived for the development of the arts and the theatre.

The essay concludes by applauding the effort and vision of Bode Osanyin in establishing the resort. It recommends more of such, and appeals for the completion of the "uncompleted resort" through the support of well-meaning organizations, the private sector, arts patrons and individuals. That is when the resort's vision will not be a mere dream but a realistic initiative and more importantly, that is when more of such visionary initiatives will become part of our system of institutional development especially in the arts and culture sector.

ART AND THE ARTIST

The word art comes from the Latin "ars" meaning skill. The Websters New World Dictionary (1986:78) defines art as creativity of man as distinguished from the world of nature. Art is, therefore, human ability to make or do things that display form, beauty or unusual perception. Art, in its broadest sense, according to the Encyclopedia Americana,(1982:283) embraces all the creative disciplines - literature, poetry, drama, music, dance and the visual arts.

Edwin Wilson and Alvin Goldfarb in their book, Theatre, the lively art (2002:7) describe art as a mirror or reflection of life, an abstraction or a projection of how we live, think and feel. Art reveals to us what people treasure and admire and what they fear most deeply. Art, according to them, is not only something we find desirable and enjoyable, it seems to be an absolute necessity for human survival.

Zulu Sofola (1994:2) in her monograph, The Artist and the tragedy of a Nation says, "Art is the only human experience that is nearest to God because it is in that experience that man shares very clearly in the most enduring and significant attribute of the Supreme being, God as creator, the Supreme Artist." Art emanates from the soul of man, the centre of his being in which resides his divine quality as the Zenith of creation.

Art is thus the medium through which the soul of man reaches out beyond itself to transform and make intelligible, the proddings within the inner recesses for ultimate truth, the meaning of existence, man's place in the cosmos, his relationship to the supreme creator and to his fellow creatures and finally, the ultimate end of man. Sofola quotes Goethe the German
philosopher cum Dramatist who once said “Art is long, life is Short,” and she buttresses this phrase by submitting that... “Art is life that never ends, it is eternal” Art, we’re told is the prototype of science and where art is now, science will come only later... as an invention. Art, therefore, serve as a catalyst for all that man does, aspire to and envisions. Sofola Writes:

The artistic mind first of all catches a glimpse of a truth in his divine essence, actualizes it in his medium as a suggestive blue-print, before any other level of human awareness catches on and further realizes it in the various channels of actualization. (P.3)

Of all the arts, the theatre is the most physical and the most vibrant. It is the melting pot and the rallying point for all the arts. Even beyond the arts, theatre has a lot to do with technology, architecture, sociology, psychology and so forth.

Umukoro M.M (2001:2) in his lecture, The performing Artist in academia while examining the relationship between the theatre and other disciplines, observes that the theatre transcends the broad canvas of the liberal arts into the wide spectrum of education as well as the physical and social sciences. And he submits that for want of a better nomenclature, theatre as a branch of knowledge can be christened “humanistic science”.

Supporting this view, Osanyin describes literature and the theatre as a refinery of the human soul. It is the crucible that transmutes our rawness into a gem. In his words...

On stage, all the art forms become dynamic. All artistic expressions are geared towards the enchantment of the human soul and social change. Duro Oni (2003:186)

The arts and especially the theatre are so crucial, important and all embracing that they affect and influence our lives so deeply. One then, wonders whether humanity is giving the theatre the kind of attention it deserves to properly impact itself to refining the human soul and mobilizing the society towards social change and the ideal, or not.

The Artist is a person who works or is skilled in any of the fine arts, which includes the visual and performing arts. Bamidele (2000:27) in an attempt to categorise different artistes, writes:

The artist might just be a story teller, telling his tales to those who care to listen, he might just be a troubadour presenting a jest that matters; he might be a creative artist who presents to us his own precise political or moral latitude, he might even he an artist with paint and brush recording for us the mirror-image of our environment.

The physical resources of a society affect the medium in which an artist works, and an artist’s medium also affects the style of his work. Thus, a sculptor must treat stone different from wood. A musician achieves different effects with drums than with violins. A writer, writing poetry must meet certain demands of poetry that are irrelevant to the novel.
Funk and Wagnalls New encyclopedia (1998:240) informs us that the status of Artists in the west has changed over the centuries. In classical and medieval time, poets and other writers who used mental skills were usually ranked above actors, dancers, musicians, painters and sculptors who use physical skills. From the renaissance on, as all aspects of the human personality came to be valued, those skilled in the visual and performing arts gradually gained greater recognition. Today, art in all its categories is considered an area of human achievement and its many creators are ranked among the first citizens of the world. But what are their roles in society? What functions do they serve? Do their works have any impact on society to justify their relevance as contributors to societal development? In other words, are they engaged in mere dreams and fantasies through their creativity or are their contributions to society through their works, tangible and concrete? Are they substantial, authentic and verifiable?

Before we answer these questions, let us examine these two concepts—dream and reality.

DREAM AND REALITY

The Webster's New Dictionary defines dream as a sequence of sensations, images, or thoughts, passing through a sleeping person's mind or a fanciful vision of the conscious mind. Roget's II, The New Thesaurus describes dream as an illusory mental image. A fantastic, impracticable plan or desire — fancy, fiction, chimera, figment, phantasm or vision. It also defines it as a fervent hope, wish, goal or aspiration.

From the foregoing definitions, we come to realize that dream could be examined from two different perspectives. The first, is that which is experienced, subconsciously, when someone is in a deep sleep. While the other is an idea conceived consciously and which one hopes or aspires to achieve in concrete terms. We shall be looking at dream in this essay from the latter perspective. And for that purpose, we should like to examine it more or less as "vision". Vision is defined as something supposedly seen other than normal sight, a strong mental image, an imaginative contemplation. It is the experience of having such a perception or revelation. It is the ability to perceive something not actually visible as through mental acuteness or keen foresight.

The word dream is usually contrasted with the word reality which means the fact or state of existing or of being actual, that is, something having real demonstrable existence. But there is a sense in which dream or vision can become reality when it is premised on foresight which is the exercise of good judgement or common sense in practical matters.

A dream doesn't necessarily have to become actualized or could attain the stage of realization; a dream can become an actuality, a phenomenon.

Sydney Bremer (1971:243) in the chapter titled "Castles in the Air" from the book The Spirit if Apollo tells us that most of the things which make life worth living which have emancipated man from drudgery and lifted him above commonness and ugliness, we own to dreamers. He writes...
The present is but the sum total of the dreams of the ages that have gone before - the dreams of the past made real.

The trouble with the one who gives himself to building castles in the air, is not that he builds them in the air, but that he does not go farther and actualize in life, in character, in material from the castles he thus builds. So he only does a part of the work, a very necessary part, but another equally necessary part remains still undone.

The most practical people in the world are those who can look far into the future and see the civilization yet to be, who can see the coming man emancipated from the narrowing, hampering fetters, limitations and superstitions of the present day; who have the ability to foresee things to come with the power to make them realities. The dreamers have ever been those who have achieved the seemingly impossible. (p.245)

Our visions, says Bremer, do not mock us. "They are evidences of what is to be. The fore glimpses of possible realities". As a matter of fact, castles in the air are always necessary before we can have castles on the ground.

It is a splendid thing to dream when you have the grit and tenacity of purpose and the resolution to match your dreams with realities. But dreaming without effort, wishing without putting forth exertion to realize the wish undermines the character. It is only practical dreaming that counts - dreaming coupled with hard work and persistent endeavour. (p. 247)

Buttressing this point, Stephen Covey (1990:99) also advocates for pro-activity and he says for everything man wishes to do in life, he should "begin with the end in mind". This idea, he submits, is based on the principle that all things are created twice. In other words, there's a mental or first creation and a physical or second creation to all things.

The Artist, be he a painter, writer on performer and indeed any creative inventor goes through this first and second processes for his creative works. In other words, he conceives of the idea, dream or vision first, before concretizing it in physical terms.

To this extent, artists cannot just be waved off as mere dreamers whose works or contributions to society cannot be valued or measured. Indeed, if we agree that art is a reflection of life, the artist, through whose work, life is reflected cannot be described as a dreamer unless we also agree that mirror can reflect illusion by distorting the image before it. But we know that the mirror is always faithful to the image set before it. Therefore, the reflection of that image cannot be described outright as unreal. It is a faithful resemblance. And so, the artist as an instrument of life – reflection, reveals reality. In other words, as George Mercier proposes and quoted by Jeyifo (1985) there is a sense in which the supposed lie in the creative fiction of the artist can be truthful.

THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF ARTISTS IN SOCIETY

Through the ages and in all civilizations, Sofola (1994) says, the Artist has been described as a seer, a visioner, a thinker, a creator, the conscience of society, a gadfly, a prophet, a town-crier, a teacher and a revealer of Divine mind. L.O Bamidele
(2000) in his book, Literature and Sociology deals exhaustively with the subject of the Artist's role in society. He notes that there is a lot of discordant voices amongst artists themselves on what roles they and their art should play in society. Some of them say their role is to educate and enlighten mankind. To some, their role is to participate in business of society just like any other man. There are others who think that the role of art is political while some think that art should be apolitical.

There seems to be two main polarized views concerning the role of Artists in society. There are those who believe that art should be committed and play a socio-political role such as Duvignaud, Shelley and Soyinka. Shelley for instance is quoted to have once said “poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world”. Although, Soyinka uses ritual and myth as integral part of his dramaturgy, he has always argued that “the theatre is the most revolutionary art form known to man.

Olu Obafemi (1996:123) commenting on Soyinka's dramatic vision writes thus...

Soyinka is preoccupied in his creative work especially his plays, with the socio-political and spiritual state of Africa. He sees African society in a state or transition both on the material and spiritual levels. He approaches this concern with the inextricable search for liberation through the medium of ritual.

The other group however believes in the non-committal view of art. Although they agree that writing is not just merely a personal venture, because it is essentially a "social act", they warn that we should, however, not over-mystify the political role of art whenever we want to justify its societal function. Tom Stoppard, for instance, was once quoted as saying "committed art is a kind of bogus enterprise".

Stendhal, Ososfian and Ospanin seem to maintain a perfect middle ground concerning the purpose of art, as entertainment and as a social agent. They believe that art, especially the theatre should put order to the chaos of life through form. This is more of a humanistic function that perches on the fringe of the dialectical process of art in politics.

For instance, Ososfian in an interview with Muyiwa Awodiya states unequivocally

First and foremost, I am an artist, and as an artist, I am creating aesthetic forms for the stage, in poetry, even in journalism... my art can only express certain things, my reaction to reality, these are basic commitments. Politics for me is not a posture, the concern for justice is deeply embedded in my consciousness. (Awodiya 1993:61).

In the same vein, Bode Ospanin whose theatrical activities especially his writer's resort are being examined in this essay declares that didactic drama is less creative and gives less joy. In an interview with Duro Oni, he admonishes that though literature and the theatre have a social responsibility, they are first and foremost arts, and so, an artist should not be too anxious to change anything. The preoccupation of the artist is to produce a
thing of beauty which is joy forever. For him...

Propaganda is a far cry for art. This is why committed theatre must be a good theatre in itself. Politically committed theatre should not let its political goals stifle or mask its art which is the soul of theatre. When art is removed from the theatre, it becomes a soap box.

(Duro Oni 2003:187).

With the foregoing submissions, it is clear that some artists, such as Bode Osanyin and Femi Osofsan do believe in the social responsibility of the arts and theatre but not to the extent that it will sacrifice its multi-faceted mission of humanism to mere political dialectics.

The truth is that the realities of the human conditions and circumstances should not be looked at parochially, certainly not only in terms of politics, nor religion, economics, history or science. It should be examined beyond subjects and issues to enduring visionary ideas and legacies concretized in terms of institutional physical heritage. This, for me, does not only compliment our oral and textual heritage in the arts and the theatre but takes it a few steps ahead.

In a sense, the continuity of our heritage and its accurate transference from one generation to another lie more in its patronage and physical promotion than in its written form. In other words, the impact of what is seen and heard cannot be compared with what is read. I am not by this argument demeaning the importance of literature, but I am almost certain that expressed literary views and written creative ideas, as important as they are, would have greater effect and penetration on their recipients, when they are manifested in physical terms and rendered audio-visually.

This is why Bode Osanyin and the writer's resort should be celebrated for what they both represent, "a testimony of passion and vision in the promotion of our literary and performance heritage". We shall now dedicate the remaining part of this essay to examining Bode Osanyin's writer's resort - the idea behind it, its activities, achievements so far, its problems and prospects as a resource centre for the development of the arts, culture and theatre in Nigeria and beyond.

BODE OSANYIN AND THE WRITER'S RESORT

The Man, Bode Osanyin

Bode Osanyin was born on the 20th of August 1940 to Mr Simeon Adewale Osanyin and Mrs Alice Durodola Osanyin of Ijebu-Jesa in Osun State of Nigeria. He attended St. Judas School and New African School Ebute Metta, Lagos, for his primary education. He later attended Ahmadia Grammar School Ibadan and Ijebu-Jesa Grammar school for his secondary education which he completed in 1962. He worked briefly at the Nigeria Railway Corporation before proceeding to the University of Ibadan where he had a Diploma and Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degrees in Theatre Arts between 1968 and 1973. He had a stint with the Nigerian Television Authority as a drama producer between 1973 and 1974 before proceeding to East Germany for his post - graduate
studies in Theatre practice. At the end of the programme, he picked up a teaching appointment at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan as a junior arts fellow in 1975. He left Ibadan to join the Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Lagos in 1976 as a research fellow II. He later rose to become an Associate professor of Theatre Arts in the department of Creative Arts created out of the Centre for Cultural Studies. He died in 2005 after a brief illness.

Bode had always showed signs of a culture-conscious and a creative-minded person from his youth. In an interview with Duro Oni, he recounts how he had been exposed to the Cinematic art early in life on account of the proximity of Casino Cinema to their house in Ebute Metta.

He says:

I grew up watching films – amorous Indian films, flamboyant American Cowboy films and the like. My father blazed the trail in the direction. He later became popularly known as "Papa Casino" graduating to a non-gate-free status. My mother also did her petty trading around Casino Cinema till late in the night. The Casino cultural was mine. (Duro Oni 2003:177).

Apart from this, he confirms the possible influence the late Hubert Ogunde had on him, also because they were neighbours in Ebute Metta in the mid 1950s. In the same interview with Duro Oni, he narrates how the thundering sounds of Ogunde’s Gbedu drums attracted him (Bode) to his rehearsal sessions and how the fantastic singing and the energetic dancing of his troupe could not be resisted. He affirms

From childhood, I knew what was theatre – drama, dance, music and stage craft in general. I tutored myself watching Hubert Ogunde’s rehearsals. This was the seed of my interest and career in the African total Theatre. (Duro Oni 2003:177)

With this background, it was easy for Bode Osanyin to find expression for his creative interests right from his secondary school days. For instance, he recalls how he wrote an essay in form 3 which was so intriguing that the teacher made him to read it to the class. Though the exercise was greeted with laughter of derision by his classmates, he was never deterred. As a realistic demonstration of his creative impulsion, he wrote his first novel in 1969 as a diploma student of the University of Ibadan. He followed this with Shattered Dreams another novel and wrote his first play Akara Ogun adapted from Wole Soyinka’s free translation of Fagunwa’s Ogboju Ode ninu Igbo Irunmole – The forests of a Thousand Demons, in the early 70’s. Since then, Bode Osanyin has been creatively productive and he has written over twenty plays and playlets although not all have been published. Also, he has about five novels and two volumes of poetry collection to his credit. This is apart from chapters contributed in several published books and essays which have appeared in academic and learned journals.
His Works

Some of his works include Ayilale, the Story of the fruits that crush the Trunk, The flying elephant and other plays, which include, Cassava Stuck in the throat and Waiting for the Ferry. Others are Akara Ogun, Kubura, The New Status, Interrogations, The Flood, The Link, Ogedengbe, Woman and Our Patriot (Plays); The Noble Mistress, Rich Girl, Poor Boy and Seraro and Joy (Novels) and Wasteline beads and other poems (Poetry).

With this volume of creative and literary output, Osanyin has clearly established himself as one of Nigeria’s foremost and renowned writers.

But beyond literary prolificity, Bode Osanyin is also a giant man of the theatre. A theatre professional to the core. He has acted, directed and produced several plays on the stage both in Nigeria and abroad. In an interview with his wife Ajike Osanyin by this writer in their residence at the University of Lagos Staff quarters, on Tuesday 20th November 2007, she reveals that her late husband’s commitment to theatrical practice sometimes appears overly and vexatious. She recalls how Bode’s entire life, his thoughts views, arguments, goals and aspirations revolve mainly around the theatre and the arts. Though she describes him as a gentleman and fair-minded person who abhors violence and laziness, she confesses that they’ve had occasions to quarrel on investment decisions especially as regards his theatrical commitments and the writer’s resort.

The Resort

The origin of the resort can be traced to the late 70’s when Bode was commissioned by UNESCO/Ufpa to write a research-based play on family planning for a rural health week programme in Igbogbo area of Lagos State. He got paid one thousand dollars for the job, an amount considered huge for an average University Lecturer at that time. With that money, he acquired a piece of land in Ijoko Ota area of Ogun State and started the construction of a small bungalow on it.

Recounting how the ideas of resort and readings actually came about, Bode Osanyin in an interview with Duro Oni says:

I went on sabbatical to West Germany in 1984/85 as a writer-in-residence in the German Academy of Arts programme of DAAD. In Berlin, I was exposed to the culture of reading my works to audiences at various art galleries. This was how I got the idea of a writer’s resort.

(Duro Oni 2003: 195)

Fortunately, while he was away in Germany, his brother, Engineer Muyiwa Osanyin continued to help him with the building project. And by the time he returned in 1985, the bungalow was near completion.

Sometimes in late ‘86, he explains in the same interview with Duro Oni how a young diplomat, Ademola Araoye had walked
into his office at the University of Lagos and pleaded with him to edit his volume of poems. He (Osanyin) therefore seized the opportunity to invite him (Araoye) be to the pioneer guest reader at the writer's resort. Araoye jumped at the idea and they both made frantic preparations for the reading session at Ijoko Ota which came up on the 28th February 1987.

The philosophy of the resort according to Osanyin

....is to serve as a midwife to the efforts of writers and dramatists. (Duro Oni 2003:196)

And since the first outing in 1987, the resort has played host to established artieses and well known names in the field of literature and theatre. Writers like Segun Olusola, TM Aluko, Hamid Taju, Malam Bilya Bala, Frank Aig-Imoukhuede, Daniel Ayo, Kole Omotoso, Niyi Osundare, Femi Fatoba, Bunmi Oyinsan, Rasheed Gbadamosi, Ken Saro Wiwa, Karen Arabisala King and many others have been featured at the resort.

The resort has come to be identified as the rallying point for all creative writers, literary artieses and lovers of arts in general.

Segun Olusola once described it as “a cultural fountain where energy is renewed”.

Folake Doherty in Lagos life, July 18, 1987 writes:

The idea behind the resort, a non profit making venture is essentially to give both known and unknown writers, publishers and patrons of arts, a modest form for creative interaction.

Ajike Osanyin (2003:164) comments on the resort, thus

Even though it was a small art organization, it became the rallying point of all creative artists and the Nigeria ‘mecca’ for artistic excellence for the black and African writers, artieses and art patrons the world over.

The idea one seems to get at first is that the resort is mainly for writers and literary artists. No doubt, because of the background of the founder himself as a writer, he desires the resort to be an avenue where literary activity will be strongly encouraged and where publishers will pick new manuscripts, but at the same time he also wants the resort to be a popular performance venue.

Apart from the fact that there have always also been performances alongside the reading sessions, there is a grand plan to make theatre performances the ultimate event at the resort. I believe that Bode Osanyin whether consciously or subconsciously wanted to use the literary culture to draw upon and nurture the artistic and performance culture. He is a promoter of both cultures and he probably knew that one can take off with limited infrastructural investment such as the initial bungalow that was first constructed in 1985.

He knew that one should precede the other and that where literature and drama stop, theatre begins. That's why, when Duro
Oni asked him what his considerations are from “Drama to theatre”, he replies that “Drama is the content of theatre”. Continuing, he stresses...

To qualify to be called a theatre, a building, a structure, a space must have vibrant content. The first duty of a dramatist therefore is to create and to provide a viable play, drama, dance, pantomime or music worthy of the sweat all the anguish of rehearsals and production period and above all, worthy of the respect of the audience. (Duro Oni 2003:189)

Talking about some of the performances which have taken place at the resort, Ajike Osanyin (2003:165) reporting about community participation, reveals how excited the Ijoko Ota citizens felt at different times that stage performances were presented by groups and individuals such as Lagos State Council for Arts and Culture, then under the Leadership of Gbenga Sonuga (now Oba) Veteran actress, Taiwo Ajayi Lycett, Akuro Theatre, Ade Odufuwa, Ojikutu Adimula – Oak, Segun Davies, Tunji Sotimirin, Segun Akinkugbe, Stella Oyelede, Golda John and Bimbo Macaulay’s Ogun State Centre for Arts and Culture Troupe etc.

She also reports that some talented artists even from among the touts at the Ijoko garage brought their theatres to thrill the audience regularly and that a certain Ojikutu theatre which was the relic of the defunct Yoruba travelling theatre was like the

resident theatre of the resort. All these performances were done in the open-air, on a make shift stage, in front of the bungalow where the reading sessions also take place. But as noted earlier, Bode Osanyin had grand plans for in-door theatrical activities. Attesting to this fact in an interview with Duro Oni, he discloses:

Since inception in 1987, the resort has had considerable physical development. More land has been acquired for a 2000-seater arts theatre and chalets for accommodation of writers and dramatists. This is near completion. It is envisaged that in a couple of years from now, the resort will be fully residential and full scale theatre productions will commence. The idea is to make the resort a “mecca” of cultural activities and artistic excellence. Duro Oni (2003:157)

In furtherance of this resolve, he concludes this vision when he was asked in the same interview, how he would like to be remembered.

I want my Writer’s Resort to outlive me and to be a shining example of what an individual can do to promote literary development in Nigeria. I want the 2000-seater Arts Theatre of the Writers’ Resort to be a popular theatre
where productions are regularly mounted and a testimony of an example of a privately-owned theatre; and encourage others to do the same so that there would be a proliferation of theatres and theatre productions in Nigeria. I believe that theatre can perform wonders for the black and African peoples for their development and emancipation. Writer's Resort should be seen as what individuals can do to promote the development of arts and culture without government subvention. Above all, I recommend hard work and prayer for artists.

CONCLUSION

Bode Osanyin in his own little way, has consciously set the stage, where according to Umukoro (1993) the course of the arts in Nigeria can be nurtured and directed and also where artistic and creative potentials in drama, dance and music can be explored and developed. He denied himself of every necessary comfort and spent all his earnings to develop the resort as a gift to the art community.

Bode Osanyin can therefore be described, simply as a “great advocate of creative expression both in the literary and performative genres”. He has done his best and left the rest, as if he knew that he would be exiting the stage before the theatre is completed for performances. Bode Osanyin had a dream, premised on vision and foresight and this has been turned into physical reality. Given that we live in an environment where selfless efforts such as this are hardly appreciated, I believe Bode Osanyin deserves our commendation and applause.

The resort, which more or less should now be referred to as the Bode Osanyin Memorial Resort has the following features: a 2000-seater, purpose-built theatre with library, gallery, rehearsal rooms, conference rooms, offices, chalet for lodging, parking lot etc.

The complex, however, is yet to be completed and the main problem is funding. The onus is therefore on all of us here to ensure the full realization of the resort’s vision in its completion. And let’s not deceive ourselves; it is not certain that the Nigerian government can be of much assistance in this regard. A government which has practically failed in its primary responsibility to invest in cultural institutions, through the development of artistic promotion infrastructure can hardly help. A government which declared its intention to put on sale the only national infrastructural heritage on the arts—the national theatre, will never understand the meaning of this resort’s initiative. A government which thinks that the arts are like financial institutions and staple foods which should be subjected to market forces and the economics of buying and selling is certainly not well informed. Let us, therefore, direct our searchlight elsewhere, a place where the purpose of art is well understood. Let us turn to foreign institutions such as the Ford Foundation for
assistance. I wish, to now recommend to the Bode Osanyin Foundation and the Bode Osanyin family and everybody present here who can help, that a comprehensive proposal should be packaged for the attention of the Ford Foundation.

I believe that if the Ford Foundation gets information in a proposal, detailing the origins and the idea behind the resort, its goals and aspirations, its activities, achievements and future plans, and an estimate of the required completion fund, the resort will be ready for commissioning within a year from now. and so, the third annual Bode Osayin Memorial lecture can hold at the newly completed Bode Osanyin memorial resort in 2008. This proposition, nay, idea...is another dream, which I strongly believe can become a reality.

Thank you for listening.

References


