Playing against violence: a case study of popular theatre in Zimbabwe

Kennedy C. Chinyowa

To cite this article: Kennedy C. Chinyowa (2009) Playing against violence: a case study of popular theatre in Zimbabwe, Studies in Theatre and Performance, 29:3, 275-287

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1386/stap.29.3.275/1

Published online: 03 Jan 2014.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 10

View related articles
Playing against violence: a case study of popular theatre in Zimbabwe

Kennedy C. Chinyowa

Abstract
This article reviews the performance in Zimbabwe of a play called Tinoendepi? as an exemplary piece of popular theatre aimed at alerting audiences to issues of violence during the run-up to the 2002 presidential election. The play presents the history of a country that opposed colonial violence with successful revolution before subsiding into a recognizable brand of neo-colonial violence.

Introduction
From August to December 2003, a ten-member delegation consisting mainly of South African clergy visited Zimbabwe and prepared a detailed report on what they had witnessed at first hand concerning the extent of human rights abuse in Zimbabwe (Solidarity Peace Trust Report, 2003). In the foreword to this report, one of the members, Bishop Kevin Dowling, comments that, ‘When people speak to you, they are looking over their shoulders all the time’ (p. 2). Twenty-four years after the attainment of national independence from Britain, the ordinary people in Zimbabwe were yet to realize the meaning of freedom, peace and justice. The Solidarity Peace Trust (2003) observed that torture and fear were rampant. In spite of widespread hunger and famine, food was allegedly distributed to supporters of the ruling political party (Amnesty International Report, 2004). The commercial farms that were being seized from white commercial farmers in the name of land reform were not benefiting landless peasants and workers, but the ruling party’s political ‘heavyweights’. A militia of youths from the ruling party had been trained to unleash a reign of arson, rape, intimidation and terror on civil society (IRIN News, 2003). Laws such as the Public Order and Security Act (2002), the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (2003) and the Miscellaneous Offences Act (2001) had been passed to curtail freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of movement and freedom of the press. It seemed as if political expediency, personal gain, economic corruption and absence of the rule of law had created a cumulative culture of violence that ultimately led to the suspension and subsequent withdrawal of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth (IRIN News, 2003). But what surprised Bishop Dowling most was that, in the midst of all this pain and suffering, ‘[. . .] you hear them (i.e. the people) laughing, you hear them . . .’
singing. Why should you be joyful when life is such a burden?’ (‘Solidarity Peace Trust Report’ 2003: 1-2).

To an extent, the University of Zimbabwe Theatre’s (UZT) popular theatre performance entitled Tinoendepi? (Where shall we go now?) tries to answer Bishop Dowling’s paradoxical question. In interviews with the co-directors of UZT, Owen Seda and Ethel Dhlamini-Maqeda, who are both lecturers in the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Zimbabwe, they indicated that the purpose of Tinoendepi? was to sensitize the electorate on political violence and torture during the run-up to the April 2002 presidential elections. To this end, they first held workshops with victims and witnesses of political violence. The UZT travelling theatre troupe then scripted the play out of the personal testimonies they had gathered. It was performed in both rural and urban areas of Zimbabwe during the time leading up to the presidential elections. This article examines Tinoendepi? in terms of how play discourse addresses the nature of violence as a cyclic phenomenon. I will analyze the historical trends in the play, beginning with an idyllic African communalism, through colonialism to the liberation struggle and neo-colonialism, and back again to cultural regeneration.

Keyan Tomaselli (1996: 121) points out that a study of play as a discursive mechanism produces other dimensions. It is in the process of making and performing that play reveals its purpose. The ordering and shaping of play needs to be viewed as a way of making ‘something’ come into being. In other words, play consists of framing devices that function as ways of creating particular kinds of knowledge concerning reality. In this case, by examining political violence through the medium of play, it will be possible to find out how such violence has stifled development through the violation of human rights. As Jan Pronk (1982) asserts, a guarantee of human rights is not merely related to development, but it is integral to development. In other words, the abuse of human rights is incompatible with human development. Thus violence is symptomatic of underlying structural injustices that need to be redressed if development is to take place.

African communalism

Tinoendepi? opens with a song that ushers in what has been popularly referred to as the ‘golden age’ of precolonial African communal life (Chiwome 1996; Asante 1994; Awoonor 1975). Performers are acting out a series of improvised mimes designed to create images of a romanticized communal mode of production. While some are clearing and tilling the land, others are hunting wild game, planting and harvesting crops, threshing and pounding the grain. The whole simulated action smacks of a harmonious community driven by a collective work ethic. This industrious spirit is aptly captured by the ongoing song:

If you don’t plough, you won’t eat
So take your hoes and plough.1

1 Quotations from the text, translated by the author of this article, are taken from the video recording of a performance. The video is available at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Zimbabwe.
To an extent, this song serves to show how people were still living in balance with nature. The prologue thus introduces the audience to a time when African society lived in harmony with itself. The individual was not separable from his or her social and cultural environment. Every person lived in accordance with a communal ethic described by the Ugandan philosopher, John Mbiti, as, ‘I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am’ (Mbiti: 141). The survival of the individual and the community was conceived as ‘a perpetual and universal movement of sharing and exchange of the forces of life’ (Ramose 1999: 57–58). Such a tradition placed the community rather than the individual at the centre of social existence and decision making.

However, the harmony of the old song is broken by the intrusion of a ‘new song’. A clumsy-sounding drumbeat by a black messenger disrupts the communal work ethic to announce that Whiteman wants everybody to come for a meeting under the muhacha tree, a familiar traditional village meeting place. The work song recedes to the background as voices of protest can be heard from the performers-turned-villagers asking, ‘What does vasina mabvi (those without knees) want from us?’ The Shona term vasina mabvi arose out of the people’s first impression of seeing white men wearing long trousers covering their knees. It is an irony that the coming of the white man is heralded by the drum which has been described by the African philosopher Mogobe Ramose as ‘the basic instrument in the Bantu understanding of being as musical harmony’ (Ramose 1999: 60). It is as if colonialism has turned the African ‘talking drum’ into a symbol of fragmentation of communal well being. As happened to Caliban in The Tempest, Man Friday in Robinson Crusoe and the curious ‘natives’ in Conrad’s The Heart of Darkness, the ‘new song’ takes away the people’s language. In Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s (1986) view, by denying Africans their voice, colonialism becomes a primary decentring force in the social construction of otherness.

**Colonial violence**

In the typical mould of the biblical John the Baptist proclaiming the coming of the Messiah, Whiteman arrives to tell the ‘villagers’:

> It is not often that I get to address the natives.  
> Therefore I have a very important issue.  
> The Shona and Ndebele rebellions have been crushed.  
> We are now the Supreme rulers of this land.  
> You shall follow the laws of the Crown.  
> You shall leave your pagan rites, sacrificial killings, sun gods, river gods, moon gods.  
> [. . .] You shall avail your labour at all times.  
> Anyone who disobeys shall be dealt with severely.  
> I’m sure you all know what has just happened to that witch woman, Nihunda and that wizard, Kakuvi.  
> The same fate shall befall you if you disobey.
Whiteman speaks in English while his messenger translates the words into the Shona language. The significance of Whiteman’s speech must be viewed according to the primacy of the word in African verbal art as a mode of performance. Richard Bauman explains that, in the word:

there is something going on in the communicative interchange which says to the (audience), ‘interpret what I say in some special sense, do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey’.

(Bauman 1984: 9)

Thus the frame within which Whiteman’s speech is delivered elicits a negative reaction from the villagers, characteristic of the call-and-response technique in African narrative performance. For them, the word constitutes the action. As Ruth Finnegans (1967) observed among the Limba people of Sierra Leone, speech is used to actually perform an action. Speaking is like making a sacred contract; it plays with the forces of life. It is akin to the order of creation, which is said to have begun with a creator whose powers of speech were able to bring a phenomenal realm into existence (Mutere 2002).

In the case of Whiteman, his words act to bring forth a ‘new song’ of organized violence. He stands for a much larger colonialist project, that of Europe’s ‘civilizing mission’ and the spreading of Christianity; but that project appears to be riddled with a bundle of contradictions. It is carried out through violent conquest. It is premised on an occidental philosophy which regards the humanity of the other as ‘uncivilized and primitive’. Thus Whiteman’s words are simply putting into action a violent ‘modernity’ that is deemed a required and necessary step in the unfolding of ‘modern’ civilization. That explains why the legendary religious figures of the First Chimurenga (1896–7), Nehanda and Kaguvi, wrongly pronounced by Whiteman as ‘Nihunda’ and ‘Kakuvi’, had to be eliminated. According to Cheikh Anta Diop (1981: 1), the negation of the history of Africa was accomplished when imperialism first killed its being spiritually, culturally and physically.

How was this violence experienced by the colonized? Chinua Achebe aptly answers this question in his novel, Things Fall Apart (1959). The ‘villagers’ in Tinoendepi experience a peculiar form of ambiguity in which they are torn between the two worlds of tradition and ‘modernity’. The performance presents the comic irony of villagers trapped within a spiritual and cultural quandary. Some begin to side with Whiteman for bringing Christianity and put an end to witchcraft; others opt to keep to their ancestral spirits. In a comparable way, in both Things Fall Apart and Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s novel Ambiguous Adventure (1962), the central characters, Okwonkwo and Samba Diallo, ultimately die because of their failure to reconcile their Old World with the New World. Likewise, with the passing of communal culture, ‘villagers’ in Tinoendepi enter what is described by Kane as a ‘strange dawn’ born of cannon shots and shining glass beads. But
while this colonial violence establishes a new order of time, the colonized yearn to replace it with yet another form of violence that will bring forth their own order of time. Just as colonialism had interrupted the history of indigenous culture, the reclaiming of ‘national time’ is possible only on the demise of ‘colonial time’ through revolutionary means.

**Revolutionary violence**

*Tinoendepi?* proceeds to demonstrate the cyclic nature of violence by showing that, within the structures of the armed liberation struggle and, in particular, what has come to be called *pungwe* theatre (the all-night performances used by freedom fighters (or guerrillas) to raise people’s awareness about the liberation struggle), were sown the seeds of organized violence that were to extend into the post-colonial period. The *pungwe* consisted of revolutionary songs that were accompanied by *kongonya* (warrior-like) dance and *toyi toyi* (military drill) chants. The *pungwe* was a rehearsal of what the freedom fighters (or guerrillas) wanted to happen during the armed struggle. It provided a forum for people’s involvement in the shaping of history. In fact, Alec Pongweni (1982) goes further to assert that it was the songs that were sung during *pungwe* that won the liberation war. *Pungwe* awakened the people’s craving for social justice, self-determination and political freedom, which was manifested through what Eugene van Erven (1992) has termed ‘the playful revolution’. It may not have been the revolution itself but it was what Augusto Boal has famously called ‘a rehearsal for the revolution’ (Boal 1979: 122). However, there was an inherent paradox within the armed liberation movement itself. While the *pungwe* had the ingredients of a truly popular revolution, the privileged status of the freedom fighters and nationalist leaders vis-à-vis the peasants and workers posed a potential danger, not only in terms of future conflicts of interest but also the use of violence to mobilize the masses through fear and intimidation.

The fourth scene in *Tinoendepi?* captures the drama of *pungwe* taking place in a guerrilla camp at the height of the liberation war around 1976. The scene opens with the people singing and dancing together with two armed guerrillas. There are occasional breaks as the people respond to the nationalist slogan, ‘Black Clothes! Black Skin!’ But amidst the chanting, sloganeering, singing, dancing and ululating lurks a characteristic mode of deep play in which ‘war is carried out in a sporting (or game-like) manner’ (Sutton-Smith 2002: 9). Kendall Blanchard offers an example of such deep play among the Dani people of New Guinea, who occasionally make war in order to avenge the death of an ancestor or fellow villager. In Blanchard’s own words:

The war is surrounded with much pomp and circumstance, shouting and enthusiasm; it is fought according to a set of understood rules; and it is marked by a playful or sporting attitude that seems to take precedence over the idea that eventually someone must be killed. (1995: 167)
Likewise, *pungwe* can be viewed as a peculiar form of deep play. Not only did it possess such features of play as enjoyment, rules, secrecy and disguise (see Chinyowa 2006), but it also reflected a paradox in the contrasts between the extremities of danger and the protection of rules that were rather selective in their application.

The *pungwe* also contained its own paradoxes of violence. While the liberation struggle relied so much on what the former guerrilla Charles Pfukwa describes as ‘the unwritten artistic codes such as songs and folktales’ (2001: 36), the same mediums of expression were used to bring pain, suffering and even death to those who did not play according to the rules of the war game. As an ex-freedom fighter, Pfukwa, now an academic at the University of Zimbabwe, writes that it was through the ‘unwritten code’, the spontaneous forms of cultural expression within the people, that the guerrillas were able to acquire the identity of a people’s army. But in *Tinoendepi?*, even the name of one of the guerrillas reflects the existence of a Manichean relationship between the ‘comrades’, as the freedom fighters preferred to call themselves, and the people. Comrade Killem leads in the torture of two suspected villagers deemed to be sellouts, Sinyoro and Muchadakurwa. From the preceding drama, the two alleged sellouts had been tortured by Rhodesian security forces for giving food to the guerrillas. It is after they escape from the Rhodesian army camp to seek refuge in the guerrilla camp that they are accused of ‘selling out’ to the enemy. The paradox is accentuated by the close parallel between the two forms of torture. For instance in scene 3, the Rhodesian army captain says to the captured villagers:

*Captain:* Where did you spend the whole night on Wednesday last week?

*(The two villagers, Sinyoro and his wife, look at each other and remain silent)* I said where were you on Wednesday last week? Come on, hurry up! Speak now!

*Sinyoro:* *(Sheepishly)* I had gone to Madhlambudzi to claim lobola *(brideprice)* for my daughter, Keresia, who eloped last year but up to now they have not bothered to pay me.

*Captain:* *(With rage)* Don’t start playing games with me. You are going to speak out today! Now, get out of my way! *(addressing his colleague)* Have these people gone for electric torture as yet?

*Soldier:* Not yet [. . .] [. . .]

*Captain:* *(To Sinyoro)* Old man, I want you to pour this whole container of paraffin on your wife’s clothes until they are soaked. Hurry up! *(Sinyoro carries out the instructions)* Now, light her up!

The Rhodesian army captain describes this form of torture as ‘Operation Gehenna (Hell)’. It is not unlike the torture that awaits the same villagers when they manage to escape and get to the guerrilla base:

*Comrade Killem:* Does anyone have a question?
Villager 1: We understand what you are saying. You say we are like water and you are the fish. It means we have to co-operate in order to win this war. But what do we do with people who go behind our backs to report to the (Rhodesian) soldiers and the police?

Comrade Killem: You have asked a good question, amai (mother)? (begins to chant a slogan) Black skin!

Villagers: Black clothes!

Comrade Killem: (refers the question to his colleague) You answer this woman, comrade!

Second Comrade: We call such people sellouts, amai! When sellouts do that we cut off their heads, or drown them in a drum of hot traditional beer, or burn their homes. We don’t bury them in graves but let them be eaten by dogs or wild animals. We do that because they are sellouts. They are called what?

Villagers: Sellouts!

Second Comrade: They are what?

Villagers: Sellouts!

It is at that moment that Sinyoro and his accomplices arrive at the scene. Comrade Killem does not take long before ordering them to come forward and undergo what he calls, ‘Operation Limpopo’, a form of torture where victims’ heads are dipped in buckets full of water until they faint or die. While this torture goes on, the other villagers are singing, dancing, clapping their hands and ululating as if to celebrate the suffering of the ‘sellouts’. The words of the song entitled Chenjera, chenjera (Be careful, be careful) are a testimony to the systematic nature of revolutionary violence:

Leader: Be careful! Be careful!
Chorus: Be careful. Be careful.
Leader: The comrades will kill you!
Chorus: Be careful. Be careful.
Leader: They kill with knives!
Chorus: Be careful. Be careful.
Leader: The comrades will beat you!
Chorus: Be careful. Be careful.

During the torture of Sinyoro and Muchadakurwa, a villager comments in a hushed voice, ‘How shall we win the struggle when they do this to us?’ But the question is drowned in the song and dance. It is evident that the rules of the pungwe ‘game’ are carried out in a playful atmosphere that belies the pain and suffering of the players.

Both Operation Gehenna and Operation Limpopo can be viewed as manifestations of deep play, described by Jeremy Bentham as ‘play in which the stakes are so high that it is irrational for men to engage in it at all’.² Bentham was arguing from a utilitarian point of view, considering that the net pain rather than net pleasure brought about by such play...
tended to disregard the risk of physical, mental and emotional trauma. In a war situation like the Second Chimurenga, the deep play takes place according to a set of rules that take precedence over the possibility of pain or death. The same violence practised during the liberation struggle was likely to spill over into the post-independence period in the form of yet another type of violence.

Neo-colonial violence

The attainment of national political independence in Zimbabwe on 18 April 1980 was greeted with much euphoric celebration and anxiety about the fulfilment of promises made during the liberation struggle. Those who had fought and supported the revolutionary effort had high expectations of entering a ‘new heaven and a new earth’. But in Tinoendepi?, the gains of independence are depicted as futile and paradoxical. The ‘playful revolution’ that started with the punywe during the armed struggle assumes mythical proportions. What emerges is a new political game built on a series of myths, which Kwame Nkrumah (1965) aptly termed neo-colonialism, a new form of colonialism. In the process of showing the myths associated with neo-colonialism, Tinoendepi? reveals how such myths are closely associated with ideologies like nationalism, socialism, democracy and philanthropy.

Myth is a mode of signification that offers explanations of why the world is as it appears to be, and why people act as they do. Like play, myth functions to bring forth a symbolic model of reality. It encourages people to doubt the capacity of the social order to suggest how reality can be reconstituted. The capacity of myth to construct its own reality brings forth what appears to be the archetype of people’s lived experiences. Thus myth functions to validate what comes to be believed as:

a statement of eternal fact, truth, obviousness, naturalness, common sense,
rightness, reasonableness, already-thereeness – it just needs to be named . . .
by anyone, hence the apparent ‘legitimacy’ of myth.

(Tomaselli 1996: 67)

For those who may not recognize the artificial constructedness of myth, it will be seen as true in itself and may come to be believed as more real than the real. It is this make-believe frame in myth that helps to articulate the problem of neo-colonial violence in Tinoendepi?. The character Mysterious Man, who emerges to replace Whiteman and becomes the nationalist leader of the newly independent nation state, turns out to be a petty-bourgeois mythologist, that is one who wants to participate in the making of the world, not as it is, but as he would like it to be. His speech is a metanarrative, at best a political act. In the typical mould of a bourgeois mythologist, Mysterious Man, accompanied by bodyguards, comes to address the jubilant masses at a political rally. The people have been singing a Ndebele song of praise for his heroic leadership. The song is entitled Ubaba wethu, somlandela (Our father,
we shall follow you). The song serves to communicate Mysterious Man’s duplicity as evidenced by his address during a brief appearance from the shadows:

Mysterious Man: Black skin!
Crowd: Black clothes!
Mysterious Man: (Bodyguard translates as Mysterious Man addresses the crowd in English) We are happy today because we are independent. What remains now is to work together and rebuild our country. During the war, there were leaders and followers. The same thing is going to happen now. I don’t have much to say because I have no time left. I have a very important meeting to attend in Zürich. [i.e. in Switzerland, presumably with a Swiss bank]

At the time of national independence, the new black leadership in Zimbabwe sought to create a new social and political order by adopting the Marxist–Leninist ideology of scientific socialism that would replace the existing colonial capitalist system. Commitment to socialist transformation was believed to lead ultimately to the creation of an egalitarian society. But for the new black leadership represented by Mysterious Man, the liberation struggle was only a means to an end. There are sounds of disgruntlement from the people during and after Mysterious Man’s speech. Already, the masses are beginning to sense a betrayal of the nationalist revolution. As Amilcar Cabral (1982) once pointed out, during the liberation struggle the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence. But as soon as independence is won, the leader will reveal his inner purpose to become the president of a new company of indigenous profiteers. In Tinoendepi?, the myths of nationalism and socialism are demonstrated by Mysterious Man’s lack of commitment to the wishes and aspirations of the people. Even the former freedom fighters, Comrade Killem and his colleagues, discover that they are now ‘less equal’ than their leaders. Comrade Killem is ordered to leave the front seats reserved for ‘superiors’ and sit among the ordinary masses. New black T-shirts are distributed to only a selected few. In short, the nature of the neo-colonial violence that emerges in the new political dispensation is akin to the new world-order established in George Orwell’s Animal Farm (1972).

Apart from socialism, Tinoendepi? shows how neo-colonialism has also mythologized the meanings of democracy and philanthropy. When Mysterious Man realizes that his political support base has diminished, he resorts to corruption. He bribes Comrade Killem to force the villagers to continue wearing ‘black clothes’. Meanwhile, a new opposition party has emerged whose slogan is ‘Pfeka! Chero chawada, pfeka!’ (Wear whatever you want). Even Sinyoro, alias Baba vaRameki (father of Rameki), can no longer get along with his wife and friends. He now opts to put on ‘yellow clothes’ instead of black, because, as he says, ‘These days you
must wear what you want’. Those who do not support Sinyoro’s new ‘democratic’ party are tortured. The political divisions wreak so much havoc that the supporters of the ruling party, led by Comrade Killem, and the opposition party, led by Sinyoro, burn each others’ houses, prevent children from attending school and beat up opponents. In the end, both Comrade Killem, now mentally deranged, and Sinyoro, now physically disabled, are inmates at an urban Rehabilitation Centre. But there is a paradox when Mysterious Man, the cause of all the suffering, pays an official visit to donate more funds for the rehabilitation of victims of organized violence. In the end, both democracy, in the image of the opposition political party, and philanthropy, symbolized by Mysterious Man’s donation to victims of torture, are shown to be implicated in the perpetuation of neo-colonial violence. As Frantz Fanon (1967) concludes, neo-colonialism replicates colonial violence by proxy – what is true of the colonial situation applies with equal force to the neo-colonial setting. What does Tinoendepi? suggest as the way forward in resolving the problem of neo-colonial violence?

Cultural regeneration
Amilcar Cabral has proposed that the challenges of Africa’s rebirth lie in a ‘return to the source’ of its cultural heritage. Ngugi wa Thiong’o suggests that the war against neo-colonialism needs a realignment with the people’s cultural struggle for survival and freedom, to rediscover their languages of struggle, their heritage of exuberant performance – their songs, dances, narratives, ‘talking drums’ and rituals. Tinoendepi? ends by suggesting cultural regeneration as a way of resolving the problem of organized violence and torture. The protagonist Sinyoro leads other actors in a song entitled Nyika yedu yauraiwa nemhirizhonga (Our country has been destroyed by violence) whose words attest to the didactic intention of the closure:

Our country has been torn apart by violence
Gentlemen, violence has destroyed us
In Mutare, they have been tortured
Gentlemen, do not commit violence
Come and see how much we have suffered
Ladies, do not commit violence.

This song completes the circular structure of the whole performance. In fact, in the video, the epilogue is followed by a replay of scene 1, the precolonial setting. This replay brings a sense of aesthetic closure to the whole play. But by the didactic nature of the closure, it is questionable whether it can be effective enough to solve the problem of violence as a continued violation of human rights?

The prospect of returning to the source of culture in the precolonial period tends to ignore the complex configurations of a postmodern global
culture. Perhaps the option is for popular theatre to demonstrate how the past, as the people’s cultural frame of reference, can remain compatible with the demands of the present, and possibly the future. How can the communal ethics of the past, for instance, contribute to solving problems associated with neo-colonial betrayal and disillusionment? Moreover, as David Kerr and Stephen Chifunyise (1984) found out during their involvement with the Chikwakwa Travelling Theatre at the University of Zambia, the short-term nature of university travelling theatre means that the popular theatre project cannot be sustained. I would concur with Kerr and Chifunyise’s suggestion that ultimately the ability of university travelling theatre to connect with the popular audiences depends on the extent to which it can build lasting links with the people.

**Conclusion**

This article has shown how play as a discursive frame might help to deconstruct the cyclic nature of violence through the agency of popular theatre. Such theatre acts as a forum for an oppressed people’s involvement in the shaping of their own destiny. It helps to awaken the people’s consciousness of justice, peace and freedom as manifested in the playful discourse in *Tinoendepi?*. The contention is that true liberation requires the simultaneous transformation of the oppressed as well as the social circumstances that create the conditions of oppression. Popular theatre provides the aesthetic space for those who are the subjects and objects of development to be directly implicated in the making of their history. Although such theatre may not be the revolution itself, it is, in Augusto Boal’s view, a rehearsal for the revolution.

The capacity of popular theatre to expose the culture of violence in politically repressive situations like Zimbabwe’s showed how social change can be debated without resorting to violence. Far from reinforcing the ‘culture of silence’, such theatre takes cognisance of the fact that violence only begets violence. It is therefore necessary to capitalize on the non-violent power of popular theatre, its capacity to instigate a ‘playful revolution’, in order to create conditions for peaceful development. As Shifra Schonman (2002) concludes in her analysis of the nature of peace education in the war-torn Middle East region, the people who get on in this world are those who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they cannot find them, create or make them.

**References**


Fanon, Frantz (1967), The Wretched of the Earth. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Suggested citation
Contributor details

Kennedy C. Chinyowa is a lecturer and research fellow in Dramatic Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. He has taught at several universities including the University of Zimbabwe, Griffith University (Australia), University of KwaZulu-Natal and Tshwane University of Technology (South Africa). He was a visiting scholar in the Centre for Applied Theatre Research at Griffith University where he obtained his Ph.D. degree in Theatre for Development. Apart from winning numerous research awards and presenting several conference papers and workshops, he has published widely in books and international refereed journals such as Research in Drama Education (UK), Studies in Theatre and Performance (UK), Drama Australia (Nadie) Journal and the South African Theatre Journal.

E-mail: kccchinyowa@gmail.com
Choreographic Practices
ISSN 2040-5669 | 1 issue | Volume 1, 2010

Editors
Vida L. Midgelow
vida.midgelow@northampton.ac.uk
Jane M. Bacon
jane.bacon@northampton.ac.uk

Aims and Scope
Choreographic Practices operates from the principle that dance embodies ideas and can be productively enlivened when considered as a mode of critical and creative discourse. The journal provides a platform for sharing choreographic practices, inquiry and debate.

Call for Papers
Choreographic Practices is an international, peer-reviewed, bi-annual journal. Contributions are invited that articulate choreography from a diverse range of perspectives. We are especially interested in receiving articles that address research-led movement practices that are interdisciplinary and experimental in nature. Selected issues will also be thematically arranged. Choreographic Practices publishes both conventional and alternative modes of writing, including performative and visual essays.

www.intellectbooks.com