

Activities

Uganda Centre of ITI (Africa)

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Acknowledgement

The Executive of the Uganda Centre for the International Theatre Institute acknowledges the support extended to them in the implementation of their vision, objectives and activities in the period 2014-2016.

First, we thank the Uganda National Culture Centre (UNCC) for their support throughout the different activities (the election of the current executive, through the launch of the revitalized Uganda Centre ITI, workshops, celebration of World Theatre Day and the staging of various ITI-supported performances).

Special appreciation goes to the Department of Performing Arts and Film (PAF) of Makerere University who have continued to host our Centre and often have allowed us to use their teaching space to conduct training workshops for young theatre artistes. Our Centre's collaboration with PAF has enhanced a speedy achievement of our mission and mutual enlightenment.

We highly appreciate the other offices that were very instrumental in keeping us advancing forward e.g. the offices of the National Association of Book Trust, Uganda (NABOTU), the Young Theatre Practitioners and the Chairperson of Uganda National Theatre Union Mr Benoni Kibuuka. These partners made it possible for the Centre to achieve much in the shortest time.

We are indeed grateful to theatre artists and students who volunteer with our Centre; they have played a

key role in the execution of various activities in the period since October 2014. We are overly grateful to the media houses who have continued to support our activities by offering free publicity, coverage and reviews of our events.

Lastly, we would like to thank ITI Sudan (Mr Ali Mahdi) and ITI Germany (Dr Thomas Engel) who relentlessly encouraged us to reinvigorate our then waning Centre. As a Centre we are truly grateful to these two Centres who shared their resources in mentoring the current leadership.

Jessica A. Kaahwa (PhD)
President

Activities 2014 – 2016

The Journey of the Uganda Centre of ITI

Uganda became an ITI member in 1976 but was deregistered in the same year following the alleged murder of the country's best actor and playwright, Byron Kawadwa, by Idi Amin's henchmen. The country was readmitted in 1986 under the leadership of Jackson Ndwula who remained President until 15 January 2015 when he handed over the reigns to Dr Jessic Atwooki Kaahwa.

This brief report covers events from the ITI World Congress at Yerevan, Armenia (November 2014) to the memorable re-launch of the Uganda Centre for ITI (UCfITI)] on January 15, 2015 and the subsequent planning for World Theatre Day 2016 celebrations.

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December 2014

Having completed the registration earlier in August, the Uganda Centre for ITI was a beehive of activities preparing for the re-launch of the Centre in Uganda. This included media campaigns, writing of invitation letters to theatre artistes and supporters from allied fields of culture and communication.

January 15, 2015

The Uganda Centre for ITI was re-launched after decades of inactivity. The day brought to light many theatre enthusiasts' profound expectations such as the need to promote international exchange of performing arts knowledge and practice, stimulate artistic creation and increase co-operation among thespians. Another priority identified was the need to streamline the systems that guide theatre artists in Uganda and to know practitioners within the sector and their competencies in order better to network and support one another. The launch also exposed the great yearning for professionalism in the performing arts industry.

Post-launch of the Uganda Centre for ITI

Since the re-launch, the Centre has been overwhelmed by the artistic and moral support extended by the veteran and new theatre artists. They have also expressed their expectations that the Centre must be steered by active theatre practitioners capable of translating the needs of the artists into tangible actions.

February 2015

This period at the Centre was marked by marathon planning for combined theatre activity. The Centre chose to sponsor the first-ever week of "Theatre Festivities" (March 23– 27) leading up to World Theatre Day on March 27.

March 23–27, 2015

The Centre's first outing was made possible by support from the Uganda National Cultural Centre, National Association of Book Trust, Department of Performing Arts & Film (Makerere University), Uganda Performing

Groups Association, Young Theatre Practitioners, Uganda New Vision Group, Central Broadcasting Station, East African Newspaper, Theatre Factory, Foursum Comedy Group, Bakayimbira Dramactors and the Ministry of Culture, Gender & Youth.

The programme included technical production training, dramaturgical training, workshops on copyright and publishing, the staging of plays by schools, Young Theatre Practitioners and professional theatre groups leading up to World Theatre Day, the celebration of which included marching, speeches, performances and exhibitions.

Other activities in 2015

- For the National Heroes Celebration in June, Young Theatre Practitioners took the lead at Kiboga Boma Ground.
- From August-October, we contributed to public awareness of political agendas and electioneering through the sponsorship of a play: "Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again" by Ola Rotimi that aimed at provoking dialogue among the publics.
- PAF's "Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again" was staged again on October 11-12 to great public appreciation, while it boosted the Department of Performing Arts & Film, which had been off the national stage for fifteen years.

World Theatre Day 2016

To mark this day, UCfITI has planned training workshops and encouraged partners to prepare productions that address social issues in our society.

Achievements since the re-launch of ITI in Uganda

UCfITI has registered great trust from her partners especially the UNCC, Theatre Groups and PAF who are the trainers and custodians of the theatre edifice in Uganda. As the Centre, we are also enjoying the support and the networks of the former executive led by Mr Jackson Ndawula. We have been able to rally most related institutions, offices and Young Theatre Practitioners (YTP); by so doing, we have increased

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public awareness of ITI and its local chapter's role. On the whole, the Centre has achieved most of its annual projected activities such as organizing symposiums, festivals, workshops, training and supporting staged performances.

Notwithstanding these achievements, the Uganda Centre for ITI has much to do in terms of enhancing artistic collaboration synergies between Ugandan theatre practitioners and building relationships with the Ugandan public. We also have to find ways to move beyond the expressed challenges and create avenues and opportunities that will unleash the potential in Ugandan artists.

Future Plans

- Week of theatre activities and awareness, March 23-27
 - General Assembly to elect the new executive to steer the Centre's activities for 2016—2018 (July)
- The Centre in conjunction with UNCC is planning a conference to revisit the issue of the "Guild System" to enhance cohesion and fairness in execution of various theatre specializations (October).

Links to reports on our activities

<http://www.observer.ug/lifestyle/37064-uganda-celebrates-world-theatre-day>

www.theeastafrican.co.ke/magazine/Ugandan-actors-get-their-act-together-on-ITI-/434746/2598542/-/4hi7ysz/-/index.html

www.observer.ug/lifestyle/42-entertainment/40407-makerere-returns-to-theatre

www.theeastafrican.co.ke/magazine/Ola-Rotimi-s-play-still-relevant-49-years-later-/434746/2927504/-/o2833n/-/index.html

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