

Old ways, New Ways: Theatre artists peopling the Media in Uganda

Samuel Kasule

University of Derby, UK

Art has changed and we are changing too; we live in a very complex world today. Artistic performance no longer occupies a single space; notably, performances invite us from diverse spaces such as radio, television and digital media, which distort the margins and genres, which represent divergences between theatre and widely available audio and visual media forms. In migrations, and convergences that resonate with the boundary crossings within post-colonial nations, the blurring of ethnic cultural boundaries, cultural values, and linguistic difference, theatre practices continue to cross boundaries, from the stage space to radio and television, or to digital media. The boundaries of theatre are blurred and practitioners seek to use forms and styles in ways that communicate their message successfully, and capture the nuances of people's daily lives. New technologies generally widen networks of contact and create virtual cadres of users, especially today when a cross-section of people in urban and rural areas rely on mobile phones to keep them in contact with family members. Moreover, the role of new technologies in enabling artistic performances to cross boundaries in ways that people are unable to, presents a novel way to reflect on theatre practice. It is questionable however, whether by moving or migrating from one space and time, to an alternative space and a different time, a performance form or idea enriches its value. When we film performances, we lose specific qualities, which are only available when they are staged live, including expressions and audience responses. Additionally, editing filmed recordings deletes creative moments within live performances when performers improvise phrases or make statements and correct them. In Uganda, since the current National Resistance Army/ National Resistance Movement took power in 1986 led by Yoweri Museveni, theatre lost its position as the space for protests;

therefore, for stage artists whose income was dwindling, television and radio presented financial opportunities that were a welcome bonus. FM radios became spaces where people, on their own terms, discussed their issues, mobilised and presented a counter-narrative to that of the ruling government. Today, the stage, radio, television and digital media overlap and work together; for audiences outside theatre, performances in these spaces may be more exciting and engaging. This essay, which focuses on the interrelationship between media and theatre, concentrates on Bakayimbira Dramactors, one of the few remaining old drama groups (from the 1980s and 1990s) in Uganda. It draws attention to the ways in which the deployment and adaptation of various media to indigenous processes, Bakayimbira have developed news and performance outlets, and networks, while maintaining or restoring specific indigenous performance cultures that appeal to the audience.

Digitising Performances

Notably, the advent of FM radios displaced theatre as spaces where people–mobilised and presented a counter-narrative to that of the ruling government. The move from the stage to television or radio studio took the artists away from the theatre institution, the restrictive stage space, to a rapidly ever-changing arts practice. Moreover, the socio-politics of the stage are different from the politics of the media. Having begun by making low-budget videos, today they use new twenty-first century media technologies, a powerful means of collective expression. Nonetheless, digitising performances has had its own ramifications: who would pay to watch a play *live* if they could record and watch/listen to it at home and at their own convenience? George Lugalambi and Peter Mwesige (2010: 19) observe that ‘[audiences] then have a chance to raise their issues [...] with their leaders and decision makers. Commercial ventures, private media organisations strived to provide a ‘sense of empowerment’ for Ugandans through alternative spaces Thus, one of the offshoots of these developments has been the *bimeeza* or

‘open-air talk-shows’ (2010: 125), mostly by FM radios and private television stations in Buganda – Simba, the Buganda Kingdom’s Central Broadcasting Cooperation (CBS), and Radio Spectrum. (Valerie Alia, 2009; Folker Hasnusch, 2013; George W Lugalambi, Peter G Mwesige and Hendrik Bussiek, 2010; and Abiodun Salawu, 2016) Not surprisingly, many of these programmes adopt indigenous names, phrases from proverbs, idioms and sayings; this further underlines the fusion between tradition and modern technological media. The development of *ebimeeza* and talk-shows that feature satirical presentations in Uganda, popularized by Bakayimbira’s artists, Kibuuka and Senkubuge, and aided by the widespread ownership of mobile phones, have raised theatre artists’ position. This has not only given access to theatre practitioners to perform on radio, *ebimeeza* has raised their status on radio to a far bigger and wider audience base than traditional theatre spaces. ‘The mobile phone’, Lugalambi and Mwesige state, ‘has been a boom for broadcasting. Not only has it made it possible for stations to cover remote parts of the country, it has also given audiences opportunities to call in to the stations to participate in public debates. No wonder that talk shows are very popular among audiences’. (2010: 19) This development resonates with what Conway Jock has observed about the radio talk shows in US and Canada when he states, ‘talk radio forges the communication links in [...] neighbourhoods, small towns and [...] communities’. Similar to Jock’s description of how ‘talk radio forges ... communication links’ in Aboriginal communities, today, the use of YouTube, WhatsApp and the internet means that people can watch, listen, and instantly respond to programmes. This has helped to expand the audiences/listeners, one of the implications being the fact and realisation in society that theatre owners and government-owned media institutions no longer own the copyright to Ugandan stories.

According to Senkubuge, soon after the emergence of public FM Radio stations, Alex Mukulu, another theatre artist, encouraged him to join one of the new FM radios stations,

Simba Radio. For, according to Mukulu, the new way for theatre arts development was through radio and television but not the stage. Moreover, given the shortage of trained radio and television journalists, it is notable that the proprietors of FM stations recruited popular theatre artists who had no journalistic training but had Luganda language proficiency and could ‘talk’ on air. Their work in theatre was the only training people had to become communicators; after all, most artists have a way with dialogue.¹ Additionally, apart from the stage discipline, they had confidence, could deal with live audiences, engage in endless dialogue, work collaboratively, and had a talent with parody. Interactive radio talk-shows were to become the new tool in Uganda’s post-liberation war media, politics, and performance cultures. In January 1999, Senkubuge invited Benoni Kibuuka, his co-director, writer and actor at Bakayimbira, to be the co-host of the mid-morning radio programme, ‘*Binsangawano*’, which has a self-conscious reference to the common Luganda saying, literary meaning ‘words find me here’; the speaker asserts absolves him/herself of being a village gossip.

Senkubuge and Kibuuka were used to writing, reading and learning scripts as well as the mechanics of spontaneity in a theatre culture that was characterised by call-and-response. Moreover, drawing from their theatrical background, the programmes they fronted adopted drama formats blending music, satirical skits, and topical discussions. Both were popular not only with theatre audiences but the general public. Similar to theatre, radio talk-shows and television dramas create an intimate connection with the common listeners or audience who listen in their cars or homes, and create the fictional scene as well as the stage. As Senkubuge notes, they were aware that the listeners’ response to the programme depended on their oral interaction, humour, and teamwork, the very skills they had sharpened in theatre.

When the stage performers move over into the media world, it is often as programme presenters, newsreaders, and programme hosts than as playwrights. Nonetheless, as noted above, since the stations absorbed fluent comedic actors known to a cross-section of the

listeners, radio presentations/broadcasting too underwent change. For, in the crossing of boundaries both media and theatre are modified through their contact with other forms of performance as evidenced by the changing patterns of speech and performance. The influence of new technologies on Bakayimbira's practices marks the crossing of boundaries between theatre and media; as demonstrated by the popularity of '*Binsangawano*', the phone-in programme that depended on their interaction with the public. They understood their work and specifically repositioned themselves to exploit digital media, television, and radio, as well as the stage space. These theatre artists turned journalists share people's anxieties on air in programmes free of mediation by government agents who are oblivious of the issues facing ordinary Ugandans. Bakayimbira's control of media programmes has empowered them, particularly since they have access to social media and the internet – acting like 'guerrillas' to present programmes that proactively challenge governments. Of course, when popular artists exploit the mobile phone technology, they contribute both directly and indirectly to the degradation of previous media systems set up by colonialists and predominantly created behind closed doors. They are at once theatre artists and media 'guerrillas' who view theatre, radio and television as the people's parliament (*ye palimenti yaffe*). Expanding on the group's entry into the media world Senkubuge further underlines the survival of the drama group as a performing entity - not that it was unaffected by the introduction of FM radio and digital media but rather, because of its interface with media, it has survived.² Similar to most performing groups today, they stage hybrid dramas that are neither pure theatres nor pure film but a blend of both.³

Theatre artists and scholars who criticise Bakayimbira for migrating to FM Radios or television stations, and employing comedic dramatic styles, have rarely asked the following questions: if we had curtailed or altered all traditional forms of performances and their dissemination, what alternative traditions were contemporary artists to employ in terms of

dramatic style, language, and performance space? In addition, whose worldview is projected on stage: conservative critics and modern artists? Would the Bakayimbira want to discard their lived experience dating back to Idi Amin's period (between 1971 and 1979 when theatre artists were targeted by the State Research and para-military men) in order to appease critics demanding 'pure/authentic theatre'? What is more original and pure than the lived reality depicted on television and discussed by Senkubuge and Kibuuka in the talk-show radio programmes? I would suggest that contemporary Ugandan theatre was born from the conflicts between people and their post-independence tyrannical rulers. No institution survived the effects of political turmoil intact, therefore, most of the artistic elements we engage with have only been in existence since people started confronting tyranny; similarly, the socio-political issues they deal with today are neither colonial or post-independent but those that exist as a result of these conditions. Hence, while the complex relationship between theatre and media and the reconfigured forms of performance are recognisable by diverse audiences. The specific relationship between theatre artists and radio or television has given the former a wider reach and mixed audience base with its message such that political institutions found it difficult to recognise and regulate it. For example, in the colonial period, the central government owned television and radio houses; since journalists were members of the civil service political leaders manipulated the institutions. Thus, the 1998 regularisation of the media meant radio and television presented financial offers to theatre artists with no training in journalism at a time when their income was dwindling. Notably, before this time, Uganda had not witnessed so much movement between theatre, television and radio.

To a certain degree, similar to what Paul DeMain, a Native American journalist, notes about Native American interactive presenters, Kibuuka and Senkubuge's relationship with, and style of, talk-show radio '[goes] back to an old tradition, the oral visual presentation and the storyteller's credibility' (1996:132). DeMain asserts that because of this practice, the control

of media and theatre empowers the artists since they are ‘able to get the story, tell our story, work and edit our stories’. By describing the juxtaposition of new radio, information technology and journalistic reporting, as a process where ‘old traditions flow into new technologies’, DeMain gives voice to the development of styles in the twenty-first century, that draw directly on various indigenous popular forms and highlight the relation between performance and media. Stories are not going to come from the government, but people, including the artists, write and spin their stories from the grass roots just as the storytellers or travelling musicians did before the twenty-first century.

Kazanyirizi

Senkubuge and Kibuuka’s successful images and clout following their entry into the FM radio and satellite television stations media world have been largely dependent on their *kazanyirizi* and trickster personalities; their performances reflect their satirical on-stage roles. By 1986, several years before the 1997 Uganda Communications Act that not only allowed the emergence of privately owned FM radio and satellite television stations but the expansion of activities by multinational companies, and also the spread of mobile phones, Bakayimbira’s performances commanded full houses across the country in urban and rural theatres. While they are strongly rooted in theatre, Senkubuge and Kibuuka’s approach has never been inward looking at the expense of a wider vision of the role of the artist and in this sense, they have embraced television and radio media as a new way of empowerment for the narrator’s authoritative voice. They are conscious of the potent function and mediation new technologies have made in the way of generating a virtual society as well as creating strong inroads into local practices. Although their artistic goals and strategies in media and theatre may differ, crucially, by using humour and parody, these artists unsettle audiences, particularly in the political establishment and the business class. In order to give voice to complex post-1986

liberation war issues, Senkubuge and Kibuuka have created the radio talk-show premised on sensationalism, parody, satire, comedy and witticism based on indigenous concepts of performance that first made comedy and interactive talk worth striving to pursue and experience in a theatrical context. This combination of indigenous and modern generic peculiarities is best captured in the *Bimeeza* talk-shows, the radio programme, ‘*Binsangawano*’ and the television/stage play, *Byansi*. The character of Dube, the central character in *Byansi*, draws on the notion of *kazanyirizi*, an indigenous comedic trickster who makes a living through milking audience laughter using his wit, cunningness, clever word play, and physical agility, improvisatory and innovatory skill. Their *kazanyirizi*, who is associated with the liberalisation of the radio and television media, transforms into a more openly subversive character, always reflecting on the disorder in Ugandan society as if to remind the audience that the anarchy he creates demonstrates the marginal existence of a community in which *kazanyirizi* is an important figure. *Kazanyirizi* occupies a liminal space facing both the oppressed and the oppressors; in addition, in this in-between space he embodies the pre-independence culture still alive within some communities, and one in which the people value resistance and transgression as well as the threats posed by new cultural and political practices that have entered society. The consummate figure whose performance underlines diverse views is important to this discussion not only because of the popularity of the performers among radio audiences but because the post-independence *kazanyirizi*, who lampoons social/ political deviants and makes a fool of the audience has become a more openly subversive character than his indigenous double. Although there is a strong internal aspect to their commitment to the media, and change to theatre, Bakayimbira know that it has to be linked to the audience’s worldview. Importantly, they create a link to the storytelling performance genre rather than theatre forms; hence inviting us to think about aesthetic and multi-vocal qualities.⁴ The shift is significant in the understanding of the similarities between Bakayimbira as stage artists and as media presenters

since their plays and interpolated comedy resonate with these indigenous performance subjects, concerns and contexts.

The most outstanding contemporary referent for Bakayimbira's *kazanyirizi* is *Byansi* with its central character, Dube also known as Dube Atasasula Booda (Dube who takes and pays his boda boda fares). In the television play, Haji Bumali/Dube, cheats, robs, and swindles his way around the city. Set mostly in an urban neighbourhood, the episodes feature stereotypes while presenting a range of a remarkable cast of local actors that create distinctive characters. *Byansi*, a microcosm of Uganda, which is constructed on phone-in interactions with people, demonstrates in different ways how relationships with people produce dramatic subjects and produces theatre. Kibuuka, Kiyingi and Senkubuge are good examples of artists whose media reputation comes packaged within their own sense of critical approach to public discourse. Contemporary plays, similar to *Byansi*, seem to be a form of creative coping with the new reality that has destroyed cultural norms; therefore, Haji Bumali/Dube's inversion and subversion of the norms means that they emerge from their trickster form capable of handling the chaos. We cannot underestimate the impact of *Byansi* on Ugandan television and stage theatre for audiences and actors. The play's plot centres on the life of Dube, and how the people he loves are affected by his disorderly and selfish behaviour. The play owes much of its success to the inspirational performance of Kibuuka, Senkubuge and Senga Kacapiro. Senkubuge and Kibuuka's successful images following their entry into FM radio and satellite television stations media worlds has been largely dependent on their trickster personalities; their performances reflect the satirical on-stage roles. Stylistically, the play can be compared to other dramas of the period because of its comedy and the way in which the actors directly address the audience; this is achieved even when the play is confronting the audience with complex statements.

The idea of *kazanyirizi* has become a fascinating source for talk-show presenters and anchors of other interactive FM Radio programmes and has been employed to challenge the problems outside the studios and performance arena. Indeed, one of the significant aspects of Bakayimbira and their interpolated comedy is not only their similarity to indigenous stories but the creation of stage spin-off's also starring the presenters of the talk-show programmes.

In this 'new' media world, static folk characters become dynamic and shift their identities; for example, although today's *kazanyirizi* shares common characteristics with his folk predecessor, his ability to talk back to the audience and present a counter-narrative is reinvigorated by the new media technologies that enhance these critical facilities for the character and the audience alike. The intention here is not the subversion of indigenous aesthetic for the sake of modernisation but their appropriation of *kazanyirizi* is a form of intervention upon the social/political situation. This character's trajectory, illustrates the potential of inter-media influences demonstrated through the strategies, adopted by Senkubuge and Kibuuka, to adopt 'guerrilla' tactics in order to circumnavigate communication laws and regulations. This practice of artistic political intervention using private media spaces, also adopted by other artists, allows them to raise issues that are important to the communities; ones that public media outlets, which are policed, would normally avoid. Implicitly, there is a merging of indigenous performance and media knowledge and practice. Crucially, the presenters of these programmes or chairs of radio discussions resonate with characters from oral narrative, particularly featuring trickster humour through *kazanyirizi*. Contrary to professional journalistic practice but keeping in line with *kazanyirizi*'s character, Bakayimbira radio presenters break the boundaries of professional codes and protocols, preferring to privilege people's voices and perspectives. In this way, radio talks, through the 'talk-in-interaction' are instrumental in achieving this objective and shaping public discourse since they provide the space for the production of culturally relevant programmes.

The chaos Haji Bumali/Dube create in post-Idi Amin plays, for example, when Dube cheats *booda booda* operators, taxi men, and shopkeepers, and tricks them into selling him goods and services is an interesting alternative to surviving under oppressive regimes. So, while the pre-Amin trickster plays present a *kazanyirizi* who subverts in order to iterate cultural values and identity, the character in these dramas present audiences with an ideal for exploiting institutions and people. Post-National Resistance Movement government tales, however, are inverted to critique government institutions and business organisations, mostly led by party sympathisers. For example, one episode of *Byansi*, which can be interpreted by the audience as signifying the machinations of the rich, is entertaining. In writing the script, Senkubuge uses *kazanyirizi*'s language and techniques in the play – the behaviour, contradictory language and the power of deception. Dube cheats, robs, and swindles his way around the city. In this context, *kazanyirizi* and Wakayima, who combine bandit and trickster behaviour are substitutable characters that are merged in Haji Bumali/Dube, rogues who live by their wits. Viewing *kazanyirizi* as the hero of the story presupposes that the audience associates and identifies with and affirms his cheating behaviours. Nevertheless, just like other indigenous tales, a play's meaning and significance lies with the particular listener or spectator. Therefore, people may laugh at the end when Haji Bumali/Dube insult and cheat their victims. Moreover, if the fraudster *kazanyirizi*'s capacity for deviant behaviour and action are undermined, some of the viewers or listeners might not want to empathise with him.

It is impossible, I would argue, to listen to *Bisangawano* or watch *Byansi* and ignore both the manipulative nature of *kazanyirizi* and the sense of deprivation/hardship and exploitation / dog – eat –dog life that marks the people's lived experience. As in the television play, *Byansi*, so also in this programme, the intolerable is rendered tolerable, and even enjoyable, by the employment of the *kazanyirizi* style of performance. In writing the scripts, Senkubuge and Kibuuka use *kazanyirizi*'s language and techniques – character motifs,

contradictory language and the power of deception. As a title, *Byansi*, short for Luganda saying, *byansi bya kuleka* (earthly possessions are useless when one dies) is a self-conscious reference to corrupt officials, and echoes the hopelessness of acquiring wealth at the expense of people's humanity. It resonates with the other play's subtitle, *State of the Nation*, which is a parody of the debilitating social and political conditions in Uganda. Haji Bumali/Dube's performance as *kazanyirizi* in *Byansi* seems to be presenting a form of creative coping with the new reality that has destroyed cultural norms; through inversion and subversion of the norms, he emerges from his trickster form capable of handling the chaos. In a way, it is only in another performance space that certain notions of performance are appreciated. Their in-depth meanings reveal themselves as they engage in dialogue with other media and audiences. Therefore, when Bakayimbira invoke *kazanyirizi* as a double-voiced media figure reminding us that in the absence of traditional journalistic figures, the fetishisation of audience interaction, and the aesthetisation of the signs of poverty works to make the audience to engage with radical criticisms of new forms of exploitation.

Ku Jjirikiti: State of the Nation (2012)

Senkubuge and Kibuuka's media programmes constantly change because the discussions concentrate on politicians and the new rich. The play, *Ku Jjirikiti: State of the Nation*, is a good example of this approach to theatre and media, whereby irrespective of the nature of the performance space, they do not have to depend on in-house field reporters and journalists to collect material but take advantage of mobile phones, computers, as well as social media platforms. *State of the Nation* references a moment in September 2009 when, following the riots sparked off by the Central Government's imposition of a ban preventing the Kabaka of Buganda from touring Bugerere Country, the Uganda Broadcasting Council suspended several radio presenters, including Kibuuka and Senkubuge. According to media reports, another

journalist, Robert Kalundi Serumaga, was ‘abducted by unidentified assailants riding in an unmarked sedan’ and later detained at the Central Police Station.⁵ This action draws our attention to the interface between media and theatre, and resonates with Senkubuge and Kibuuka’s comments on the use of theatre as a space for political discourse, ‘*Theatre ye palimenti yaffe* (Theatre is our parliament)’.⁶ *State of the Nation* premiered and showed at the Uganda National Theatre, was uploaded on YouTube, and also issued on DVD. As a play concerned with corruption and nepotism the multi-layered satire intertwines wider political and historical issues that resonate with the audience capable of understanding the witticisms. It employs recognisable gestures and language in the construction of a biting satire of the Ugandan political class. Most importantly, the fore sighting afforded by setting the play both in the past through a flashback, and the present, is enhanced by the use of pre-recorded scenes projected on the screen; collectively, these offer a space from which the play criticises specific cynical abuses of power and history. The play crucially demonstrates the trend in twenty-first century Ugandan theatre of dramas which create an intimate and communal performance that underwrite the artists’ attempts to rehearse communal participation with the audiences. Crucially, in the penultimate scene of the play, Senkubuge, by working outside the ordinary theatrical forms, presents to the audience the *Ekyombo* (boat), that, similar to Noah’s Ark will be used symbolically to cleanse Uganda of all the undesirable elements. Its overpowering background image projected on the screen in the final scene is a significant reminder to the audience of the conflicted environment, the fusing of religion and politics - that Bakayimbira are interested in – dramatic themes in plays with cultural/social and political history and their illusory presence as well as the real events of Uganda. This juxtaposition reveals Senkubuge’s approach to modern Uganda as a conflicted ghostly space where the past and its effects haunt the present like an infectious leftover affecting people’s lives and memories. The multiple roles on broadcast/television media and the stage are at the centre of Bakayimbira’s *State of the*

Nation in a way that demonstrates its inheritance of media and dramatic styles of the 1990s. Although released on DVD the play may not be classed as a *kinaUganda* film. Having started as a stage play, it still reads dramatically, apart from its arrangement of some of the scenery and stage properties and fast-moving action, sequences that demonstrate a strong influence of television drama.

The radio talk-shows that frame's the play resonate with Mary Louise Pratt who notes that talk-shows demonstrate how "the improvisatory character [of talk-shows] is in a crucial dimension of much mass culture and everyday life activity' (1997: 8). In this context, audiences who listened to Kibuuka and Senkubuge's programmes did so mostly because of the presenters' power of performance inspired by their stage work. When their voice commands are blended with written/improvised scripts, both artists are transmuted into *bakazanyirizi* comedians essential to the actor-audience relationship in local Ugandan theatre. Kibuuka and Senkubuge's stage performances and talk-shows are characteristically extemporary but can also be captivating and shockingly hilarious.

As a play caught between three performance spaces, radio, television and theatre, *State of the Nation* struggles sometimes to exploit the conventions of media in a manner that might reflect on the shifting position of the artist. This is particularly evident in the scene when the First Lady is manoeuvring to stage a house coup d'état in order to wrestle the control of government from her husband. The interrelation of artistic elements that mediate the meaning and reception of the play reflect Bakayimbira's shifting focus on media and theatre. The play, a testimony to the reversal of roles between radio scripts and staged performances, which has contributed to the use of multiple media – video, dance and music - in staged productions, evidences the view that working with broadcasting and television media has allowed Senkubuge and Kibuuka space to reflect on their theatre work. The play marks the change in their theatrical productions, which is underlined by their desire to engage various media, and

incorporate live and intermedialised aspect of Serambala's lived experiences. In this respect, the intermedial texture created through what Aneta Mancewicz calls 'intermedial interweaving' (2014: 24), relates to the act of relating Serwambala's present condition with his past medialized life unconsciously distances the audience from the character on stage, allowing them to reflect on the state of the nation.⁷

Thus, 'through interconnections between live and mediatised elements [...] intermedial texture constructs a new type of dramaturgy' (Mancewicz, p. 25), Bakayimbira's work is linked with radio talk-shows, staged performances, television drama, while also engaging with recording performances on DVD, and uploading it on social media platforms. The appropriation of private media spaces by Bakayimbira and other artists serves multiple functions: through discussion, performing and archiving they act as a sounding board for the society without falling into the trap of sycophancy; it highlights specific issues and provokes artistic and political discourses that concentrates on concerns significant to society; it shifts stereo-typical labels previously attached to stage artists and travelling musicians, since its location in diverse spaces removes the usual perception of *kazanyirizi* generated by impersonators at weddings and sumptuous parties. In the introduction, I commented about the shifting boundaries of theatre, which are becoming blurred forcing artists to adapt to new ways of working while also remaining the voice of the community. The complex performance of *omudingidi* (tube-fiddle player), the original *kazanyirizi*, whose text is not fixed but is always ambivalent, and which creates a multiplicity of meanings interwoven through song, comedy, dance and virtuoso instrumentation, is closer to these changing roles. Nonetheless, the artistic innovation evidenced in the work of this generation of artists who invoke *kazanyirizi* as a counterbalance to state-controlled theatre and media may disappear if theatre scholars and critics do not critically engage in its discourse even as it undergoes changes. Although most of these performances are in Luganda, which restricts it to people who are knowledgeable in the

language, the connection between the artistic performer and the critic (in Uganda) offers provides important secondary sources, most notably the ephemeral performances discussed in this essay. The intersection between theatre and media spaces and within intermedial collaborations will continue to provide new grounds for creative coalitions that enable the discussion of political and social issues; hence, the development of a critical discourse concentrating on it will ensure its survival and that of other Luganda/Ugandan theatrical forms.

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¹ Senkubuge further states that when the owner of Simba Radio, Aga Sekalaala, invited him to a meeting, he had no set idea about Senkubuge's role and contribution, so he asked him, 'What are you going to do on radio?' Senkubuge replied, 'To force a smile and laughter on listeners every morning'. To underline his project Sekalaala affirmed: 'You will see the power of radio. We will work together. You will be at liberty to popularize your drama or advertise it at no cost. You will be free to place advertisements [for your shows] at no cost. Sell airtime and not radio shows'. Sekalaala allowed him to use radio to mobilise audiences and business support for the Bakayimbira's shows including '*Ekiggunda ky'omwaka*,' the largest New Year's festival in Kampala City.

² Charles Senkubuge and Benoni Kibuuka interviewed by the writer, 20 April 2014 at the Uganda National Theatre.

³ Bakayimbira are similar to other outspoken artists before them, including Dan Mugula, Wyclif Kiyingi, Elvania Zirimu, Byron Kawadwa, Robert Serumaga, Nuwa Sentongo, and John Ruganda, who were not afraid to voice the concerns of the community through humour and satire symbolised by *kazanyirizi*.

⁴ Similar characters that featured in radio dramas by the late playwright, Wycliff Kiyingi include, Katooto and Kadiidi. Another An iteration of this character is *kajjajjata* – this signifies theatre artists who are also radio presenters who are commonly hired to play the role that previously was dominated by travelling musicians and abadongo (travelling musicians) ensembles.

⁵ See 'Cablegate: Uganda: Deaths, Detentions, and Distrust After Kampala'

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WL0909/S00903/cablegate-uganda-deaths-detentions-and-distrust-after-kampala.htm>.

⁶ Kibuuka and Senkubuge made the comments in an interview with the present writer on 20 April 2010, at the National Theatre, Kampala, Uganda.

⁷ Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx describe intermediality as a process that 'allows for particular ways of structuring the stage, employing aesthetic strategies [...]' (see Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx (2010), 'Presence and Perception: Analysing Intermediality in Performance in Chappie and Kattenbelt, eds., *Intermediality in Theatre*, Amsterdam an New York: Rodopi, p. 223)