

**The Playwright-Director Dynamic: Points of Intersection and Divergence
Between
Mike Bamiloye and Festus Dairo**

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Abstract

*The collaboration between a playwright and a director is fundamental to transforming a script into a compelling stage performance. In faith-based theatre, this relationship is even more crucial, as both artists must balance artistic expression with the intended spiritual message. This study examines the artistic collaboration between Mike Bamiloye, a playwright known for his morally and spiritually driven narratives, and Festus Dairo, a stage director with a distinctive interpretative style. Their work on *Darkest Night* and *Alájàwòn* illustrates both their shared commitment to faith-based storytelling and their differing approaches to narrative structure, character development, and staging techniques. Through qualitative research, this study explores the intersection and divergence of their artistic visions, relying on interviews with both Bamiloye and Dairo to provide firsthand insights into their creative processes. The findings reveal that while Bamiloye emphasizes clear moral and spiritual resolutions, Dairo introduces psychological depth, aesthetic experimentation, and interpretative flexibility that add layers of complexity to the performance. These differences, rather than creating conflict, enhance the theatrical experience by making faith-based drama both instructive and artistically compelling. The study also highlights the director's role in shaping audience engagement, demonstrating how staging choices and performance techniques influence the reception of religious themes. This research contributes to theatre studies by emphasizing the dynamic interplay between playwrights and directors, particularly in faith-based drama, where the balance between textual fidelity and creative interpretation is critical. It underscores the need for structured collaboration between playwrights and directors to ensure that productions remain spiritually impactful while allowing for artistic depth. The study concludes with recommendations for fostering stronger creative partnerships, encouraging open dialogue, and refining staging techniques to maximize audience engagement and the overall effectiveness of faith-based theatre.*

Keywords: Playwright-Director Relationship, Mike Bamiloye, Festus Dairo, Faith-Based Theatre, Directorial Interpretation.

Introduction

Theatre is an inherently collaborative art form that relies on the synergy between playwrights and directors to bring scripts to life on stage. While playwrights provide the

foundation of a performance through their textual narratives, directors serve as interpreters who shape the dramatic experience through staging, movement, and performance choices (Babalola, 2017; Glikpoe & Horsu, 2023). This dynamic interplay between the playwright's vision and the director's interpretation often results in a fusion of artistic expressions, sometimes leading to alignment and at other times, divergence in creative perspectives. The relationship between playwright and director is particularly significant in faith-based theatre, where textual fidelity and thematic emphasis on religious narratives often shape directorial decisions.

Playwriting in Nigeria has evolved over the years, with playwrights using drama to address socio-political, cultural, and religious themes. Early Nigerian playwrights like Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, and Zulu Sofola used theatre as a medium for national consciousness and identity formation (Aniukwu, 2021). More recently, playwrights like Ahmed Yerima and Femi Osofisan have explored contemporary issues while incorporating traditional and modern theatrical techniques. In faith-based theatre, scriptwriting is often driven by a commitment to conveying spiritual messages, moral lessons, and evangelistic themes, which necessitates a directorial approach that aligns with or interprets these intentions appropriately (Booth, 2023). Playwrights in this genre, such as Mike Bamiloye, craft stories that intertwine religious teachings with dramatic storytelling, offering audiences a blend of theatrical entertainment and spiritual edification.

The art of directing is central to the transformation of written texts into compelling stage performances. Directors are responsible for visual storytelling, blocking, character interpretation, and the overall aesthetic of a production (Babalola, 2022). In Nigeria, theatre directors like Bayo Oduneye and Chuck Mike have been instrumental in shaping the direction of modern stage productions, employing innovative techniques that enhance performance delivery. The director's role extends beyond mere staging to include an interpretive function that bridges the playwright's intentions and the audience's reception (Braun, 2014). In faith-based theatre, this role becomes even more complex, as directors must navigate between artistic creativity and theological accuracy, ensuring that the spiritual essence of the play is not lost in translation.

In Nigeria, faith-based theatre has played a crucial role in shaping moral and spiritual consciousness and evangelistic outreach, with playwrights like Mike Bamiloye pioneering this genre through Mount Zion Faith Ministries. Bamiloye's plays are known for their instructive storytelling, Christian themes, and spiritually charged dialogues (Oki & Adetoro, 2024; Olakunbi-Black, 2024). However, the staging of his works involves an additional layer of interpretation, particularly when handled by directors who bring their own artistic and theatrical sensibilities into the production. Festus Dairo, a notable stage director with Zion Royal Theatre, has directed two of Bamiloye's plays, *Darkest Night* and *Alájùwòn*, bringing his unique staging techniques and directorial vision to these works.

While studies on Nigerian theatre have extensively examined the works of established playwrights and directors (Arinde 2025, 2024; Babalola, 2022), there remains a significant gap in research focusing on faith-based theatre and its unique creative dynamics. Most scholarly discourse on Nigerian drama has concentrated on secular theatre, political narratives, or traditional performance forms, leaving religious theatre relatively underexplored (Adeoye, 2011). Moreover, the intricate relationship between playwrights and directors within faith-based theatre has received little critical attention, despite its growing influence on Nigerian audiences and religious communities.

This study is necessary because it provides a systematic analysis of how directorial interpretation influences the staging of faith-based plays. By examining the intersection of Bamiloye's playwriting and Dairo's directorial approach, the study sheds light on the extent to which faith-based narratives remain intact or undergo transformation during performance. Additionally, it proposes a framework for understanding how directors navigate the dual responsibility of artistic creativity and religious fidelity, a balance that is crucial in Christian drama but remains largely untheorized in existing literature. Beyond filling this scholarly gap, the study has practical implications for theatre practitioners. It highlights the challenges and opportunities directors face when staging faith-based productions, offering insights that can enhance collaboration between playwrights and directors in religious theatre. Furthermore, the research contributes to broader discussions on Nigerian drama by positioning faith-based theatre as a vital and evolving component of the country's theatrical landscape.

This study seeks to explore the points of intersection and divergence between Mike Bamiloye's playwriting and Festus Dairo's directorial approach. Using qualitative interviews with both theatre practitioners, this research will examine how their artistic visions align or differ in the process of theatrical production. Specifically, it will investigate how Dairo's direction interprets and translates Bamiloye's faith-based narratives into stage performances and whether this process enhances, modifies, or challenges the original intent of the plays.

By examining this playwright-director dynamic, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on creative collaboration in Nigerian drama, with particular emphasis on faith-based theatre. It will also provide insights into the evolving nature of Christian drama in Nigeria, highlighting how directorial inputs influence the reception and effectiveness of religious narratives on stage. This research, therefore, not only explores the nuances of artistic interpretation but also underscores the continued relevance of theatre as a tool for spiritual engagement and cultural expression.

Literature Review

Several studies have examined the complex relationship between playwrights and

directors in theatrical productions. Carlson (2018) asserts that the director's role evolved from a mere facilitator to an autonomous creative force, often reshaping a playwright's work to align with personal artistic or thematic inclinations. Similarly, Pavis (2003) explores how directors negotiate between textual fidelity and performative innovation, arguing that no script is immune to interpretative transformation once it enters the rehearsal space. These perspectives highlight the interpretative agency of directors, which can sometimes lead to tensions between playwrights and directors, particularly when the latter's vision diverges significantly from the original script.

Bickerstaff (2015) further underscores that theatre is a collaborative medium, where no single creator holds absolute authority. This aligns with Barthes' (1977) concept of the "death of the author," which suggests that meaning is not solely derived from the writer's intent but is continually reshaped through performance. Applying this to Nigerian theatre, scholars like Betiang (2014) argue that indigenous stage directors often introduce cultural and aesthetic modifications to scripts, thereby localizing plays for specific audiences. This dynamic raises critical questions about how much interpretative freedom directors should have, particularly in faith-based performances where thematic consistency is crucial.

Faith-based theatre in Nigeria has been instrumental in religious evangelism, social reformation, and moral instruction. Scholars such as Oki (2024) and Olayiwola (2019) note that Nigerian Christian theatre has largely been shaped by dramatists like Mike Bamiloye, whose works emphasize spiritual warfare, redemption, and Christian morality. According to Olayiwola (2019), Bamiloye's plays function as both entertainment and evangelistic tools, reinforcing biblical principles through dramatization. However, the effectiveness of these themes depends significantly on their stage execution, where directors play a crucial role in translating textual messages into compelling performances.

Despite the significance of faith-based theatre, few studies have examined the extent to which directorial interpretation influences the reception of religious plays. Olatunji & Ojo (2024) highlights the need for scholarly attention to how directors modify faith-based scripts through staging, lighting, and performance choices.

Research on directorial interpretation in religious drama suggests that directors often balance between adhering to the playwright's religious message and introducing artistic elements that enhance the theatrical experience. Bouchard & Gillespie (2021) argues that religious plays directed with rigid adherence to scriptural texts may risk losing dramatic appeal, thereby reducing audience engagement. These perspectives raise pertinent questions regarding how directors handle faith-based scripts. Whether they should prioritize textual accuracy or embrace creative modifications for theatrical impact.

While past studies have explored playwright-director dynamics (Olatunji & Ojo, 2024; Babalola, 2017), little attention has been given to how directorial interpretation affects faith-based theatre in Nigeria. Specifically, there is a lack of research on how Nigerian directors interpret Christian plays for the stage without compromising their theological essence. Furthermore, although Mike Bamiloye's contributions to Christian drama have been widely studied, there is minimal scholarship on how his works are staged by independent directors such as Festus Dairo.

This study fills this gap by analyzing the intersection and divergence between Bamiloye's playwriting and Dairo's directorial approach in *Darkest Night* and *Alájùwòn*. By employing interviews with both theatre practitioners, this research provides a nuanced understanding of the collaborative dynamics in Nigerian faith-based theatre. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on creative authority in theatre and offers insights into how directors navigate the delicate balance between religious fidelity and artistic expression.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing textual analysis, performance critique, and semi-structured interviews to examine the relationship between Mike Bamiloye as a playwright and Festus Dairo as a director. Given that theatre is both a textual and performative medium, this methodology allows for a comprehensive exploration of how *Darkest Night* and *Alájùwòn* transition from script to stage under Dairo's direction. A case study design is employed, focusing specifically on these two plays, as it provides an in-depth understanding of the artistic collaboration between the playwright and director. Case studies are particularly valuable in theatre research as they facilitate a detailed examination of creative processes, allowing for a nuanced discussion of how artistic visions converge or diverge in a specific context (Yin, 2018).

To achieve this, the study engages in textual analysis of the scripts, focusing on their thematic concerns, dramaturgical structure, and character development. This is complemented by performance critique, which examines how Dairo's directorial choices influence the delivery of Bamiloye's message on stage. Attention is given to aspects such as blocking, lighting, actor interpretation, and spatial arrangement, all of which contribute to the final realization of the play. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews with Bamiloye and Dairo provide firsthand insights into their artistic processes.

To analyze the collected data, **discourse analysis** is employed to extract patterns and thematic trends from the interviews and performance critiques. This method allows for the identification of recurring motifs in the practitioners' discourse regarding artistic collaboration, directorial interpretation, and faith-based storytelling. Through discourse analysis, the study uncovers how Bamiloye and Dairo articulate their creative

intentions, negotiate artistic choices, and perceive the transformation of text into performance. Additionally, the discourse surrounding the performances is examined to determine how directorial interventions reshape the narrative and audience reception. This approach ensures a systematic and interpretative understanding of the complex interactions between script, stage, and artistic vision.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study is rooted in Performance Theory and Reader-Response Theory. Performance Theory, as articulated by Richard Schechner (1985), posits that theatre is a fluid and evolving art form where meaning is not solely derived from the script but also from performance. A playwright's work is subject to transformation when it is staged, as directors, actors, and production elements all contribute to shaping its final form. This perspective is particularly relevant in examining how Dairo's directorial approach influences the staging of Bamiloye's plays, potentially altering aspects of their original theological and dramatic intent.

In addition, Reader-Response Theory, developed by Stanley Fish (1980), provides a useful lens for understanding how directors function as interpretive agents. This theory suggests that meaning is not fixed within a text but emerges through the interaction between the work and its interpreter. In the context of theatre, this means that Dairo, as a director, brings his own creative vision and artistic background to Bamiloye's scripts, inevitably shaping how audiences receive and engage with the performance. Given that faith-based theatre often carries strong moral and spiritual messages, this study considers how directorial agency in such productions navigates the balance between artistic freedom and theological fidelity.

Synopsis of Plays

- *Darkest Night*

Darkest Night is an eschatological drama that sounds a passionate warning to Christians about the second coming of Jesus Christ. Set in the quiet town of Agbamu, the play portrays the intense trials believers face during a brutal invasion by religious extremists.

The story centers on the Kenny and Anderson families, ordinary people forced to make extraordinary choices, which is to either deny their faith or stand firm in Christ. Kenny, a devoted Christian, hides with his family, trusting God for protection, while the Anderson family battles fear and uncertainty.

Officer Collins, a fierce interrogator, captures believers like the bold choir master, Marvellous Hezokwat, and Pastor Macauley, both of whom refuse to deny Jesus. Pastor Larry and Rev. Godsmans, though initially strong, succumb to fear and renounces

their faith. Yet, amidst the sorrow and persecution, many believers stand unshaken, singing songs of praise even in the face of death. Deeply moved by their courage, Officer Collins eventually abandons his role as an oppressor, boldly confessing Jesus Christ as his Lord and personal Saviour. His conversion inspires some fellow soldiers to do the same, marking a powerful turning point in the story. *Darkest Night* is a stirring reflection on courage, sacrifice, and the unyielding power of true faith, even in life's darkest moments.

- Alájùwòn

Alájùwòn is a theatrical adaptation of Mike Bamiloye's *The Gods Are Dead*, set in the traditional village of Bode Ajuwon. The play follows Rev. James, a Christian missionary, who arrives with a message of salvation through Jesus Christ. His arrival is met with fierce resistance, especially from Wingoroye and King Alájùwòn, the staunch defenders of the village gods and customs.

Rev. James soon learns that the village is held captive by seven demonic forces controlling its affairs. Despite threats of death and being sacrificed to the gods, he boldly confronts the king, declaring the power of Christ over every spiritual stronghold.

When the king's only son falls gravely ill, the stage is set for a divine showdown. While the villagers prepare sacrifices to their gods, Rev. James seizes the moment to reveal God's power. Through fervent prayer, the boy is miraculously healed, stunning the entire village. Faced with undeniable proof of God's supremacy, King Alájùwòn publicly surrenders to Christ. The villagers, witnessing the transformation, abandon their idols and turn to Jesus. Alájùwòn is a powerful story of courage, faith, and spiritual victory, which is a reminder that the power of God triumphs over darkness, bringing hope, deliverance, and salvation.

Analysis and Discussion

The Points of Intersection Between Bamiloye and Dairo's Artistic Visions

Theatre is a collaborative art form, and the relationship between a playwright and a director is crucial in shaping the final production. In the case of Mike Bamiloye and Festus Dairo, their artistic visions align in several key areas, particularly in their commitment to faith-based storytelling, their emphasis on realism in performance, and their shared understanding of theatre as a tool for evangelism and social transformation. Their collaboration in *Darkest Night* and Alájùwòn reveals a synergy that ensures the spiritual and moral themes in Bamiloye's scripts are effectively translated into compelling stage productions.

One of the most significant points of alignment between the two artists is their dedication to Christian evangelism through drama. In an interview, Bamiloye

emphasized that his primary aim as a playwright is “to use drama as a means of preaching the gospel and leading people to Christ” (Bamiloye, personal communication, March 24, 2025). His plays are structured around biblical themes, often presenting narratives of redemption, restoration, spiritual enlightenment, divine intervention, and the consequences of moral failure. Dairo, as a director, reinforces this vision through his staging choices. When asked about his approach to directing Bamiloye's works, Dairo stated, “My goal is to remain faithful to the message while ensuring that the performance captivates the audience. I do not see myself as altering the script, but rather as bringing it to life in a way that enhances its impact” (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025). This mutual commitment to spiritual storytelling ensures that the plays retain their evangelical essence while benefiting from the dynamism of theatrical performance.

Another key area of intersection is their preference for realism in theatrical representation. While Bamiloye's plays often include supernatural elements such as depictions of angels, demons, and divine interventions, his narratives are rooted in real-life struggles and moral dilemmas. “I want my audience to see themselves in these stories,” Bamiloye explained. “Even when supernatural forces are at work, the characters must feel real; their challenges must be relatable” (Bamiloye, personal communication, March 24, 2025). Dairo complements this by employing naturalistic acting techniques, realistic set designs, and expressive lighting to maintain believability on stage.



Fig. 1: Mysterious beings - *Darkest Night*



Fig. 2: Believers facing death - *Darkest Night*

In *Darkest Night*, for example, Bamiloye's script presents a dramatic battle between faith and persecution, depicting the harrowing choices believers must make in the face of death. The play explores the cost of standing for Jesus in a society that seeks to eradicate Christianity, showing both those who remain steadfast and those who falter under pressure. Dairo ensures that this conflict remains accessible to audiences by using stage compositions that emphasize the psychological and emotional states of the characters. He remarked, “If the audience cannot connect with the struggles of the

characters, then the message is lost. My job is to make them feel like they are part of the story” (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025).

Their shared emphasis on visual storytelling also strengthens their collaboration. Bamiloye's scripts are rich in symbolic imagery, often using allegories to communicate deeper spiritual truths. Dairo enhances this visual language through blocking, movement, and spatial arrangements. When discussing his directorial decisions for *Alájàwòn*, he explained, “Daddy Mike's script already contains powerful images, so my task is to amplify them on stage. For example, when a character is spiritually lost, I use lighting to isolate them, making it clear that they are struggling in darkness. When redemption comes, the stage opens up, and light floods in. These are things the audience may not consciously notice, but they feel it” (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025). This integration of textual and visual storytelling ensures that the messages in the plays are reinforced through both dialogue and stagecraft.



Fig. 3: Rev. James under a tree - *Alájàwòn*



Fig. 4: Rev James at the palace - *Alájàwòn*

Music and sound play a crucial role in the artistic vision of *Darkest Night* and *Alájàwòn*. Bamiloye's plays often incorporate gospel music and hymnody, not merely as background elements but as essential components of the narrative. He remarked, “Music is a way to prepare the hearts of the audience for the message. Sometimes a single song can communicate what words cannot” (Bamiloye, personal communication, March 24, 2025). Dairo enhances this vision by integrating live music, synchronized vocal performances, and carefully selected sound effects that heighten dramatic tension. In *Darkest Night*, for instance, hymn singing becomes an act of defiance and faith, with the persecuted believers raising their voices in worship even in the face of death. These musical moments are not just transitions between scenes but powerful expressions of resilience and devotion. “I use music as a bridge,” Dairo explained. “It connects scenes, deepens emotions, and sometimes even speaks for the characters” (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025). This alignment in their

use of music ensures that the audience remains emotionally and spiritually engaged, experiencing the weight of the play's message through both sound and silence.



Fig. 5: Family of Rev. Godsmans Singing - *Darkest Night*



Fig. 6: Pastor Macauley singing - *Darkest Night*



Fig. 7: Villagers singing and dancing - *Alajuwon*



Fig. 8: A special dance session - *Alàjùwòn*

Both artists also recognize the importance of audience engagement. Bamiloye's writing style frequently includes direct address, reflective monologues, and interactive dialogue that draw the audience into the moral and spiritual dilemmas of the characters. Dairo builds on this by designing performances that occasionally break the fourth wall, allowing actors to interact directly with spectators. "Faith-based theatre is not passive," Dairo stated. "It demands a response. Whether through a character looking directly into the eyes of an audience member or an unexpected moment of silence that invites reflection, I make sure the audience feels involved" (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025). Bamiloye agreed, adding, "At the end of the play, the goal is transformation. If people leave unchanged, we have failed" (Bamiloye, personal communication, March 24, 2025).

Fig. 9: Pastor Macauley - *Darkest Night*Fig. 10: 'Wingoroye - *Alájùwòn*

The collaboration between Bamiloye and Dairo is rooted in a shared understanding of theatre as a vehicle for both storytelling and spiritual impact. While Bamiloye constructs the narrative framework, Dairo ensures that this framework is brought to life in a way that resonates with audiences. Their artistic alignment in areas such as evangelistic intent, realism, visual storytelling, music, and audience engagement creates a synergy that enhances the effectiveness of their productions. This intersection of vision ensures that their works not only entertain but also inspire, challenge, and spiritually uplift their viewers.

The Points of Divergence Between Bamiloye and Dairo's Artistic Visions

While Mike Bamiloye and Festus Dairo share a common vision for faith-based theatre, their creative approaches diverge in several significant ways. These differences stem from their unique perspectives on storytelling, staging, and interpretation. As a playwright, Bamiloye prioritizes message-driven narratives, often structuring his plays with clear moral and spiritual resolutions, whereas Dairo, as a director, leans toward a more dynamic and interpretative staging process that sometimes challenges conventional storytelling techniques. Their divergence in these areas shapes the final productions of *Darkest Night* and *Alájùwòn*, illustrating the complex relationship between a playwright's vision and a director's interpretative authority.

One of the primary differences between Bamiloye and Dairo lies in their approach to storytelling. Bamiloye's scripts are structured with a clear moral and spiritual direction, ensuring that each character's journey leads to an unambiguous resolution aligned with Christian teachings. He explained in an interview, “The message is the most important thing. Every element of the story must guide the audience towards understanding God's truth” (Bamiloye, personal communication, March 24, 2025). His narratives often follow a cause-and-effect pattern, where actions lead to divine consequences,

reinforcing the didactic purpose of the play. Dairo, on the other hand, views storytelling as more fluid and sometimes open to multiple interpretations. He noted, “Life is not always as black and white as we present it on stage. I sometimes prefer to leave room for the audience to wrestle with certain questions rather than providing all the answers” (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025). This approach occasionally leads to modifications in the way conflicts are resolved on stage, as Dairo may introduce subtle ambiguities that invite deeper contemplation rather than immediate moral closure.

A clear example that illustrates these contrasting approaches can be found in *Darkest Night*. Soldiers are shown interrogating and executing individuals who profess faith in Jesus Christ. The narrative initially appears to follow a straightforward path of persecution and martyrdom, aligning with Bamiloye's style of emphasizing spiritual conviction and divine justice. However, the twist occurs when one of the very soldiers, moved by the unwavering faith and courage of the believers, experiences a profound internal transformation and ultimately surrenders his life to Christ. This moment not only reinforces the redemptive power of faith, a hallmark of Bamiloye's storytelling, but also introduces a layer of complexity and moral introspection that resonates with Dairo's preference for open-ended interpretation. The soldier's conversion serves as both a spiritual resolution and a subtle invitation for the audience to consider the unseen battles of conscience, blending the two storytellers' distinct philosophies into a compelling narrative moment.



Fig. 11: The Soldiers executing believers - *Darkest Night*



Fig. 12: One of the Soldiers accepting Christ - *Darkest Night*

A related divergence can be seen in their handling of character development. Bamiloye's characters are often written as clear moral and spiritual archetypes, with some representing unwavering faith and others embodying the dangers of compromise or outright rebellion. This characterization serves his evangelical purpose, ensuring that audiences can easily grasp the spiritual trajectory of each figure. “I don't believe in confusing the audience,” Bamiloye stated. “A story should be clear about who is

standing for God and who is not” (Bamiloye, personal communication, March 24, 2025). Dairo, however, prefers to introduce more nuance into character portrayals, sometimes directing actors to emphasize internal struggles that are not overtly stated in the script. In *Darkest Night*, for instance, Dairo instructed the actor playing Reverend Godsmen, a leader facing intense persecution to initially display boldness before gradually succumbing to fear. He explained, “Faith is often tested in ways we don't expect. I wanted the audience to see that even those who seem strong can falter under pressure. It makes his struggle more human and his failure more poignant” (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025). This directorial choice, while still aligned with the play's theme of spiritual endurance, deepened the emotional weight of the character's downfall, making his eventual fate even more impactful.



Fig. 13: Reverend Godsmen and his family - *Darkest Night*

Another point of divergence emerges in their use of staging and spatial arrangements. Bamiloye's vision of theatre leans towards a traditional stage setup where the focus remains on the dialogue and character interactions. His preference for clear, straightforward stage compositions ensures that the audience's attention remains on the message being delivered. “I write with a certain image in mind. Actors are positioned in ways that make the story as direct as possible,” **Bamiloye remarked (personal communication, March 24, 2025)**. Dairo, however, is more experimental in his staging techniques, using space in unconventional ways to enhance the dramatic effect. In *Alájàwòn*, rather than positioning actors in predictable formations, he introduced fragmented stage movements where characters occupied different levels of the stage to symbolize spiritual struggles. “The way a character moves, where they stand, and how they relate to space can speak just as loudly as words,” **he explained (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025)**. “I sometimes challenge the actors to break from traditional stage formations and explore movement in a way that adds layers to the performance.” While Bamiloye acknowledges the effectiveness of such techniques, he expressed concern that “too much abstraction can sometimes dilute the clarity of the message” (**Bamiloye, personal communication, March 24, 2025**).



Fig. 14: The villagers with the King
- *Alájùwòn*



Fig. 15: The gods of the land
- *Alájùwòn*

Interpretation of supernatural elements in the plays also presents a key area of difference. In Bamiloye's scripts, spiritual battles, angelic visitations, and demonic manifestations are presented with direct references to scripture, emphasizing their theological foundation. "These things are real," he stated firmly (Bamiloye, personal communication, March 24, 2025). "I write them as they are, without compromise." Dairo, while respecting the integrity of these themes, sometimes approaches their representation on stage with greater subtlety. Rather than relying heavily on dramatic effects such as sudden blackouts or exaggerated sound cues, he prefers psychological tension and nuanced lighting to depict spiritual warfare. Speaking on this, he noted, "I want the audience to feel the presence of the supernatural, not just see it. Sometimes the unseen is more powerful than the obvious" (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025).

In *Alájùwòn*, instead of using a literal angelic figure in a key confrontation scene, Dairo suggested that an actor's transformation in posture and voice should imply divine intervention, allowing the audience to interpret the moment in a more personal way. While this approach added depth, some audience members familiar with Bamiloye's style found it less explicit than expected.

Their differences also extend to their perspectives on audience engagement. Bamiloye's scripts often feature direct audience address, where characters deliver reflective monologues that explicitly guide the audience's moral understanding. "Sometimes, you have to speak to them directly," he explained (Bamiloye, personal communication, March 24, 2025). "People need to hear the truth in a way they cannot ignore." Dairo, however, prefers an immersive approach that allows the audience to discover meaning through experience rather than direct instruction. He stated, "I believe in making the audience feel the weight of the story through silence, gestures, and subtext. Not everything needs to be said out loud" (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025). This divergence in audience engagement styles means that while Bamiloye emphasizes clarity and direct moral and spiritual

instruction, Dairo focuses on emotional resonance and interpretive space.

Despite these differences, both Bamiloye and Dairo acknowledge that their unique approaches ultimately serve the same purpose: communicating messages of faith through theatre. Bamiloye recognizes Dairo's ability to bring fresh perspectives to his works, stating, "Festus has a way of making my stories come alive in ways I did not even imagine. That is the beauty of collaboration" (Bamiloye, personal communication, March 24, 2025). Similarly, Dairo appreciates the clarity of Bamiloye's vision, admitting, "Working with Daddy Mike keeps me grounded. His stories have a clear purpose, and that challenges me to find creative ways to honor that while still bringing my directorial instincts to the table" (Dairo, personal communication, March 25, 2025).

Schechner (1985) emphasizes that performance is not simply the execution of a script, but a dynamic, evolving event shaped by rehearsal, embodiment, space, audience interaction, and cultural context. Dairo's staging of Bamiloye's works aligns with this idea through his commitment to enhancing the script without altering its core message. His use of expressive lighting, blocking, and actor-audience engagement transforms Bamiloye's fixed text into a living, breathing experience. For example, in *Alájùwòn*, Dairo's manipulation of stage space and symbolic use of light and shadow do not merely illustrate the script but re-interpret its spiritual metaphors in a way that evolves with each performance. This approach reinforces Schechner's notion that meaning is generated through the event of performance itself, not solely within the script.

In light of Reader-Response Theory, Dairo's direction invites diverse audience interpretations by emphasizing emotional resonance and spiritual reflection. His deliberate breaking of the fourth wall, use of music, and emotionally charged performances encourage spectators to move beyond passive reception and become participants in the unfolding moral and spiritual dilemmas. This interactive dimension enhances accessibility for audiences of varying backgrounds, as they are not only observing but also engaging with the narrative. However, this same openness may introduce interpretive variability, as what one viewer sees as divine intervention, another may perceive as symbolic or psychological struggle. Dairo's interpretive staging thus walks a fine line: while it enriches the message's emotional impact, it also introduces layers of ambiguity that allow audiences to draw personal, and sometimes divergent, meanings from the same performance.

In the end, the points of divergence between Bamiloye and Dairo illustrate the dynamic nature of theatre, where the interplay between script and performance creates a layered and evolving artistic expression. While Bamiloye's writing emphasizes theological clarity and structured moral and spiritual lessons, Dairo's direction introduces interpretative flexibility and aesthetic depth. Their differences, rather than causing conflict, enrich their productions, ensuring that the plays remain engaging, thought-

provoking, and spiritually impactful for diverse audiences.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the interplay between Mike Bamiloye and Festus Dairo exemplifies the dynamic relationship between playwright and director in faith-based theatre. While Bamiloye's structured, message-driven narratives ensure theological clarity, Dairo's interpretative approach introduces depth, realism, and visual engagement. Their collaboration demonstrates that directorial interpretation does not dilute a play's message but can instead enhance its emotional and dramatic impact. The study affirms that creative tension between playwright and director is not a hindrance but a vital force that enriches theatrical productions, making them more compelling and resonant with audiences.

To foster more effective collaboration between faith-based playwrights and directors, it is recommended that both parties engage in deliberate pre-production meetings to articulate their individual visions and negotiate areas of flexibility. Joint script analysis sessions and collaborative workshops during rehearsals can also bridge interpretive gaps and help align theological intentions with performative choices. Additionally, feedback loops involving actors and even preview audiences can provide valuable insights into how well the intended message is being communicated.

While maintaining doctrinal clarity remains essential in faith-based theatre, this study suggests that embracing interpretative flexibility, within defined theological boundaries, can significantly enhance a production's emotional resonance and audience engagement. Directors should be encouraged to explore innovative staging, characterization, and symbolism, provided these elements support, rather than contradict, the core spiritual message of the text. A balanced approach that respects the playwright's intent while allowing space for creative interpretation ensures that faith-based theatre remains both theologically grounded and artistically vibrant.

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