

MUSICAL-DRAMA, STAND-UP COMEDY AND THE ACTS OF KENNY BLAQ: A REVIEW OF 'OXYMORON OF KENNYBLAQ (THE RUSH)' PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

The creative industry of a nation is significant due to the numerous advantages they derive from it; a key part of this industry is Stand-Up Comedy (SUC). The acceptance of SUC in Nigeria has assumed a higher level. One of the reasons for this is because of its ability to help alleviate stress. Kehinde Peter Otolorin, with the moniker, Kenny Blaq, is one of Nigeria's stand-up comedians of no mean repute when it comes to the entertainment world. He proficiently blends music and drama into SUC while performing. The population of this study is made up of students of Mass Communication and Theatre Arts of the University of Benin, Benin City; Delta State University, Abraka, and University of Africa (UAT), Toru-Orua, who have watched the video of Kenny Blaq's 'Oxymoron of Kennyblaq (The Rush)' Performance of 2018. Hence, the objectives of this study were to find out respondents' level of satisfaction with Kenny Blaq's musical-drama sub genre of SUC; to ascertain the therapeutic value of SUC to the respondents, and examine the extent drama and music were infused into the event. The study is founded on the Reception theory, and it adopts both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The major findings of the study are that respondents were highly satisfied with Kenny Blaq's performance, and SUC is considered to have therapeutic value. The study also revealed that Kenny Blaq excellently imbued music and drama at the Kenny Blaq's 'Oxymoron of Kennyblaq (The Rush)' Performance of 2018. It was concluded that Stand-up comedians' renditions can be satisfactory to their audience when they are well informed and conversant with the happenings around them having carried out painstaking research before mounting the podium to perform. Among the recommendations made was that Nigerian citizens should take advantage of the therapeutic nature of SUC by exposing themselves to more stand-up comedy to ease off stress, depression and tension.

Keywords: Drama, Music, Performance, Stand-Up Comedy, Therapeutic

Introduction

The troika of music, drama, and comedy is not only part and parcel of the communication process due to their ability to convey messages, but they are also integral parts of the entertainment industry. According to Jammy Guanah and Samuel Udo, music is used in many civilizations for a range of purposes, such as education, communication, sensitisation, information, entertainment, leisure, and creativity. The importance and function of music in society are enormous, and they are mostly influenced by the message that culture wants to convey through music. Equally, Jammy Guanah describes drama as “a very formidable force and a transformer of society; drama being a useful tool in national discourse and social commentary” (385). Liking the stage art of stand-up comedy (SUC) to the core dramatic theatre, Ezechi Onyerionwu agrees that both artistic media have music and dance as adjunct artistic phenomena. Consequently, musical-drama comedy is a medley of music, drama, and stand-up comedy (SUC) meant to entertain, inform, and educate the public; it is an 'edu-info-tainment' content served a diverse audience.

A larger percentage of comedy engenders laughter, and the Bible (Psalm 2: 4, as cited in John Maxwell) says that God laughs. He laughed due to the comic rendition of the people who were wishfully plotting against Him and the king He has installed. Comedy does not just elicit laughter, but it can effectively disseminate information, present lofty ideas or thoughts, and can either make the audience laugh or shed hot tears ignited by

laughter. Additionally, comedy can be used to promote social values, highlight social injustices, question them through social commentary, and even talk to people and brainwash them. Humour and comedy go hand in hand. Martin Akpan, a medical practitioner, asserts that people are born with the innate capacity to develop a sense of humour, and that humour and the behaviours or reactions that go along with it (such as smiling and laughing) may be inherent in human culture. Akpan is of the opinion that research has proven that no ethnic group in the world lacks either individual or collective humour.

Usually, humour is used to lubricate a comic or comedy performance, and this aligns with the positions of Salvatore Attardo and WillaimBeeman who agree that humour is aimed primarily at creating/producing hilarity or amusement. ToLimorShifman, humour is present in all fundamental morphologies of human communication, including written language (script), moving visuals, static images, and sound-based vocal communication. Humorous communication exhibits richness and variety in both the issues it covers and the formats it adopts (189). Comedy is a component of the humour business that stands out in Nigeria and other parts of the world today. According to Lachmi Deb Roy, artists also have a responsibility to society, and in the case of comedy, comedians are best positioned to contribute to raising people's overall pleasure levels. He cites comedian Akash Gupta as saying, "I think the responsibility as a comedian is to do a good show and to make people laugh" (2).

Comedy is so highly rated in society today that a school like Bath Spa University in the United Kingdom offers a degree course in it. Students are trained in a range of comedy genres which includes stand-up, sitcom, panel show, street performance, physical comedy, sketch, high comedy and satire (Bath Spa University). The art of stand-up comedy and how to construct a stage persona, perform mechanics, develop a joke, and create sets that will hit an audience are also being taught through various fora (Tucson Improv Movement).

Furthermore, comedy is employed as a teaching strategy in higher education to motivate and enhance students' learning (Gill Seyfang). The use of improvisational comedy by researchers to enhance their capacity to convey findings and explain their work is supported by stand-up comedy studies (John Ross). Comedy can boost reading and citation rates, according to a recent study by American and Canadian academics that evaluated the comedy value of roughly 2,500 publications published in journals of ecology and evolution before analysing their citation rankings (Jack Grove).

A good comedy makes you laugh, and will pass a message it sets out to communicate. Through a good comedy, a hurtful "bitter truth" could be said in a cheerful manner; this may get those concerned laughing, and yet a salient message has been passed. Comedy is being used to address salient societal issues, and it has become a brand in Nigeria. *However*, Quotepark cites Kurt Vonnegut as saying, "well, the telling of jokes is an art of its own, and it always rises from some emotional threat. The best jokes are dangerous, and dangerous because they are in some way truthful" (1).

Stand-up comedy genre is one of the best in modern humour. The main goal of stand-up comedy, according to Izuu Nwankwo (*Ambivalence in the Stand-Up...*), is to make people laugh, but its biggest conflict is that most of its amusement stems from insults or abuse. This concept leads to the conclusion that a competent comic will say something poisonous (painful, serious), make the audience laugh, and still get the point across. That is why emotion and thought play a big role in theatre. Although absurdity appears to be the most despised type of theatrical entertainment, it is also crucial to success and, weirdly enough, calls for deft use of mind and emotion.

Comedy makes a person laugh, and laughter is rooted in smiles. Martin Akpan declares that although gelotology (the science of laughter) is yet not fully explored, persuasive information gleaned from medicine, psychology and anthropology favours the view that human physiology is "stirred in many ways by the physical components of laughter" (18). Consequently, the impact of humour, mirth and laughter on health and healing cannot, therefore, be over-stressed. According to Norman Cousins (as cited in Aramide Oikelome):

Our cardiovascular and respiratory systems, for example, benefit more from twenty seconds of robust laughter than from three minutes of exercise on a rowing machine. Through laughter, muscles release tension and neuro-chemicals are released into the bloodstream, creating the same feelings the long-distance joggers experience as "runner's high" (E16).

The body naturally produces endorphins, which occur in large quantities when laughing; laughter aids in pain alleviation. Humorous laughing is recognised to aid in the expectoration (coughing out) of purulent discharges linked to bronchitis, emphysema, or heavy smoking in the respiratory system (Martin Akpan). Quite appropriately, SUC can stir up grins buried in laughing to encourage positive behaviour and attitude toward circumstances. According to renowned comic theorists like William Hazlitt, George Meredith, Susan Langer, Arthur Schopenhauer, Sigmund Freud, and Henri Bergson, among others, this is feasible because humour is a social phenomenon. According to Edward Imo, the primary goals of stand-up comedy are to elicit laughter and to mock inappropriate behaviours to preserve social order.

Due to the deluge of issues individuals confront, the purpose of SUC has gradually changed over the past decade from being purely entertaining to therapeutic; it now acts as a relief tonic to let people "forget their misery" for a while. Hence, during Covid-19 pandemic, Indian comedian, Urooj Ashfaq (as cited in Lachmi Deb Roy), saw SUC as the need of the hour, whereby, "everybody wants to feel that things are normal the way it used to be. And going for a stand-up show, whether it is on zoom or OTT, both for the viewers and the performers, it will help to take your mind off depressing things" (2).

One major comedian that has used the SUC medium to perform this therapeutic task satisfactorily is Kehinde Peter Otolurin, popularly known by the sobriquet, Kenny Blaq. He has expanded the scope of SUC considerably in the entertainment industry. Musical-drama comedy is still in the infancy stage in Nigeria, and Kenny Blaq is one of those boldly spearheading it, to give it a broader appeal. Many other stand-up comedians focus on just telling and cracking jokes, but he is leveraging his musical talent as a potent tool to enhance his SUC delivery. He chose the pathway of blending music and drama with SUC because, as a young talented entertainer, he wants variety for his audience who pay to watch him perform. He once said during an interview, "everyone around me knows the premium that I place on quality content production, some think I'm crazy. Getting in bed with Netflix validates me" (Jayne Augoye 2).

Arguably, he is one of the best stand-up comedians in Nigeria and Africa. No doubt, he has brought diversification to SUC by including drama and music to his repertoire of brain waves. The young man with the cognomen, Kenny Blaq, hosts the 'Oxymoron of Keeny blaq' show every year; but, perhaps, one of the most glaring displays of his dexterity on stage was at the 'Oxymoron of Keeny blaq (The Rush)' show in 2018. At this event, he had a live band made up of seasoned instrumentalists and backup singers. There were six sessions, and the jokes he rendered were skillfully dramatised (skits) by him and some invited artists. Kenny Blaq's performance at that show was a melange of music, drama, and comedy. Therefore, this paper interrogates his performance specifics in SUC delivery while dealing with issues like the therapeutic nature of SUC.

The number of depressed people in Nigeria is high due to the intensity of stress they face at home, their workplaces, and in society at large, as confirmed by Julie Perng, et. al. Due to poverty and ignorance, most depressed people do not go for psychiatric evaluation when they have a nervous breakdown (Health think Team; Gavin Andrews). This has led to an increase in mentally deranged people on the streets. However, comedy, which is a cheap and common remedy for ailments like depression due to its therapeutic nature, tends not to be optimally explored and utilised. Scott Weems emphasises that humour is a form of psychological processing, a coping mechanism that helps people to deal with complex and contradicting messages, a response to conflict and confusion in our brain.

On its own, SUC has been playing a great role in Nigeria's entertainment industry, but the performances of most comedians are boring because they keep on repeating the same jokes they are known for, however, spicing it with music and drama as it is being done by comedians like Kenny Blaq has brought a lot of improvement to SUC. Since the use of SUC as an unconventional therapeutic means to address depression is being spearheaded by untrained psychiatric personnel (comedians), whom Edward Imo refers to as *psychotherapists*, the importance of this study is enhanced by the need for a better understanding of this topic, to adequately educate and inform the public more about SUC.

In this context, therefore, the objectives of the study were to: (i) find out the level of satisfaction respondents derived from Kenny Blaq's musical-drama comedy sub-genre of SUC, (ii) ascertain the therapeutic value of SUC to the respondents, and (iii) examine the extent drama and music were infused into the 'Oxymoron of Kennyblaq (The Rush)' performance.

Review of Relevant Literature

Theoretical Foundation

Reception theory is the foundation of this subject. Reception theory is a progenitor of three significant literary disciplines, namely history, hermeneutics, and structuralism. However, its debt to these three disciplines is not exclusive, as evidenced by the various ways in which scholars and critics have interpreted and applied reception theory (Clement Akangbé). Reception, often known as Reader-Response criticism, is the aggregate name for several critical ideas that have surfaced since the 1960s. These theories vary in their attention to the reader's reactions as opposed to the text itself as the source of meaning in literary works. According to Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch:

in reader-response criticism, literature, rather than being considered a fixed and stable entity with a single 'correct' meaning, is viewed instead as an activity or process that goes on in readers' minds. This process evolves as readers experience anticipation, frustration, retrospection, and reconstruction. In a sense, the literary work has its existence in the mind of the reader, not on the printed page, so that the reader participates in its 'creation' (181).

Additionally, Clement Akangbé submits that the reader is crucial to reception, which is why a branch of literary theory called Reader-Response theory focuses primarily on the reader's function. The Reader-Response theory, sometimes known as Reader-Response theory and occasionally Reception theory, is an amalgam used to capture several theoretical perspectives.

Although the focus of this theory is on the responses of the reader of a literary work to a text, yet the theory can be applied to other works of art like drama, poetry, music, comedy, and other literary and art works, hence its usage in this study. Clement Akangbé asserts that while each Reader-Response theory has a unique viewpoint on reading and comprehension, they all appear to agree-albeit to varying degrees and in different ways-that each reader generates or creates the meanings of a text, and as a result, there is no single right interpretation of a text. This implies that the reader determines the meaning. The critics, however, hold varying opinions about how readers read, what circumstances affect readers' reactions, and what role the text has in influencing those responses.

Reception implies the response of audience to a work of art. The work of art in this context is the performance of Kenny Blaq at the 'Oxymoron of Kennyblaq (The Rush)' show. The 'Oxymoron of Kennyblaq (The Rush)' video is the 'text' that was 'read' by the respondents (audience), which they thereafter responded to in various ways. Readers' responses may be conceived as the comments, criticism, attitudes, or feelings of the audience toward an artist's work. The audience's responses to any part of the work may be positive or negative. This theory is very appropriate for this study because the audience (readers/viewers of the video) of Kenny Blaq's performance at the 'Oxymoron of Kennyblaq (The Rush)' show are those who responded through questionnaire and oral in-depth interviews to the enquiries made about his performance in this study.

Kenny Blaq's Exploits in the Stand-Up Comedy Industry

Otolorin Kehinde Peter with the epithet, 'Kenny Blaq' is a major player in the entertainment industry in Nigeria, and his acts have availed him the opportunity to perform in various events in different parts of the world. As a toast of all comedians in Nigeria, he is now tagged, "Comedians favourite comedian." He sticks out among other comedians since he is constantly on the go. He is one of the comedians that, according to Kelvin McCarron and Maggi Savin-Baden, inspire the audience to consider specific themes rather than necessarily elicit amusement from them. Kenny Blaq is one of Nigeria's most popular and futuristic stand-up comedians right now. Most of his jokes are unique; hence he is not among the comedians that parody other jokes. Some comics may simply copy jokes they hear from other comics at events and tell them as their own without crediting the sources. According to Ajibade Oyemade, "some will buy all the comedy CDs, sit down and watch it (sic), then come and claim they are comedians" (as cited in Chioma Agali 42).

He can use timing to get the most laughs possible from a crowd. His jokes are based on philosophy and touch on important and pertinent topics including the economy, well-being, morality, sports, and current events. He has a firm grasp on the situation and can shift the mood during any performance with his effective delivery techniques. To transport his audience to a place of happiness and relaxation where they can easily forget their problems, he employs humour interwoven with music and drama. He is renowned for giving eloquent and graceful performances that are full of charisma. Over the last few years, Kenny Blaq's amazing performance has earned him several awards including; Naija FM comedy awards, of the upcoming comedian of the year 2015 and comedian of the year 2016 and 2017. In 2017, he won The Future Awards Africa comedy act of the year (OdionOkonofua). He also bagged the MEAMA Best Comedy Act award in Nigeria in 2016 (Jayne Augoye).

His events are usually planned to cater to the various audience demographics, and his live performances are always executed with grace and thrilling vigour. His performances consistently keep the crowd on the edge of their seats, eliciting cheers, hails, and dancing all the way through. He constantly pulls out all the stops to make the audience laugh out loud. He typically maintains a solid posture as a comedic performer who is confident in his act and wit. He consistently receives thunderous applause whenever he combines comedy, drama, and music, setting him apart from other performers of his generation. No matter where he performs, he has a powerful stage presence and an incredible knack for engaging his audience. He enthusiastically performs while using a complex yet intriguing network of legs and body movements. His stand-up humour is flavored with drama and music to ward off boredom and sustain his audiences' interest till the end of his shows.

Comedians do hold yearly programmes where they invite co-comedians and musicians to feature, however, when it comes to the host personally combining music, comedy and drama in performance, Kenny Blaq can be adjudged to be a pioneer; a successful one at that. He even incorporates other comedians, dramatists, and backup singers in co-performing with him. He is a talented singer with a sonorous voice that he uses as an instrument with amazing range and ability that sends his admirers into frenzy and makes his audience want more since they frequently sing along with him as he performs.

His performances are entertaining, participative, and adorably yelled out. His audience cannot resist his comedic performances. Usually, his mesmerising voice echoes like an old cone in a wooden loudspeaker. His performances are a complete entertainment experience, a musical combination of sound gags, music, and drama with profound themes that calm the audience and are important to society's advancement. With his distinct comic relief, he has the power to liven up any gathering. He enthrals his audience with a distinctive approach that combines comedy, music, and drama. He can deftly combine a song and a story into a cohesive whole that enthrals his audience. Kenny Blaq has the mastery of blending all genres of songs of both foreign and local musicians in a stretch. He effortlessly links songs to tell stories, backed up with danceable beats which instigate the audience to sing along with him while clamouring for more. His humour occasionally had a storyline or element of fantasy. The audience always cheers loudly after one of his performances.

He elevates comedy to a new level by adding elegance, flair, and class. His concerts take him all over the world; "The Kenny Blaq State of Mind," put on by SMADE Entertainment and held at Indigo at the O2 on September 30, 2018, was a tremendous hit. That is why Kenny Blaq's new one-man musical comedy "In My Room" premiered on NETFLIX on November 17, 2021. Netflix obtained the rights to the humorous production, which is being streamed to viewers all over the world. It has introduced the 28-year-old to places like the remainder of Africa, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the movie "In My Room" was filmed in Lagos (Jayne Augoye).

Review of 'Oxymoron of Kenny blaq (The Rush)' Performance

The performance was supported by guest dramatists and a live band that supplied beats and backup songs that rhymed with the songs sung at the event.

Skit 1

Kenny Blaq comes on stage and cracks a joke about Kizz Daniel, a musician, singing his song. He accuses Kizz Daniel of snatching his girlfriend, Chidinma. He sings Kizz Daniel's song that talks about how he plans to go home from a party with a different girl from the one that accompanied him to the party. He then acts how Kizz Daniel purportedly wooed the new girlfriend (Juliet Ibrahim). He praises Juliet Ibrahim's beauty in an attempt to woo her, but she accuses him of dating Chidinma; he denies it. At this point, Kenny Blaq renders Kizz Daniel's 'Laye' song. He requests her phone number, blood group, bank verification number, address, Automated Teller Machine (ATM) password, email, and other information about her.

Kenny Blaq, acting as Kizz Daniel, he did not call his new girlfriend, instead, he goes to her house to see her, only to find out she has weird parents. Her parents put him on the floor, turn him around, and slam him on the floor, leaving him to cry in pain. Kenny switches to mimicking the former Governor of Ekiti State, Ayodele Fayose, who claimed he was assaulted during the 2018 gubernatorial elections. The video of Fayose writhing in 'pains' with collar around his neck is shown simultaneously as Kenny Blaq imitates him, as he asks for help, saying his calls were not being picked up by those he wanted help from. Juliet Ibrahim comes on stage, asking him why he was sounding sorrowful. She also asks if he has seen her parents and if they treated him very well. He says he did not know her parents were into Karate. He interjects with Kizz Daniel's song entitled "Jumbo Jumbo."

Kenny says he is no longer interested in the relationship. His girlfriend tries her best to talk to him but he tells her to get out. He comes up again with the song, 'you see this life, I don't want trouble. One man's meat is another man's poison...'. As the lady tries to convince him to continue with their relationship, he was almost changing his mind when he suddenly bursts into singing another of Kizz Daniel's song; "peperipepeperipe, no go de do pass yourself", as they leave the stage.

Skit 2

Having dumped his girlfriend because of the way her parents treated him, he moves to a new girlfriend (Amaka) whom he suspects already is cheating on him. He picks up her phone, unlocks it, and sees a number saved as "Face-To-Face". He asks her about the number as he scrolls down to read their conversations. He reveals the content of the conversation by singing, "I can see you and I are meant to be together. Can't you see that you are the only one for me?" While doing that, a call from "Face-To-Face" comes in. He picks it and listens: he reveals the sweet words from "Face-To-Face" as he renders 2Face's song, "I just want to be there..."

Out of anger, he calls Amaka and accuses her of cheating on him. She tries to pacify him by calling him "Baby", but he reacts by saying because he has a baby face does not mean he is Teju Baby Face (a comedian). Amaka says Blaq was getting everything wrong and tries to explain herself, but he is very hurt, and did not listen to her, instead he sings 2Face's songs that says, "every time we have spent together there is a fire in our eyes, all the things we have said to each other are nothing but truthful." He orders her to pack out of his house, mimicking Pastor Chris Oyakilome's voice saying "be gone, never again, you are done."

Amaka leaves, and after four years Kenny is really in need of a job. After fruitless efforts in getting one, he gets a call from a friend who tells him about a job vacancy in Lagos Island. He gets excited, and then renders a song by 2Face, singing “come make we go, wetindemdey do for there, make we feel am, make we check am if na two head demdey use we go know....”

Skit 3

He gets to the venue of the interview to discover that Amaka is the interviewer. He praises her, but she did not listen to him. Amaka pretends not to know him by saying his face looks familiar. She asks him if he is an actor. She asks him if he is the type of man that drives away women from their homes with words like, “park your shit and leave my house.” Kenny Blaq replies that was when he was in the world, but that he has repented. Amaka then responds with 2Face's song, singing, “e bi like say dem want to tell us another story again ooo...!”

Amaka goes ahead to ask him how she could be of help to him. Blaq tells her to leave his work issue aside, and gets down on his knees saying he has a confession to make. He then sings one of 2Face's song. This makes Amaka to get up, warning him not to make her angry. She then sings “Nafanaibaga...” by 2Face. Blaq goes down on his knees, almost lying flat on the floor; he holds Amaka's leg, saying he needs her spiritual healing. Amaka claps back and sings “Ole” by calling Kenny a thief. Blaq is confused about why Amaka is calling him a thief, then he asks her what he did, and she replies singing again “Ole” by 2Face.

After that she lets Blaq know that she now has a new man, and that she does not need him. She goes further to call on her security to get Blaq out of her office. Blaq tells the security officer that he can die for Amaka's love, and sings, “if love is a crime then I want to wanted...” by 2Face. The security officer chases him around the stage, and finally catches up with him. He takes him out. He narrates how he was beaten. He calls his lawyer, but he did not pick up his calls. He has to go to the lawyer's office.

Skit 4

His lawyer asks him what the issue is. Blaq proceeds to ask his lawyer if he is the only one around and then interjects with a 2Face's song. His lawyer tells him his case is bad. After flipping through some documents, the lawyer proceeds to sing 9ice's and 2Face's song. Blaq says there must be something the lawyer could do about the case. After viewing a document again, the lawyer sings “I'm legally blind...” by 2Face. Blaq still asks the lawyer if he is still going to jail, even if it is for two days. The lawyer goes through his papers, and he tells him he is not going anywhere for too long, and that the maximum time would be for five years, Kenny refers to the Nigerian passport which is 10 years and compares how he would spend half of that locked up because of a case.

After Blaq's protest, the lawyer quotes some sections of the Nigerian constitution, and boasts that he would use them for his defence, and that at the end of the day he would spend only two and half years in jail, and that Blaq should call him when he returns from jail. He counsels him not to jump out of the vehicle while being taken to jail. Blaq sings “no be small tin o...” by 2Face as his lawyer leaves. This performance was greeted with thunderous applause from the crowd.

Skit 5

Kenny says he realised one cannot fully please the society because of his experience when he started his stand-up music-comedy career. He says some people tried to discourage him by telling him to pick either music or comedy while some people told him to do both. He says some people did not even like him doing either. He says he was so frustrated that he remembered the lyrics of the music legend, Ebenezer Obey, entitled “Ketekete.” He then re-enacts the music in a drama form. He sings a segment of the song and it is acted.

The first part shows the father (Crazy Clown) and his son (Ade) who are embarking on a journey on a bicycle. The father rides on the bicycle while the son walks along his side. After a short distance, they meet a man (MC) whom they ask for direction to Kenny Blaq's Oxymoron show. He wondered why the father is on a bicycle and his son is walking. The father explains that he is an old man who experiences waist pain hence his decision to ride the bicycle while the son treks. MC compares the father to a slave master who is punishing his son. MC angrily walks away.

The father puts the son on the bicycle to ride while he treks by his side. After a short distance, they meet Lasisi whom they equally ask for direction to Kenny Blaq's Oxymoron show. After accusing the father of smelling, Lasisi asks him who is the person he is standing with. He tells him he is his son. He then asks him why the son should be the one riding the bicycle while he treks. The father explains that they initially met an illiterate who advised that it is the son that should ride the bicycle. Lasisi insults the father and son for their actions, and leaves them without answering their question.

The befuddled father and son continue their journey but this time around both of them are trekking while rolling the bicycle. After moving for a while they meet Brother Shaggi whom is asked the direction to Kenny Blaq's Oxymoron show. Shaggi walks around trying to crack his head about the venue. He asks the father where the place is, and remembers he is the one being asked the question. Since Shaggi cannot help with the direction they inquired about, they are about leaving when he says he observes they have a bicycle and yet they refuse to ride on it. The father explains his past experiences with the people they met before now, and who gave them different suggestions. Shaggi says their action is making the bicycle feel lonely, and then exits the stage. As the father and son proceed on their trip with both of them now riding on the bicycle, they meet Charles Okocha and his hype man and also ask for directions. Okocha asks the father and son why they have to suffer the poor bicycle. The father tries to explain all that has happened, but Charles was not having it. He chastises them, and they all leave the stage. Kenny Blaq, who has been sitting to sing along all the while now stands up to lead the audience to sing the concluding part of Ebenezer Obey's song that says no matter what you try, you cannot please the world.

Skit 6

A man comes up on stage with his mentally deranged son, cursing and scolding him for spending and wasting his money on drugs after sending him to America to study. He takes his son to a psychiatrist doctor for treatment. The doctor asks for privacy with the son and asks him what the problem is. He answers with a song patterned after South African music beat to explain how he feels. A group of backup singers and dancers mount the stage to re-echo the response of the doctor in the song too. The son relates how he abused drugs not knowing they were harmful to his health. He demonstrates his pains while the doctor is busy evaluating his mental state. He begs the doctor to help check him before it becomes too late.

At this point, Kenny Blaq comes up the stage to advise the youth against drug abuse; he iterates that the youth can make it in life without abusing drugs just like he made it without depending on drugs because there is a better life outside drugs. He then leads the backup singers and dancers to sing musician Olamide's song that condemns drug abuse.

Therapeutic Values of Comedy Engendered Laughter

Martin Akpan, a medical practitioner, describes laughter as essentially a respiratory act that includes the typical expiratory (breathing out) and inspiratory (breathing in) components, with the former (expiratory) being dominant. It improves lung aeration more than regular breathing does. Laughter gives a person a greater sense of well-being, flexibility, and healthy coping strategies for stress, demands, and challenges in life. Laughter does this via triggering the respiratory system as well as various other bodily functions, such as the heart, blood circulation, muscles, and central nervous system.

Aramide Oikelome quotes Betty Lawanson as emphasising that "Laughter bonds people", and "Any good friend will tell you that laughter is the shortest distance between two people- especially in marriage" (16). Oikelome also cites Betty Lawanson's partner (Tony), to have claimed that daily laughter is a vitamin every marriage needs to prosper. Tony emphasises that laughter is the hidden element in love and that couples who laugh together form important, lifelong connections where they never lose their love.

According to a popular Vietnamese teacher and author, everyone should smile every morning when they wake up (Chris Kwakpovwe *The Vietnamese Teacher...*) because smiles elicit emotions that are mixes of internal sensations and physical responses that give feedback to the brain. Therefore, the brain will be "fooled" into reacting with the appropriate sentiments if laughter causes one to commence a grin with his or her facial muscle.

Laughter is viewed as a beneficial medication that positively impacts both the body and the soul of a person. Observing that modern research indicates that people with a sense of humour have fewer symptoms of physical illness than those who are less humorous, Aramide Oikelome quotes French philosopher Voltaire as saying, "The art of medicine consists of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease" (16).

Martin Akpan compares laughing to stationary jogging, which increases physical fitness and overall body activity. He claims that while moderate laughter (smiling, chuckling, chortling, etc.) increases the activity of only the face, neck, scalp, and shoulder muscles, as the mirth develops in intensity and duration, muscles from other areas of the body are called into play. Thus, the majority of the skeletal muscles in the body are used during convulsive laughter.

According to Martin Akpan, laughing is therapeutic. He notes that medical professionals are still thinking about the widely documented case of Norman Cousins, who, after engaging in what he called 'deep belly laughing,' "laughed himself-back" to life from a terrible illness. Chris Kwakpovwe (*Optimism...*) emphasizes that serotonin levels are increased by laughing, but that this is not always the case, therefore you must choose to be happy. Good thoughts and behaviours have a positive impact on the biochemistry of the brain (the neurotransmitter linked with feelings of happiness).

According to a popular Vietnamese teacher and author, everyone should smile every morning when they wake up (Chris Kwakpovwe *The Vietnamese Teacher...*) because smiles elicit emotions that are mixes of internal sensations and physical responses that give feedback to the brain. Therefore, the brain will be "fooled" into reacting with the appropriate sentiments if laughter causes one to commence a grin with his or her facial muscle.

Laughter is viewed as a beneficial medication that positively impacts both the body and the soul of a person. Observing that modern research indicates that people with a sense of humour have fewer symptoms of physical illness than those who are less humorous, Aramide Oikelome quotes French philosopher Voltaire as saying, "The art of medicine consists of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease" (16).

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Data Collection, Presentation and Analysis

The data obtained from Barclays Ayakoroma and the departments of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication of DELSU, UNIBEN and UAT about the population of students is given thus:

Table 1: Number of students in each selected school

School	Theatre Arts	Male	Female	Mass Comm.	Male	Female
UNIBEN	578	213	365	927	221	706
UAT	32	15	17	128	37	81
DELSU	592	188	404	393	99	294
Total	1,202	416	786	1,448	357	1,081

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 2: Level of satisfaction with Kenny Blaq's musical-drama comedy sub-genre of SUC

Responses	Frequency	%
Very Satisfied	81	36.65
Satisfied	69	31.22
Undecided	5	2.26
Dissatisfied	37	16.75
Very Dissatisfied	29	13.12
Total	221	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

KEYS: Likert - type five points rating scale and dichotomous was used: 5= Very Satisfied (VS), 4=Satisfied (S), 3= Undecided (U), 2= Dissatisfied (D), and 1= Very Dissatisfied (VD) responses as well as open-ended questions.

From Table 2, it can be said that the respondents were pleased with Kenny Blaq's style of SUC.

Table 3: Stand-up comedy is therapeutic to the respondents

Responses	Frequency	%
Totally Agree	79	35.75
Agree	81	36.65
Undecided	4	1.81
Disagree	28	12.67
Totally Disagree	29	13.12
Total	221	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

KEYS: Likert - type five points rating scale and dichotomous was used: 5= Totally Agree (TA), 4=Agree (A), 3= Undecided (U), 2= Disagree (D), and 1= Totally Disagree (D) responses as well as open ended questions. Table 3 revealed that majority of the respondents agree that comedy is therapeutic in nature.

Table 4: Extent drama and music were infused into the 'Oxymoron of Kennyblaq (The Rush)' event

Responses	Frequency	%
Very Large Extent	83	37.56
Large Extent	85	38.46
Undecided	9	4.07
Low Extent	21	9.50
Very Low Extent	23	10.41
Total	221	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

KEYS: Very Large- 90% - 100%; Large- 89% - 70%; Undecided- 50% - 69%; Low- 40% - 49%; Very Low- 1% - 39%.

Table 4 sign posts music and drama were adequately suffused in the 'Oxymoron of Kennyblaq (The Rush)' event.

Discussion of Findings

The results from the questionnaire completed by the respondents, and reactions from the oral in-depth interviews, suggest a high level of satisfaction with Kenny Blaq's musical-drama comedy brand of SUC, with 36.65% ($n = 81$) claiming to be "very satisfied" and 31.22% ($n = 69$) choosing the option "satisfied." Also, during an oral-in-depth interview, David Osaigbovo, a 400 level Theatre Arts student of UNIBEN, said "I so much admire Kenny Blaq when he is on stage performing because I always learn something new from him. His style of SUC ignites me. He has convinced me that I can make it as a budding stand-up comedian." Osaigbovo says further that, "I am studying him from afar in order to pattern my SUC after his style after I graduate from the university. I am very pleased with the way he presents and delivers his jokes, especially his expertise in permeating them with music and drama."

This result confirms the report of Vanguard newspaper that Kenny Blaq has established a solid reputation as one of most authentic creative entity within the ecosystem. Vanguard stresses that he has established a reputation as one of the few touch-bearers of the sub-genre known as music-comedy, accentuating that Kenny Blaq has tailored his award-winning show, "The Oxymoron of Kenny Blaq" in like manner of a Broadway-style comedy extravagance."

Results also revealed that SUC possess therapeutic value. This is consistent with the stand of Ezechi Onyerionwu that stand-up comedy has successfully defended its position as one of the most efficient analgesics to the hurts, sorrows, concerns, disappointments, frustrations, worries, and uncertainties of the typical Nigerian. According to Onyerionwu, it is a most welcome development that comedians have recycled those same disgraceful materials of their follies to become catalysts for the restoration of their sanity for many Nigerians who were on the verge of going to psychiatric care as a result of the infernal socio-political woes of their fatherland (64).

The music and drama Kenny Blaq infuses into SUC, no doubt, have some therapeutic implications. When he claims that stand-up comedy has played a significant part in healing from its inception in Europe, Alex Roy-Omoni argues in favour of this perspective. In this place, healing extends past physical and emotional sickness. It includes all facets of existence marked by rationality, serenity, and human harmony. Roy-Omoni cites Chortle as observing that, "laughter saves relationships, diffuses tension and keeps mental health in check" (100).

The impact of comedy on society is enormous. It elicits laughter, and brings about light heartedness, thus reducing their anxiety, stress, and anxiousness about life's challenges. According to Indian comedian Akash Gupta (as cited in Lachmi Deb Roy), during the second wave of Covid-19, he received messages on Instagram from viewers who were in hospitals in isolation saying they enjoyed watching his comedic videos and that they helped them feel better. This gave him the impression that he had improved society by making people's lives more enjoyable at a time when the entire globe was experiencing a depressing period.

Martins Akpan lists further health benefits of humour and laughing, such as improved morale and socialising levels among patients in otherwise depressing, dismal, and oppressive settings like jails and hospitals, as well as an expanded body's immune system and capacity to fight diseases. In addition, laughter lessens the intensity of fear and wrath, two known emotions thought to be linked to a higher incidence of coronary heart attacks, and brings hope and confidence when there is despondency. When Allwell Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu claim that the audience is taken to a level of ecstasy that fully drowns individual worries, sorrows, and aspirators, they are emphasising the therapeutic value of speech and stand-up comedy.

To a substantial extent, majority of the respondents (76.02%) are of the opinion that Kenny Blaq adequately infused music and drama into his performance at the event. This finding resonates with the decision of Samson Abibalakumor, a 300 Level Mass Communication student of University of Africa, Toru-Orua. During an

interview, Abibalakumor disclosed that the seamless manner with which Kenny Blaq blended music, drama and SUC has inspired him to the extent that he is already musing with the idea of incorporating other elements of the art, like dance, into his SUC career when he graduates from school. He says he is developing his skills in SUC, "... and since I love poetry so much, I am seriously thinking about how I can successfully infuse the spoken words into SUC the same way Kenny Blaq has triumphed in blending music, comedy and drama in his performances."

Infusing drama and music into his performance, as Kenny Blaq did in the 'Oxymoron of Kenny Blaq (The Rush)' performance, has gone a long way to give a new face to stand-up comedy in Nigeria, bearing in mind that musical-drama comedy is a comedy laced with music and drama. Taking into consideration the definition of comedy by Lawrence Mintz (as cited in Fabiola Scarpetta & Anna Spagnolli), it is clear that, of a truth, Kenny Blaq has taken comedy to another level. He has successfully infused music and drama into SUC, supporting his acts with costume, prop and setting as seen in the 'Oxymoron of Kenny Blaq (The Rush)' event.

Hitherto, Mintz identified stand-up comedy as "an encounter between a single, standing performer behaving comically and or saying funny things directly to an audience, unsupported by very much in the way of costume, prop, setting, or dramatic vehicle" (71). Kenny Blaq's renditions at the event fits well into the definition of stand-up comedy given as a form of popular entertainment where a performer mounts the stage to stimulate audience laughter through joke deliveries spiced up with mime, dance, acting, singing, and imitation, stand-up comedy has grown in popularity in Nigeria (Izue Nwankw? *Joke performance mechanics....*).

Conclusion

Stand-up comedians' renderings can be satisfactory to their audience when they are well-informed and conversant with the happenings around them. The serious ones take the pain to embark on scrupulous research before mounting the stage to crack jokes, hence their performances are always electrifying. This is clearly the case with Kenny Blaq. Julius Agu pioneered Music-comedy in Nigeria, but Kenny Blaq has taken it to another level with the addition of drama to the fray to make it musical-drama-comedy

The fact remains that some other comedians were in to music-comedy before Kenny Blaq came on the SUC scene, however, he has raised the SUC bar by infusing drama into the SUC music-comedy mix, thereby pioneering another sub-genre of SUC in Nigeria. He displayed it during his outing at the 'Oxymoron of Kennyblaq (The Rush)' event in 2018.

The therapeutic nature of comedy generally, and SUC specifically, is never in doubt. This has made the duties of comedians as "psychiatric specialists" of society to be enviable. The way they render their services to society has become a concern for everyone. This warrants the call for them to everything within their means to ensure that they give their best to society.

Entertainment can be therapeutic, but Nigerians are currently too pummelled by storms of economic instability, unrelenting insecurity, and political upheavals. The Nigerian government needs to understand the significant impact comedy, particularly SUC, has on raising national spirits in times of crisis. To inspire much-needed hope among the Nigerian people, it would not be a terrible idea for the Nigerian administration to act quickly to discover stand-up comedians like Kenny Blaq and a host of others.

Recommendations

- i. Stand-up comedians should keep themselves abreast of the happenings in society so as to come out with valuable jokes that will eventually engender development of the society.
- ii. To enjoy the therapeutic values inherent in comedy, citizens should expose themselves to more stand-up comedy so as to ease off stress, depression, and tension
- iii. Stand-up comedians should explore the possibility of infusing other entertainment elements, apart from music and drama, into their presentations.

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