

ence, and with the specialized roles of professional drummers and video producers. Finally, I will place the findings in the context of the anthropology of celebration and the history of media practice in West Africa.

1 A Sociological Concept of the Audience of Performance

With reference to a definition of performance as a display of communicative competence, Barber (1997: 347) defines audience as:

the body of people prepared to grant the performer space and time in which to mount ... a display, by suspending or bending the normal patterns of communicative turn-taking ... what creates an audience is the listeners' intentional orientation towards the speaker.

The concept of audience in live events is commonly associated with a distinct subgroup among the participants, established by its members' sharing the same specific position and role in interaction, i.e., being addressed by, confronted with, and excluded from the role of performing. One speaks of audience mainly in the case of performance genres characterized by a one-way presentation of something by one group (the performers) to another, different group (the audience). This unilateral concept of audience makes it seem absurd to view celebrations, games, or rituals as performance, because action groups in these frameworks address themselves more than they do an essentially stable and permanent social body of confronted nonperformers. To approach the practice, function, and role of audience in participatory performances such as wedding celebrations in urban West Africa, a more inclusive concept of audience is needed. I will attempt to derive such a concept from sociologist Erving Goffman's seminal studies of face-to-face behavior in everyday social life.

In his first book, Goffman (1959) adopted the vocabulary of dramaturgy as a set of metaphors for the analysis of everyday persons' techniques and strategies of presenting themselves in dramatic, idealized, and controlled ways to others as a key element of social interaction. The function of the role of audience in this context is to witness and socially validate the presentations of performing individuals or teams in interaction. "Performance" here does not refer to the display of only artistic or other special competence, but to all socially competent behavior

... which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. Taking a particular participant and his performance as a basic point of reference, we may refer to those who contribute the other performances as the audience, observers, or co-participants (Goffman 1959: 15 f.).

Audience in this sense refers not only to some group of listeners or spectators who are not themselves performing, but to all participants in a situation who perform social roles which are complementary to the performance of another role and functional to the system of interaction. This is to conceive of the performance of any social role's "role-others" as its "audience" (Goffman 1961: 85). The emerging concept of performance and audience is basically relational and dynamic: Each act of audience is another performance, and each string of interaction of performance and audience changes the present social context. This concept does not refer to relationships between social groups, but to relationships between roles in interaction. In contrast to Barber's definition cited above, it includes everyday interaction marked by taking turns, as in talking, greeting, or playing games.

In his dramaturgical approach, however, Goffman works out in detail mainly the conditions, devices, and techniques for the staging of "pure" performance, where the performing team hides the process of impression management from the audience, and where breaks in the distinction between performance and audience are not tolerated. He thus comes close to reifying the social role and function of audience as "the" audience in the sense of a distinct social group, and excluding the more "impure" or participatory forms of performance from being studied in dramaturgical terms. I would argue that he was somewhat hasty, when he stated that no individual – with the exception of some specific discrepant roles – must be allowed to join both performance and audience in the same situation. He was hasty, when he insisted that the two basic implications of the human need for social contact, i.e., the need for an audience to present oneself to, and the need for teammates with whom to enter into conspiratorial intimacies and "backstage" relaxation, *principally* have to be segregated by team and region boundaries (Goffman 1959: 206). He actually touched on, but did not take seriously the possibilities that, first, an individual performer is so taken in by his own act that he comes to be his own audience, and, second, that a performance team plays to itself instead of to a differentiated audience team.