

## **Alfadil Saeed: 50 Years of Theatrical Activity (1955 -2005)**

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**Abstract:** *This paper brings into light one of the founders of Sudanese drama who began his theatrical experience so early when he was twenty years old and carried on his mission to his death at the age of seventy. Alfadil Saeed's career as a comedian and originator of this art in Sudan is sometimes overlooked by the graduates of drama institutes because they fell victims to the cliché that Saeed's characters are stock and stereotyped and they do not deserve attention or study. This snobbish attitude is the result of lack of documentation for Sudanese drama since there are no serious attempts or patience to write about the history of Sudanese drama. The paper discusses the early beginning of Sudanese drama and states the pioneers who initiated this art in the Sudan. It also sheds light on the life and works of Alfadil Saeed. Then, it moves to the question of whether his characters are stereotyped or dynamic and developed. In the conclusion, the researcher considers Alfadil Saeed as the true father of Sudanese comedy from whom a whole generation of actors developed into stars. In fact, the figures of plays and performances testify to the high position Alfadil Saeed occupies, not only in Sudan but in the Arab world as well. The paper calls for more attention towards Saeed's theatrical experience especially from academic institution that are concerned with drama in the country. It also calls for a recognition for Alfadil Saeed, the pioneers who gave away fifty years of his life to the cause of drama in Sudan.*

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### **I. Introduction**

One of the major difficulties that encounters anyone who takes the task of writing about Sudanese drama is the lack of sources in English language. This lack of written sources represents a real challenge for anyone who writes about modern Sudanese drama. Even when you 'google' 'Sudanese drama' you may get results far from what you mean such as 'dramatic turbulence, war, refugees ... etc.' Obviously, it will be true to state that Sudanese drama is the least written about in academic journals worldwide, especially in English language. Apart from a few extracts that give the least required information, there are two major books in English that handle the subject of Sudanese drama. These books are mainly about Arabic Drama and they are both written by university professors, Dr. Khalid Al-Mubarak and Dr. Mohamed Al-wathig. Unfortunately, each of these two books devotes only a very small section that traces the early beginnings of Sudanese drama and gives little or no account of contemporary drama. Thus, one of the goals of this study is to provide some data about drama in Sudan for those who seek references in English. The study is about Al-Fadil Saeed (1930 - 2005), who was born in Alqadar near Dongola in the North of Sudan but moved to live with his family in Omdurman, the 'National Capital of Sudan' one of the three Provinces that constitute the 'Capital'; Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman.

### **Early Beginnings of Sudanese Drama**

In tracing the history and development of drama as an art form in Sudan, one has to note that there were two trends or approaches to the question of the introduction of drama in Sudan. First, there were those who looked into the rituals, traditions, ceremonies and other forms of Sudanese culture that contain some aspects of theatrical performances and consider these as rudimentary forms from which the indigenous drama sprang. The second trend or approach does not consider these forms enough to assume that they represent the starting date for the drama as an art form. They mostly believe that drama came into Sudan with the settlement of the Arabs and European communities in Khartoum and the contact that resulted from the cultural exchange.

Before this there were meek Foreign Expatriate groups' performances especially the Egyptian and the Syrian communities in Khartoum. These performances were exclusive and no Sudanese citizens were allowed to them. So, evidently they had no influence on the development of indigenous drama in Sudan.

According to Khalid Al-mubarak (1983), the first theatrical performance in Sudan took place in Qitaina city in 1902 when the Egyptian magistrate, 'Mamur' in Arabic, introduced his play **The Sudanese Leader** "Al-Murshid Al-Sudani" or "Nakatut", the name gained from a major character of a liquor or 'Marissa' seller in the play. It was written in formal Arabic verse and its theme was the importance of education.

In Gordon Memorial College, University of Khartoum now, a group of students led by SeddiqFarid, Arafat Mohamed Abdalla, Abdulrahman Ali Taha, Ali Badri, AwadSatti, Ali NourAlmohandis, Abubakr Osman and others worked actively on school theaters. According to Hassan Najeela: 1956), this group of university students acted a play on one of school stages in Omdurman on December 9, 1920. The play was about the importance of education as a lawful right for women.

The social and sports clubs played a great role in the development of Sudanese drama. In the 1920s The Graduate Club in Omdurman witnessed some theatrical performances calling for independence and national pride. The British colonial authorities put these performances under direct censorship. Also in Alzahra Club, Khalid Abu- Rruss presented his play Tajouj Death in 1933. It was the first original play written by a Sudanese playwright. Moreover, in Al-Merreikh Club in Omdurman, Ibrahim Al-abadi presented his drama Al-Mac Nimeir in 1934.

In Rufaa, a small town in Algezira the central province of Sudan, BabikerBadri ASSTATED IN HIS BOOK "My Life" initiated theatrical performances during the period (1903 – 19130) that call for women education.

## Pioneers of Sudanese Drama

### 1. Gordon Memorial College's and Bakht Al-Rudda'sTheatricalPerormances

In Gordon Memorial College a group led by SeddiqFareed, Arafat Mohamed Abdullah and Abdulrahman Ali Taha translated some English plays as well as small sketches and performed them at Schools and public places in Khartoum. Evidently, AbdulrahmanTaha had the most contribution. According to HashimSiddik (2008), Abdulrahman Ali Taha was writing truly indigenous Sudanese plays; one of these was his play Suaad which was performed on Bakht Al-Redda stage inEldouiem in the 1940s. This play was written in verse and its production left a deep influence on those who attended it. Before this in 1934, Taha produced another daring theatrical performance represented in his plySudan in the Year 2000.

A second influential pioneer who had an impact on the movement of drama in Sudan was someone qualified and dedicated to drama as an art form, in the person of Ahmed Altayeb who came to teach at Bakht Al-Redda after obtaining his Ph.D. from a British University. His influence came as a result of speciality sincehis doctorate thesis was on Arabic Drama. He began adapting translated texts to fit into a Sudanese social context. He was the first to translate and present Shakespearian plays on Bakht Al-Redda stage. He adapted King Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet and The Tempest. His performances paved the way for further adaptations and theatrical experiments.

### 2.Graduates' and Other Sports Clubs in Omdurman

The Graduates club is situated in Omdurman, the historical and national city, which hosts several social andsports clubs as a means for social gatherings and entertainment. The Graduates' club in particular was the locale where the graduates of Gordon's Memorial College as an elite group found a space to exchange ideas and find comfort, away from the restrains of life. In the year 1908 and the years that followed, some of these graduates discovered the importance of theatre as a tool for educating and raising people's awareness. The same group of SeddiqFareed and Arafat Abdullah initiated performances taken from Arabic drama such as the dramatic and historical sagaof Salah EldienElayoube. These plays found very good reception from Omdurman's spectators. In the later years before the Graduate Convention, held in 1934 and turned the club's orientation towards the political activities and issues concerning independence, the club fostered real cultural activity. Most performances on the Graduate's club stage were either translated texts or taken from classic Arabic drama. Certainly, no real Sudanese indigenous drama in the period of the 1920s and early 1930s can be claimed for. In fact, the year 1934 witnessed the first truly Sudanese drama. The Death of Tajoujby Khalid Abu-Rous is arguably the first Sudanese play to be performed as a fully-fledged form of drama on a Sudanese stage. As mentioned earlier, it was produced on Alzahra'sClub stage in Omdurman in 1933. This theatrical performance became very popular and spectators enjoyed it greatly so the period witnessed more performances of this work in other clubs in Omdurman and Khartoum. In 1934, another brave attempt of a true Sudanese work came from the poet Ibrahim Alabadi who introduced his masterpiece AlmacNeimir on Al-Merriekh 's Club stage also in Omdurman. Most critics consider this play as a great work which gave a lasting effect on the theatrical development in Sudan. According to AlsirGadour, a famous Sudanese actor and poet, Alabadi wrote the play in 1927 and this claim could be true since the play was first produced in 1934. The play calls for nationalism and rejects tribal chauvinism and racism. The original text in Arabic reads as such:

جعلني ودنقلاويوشايقويوزاندي شن فايداني  
غير ولدت خلاف خلتي أخوي عاداني؟  
خلوا نباتاإسري مع البعيد والداني  
يكفي النيل أبونا.

والجنس سوداني.

The researcher's own translation of the above lines of verse goes like this:

Jaaly, Dunlaoy, Shaigy and Zandy, what is the use save disagreement and enmity and lack of brotherhood?  
Fostered ill news to neighbors and aliens. Enough, the Nile is our father and the Race Sudanese.

The first line names some Sudanese famous tribes. In its own time, the play's calling for ant-racism and nationalism indicates an early dawn of awareness and civility. The play had performances for a period of no less than thirty years in clubs and schools and it contributed greatly to making drama a popular art in Sudan.

Unlike Ibrahim Alabadi whose repertoire contains only *AlmacNeimir*, Khalid Abu-Rous continued to feed the Sudan Theater with more plays including *KharabSauba* (Suba's Destruction), *OmatTaha* (Taha's Mothers), *AlsabaaAlharaqoAlbandar* (The Seven Who Burned the City), *Aldahia* (The Victim), *AlhobwaAlmaal* (Love and Money), and *Iblees* (The Devil) in 1968. All these plays testify to Abu-Rous position as the true father of Sudanese drama. His theatrical group toured most cities in Sudan and gave performances to these plays in clubs and other available stages like schools.

Thus, the sports clubs in Omdurman and the academic institutions such as Gordon's Memorial College and Bakht El-Redda played a major role in the development of the Sudanese drama. Pioneers such as Abu-Rous, Alabadi, SeddiqFareed, Ahmed Altayeb, and AbdulrahmanTaha had the lion's share in the birth of Sudanese drama as an art form. However, it is worth noting that the year 1946 witnessed two theatrical events. The first being the forming of the first formal theatrical troupe in by Maysara al-Siraj and the second is the appearance of woman on stage. Al-Siraj or The Sudan troupe for Drama and Music produced works in Classic Arabic language such as *Gars ala-Hrar* (The Sowing of the Free), *WafawaAjaieb* (Loyalty and Wonders) and *IntigamwaGaraam* (Revenge and Love). The troupe members included famous Sudanese actors such as Mohamed Khairie Ahmed, AwadSeddiq and Mahmoud al-Sabaq. It was the first theatrical group to have a woman actress as a member and likewise the first to issue a magazine called *Al-awfq* (The Horizon) in 1948. Furthermore, this troupe was the first to own a private stage at Alaardain Omdurman. Its slogan "Give me a piaster, I give you a stage" was very effective in its own time.

#### **Establishment of the National theater in Omdurman**

Following the country's Declaration of Independence in 1956, the Sudan witnessed a remarkable ferment in theatrical activity. The late fifties gave way to experimental productions, most of which advocating nationalism and reflecting the desires of a free nation after the dual English-Egyptian colonialism (1898-1956). As a result of this vehement theatrical activity and the feeling of pride resulting from the expulsion of the colonial troops out of the country, the year 1959 witnessed the establishment of the National Theatre in Omdurman to receive the production of so many enthusiastic, though inexperienced, dramatists. Some of the first plays produced were built on real stories that took place either during the colonial period and the early years after independence. Plays such as *Anbar Jauda* (Juda's Ward), performed by Apadamac theatrical group, contributed to drawing more spectators to the stage. The play's plot tells an incident which took place three years prior to the production when some 103 farmers refused to handle their harvest of cotton to the authorities, so they were locked in a jail and left to rot and die. The group also produced Dr. Abdalla Ali Ibrahim's play *Ahzanbaad al-Sadisawa al-NisfMsaa* (Following Half Past Six Sorrows).

In 1967, al-Faki Abdulrahman a pioneer actor and graduate of Bakht al-Redda Teachers' Training Institute became the chairman of the National Theatre. Consequently, he declared the beginning of an annual theatrical season for all groups to present their works in it, probably as a means of bringing new life into this stage which came later to host most of the outstanding works of that period. The National Theatre in its first season presented four plays *al-Mac Neimir* (King Neimir) by Ibrahim al-Abadi, *SinnarAlmahroosa* (The Well-guarded Sinnar) by AlthahirShebeika, *Iblees* (The Devil) by Khalid Abu-Rous and *AklAeesh* (Earning a Living) by Alfadil Saeed.

According to Badr al-Deen Hassan, there was a committee that would look into texts and decide on their suitability for these seasons. It was evident that some plays would have no chance of production because the military regime of JafaarNemiri saw in them direct threat to the stability of the country. Nemiri became president of Sudan in 1969 after a military coup over a democratic system. He began his new system as a socialist but after a few months turned his back to the Sudanese Left and banned their activity. His regime continued until he was overthrown by a popular uprising in 1985. Plays that were banned include *NahnNamshi fi Jinazat al-Matar* (We Walk in the Rain's Funeral) by the poet al-Tayeb Omer al-Dawsh. Also *NabtaHabeebaty* (My Beloved Nabta) by HashimSeddiq. However, the authorities soon approved of *Nabta's* performance on the same stage because it appeared that banning this drama would give it more credit in the minds of the spectators.

### **Flourishment of Sudanese Theatre (1967 – 1985)**

This period of 18 years which was mostly during Nemiri's military regimewitnessed real theatrical activity that resulted in so many plays. The National Theatre as a public stage owned by the government encouraged the production of plays and sponsored them. In particular the period from 1967 to 1985, in MekkiSinada's words, "saw the production of 130 plays; 100 plays out of these were by Sudanese playwrights" (2014: p.89). Sinada points out that these 100 plays were written by 54 playwrights, 24 of whom wrote a single play and 24 wrote only two plays, indicating that those who wrote three or more plays were only eight playwrights of whom the subject of our research Alfadil Saeed is the most outstanding since he topped them all by writing eight plays. Others like Omer Al-Hamed, Abual – Abaas Mohamed Tahir and Ali Albadawi Al-Mubarak each of them wrote four plays. HamdnallaAbdulgadir, Badr Al-DeenHashim and Hassan Abdelmajeed each of these wrote three. Another distinguished playwright is Mohamed Shahwan who wrote three plays for children's theatre.

MekkiSinada himself was one of the most prominent actors and directors of the period. His playing of the major role in HamdnallaAbdulgadir's masterpiece *KhutubtSuhair* (*Suhair Engagement*) gave him popularity. The play as a social drama earned its writer HamdnallaAbdulgadir the name of Ibsen of Sudan. The actress TahiaZarog, one of the female pioneers, did the part of the heroine in an effective way. The play became very popular and its broadcasting on Omdurman television gained it more popularity. Thus, the appearance of actresses on stage in this period contributed to the development of realistic Sudanese drama greatly. As MahasinSeifeldeen(2010) points out, female Pioneers such as Asia Abdelmajeed, EnaamHamza, Safia Mahmoud, NematHamad, Nafisa Mahmoud, RabhaM. Mahmoud, BelgisAwad, FaizaAmasaib, and TahiaZarog paved the way for a second generation of actresses such as Al-Mqrabi's *Girls*, TamadorSheikhedeem, Zakia Mohamed Abdulla, Nadia Ahmed Babiker, and TahaniAlbasha.

### **Alfadil Saeed's Life and Major Works**

Most sources agree that Alfadil Saeed was born in 1935 but the definite place of his birth is negotiable since some references state that his birthplace is at Bait Al-Maal in Omdurman, the national capital of the Sudan; others claim that it is at Al-Gadar, near Dongola in the northern province. However, his family in a page carrying Saeed's name on Facebook and administered by his family members state Bait Al-Maal, Omdurman as Saeed's birthplace. Also, in an interview by Tahir Mohamed Tahir in *AkhbarAlyoum Daily Sudanese Newspaper* (2005) shared on Facebook, Alfadil Saeed states that "he was born in Bait Al-Maal, Omdurman. It is noteworthy, however, that Saeed is his father's name as most Sudanese commonly have their first name followed by their father's name or grandfather's as a nickname instead of the family name or surname. Thus, his full name is Al-FadilSaeedDirarSalntout. As a child, he grew up in Bait Al-Maal and moved with his family to Wad Nubawi a nearby neighborhood where his talents and gift as an actor showed themselves early in primary school. In Wad Nubawi, Saeed adapted the Scout's Regulations into a dramatic performance that greatly impressed the traditional leader Abdulrahman Al-Mahadi who sponsored these shows. *Nukhbat Al-Sudan News Paper* (2009) states that in elementary school Saeed came into contact with his math teacher Khalid Abu-Rous who was at that time a famous actor. However, Abu-Rous did not encourage Saeed to continue acting without completing his education. So when Abu-Rous saw Saeed's insistence on acting on 'Masraahalmilaayat' in Sudanese colloquial Arabic or *Bedsheet Stage* in English, he advised him not to hurry "We want educated actors, son". Although Abu-Rous was impressed by the performance he told the young schoolboy who at that time gained popularity in school and neighborhood as a promising actor that his education must be a question of priority. The above incident is related by Saeed himself who followed his performances with relentless passion. Saeed refers the credit of his gift of acting to his family as he reveals "I was born an actor, raised by four grandmothers from whom I Learnt that skill." Nevertheless, his potentials as an actor developed greatly at secondary school when he came into contact with some of Egyptian actors namely Mohamed ahmed Abu-Lamaa and Ameen Al-Heneidi who were teachers working for the Egyptian Educational Mission in Khartoum. These teachers were adapting performances to some of NajibRehani's works, so Saeed fell immediately into the spell of this Egyptian comedian who was the hero of his own time. In fact, the influence of Rehani's works and career is obvious in some of Saeed's early works. Unsurprisingly, as an ambitious high school student, Saeed declared that he was going to study acting at the Institute of Music and Drama in Cairo. Yet, his teachers advised him not to do so because the material outcome of an actor at that time would be nothing. In 1955, Saeed started the establishment of Youth's Theatrical Group for Comedy which included comedians such as Mahmoud Siraj (Abu-gaboura) and Othman Ahmed Hamad (Abdeleiba) and Othman Eskendrani. The first two came later to be famous comedians with stereo-typed characters of Abu-gaboura and Abdeleiba. The group which was formally registered by Omdurman City Council in 1955 included some actresses and decided on Al-Omal Club (Laborers' Club) as their office and springboard. In due time, the group began its tours around the country giving performances to sketches and small parts of theatrical performances in open air or on available

stages. He didn't go to university because he wanted to follow his passion of theatrical activity, though he had a chance of joining Faculty of Arts at Khartoum university.

Saeed's career as a founder and father of comedy in Sudan was not an easy one. Although he became famous due to the small acts and comic sketches he used to produce on different stages, it was difficult to have his works as such recognized or allowed on Radio at that time. Comedy was new in Sudan and the station programmers would not risk to introduce it as a new form of entertainment to listeners. Thus, Saeed had to join Omdurman Radio Station from another outlet. He began presenting small acts as parts of programs such as "Women Corner" giving small acts and parts that call for women emancipation and education. He also gave his drama help to "the Child's Corner." These were programs intended for special sections of society and radio broadcasting at that time was the first and most popular means of mass media production. Saeed's cooperation with Omdurman Radio gave him publicity throughout Sudan. Accordingly, his tours to regional cities became commercially successful. Moreover, his stage designers and other technicians who accompany him and facilitate the production demands gained skill and experience.

Saeed's first play was Dastour Ya Asyadi "Law, My Masters" an adaptation Of Najeeb Rehani's play "School of Pottery." The play's subject was 'Zaar' a ritual in which women dance and sing in order to expel bad spirits or to grant their demands. 'Masters' here refers to supernatural spirits. So, the drama was a rejection for this traditional practice. However, the first full play produced by Saeed's troupe was Akl Ayesh (Earning a Living) in 1967. It was presented on Omdurman National Theatre in its first season. His play became a commercial hit and it had performances all over the country and outside as well especially in quite a number of Egyptian provinces and in United Arab Emirates. The play was recorded by the Egyptian TV and had TV shows. Altogether Saeed produced 15 complete plays all authored by Saeed himself except one Jaart Alsau by ex-Kuwaiti ambassador in Khartoum Al-Surai. His Radio acts reached about 200 works. He had one cinema work Rehlat Oyoun (Eyes' Trip); it was a joint Sudanese Egyptian work featuring some stars from both countries. In Ramadan he had an annual production for radio. His three stereotyped characters Al-ajab, Bit Qudeim and Grandpa Kartoob represent three stages of human life the young sarcastic seemingly stupid guy, the old woman who knows quite a lot about modern things but holds fast to the golden past by criticizing out of place modes of conduct and the grandfather who teaches the newer generation how to become themselves and never change with times.

Here is a list of his fifteen plays:

Name in Arabic	Name translated by writer of article
Dastour Ya Asyadi	Law my Masters
Akl Ayesh	Earning a Living
Aleefi Raso Reesha	That with a Feather on Head
Alkiskita	The Hat
Nihn Kida	We ... ARE
Alnisf Alhilo	The Sweet Half
Alnas fi Shno	People, What are they doing?
Jarat al-Sau	The Neighboring Evil Woman
Alnas Dayel	Those People
Tabasheer	Good News
Alhaskaneet	Acacia Thorny Tree
Rajeen	Give them Back, Woman.
*Al-tsawee Talga	You Get what you Do
*Al-thobaan	The Snake
*Al-Momathila	The Actress

\*the last three plays were not performed on stage due to his untimely death in one of his tours. There is also another play Jamaylat Buhraid (1950) written by Ismail Khorsheid. Most of the given works start from 1955 to his death in 2005.

Alfadil Saeed was the playwright, the actor and the director of most of his works. In fact, he did all that with great versatility and verisimilitude. In addition, he was a poet and writer of songs such Abooyya Yaba Ma Tgool Leeho La (Pa, Don't Say No to Him). This was sung by the famous traditional singer Mohamed Ahmed Awad and it seems that Saeed wrote it while he was by accident with the singer on the same train to Port Sudan in one of his Theatrical tours. The song gained popularity due to the simplicity and honesty of its own diction. Fifty years of relentless effort to create smile and cultivate laughter on people's faces, our comedian died in one of his tours in Port Sudan where he was showing his play Alkiskita. He said earlier that 'he wants to die on stage' and he died a theatre-man touring and completing his mission to the end. He dreamt also of having "Alfadil

Saeed's Theatre" established in the capital of Sudan. During his lifetime he bought a piece of land to establish a stage carrying his name on it but his death prevented this dream from materializing.

### **Alfadil Saeed as a Director**

The versatility of our artist is apparent in his leading role within his group as an author, a director and a major actor for almost all his works. According to Saad Yusuf Obeid (2005: p.22), Al-Fadil Saeed was the author of all the plays that his troupe performed on different stages except *Jameelat Buhraid* (Buhraid's Lady) in the late 1950s by Ismail Khorshied and Jarat al-Sau (The Neighboring Evil Woman) in season 1987-1988, by the former Kuwaiti Ambassador in Khartoum Abdalla Al-Suraie. Moreover, Farouk Al-Hawhri the Director of Nile Valley Radio Station considers him as one of the three sides of the Comedy triangle in the Arab world. He considers Nejeeb Al-Rehani in Egypt, Duraid Laham in Syria and Alfadil Saeed in the Sudan to be the founders of comedy in the Arab world. However, he thinks that Saeed's theatrical experience to be more distinctive because he plays takes the responsibility of a triple task of playwriting, directing and that of a leading actor. He adds: "in spite of Saeed's seemingly comic-nature offstage, he is a very serious director who would never allow mistakes at rehearsals." It is true that a spirit of a team work experience is evident among his cast but he is a serious dramatist who passed his experience to so many actors. To name some of those who worked with him beside those mentioned earlier, one needs to mention actors such as Al-Sir Gadour, Fathi Birkiah, Ali Mehdi, Abdelazim Ahmed Abdelgadir, Yasin Abdelgadir, Jamal Hassan Saeed, Mustafa Ahmed Alkhalifa, Nabil Mutwakil, Samia Abdalla, Zakia Mohamed Abdalla, Nemat Hamad, Abdelwahab Al-Jaafri, Othman Ahmed Hamad, Alsir Mahjoub, Mohamed Khalafalla and Alrayah Abdelgadir. This list includes only some of those who worked with him.

### **Improvisation in Saeed's Theatre**

Improvisation in Saeed's career as a dramatist started with his first contact with stage. As mentioned before, when he was an intermediate student he changed the Scout's law into an improvised dramatic work. Most of his works that followed were as such, so as an actor he learnt the art of improvisation from the beginning. His technique was so simple. He would bring his cast together and tell them the plot of the work. He would also suggest the characters for them, then each of the group would contribute a sentence or two so as to build an overall dialogue that would lead logically to the plot he had stated at the beginning.

Later, improvisation became an inherent part of Saeed's works. Almost all his plays were developed from plots that he would reveal to his cast in rehearsals. He would give each character time to develop its own dialogue and exchange suggestions. Afterwards, in rehearsals, he would either approve, add, amend, or even reject what the actor suggest for his role. When they agree on dialogue actors don't have a chance for a future change. Thus, it would be misleading, if we took his art of improvisation to mean a loose dialogue. In fact, actors rarely deviate the agreed upon text except the major character. So, Saeed's improvisation and revision of dialogue greatly helped in giving his flat characters the dynamicity they deserved. So his so-called stereotyped characters are really developed and round characters by nature. This is why we find the old grandmother Bit Qudeim acquainted with technology, yet rejecting it as an indication of a character which is subject to change. The same could be said for Al-ajab character which has depth and vitality.

### **Saeed's Three Stereotyped Characters**

Alfadil Saeed has three main characters in all his plays. These characters may seem caricatures or called stereotyped but in reality they are fully developed characters with depth. They continued to make people laugh as long as they were on stage because they are neither flat in nature or stock in dramatic terms. For example Bit Qudeim is not the traditional grandmother and neither is Kartoob the taken-for-granted old grandfather. These characters continue to live on stage due to Saeed's skill of improvisation and rebuilding the dialogue according to the changing times and situations. The third character of the young man Alajab is not flat as well. In most of his works, Alajab develops from a seemingly stupid jester to someone who gains knowledge and passes it over to the audience. His appearance is stock but in each drama he turns out to be a full-developed character. That is why this character has the ability to make people laugh and after some time to move the same audience into tears.

According to Mary Elias and Hanan Gassab Hassan (1997: PP,255-257), a stereotyped character limits the actor's creativity and vision. It, also, makes him unable to analyze his role so instead of accepting the challenge of the new role he would simply imitate without feeling any pressures. As a result, the actor gains fixed qualities that may not change or develop. Finally, the stereotyped character requires no change in style or performance because the final goal is to draw the spectators' laughter. As for Saeed's characters, they break the mould of the above standards. His characters are contemporary and they discuss current issues in a renewable manner that make them dynamic with situations and times. They are not stock or static caricatures. They do not repeat themselves due to an actor who has great endowments.

Apart from Saeed's seemingly stereotyped but dynamic characters, other most famous stereotyped characters are Tour Al-Jar by Othman Humieda, Wad Abu-gaboura by Mahmoud Siraj, Wad Abdeleiba by Othman Ahmed Hamad, Hamid Algarbawy by Hassan Loufa, and Shelabia by Wad Al-Masry. All these characters stopped at a time because they were stock and nonrenewable, unlike Saeed's characters that have continuity and renewability. As Adil Harbi (2014, p.156) points out, stereotyped characters in the Sudan are two categories:

- A. The traditional stereotyped character.
- B. The creative stereotyped character.

He considers Alfadil Saeed to be category (B) because he was able to overcome the static traditional stereotyped by creating three unique characters through:

1. High quality of performance
2. Honesty and spontaneity.
3. Improvisation that gives singularity and add dimension to his characters.

It is evident, therefore, that although all stereotyped characters stopped at one level and ceased to make people laugh, Saeed's characters and theatre continued to feed the thirty imagination of the spectators who expect the new and creative from a real artist who knew how to develop his skills and master his art. The popularity of Saeed during his lifetime testify to the high quality of the drama he used to present on stage.

## II. Conclusion

Fifty years of relentless dedication to his mission as a true pioneer of Sudanese drama. Fifteen plays that had more than one thousand performances all over the Sudan and abroad. About two hundred works on Omdurman Radio. Besides a film and Ramadna Annual Serial. All these works qualify our dramatist to the top of all dramatists in the country. In fact, Saeed's stature in the chart of Sudanese drama gives him the credit to be called the father of Sudanese Comedy. A whole generation of actors graduated from his school and they all ask for a recognition for this theatrical pyramid whose last wish before his death was to see Alfadil Saeed Stage built. Therefore, this research paper is meant to light a candle in the darkness of those who mistakenly oversimplify Saeed's theatrical experience by labeling his characters as stock and stereotyped without questioning their essence or doing their homework of checking his works and their continuity as well as their vitality on stage. Undoubtedly, Alfadil Saeed as a pathfinder and pioneer of Sudanese drama deserve more attention from specialized institutions such as the Institute of Music and Drama in Khartoum and its graduates. Let us give the credit to the theatre man who worked for it all his life.

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