

Act 1, scene 1: confrontation between President Batela and his son

The Presidential family is in the music chamber of the palace. The President sits on his luxurious throne, his two children and his wife at his side. Three amazons who make up the President's body guard stand behind the family. Musicians and dancers entertain the Presidential family, who are falling about laughing and chattering with joy. The musicians and dancers have been at it a long time and are growing tired. It is their duty to sing and dance until the President gives the signal to stop.

BABELA notices the performers' exhaustion and asks his father to stop the show. In fact everyone is tired. **BABELA** waves at his father who is smiling and still has the dance in him, though he can't keep up with the rhythm, the melody and the cadence of the songs.

BABELA: Dear father, how much longer will these men dance?

BATELA: Until I no longer want to watch them. Music is what allows us to forget, Babela. Odious facts, problems of state disappear.

BABELA: You may want to forget, father. But that wish shouldn't exceed the limits. You've been losing yourself in the dance for hours. And the music. When will you think about more pressing concerns?

BATELA: Music is our daily bread. It must be listened to and listened to some more, without interruption. And everyone can consider matters of state.

BABELA: Dear father, you are the Head of State and the guarantor of our unity. Why would you have the people give up their freedom in this forced dance?

BATELA: They are free. Free in their dance. They express themselves through it. Today, in front their Supreme Leader they have given the best of themselves.

BABELA: Don't you see that they're dancing, singing, playing, until they have no strength left? Why would you have them exhaust themselves like prisoners in forced labour?

BATELA: They are workers with fixed hours. This is their employment. Their duty is in this music. The dance is their livelihood...

BABELA: Dear father, it is the people who give you your power to govern in this State. Sow a bad seed, sow suffering and grievance and that power will be taken away.

BATELA (annoyed and with growing anger): You are wrong young man. My power is for life. Nobody can deprive me of my role as Head of State. I am Head. The word is not made to cover up truth but to express it. My Kipoye is there to detect all wrongdoers and schemers who attempt to steal either my power or my life, by force or any other means.

BABELA (upset): Dear father, of course you are number one in this State. But don't misuse your people who love you so much. No one can be above their respect. And the bottom line has to be freedom. To flow into the spirit of a people like a dream is an art. To know how to leave that spirit free is a masterpiece. The musicians must really rest now.

BATELA: No. I said no. Each and every one of us has his work cut out in this great state of ours. Don't try to deprive me of the pleasure which makes all my senses vibrate. The mouth isn't just for speaking dry reason, but for expressing. One should n't live to eat, but rather eat to live... The drums must beat, the songs echo in the very bottom of the heart. They need to burst my eardrums. The dancers must twirl and shake in rhythm with the music. That is my desire. Dance dance, music music.