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Some of the youth line up for the audition PHOTO BY UCHE JAMES IROHA

## Looking for talent in Ajegunle

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BY BEN EZEAMALU  
March 28, 2011 01:42AM

Hundreds of expectant youth in Ajegunle thronged the Ayota Arts Centre in the area, last Saturday, to participate in the Born Throway project, a creative arts initiative which aims at imparting knowledge to young people for better self-expression by honing their artistic skills.

According to the project organizers, the training programme would unlock participants' artistic potentials through a series of improvisation techniques giving them tools for expressing their dreams, fears, hopes and visions to the world.

"We have chosen Ajegunle because it is an amazing place with lots of talents, and it is a special mix of ethnic, religious and the kind of presentation that we are hoping to capture the diversity of these talents," said Ilaria Chessa, the project's producer. "This is the pilot, we are hoping to train these young people to trust themselves, and to come out with their talents and express it."

Professional assessed the youth on a four count genre of drama, dance, music, and spoken words respectively. 25 finalists would be selected to attend a week long training and workshop, in April, that would involve acting, dancing, as well as music. The workshop will also reflect on waste, abandoned spaces and places.

### 'Waiting to exhale'

The narrow passage that led into the audition venue and the small space outside the hall, which served as a waiting room for would-be interviewees, were crawling with young adults, most of them between the ages of 16 and 21, the prerequisite age group for the audition. Idris Habib, one of the participants, said that, if selected, he hopes to combine his "dream" with his academic

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activities at the Ambrose Alli University in Edo State, where he had just gotten admission to study Accounting.

"I won't even think of not being selected," he said. "I don't want to imagine it because I must be among them. Obiwon (a Nigerian R&B musician) is an accountant and a singer. I can be the same."

For 18-year-old Felix Onyelu, who works as a machine operator in a cyber cafe, the opportunity might present him the break he had been waiting for. "I've been to three auditions in the past and they kept promising to reach me but they don't," he said. "By the grace of God and my performance, I think I'll be among those selected.

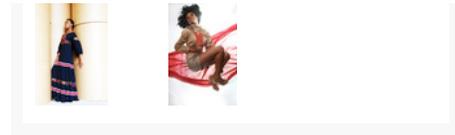
**Talents abound**

Ropo Ewenla, a member of the panel of judges, said that the expectations they set before the screening were surpassed. "We look out, essentially, for potentials captured in different ways, creativity in terms of expression, purposefulness of art, depth of conceptualization and presentation," he said. "All these don't have to be there in huge quantity, but we just want to see that potential, something that we can groom subsequently, and project to the rest of the world as an example of how never to give up. Our expectations before coming here have been met to a large extent...You find young people who are talented in virtually areas of the arts in which we are analysing them."

Ms Chessa said that the success of the pilot project would lead to the initiative being extended to other parts of the country. "The theme is really Born Throwing, just like forgotten people and the way we look at our society with prejudice, we are not seeing beyond what our eyes are capable of seeing and we are seeing it today with the amazing talents that are here," she said.

Philip Abu, a participant at the audition, said he overheard a group of young people near his home discussing about the audition two days before the event and decided to "take it from there." "The whole thing is like an encouragement for everybody that is participating because we were not expecting anything, then we began to see the posters and everything and it was free of charge," he said.

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