



Dahlia Katz

23|24 SEASON

 UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents

THE BOOK OF LIFE

THURS, SEPT 14, 7:30 pm

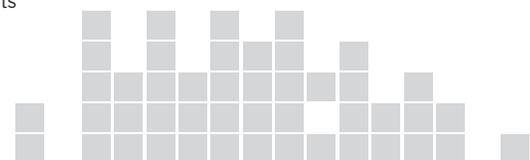
Fine Arts Theatre

Join us immediately following the performance for a brief Q&A with the artist.

Supported by
**THE CHRISTINE AND THOMAS PAVLAK
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Please silence all mobile phones and electronic devices. Photography, video and audio recording, and texting are prohibited during the performance.

#ugapresents



THE BOOK OF LIFE

Produced by Volcano Theater (Canada) and
THE WOMAN CULTURAL CENTRE (Rwanda)

PLAYWRIGHT / PERFORMER / CO-CREATOR

Gakire Katese Odile "Kiki"

DIRECTOR / CO-CREATOR

Ross Manson

THE WOMEN DRUMMERS OF RWANDA

Kamariza Mediatrice
Mukeshimana Alphonsine
Mukamugema Chantal
Mukanyandwi Claudine
Musabyemariya Christine
Nyinawimbabazi Claudine
Uwamriya Clementine
Uwintije Clementine

VISUAL ANIMATION DESIGNER / OPERATOR

Kristine White

VISUAL ANIMATION DESIGNER

Sean Frey

COMPOSER

Mutangana Moise

PRODUCERS / PRODUCTION / DESIGN

Kaitlin Hickey & Patrick Lavender

TRANSLATOR AND VISUALS ASSISTANT

Katese Aurore

TOUR COMPANY MANAGER

Kafi Pierre

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Abigail Whitney

SET CONSTRUCTION

Tuyizere Ernest, Kigali Rwanda

GENERAL MANAGER

Ray Bramble

A Note from the Producers:

Because the global arts world is asymmetrical with respect to funding access, there is often a basic inequity in North/South partnerships. Volcano (Canada), and the Woman Cultural Centre (Rwanda), are pioneering an Asymmetric Co-production agreement based on transparency and shared agency. We would like to make this available to other producers. If you're interested, reach us at info@volcano.ca.

"In The Book of Life there's an opportunity to re-invent things; to dream; to try to undo something; and to propose for a moment another point of view, another way of the re-visiting the past ... It's like a ceremonial way to just rehabilitate life."

— Odile Gakire Katese

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Merriam Webster defines serendipity as: "The faculty or phenomenon of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for."

When I first travelled to Rwanda in 2008, I was keenly aware of Canada's complicity in a global and willful blindness to an unfolding genocide that had happened just over a decade earlier. Like many Canadians, I had learned of my own country's failure to act through UN peacekeeping General Romeo Dallaire's insistence on speaking out. He was our witness to the perils of ignorance and inaction.

Western complicity, and a colonial eugenics program that ran for most of the 20th century in Rwanda before independence, had generated the most horrific imaginable consequences. Groups that had been more socio-political than racial, had been pitted by Europeans against one another over decades of toxic misinformation, forced labour, the introduction of identity cards, and racial favouritism based entirely on fiction. All of this was foremost in my mind.

It was in Kigali, at a coffee shop in the centre of the city, that serendipity, like an agent of fate, put another theatre artist, Kiki Katese, in front of me. Kiki and I have had a long and productive artistic relationship ever since. We have invited each other to our respective countries to teach, to perform and to create. We have been doing this now for well over a decade. *The Book of Life* spans this entire time. It is a project that has taken many forms for her: short films, a book, a national letter-writing campaign, and now a play. The wisdom of it, of Kiki, of the women drummers who have been so integral to the construction of this project—this wisdom is a light, a beacon for the rest of the world, as we all peer ahead into an uncertain future. Kiki's artmaking is, in fact, a valuable and agreeable thing.

—Ross Manson

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

GAKIRE KATESE ODILE “Kiki”

Gakire Katese Odile “Kiki”, as she herself describes it, is a professional dreamer and a woman of firsts. She is a Rwandan playwright, director and cultural entrepreneur. Among her many accomplishments in Rwanda are the first women’s drumming company (Ingoma Nshya, Women Initiatives), the first professional contemporary dance company (Amizero Dance Kompagnie), the first international festival (Festival Arts Azimuts), the first national festival in Rwanda (Rwanda Drum Festival), the first co-op ice cream store (Inzozu Nziza – Sweet Dreams) and the first recipient of the League of Professional Theatre Women’s Rosamond Gilder/Martha Coigney International Award. Kiki is a grand person with a warm, generous, insightful outlook on life. She has a vision that is a long one, of how art will heal and inspire her country.

Kiki is the founding director of Rwanda Professional Dreamers and is currently working on *Mumataha*, *Remember Me* and *The Book of Life*. More than projects related to the commemoration of the 1994 genocide, they are a dressing of wounds and come to lessen the sounds of tears and sorrow and to accompany the dead and the living on their respective journeys.

WOMEN DRUMMERS OF RWANDA (Ingoma Nshya)

For centuries in Rwanda, drumming was an activity reserved exclusively for men. Women were not permitted to touch the drums or even approach the drummers.

In 2004, Gakire Katese Odile, “Kiki,” created the first-ever Rwandan female drumming ensemble, Ingoma Nshya – which is Kinyarwanda for ‘New Drum’ or ‘New Power.’ After the near collapse of Rwanda in the wake of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsis, a group of women decided it was time for a change, for the sake of the country, and, in particular, for the sake of its girls and women.

Ingoma Nshya is a visionary grass roots project with multiple goals – healing, reconciliation, women’s social and financial empowerment, and artistic excellence. For the women, the group has been a place to begin to live again, to build new relationships, to heal the wounds of the past.

For these women, culture is a driving force that allows them to emerge from the devastation of genocide, and to create a new future.

Ingoma Nshya is now a company of 20 professional drummers – together, they are a potent symbol of a society’s ability to heal, move forward, and create hope.

Find out more at ingomanshya.org or womanculturalcentre.com

VOLCANO

Volcano is a Toronto-based live performance creation company. It works adventurously, collaboratively, and with an eye to making art that transcends borders, boundaries and orthodoxies. A push for equity, racial justice and human

well-being is critically important to Volcano. It is specifically mandated to be inclusive, and to diversify its sector through mentoring, training and representation. In its nearly 28-year history it has explored a wide-range of ethical terrains using opera, theatre, and cross-disciplinary performance, and toured productions to three continents. It has received over 70 awards or nominations at local, national and international levels. In Edinburgh, its shows include: *Century Song*; *White Rabbit Red Rabbit*; *Goodness*; *My Pyramids*; *Weather*; and *Lambton Kent*.

Volcano’s goal is to make the world a more resilient, just and caring place through imagination, action, respect for one another and through the art it supports.

Find out more at volcano.ca

ROSS MANSON - DIRECTOR

Ross Manson is an award-winning director and the founding artistic director of Volcano, an internationally acclaimed theatre company based in Toronto. Volcano is an independent, concept-driven company characterized by multi-disciplinarity and collaboration across intersectional identities. Ross’s shows for Volcano have toured to three continents, and won or been nominated for over seventy local, national and international awards. He has directed for theatres across Canada and around the world, including: the Canadian Stage Company; the Tarragon theatre; Luminato Festival; the Traverse Theatre Scotland; LiteraturFest Berlin; PS122 New York; the National Svenska Theatre, Helsinki, and the Edinburgh International Festival, among many others. Award recognition includes Toronto Theatre Dora awards as a director, a writer, and a producer; the KM Hunter award in Theatre; and short lists for the Siminovitch National Directing award (twice); the Ontario Premiere’s Award for Excellence in the Arts, and the Toronto Arts Foundation Cultural Leadership Award.

KRISTINE WHITE - VISUAL ANIMATION DESIGNER

Kristine White is a multidisciplinary artist who works with visual and performance arts practices in collaboration with theatre-makers, musicians, dancers and communities. Shadow puppetry and projection are a focus of her current practise. Her work has been supported by grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council, and Kingston Arts Council. Kristine has worked for national and international theatre companies designing puppets, props, and costumes, led mask and puppet-making workshops, and facilitated community-based creative activities.

KAITLIN HICKEY - PRODUCER / DESIGNER

Her design work has been seen on stages across Canada and Internationally. Working with Volcano Theatre since 2014, she has been a part of *The Book of Life* team since 2019. Recent selected credits include: Set & Lighting Design, *Wildfire* (Factory Theatre), Set & Lighting Design, *Miss Caledonia* (Regina Globe Theatre), Set & Lighting Design, *Supper Club* (Resource Centre for the Arts, NL); Lighting Design, *Is My Microphone On?* (Canadian Stage); Lighting Design: *Controlled Damage* (Neptune Theatre), Set Design: *Kiinalik: These Sharp Tools* (Buddies in

Bad Times, Edinburgh International Festival); Production Design: Empire Trilogy: *Four Sisters* (Paradigm Productions); Set Design: *Noor*, (Generous Friend, Aga Khan Museum); Lighting & Set Design: *Knives in Hens* (Coal Mine Theatre), Lighting Design: *The Children's Republic* (Belfry Theatre). Nominated for multiple Dora Mavor Moore awards and the recipient of the Robert Merritt Award for outstanding lighting design.

PATRICK LAVENDER - PRODUCER / DESIGNER

Patrick began working with volcano theatre in 2014. Since then, working with volcano on over 5 productions, he has been given the opportunity to travel as a theatre ambassador and learn from artist in many remote and fascinating communities. These experiences will last a lifetime, and he is forever grateful. For volcano theatre: co-design and production for *The Book of Life*; production manager and associate lighting designer for *Century Song* (2014 - 2018); production manager and assistant video design for *The Four Horsemen Project*; production manager and lighting design for *Waiting for Godot*. Patrick has received 4 Dora Mavor Moore awards for his design work in Canadian Theatre. His work has been seen internationally some career highlights include: The Edinburgh International Festival, World Stage Design in Taipei, Nova Scena in Prague, Jaffa Fest in Tel Aviv, Spoleto Festival USA, Luminato Festival in Toronto.



KAFI PIERRE - TOUR COMPANY MANAGER

Kafi Pierre has been involved in the arts professionally for more than 20 years. She has held roles as a Producer, Artistic Director, Creative Director, Company Manager, Artistic Consultant, and Production Coordinator with top-tier international organizations.

She has a graduate certificate in arts administration and cultural management and has performed and taught in over 100 cities across five continents. As you can see from her resume, Kafi has worked with industry legends like Franco Dragone and Ron Kellum, in all aspects of performing arts, including arts administration, production management, strategic brand management, writing, directing, choreography, acting, coaching, set design, costuming and backstage management. After 12 years of dancing on Broadway and Cirque du Soleil stages, Kafi joined Cirque Du Soleil as an Associate Artistic Director, touring North America for 2 years. As a company manager, she has worked for Fall for Dance North and as a producer, Ms. Pierre has worked for Danceworks, Luminato Festival, Reelworld Film Festival and is currently the Creative Producer for Season 2 of Canada's Got Talent.

ABIGAIL WHITNEY - ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Abigail Whitney is an actor, film and theatre director, and an international fashion model. Her first tv credit includes playing Moonshadow, a superhero on Amazon's *The Boys*. She won Best Stage Director for her theatre directorial debut at UofT's Drama Coalition Awards and Audience Choice Award for her second work as a theatre director at UofT's Drama Festival. She has modeled across Canada and abroad in national and international magazines. She's featured in Covergirl, Sephora, Sirens, Lululemon campaigns and more. Her debut short film *Seule* that she independently wrote, produced and directed is airing on CBC Gem. She is independently writing and directing her next short film.

KATESE AURORE - TRANSLATOR & VISUALS ASSISTANT

Katese Aurore, producer, has been working as a volunteer with Ingoma Nshya and the Woman Cultural Centre since 2019 when she collaborated in the production of a day event celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of Ingoma Nshya in Kigali. She has been assisting with administrative and financial work, with logistics and communication. In 2022, she joined the team of "The Book of Life" as a producer and a translator as they performed in Rwanda and in Scotland at the Edinburgh International Festival and at Clifton Street Festival. In 2023, she will also be working as the project manager of "Gira Ingoma – One Drum per Girl", a program ensuring artistic education for girls in ten primary and secondary schools in Huye district. She is the next generation of Ingoma Nshya as she is taking over the legacy.

