



REDCAT

William Kentridge

• Houseboy by Ferdinand OYONO

Theater

NOVEMBER 17 - 19, 2022 at 8:30 PM

NOVEMBER 20, 2022 at 3 PM

CO-PRESENTED BY

REDCAT

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We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandefño, and Ventureño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

William Kentridge

• Houseboy by Ferdinand OYONO

Text from the work *Une Vie de Boy* by FERDINAND OYONO © Copyright Julliard 1956

Directed by WILLIAM KENTRIDGE

Assistant Director: PHALA OOKEDITSE PHALA

Performers: ALFRED MOTLHAPI, NHLANHLA MAHLANGU, SELLO RAMOLAHLOANE,
KATLEGO LETSHOLONYANE, WILLIAM HARDING, ANTONY COLEMAN, SUE PAM-GRANT,
BUHLE MAZIBUKO, SIBAHLE MANGENA

Musicians: MICCA MANGANYE, VOLLEY NCHABELENG

Chorus Director: NHLANHLA MAHLANGU

Additional Voices: MOTHO OA BATHO, BONGILE GORATA LECOGE-ZULU,
BRONWYN LACE

Costume Designers: GRETA GOIRIS, EMMANUELLE ERHART,
SO ACADEMY COSTUME MENTEES

Lighting Designer: WESLEY FRANCE

Sound Engineer: ZAIN VALLY

Stage Manager: DIMAKATSO MOTHOLO

Co-presented with The Broad in conjunction with the *William Kentridge: In Praise of Shadows* exhibition on view November 12, 2022–April 9, 2023.

Generous support provided by Brenda R. Potter and Marian Goodman Gallery.

Houseboy is an original production of The Centre for the Less Good Idea | William Kentridge (Founder), Bronwyn Lace (Co-Founder and Director), Phala Ookeditse Phala (Animateur) | lessgoodidea.com

Co-produced in partnership with THE OFFICE | Rachel Chanoff, Laurie Cearley, Lynn Koek, Indigo Sparks, Catherine DeGennaro, Zion Jackson, Noah Bashevkin, Erica Zielinski, Olli Chanoff, Nadine Goellner, Gabrielle Davenport, Chloe Golding, Kyla Gardner, Bruna D'Avila, Scout Eisenberg, Mego Williams, Carol Blanco | theofficearts.com

Special thanks to the team at the Kentridge Studio | Linda Leibowitz, Natalie Dembo, Anne McIlleron, Anne Blom, Chris-Waldo de Wet, Jacques van Staden, Joey Netshiombo, Damon Garstang, Diego Sillands, Thandi Mzizi Nkabinde

THE BROAD



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performing arts • film

ABOUT THE WORK

What does an anti-colonial African novel look like on stage? *Houseboy*, directed by William Kentridge, is a stage adaptation of the 1956 novel by Cameroonian diplomat Ferdinand Oyono.

The performance, which explores historical narrative, archival memory, and post-colonial identity through the diary entries of a Cameroonian youth, was developed and first staged in 2021 at The Centre for the Less Good Idea, an interdisciplinary and experimental incubator space for the arts located in Maboneng, Johannesburg. Developed for The Centre's 7th Season, which Kentridge co-curated, *Houseboy* can be seen as a direct response to the Season's central theme: What of text?

"What are the ways of transforming a text designed to be read, into a performance on stage? Is it necessary to make this change (of text to performance)? Is there anything to be gained in this process?" writes Kentridge in his curatorial statement. "These are not questions we asked ourselves. Rather we said: Let this be a provocation, let us see what emerges."

For *Houseboy*, Kentridge was interested in discovering how a full-length novel could be translated into a staged work through the act of collaborative and non-linear reading. The two-hour adaptation is what ultimately emerged – a longform performance that makes use of an ensemble cast and live music to explore the themes of post-colonial memory, agency, and narrative history that are so intricately woven throughout Oyono's novel. A large backdrop produced by Kentridge – palm trees and dense foliage in black – sets the scene, and each character remains present on stage throughout while myriad live percussive sounds from just off stage, both punctuate and set the pace of the narrative.

At the heart of *Houseboy* is language and the written word. Here, language is resistance and soft rebellion, and the presence of the diary – the primary vessel for the story – is a means of creating a new record. *Houseboy*'s protagonist is Toundi Ondoua, a black youth in colonial-era Cameroon who is forced to serve a colonial household as "the Chief European's 'boy' – the dog of the King," and who keeps an account of his life and those around him in his diary. Through the diary, Ondoua is able to provide a record from the vantage point of the colonised – "I don't think I'll ever forget what I've seen," he states in one entry – while also highlighting, with perceptive humour, the flaws and faultlines of the empire.

Ultimately, it is through these rich, reflective and incisive diary entries – now narrated and embodied through the stage adaptation of *Houseboy* – that language and memory become forms of resistance and soft rebellion.

Runtime: Approx. 120 minutes, no intermission

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

William Kentridge is a draughtsman, performer, filmmaker, and is the founder of The Centre for the Less Good Idea. Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, Kentridge is internationally acclaimed for his drawings, films, theatre, and opera productions. Embracing collaboration and cross-pollination of various media and genres, including performance, film, literature, and more, his work frequently responds to the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, within the context of South Africa's socio-political landscape. Erasure, play, uncertainty, and a process-led methodology are also central to his practice. A background in theatre, as well as his early experimentations with stop-motion animation continue to inform and characterise much of the work he produces today, be it for the stage, the gallery, in the studio or the lecture hall.

For Kentridge, The Centre for the Less Good Idea is a space that is partially informed by his own artistic practice and processes, while also affording him a space to experiment and collaborate with fellow artists, performers, and ways of working. It is this ability to be both in and outside of The Centre that sees Kentridge working to hold, inform, question, and draw out the seemingly disparate lines of thought that are necessary agitators and animators for the particular kinds of work that take shape in the mixed-media terrain of the space.

Bronwyn Lace is a visual artist who has collaborated with William Kentridge on the founding and establishing of the Centre for the Less Good Idea. For Lace, who currently works between Austria and South Africa, her artistic practice is concerned with the relationship between art and other fields such as physics, literature, philosophy, museum practice and education. Site-specificity, responsiveness, and performativity are also central to her practice, and have informed a great deal of her early work. Similarly, a balance between an isolated, introspective studio process and a collaborative, communal process sees Lace embracing incidental discoveries underpinned by an informed pursuit of new ideas.

Phala Ookeditse Phala is the Animateur at The Centre for the Less Good Idea. He is a multi-award-winning storyteller in the form of a theatre-maker and director whose works have won awards in South Africa, USA, Czech Republic and Australia. Phala holds a Masters in Dramatic Arts from Wits University. His works champion emotional and psychologically-stimulating storytelling as a uniquely African aesthetic. His focus and interest are on methodologies of making and creating work in ways that collapse and disrupt conventional norms.

Bongile Gorata Lecoge-Zulu works across the disciplines of music and theatre education, facilitation, performance, writing and curating. As an artist involved in experimental and collaborative endeavours where she investigates possibilities of merging music with other art forms and creative methodologies, much of her work follows a multidisciplinary trajectory, seeing her occupy diverse artistic roles. Similarly, the possibilities of translation across disciplines informs much of her practice. She has collaborated on performances such as: Born in the RSA, the Rwandan genocide commemorative performance Re/Naissance & Witness, the solo dance work Full Fat, Low Fat, Fat Free, and Godot-Logue in Gauteng. Through these works, her involvement in the Playback Theatre community, and her company Black Petal Productions, Lecoge-Zulu addresses issues of social justice in varying forms. Her most recent large productions in collaboration with The Centre for the Less Good Idea were the curation of both the Poetry Minute series and Season 8 in 2021.

Wesley France has more than thirty-five years experience in lighting design and technical coordination for the performing arts in the international arena. He has been a freelance lighting designer and technical production manager for numerous local and international productions and has worked extensively with William Kentridge and Handspring Puppet Company among others and is currently part of the team at the Centre for the Less Good Idea.

Zain Vally is a multidisciplinary sound engineer, location recorder, and the Sound Engineer for The Centre for the Less Good Idea. Vally works extensively in the music industry and is an accredited recording engineer on Beyoncé's album, *The Lion King: The Gift*. He also holds location recording credits for documentaries and television shows such as *Stony Hill to Addis*, *Yo! MTV Raps Africa*, and *Gqom Nation*. Having gravitated toward music from a young age, Vally pursued a diploma in Audio Technology and Post-Production from the Academy of Sound Engineering in Auckland Park, Johannesburg.

Dimakatso Motholo is a performing artist, production, stage, project manager, and researcher in cultural policy and arts management with a focus on cultural entrepreneurship. Motholo occupies a hybrid position, whereby she holds the majority of all the departments in the organisation. In her position, she finds herself working between administration and person-orientated work: liaising with artists and production, overseeing the various physical spaces at The Centre, and working to ensure that processes run smoothly for production teams, curators, and collaborators alike are a few of the daily roles she occupies.

Alfred Motlhapi is an actor, dancer and interdisciplinary performing artist. A graduate of the Market Theatre Laboratory, Motlhapi has a key interest in exploring the narrative power of the body in motion. He describes his craft as "a way to find healing and enlightenment in his life by exploring ways of using art as a tool." In addition to creating and participating in performances for The Centre's various Seasons, he has produced an experimental text-based work *Come Close Range – I Am The Source* for The Centre's Poetry Minute series (2021). He also plays the role of the protagonist, Toundi Ondoua, in *Houseboy*.

Nhlanhla Mahlangu is a vocalist, composer, theatre-maker, dancer and educator. With a career that spans more than 20 years of professional performance and administration in the realms of theatre and dance, Mahlangu's work has been seen all over Africa, North America, South America, Asia and Europe. He has worked with musicians, theatremakers, dancers and choreographers such as Richard Cock, Gregory Vuyani Maqoma, Sylvia Glasser, Vincent Mantsoe, Jay Pather, Des and Dawn Lideberg, Robyn Orlin, James Ngcobo, Victor Ntoni and Hugh Masekela. Through his work, Mahlangu excavates personal and communal histories while also utilising art and performance as tools for healing. He is also well-known for his use of *Isicathamiya* – a musical performance similar to *acapella*, but rooted in an isiZulu tradition – in the realm of theatre. Mahlangu has been a frequent collaborator of The Centre for the Less Good Idea, joining its debut Season in 2017. Since then, he has conceptualised, directed and performed in numerous experimental and collaborative works at The Centre.

Sello Ramolahloane is a renowned actor and theatre-maker working across the realms of film, television and stage. Ramolahloane's career spans 30 years and has seen him performing in Australia (Adelaide & Wollongong), Amsterdam, France, Poland, Germany, Holland, Austria,

Portugal and the UK (Nottingham, Manchester, London, Birmingham). Ramolahloane has performed in William Kentridge's staged adaptation of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke's poem The Panther, and conceptualised and performed in Matswakabele, a performance for The Centre for the Less Good Idea's 7th Season that used song and intimate storytelling to explore and unpack the contradictions of a single event from the perspectives of multiple witnesses. Most recently, he has performed in Houseboy, Kentridge's longform stage adaptation of the Cameroonian novel by the same name.

Katlego 'Kaygee' Letsholonyane is an award-winning actor and Setswana writer who hails from Dinokana village in the North West province. Letsholonyane is passionate about writing and creating new work for South African stages, and has produced a full length Setswana play, Seperekisi. As a television actor, he is best known for his role on the daily drama show on SABC 1 Skeem Saam, playing the character of Chef Kgosi. In 2019 he embarked on a two month residency in Copenhagen, Denmark working on the cutting-edge production, Dark Noon, under the direction of Tue Biering and Nhlanhla Mahlangu. In addition to his role in Houseboy, Letsholonyane's recent collaborations with The Centre for the Less Good Idea include performing in William Kentridge's adaptation of the Russian playwright Vladimir Mayakovsky's self-titled verse drama, Mayakovsky: A Tragedy.

Sue Pam-Grant is an award-winning actor, writer and interdisciplinary artist. A graduate of the University of Cape Town Drama School (1983) Pam-Grant has recently completed her Masters in Fine Art from the University of Witwatersrand. Her practice spans visual art, performance, theatre and filmmaking. As a theatre-maker, Pam-Grant is best-known for the internationally renowned Curl Up and Dye, which she wrote and performed in. The work toured internationally and continues to be taught in schools today. Pam-Grant also has a long history of collaboration with William Kentridge and, more recently, with The Centre for the Less Good Idea. Since 2018, she has collaborated with Kentridge and The Centre to produce and perform in a number of works including Mother Courage, The Pigeon, Common Confusion and, most recently, in Houseboy.

William Harding is a multi award-winning playwright, actor and director. Born in Belgium, Harding moved to South Africa in 1995. As an actor, he is best known for his work with Sylvaine Strike, and the Fortune Cookie Theatre Company. While at the Fortune Cookie Theatre Company, Harding worked as dramaturge on The Cenotaph of Dan Wa Moriri and Travels Around My Room. In 2016, he travelled around South Africa performing in Shakespeare's Coriolanus (in the role of Menenius Agrippa) for schools. Harding first began working collaboratively with William Kentridge and The Centre for the Less Good Idea in 2019, for The Centre's 7th Season. Here, he collaborated on and performed in a number of works including The Pigeon, the solo work And Yet You Go On, and Houseboy.

Sibahle Mangena is a five time Naledi-nominated actor, writer, voiceover artist and theatre-maker with an interest in body movement and text. Shortly after her graduation from the Market Theatre Laboratory in 2018, Mangena was employed by the Market Theatre Laboratory to become a member of the KWASHA! Theatre Company. In addition to her work as a theatre-maker, she teaches Drama to primary and highschool learners in partnership with The Market Theatre's Windybrow Theatre. Mangena is a frequent collaborator of The Centre for the Less Good Idea, with her most recent performances including Umsebenzi ka Bra Shakes (The work

of Shakespeare), Umthandazo, Keys to a Great Poetic Game, and William Kentridge's stage adaptation of the Cameroonian novel Houseboy.

Buhle Mazibuko is an experienced and passionate actor who's appeared in numerous screen and stage roles. On screen, Mazibuko is best-known for her role as the notorious character "Nomasonto" on the South African drama series Skeem Saam. Her stage work includes the performances Blood Sugars, Shakuntala, Oedipus Rex and Nawe Mbopha ka Sithayi. 2019 marked her first instance of collaborative work with The Centre for the Less Good Idea. Participating in Season 7, Mazibuko performed in Go Down Moses, Zondo Requiem, Umthandazo, and the William Kentridge-directed Houseboy.

Antony Coleman is a South African actor well-known for his roles both on screen and on stage. In addition to his stage work, Coleman has acted in a number of feature films, including Glory Glory, Hoodlum and Son, the Oscar nominated Blood Diamond, and Gums and Noses for which he won best actor at the New York International Independent Film Festival. He has six Vita Award Nominations for his work in theatre, two SAFTA nominations and one win for Best Actor. He has also won Best Supporting Actor at the Naledi Awards for his performance in Pale Natives at the Market Theatre. Coleman's collaboration with The Centre for the Less Good Idea include a stage adaptation of Patrick Süskind's The Pigeon, as well as various adaptations of Franz Kafka texts, exploring anxiety, animality, absurdism, and paranoia as central themes. He also collaborated on works showcased through the Season's Pepper's Ghost programme, and performed in the William Kentridge-directed Houseboy.

Micca Manganye is a Johannesburg-based musician and performer specialising in percussion and live performance. Hailing from Tembisa, Manganye is deeply inspired by the inherent musicality of the body. His practice has frequently occupied the intersections of live music, theatre and performance art. In addition to his work as a performer and multi-instrumentalist, Manganye has taught at the South African State Theatre and worked as facilitator and choreographer for various productions. He is a regular collaborator of The Centre for the Less Good Idea. Most recently, he has performed in the William Kentridge-directed performances Panther and Houseboy.

Volley Nchabeleng is a multidisciplinary performer and percussionist who hails from the village of Masemola (Thabampshe) in South Africa's Limpopo Province. Nchabeleng is known for his skill with indigenous musical instruments, his penchant for teaching and his versatile mode of performance and composition. A consummate performer, Nchabeleng's approach to music resonates with his versatile perspective and interests in the influences of music from across the globe. He has performed across Africa, Europe and Asia; and his tours include India, Belgium, Holland, Germany, France and Australia to name a few. Nchabeleng first began working collaboratively with The Centre for the Less Good Idea in 2019 for The Centre's 7th Season. Here, he collaborated on productions including Panther, Sounds of Limpopo and Houseboy.

Motho Oa Batho is an opera singer and young composer who loves to write and tell stories. Having begun his musical career at the Drakensberg Boys Choir School, his musical adventures have now taken him to Germany where he lives his life as a freelancing operatic tenor. Batho has shared the stage with the likes of LIRA, Bryn Terfel, and Eric Owens and is a recipient of the First prize award of the South African competition "Amazwi Omzansi".

The Centre for the Less Good Idea is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Founded by William Kentridge and Bronwyn Lace in 2016, it is a physical and immaterial space to pursue incidental discoveries made in the process of producing new work. The Centre is a space to follow impulses, connections and revelations. It is a physical performance space for artists to come together and for curators to bring together combinations of text, movement, sound and image. The Centre nurtures the act of playing with an idea to allow for recognizing those things you didn't know in advance: the secondary ideas, those less good ideas coined to address the first idea's cracks.

The amusing and grammatically awkward Tswana proverb (translated by the great Sol Plaatjie in his book of 732 Setswana proverbs in 1916): "If the good doctor can't cure you, find the less good doctor," goes a long way to describing the interests at The Centre. Secondary pursuits, collective and collaborative artistic process is celebrated at The Centre and it is that to which it gives its attention and resources.

The Centre believes an ensemble sees the world differently from how one individual does. It is a safe space for failure, for projects to be tried and discarded because they do not work. It's a space for short-form work which doesn't have a natural home in a theatre or gallery.

The Centre has quickly gathered momentum and by 2022 has become a formative space for arts projects in South Africa and beyond. Between 2016 and 2022 over 400 individual performances, films and installations have been created and shown at The Centre and more than 700 artists of all disciplines have worked on projects at The Centre.

In early 2020, SO | The Academy for the Less Good Idea was launched. The Centre, in its collaborative and multidisciplinary approach, has recognised a powerful yet unforced learning that takes place between practitioners in the building of Seasons and programmes. SO Academy seeks to expand and extend these learning opportunities.

REDCAT TECHNICAL STAFF

Technical Director: BILL BALLOU
Associate TD, Sound and Video: PETE PACE
Associate TD, Lighting: CHU-HSUAN CHANG
Audio Assistant: JOSUE CLARK

Lighting Board Operator: CHRISTA TROESTER
Deck: JERREL MILAN
Wardrobe: SARAH DAWN LOWRY
Camera Operator: JOSHUA HILL

UPCOMING AT REDCAT

DEC 8 - 10
My Barbarian
Double Future

REDCAT and Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles present *Double Future*, a double-bill performance by My Barbarian (Malik Gaines, Jade Gordon, and Alexandro Segade). Re-performing works they created almost two decades ago, My Barbarian responds to the contemporary moment with prescient works that address class struggle and environmental collapse.



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