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What makes humans go to the edge of the abyss and then step in? But then what? What happens next after the worst thing?

THE BOOK OF LIFE

Co-Created + Written + Performed by
Odile Garike Katese

Co-Created + Directed by Ross Manson

A Volcano Theatre Production in Association with the Woman Cultural Centre, Rwanda and
Why Not Theatre Presented by Canadian Stage

Marilyn and Charles Baillie Theatre – September 17-29, 2019

***“The Book of Life* is a line I throw out in order to join with others; a pretext to uncover my lies, my truths; an opportunity to let my heart speak, an opportunity to officially declare my fire for humanity (yes, I am burning with love and hatred for humans). And each time I hope to learn better why, how and when to love and hate myself, to find my balance in what I have of the human, the divine and the animal. – Odile Garike Katese**

Canadian Stage is thrilled to open its fall 19.20 season with the world premiere of *The Book of Life* by internationally celebrated Rwandan artist and humanitarian Odile Garike (Kiki) Katese. Inspired by the atrocities of the Rwandan genocide when in 1994 one million people were murdered in 100 days, in this ground-breaking collaboration with Ross Manson, one of Canada’s most celebrated directors, Katese takes the audience on a remarkable journey of resilience and imagination.

In *The Book of Life* Katese presents an alternative memory of the Rwandan genocide. A how-to guide on overcoming trauma, this solo work is a moving celebration that offers an understanding of life in the aftermath of incalculable loss. Infused with original music performed and sung by Rwanda’s internationally acclaimed first all-female drumming group, *Ingoma Nshya (The Women Drummers of Rwanda)*, stunning projections, and a collection of letters written by survivors to the dead (orphans to missing parents, wives to husbands, killers to their victims), *The Book of Life* offers hope and a humane way to forgive and move forward.

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"We are thrilled to welcome back Ross Manson and Volcano Theatre with this extraordinary work," says Canadian Stage Artistic Director Brendan Healy. "For the past two decades, Volcano has been an important generator of new Canadian work and *The Book of Life* is no exception. Visceral, timely, and full of empathy, this production speaks to the core of our humanity and it highlights the power of art to heal. As we look back on the terrible events in Rwanda twenty years ago, *The Book of Life* gives us hope."

"We still have the possibility of undoing the genocide in some small way, to bridge the hole that's been left, not with bones or the clothes they wore when they died – but with their lives," says Katese. "The dinners. The lovers. The dates. The joy. How do we undo the undo-able? We let them live again."

Over ten years in the making, *The Book of Life* is an inspiring example of how to turn darkness into light.

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**To receive further information or to request an interview, please contact
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ABOUT ODILE KIKI KATESE

A self-described professional dreamer and a woman of many firsts, Katese 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 (*Inzizi Nziza – Sweet Dreams*) and the first recipient of the League of Professional Theatre Woman's Rosamond Gilder/Martha Coigney International Award.

ABOUT CANADIAN STAGE

Canadian Stage is one of the country's leading not-for-profit contemporary performing arts organizations. Led by Artistic Director, Brendan Healy, and Executive Director, Monica Esteves, the company produces, presents, commissions, and collaborates with multiple partners on cross-disciplinary work with a focus on performance styles that integrate theatre, dance, film, visual arts and more. Sharing innovative and vibrant performance work from Canada and around the world, it stages performances at three Toronto venues: The Bluma Appel at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts; the Marilyn and Charles Baillie Theatre; and the High Park Amphitheatre.

BRENDAN HEALY, Artistic Director **MONICA ESTEVES**, Executive Director
ALEXANDRA BAILLIE & TONY BAYLIS, Board Co Chairs

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ABOUT VOLCANO THEATRE

Volcano is a Toronto-based live performance creation company. We work experimentally, collaboratively, and with an eye to making art that is socially and politically current. We work across boundaries of all kinds in this pursuit; geographically, culturally, and formally. We give our artists the time they need to make work that is as good as it can be, often embarking on years-long development trajectories. We keep our works alive for multiple seasons through remounts and touring and have been recognized in this by over 70 awards and nominations at the local, national and/or international level. Volcano makes theatre that connects Canada to itself and the world.

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