

# THE BOOK OF LIFE

**Volcano, Canada  
Woman Cultural  
Centre, Rwanda**

Supported by



Conseil des arts  
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Canada Council  
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**Canada**

Made possible through the  
**PLACE Programme**

13–16 August 8pm

14 August 2pm

**CHURCH HILL THEATRE**

The performance lasts approximately  
1 hour 25 minutes.

Please ensure that all mobile phones  
and electronic devices are switched off  
or put on silent.



# THE BOOK OF LIFE

**Volcano, Canada**

**Woman Cultural Centre, Rwanda**

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Playwright and Performer

Director

Assistant Director

The Women Drummers of Rwanda

Alternates

Composer

Visual Animation Designer

Visual Animation Designer  
and Operator

Production Design and Management

General Manager / Producer

Producer

**Odile Gakire Katese**

**Ross Manson**

**Abigail Whitney**

**Ingabire Rose**

**Kamariza Médiatrice**

**Mukakarisa Agnes**

**Mukamugema Chantal**

**Mushimiyimana Margarite**

**Nyinawimbabazi Claudine**

**Uwintije Clémentine**

**Uwizerwa Marie Noella**

**Mukanyandwi Claudine**

**Mukeshimana Alphonsine**

**Musabyemariya Christine**

**Uwamariya Clementine**

**Mutangana Moise**

**Sean Frey**

**Kristine White**

**Patrick Lavender**

**Kaitlin Hickey**

**Ray BrEamble**

**Sheree Spencer**

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*"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 re-visiting the past... It's a ceremonial way to rehabilitate life."*

Odile Gakire Katese

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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 wilful 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 programme 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**

# ODILE GAKIRE KATESE

Odile Gakire Katese (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 (Inzizi 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, Odile Gakire Katese 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](http://ingomanshya.org)  
or [womanculturalcentre.com](http://womanculturalcentre.com)

# VOLCANO, CANADA

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](http://volcano.ca)