



Houseboy

William Kentridge's

by Ferdinand Oyono

The Lindemann Performing Arts Center
144 Angell St, Providence, RI

Presented By
Brown Arts Institute

Co-Produced By
The Centre for the Less Good Idea
THE OFFICE performing arts + film

Date
February 9, 2024 at 7:00 PM
February 10, 2024 at 3:00 PM

Credits

Text	Ferdinand Oyono
Director & Set Designer.....	William Kentridge
Associate Director.....	Phala Ookeditse Phala
Chorus Director	Nhlanhla Mahlangu
Costume Designer.....	Greta Goiris
Performers	Alfred Motlhapi
	Nhlanhla Mahlangu
	Sello Ramolahloane
	Katlego Letsholonyana
	William Harding
	Neil McCarthy
	Sue Pam-Grant
	Buhle Mazibuko
	Sibahle Mangena
Musicians	Micca Manganye
	Volley Nchabeleng
Additional Voices.....	Makudupanyane Senaoana
	Anathi Conjwa
	Bronwyn Lace
Costume Fabricator	Emmanuelle Erhart
Lighting & Production Manager	Brendon Boyd
Sound Engineer	Zain Vally
Associate Producer	Dimakatso Motholo
Stage Manager	Mego Williams
Production Assistant.....	Jessica Jones

From the work "UNE VIE DE BOY" by Ferdinand OYONO-© Copyright Julliard 1956

Houseboy is an original production of The Centre for the Less Good Idea

Co-Founder: William Kentridge

Co-Founder & Director: Bronwyn Lace

lessgoodidea.com

Co-produced in partnership with THE OFFICE performing arts + film

Rachel Chanoff, Laurie Cearley, Lynn Koek, Catherine DeGennaro, Elly Obeney, Carol Blanco, Indigo Sparks, Soleil George, Zion Jackson, Noah Bashevkin, Erica Zielinski, Olli Chanoff, Nadine Goellner, Chloe Golding, Kyla Gardner, Bruna D'Avila, Scout Eisenberg, Jose Alvarado, Mego Williams, Barbara Sartore, and Sarah Suzuki.

theofficearts.com

Special thanks to the team at the Kentridge Studio:

Linda Leibowitz, Natalie Dembo, Anne McIlhleron, Anne Blom, Chris-Waldo de Wet, Jacques van Staden, Joey Netshiombo, Damon Garstang, Jessica Jones, Diego Sillands, and Thandi Mzizi Nkabinde.

Cover: Photo Credit to Zivanai Matangi



From the BAI Artistic Director

In this inaugural year of The Lindemann Performing Arts Center (opened October 2023), I have intentionally focused on bringing innovative artists to campus who can help us think (and dream) through the scope and scale of artistic work that matches the invitation of this extraordinary new building.

We began with *Carrie Mae Weems: Varying Shades of Brown* (September-December 2023) as a campus-wide activation that invited visitors to step out of their comfort zone, to engage with art across multiple spaces on campus, including a large-scale cyclorama in Lindemann's Main Hall that challenged us to think about how visual art might be presented in this chameleon of a space. Recognizing that many benefits to our communities emerge when we engage an artist beyond a week or weekend of events, we also built an curricular/co-curricular component into the project that began with a class (ARTS1910a *Artist@Work: Carrie Mae Weems*, Spring 2023), evolved into faculty and class installation visits guided by the BAI Exhibitions team, and culminated in an Artist Convening in Granoff featuring visiting and local artists, activists, and scholars discussing how their work interfaces with many of the themes highlighted by Carrie's project. We learned a great deal about the complexities of hosting projects at this scale and look forward to bringing those lessons-learned to our next projects.

As we continue to explore how to best nurture genuine, deep and long, artist engagement and collaboration, I am thrilled to welcome William Kentridge, Bronwyn Lace, and artists from The Centre for the Less Good Idea, founded by Kentridge and Lace in 2016. Kentridge and The Centre present here in the Main Hall the East Coast premiere of their theatrical work *Houseboy* and will then stay on to spend time with us in a collaborative residency across February. We have the good fortune to see an artistic work that already exists in the world and to invite local collaborators (Brown and RISD students, faculty, and staff) into the Centre's creative process, which includes development of work on future projects that we are planning to return to Brown in the coming years.

I invite you to open yourself to experiencing the fullness of *Houseboy*, an extraordinary work developed at The Centre over the past few years which enlivens the 1956 novel by Cameroonian diplomat Ferdinand Oyono and asks us to make space for new ways of reckoning with colonial pasts.

Avery Willis Hoffman

Inaugural Artistic Director, Brown Arts Institute
Professor of the Practice of Arts & Classics

Introduction

In 2016, William Kentridge and Bronwyn Lace founded The Centre for the Less Good Idea, a space for responsive thinking through experimental, collaborative and cross-disciplinary arts practices, based in Maboneng, Johannesburg. The Centre has quickly gathered momentum and by 2024 has become a formative space for arts projects in South Africa and beyond. Between 2016 and 2024 over 500 individual performances, films and installations have been created and shown at the Centre and more than 1,000 artists of all disciplines have worked on projects at The Centre.

Houseboy (120 mins)

Developed at The Centre for the Less Good Idea in Johannesburg, South Africa, and directed by William Kentridge, *Houseboy* is based on the 1956 novel by Cameroonian diplomat Ferdinand Oyono. Told through the diary of the protagonist Toundi Ondoua, *Houseboy* makes use of an ensemble cast to explore themes of narrative history, archival memory, and post-colonial identity through the lens of the colonised. A large backdrop produced by Kentridge – palm trees and dense foliage in black – sets the scene, and each character remains present on stage throughout, facing the audience in a Brechtian delivery, while myriad live percussive sounds from just off stage 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.

Biographies - Creative & Production Team

William Kentridge is a draughtsman, performer, filmmaker, and is the co-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 sociopolitical 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.

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.

Biographies - Cast

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*.

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’ Letsholonyana is an award-winning actor and Setswana writer who hails from Dinokana village in the North West province. Letsholonyana 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*, Letsholonyana’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, Pam-Grant 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 graduated from Wits University with a BADA in Writing and Performance Studies in 2011. As an actor he has appeared in *Castaways* (directed by Daniel Buckland), *Houseboy* (directed by William Kentridge), *Garry's Retreat* (directed by Daniel Geddes), *Metamorphosis* (directed by Albie Michaels), *Tartuffe*, *The Miser*, *CARGO: Precious*, *The Table* (directed by Sylvaine Strike) and *Coriolanus* (directed by Nikki Pilkington), amongst others. His work as a playwright include: *Tobacco and the Harmful Effects Thereof* (Market Theatre, Baxter Theatre, Edinburgh Fringe), *The Cenotaph of Dan Wa Moriri* (Market Theatre, Alexander Bar) in collaboration with Tony Miyambo and Gerard Bester, *Kings of the World* (Market Theatre), *Travels Around My Room* (NAF) as well as dramaturgy on *The Table* (Market Theatre, Baxter Theatre) and *The Miser* (Market Theatre, Baxter Theatre). In 2015 he was nominated for the *Best Emerging Voice* Naledi Award in 2019 he was nominated for a *Best Actor* Naledi Award for *Metamorphosis*.

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*.

Neil McCarthy is a multi-award-winning actor, writer, director and producer who works extensively in the South African film, theatre and broadcasting industry. In addition to his work as an actor, director and producer, he is one of the most experienced and celebrated scriptwriters in the country, having worked on landmark drama series including *Isidingo*, *Rhythm City* and *Isono - The Sin*. As a theatre director McCarthy has received multiple awards and was resident director at Johannesburg's prestigious Market Theatre in the early 1990s. His acting for film and television includes the Academy Award winning *Hotel Rwanda*, *The Deal*, with Meg Ryan and William H Macy, and *The Hotzone* for National Geographic. In 2019 he began collaborating with William Kentridge and The Centre for the Less Good Idea on a performance based on the Joseph Conrad short story, *An Outpost of Progress*.

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.

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. Manganye's 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. Manganye 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*.

South African tenor **Makudu Senoana** is an internationally renowned musician and performer. Originally from Johannesburg, Senoana is a graduate of the renowned Drakensberg Boys Choir School and the South African College of Music at the University of Cape Town. There, he studied voice under the guidance of Hanna van Niekerk and Professor Kamal Khan, and performed in his first operas including the role of Tom Rakewell in *The Rake's Progress* with UCT Opera. Senoana made a return to the Dutch National Opera last season for their Be Opera project, covered Rinuccio in San Diego Opera's production of *Gianni Schicchi* and performed the same role with Opera Steamboat, workshopped a new piece with On Site Opera, and featured prominently in Opera Ithaca's festival, performing in their productions of *Nabucco* (Ismaele), *Highway 1, USA* (Nate), and *Proving Up* (Miles Zegner). Senoana enjoys a close relationship with director William Kentridge, with whom he toured South Africa and the U.S. in performances of *The Head & the Load*, a genre-defying experience centred around Africans in WWI, initially commissioned in part by the Park Avenue Armory.

Anathi Conjwa is a singer-songwriter, actor and theatre-maker. Born and raised in the Eastern Cape, Conjwa is the co-founder of the theatre company Intsusa, which has gone on to write and perform the international award-winning theatre piece *A Place of Knowing*. A frequent collaborator, Conjwa has worked with a variety of artists across a number of performances, many of them forming part of Seasons of The Centre for the Less Good Idea. Her work as a performer has seen her tour internationally, most recently to the UK. As a musician, Conjwa is well-known as 'Ithana' and was a crowd favourite on *Idols – South Africa*. Frequently, Conjwa merges her skills as a musician and a theatre maker to produce rhythmic and compelling musical performances for staged theatre works.

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. Her artistic practice is concerned with the relationship between art and other fields such as physics, literature, philosophy, museum practice, education, and more. 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. At present, Lace's position between South Africa and Austria also sees her working to establish relationships between The Centre and other collaborative, experimental arts spaces and institutions across the globe.

About The Centre for the Less Good Idea



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 2024 has become a formative space for arts projects in South Africa and beyond. Between 2016 and 2024 over 500 individual performances, films and installations have been created and shown at The Centre and more than 1,000 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.

More Information about
The Centre for the Less Good Idea: <https://lessgoodidea.com/>

About Brown Arts Institute



Established in 2021, Brown Arts Institute (BAI) is a university-wide research enterprise and catalyst for the arts at Brown that creates new work and supports, amplifies, and adds new dimensions to the creative practices of Brown’s arts departments, faculty, students, and community. Through year-round programming, research-focused courses, initiatives, collaborations, and partnerships, along with rigorous artistic and academic programs, BAI commissions and presents new work on campus, across Providence, Rhode Island, and beyond, from students, faculty, and on-campus arts groups, as well as in collaboration with forward-focused visiting artists and other performing arts organizations.

Photo Credit to Iwan Baan

More Information about Brown Arts Institute: arts.brown.edu

About IGNITE Series



Brown Arts' IGNITE Series uplifts the spirit of artistic collaboration across Brown, Providence, the Rhode Island region, and beyond. Ignite your creative curiosity through this multi-year series of programs, activations, interventions, and investigations.

More Information about the IGNITE series: arts.brown.edu/ignite

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Lightboard Operator

Jery Jerome

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Next Up - Tanya Tagaq



Artistic Innovators Residencies

March 2024

Artist and activist Tanya Tagaq engages with Brown communities through a number of ongoing projects that express her deep engagement with the Land and advocacy for Indigenous Peoples. Stayed tuned for a full announcement about Tanya's full collaborative residency.

Photo Credit to Alejandro Santiago

About the Artist



From Ikaluktutiak (Cambridge Bay, Nunavut), internationally-celebrated artist Tanya Tagaq is an improvisational singer, avant-garde composer and bestselling author. A member of the Order of Canada, Polaris Music Prize and JUNO Award winner and recipient of multiple honorary doctorates, Tagaq is an original disruptor, a world-changing figure at the forefront of seismic social, political, and environmental change.

Photo Credit to the artist

More Information about Tanya Tagaq: arts.brown.edu/ignite/artistic-innovator-residencies/tanya-tagaq

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We appreciate your feedback!**



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