

ISEMAN THEATER
FRI JUNE 22, 6PM, SAT JUNE 23, 1PM & 6PM



WORLD PREMIERE

Commissioned by the International Festival of Arts & Ideas

Written and Performed by **Toto Kisaku**

Co-Director/Producer/Sound Designer **Hanifa Nayo Washington**

Co-Director/Dramaturg **Will MacAdams**

Scenic Designer **David Sepulveda**

Lighting Designer **Jamie Burnett**

Sculpture Designer **Susan McCaslin**

Music Composer **Yaira Matyakubova**

Stage Manager **Katherine Sullivan**

Live Illustrator **Sara Zunda**

Script Translator **Robert Barsky**

Production Assistant **Uwizeyimana Angelique**

Voice Actors **Patrick Dufou, Rose Anou, and Sara Zunda**

Yale Production Manager **Alex Worthington**

Stage Carpenter **Ross Wick**

Audio Supervisor **Paul Bozzi**

Master Electrician **Linda Young**

Scenic Painters **Jamie Burnett, David Sepulveda,**
and **Amie Ziner**

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New Haven.

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care and encouragement! Thank you for lending your hearts and
hands in building community around this project!*

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**The
Inner-City
News**

REQUIEM FOR AN ELECTRIC CHAIR
TOTO KISAKU

HISTORY AND BIOS

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there is a growing problem of children who are systematically mistreated, accused of witchcraft or sorcery, and driven from their parental homes into the streets to fend for themselves. Toto and his theater company took up the cause of these children and created theatrical performances/events to bring attention to their plight. The performances renewed attention to the Children's Protection Law voted in January 2009 by the Congolese parliament, but which, sadly, had not been enforced in any way by the government to protect these abandoned children.

Because of the attention the performances were receiving and the growing backlash against the government, Toto was persecuted by the regime. *Requiem For An Electric Chair* chronicles this story.

TOTO KISAKU is an award-winning Congolese playwright, actor, director and producer who studied drama at the National Institute of Arts. After establishing the K-Mu Theater in 2003, he spent the next 13 years traveling the world producing and participating in plays, with a focus on going beyond the constraints of daily life and examining how people living in difficult circumstances (poverty, oppressive regimes) can use artistic activities to recreate their environments and improve their lives. Toto arrived in the U.S. in late 2015 seeking political asylum, which he was granted this March. Since his arrival, Toto has spent his time learning English and redefining his artistic expression based on the drama that his country of origin is experiencing as well as the country which has welcomed him. A critical theme found throughout Toto's work is his invitation to both spectator and actor to find ways to go beyond the four walls of a performance space. Festival Appearances: Festival of Limoges, Avignon, Paris Quartier d'Été, Right About Now, A / D Werf, ICAF, TAZ, Festival on Niger, Pilotobé, Mantsina sur scène, Toseka. Collaborative Projects and Creations: "Patati Patatra et des Tralalas" by D. Niangouna; "Tabataba" by BM Koltes; "Roberto Zusso" by BM Koltes; "20 ans, et alors !" by Don Duyns; "Topdog / Underdog" by Suzan-Lori Parks; "Rencontres au Pluriel" by Toto Kisaku; "Basal'ya Bazoba" by Toto Kisaku and Guido Kleene; "Surface" by Toto Kisaku. Toto was the recipient of the 2010 "Freedom to Create Prize," presented in Cairo, Egypt. Kisaku is among this year's Rebecca Blunk Fund awardees, awarded by the New England Foundation for the Arts. "Requiem For An Electric Chair" is Toto's first play to be performed in English and is his debut performance in the United States.

HANIFA NAYO WASHINGTON is a cultural activist, singer songwriter, spoken word poet, creative writer, storyteller, director, producer, actress and healing justice practitioner who graduated from Beloit College in 2001 with a B.A. in Communications & Russian & Soviet Studies. As a cultural activist Hanifa aligns herself with projects and movements where she can use her creativity as a radical tool for liberation, healing, and community building. This year Hanifa co-facilitated the International Festival of Arts & Ideas' Fellowship Program Town

Hall event as well as co-directed an Altar'd Spaces performance featuring The Word's Citywide Youth Poetry Jam. This production marks Hanifa's debut as a producer, director, and sound designer of a theatrical performance. Hanifa says, "It is an honor to work with Toto. To gently cradle his story and co-create pathways to expression, catharsis, and connection is nothing short of humbling."

Hanifa is a Community Leadership Program Fellow and an Inspiring Equity Arts Fellow at the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund.

WILL MACADAMS is a playwright, director and teacher who has worked in theatre in Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa, and across the United States. Past projects include: "Flor" (Cornerstone Theater, playwright) created with residents of a farming community in the California Central Valley; Peter Handke's "Kaspar" (director), presented by a Johannesburg-based activist theatre company at the brink of post-Apartheid South Africa; "Eye to Eye" (director) about racism and policing, created with young people at CityKids @ Safe Space of New Haven and future officers of the New Haven Police Department; "Freedom River" (director, playwright) at New Haven's Art on the Edge festival; and "The Black Dirt Cycle" (director, co-playwright), a series of site-specific plays about soil, history, and immigration. He currently teaches directing and theatre for social change at Hampshire College. For the International Festival of Arts & Ideas, he directed the community-based piece "Wandering Home (2003) and co-coordinated (with Zanette Lewis) the organizing work that led to the residency of Urban Bush Women (1999/2000). Currently, he is working with a team of visual artists and theater makers to develop a living room tour of his play "White Mourning," which explores whiteness, parenting, and memory and raises funds for reparations.

KATHERINE SULLIVAN holds an MFA in Creative Writing from SCSU Graduate School. She has a long history of working in the arts and theatre in New Haven and is honored to be a part of this exquisite production. She recently acted as the Production Manager for the public art exhibit on the New Haven green, Portrait of America. Her goal is to continue to work in the arts; developing and participating in programs that aim to the develop social change. She is thankful for the support and kindness of her husband, Joe Selvaggio and her twin boys, Ezra and Jacob.

DAVID SEPULVEDA may best be known to audiences as arts and culture contributing reporter for New Haven Independent. After graduating from Southern Connecticut State University with a B.S. degree in Art Education in 1978, Mr. Sepulveda taught fine art in Stamford Public Schools for 36 years. Over his tenure as an Arts instructor, he worked collaboratively with music and theater departments in producing quality theatrical sets. Mr. Sepulveda also earned a Master of Arts degree in Studio Art from New York University and a second masters degree in Learning from The Graduate Institute. Mr. Sepulveda has continued his set design work locally creating numerous sets for Bregamos Community Theater including the set for "Hope High - Class of '84 " staged at Long Wharf's Theater 2, and a traveling set that appeared in "Legends of the

Forgotten Borough" staged at the Atlanta Black Theater Festival. He has painted large stage backdrops for the annual Puerto Ricans United festivals on New Haven Green. Mr. Sepulveda has been designing and creating sets for Collective Consciousness Theater productions for 6 seasons.

JAMIE BURNETT is a lighting designer and founding member of The Elm Shakespeare Company. This summer will be his 23rd season with the illustrious company. As resident set and lighting designer for the Elm Shakespeare Company he designed lighting for every production for the past 22 years. He has designed sets for almost every production till 2009. His company, Luminous Environments, specializes in Theater and TV Studio Renovations and installations. Latest Projects include the Edgerton Center Theater Technical renovation at Sacred Heart University, Conard High School Theater, West Hartford, Quinnipiac University New Black Box Theater, Hamden. 2005: recipient of the New Haven Arts Award.

SUSAN MCCASLIN has been making paper sculptures and installations that include the theme of survival since 2006. Her interest lies in the fundamental need of all life to thrive and exist whether it be the bird who builds its nest, the child who creates its special place or the prisoner who looks for safety in shadows. Susan says, "I look forward to adding the dimension of performance to my installations and I am proud and appreciative for Toto Kisaku's trust of what I can bring to the telling of his story."

SARA ZUNDA is an illustrator and graphic designer and recent graduate from Paier College with a Bachelor's Degree in Illustration. Sara is an emerging artist and has experience as a freelance illustration and character designer, as well as an in-house package designer. Sara is a well-rounded and passionate individual who is absolutely over the moon to be able to lend her hand in such an empowering and intriguing tale. She hopes to represent Toto and his story and visually empower his characters the way they were meant to be seen.

YAIRA MATYAKUBOVA composed and recorded several original pieces for this production. She has performed in Carnegie Hall with the Silk Road Project in collaboration with Yo-Yo Ma and Pinchas Zuckerman, and she is a tenured member of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. She received her Bachelor's degree from The Harid Conservatory and her Master's degree from Rice University in Houston, where she was honored with a President's Award. Ms. Matyakubova further pursued her musical studies at Yale University from 2003-2005.

UWIZEYIMANA (WIZE) ANGELIQUE is a student at Hampshire College. She was born and raised in Tanzania but her family originates from Burundi and Rwanda. Wize is attending school to change the world through human connection, theater, dance, psychology and philosophy. Her most recent piece "Tenderness" is about mass incarceration and school to prison pipeline. Wize hopes to continue to do work that addresses the injustices in our society and to bring people together.