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SUNDANCE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES FOUR PROJECTS SELECTED FOR FIRST-EVER EAST AFRICA THEATRE LAB ON THE ISLAND OF MANDA, KENYA

ARTISTS FROM KENYA, RWANDA, TANZANIA & UGANDA

New York, NY — Sundance Institute announced today the projects chosen to participate in the Sundance Institute Theatre Lab in East Africa. The Lab will take place July 9-29, 2010 on the island of Manda off the coast of Kenya. Under the supervision of Philip Himberg, Producing Artistic Director of the Sundance Institute Theatre Program, the Lab will provide these projects with guidance in their creative development toward final production. Modeled on the annual Sundance Institute Theatre Labs, Sundance Institute East Africa is an exchange and development program, and participants will receive training and mentorship from American and African Creative Advisors.

Following a tradition of hosting theatre artists from Eastern Europe and East Africa annually to the Theatre Lab in Sundance, Utah over the last seven years, Sundance Institute East Africa began officially with a series of exploratory visits and workshops in Nairobi, Kenya and Kampala, Uganda in May 2008. Playwrights Noah Haidle (Lab alumnus 2007) and Charlayne Woodard (Lab alumna 1998) accompanied Sundance Institute to the region leading workshops, readings, and conversations with the local theatre communities in both countries. Sundance Institute invited two artists each from Tanzania (Single Mtambalike and Ghonche Materego) and Rwanda (Carole Karamera and Odile Gakire Katese) to join in the activities.

In 2009, the Theatre Program traveled to Rwanda, Tanzania, and Lamu in Kenya. Sundance Institute creative staff, accompanied by American Director Rebecca Taichman (Lab alumna 2006 and 2008) and Kenneth Kimuli (Lab alumnus 2007 from Uganda) met with theatre artists, offered workshops, and shared presentations in Kigali, Butare, Dar es Salaam and on Lamu. Additionally, last summer the East African project Ngwino Ubeho was developed at the Theatre Lab in Sundance, Utah by Odile Gakire Katese and her collaborative team Flora Théfaine (Togo) and Alif Naaba (Burkina Faso).

“Sundance Institute is honored to be partnering with an extraordinary range of emerging and established theater artists in East Africa and to be supporting new work created to be seen by audiences in this region, as well as internationally,” said Himberg. “I am profoundly touched and inspired by the theatre artists working in these five countries because they represent a new generation of writers, musicians and performers engaged in new, often hybrid forms of presentation. This new work honors African cultural customs, but is fresh, distinct and innovative. These are truly the independent theatre artists of East Africa. Over the last few years, Sundance Institute East Africa has focused on several levels including the exchange of working methods, sharing of developmental models, and oftentimes, direct collaboration between American and the African artists. The presence of the African theatre artists at our U.S.-based Labs has both influenced and informed the work of U.S. writers and directors. I look forward to our first full-length Theatre Lab in East Africa, a region rich in long-standing theatrical and story-telling traditions.”

The creative advisors for Sundance Institute East Africa are: Liesl Tommy(United States); and George Seremba, African Creative Advisor (Uganda & Ireland). The 2010 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab in East
Africa is made possible through the generosity of Wayne MacGregor who has provided his personal residence, Akili, as rehearsal and performance space for the artists.

2010 SUNDANCE INSTITUTE THEATRE LAB IN EAST AFRICA PROJECTS:

**Cut Off My Tongue** (Kenya)
Sitawa Namwalie, playwright/performer
Lillian Amimo Olembo, performer/choreographer

*Cut Off My Tongue* is a collection of dramatized texts that incorporate poetry, spoken word, narrative, music, dance and movement. The piece deals with interrelated stories about life in Kenya grouped around tribe and ethnicity, African womanhood, love and desire, political critique, tradition and genealogy. Although the main focus of the project is Kenya, the themes Namwalie addresses cut across post-colonial Africa and the continent’s struggle to deal with the question of “Nation-State”. Namwalie will develop the third part of the project to complement two parts previously written.

**The Book of Life** (Rwanda)
Odile Gakire Katese, conceiver/director
Ruzibiza Wesley, choreographer
Samuel Kamanzi, composer/performer
Mutangana Moise, composer/performer

*The Book of Life* is formed from a collection of letters written by widows of the 1994 Tutsi Genocide to their loved ones. The project transcends space and time as illustrates the living desire to reconnect with the dead so as to go past the pain. To find healing, to find joy, to find love and to celebrate life.

**Africa Kills Her Sun** (Tanzania)
An Adaptation *Africa Kills Her Sun* by Ken Saro-Wiwa
Mrisho Mpoto, adapter/performer
Gilbert Lukalia, director

Ken Saro-Wiwa (1941-1995) was hanged by the Nigerian dictatorship in 1995 for his activism on behalf of his Nigerian Ogoni people. The original text is a condemned man’s last letter to his loved one. Mpoto will adapt this text and use his poetic style in Kiswahili to combine it with slam poetry and storytelling to talk about corruption and abuse of power in contemporary Africa.

**Silent Voices** (Uganda)
Lucy Judith Adong, playwright
Grace Flavia Ibanda, choreographer
Jacob Otieno, director

*Silent Voices* mirrors the views and emotions of the real victims of the Northern Uganda war. The project explores how victims have been ignored in the constant calls to “forgive” and “reconcile” at the expense of justice. Through the protagonist, (Mother - a symbolic representation of life and death) *Silent Voices* examines what good citizens can be driven into by unhealthy policies.

Sundance Institute East Africa
The Sundance Institute Theatre Program Alumni from East Africa include: Deborah Asiimwe (Uganda), Odile Gakire Katese (Rwanda), Mũmbi Kaigwa (Kenya), Kenneth Kimuli (Uganda), Philip Luswata (Uganda), Charles Mulekwa (Uganda), Gichora Mwangi (Kenya), and Eric Wainaina (Kenya). U.S. operations are now co-led by native Ugandan playwright/producer Deborah Asiimwe, Specialist-East Africa.
Wayne MacGregor/Akili
Akili is the private home and studio of British choreographer and director Wayne McGregor. Created in 2006, Akili has played host to over 60 international artists from a diverse range of artistic disciplines in small scale residencies and retreats. Akili affords artists the time, space and inspiring location to stand back from their usual practice and simply ‘breathe’ re-energizing their personal creativity. Wayne McGregor is a multi award-winning artist, renowned for his physically testing choreography and ground breaking collaborations across dance, film, music, visual art, technology and science. He is the Resident Choreographer of The Royal Ballet, Covent Garden and Artistic Director or Wayne McGregor | Random Dance, a resident company of Sadlers Wells Theatre, London.

Sundance Institute Theatre Program
The Sundance Institute Theatre Program is a program of the Sundance Institute. Through its developmental activities at the Sundance Institute Playwright’s Retreat at Ucross, the Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at White Oak, Sundance Institute East Africa, and two new pilot theatre programs at Mass MoCA and Governors Island, the Program identifies and assists emerging theatre artists, contributes to the creative growth of established artists, and encourages and supports the development of new work for the stage. Under the guidance of Producing Artistic Director Philip Himberg, more than 85% of the work coming out of the Program’s labs has found professional production at theatres across the United States, Mexico and Europe. Recent productions of Sundance Institute-developed work include: Passing Strange by Stew and Heidi Rodewald, which won the 2008 Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical, Circle Mirror Transformation by Annie Baker and The Lily’s Revenge by Taylor Mac.

Sundance Institute
Founded by Robert Redford in 1981, Sundance Institute is a not-for-profit organization that fosters the development of original storytelling in film and theatre, and presents the annual Sundance Film Festival. Internationally recognized for its artistic development programs for directors, screenwriters, producers, film composers, playwrights and theatre artists, Sundance Institute has nurtured such projects as Angels in America, Spring Awakening, Boys Don't Cry, Sin Nombre, Born into Brothels and Trouble the Water. www.sundance.org.

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