

Soulpepper



NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS
Canada is our stage. Le Canada en scène.

Copperbelt

WRITTEN BY AND STARRING

Natasha Mumba

DIRECTED BY **Nina Lee Aquino**

—WORLD PREMIERE—





An African story.

I wonder what comes to mind when you hear that phrase? When I left Zambia as a pre-teen and lived in both the United States and Canada, I quickly encountered a dominant narrative about what it meant to be African. African existence was almost exclusively portrayed through the lens of humanitarian suffering. The plays I saw and the Hollywood films I watched about the continent were all centered around war, poverty, and pain.

So, the second I told anyone I was from Zambia they would immediately inquire how frequently I saw lions or which charitable organization they'd just worked for in Kenya or Uganda. This was the breadth of understanding they had of life on that vast continent.

54 countries.

Over 5,000 different ethnic groups

Over 2,000 languages

And yet—one single story.

Novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie said it best, “There is a danger in a single story—show a people as one thing over and over again and that becomes their only story.” This kind of simplification strips people of their complexity and individuality. It dehumanizes them, limits our ability to see ourselves in them, and ultimately renders them invisible.

This is the reason I have written this play, so you get to witness a beautifully complex, truly messy, contradictory and complicated Zambian family.

And I'm so grateful that I get to bring you along on this journey. I stand alongside the African writers who came before me, those writing now, and those still to come—writers who are working to break open the colonial container that insists on holding us in a single space. Together, we continue to tell the truths of our lives across that vast, wide, and beautiful continent.

Zambia Ku Chalo.

Thank you for being here.

Natasha Mumba
Playwright, *Copperbelt*

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Cast

Natasha Mumba
Eden

Eric Miracle
Musolo (Movement Captain)

Rick Roberts
Peter

Warona Setshwaelo
Harriet Kasuba

Makambe K. Simamba
Lombe (Fight Captain)

Kapembwa Wanjelani
Chimfwembe Kasuba

Kondwani Elliott Zulu
Dalitso

Creative Team

Natasha Mumba
Playwright

Nina Lee Aquino
Director

Tawiah Ben M'Carthy
Movement Director

Ric Knowles
Dramaturge

Rachel Forbes*
Set & Costume Designer

Michelle Ramsay*
Lighting Designer

Romeo Candido
Sound Designer & Composer

Chiluba Katongo Nsofu
Dialect Coach &
Cultural Consultant

Richard Lee
Fight Director

Nikki Mabias
Assistant Set &
Costume Designer

Nathan Bruce
Associate Lighting Designer

Christine Lee
Associate Sound Designer

Tamara Protić
Stage Manager

Neha Ross
Assistant Stage Manager

Austin Kaluba
Bemba Linguist

Production Team

Andy DeVries
Head Carpenter

Paul Boddum
Head Scenic Artist

Lisa Nighswander
Head of Props

Ellie Koffman
Head of Wardrobe

Claudia Matas
Assistant Head of Wardrobe

Jacqueline Robertson-Cull
Head of Wigs

Leanne Cecchetto
Dresser

Gunes Agduk
Lighting Operator

Benjamin Vukelic
Audio Operator

Dalton Villeneuve-Marini
Deck Operator

On display in the atrium: *Chiromancie-hors-série-4 n1 & n2* by visual artist Moridja Kitenge Banza. Commissioned in response to *Copperbelt*, the artwork evokes both personal narratives and the broader geopolitical issues tied to displaced bodies, erased knowledge, fragmented lands, and extracted resources.

Front Cover: Pictured: Warona Setshwaelo, Kapembwa Wanjelani, Makambe K. Simamba, Kondwani Elliott Zulu; Set & Costume Design by Rachel Forbes, Lighting Design by Michelle Ramsay, Photo by Dahlia Katz.



The National Arts Centre is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and engages professional artists who are members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the terms of the jointly negotiated Canadian Theatre Agreement



**Indicated designers on this production are represented by the Associated Designers of Canada, Local ADC659.

Running Time:
2 hours, 30 minutes (including intermission)



NINA LEE AQUINO is a renowned Filipino Canadian director, dramaturg, artistic leader, teacher, and mentor. She previously served as Artistic Director at Cahoots Theatre (2009–2012) and Factory Theatre (2012–2022). She edited the country’s first two-volume Asian Canadian play anthology and co-edited the award-winning inaugural book on Asian Canadian theatre. In addition, she holds an adjunct professorship at York University’s Theatre Department and serves on the board of directors for the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres. Her numerous accolades include the Canada Council for the Arts’ John Hirsch Prize for Directing, the Toronto Theatre Critics Award for Best Director, the Toronto Arts Foundation’s Margo Bindhart and Rita Davies Cultural Leadership Award, and three Dora Mavor Moore Awards for Outstanding Direction.



NATHAN BRUCE is a theatre Video and Lighting Designer as well as New Media Artist creating interactive installations/exhibitions. Recent credits include *Rogers V. Rogers* (Video Design, Crows Theatre), *Tapestry Briefs* (Lighting Design, Tapestry Opera), *Feed-Back* (Co-Projection Design, The Bentway), *Octet* (Video Design, Crows Theatre); *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* (Video Design, The Royal Alexandra Theatre); *Reina* (Lighting Design, Buddies In Bad Times Theatre); *Die Zauberflöte* (Projection Design, Koerner Hall); *18 Jews Order Chinese Food* (Lighting Design, Persephone Theatre, SK); *WIGHTS* (Video Design, Crows Theatre). Recent installation/exhibition credits include *Try To Forget* (Artist, St. Anne’s Anglican Church, Long Winter); *After The Flood* (Co-Artist, Charles Street Video); *Love Across Distance* (Co-Artist, The ArQuives, Nuit Blanche 2024).



ROMEO CANDIDO For NAC: *Prison Dancer The Musical* (Citadel Theatre); *Trident Moon* (NAC/Crow’s Theatre). For Soulpepper Theatre: Debut. Selected Theatre Credits: *Wendy And Peter* (Stratford Festival); *Banana Boys* (Factory Theatre); *The Unplugging* (Factory Theatre / Native Earth Performing Arts), *Lady In The Red Dress* (fu-GEN Asian Canadian Theatre Company). Film/TV: (showrunner, director, writer) *Gangnam Project*, *Topline*, *The Next Step*, *Workin’ Moms*, *Son Of A Critch*, *Circuit Breakers*, (EMMY NOMINATION best Director), *Popularity Papers*, *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. Upcoming Projects: *Through The Eyes of God* (Theatre Passe Muraille), DATU album. romeocandido.com



RACHEL FORBES For NAC: Controlled Damage (NAC/Neptune Theatre); Calpurnia (NAC/Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre/Black Theatre Workshop). Rachel is an award-winning set and costume designer creating for theatre, dance, opera and film. Recent credits include: *Da Kink in My Hair*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Brothers Size* (Soulpepper Theatre); *Slave Play*, *Topdog Underdog*, *Fairview*, *Choir Boy*, *New Monuments* (Canadian Stage); *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Bridge* (Neptune Theatre); *Treemonisha* (Volcano Theatre); *Of the Sea* (Tapestry Opera/ Obsidian Theatre); *Calpurnia*, *The Mountaintop* (Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre); *Death and the King's Horseman* (Stratford Festival); *Harlem Duet* (Bard on the Beach); *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Trouble in Mind*, *Victory, 1837: The Farmers' Revolt* (Shaw Festival).



RIC KNOWLES For NAC: Irresistible Neighbourhoods (Volume 1: Ottawa 2044, Volume 2: Walking On Water). Ric Knowles has been a director and dramaturge for 45 years at theatres ranging from Mulgrave Road to the Stratford Festival. He is University Professor Emeritus at the University of Guelph, and the award-winning author or editor of 22 books on theatre and performance. He is delighted to be working with Nina and everyone at the NAC.



CHRISTINE LEE Based out of Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang (Montreal), Christine ML Lee is a sound designer, composer, playwright and poet interested in the intersection between music, movement and storytelling. Winner of the METAs Award for Outstanding Sound Design and Composition for her work on Centaur Theatre's production of *Three Women of Swatow*, Christine has previously worked on Teesri Duniya Theatre's *Psycho 6* for which she was subsequently nominated for a METAs for Outstanding Emerging Artist (Production), *Bonnes Bonnes* (Nervous Hunter/Théâtre aux Écuries/Théâtre Cercle Molière), and *Mizushōbai* (Table d'hôte theatre). Christine is fascinated by dance and spoken word and integrates them with her music, which has been performed at Festival Quartiers Danses and in Montreal Botanical Gardens. Poet and writer, she participated in the BIPOC Writers' Connect Conference at The Writers' Union of Canada as well as Tapestry Opera's Liblab programme. Supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, Christine is currently working on a musical tentatively titled, *Just a Note*, for which the staged reading at the St-Ambroise Montreal Fringe earned Christine a Frankie Award for Most Promising Anglophone Emerging Artist. In 2026, she is excited be assisting sound designer Romeo Candido on both *Copperbelt* (NAC English Theatre/Soulpepper Theatre co-production) and *Through the Eyes of God* (Theatre Passe Muraille).



RICHARD LEE is an Actor, Sound Designer, and Fight and Movement Director. Previous credits include: *Abraham Lincoln Goes to The Theatre* (GCTC); *The Orphan of Chao* (Shaw Festival); *Marine Life* (Tarragon Theatre); *Caught* (Theatre Passe Muraille); *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Odyssey & Macbeth* (Driftwood Theatre Group); *Paper Series* (Cahoots Theatre Company); *5 Vengences* (Humber Theatre); *Little Dragon* (K'now/Theatre Passe Muraille); *Banana Boys* (fu-GEN Theatre Company); *China Doll* (Nightwood Theatre).



TAWIAH BEN M'CARTHY For NAC: Obaaberima (Buddies in Bad Times Theatre), Alice Through the Looking Glass, Stuff Happens. Tawiah M'Carthy is a Ghanaian born, Toronto based theatre practitioner. Directing credits include *Here Lies Henry* (Factory Theatre); *Topdog Underdog* (Canadian Stage); *Fairview* (Obsidian Theatre/Canadian Stage); *Death and the King's Horseman* (Stratford Festival). Movement direction include *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* (Obsidian Theatre). Creator/Writer credits include *Maanomaa, My Brother* (Blue Bird Theatre Collective); *Yen Ara Asaase Ni* (21 Black Futures, Obsidian Theatre); *Black Boys* (Saga Collectif) and *Obaaberima* (Buddies in Bad Times Theatre). On stage credits include *Sizwe in Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (Soulpepper Theatre); *Oyinyechuku in Three Sisters* (Obsidian Theatre/Soulpepper Theatre); Larry in *Fat Ham* (Canadian Stage) and Emeka/Archie in *Feast* (Tarragon Theatre). On screen credits include *Law and Order Toronto: Criminal Intent* (City TV) and *The Institute* (MGM). Tawiah is a Pauline McGibbon Award (Directing), a multi Dora-nominated playwright and performer and Co-Artistic director of Blue Bird Theatre Collective.



NIKKI MABIAS is a Filipino-Canadian set and costume designer based in Montreal, Quebec. Growing up in a vibrant multicultural environment, Nikki is dedicated to celebrating her heritage through her work while amplifying the voices of artists from diverse backgrounds in collaborative creation spaces. She is thrilled to make her NAC and Soulpepper debut with the production of *Copperbelt*. Her recent design credits include: *Yerma* (National Theatre School), *Jane Eyre* (National Theatre School), *Falsettos* (Contact Theatre). Nikki graduated in Set and Costume Design from the National Theatre School of Canada (2025) and holds a DEC in Professional Theatre Design (2021).



ERIC MIRACLE is a second-generation Haitian artist and a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada, thrilled to join the cast of *Copperbelt*. His recent theatre credit includes *King James* at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre. Eric is deeply excited to be part of this production and proudly dedicates his performance to his friends and family. More specifically, Mama Miracle! IG: Eric.Miracle.



NATASHA MUMBA is Zambian-Canadian, actor, writer, dramaturg, artistic leader and director. Her acting credits include: *School Girls, or the African Mean Girls Play* (Obsidian/Nightwood); *Henry V*, *The Adventures of the Black Girl*, *Dracula* (Shaw Festival); *Silver Arrow* (Citadel); *Trout Stanley* (Factory); *Measure for Measure*, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Canadian Stage); *Middletown* (Crow's Theatre); *Welkin* (Soulpepper). FILM & TELEVISION: *Handmaid's Tale* (MGM); *The Last of Us* (HBO); *Y: The Last Man* (FX); *Beacon 23* (AMC); *Matlock* (CBS); *Five Days At Memorial* (APPLE +); *The Abandons* (NETFLIX). Natasha also currently serves as the Associate Artistic Director and Company Dramaturg at Obsidian Theatre Company in Toronto. Her Directing credits include: *Vierge* (Factory Theatre); *Three Sisters* (Assistant director - Soulpepper Theatre); *Lady Sunrise* (Assistant Director - Factory Theatre); *The Water Gun Song* (Young People's Theatre). She is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada. IG: @Tashamum



CHILUBA KATONGO NSOFU is a Zambian actress, writer, translator and creative director, fluent in English and Bemba. Acting credits include: *Tizibika* season 1 and special (Zambezi magic DSTV), *Amoye* (GoTV & Zambezi Magic), *Nkhani yamu sisi*, *Property grabbing* (Lusaka play house stage) and *Date my family Zambia* (DSTV). Chiluba Translated and co-hosted the Ngoma Awards (National arts council of Zambia), as well as creative campaigns (One stop shop, Gigibonta, Go green). TV commercials include, Ponyamo uwine for Zanaco bank (ZNBC), Saturnia regan pension fund (ZNBC) and Foxdale forest estate (digital platforms). Chiluba has good insight on Zambian local culture i.e. languages, alters, and dance.



TAMARA PROTIĆ was born in Zrenjanin, Serbia and immigrated to Scarborough with her family in 1995. Selected Credits: *De Profundis: Oscar Wilde in Jail*, *WILDWOMAN* (Soulpepper Theatre); *Slave Play* (ASM; Canadian Stage); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Canadian Stage); *Waitress*, *Bed & Breakfast*, *The Ballad of Stompin' Tom* (Capitol Theatre); *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan* (Bad Hats Theatre/ Soulpepper); *The Waltz*, *Lady Sunrise*, *Prairie Nurse* (Factory Theatre/ Thousand Island Playhouse); *Hedda Gabler*, *Knives in Hens*, *Poison* (Coal Mine Theatre); *Salt-Water Moon* (Factory Theatre/Why Not Theatre/Mirvish); *SHEETS* (Veritas Theatre).



MICHELLE RAMSAY For NAC: *Trident Moon* (NAC/Crow's Theatre); *Snow in Midsummer* (Shaw Festival); *Prison Dancer* (Citadel Theatre); *trace* (Factory Theatre). Other Theatre: *Frozen* (Arts Club Theatre); *Waitress* (Arts Club Theatre & Grand Theatre/Theatre Aquarius); *A Strange Loop* (Soulpepper/Crow's Theatre/Musical Stage Company/TOLive); *Women of the Fur Trade* (Globe Theatre and Stratford Festival); *The Tempest* (Theatre Rusticle); *Come Home: The Legend of Daddy Hall* (Tarragon Theatre). Michelle has received eight Dora Awards, the 2008 Pauline McGibbon Award, and was a finalist for the 2021 Siminovitch Prize. She is the Chair of the Board for Associated Designers of Canada and on the Board for ADC659.



RICK ROBERTS For NAC: *Prince Hamlet* (Why Not Theatre) and Copenhagen. Rick Roberts has been a stage and screen actor, a playwright and director for over three decades. Other favourites include *Animal Farm*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (Soulpepper Theatre); *R+J* (Stratford/Why Not Theatre); *The Goat*, *Cymbeline* (Stratford); *Prodigal* (Howland Theatre/Crow's Theatre); *Feast*, *Within the Glass*, *Enemy of the People* (Tarragon); *Proud* (Belfry); *Julius Caesar* (Citadel Theatre) and the title role of Zastrozzi (Stratford Festival). As a writer, *Mimi* (which he co-wrote with Allan Cole and Melody Johnson) premiered at The Tarragon Theatre and was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award for Best New Musical. His play *Kite* premiered to critical acclaim earning numerous Dora Award nominations for writing and production. Other writing credits include *Fish/Wife*. His play *Orestes* premiered online during covid at the Tarragon Theatre in 2021. Roberts starred in the series *Fortunate Son* and *This Life* for the CBC and appeared in *Transplant* (CTV/ NBC). he also appeared in the short film *The Light Before the Sun* for which he received an ACTRA award for best actor. Rick starred in the CBC movie *Jack* where he played the role of the late Jack Layton. His performance garnered him the Canadian Screen Award and the ACTRA Award for Best Actor. He appears in the video game *Far Cry 6*. He is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada.



NEHA ROSS For NAC: *Mahabharata* (Why Not Theatre), *Mixed Tape* (Crow's Theatre), *Prince Hamlet* (Why Not Theatre), *Kim's Convivence* (Soulpepper Theatre). Selected Theatre: *Bad Parent*, *Animal Farm*, *Kamloopa* (Soulpepper Theatre); *R + J*, *ICELAND*, *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as South West Africa, From the German Sudwestafrika, Between the Years 1884 – 1915* (Why Not Theatre); *Playing Shylock*, *Slave Play* (Canadian Stage); *Perceptual Archaeology*, *The Wrong Bashir* (Crow's Theatre); *One Thing Leads to Another* (Young Peoples Theatre); *Other Side of the Game* (Obsidian Theatre); *The Taste of Empire*, *The Madness of the Square* (Cahoots Theatre Projects); *Lady in the Red Dress*, *Brown balls*, *People Power* (fu-GEN Theatre Company).



WARONA SETSHWAELO is a storyteller, mother and activist from Botswana and South Africa living in Tio'tia:ke (Montréal) since 2007. She has been fortunate to work with theatre companies such as Imago, Centaur Theatre, Segal Centre, Black Theatre Workshop, Teesri Duniya, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, The Belfry, Tarragon, Repercussion Theatre, Prairie Theatre Exchange and Obsidian Theatre and is excited for her Soulpepper and NAC debut.

She is a META recipient, as well as the Montreal ACTRA Woman of the Year (2023) and Victor Knight Community Leader award (2021). Most recently she was honoured to be named the Gina Wilkinson Prize 2024. Recipient.

Warona is honoured to participate in this authentic reflection of Southern Africans.



MAKAMBE K. SIMAMBA is a four-time Dora Mavor Award-winning, three-time Betty Mitchell Award winning theatre artist. She is the writer and sole performer of *Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers* which she has toured successfully across Canada. Select acting credits include *As You Like It* (Stratford Festival), *Three Sisters* (Soulpepper Theatre and Obsidian Theatre), and *The First Stone* (New Harlem Productions). On screen, her credits include *Star Trek Strange New Worlds* (CBS) and *Titans* (HBO). Makambe is also a national award-winning and published playwright whose work includes *A Chitenge Story*, *Recipe for Change* and *Mwana Mulena*. Makambe is proudly Zambian-born and Caribbean-raised. Her intention as an artist is to be of service to humanity through her ability to tell stories.



KAPEMBWA WANJELANI is a Zambian storyteller who brings emotion to life. His journey began with a love for spoken word, and that passion opened doors into other creative spaces. He has grown into an actor, a voice artist and a practitioner of social and behaviour change communication. His performances carry heart, rhythm and an instinct for truth, whether he's on camera, behind the mic or speaking to a community.

KONDWANI ELLIOTT ZULU is an African actor who is thrilled to be part of this exciting production.

His theatre credits include: *Saints and Sinners* by Leo Simukoko (Lusaka Play House); *Flesh and Blood* by Paul Selenge (Zimbabwe); *God We Need To Talk* by Lee Sendford (NATAAZ festivals).

His TV/FILM credits include *Black Dollar* by Kazadi Films, *Can They See Us* by K-Roc Pictures (Netflix); *Service To Heart* by Paul S. Wilo, *Ten Tamanga Street* (Zambezi Magic).



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Why Not Theatre
Nightswimming
Canadian Stage
National Arts Centre English Theatre
Ontario Arts Council
Canada Council for the Arts

We wish to thank the following artists and companies who were involved in the development of the play:

ZAMBIA KU CHALO,
37D GALLERY, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA
Play reading, January 10, 2025

Actors: Sophia Chapeshamano, Kondwani Elliott Zulu, Nancy Malubila, Tawiah M’Carthy, Christine Ngoma, Jacob Shichilenge, Kapembwa Wanjelani

Playwright: Natasha Mumba

Director: Nina Lee Aquino

Movement Director:

Tawiah M’Carthy

Dramaturg: Ric Knowles

Bemba Linguist: Austin Kaluba

Bemba Translator, Cultural

Consultant and Dialect Coach:

Chiluba Katongo Nsofu

Host / Facilitator:

Florence Mumba

Coordinator:

Yoko Chimanja Shawa

NAC Workshop Producer:

Judi Pearl

CANADIAN STAGE

Workshop reading, April 7, 2024

Playwright: Natasha Mumba

Director: Nina Lee Aquino

Dramaturg: Ric Knowles

Actors: Derick Agyemang, Akosua Amo-Adem, Mazin Elsadig, Ryan Hollyman, Sterling Jarvis, Oyin Oladejo, Makambe K. Simamba.

Stage Manager: Tamara Protić

WHY NOT THEATRE

Workshop, 2021

Dramaturg: Intisar Awisse.

Actors: Allison Edwards-Crewe, Sophia Walker, Kwaku Adu-Poku, Mazin Elsadig, Gray Powell, Akosua Amo-Adem & Alexander Thomas


NIGHTSWIMMING

In 2021/22, Natasha was awarded the Nightswimming Writing Commission to develop her play *Copperbelt*.

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Corry van Gaal Head of Office, Canadian High Commission in Zambia and Staff.



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