



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

presents

Boundless: Africa

**In collaboration with the Caine Prize for African Writing,
the Camargo Foundation, and the Alan Cheuse International Writers Center
at George Mason University**

February 4 & 5, 2020 at the REACH

(WASHINGTON)—As part of the 2019–2020 *WORLD STAGES* season, the Kennedy Center presents the literary mini-series ***Boundless: Africa*** on February 4 and 5, 2020. The program combines performances, panel discussions, and readings, with most events held at the REACH at the Kennedy Center. Featuring playwrights, poets, and writers of African heritage living in Africa and the Diaspora, including the U.S., the series brings to the forefront relevant issues that inform the boundaries separating genres, art forms, geography, and time.

The *Boundless: Africa* programs are offered over two days in spaces carefully selected to best fit each presentation. The series launches on February 4, 2020, at George Mason University—one of the main collaborators in this effort—with a panel discussion moderated by Caine Prize Winner Helon Habila. The Nigerian-born Professor of Creative Writing will converse with Zimbabwean novelist Panashe Chigumadzi, Egyptian writer Ahmed Naji, and Somalian-American poet Ladan Osman about the influence of politics in their respective literary work.

(more)

The series then moves to the Kennedy Center, where a play reading and a literary-musical performance take place at the REACH. Written by Camargo Foundation Fellow Femi Osofisan—a prolific Nigerian playwright, poet, and essayist—and directed by Fulbright Scholar Chuck Mike, *Not All Canoes Sail Back Home* is inspired by three fascinating women—Efua Sutherland, Maryse Condé, and Maya Angelou—and their lives in Nkrumah’s Ghana in the 1960s. After the reading, Mr. Osofisan will participate in a talkback with playwright Carlyle Brown, Director Chuck Mike, and playwright and moderator Tom Minter. Ben Okri—the Nigerian-born/London-based Booker Prize Winner, novelist, and poet—completes the evening by performing *A Voice in The Wind*, a reading from his many lauded works, with musical accompaniment. Mr. Okri’s writings—known to challenge perceptions of reality—include essays, short stories, a new novel, and one of his plays.

On February 5, 2020, *Boundless: Africa* continues at the REACH with another enlightening panel discussion. *Talking Home: A Writer’s Life* convenes award-winning authors from Nigeria and Uganda: 2019 Caine Prize Winner Lesley Arimah, (*What It Means When a Man Falls from the Sky*); Windham Campbell Prize Winner Jennifer Makumbi, (*Kintu and Let’s Tell This Story*); and Canadian-based Titilope Sonuga (*Down to Earth, Abscess, and This Is How We Disappear*). This conversation is moderated by Ellah Wakatama Allfrey, editor-at-large at Canongate Books and chair of the Caine Prize for African Writing.

The two-day series closes with *At Home, From Home, Home and Away*—a themed dinner party where audience members can mix, mingle, and learn from the *Boundless: Africa* featured writers. The unique and participatory format includes a three-course meal, performances, and interventions throughout the evening.

Curated by Alicia Adams, Vice President of International Programming and Dance, *WORLD STAGES* offers audiences the unique chance to experience the world’s best productions. While highlighting visionary artists at the forefront of international discourse, each performance dives into topical themes—such as forgiveness, survival, identity, and community—revealing a vision of the world like you may never have seen. In addition to *Boundless: Africa*, upcoming *WORLD STAGES* programs include: theater from Canada, Scotland, and Palestine; and a Cuban production of a Mozart opera.

Boundless: Africa Calendar of Activities

***Unbound* | Tuesday, February 4, 1:30-2:45 p.m.**

Merten Hall, Room 1201 at George Mason University

Panel discussion: African writers discuss how politics informs and shapes their work

Speakers: Gbenga Adesina, Panashe Chigumadzi, Ahmed Naji, Ladan Osman

Moderator: Helon Habila

Ticket information: This event is free and open to the public.

***Not All Canoes Sail Back Home: Maya, Maryse, and Efua in Nkrumah's Ghana* |
Tuesday, February 4, 6-8 p.m.**

Skylight Pavilion in the REACH at the Kennedy Center

Play reading followed by a panel discussion

Speakers: Carlyle Brown, Chuck Mike (director), Femi Osofisan (playwright)

Moderator: Tom Minter

Tickets: \$10

In the 1960s, under Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the newly independent Ghana, the country was the undisputed headquarters of freedom fighters from throughout the Black world. Three truly exemplary women, now literary giants, made Accra their home base: Maya Angelou from North America, Maryse Condé from Guadeloupe, and Efua Sutherland from Ghana. They were in the early years of their womanhood, and their careers were in such a budding stage that not even the most intrepid soothsayer would have dared predict their later spectacular achievements. But what part did their Ghanaian sojourn play in their maturation—literary, political, and otherwise? What effect did their presence have on the local population and the eventual failure of the Nkrumah revolution?

This play is a fiction born out of imagined scenarios between three great black female writers brought together at that most momentous period of our history, when one daring, visionary black man tried to change our racial destiny from being that of perennial victims.

***A Voice In The Wind* | Tuesday, February 4, 8:30-10 p.m.**

Studio K in the REACH at the Kennedy Center

Written and performed by Ben Okri with a guest musician

Tickets: \$15

Ben Okri presents a performance reading of excerpts from a range of his works accompanied by a musician. He draws from his essays, very short stories, his new novel,

and one of his plays. In his own words, it will be “an intimate encounter with my artistic spirit and a peering into the spirit of the times through my artistic lens.”

***Talking Home: A Writer’s Life* | Wednesday, February 5, 12:30–2 p.m.**

Skylight Pavilion in the REACH at the Kennedy Center

Panel discussion

Speakers: Lesley Arimah, Jennifer Makumbi, Titilope Sonuga

Moderator: Ellah Wakatama Allfrey

Tickets: \$10

***At Home, From Home, Home and Away* | Wednesday, February 5, 6:30–9 p.m.**

Skylight Pavilion in the REACH at the Kennedy Center

Conceived around the concept of a dinner party, the audience will enjoy a seated meal alongside local writers and writers from the Diaspora. This event will include a three-course meal with participatory musical performances and interventions throughout the evening.

Guest writers: Gbenga Adesina, Ellah Wakatama Allfrey, Lesley Arimah, Carlyle Brown, Panashe Chigumadzi, Tope Folarin, Helon Habila, Jennifer Makumbi, Chuck Mike, Ahmed Naji, Ben Okri, Ladan Osman, Femi Osofisan, Titilope Sonuga.

Tickets: \$60

FUNDING CREDITS

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For more information, please visit the Kennedy Center [website](#).

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PRESS CONTACT

Camille Cintrón Devlin

ccdevlin@kennedy-center.org

(571) 317-9317

TICKETS & INFORMATION

(202) 467-4600; (800) 444-1324

www.kennedy-center.org