

THE CAMARGO FOUNDATION, THE PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER,  
and ILLUSION THEATER

*present*

# THE AFRO-ATLANTIC PLAYWRIGHT FESTIVAL

Co-curated by **Carlyle Brown** and **Chuck Mike**  
October 13–29, 2023

*Featuring:*

## **We Take Care of Our Own**

by Zainabu Jallo, directed by Carlyle Brown

## **MY SOUL IS NOT RESTED**

by Cassandra Medley, directed by Aaron Todd Douglas

## **Red Dragon**

by Tonderai Munyevu, directed by Ansa Akyea

## **What is the African Diaspora?**

### **A Conversation about Afro-Atlantic Culture**

with playwright Zainabu Jallo and Africana Scholar

Maboula Soumahoro, moderated by director and

festival curator Carlyle Brown



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THEATER**

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**BONNIE MORRIS and MICHAEL ROBINS,**  
*Producing Directors*  
**TREE O'HALLORAN,** *Associate Producer*

**Present**

# **WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN**

Written by  
**ZAINABU JALLO**  
Directed by  
**CARLYLE BROWN**  
**OCTOBER 13-29, 2023**

"This world is so empty if one thinks only of mountains, rivers & cities;  
but to know someone who thinks and feels with us,  
and who, though distant, is close to us in spirit,  
this makes the earth for us an inhabited garden."

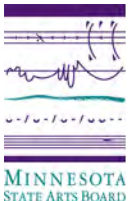
*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

## **PERFORMING COMPANY**

Youssouf Sadio..... **Warren C. Bowles\***  
Moon-So..... **Stan Egi\***  
Bajran ..... **Richard Ooms\***

*\*Members of Actors Equity Association*

*The author dedicates this premiere production to Arthur French Jr. who performed Youssouf in Illusion's 2021 virtual presentation of this play.*



*This activity is made possible in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.*

## PRODUCTION COMPANY

Director ..... Carlyle Brown  
Playwright ..... Zainabu Jallo  
Stage Manager ..... Joelle Coutu\*  
Set Design ..... Joseph Stanley  
Lighting Design ..... Garvin Jellison  
Costume Design ..... Amber Brown  
Sound Design ..... C Andrew Mayer  
Stagehands ..... Rachel "Sho" Klusky  
Virginia Culhane  
Props Coordinator ..... Tree O'Halloran

*This show will be performed without an intermission. Video and audio recording by any means is strictly prohibited. Please silence all devices that may make noise.*

\*Member Actor's Equity Association

## SPECIAL THANKS:

Barb Davis  
David Pisa  
The Guthrie Theater  
Jeremy B. Cohen, Julia Brown  
and Christopher Bineham of  
the Playwrights' Center

Julie Chénot, Juliette Baux and  
Zoé Le Voyer of the Camargo Foundation  
Cynthia Gehrig  
Ben Cameron  
Kathleen Carlson  
Virginia Rose Kane  
The Jungle Theater

*The Afro-Atlantic Playwright Festival is hosted by Camargo Foundation, the Playwrights' Center, and Illusion Theater and generously supported in part by the following organizations:*



This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. To find out more about how National Endowment for the Arts grants impact individuals and communities, visit [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).



**VENTUROUS**  
Theater Fund

Venturous Theater Fund of the  
Tides Foundation



**JEROME**  
FOUNDATION

This project was supported by a grant  
from the Jerome Foundation

## **NOTE FROM BONNIE, MICHAEL, & TREE**

(Producing Directors)

Welcome to our 49th Season! Carlyle was just starting as Illusion's Mellon Playwright in Residence when he shared *WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN* with us. We put together a company from around the country to explore and read the play virtually in that first year of Covid. The play has grown since then, as has our need for stories of connection, hope, compassion, and friendship—all things this beautifully written piece explores. We salute the talented company and the creative team. Zainabu's play personifies our mission of producing theater that responds to the world we live in now. Let us know your thoughts. Spread the word. Come again to sit in community with others in our home.

## **NOTE FROM ZAINABU JALLO**

(Playwright)

*We Take Care of Our Own* peeks into the lives of three individuals facing the difficulties of ageing in the diaspora. Having interrupted familial traditions of intergenerational care by their choices to migrate, they attempt to find a sense of community as a medley of memories and apprehensions flood their conversations.

Immense gratitude goes to: Camargo Foundation; Illusion Theater; Carlyle Brown, who I refer to as the “midwife” of this play; the production team; and special thanks to my family and every one of the beautiful people I have encountered in the course of writing this play.

**NOTE FROM CARLYLE BROWN** (Director and Co-curator)

I was immediately attracted to *We Take Care of Our Own*, to its use of language - playful, poetic, percussive - its slightly heightened nature, all of which to my ear contributed to the African-ness of the play. It is the kind of play I like - theatrical, authentic, grounded in simplicity, its themes relevant, with something to say. It makes you think and causes you to wonder. Zainabu Jallo, playwright, is a true child of the African Diaspora, born in Nigeria of a Nigerian father and a mother with Brazilian roots, she refers to herself as a rolling stone, living in different cities on different continents, calling five cities her home. She lives and actively participates in the here and there of a diasporic condition. A playwright, poet, and scholar with her doctoral research in the study of diasporic consciousness with a special interest in the intersections of

theatre and spiritual performance, she is a poster child for what we are exploring in the Cultural Diaspora Project.



**CARLYLE BROWN AND  
ZANIABU JALLO AT  
CAMARGO.**

This play was written during the Cultural Diaspora Residency Program at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France.

## **THE SECOND AFRO-ATLANTIC PLAYWRIGHT FESTIVAL 2023**

**“MEET THREE PLAYWRIGHTS FROM THE AFRICAN DIASPORA WHO MAKE THEIR NARRATIVES OUT OF AN AFRO-ATLANTIC POINT OF VIEW. STORYTELLERS AND GRIOTS CREATING INTRICATE, EXPANSIVE NARRATIVES WHERE BLACK LIVES DON’T SIMPLY MATTER BUT ARE ESSENTIAL.”**

In the summer of 2018, Chuck Mike and I convened four African American and four African playwrights for a month-long residency of the Cultural Diaspora Program at the Camargo Foundation to explore their craft, their voices, and their African-ness without the white, Western gaze. The Program supports established and mid-career playwrights from the African Diaspora for whom their Afro-Atlantic identity is an influence and factor in their craft, the content they create, their thinking and their world view.

The following summer, 2019, in partnership with the Camargo Foundation and the Playwrights’ Center in Minneapolis, three plays from the 2012 Camargo residency were presented in staged readings in the first Afro-Atlantic Playwright Festival. Those plays were *Deux Femmes on the Edge de la Revolution Part 2*, the second installment in France-Luce Benson’s epic historical trilogy of the Haitian Revolution; *Canoes* by veteran Nigerian playwright Femi Osofisan, a study of three young Black women coming of age in Kwame Nkrumah’s newly independent Ghana who would become international literary giants, Efua Sutherland of Ghana, Maryse Conde’ from Guadeloupe and Maya Angelou from the United States; and *We Take Care of Our Own*, Nigerian playwright Zainabu Jallo’s tender tale of migration and aging in the diaspora.

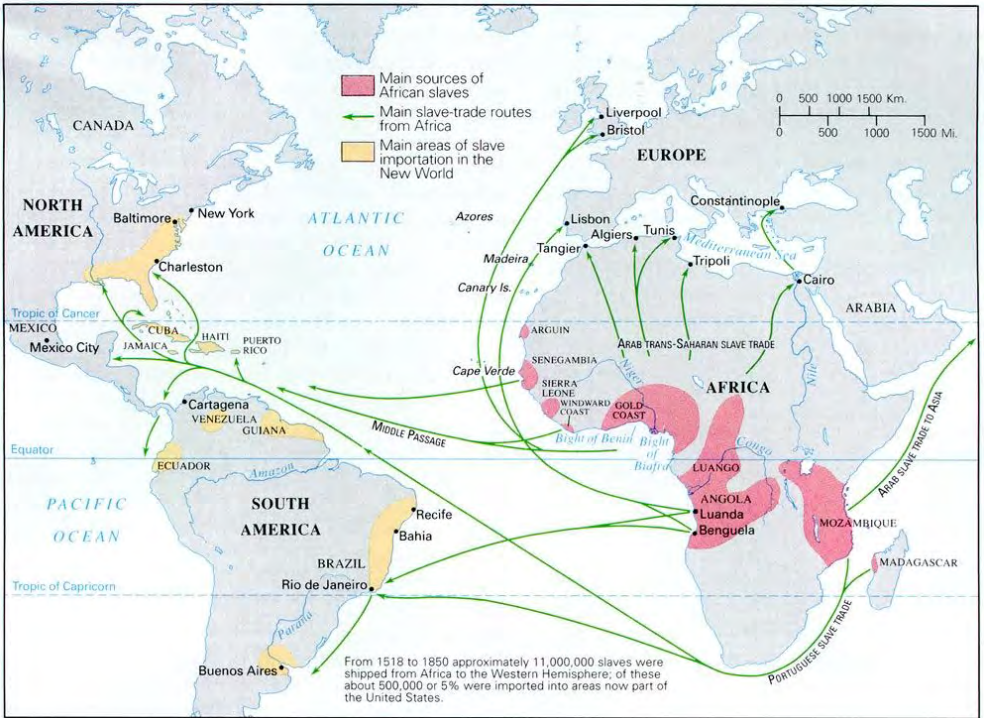
The first Afro-Atlantic Playwright Festival was a success and as a result the Cultural Diaspora Playwrights’ project was invited to New York University Tisch School of Drama; to BOUNDLESS AFRICA, a celebration of African writers at the Kennedy Center; and a workshop and staged reading in Accra at the National Theater of Ghana.

Now, in partnership with the Camargo Foundation, the Playwrights’ Center, and Illusion Theater where I am currently the Mellon Playwright in Residence, we are presenting the second Afro-Atlantic Playwright Festival featuring a full production of Zainabu Jallo’s *We Take Care of Our Own* running at Illusion Theater October 13-29 plus two staged readings of playwrights from 2022 Cultural Diaspora Residency at Camargo -- *The Red Dragon* by Tonderai Munyevu and Cassandra Medley’s play *MY SOUL IS NOT RESTED*.

- Carlyle Brown

# THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Image sourced from [www.scalar.chapman.edu](http://www.scalar.chapman.edu).



*The African Diaspora is the term used to describe the mass dispersion of peoples from Africa during the Transatlantic Slave Trades, from the 1500s to the 1800s.*

*This Diaspora took millions of people from Western and Central Africa to different regions throughout the Americas and the Caribbean.*

### **ZAINABU JALLO** (Playwright)

is a scholar, playwright, and portrait photographer. Her academic and creative works have been conveyed through Fellowships at the Sundance Theater Institute, The Institute for World Literature, Harvard University, Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin, Residenz Theater Munich, Chateau Lavigny, and House of Writers in Switzerland. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts England, and UNESCO Coalition of Artists for the General History of Africa. She is the author of award-winning plays—*Onions Make Us Cry*, *Holy Night*, and *My Sultan Is a Rockstar*. Jallo is post-doctoral researcher and lecturer at the University of Basel, Switzerland. She is one of the Principal Investigators of the “Sacral Architecture Africa” Project. Her scholarly interests include The Afro-Atlantic, Iconic criticism, the history of Criminal Anthropology and Material Culture. <https://zainabujallo.com/>

### **CARLYLE BROWN** (Co-Curator, Director)

is playwright/performer, curator and artistic director of Carlyle Brown & Company based in Minneapolis. His plays include *Little Tommy Parker's Celebrated Colored Minstrel Show*, *The African Company Presents Richard III*, *Pure Confidence*, *Are You Now or Have You Ever Been? Down in Mississippi*, *A Play by Barb and Carl*. Carlyle's plays have been produced at theatres across the country and internationally. Currently he is the Andrew W. Mellon Playwright-in-Residence at Illusion Theater. Most recently he won the 2022 Legacy Award from the Legacy Playwrights Initiative which recognizes established American playwrights for their sustained influence on the American theatre. He is also the 2019 Helen Merrill Award recipient, the 2018 William Inge Award for Distinguished Achievement in the American Theater, the 2010 Otto Rene Castillo Award for Political Theatre, he received the 2010 United States Artist Fellowship, a 2009 Guggenheim Fellowship, and the 2006 Black Theatre Network's Winona Lee Fletcher Award for outstanding achievement and artistic excellence.

### **CHUCK MIKE** (Co-Curator)

was born in Brooklyn, New York and has lived in Nigeria since 1976. A practical disciple of Wole Soyinka and former MacArthur Foundation Fellow, he is a distinguished actor, producer, director, and theatre activist of enormous energy. Producer of four festivals/seasons of theatre for CAFTAN (Collective Artistes Festival of Theatre Arts Nigeria), he is founding director of The Performance Studio Workshop (Nigeria) and Collective Artistes (Nigeria and UK). His forte is “devising” Theatre for Development. Spaces of work range from villages across Southern, Western, and Eastern Africa to The Kennedy Centre, Lincoln Centre (USA), West Yorkshire Playhouse, The Royal Court (UK), MUSON Centre, and The National Theatre (Nigeria). Chuck also shares his off season time with teaching and has taught or conducted workshops at various institutions across the globe, some of which include the Universities of Ife and Ibadan (Nigeria), Leeds, Oxford and The Royal National Theatre Studio (UK), Smith College, New York University (USA), and the University of Toronto. Currently, he holds an Associate Professorship at the University of Richmond, Virginia.



**WARREN C. BOWLES\***

(YOUSSOUF SADIO) is making his debut at Illusion Theater. He has experience as an actor, director, fight choreographer, and playwright at Mixed Blood Theatre, The Guthrie Theater, Six Points Theater, Ten Thousand Things Theater, History Theatre, A Contemporary Theatre, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Kingsmen Shakespeare Company, American Players' Theater, Park Square Theatre, and others across the country. His degrees come from the Universities of Minnesota and Notre Dame with studies at l'Université Catholique de l'Ouest (Angers, France). He received a 2005 McKnight Fellowship for Theater Artists, a 2016 Ivey recognition for directing, and in 2013 he was named a "Local Legend" at the annual MLK breakfast.

**STAN EGI\***

(MOON-SO) is thrilled to be back in Minneapolis since performing at the Guthrie Theatre in *Naga Mandala* directed by Garland Wright. He recently performed at the Goodman Theatre in *Nightwatch* directed by Chay Yew, in *King of the Yees* by Lauren Yee at Baltimore's Center Stage and Seattle's ACT Theatre. On Broadway he appeared in the Tony Award winning *Anything Goes* for 2 years. Off Broadway: Public Theatre in *Golden Child* by David Henry Hwang, *Manhattan Theatre Club* directed by Oskar Eustis, Playwrights Horizons in *Yankee Dawg You Die* by Philip Kan Gotanda. Regional Theatres: leading roles at American Conservatory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Pasadena Playhouse, Sundance Theatre Lab, New Jersey Repertory, South Coast Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, Huntington Theatre, Yale Repertory. Film: *Rising Sun* with Sean Connery, *Paradise Road* with Glenn Close, *Come See the Paradise*, *Gung Ho*, *Boys on the Side*. TV: *Hawaii Five-O*, *CSI*, *Medium*, *Numb3rs*, *J.A.G.* Stan lives in Los Angeles with his wife, actress, and choreographer Annie Yee.

**RICHARD OOMS\***

(BAJRAN) began his career in repertory at the Playhouse in the Park in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1970. He appeared Off-Broadway in *Anna K* in 1971. In 1972 he became a founding member of John Houseman's The Acting Company where for eight years he performed in over 35 plays, appearing in cities throughout the U.S., the Virgin Islands, and Australia. Richard was a member of the acting company at the Guthrie Theater from 1981 to 2013. He has appeared in roles ranging from King Lear to Argon in *The Imaginary Invalid*. Richard has also appeared at The Childrens' Theater Company, The Mixed Blood Theater, with Ten Thousand Things and Park Square. Other regional credits include American Conservatory theater in San Francisco, IRT in Indianapolis, The St. Louis Rep and Missouri Rep in Kansas City. Richard can be seen in the films *Drop Dead Gorgeous* and *The Thirteenth Warrior*.

**JOELLE COUTU** (Stage Manager)

Joelle is excited to back with Illusion Theater. Joelle has been a stage manager in the Twin Cities for over 20 years for various large and small companies. She has worked for such places as the History Theater, Guthrie Theater, Skylark Opera, Theater Latte Da, Lyric Opera of the North, Gilbert & Sullivan Very Light Opera Company, Park Square Theater, Triple Espresso, among others.

**BONNIE MORRIS** (Producing Director)

Bonnie has been a part of Illusion's remarkable history as an actor, writer, educator, and producer. Bonnie is passionate about new works and new artists. Bonnie co-authored all of Illusion's educational plays including *TOUCH*, *For Our Daughters*, *Clear the Air* and *Keepin it Real*. Bonnie was awarded the 2014 Lifetime Achievement Ivey Award.

## **MICHAEL ROBINS**

(Executive Producing Director)

founded Illusion Theater in 1974. Over the past 40+ years, he has guided nearly 500 plays to production. Most recently Michael directed T. Mychael Rambo's *PRESENT, Judy, Joan & Joni* (conceived by Michael and Roberta Carlson), the premiere of Michael Egan's stage adaptation *Five Minutes of Heaven*, and *In This Moment...Now*. Favorite projects he has directed include Allison Moore's Ivey award winning *My Antonia*, *Bill W. & Dr. Bob* by Samuel Shem and Janet Surrey, James Still's *Miranda*, Kate Guentzel in *The Pink Unicorn*, and Jeffrey Hatcher and Chan Poling's *A Night in Olympus*. With Roberta Carlson, Michael created the musical *Only One Sophie*. Michael is part of the team that created Illusion's Education/Prevention program in 1977 starting with the award-winning play *Touch*. Michael received the 2014 Lifetime Achievement Ivey Award with Illusion Theater co-founder Bonnie Morris.

## **TREE O'HALLORAN**

(Associate Producer)

has worked intermittently with the Illusion Theater on new works, established plays and educational tours since 1988 and has recently joined the theater full time in the role of Associate Producer. As a stage manager, she has worked around the country and abroad for such theaters as the Guthrie, the Alley Theatre, the Children's Theatre Company, Hartford Stage, Williamstown Theater Festival, PlayMakers Rep, Nissay Theater (Tokyo), Gibileena Festival (Italy), Jungle Theater and Ten Thousand Things.

SCAN FOR BIOS OF THE PRODUCTION TEAM:



**CAMARGO  
FOUNDATION**

CASSIS, FRANCE

## **Camargo Foundation**

Founded by American artist and philanthropist, Jerome Hill (1905-1972), the Camargo Foundation fosters creativity, research, and experimentation through its international residency program for artists, scholars, and thinkers. Since 1971 Camargo has hosted nearly 1,000 individuals working in the arts and humanities from all over the world. Located in Cassis, France on the Mediterranean Sea, the Foundation offers time and space in a contemplative and supportive environment giving residents the freedom to think, create, and connect. <https://camargofoundation.org>

## **PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER**

### **Playwrights' Center**

One of the nation's most generous and well-respected theater organizations, the Playwrights' Center focuses on both supporting playwrights and promoting new plays to production at theaters across the country. Work developed through Center programs has been seen nationwide on such stages as The Guthrie, Lincoln Center Theater, New York Theater Workshop, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Steppenwolf, The Public, Woolly Mammoth, and many others.



*Illusion Theater offers a special note of gratitude to our Board and Staff for their commitment and support to this Festival.*

## STAFF

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**Michael Robins** Executive Producing Director  
**Tree O'Halloran** Associate Producer  
**Carlyle Brown** Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Playwright-in-Residence  
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Illusion Theater's mission is to  
create theater that illuminates  
the illusions, myths and realities of our times and to  
catalyze personal and social change.



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