
CaL
PERFORMances
Program Book

Thursday through Saturday, November 12–14, 2026, 7:30pm
Sunday, November 15, 2026, 3pm
Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts, Oakland

William Kentridge's *The Head & the Load*

With music composed and conceived by Philip Miller with Thuthuka Sibisi

CREATIVE TEAM

*Concept	Director*	William Kentridge
Composer	Philip Miller
Choreography	Gregory Maqoma
*Music Director	Co-Composer*	Thuthuka Sibisi
Projection Design	Catherine Meyburgh
Costume Design	Greta Goiris
Set Design	Sabine Theunissen
Lighting Design	Urs Schönebaum
Sound Design	Mark Grey | Michele Greco
Video Editing and Compositing	Janus Fouché | Žana Marović | Catherine Meyburgh
Associate Director	Luc De Wit
Studio Technical Director	Chris Waldo de Wet
Cinematography	Duško Marović
Orchestration	Michael Atkinson | Philip Miller

Cal Performances is committed to fostering a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for all—one that honors our venues as places of respite, openness, and respect. Please see the Community Agreements section on our Policies page for more information.

CREATED AND PERFORMED BY

Actors

Hamilton Dlamini, Nhlanhla Mahlangu, Katlego Letsholonyana,
Luc De Wit, Joanna Dudley (In memoriam Mncedisi Shabangu)

Featured Vocalists & Performers

Joanna Dudley, Ann Masina, Nhlanhla Mahlangu, Bham Ntabeni, Sipho Seroto, Dana Lyn (*viola*),
N'Faly Kouyate (*kora*), Vincenzo Pasquariello (*piano*), Tlale Makhene (*percussion*)

Dancers

Otto Andile Nhlapo, Julia Zenzie Burnham, Nhlanhla Mahlangu, Thulani Chauke, Xolani Dlamini

Ensemble Vocalists

Mhlaba Buthelezi, Ayanda Eleki, Nokuthula Magubane, Ncokwane Lydia Manyama,
Tshegofatso Moeng, Mapule Moloi, Xolisile Bongwana, Motho Oa Batho,
Bulelani Madondile, Siphiwe Nkabinde, Lubabalo Velebayi

Musicians

Dilon Bryan (*French horn*), Shane Cooper (*bass*), Kendra Grittani (*cello*),
Richard Harris (*trombone*), Sam Jones (*trumpet*), Andrew Kershaw (*tuba*),
Nathan Koci (*accordion*), Shoto Otaguro (*percussion*), Myles Roberts (*flute*),
Benny Vernon (*trombone*), Khelsey Zarraga (*violin*)

ADDITIONAL ORCHESTRATION

Nathan Koci

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Production Manager	Brendon Boyd
Technical Director	Mike Edelman
Co-Sound Designer + Engineer	Michele Greco
Video Controller	Matthew Deinhart
Stage Manager	Mego Williams
Assistant Stage Manager	Lissy Barnes-Flint
Company Managers	Carol Blanco | Catherine DeGennaro
Costume Supervisor	Mathilde Baillarger
Costume Assistant	Ntabiseng Malaka
Monitor Sound Engineer	Zain Valley
Head Costume Fabricator	Emmanuelle Erhart
Costume Fabricators	Bert Menzel | Claudine Grinwis
Photography	Stella Olivier
Scenic Painter	Anaïs Thomas
Acting Coach	Phala O. Phala

The Head & the Load *acknowledges the kind assistance of Goodman Gallery, Lia Rumma Gallery, and Marian Goodman Gallery in this project.*

The Head & the Load *was originally co-commissioned by 14-18 NOW: WW1 Centenary Commissions, MASS MoCA, Park Avenue Armory, Ruhrtriennale, and Yale Schwarzman Center with additional support from Holland Festival.*

Lead support for the development of The Head & the Load *has been provided by Brenda Potter, Daniel R. Lewis, the W.L.S. Spencer Foundation, and Jennifer & Jonathan Allan Soros, with further support from Alessia Bulgari, Agnes Gund, and Wendy Fisher. Additional support has been provided by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, JKW Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, Simeon Bruner, Robert Gold, Sarah McNair, Randal Fippinger, John and Cynthia Reed, Sakurako and William Fisher, Quaternaire, and donors who wish to remain anonymous.*

Created in residence at MASS MoCA, North Adams, 2018, and Kentridge Studios, Johannesburg 2017-2018. The Head & the Load *was developed in collaboration with chamber orchestra The Knights, based in New York.*

William Kentridge's theatrical work is developed with funding from the Kentridge Creation Fund. The artists would like to acknowledge Brenda R. Potter for her Visionary Leadership Support in this effort. If you would like to have more information on the fund, please get in touch.

Support for this performance is provided by The Council for Kentridge:*

Title Sponsor: Brenda Potter

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Additional support is provided by John Atwater and Diana Nelson, and by the Howard & Sarah D. Solomon Foundation.

**This initiative will support five seasons of major works by William Kentridge.*

The Head & the Load

Lead Support: The Edgar Foster Daniels Foundation

Major Support: Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation

Patron Sponsor: Nadine Tang (November 15 performance)

The Head & the Load *will last approximately 90 minutes and be performed without an intermission.*

The Head & the Load is about Africa and Africans during the First World War. That is to say, about all the contradictions and paradoxes of colonialism that were heated and compressed by the circumstances of the war. It is about historical incomprehension (and inaudibility and invisibility). The colonial logic towards the Black participants could be summed up: "Lest their actions merit recognition, their deeds must not be recorded." *The Head & the Load* aims to recognize and record.

Every project has to be a coming together of two things: an intriguing thematic idea, and a material form through which to think about it. In this case, our thinking is embodied in projections on a screen, the words of per-formers, music that is played, the movement of bodies.

The test is really to find an approach that is not an analytic dissection of a historical moment, but which doesn't avoid the questions of history. Can one find the truth in the fragmented and incomplete? Can one think about history as collage, rather than as narrative?

We are aided in the history itself. If you're thinking of the war in Europe, you're thinking about high modernism. The Dada movement of 1916 is an essential part of the project. One of the striking aspects of colonialism is Europe's incomprehension of Africa—not being able to hear the very clear language that was being spoken by Africa to Europe. There is the sense of language breaking down into non-sense, which is what Dadaism was very much about.

Carrying through the idea of history as collage, the libretto of *The Head & the Load* is largely constructed from texts and phrases from a range of writers and sources, cut-up, interleaved, and expanded. Frantz Fanon translated into siSwati; Tristan Tzara in isiZulu; Wilfred Owen in French and dog-barking; the conference of Berlin, which divided up Africa, rendered as sections from Kurt Schwitters' *Ursonate*; phrases from a handbook of military drills; Setswana proverbs from Sol Plaatje's 1920 collection; some lines from Aimé Césaire.

Likewise, the original music by Philip Miller and Thuthuka Sibisi includes transformed traditional African songs as well as quotations from European composers from the time of the war like Maurice Ravel, Erik Satie, Paul Hindemith, and Arnold Schoenberg.

We're very excited to bring *The Head & the Load* to Cal Performances, as the first of five works to be shown over the next five seasons.

—William Kentridge

LIBRETTO

ACT 1 | MANIFESTOS
Manifestos
Morsecode | Swahili Phrasebook
Ursonate
Orders & Commands
Recruiting
Procession to War

ACT 2 | PARADOX
Eight Things
Troubles of the Body
Chilembwe's Letter
Playing Against History
God Save The King
Amakatsi

ACT 3 | WAR
Kaiser Waltz
Running
Running & Falling
Je Te Veux
Wounded Man
Advanced Arithmetic
Kwanukimpi
Death List | Coda

During the First World War, the English Committee for the Welfare of Africans sent hymn books, harmonicas, gramophones, and banjos to the African battalions so that they could entertain themselves. What songs of war, love, and longing might have been made by these African men in the trenches on the Western Front or in the camps of East Africa?

During the early 20th century, composers such as Hindemith, Schoenberg, and Ravel sounded the siren for the end of Romanticism and the beginning of a new modernism. From this arose a musical shift toward atonality and serialism. Is it possible that the Swahili phrase books and dictionaries published for the colonial commanders were as absurdist to the ear of a Kenyan soldier as the nonsense poetry of Kurt Schwitters?

The sounds of war are violent and unpredictable. This was the sonic reality of every soldier, porter, and civilian caught up in the war, both in Europe and in Africa. Using collage as a tool, we move from a cabaret song by Schoenberg, intercut with percussive slaps on hymn books, to a Viennese waltz by Fritz Kreisler. Amid this tension and instability, Africa talks back to Europe through rhythmic war songs and chants, deliberately resisting the raucous musical soundscapes of the European avant-garde.

What did the Great War sound like to the African soldiers and carriers who fought in it? Their experiences were not considered significant enough to be recorded or archived. We can only imagine the noises they heard or the music they made, through the multitude of voices and sounds we have created in *The Head & the Load*.

—Philip Miller & Thuthuka Sibisi

William Kentridge
Artist / Concept & Design

William Kentridge (born Johannesburg, South Africa, 1955) is internationally acclaimed for his drawings, films, theater works, and opera productions.

His method combines drawing, writing, film, performance, music, theater, and collaborative practices to create works of art that are grounded in politics, science, literature, and history, yet maintain a space for contradiction and uncertainty.

Kentridge's work has been seen in museums and galleries around the world since the 1990s, including at the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Musée du Louvre (Paris), Whitechapel Gallery and Royal Academy of Arts (London), Reina Sofia Museum (Madrid), Kunstmuseum (Basel), and BOZAR (Brussels). He has also participated a number of times in Documenta in Kassel and the Venice Biennale.

Opera productions include Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Shostakovich's *The Nose*, Alban Berg's *Lulu* and *Wozzeck*, and Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, staged at opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera (New York), English National Opera (London), Sydney Opera House, and Glyndebourne in the UK.

Kentridge's theatrical productions, performed in theaters and at festivals across the globe, include *Refuse the Hour*, *Winterreise*, *The Head & the Load*, *Sibyl*, and *The Great Yes, The Great No* (the latter two presented by Cal Performances in 2023 and 2025).

In 2016, Kentridge founded the Centre for the Less Good Idea in Johannesburg—a space for responsive thinking and making through experimental, collaborative, and cross-disciplinary arts practices. The Centre hosts an ongoing program of workshops, public performances, and mentorship activities.

Kentridge has received honorary doctorates from universities including Yale, London



Stella Olivier

William Kentridge

University, Columbia University, and SOAS University of London, and has been honored with a number of awards acknowledging his artistic practice and productions. In 2021, he was made a Foreign Associate Member to the French Académie des Beaux Arts, Paris. In 2022, he was presented the Honor of the Order of the Star of Italy, and in 2023, he received the Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera for *Sibyl* in London.

Kentridge's work can be found in the collections of the Carnegie Museum of Art and MoMA (New York), Fondation Cartier (Paris), Sharjah Art Foundation (United Arab Emirates), MoCA (Los Angeles), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Johannesburg Art Gallery, and many others; as well as in private collections worldwide.

Philip Miller
Composer / Music Concept & Orchestration
Philip Miller is a composer and sound artist from South Africa. His work cuts across diverse musical genres and disciplines, including contemporary dance, opera, choral works, sound installations, and soundtracks for numerous films and television productions.

His longtime collaboration with William Kentridge has spanned more than 30 years, from some of his most seminal films and installations, including *Black Box/Chambre Noire* (2005), *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2013), *Refusal of Time* (2015), *Triumphs and Laments* (2016), and *The Head and the Load* (2018), which have been presented at museums and concert halls including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Park Avenue Armory, and MOMA in New York, and the Tate Modern and Royal Academy in London. His most recent collaborations with Kentridge include *Letter to Felice* for miniature theater and *A well built city resists destruction*, the twelfth film in Kentridge's Soho Eckstein series.

Miller has received commissions from the International Music Institute Darmstadt Festival (Germany) and Kaunas Cultural Capital of European Union (Lithuania).



Stella Olivier

Philip Miller

His sound and video work has been exhibited at the Anne Frank Museum (2023) MAXXI – National Museum of 21st-century Art (Rome, 2026), Carlier | Gebauer (Buenos Aries, 2025), Autograph ABP with co-composer Thuthuka Sibisi (London, 2017), Wits Art Museum (Johannesburg, 2014), and Rewind (Venice Biennale, South African Pavilion, 2011).

Over the last few years, Miller has been touring his vogue-opera *Nkoli, a Fierce and Fabulous Life* both at the Baxter Theatre and Market Theatre in South Africa and this coming June at the Theater der Welt Festival, Germany. His collaborative choral work *Reuben T. Caluza the B-Side* with co-composer Tshegofatso Moeng and video designer Marcos Martins, has just been presented at Artscape, Cape Town.

Gregory Maqoma
Choreographer

Born in Soweto in 1973, Gregory Vuyani Maqoma became interested in dance in the late 1980s, finding in movement both a creative language and a means of navigating the political tensions that shaped his place of birth. He began his formal dance training at Moving Into Dance (MID)in 1990 and has since established himself as one of South Africa's most internationally recognized choreographers, directors, teachers, and creative voices.

In 1999, while undertaking a scholarship at the Performing Arts Research and Training Studios in Belgium, Maqoma founded Vuyani Dance Theatre, which has since grown into an internationally acclaimed platform for contemporary African dance, artistic development, and collaboration.

Maqoma served as Associate Artistic Director of MID from 2002 to 2006 and of the FNB Dance Umbrella Festival in 2010. He was Artistic Director of the Afro-Vibes Festival in the Netherlands and United Kingdom from 2004 to 2010, served on the dance committee of South Africa's National Arts Festival from 2011 to 2017, and curated its main dance program in 2017.



Stella Olivier

Gregory Maqoma

As a teacher and artistic mentor, Maqoma has worked at universities, schools, and artistic institutions across Africa, Europe, and the United States, including at the University of California, Bates College, Bennington College, University of Minnesota, University of Cape Town, and École des Sables in Senegal. He has created repertoire for companies including Ballet de l'Opéra de Lyon, Ballet Black, and Via Katlehong.

Collaboration has remained central to Maqoma's artistic practice. Throughout his career, he has worked with an extraordinary range of intergenerational artists and makers, including William Kentridge, Faustin Linyekula, Akram Khan, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, and Kwame Kwei-Armah, while also nurturing a new generation of artists, including his protégé Musa Motha.

In 2026, Maqoma entered a significant new chapter of creation and international collaboration. He created *Genesis: The Beginning and End of Time* with poet and writer Karthika Naïr, continuing his exploration of the body as a site of memory, history, death, and renewal. He also collaborated with Sue Buckmaster and Theatre-Rites on *The Return to the Forest*, bringing together choreography, theatre, puppetry, and visual storytelling. His longstanding creative relationship with William Kentridge continued with *Orfeo*, presented at the Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

Forthcoming projects in 2027 include new creative collaborations with acclaimed theater and film director Julie Taymor, poet and playwright Inua Ellams, and theatermaker and director Amir Nizar Zuabi.

Among the many honors recognizing his contribution to the arts, Maqoma was named Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Government in 2017. He was selected as the International Dance Day Message Author and has received the Simon Nkoli Feather Award and the Artfluence Human



Stella Olivier

Thuthuka Sibisi

Rights Champion Award in recognition of his remarkable career, courage, and commitment to social justice

Thuthuka Sibisi
Co-composer & Music Director

Thuthuka Sibisi is a multidisciplinary artist, composer, and performance maker from Johannesburg, South Africa. His practice critically interrogates the intersections of queer identity, colonial legacies, and sonic resistance, creating spaces for radical reimagining.

Sibisi holds a bachelor's degree in music from Stellenbosch University, with additional studies in physical theater, and an MA in performance making from Goldsmiths (UK). Currently, he is a PhD candidate at the University of Johannesburg and a visiting lecturer at Yale University.

Sibisi's notable collaborations include working as a composer and music director for William Kentridge on *The Head & the Load*, which premiered London's Tate Modern (2018), and on "Triumphs and Laments" in Rome (inaugurated 2016). He is a collaborator with choreographer Gregory Maqoma, including on the touring production *Broken Chord*. Recent work includes *Dada Masilo's Hamlet* (Vienna, 2024) and a commission for Dutch National Opera.

His installation work has been presented at venues such as Autograph ABP (London), Iziko Museum (Cape Town), and the Apartheid Museum (Johannesburg). In film, he directed *Sonder* (2025) and co-directed *Not here but here and everywhere else* (2024).

Sibisi bridges artistic practice with scholarly research, with recent academic publications and visiting artist positions at Yale and Princeton, as well as being a curatorial fellow at Performa (New York City). His accolades include an Olivier Award nomination, a South African Music Award, and selection as a *Mail* & *Guardian* 200 Young South African.

A complete set of biographies *is available by scanning this QR code on your mobile device:*

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The Knights | Artistic Directors
Colin Jacobsen and Eric Jacobsen
Interns | Sigi Koerner, Luke Gibson,
and Stephanie Barker