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# URBAN STAGES

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urbanStages   
PRESENTS THE NEW YORK PREMIERE OF

# DOGS OF RWANDA

by **SEAN CHRISTOPHER LEWIS**  
directed by **FRANCES HILL & PETER NAPOLITANO**

starring **DAN HODGE**  
with music composed and performed by **ABOU LION DIARRA**

scenic design  
**FRANK J. OLIVA**

lighting design  
**JOHN SALUTZ**

projection design  
**RYAN BELOCK**

technical director  
**KIM T. SHARP**

production stage manager  
**JEANA HILLARY  
CAPORELLI**

assistant stage manager  
**JENNA LOWRY**

press representative  
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Actors, Production Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Manager appear courtesy of Actors' Equity Association.

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## CAST

David Zosia.....DAN HODGE  
Musician.....ABOU LION DIARRA

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## FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

“We are preaching hope, standing on the bones of the past.”

—John Rucyahana, *The Bishop of Rwanda: Finding Forgiveness Amidst a Pile of Bones*

What happens in life can be because of timing. Sean Christopher Lewis sent me an email a few months ago saying he would like Urban Stages to know about *Dogs of Rwanda*. I was looking for a play that fit into our 34th season—a season where we decided to reach beyond our shores and examine international stories and artists.

For the last several years, I have read many plays by Sean. I have always been intrigued with the quality of his writing and the gutsy stories he chooses to tell. I feel this play, in particular, will connect our audiences to some of what Rwandans had to overcome, and to the path of forgiveness and redemption Rwanda, as a nation, chose to follow. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting. We cannot forget the horrific genocides throughout history occurring in places like Armenia, Bosnia, Cambodia, Darfur and throughout Europe during the Holocaust. Revisiting them should make us aware that we have to make sure these atrocities to mankind do not happen again.

We are thrilled to have Dan Hodge on our stage. Dan played the part of David to great acclaim in the Philadelphia production of *Dogs of Rwanda* in April of 2017. The show was voted one of the best productions in 2017. Added to the Urban Stages production of this drama is West African musician Abou Lion Diarra. Abou is an internationally known drummer who picked up the sticks when he was just three-years-old. Trained by Ivory Coast’s most renowned drummer, Soro Mades, Abou also plays flute, saxophone, clarinet, guitar, bass, piano and djembe. He will compose music and perform throughout the play.

Furthermore, I am thrilled to welcome back much of the creative team from our fall production of Zhu Yi’s *A Deal*. Frank J. Oliva, set designer, has transformed our stage to permit us to enter the mind of David, our storyteller. John Salutz brings his amazing talents to illuminate the stage and reflect the emotions of the story. If you came to *A Deal*, you without doubt noticed the brilliant video projections of Ryan Belock. He is back! Peter Napolitano and I also count ourselves amongst



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THEATRE TITLE (3)

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the creative team as co-directors. We previously enjoyed working together on the world premiere of *Mabel Madness* by and starring Tony Award Winner Trazana Beverley in spring of 2016.

Urban Stages will be producing other programs and events at the theatre and beyond our stage. During the run of *Dogs in Rwanda*, we will hold various special musical evenings. Check our website for free staged readings, including a special series called *Words by Women* that highlight women writers and women stories. Our SWAN Day (Support Women Artists Now Day) short-play festival is coming back in May, produced by Bara Swain. Our Summer theatre camp for 10–15 year olds begins on July 1, 2018. Finally, visit your neighborhood library for one of our touring outreach plays or workshops. Remember to sign up for our e-mail announcements and check our website to keep up on everything uS. [www.urbanstages.org](http://www.urbanstages.org)

—Frances Hill

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## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

**DANHODGE** (*David*) has been a Philadelphia-based actor and director for a decade. As an actor he has been a regular presence on most of the regional stages, including Walnut Street Theatre, Arden Theatre Company, Wilma Theater, InterAct Theatre Company, Theatre Exile, The Lantern, Delaware Theatre Company, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Passage Theatre, 1812 Productions, among others. Across the country he has appeared at The Old Globe, Cleveland Play House, Peterborough Players, Michigan Shakespeare Festival and Weatherford Repertory Theatre. Dan is the co-founding artistic director of the Philadelphia Artists' Collective (The PAC) which produces rarely seen classical plays and has become one of the most dynamic up-and-coming theatres in the area. He is also a company member of Curio Theatre Company and is a resident director there. He has directed for Curio Theatre Company and The PAC, as well as Commonwealth Classics, Hedgerow Theatre Company, Passage Theatre and others. Dan won the Barrymore Award

for Leading Actor for his work in *Around the World in 80 Days* for Delaware Theatre Company, and also won Supporting Actor for *Fair Maid of the West* for The PAC. He holds a BFA in Acting from the University of Evansville and an MFA in Classical Acting from The Old Globe/University of San Diego. **ABOU LION DIARRA** (*Musician*) is the founder and musical director of the powerhouse group, The Black Warriors, NYC's premiere band working with West Africa's biggest acts. Their launch at Celebrate Brooklyn's African Festival was followed by a 40-city tour working with artists from Guinea, Ghana and the Ivory Coast, Abou's native country. Abou first picked up the sticks at age three. He played on bottles, cans, tables, garbage cans, whatever made a good sound. His musical journey led him to study with one of the Ivory Coast's most renowned drummers, Soro Mades, then going on to the Institute National des Arts (INA) and a scholarship to Orchestre de L'Universite D'Abidjan. His appearances in West African clubs and on television

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## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

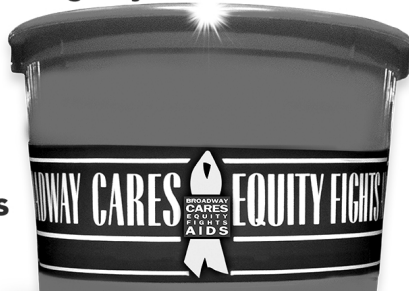
ultimately led him to New York. Abou is a new breed of drummer who can navigate through different musical genres, switching beats, rhythms and styles. Aside from playing the drums Abou also plays flute, saxophone, clarinet, guitar, bass, piano and djembe; is pursuing his songwriting talents; and hopes to achieve all that God has given him to do.

**SEAN CHRISTOPHER LEWIS** (*Playwright*). His work as a playwright and solo performer have won NEFA National Theatre Project Award, The Kennedy Center's Rosa Parks Award, National New Play Network's Smith Prize, NEA Voices in Community Award, a Puffin Foundation Artists Award, a Barrymore Award from the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, a Central Ohio Critic's Circle Citations for Best Touring Production and Best New Work, a National Performance Network Creation Fund Grant, William Inge Fellowship and an NNPN Emerging Playwright Residency. His plays and solo pieces include *Dogs of Rwanda* (NNPN Rolling World Premiere at 16th Street Theatre, Phoenix Theatre, InterAct Theatre Company, Out of Hand Theatre, Ojai Playwrights Conference, Englert Theatre, Redfern Performing Arts Center, UNI Genocide Center, CSPS/Legion Arts, Horizon Theatre, Available Light Theatre); *Killadelphia* (Baltimore Center Stage, American Theatre Company, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, InterAct Theatre Company, Southern Rep, Institut Del Teatra in Spain, Revolutions International Theatre Festival, 16th Street Theatre, Riverside Theatre, CSPS/Legion Arts, Cape May Stage, Adirondack Theatre Festival, Touchstone Theatre, Hartbeat

Ensemble, Gerald W. Lynch Theatre, Available Light Theatre, Graterford Prison and the Idaho Juvenile Detention Center); *Just Kids* (KO Festival of Performance, Sandglass Theatre, Available Light Theatre, Pontine Theatre); *The Gone Chair* (Open Stage of Harrisburg; Penn State University's Cultural Conversations Festival); *I Will Make You Orphans* (Uno Festival of International Solo Performance, Hyde Park Theatre, Riverside Theatre, The Chocolate Factory, Available Light Theatre); *Black and Blue* (Riverside Theatre, Geva Theatre Center); *Militant Language* (Know Theatre of Cincinnati, Halcyon Theatre, Bang and Clatter and Theater for the New City, published by Original Works Publishing); *The Aperture* (Cleveland Public Theatre); *The Homeschooling of Jonathan Anderson* (Drilling Company NYC, Luna Theater, Prologue Theatre, Theatre of Note, Orange Tea Theatre in Amsterdam and in the U.K. at FutureLight) and *Manning Up* (NNPN Rolling World Premiere at Riverside Theatre, Salt Lake Acting Company and Actor's Summit). Recently, with Jennifer Fawcett, he developed the one-man performance installation *Ghost Story* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. It then performed at Englert Theatre and will begin touring in 2018. He is the co-creator and writer of the comic books *Saints*, *The Few* and *Coyotes* all three of which are published by Image Comics, with *Saints* recently optioned for television by Grandview/Automatik. He can be heard as a commentator on NPR's *This American Life*. **FRANCES HILL** (*Co-Director, Founding Artistic Director*) began her theatrical career in California as an actress. Since 1983, Ms. Hill

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THEATRE TITLE (5)

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## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

has overseen more than 600 staged readings/workshops and 90 productions of new works for the stage. She has directed over 30 workshops and productions. Her favorite directing credits include Gino DiIorio's *Apostasy*, Roma Greth's *Our Summer Days*, Jim Lehrer's *Chili Queen* (directed at Urban Stages and The Kennedy Center), John Picardi's *Seven Rabbits on a Pole* and *The Sweepers* (directed at Urban Stages and Capital Rep), *Comfort Women* by Chugmi Kim (Urban Stages 2004), *27 Rue De Fleurs* and *My Occasion of Sin*. Two of her plays have been produced, *Our Bench* and *Life Lines*. Under the guidance of Ms. Hill, Playwrights' Preview Productions/Urban Stages have moved two plays into commercial Off-Broadway successes. *Minor Demons* opened the new Century Center Theater and *Men on the Verge of His-Panic Breakdown* won an Outer Critic's Circle Award while playing to capacity audiences at 47th Street Theater. Urban Stages' African American Poets as Playwrights won eight AUDELCO nominations and *Coyote on a Fence* received two Drama Desk nominations and a Pilgrim's Project Award. Eisa Davis's *Bulrusher* was one of three nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. 2010 production of *Langston in Harlem* won several drama desk nominations, a John Calloway award and several AUDELCO nominations including a win for best music production of the year (2010), along with several other awards. Recently *Character Man* by Jim Brochu (2014) was nominated for a Drama Desk and Outer Critic's Circle Award and *Mabel Madness* by Trezana Beverley (2016) was nominated for an AUDELCO Award.

**PETER NAPOLITANO** (*Co-Director, Director of Musical Theatre & Associate Producer*) has over 30 years experience as a writer, director and producer in New York theatre and cabaret. He was lyricist of *Tropicana*, book and direction by the legendary George Abbott (produced Off-Broadway by Musical Theatre Works); lyricist/librettist of *The Lady in Penthouse B*, music by Matthew Ward (produced multi style by York Theatre, starring Nancy Dussault); *Pinocchio of Chelsea*, music by Mark Janas (MMTL staged reading at Snapple Theater Center); and *That Way*, music by Barry Levitt (staged readings at Urban Stages, MMTL). He is

an alumnus of the prestigious BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop and has had his songs and special material performed by many outstanding cabaret and theatre artists. His directing credits include the early work of Charles Busch at The Performing Garage and Theatre for the New City. He has received two Bistro Awards (Director, Outstanding Series) and four MAC Awards (Director, Song, Open Mic, Benefit Series) for his recent work in virtually every major New York cabaret venue. Associated with Urban Stages for seven years, he has previously collaborated with Ms. Hill on the direction of *Mabel Madness*, written and performed by Tony Award winner Trezana Beverly for which he also wrote two songs with composer Levitt, co-produced *Musical Legends*, *My Occasion of Sin*, *Character Man* and produced seven seasons of MAC and Bistro Award-winning benefit series *Winter Rhythms*. A guest lecturer at Manhattan School of Music, he is a graduate of the NYU School of the Arts, Experimental Theatre Wing, where he studied with celebrated theatre artists Spalding Gray, Charles Ludlam, Anne Bogart, to name a few. Other highlights of his varied career include working with the ground-breaking Off-Broadway Ridiculous Theatrical Co. and The Glines, contributing editor of *The Blockbuster Guide to Movies on Video* (Dell) and author of "Modern Love" essay for *The New York Times*.

**FRANK J. OLIVA** (*Scenic Designer*) is an NYC-based scenic designer for stage and film, working primarily on new plays. Recent: *The Old Settler* (Billie Holiday Theatre); *We Will Not Be Silent* and *Welcome to Fear City* (Contemporary American Theatre Festival); *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Two River Theater); *A Deal*, *Communion* and *Angry Young Man* (Urban Stages); *Lost Not Found* (UP Theater Company). Frank is the winner of the 2017 Innovative Theater Award for Scenic Design. BFA/NYU. [www.frankjoliva.com](http://www.frankjoliva.com)

**JOHN SALUTZ** (*Lighting Designer*) is a New York-based lighting and sound designer working in theatre, dance and live performance. His work has been seen and heard at York Theatre, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Urban Stages, Queens Theatre in the Park, Poseidon Theatre Co., Hard Sparks, Via Brooklyn, Two Headed Rep, Connecticut

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THEATRE TITLE (6)

WW1



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## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

Ballet, Atlantic Acting School, Centenary Stage Co., Southeast Alabama Dance Co., Stella Adler Studio of Acting, Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute, the Hartt School (University of Hartford), FringeNYC and Theatre 167. Additional information can be found at [www.johnsalutzdesigns.com](http://www.johnsalutzdesigns.com).

**RYAN BELOCK** (*Projection Designer*) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Manhattan. As a designer, percussionist and actor his primary work concentrates on integrating projected media with live performance. Off-Broadway: *A Deal* (Urban Stages); *Me & Ella* (York Theatre). Associate/assistant: *Party People* (The Public Theater); *Sojourners*, *Her Portmanteau* (New York Theater Workshop); *Rags* (Goodspeed Opera); *The Masked Ball* (Austin Opera); *Jane Eyre* (Center for Contemporary Opera); *Are You Now* (Metro Stage); *And Then They Came for Me* (Indiana Rep). Regional: *Oklahoma!* (Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra); *In the Heights*, *Into the Woods* (Austin, TX). World premieres: *Sorin: A Notre Dame Story* (University of Notre Dame); *Colossal*, *Re/Connect* (Cohen New Works Festival). MFA: UT-Austin. BA:

University of Notre Dame. [ryanbelock.com](http://ryanbelock.com)  
**KIM T. SHARP** (*Technical Director*) is pleased to be part of the team bringing *Dogs of Rwanda* to the stage. He works regularly with Urban Stages in their efforts to champion new works by artists of diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition to technical support, Kim is a director, dramaturg and teacher. He served as Abingdon Theatre Company's associate artistic director and literary manager for 16 seasons. He continues to work with theatre artists to bring challenging and invigorating material to the stage. Thanks to Frances and everyone at Urban Stages for this opportunity.  
**JEANAHILLARYCAPORELLI** (*Production Stage Manager*). Off-Broadway: *Cardinal* (Second Stage Theater), *A Deal* (Urban Stages), *Kid Victory* (Vineyard Theatre), *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (The Playwrights Realm), *Sweat* (The Public), *They Promised Her the Moon* (Miranda Theatre Company). Regional: Cape Playhouse, Saint Michael's Playhouse, Berkeley Rep, Bucks County Playhouse and more. BFA: University of Central Florida.  
**JENNA LOWRY** (*Assistant Stage Manager*)

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THEATRE TITLE (7)

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# WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

is a stage manager based in New York City and the surrounding area. Most recently, she stage-managed *The Dream of the Burning Boy* with Normal Ave Productions. She was also the stage manager for season nine of *The Fire This Time's* 10-Minute Play Festival in January. Jenna is the outreach and social media assistant for Urban Stages and serves on the summer camp staff, as well. Jenna earned her BA from Muhlenberg College in 2017. **URBAN STAGES** is an award-winning, not-for-profit, Off-Broadway Theatre Company founded in 1984 by current Artistic Director Frances Hill. For over 30 years, Urban Stages has produced dozens of world, American and NYC premieres including Pulitzer Prize Finalist *Bulrushers* (2007) by Eisa Davis. We have been honored with awards, nominations and recognition from the Drama Desk, Obie Awards, AUDELCO, Outer Critics Circle and much more. Our world premiere of the musical *Langston In Harlem* by Walter Marks (music and book) and Kent Gash (book and direction) garnered a Drama Desk nomination, a Joe A. Calloway Award and four AUDELCO Awards including Best Musical Production of 2010. More recently, we've hand critically acclaimed hits with *Mabel Madness* by Tony winner Trezana Beverley (2016), *Communion* by Daniel MacIvor (2016) and *Angry Young Man* by Ben Woolf (2017) which transferred to the John Drew Theatre at Guild Hall in East Hampton. *Unseamly* by Oren Safdie (2015) was *The New York Times* Critics Pick. *Jim Brochu Character Man* (2014) was nominated for a Drama Desk and an Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Solo performance and *Honky* (2013) by Greg Kalleres saw a regional run at San Diego Rep and was televised nationally on PBS in late 2015. After production, most plays move on to larger venues. *Men on the Verge of a Hispanic Breakdown* by Guillermo Reyes and *Minor Demons* by Bruce Graham both moved to commercial theatres. *Chili Queen*, a play by newscaster Jim Lehrer, transferred to The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. (1989). *My Occasion of Sin* (2012) by Monica Bauer won critical acclaim when it moved to Detroit Rep. Bill Bowers has toured the United States and the world with his two Urban Stages premieres blending mime and theatre—*Beyond*

*Words* (2012) and *Under a Montana Moon* (2002). Some Urban Stages premieres have even been developed into film and television projects such as *Scar* by Murray Mednick, *Conversations with The Goddesses* by Agapi Stassinopoulos and *Cotton Mary* by Alexandra Viets. In addition to plays and musicals, annually we hold a music festival—Winter Rhythms—that features famous and up-and-coming Cabaret, musicians, lyricists and other music artists. In 2016, Winter Rhythms was honored with the Bistro Award for Outstanding Series and in 2015, it received the Ruth Kurtzman Benefit Series MAC Award from the Manhattan Association of Cabarets and Clubs.

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