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### KST PRESENTS: Work-in-Progress Reading of *Wade in the Water* by Mukwae Wabei Siyolwe & Daniel Bernard Roumain

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Kelly Strayhorn Theater is proud to present a work-in-progress showing of *Wade in the Water* by Mukwae Wabei Siyolwe and Daniel Bernard Roumain on Friday, April 25 and Saturday, April 26. This powerful theater reading begins at 8 p.m. at The Alloy Studios.

Developed during an artist residency at Kelly Strayhorn Theater, this work-in-progress by veteran performer of film and theater, Mukwae Wabei Siyolwe, explores modern-day revolutions through the lens of the ancient ceremony Kuomboka on the Bartose Floodplain, where the annual flood forces the population to higher ground.

In the oratorio style of Handel's *Messiah*, *Wade in the Water* is a hybrid mixed-media performance where indigenous and Western identities collide in an interactive tale.

Set in dreamtime, the tale spans more than 100 years and explores the relationship between Siyolwe and her great, great grandfather, King Lewanika of Barotseland. Siyolwe plays the heroine Princess Water who is guided by the elements Fire, Air, Earth, and Metal on her journey to understand the rich history of Barotseland. The importance of preserving traditions and the means of engaging in social change are key themes presented in *Wade in the Water*.

At this public reading the audience witnesses and participates in re-mapping the world in five disparate short acts. At the end, the artists and audience migrate together across the floodplain in order to reach higher ground.

"In this journey I was called to insert my contribution into the future history of Barotseland," says Siyolwe, "and I invite audiences to witness and gain insight into worlds on the margins of world history, who have decided to attain sovereignty and re-map the world."

In collaboration with Siyolwe, Haitian-American composer and violinist Daniel Bernard Roumain reenacts this living cultural tradition, blending the ancient music of Kuomboka with non-traditional hip-hop and classical music. Other collaborators include multitalented artist, producer, and entrepreneur Chen Lo, who has shared the stage with The Roots, Common, and Erykah Badu. Pittsburgh-based vocalist and teaching artist Anqwenique Wingfield, specializing in opera, classical music, jazz and soul, also joins the team of visionaries.

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Photo courtesy of Mukwae Wabei Siyolwe



“Wabei and Daniel are incredible artists who fuse contemporary with tradition,” says Janera Solomon, executive director of KST. “Their multimedia work has been seen around the world. We’re excited to host this residency and share this work-in-progress with Pittsburgh.”

Tickets for **Wade in the Water** are \$15 and can be purchased online at [kelly-strayhorn.org](http://kelly-strayhorn.org).

### About the Kelly Strayhorn Theater

As the last of nine theaters from the 1950s heyday of East Liberty, the Kelly Strayhorn Theater uses the arts as a catalyst for continuing community revitalization. The theater, in its 12th season, continues to play a key role in the transformation of Pittsburgh’s East Liberty neighborhood. An intimate, professional equipped, 349-seat multiple-use performance venue, the theater demonstrates its commitment to Pittsburgh artists and audiences. The KST is a favorite venue of emerging local artists, regional artists and arts organizations who take risks and present new work. Noted Pittsburghers Gene Kelly and Billy Strayhorn, the namesakes, are among the 80 area artists honored on the theater’s Gallery of Stars. The building, opening in 1914, is the former Regent Theatre, which served the East End as a movie house for eight decades.

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