Crossing Boundaries
Performing Arts Festival and Conference
Sep 24-27, 2015
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Zamaleo Singana Storytellers
Kenya

Ugandan Team
Uganda

Melaku Belay
Ethiopia

Ananya Dance Theatre
U.S.A

Parapanda Theater Lab-trust
Tanzania

Hulegeb Israeli-Ethiopian Theater Ensemble
Israel

Amizero Kompagnie
Rwanda

Sabeel for the Arts
Egypt

Troupe Lampyre
Burundi

Ethiopian Diaspora Theater Group

Tobia Poetic Jazz
Ethiopia

AlBugaa Theater
Sudan

Ethiopian Theatre Professionals Association Presents
Organizers
Ethiopian Theater Professionals Association
Ethiopian National Theater
Addis Ababa University College of Performing and Visual Arts
Sundance Institute East Africa Theater Program Alumni
Performance Studies International/PSi/

Collaborators
Ministry of Culture and Tourism
Sundance Institute
Michelle Promotion
Kiba Multimedia Production
Care Events and Communication
Aezop Communications
Hager Fiker Theater
Addis Ababa Theater and Culture Hall
Oromo Cultural Center
Asni Gallery
Modern Art Museum, Gebrekrastos Desta Center
Institute of Ethiopian Studies /Mekonin Hall/
Goethe Institute
Alle School of Fine Arts and Design
Ethiopian National Museum
Ethiopian Authors Association
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Israel Embassy
Tebita Ambulance
NTO
Agafari Travel
Taitu Hotel
Kibran Travel
## Crossing Boundaries Performances

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<th>Dates</th>
<th>Performance Title</th>
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<td>4:30PM – Photo Exhibition, Love is in the hair - Performance Martha Taddesse &amp; Ruth Ademassu [Ethiopia]</td>
<td>National Theater Gallery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5:00PM – Visual Arts Performance Martha Haile [Ethiopia]</td>
<td>Ethiopian National Theater Main Gate</td>
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<td>6:00PM – Special Opening Ceremony, Hosted by Silesi Demissie and Munit Mesfin with the Ethiopian National Theater traditional group and special Lifetime Achievement awardee w/ro Askale Ameneshewa</td>
<td>Ethiopian National Theater</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, September 25</td>
<td>3:00PM – “Dèchirement” Troupe Lampyre [Burundi]</td>
<td>Alliance Ethio-Francaise</td>
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<td>3:00 PM – “Yeberehan Merged” Zerihun Berehanu [Ethiopia]</td>
<td>Ethiopian National Theater</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3:00PM – “Facebook” Diaspora Theater Group [Ethiopia/USA]</td>
<td>Hager Fiker Theater</td>
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<td>4:00 PM – “Solitaire” Sabeel for the Arts [Egypt]</td>
<td>Addis Ababa Theater &amp; Culture Hall</td>
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<td>5:00PM – “Facebook” Diaspora Theater Group [Ethiopia/USA]</td>
<td>Ethiopian National Theater</td>
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<td>6:00PM – “Roktim -Nurture Incarnadine” Keynote Performance by Ananya Dance Group [USA]</td>
<td>Ethiopian National Theater</td>
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<td>Saturday, September 26</td>
<td>2:00PM – “Poetic Jazz” Tobiya Poetic Jazz with Netsa Awechi Band [Ethiopia]</td>
<td>Oromo Cultural Center</td>
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<td>2:30PM – “Chuano” Parapanda Theater Lab Trust [Tanzania]</td>
<td>Hager Fiker Theater</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3:00PM – “Radio Play” Amizero Theater Company [Rwanda]</td>
<td>Ethiopian National Theater</td>
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<td>4:00PM – “Desperate to Fight” Meaza Worku &amp; Aida Mbowa</td>
<td>Ethio-Uganda</td>
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<td>5:00PM – “Fumo Iyongo” Zamaleo Singana Story Tellers [Kenya]</td>
<td>Ethiopian National Museum</td>
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<td>5:00PM – “Sinnar Crucible” Al-Bugaa Theater Group [Sudan]</td>
<td>Oromo Cultural Center</td>
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<td>7:15PM – “Mandefro Feredeh” Hulegub Israeli- Ethiopian Ensemble [Israel]</td>
<td>Ethiopian National Theater</td>
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<td>8:30PM – Food Art Performance by Konjit Seyoum</td>
<td>Asni Gallery</td>
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<td>Sunday, September 27</td>
<td>4:00PM – Demera - Ethiopian Religious Holiday</td>
<td>Meskel Square</td>
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<td>7:30PM – Official Closing Ceremony and Recognition at the First Ethiopian Hotel</td>
<td>Taitu Hotel</td>
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<td>10:30 - መጆን ገብቶች - የቀረበት ያሸገሩ ገንዘብ ያሸገሩ ገንዘብ</td>
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<td>12:00 - የወት የቀረበው ገንዘብ ያሸገሩ ገንዘብ ያሸገሩ ገንዘብ ያሸገሩ ገንዘብ</td>
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<td>1:15 - &quot;ሂን ደፍሮ ፈረደህ&quot; ያሸገሩ ገንዘብ ያሸገሩ ገንዘብ</td>
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Message from the Organizers

We extend our deepest gratitude as we close the first Crossing Boundaries Festival and Conference held from September 24 – 27, 2015 in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia.

For the past 20 years, Performance Studies International (PSi) has staged many international conferences on the performing arts globally. This year is the first time that this international performing arts festival and conference happened in Africa, with Ethiopia as its host!

Organized by the Ethiopian Theatre Professionals’ Association, Addis Abeba University’s College of Visual and Performing Arts, the Ethiopian National Theater and the Sundance Institute East Africa Theater Program Alumni, we are excited to successfully complete the first edition of Crossing Boundaries Festival and Conference with your positive and inspiring participation.

With performances from 11 countries, including Ethiopia, Crossing Boundaries’ aim was to create a space where performers, academics and cultures of the Greater East African region can meet, engage and exchange ideas and experiences on critical issues for the region and on issues pertaining to performing arts in Africa. Thank you for playing a great role towards that achievement.

We would like to extend our gratitude for the effort you made to participate, use that opportunity to network, learn from, enjoy and engage in all the performances, dialogues and workshops available. Our hope is to make this a recurring annual event, and we look forward to your continued partnership in the future as we work to uplift the performing arts in Africa.

The Organizers
Festival and Conference Venues

Ethiopian National Theatre

Hager Fiker Theater

Oromo Cultural Center

Addis Ababa Theater & Culture Hall

Meskel Square

Alliance Ethio-Francaise

Goethe Institute

Asni Gallery

Merkato Minalesh Tera

Ethiopian National Museum

Alle School of Fine Arts and Design

Ethiopian National Theater Gallery
When: Thursday, September 24 @ 9:30AM
Where: Merkato Minalesh Tera
Duration: 1 hour
Estimated number of viewers - 150

Melaku Belay, a globally acclaimed Ethiopian traditional dancer, took us to a spectacular corner in Merkato, the biggest open-air marketplace in Africa. The location, called Min-Alesh Tera, can be translated to mean the place where you can find anything you ask for! The performance was entitled "Ahun" ("Now") to signify the inspiration that existed in the moment of the performance and with a view to capturing Merkato's old architectural landscape and its ensuing soundscape, which is at the verge of extinction with Addis Abeba's rapid transformation. The performance tried to extract diverse thoughts and rhythms out of the natural working process of recycling waste barrels into vital tools with only a few hand tools to work with.
What: Visual Arts Performance by Martha Haile | Ethiopia
When: Thursday, September 24 @ 5:00PM
Where: National Theater Main Gate
Duration: 45 minutes
Estimated number of viewers - 500

In today’s <Globalized> and <Globalizing> logics of capital and the attendant life forms, the seemingly liberatory structural systems that manifest themselves in our everyday life, set various kinds of limitations. Trying to fit in to the standard western fashion culture, people are made to be attracted to/look attractive in such kind of human-made system. Martha chose mannequins to demonstrate her idea as a central visual art performance.
What: Photo Exhibition with Martha Taddesse (Photography) & Ruth Admassu (Visual Art Performance) | Ethiopia
When: Thursday, September 24 @ 4:30PM
Where: Ethiopian National Theater Gallery and out door
Duration - One day
Estimated visitor - 500

The Exhibition encouraged black women to love their natural look and push back against the western media's standards of beauty. They have tried to inspire and spark conversations on identity. <Afro? Kinky? Curly? Short? You have beautiful hair with unique texture! Accept it! Love it! Embrace it!> was their message.
What: Special Opening Ceremony for Crossing Boundaries Festival and Conference  
When: Thursday, September 24 @ 6:30PM  
Where: Ethiopian National Theater  
Duration: 2 Hours  
Estimated audience attended- 1100

Crossing Boundaries Festival and Conference was officially launched at the Ethiopian National Theater with invited guests, special guests of honor and the performers who had come from abroad. The festival bestowed a life time achievement recognition to the 92 Years old Performer Askale Ameneshewa.
The 1st Lifetime Achievement Awardee of the 1st Crossing Boundaries Festival and Conference, Artist Askale Ameneshewa

“There just isn’t any other satisfying career for me except in theater performance. Acting for me is a way of communication with people, reaching the inner most feeling of the audience and thereby experiencing myself.” Askale Ameneshew. The Ethiopian Theater Professionals’ Association, Addis Abeba University Performing Arts College and the Ethiopian National Theater, which is currently celebrating its 60th anniversary all honor and lift this great artist, Askale Ameneshewa, for all her contributions and her artistry. Sixty years ago, when this great Theater had been recently opened, Askale had the opportunity to watch “David and Orion” on its stage. This was the moment when that shifted her entire perception on what an actor and actress did; she had thought they were easy folk that were there to simply make people laugh and tell stories, but now she saw just how much more the craft was! It was a moment that helped her decide that one day, she too would be a great actress. Askale Ameneshewa was born in Addis Abeba, but was raised in what was then called the Shewa region, in a town called Jirru. While growing up, she, like most other girls, was expected to live and lead a life in the domestic realm, taking care of the house, cooking, weaving, cleaning and managing her home. At a very young age, she was already promised in marriage to a much older man. During the Italian Occupation, she stayed with her father in Jirru, but after the war and Ethiopia’s liberation, she moved
to Addis Abeba. She was relegated still to the home space, and she did not get the opportunity to learn how to read and write until she joined the theater. Her inability to read and write did not hold her back from knowing and memorizing her lines in production. She was able to transcend the boundaries and barriers that the society had put in place for her, to challenge where her place in society was, and to be seen in the most public platform that was the stage. She was a unique gem that many recognized for her tenacity, her hunger for knowledge and passion. One such individual that saw and understood her gifts was Ato Seyoum Sibihat, who was a great lover of the arts and a high official. He was so moved by Askale that he bought her an alphabet so that she can improve on her literacy. Learning and knowledge is not only to be gained from formal school and education. In her capacity as actress, Askale was able to learn and show her talent and knowledge as an actress on various challenging plays including “Menteqo”, “Gonderew Gebremariam”, “Yebege Leleet Ra-iy” and “Yazawentoch Kebeb”. There is a saying that states that “if there is a will, there is a way” and in

her journey, Askale has been able to share her knowledge and experience with university students, teaching what she knows. This is a practice that needs to be duplicated and multiplied for knowledge to be shared from the experienced to the ones starting on their journey. Crossing Boundaries Festival and Conference is honored to bestow the Lifetime Achievement Award to this still young and vibrant Askale Ameneshewa for her talent, for the ways that she challenged the perception of what a girl can do and achieve, the way that she managed and navigated her life with her passion for art, persevering and enduring great challenges and constantly updating her knowledge and capacity on the stage where she shone bright like the star.
that she is! And so, to this 92 year old talent and beauty artist, Askale Ameneshewa, we pay our respects and our sincere thanks and as we lift her up, we are also being lifted up with her. To bestow the award on her, we ask Assistant Professor Tesfaye Gessesse, who is another legend in theater, to the stage.

“There just isn’t any other satisfying career for me except in theater performance. Acting for me is a way of communication with people, reaching the inner most feeling of the audience and thereby experiencing myself.”

የመጀመሪያው የወሰንን መሻገር የትዕይንተ ጥበባት እና ጉባኤ የህይወት ዘመን

የኢትዮጵያ ቲያትር ባለሞያዎች ማህበር፣ የአዲስአበባ ከተማ ቢሆንም ያደገችው በድሮ ሸዋ ጠቅላይ ግዛት ጅሩ ነበር፡፡ ማህበረሰቡ መወሰን የቤት ሙያ፣ ወጥ መስራት፣ ጥጥ መፍተል፣ ማጀት ማሳመሩን በጠዋቱ ስርዓት የቧልት ሞክሯል፡፡ ገና በጨቅላ ዕድሜዋ ዕድሜው ለጠና ሰው ድሯታል፡፡ ታዲያ የፅሁፍን ንባብ ሳታውቅ ወደ ጥበቡ መምጣቷን የተውኔት ቃል ጥናት አሳምራ ከመያዝ አላገዳትም ነበር፡፡ ህብረተሰቡ ያሰመረላትን ድንበር ያስብራ በመውጣት ሰደ መድረክ የወጣችው ና በአንድ የሙያ ባልደረባዋ ‹ብርቅዬ› ልትባል የበቃችው አርቲስት ለዕውቀት የነበራት ጉጉት እና ፅኑ መሻት በወቅቱ ባለስልጣን የነበሩት የኪነጥበብ ወዳጅ አቶ ስዩም ስብハードን መስጧቸው የፊደል ገበታ ሊገዙላት ὑ捭ዋል፡፡ ያስተላለች ከመደበኛ ትምህርት ብቻ ይገኛል ብሎ የሚያምን በበዛበት ዓለም ይህች ተዋናይት ὣኞት ὓሎታዋን እንደ ‹መንጠቆ›፣ ‹ጎንደሬው ገብረማሪያም›፣ ‹የበጋ ለሊት ራዕይ› እና ‹የአዛውንቶች ክበብ› ላይ ተውኔቶች ላይ ተውናለች፡፡ ‹ከወሰኑ መንገድ አይጠፋም› የሚል የህይወት መመሪያ ያላት ሲሆን ለዩኒቨርስቲ ተማሪዎች ልምድ አካፋይ መምህርት እስከመሆን ደርሳለች፡፡ ያን ዓይነት የዕውቀት ማስተላለፊያ መንገድ ዘሩ እየበዛ ባይሄድም፡፡ በአጠቃላይ የወሰንን መሻገር የትውን ጥበባት እና ጉባኤ የህይወት ዘመን ተሸላሚ አድርጎ የሚያከብራት ከቅና ትምህርት ብቻ ይገኛል ብሎ የሚያምን በበዛበት ዓለም ይህች ተዋናይት ὣኞት ὓሎታዋን እንደ ‹መንጠቆ›፣ ‹ጎንደሬው ገብረማሪያም›፣ ‹የበጋ ለሊት ራዕይ› እና ‹የአ家都知道 ክበብ› ላይ ተውኔቶች ላይ ተውናለች፡፡ ‹ከወሰኑ መንገድ አይጠፋም› የሚል የህይወት መመሪያ ያላት ሲሆን ለዩኒቨርስቲ ተማሪዎች ልምድ አካፋይ መምህርት እስከመሆን ደርሳለች፡፡ ያን ዓይነት የዕውቀት ማስተላለፊያ መንገድ ዘሩ እየበዛ ባይሄድም፡፡ በአጠቃላይ የወሰንን መሻገር የትውን ጥበባት እና ጉባኤ የህይወት ዘመን ተሸላሚ አድርጎ የሚያከብራት ከቅና ትምህርት ብቻ ይገኛል ብሎ የሚያምን በበዛበት ዓለም ይህች ተዋናይት ὣኞት ὓሎታዋን እንደ ‹መንጠቆ›፣ ‹ጎንደሬው ገብረማሪያም›፣ ‹የበጋ ለሊት ራዕይ› እና ‹የአንፃባርቃ እንጠይቃለን፡፡ ያስተላለች ከመደበኛ ትምህርት ብቻ ይገኛል ብሎ የሚያምን በበያ ዓለም ይህች ተዋናይት ὣኞት ὓሎታዋን እንደ ‹መንጠቆ›፣ ‹ጎንደሬው ገብረማሪያም›፣ ‹የበጋ ለሊት ራዕይ› እና ‹የአንፃባርቃ እንጠይቃለን፡፡
The opening Night in Pictures
የመክፈቻው ምሽት በፎቶ
ምስቀል የአለም ቅርስ ተደርጎ በዩኔስኮ ሊመዘገብ በቅቷል። የእነወ ቅርዉ በማስመዝገብ በአፍሪካ ቀዳሚዋና ብቸኛዋ ሀገር ነች። የወሰንን መሻገር ፌስቲቫል እና ጉባኤ መክፈቻ ምሽት በመካከል የተገኙት እንግዶች ልምዳቸውን ከማካፉ በተጨማሪ ይህንን በአለም ቅርስነት የተመዘገበውን በዓል ሲከወን የሚያዩበትም ወቅት ነውና ይህ ፌስቲቫል ብዙ ሚና ይኖረዋል። የኢትዮጵያ ቲያትር ባለሞያዎች ማህበር ይህንን ትልቅ ተግባር ሲያከናውን በማንም ላይ ጥገኛ ሆኖ አይደለም። ከጉልበት ከእውቀት ጀምሮ ፋይናንሱንም በማፈላለግ ሙያተኞች ለራሳቸው በዙ ሀላፊነቶችን ተዉጥተዋል። ክጣይነት እንዲኖረው የሚያደርገውም ይሄ አካሄድ እንጂ የውጪ ፋይናንስን ብቻ ተማምኖ መጓዝ አይደለም። እንደምታስታውሱት ከዚህ ቀደም የኢትዮጵያ ደራሲያን ማህበር የአፍሪካ ደራሲያንን ጉባኤ ኢወከሁ። የቲያትር ባለሞያዎች ማህበር ጥገኝነት ሳይኖር፣ምያተኞች የራሳቸውን አቅም ጉልበት እና እውቀት ተጠቅመው ሌሎች ወገኖችን አስተባብረው ይህንን ታላቅ ፈስቲቫል እና ጉባኤ ስማዘጋጀታቸው በጣም የሚያና እና በቀላሉ የማይታይ መሆኑን የሚኒስቴር መስሪያ ቤታችን የደንጋል። የሙያ ማህበራትን አጠናክሮ የመሄዱ የቤት ስራ የበለጠ እየተሰራ ከዚህ የበለጡ ትላልቅ አለም አቀፍ ዝግጅቶችን ማሰናዳት ይቻላል። የወሰንን መሻገር› የተሰኘው ይህ ዝግጅት ትልቅ አቅም እንዳለን ያስመሰከራችሁበት ነውና አዘጋጆቹን በሙሉ እንኳን ደስ አላችሁ እላለሁ። ማኒስቴር መስሪያ ቤታችንም ለቀጣይ እንቅስቃሴአችሁ ሙሉ ደግሞ እንደሚሰጥ ቃል አየገባሁኝ፣ ይህ እንግዶችም በዚህ ዝግጅት ላይ በመታደማችሁ አመሰግናለሁ።

Message from Ministry of Culture and Tourism

On behalf of the FDRE Ministry of Culture and Tourism and by the organizers of this tremendous festival and conference, the Ethiopian Theater...
Professionals’ Association, I would like to express my gratitude for all of you who have come here to enjoy these festivities.

In many countries, professional associations have been able to contribute a great deal to the growth of their profession. Here in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Theater Professionals Association has taken the task to organize such a conference and festival that brings together professionals and artists from 11 countries, so that they may share knowledge, experiences and build strong networks. We are grateful for the role that the Association has played in realizing this program.

Also, the Festival of the Finding of the True Cross (Mesqel) has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage. As you know, Ethiopia is the nation with the most UNESCO registered World Heritage Sites in the continent of Africa. It is a great opportunity that the participants of Crossing Boundaries Festival and Conference have arrived at a time when they will be able to witness the great Mesqel Celebration, which they can share with their counterparts and fellow countrymen and women upon their return.

The Ethiopian Theater Professionals’ Association organized this great festival without being dependent on any one entity. From finding the resources, both financial and human resource, they have been able to organize this by actively utilizing their know-how and their own networks and knowledge. This is the way that the Association can assert its sustainability, because otherwise, it will lead to dependence on financial support from external sources, which can come and go.

As many of you may recall, the Ethiopian Writers’ Association had, over the past 3 years, organized a similar Pan-African International Writers’ Conference here in Addis Ababa. Again, seeing how the Ethiopian Theater Professionals Association has been able to put together this international gathering is a sign that we need to continue to strengthen and enable our professional associations so that they can continue to achieve and organize such useful, international gatherings here in our country. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism would like to show its appreciation for all that the work that has been done to make this Conference and Festival possible! And I would also like to commit that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism will be behind you and will give its full support in future endeavors.

I would like to again thank all of you for being here as participants and audience.

Mr. Desta Kassa
Cultural Industries Directorate Director
Ministry of Culture and Tourism
Message from Ethiopian Theater Professionals Association

Your Excellency Ato Desta Kassa,
Directorate Director of Culture Industries in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism,
Respected guests from North-Eastern and Eastern Africa,
North America and Israel,
Dear Organizers and Spectators,
Ladies and Gentleman,

On behalf of the Ethiopian Theater Professionals Association, I would like to welcome you to this colorful event. Our association is honored to host the first edition of Crossing Boundaries Festival and Conference. We are privileged to have the chance to witness this event happening, which is the first of its kind, not only in this country, but also in the region. I think Ethiopia being a cradle of humanity, that has passed through countless historical events, and as a place of tremendous diversity in its people and cultures with rich and developed art forms makes it a perfect arena to host such a vast and international conference and festival. This festival has found its right place. We believe that theatre practitioners and academicians, including creative and talented youth, the future artists of Ethiopia and Africa, can greatly benefit from the various performances and academic discussions. Thanks to everyone who contributed your own share for this event to come true. As a host institution of this grand event, our first appreciation goes to Sundance Institute East Africa Theater Program Ethiopian Alumni, who come up with this marvelous project. Thanks to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopian National Theatre, Addis Ababa Theatre and Culture Hall, Oromo Cultural Center, the Alliance Ethio-Francaise, Goethe Institute, Ethiopian National Museum and everyone and all the institutions involved in this process. Thanks to the performers, academicians, coordinators and spectators. Our guests, please, feel at home! We hope you will have a great time in Ethiopia.

Thank you.

Mr. Melaku Alemayehu
Working committee, ETPA
Your Excellency Ato Desta Kassa, thank you for your presence here with us representing the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Fellow African brothers and sisters, welcome to Ethiopia.

Distinguished guests, thank you for being part of the opening ceremony of Crossing Boundaries.

Crossing Boundaries – our festival-conference is part of the fifteen festivals and intellectual conversations that have been taking place across the various continents of our world under the auspices of Performance Studies International. The rubric of the twenty-first event of performance studies international is fluidstates: performance of unknowing. Crossing various boundaries, the vessels have arrived in Addis Abeba from Canada - Montreal and Croatia – Regina.

While this shows the global relations and connections, Crossing Boundaries has also its own particularities in terms of taking the River Nile as a metaphor to open up a space whereby we African performer-intellectuals come together and critically think about our lived experiences in our basin and lawlands using our body-mind. Though we believe that crossings or mobilities are mediated by power and the African bodies have been spoken for, as the Nigerian intellectual Awam Amkpa would have it, our festival/conference is part of independent space makings that we – African performing artists and intellectuals – have initiated.

Our regional institutions were driven by and dependent on the agenda and vision of the metropole whose coloniality is being manifested by the neoliberal logics of administration. And the previous networks of North East and Eastern African region have not been sustained. Though we do not miss the fact that our attempts are precarious and part of varying negotiations, it is also a reality that we are capable of inventing a space where we can come together, perform, converse and confront our artistic, social, economic and political positions in a reflexive manner. It is through appreciation of our differences that we can build our hopes together. It is through self-examination/reflexivity and acknowledgement of intricate relationalities that we will be able to build our future in a generative way. Crossing Boundaries is one modest space where we will experiment this. When we invent our space this way, I would say, we can sustain our network, we can meet tomorrow. Indeed, we will meet not just in New York or Stockholm but in Addis Ababa, Cairo, Khartoum, Juba, Nairobi, Kampala, Kigali, Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam...

Thank you

Message from the organizing Team
What: “Déchirement” with Troupe Lampyre | Burundi |
When: Friday, September 25 @ 3PM
Where: Alliance Ethio-Francaise
Duration: 1 hour
Estimated audience - 150

“Déchirement” is the story of a troubled man revisiting his country’s history. It’s an autobiographical story of a man who is troubled by the memory of one “black” year in 1972, a year when the Hutu intelligentsia was decimated. In a country that is still recovering painfully after twelve years of civil war, “Déchirement” calls that part of humanity buried within us and that is often ignored, so it bends under the rubble of our own experience. It showed us that a man can have more villainy in him, more treachery even with a single statement at the end, marked in blood letters: “Never again!”
What: “Yeberehan Menged” by Zerihun Berehanu| Ethiopia|
When: Friday, September 25 @ 3:30PM
Where: The Ethiopian National Theater Entrance Hall
Duration: 1 hour
Estimated audience attended - 100

“Yeberehan Menged” was an experimental presentation exploring different techniques of performance and body and sound installation. It raised major issues of present day life and the dreams and aspirations of the youth of Ethiopia. Using body installation techniques and mixed media are new developments to Ethiopian theatre. “Yeberehan Menged” staged a new way of performance with all the spaces employed.
What: “Facebook” by Tewodros Legesse with Diaspora Theater Group | Ethiopia/USA
When: Friday, September 25 @ 3PM
Where: Hager Fiker Theater
Duration: 1 hour
Estimated audience attended - 500

“Facebook” is a satirical play on the social media culture of our generation. The characters jump in to relationships and marriage with people they know only in the cyber world and face life challenges such as deception, emotional breakdowns and economic crisis.

ምን: “ፌስቡክ” በቴዎድሮስ ለገሰ ከዳያስፖራ ቴአትር ቡድን | ኢትዮጵያ/አሜሪካ | መቼ: ዓርብ ፣ መስከረም 14 በ9 ሰዓት
የት: ሀገር ፍቅር ተጋት
stitución: 1 ሰዓት
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What: “Solitaire” by Sabeel for the Arts | Egypt |
When: Friday, September 25 @ 4:30PM
Where: Addis Ababa Theater and Culture Hall
Duration: 1 hour
Estimated audience attended - 500

“Solitaire” is a multi-media performance that sheds light on the changing identity of Arabs in the past decade. The performance dramatically and visually documents some of the experiences of Arabs and Arab Americans post 9/11, and the impact of these events on the Arab World. It also records some of the events of the Egyptian Revolution in Tahrir Square through the eyes of an Egyptian woman who changes and creates change throughout her journey to shape her identity and to search for peace within herself and in the world.
What: Roktim: Nurture Incarnadine-Ananya Dance Group |USA|
When: Friday, September 25 @ 6PM
Where: Ethiopian National Theater
Duration: 1 hour and 30 minutes
Estimated audience attended - 1000

A full-length dance work inspired by the Seed Sovereignty Movement and farming practices in Minnesota's communities of color, “Roktim”, which means “blood red” in Chatterjea’s native Bengali, brings together three artists from three different cultures. Chatterjea, Jones, and Young have produced a story reflecting and honoring the age-old work of women who cultivate, nurture, and protect land and agriculture with emotional and blood labor to create a just and sustainable food system for our shared future.
What: “Poetic Jazz” with Tobiya Poetic Jazz and Netsa Awechi Band | Ethiopia |
When: Friday, September 25 @2:30PM
Where: Oromo Cutural Center
Duration: 90 Minutes
Estimated audience attended - 700
For over 50 months, Tobiya Poetic Jazz has been entertaining thousands of poetry, storytelling and music lovers at its monthly poetic jazz programs. Combining poetry with live improvised traditional and modern music, the youth and very talented poets bring forth moving, challenging and engaging ideas through their poetry, while they also tell stories about the state of life in Ethiopia through monologue drama using a character entitled “Eyayu Fengus” who, in his craziness, shares deep and very witty truths about reality.
What: “Yemistoche Baloch” by Abebayehu Tadesse
With: The Ethiopian Diaspora Theater Group | USA |
When: Saturday, September 26 @ 3:00PM
Where: Addis Ababa Theater and Culture Hall
Duration: 90 minutes
Estimated audience attended - 600

“Yemistoche Baloch” is a romantic-comedy that portrays the life and relationships of the Ethiopian Diaspora community. Set in Ethiopia and America, the story revolved around the challenges of marriage in a foreign land.
What: “Chuano” with Parapanda
Theater Lab Trust | Tanzania
When: Saturday, September 26 @3:00PM
Where: Hager Fiker Theater
Duration: 1 hour
Estimated audience attended - 200

This play was about the contest of two heroes MUNGWE and WAZANIYA. Wamungwe believes that developments can be broughton by the so called Umwinyi, by authoritative means, through selfishness, by using power on the weak classes to accumulate all power and wealth while Wazaniya has decided to build his society’s developments through the unity of all the people as they build their economic developments together. While these heroes fought over a beautiful lady, Maendeleo, another hero from an unknown area came and interfered.
What: “Radio Play” by Amizero Theater Company | Rwanda
When: Saturday, September 26 @ 3:30 PM
Where: Ethiopian National Theater
Duration: 1 hour
Estimated audience attended: 500

When a young woman finds herself on the night watch as host of a late night call-in show, the secrets of others—stories of the unsaid, failed relationships, secret diseases and affairs starts to infect her life and imagination as she tries to stay awake. When she signed out, the Morning DJ came in. His job is to turn the raw facts into cheery messages of hope, but his skills at spinning nonsense come back to haunt him as the stories from the night watch collide with the morning facade.
What: “Desperate to Fight” by Meaza Worku & Aida Mbowa | Ethio-Uganda |
When: Saturday, September 26 @4:30PM
Where: Alliance Ethio-Francaise
Duration: 40 minutes
Estimated audience attended 150

In the cosmopolitan city of Addis Ababa, Marta is fighting to live a life that she thought is worth living. After three failed marriages, Marta is still forced to try a fourth marriage fixed by her mother as a solution to escape society’s judgment. Compared to the love affair of the couple next door, Marta’s marriages had been short lived, exposed to extremes in love and hate and ended in divorce. The men in her life were nice and loving husbands, but jealousy, revenge and bankruptcy pushed Marta to end her marriages.
What: “Fumo Iyongo” – Special storytelling and workshop by Zamaleo Singana Storytellers | Kenya |
When: Saturday, September 26 @5PM
Where: Ethiopian National Museum
Duration: 40 Minutes
Estimated audience - 100

Fumo Iyongo is an epic tale about a legendary hero who lived in the northern part of East Africa between the 9th and the 13th century who opposes the cruel leadership in the kingdom through his extraordinary powers, song and dance. The king is not happy with him at all and tried all strategies to bring him down to his knees but all attempts failed. Fumo outwits every plot that King Daudi Mringwari laid in front of him due to his unpopularity because of Fumo. King Daudi eventually used the hero’s son to betray him, and finally, the son kills Fumo iyongo. Though Iyongo died a long time ago, his spirit is still alive and remembered all over East Africa and beyond in the song Popo that he composed to oppose the tyrannical rule of kings.
What: “Sinnar Crucible” by AlBugaa Theater Group | Sudan |
When: Saturday, September 26 @4:30PM
Where: Oromo Cultural Center
Duration: 1 hour
Estimated audience attended - 400

Ali Mahdi Al Nouri, who was awarded the 2010 UNESCO Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture, founded AlBugaa Theatre in 2004. They travel around conflict zones in Sudan and stage plays performed by child soldiers and war orphans. His creations, inspired by Sudanese cultural heritage, comprise various narration techniques as well as folklore and pantomime. “Sinnar Crucible” was a pantomime show.
What: “Mandefro Feredeh” - Playwright and Director - Moshe Malka byHulegub Israeli-Eastern Ethiopian Ensemble | Israel|
When: Saturday, September 26 @7:30PM
Where: Ethiopian National Theater
Duration: 50 Minutes
Estimated audience attended - 1100
A monodrama centered on the story of citizen Mandefro Feredeh. One day police arrive at Mandefro's house with a court order forcing him to leave the premises. His neighbor, it turned out, registered a complaint against him and he had been accused of violence against his wife and also of attacking police officers. During his trial, secrets of the complainant and the defendant reveals, leading to a surprising ending.
What: Food Art Performance “The Story of < Meser> a unifying ingredient” 
by Konjit Seyoum | Ethiopia |
When: Saturday, September 26 @ 8:30- 11:00PM 
Where: Asni Gallery

Konjit Seyoum organized a food art performance in the presence of all crossing Boundaries Festival participants and invited guests. She was accompanied by Crossing Boundaries participants from Egypt, Sudan and Tanzania to cook and present her thoughts of food as cross-cultural identity and collaboration.
What: Demera - Meskel “Finding of the True Cross” | Ethiopia |
When: Sunday, September 27
@4:00 - 7:00PM
Where: Meskel Square

Demera is a very important festival of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church commemorating the discovery of the True Cross by Queen Elleni in the fourth century. The Meskel celebration includes the burning of a large bonfire, or Demera, based on the belief that Queen Elleni had a revelation in a dream. She was told that if she makes a bonfire, the smoke would show her where the true cross was buried. So she ordered the people of Jerusalem to bring a large wood pile, and after adding frankincense to it, the smoke from the bonfire rose high up to the sky and returned to the ground, exactly to the spot where the Cross was buried. Crossing boundaries Festival participants have accessed a VIP pass to attend the Ceremony.
What: Closing Ceremony at the First established in Ethiopia by Empress Taitu Betul
When: Sunday, September 17 @ 8:00PM
Where: Taitu Hotel

The closing ceremony was a dinner accompanied by Crossing Boundaries Festival Demera where all participants circled and danced around the fire lit as farewell party. Certificate of appreciation also given.
“Supporting the arts is a duty and responsibility that we should all be a part of to enable the growth of the sector; it should not be seen only as an opportunity to sell and promote one’s product.”
Walia Beer
Crossing Boundaries:
Global Humanities,
North East African Homes
Sep 25-26, 2015
Conference

Keynote Speech
“Droplets of Dust, Particles of Water:
Portraits of Survival from the
Lake Turkana Desert”
By Dr. Mshai Mwangola
Sep 25, 2015
11:00 AM - 12:30 PM
Mekonnen Hall,
Institute Of Ethiopian Studies
Addis Ababa University.

Roundtable Discussion
“Movement, Ideas
and Bodies”
Sep 26, 2015
11:00AM - 12:30PM

Plenary Sessions
- By conceptualizing urban life and death as a complex universe and heterogeneous sites of lived experiences, we ask: What forms of identities and subjectivities have emerged in the Greater East African region? How do they speak to today’s thinking and being in Greater Horn?
- What kind of subjectivities were born out of cities? What generalizations and/or particularities can we draw from a critical comparative study of urbanism in the region?
- How does language help us articulate questions of identity, memory, knowledge, and power? How do notions of urban sustainability inform the formation of postcolonial identities and subjectivities?
- What made certain ephemerologies aestheticize white and others invisible? How do we dispel the hierarchy of the urban and the rural and embodied historiographies without losing sight of power that cuts bodies? How does the movement of bodies – dance, rituals, storytelling – serve as important avenues for the construction of identities and formation of subjectivities?
- How do we imagine human security? How does political violence in the region impact the meaning of security? How are bodies disciplined and the illegitimacy? What are the conditions that produce the homely, unhomely, homeless, refugees, immigrant, and diaspora?

Sep 25, 2015
at 8:30 AM to 4:30 AM
Alla School of Art
Addis Ababa University

Sep 26, 2015
at 8:30 AM - 4:30 AM
Goethe Institute
Performance Studies International (PSi) # 21:

Zooming Fluidstates: Performance of Unknowing
Conceptual Framing

Crossing Boundaries: Global Humanities, East African “Homes”

**Festival and Conference:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; September 24-27, 2015

**KEYWORDS**

Crossing Boundaries  Rivers  Deserts  Epistemic Universe  Orality  
Practice/Performance  ‘Security’  ‘Home’  Life and Death

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**The Reflexive: Addis Ababa and Cities in Greater East Africa**

Being part of the global intellectual and artistic events that will take place under the rubric PSi # 21 Fluid States: Performances of Unknowing, “Crossing Boundaries” is an event which brings various performances, workshops, exhibitions, and conversations together.

This multifaceted event took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia between Sep. 24-27, 2015. Valorized as the “capital” of Africa, Addis Ababa as a city has evolved along a memory scape where collective forgetting and re-membering have happened. In this festival, we chose to begin by theorizing the very city in which this festival takes place since the selection of this town for the staging of the festival should not escape critical scrutiny. In so doing, we are not just invoking the positionality of our festival but inviting critical conversations on cities and production of subjectivities in our region.

For instance, we may ask, what insights would reading “cities in Africa” from Addis Ababa would invoke? By unsettling the binary division of the colonial and non-colonial city, how can we complicate Addis Ababa’s urbanism in view of pre-colonial notions of urbanity, questions of empire and expansionism, and postcolonial life forms? Regionally speaking, we need also to enquire into urbanisms of the region through a relational lens. This overarching question invites multiple engagements. It is in this regard that we ask the most important question: How would our understanding and construction of subjectivities in city spaces change if we attend to the regional, geopolitical, economic, cultural and historical contexts as well as particularities of a given urbanism?
Border Constructions and Crossings: Greater Eastern Africa

While Addis Ababa is chosen as the site where Crossing Boundaries to be staged, our conversation/performance includes engagement with countries of the Horn and the historically designated East Africa and treats all as mentioned above as part of a “Greater” Eastern Africa, namely—Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and Egypt. This project is not just about the nation states in this region, though. It is also about boundary crossings. The fact that the festival focuses on the Eastern African region calls for interrogation of the traditional ways of territorializing the region with names like East Africa, the Horn or Greater Horn. This begets discussion of colonial and postcolonial logics and practices of border constructions and certain types of boundary crossings. Who did and is doing the conceptual as well as physical cartography of the region that we will refer as Eastern Africa? What does it mean to construct a border so as to dis/allow border crossing? These questions call for reconceptualization of geo-politics and the political history of the region. Crossing Boundaries, therefore, presents an opportunity for us to rethink the traditional territorialization by attending to historico-political and socio-economic processes that unfolded in the Eastern African region.
River Systems and Deserts as Universes of Episteme and Practice

We use River Nile, the main river that has multiple origins and connects most of the states of Greater East Africa as a literal and figurative mode of thought through which we ask myriads of questions about the life forms, epistemes and practices of the region. As a literal and figurative arena where shared and different epistemes and life forms coalesce, the River Nile allows us to think with and through the Deleuzian and Guattarian notion of “rhizomatic” entry points and exits in terms of theory and performance to go beyond binaristic, linear, state-bounded and hierarchical conceptualizations of socio-economic and political life in the region. The Nile as a river system allows us to see multiplicity of ideas, practices, contestations, rifts/fissures, confrontations and negotiations – various kinds of boundary crossings as well as border constructions in the region. Though such mode of thought provides possibilities, it needs to be noted that both the entry and exit points are not given but informed by tensions, which have had their own moments of emergences.

However, when we talk of crossings in this region, we need also to re-consider deserts and the attendant life forms, and should go beyond conceptualizing deserts as “absence”. In this regard, perhaps one of the most important things that make our Eastern African region boundary crossing particularly noteworthy is that both imperial and postcolonial borders have historically traversed the desert and “the lowlands”. What is interesting is the process of de/subj ectification performed by the modern nation state. Amidst such relations how does oneself negotiate its identity by assuming a performative mode? In what ways do the dominated attempt to circumvent the vicissitude of colonial and imperial borders by assuming multiple identities? What is the value of performance in the quotidian pastoral life and how does that performance resonate with the economic and political concerns animating pastoral communities in this region?

Embodied Power

In the main, since we invoked spatiality and temporality as points of critical engagement, we would also like to think of subjectivities as lived along river basins, the rift valley, mountains and low land areas, oceanic bodies and urban and rural spaces. In these spaces bodies do not wonder alone but move relationally. And this includes relationships that
bodies have with “power/s”. Crossing Boundaries presents the avenue that would enable us to see how power is inscribed on bodies and how bodies could be archives/repertoires, mediums, battle-fields, pens and weapons. In so far as the movement of bodies in the region is concerned, the meta-narrative of ‘migration from north to south’ preoccupies the scholarship. The Hametic and Semitic theses are cases in point that show the focus of North-South migration in our region. Whereas such kind of myth making and narratives of migration is not uncommon, the ideological foundations of such myth making and the attendant mundane lived experiences should be given serious attention in having a historiographic understanding of the region. Thus, we must ask: what about other kinds of movements of bodies in the region? What possibilities would this attendance to ‘other movements’ offer to African studies?

Security and Home, Life and Death
Crossing boundaries and migration in the Eastern African region is also related to “security” and has political, economic and environmental reasons. In this conference we are interested more in the “political” reasons of “security” and “home”. Since notions of the “global” and “local” are mutually constitutive, Crossing Boundaries allows us to grapple with questions of global “security” and “home” by taking Eastern Africa as its locale. Informed by interdisciplinarity, the festival invited intellectuals/performers to engage with the notions of ‘security’ and ‘home’ by attending to the metamorphosis of the logic of governance from (post)coloniality which was “independent first” to the new reason of biopolitics and necropolitics – “security first”. Aside from the positive and normative discussion of ‘security’, this festival wanted to see the historical and material conditions that make the invention of in/security and the disposal of bodies as logics of governance possible. The new logic has been entangled with multilayered global/local projects of neo-liberalism. The notion of “security” also takes into account notions of intersectionality and assemblages by making an attempt to experiences of ethnicity, race, class, gender, religion, disability, sexuality and race in post-colonial or other contexts in the region.

Crossing Boundaries: Questions that Matter
Here we will list the major questions and issues that the festival aimed to raise in connection to the above discussed themes.

- Given that the region is a productive site in terms of heterogeneity of urban life forms, it is imperative to ask: What has made the existing urbanisms possible? What kind of subjectivities were borne out of cities? What generalizations and/or particularities can we draw from a critical comparative study of urbanisms in the region?
- By conceptualizing River Nile and Deserts as epistemic universes and heterogeneous sites of lived experiences, we can ask: What forms of ‘cultures’ and ‘civilizations’ have sprung in the Greater East African region? How do they speak to today’s tensions and hopes in Greater Horn? How does the specter of coloniality haunt the postcolonial moment? What possibilities can these epistemic universes and practices present to the peoples of Eastern-Africa to envision new life forms?
• How does language help us articulate questions of desire, memory, knowledge and power? How did notions of un/translatability inform the formation of (post)colonial identities and subjectivities?
• In contexts of empire and political domination by hegemonic powers both at the global and regional/local level, where is the archeological site of the ‘ordinary’ knowledge situated? Is the archive of the ordinary devoid of power relation? What made certain epistemologies/aesthetics/praxis visible and others invisible? How do we dispel the hierarchy of the written text over orality and embodied historiography without losing sight of power that cuts bodies? How does the movement of bodies – dance, rituals, storytelling – serve as important avenues for the concretization of identities and formation of subjectivities?
• What kind of promise does performance studies present in terms of interrogating the human conditions? Which word performs illocutionary power in multiple ways? Who is citing what/ who to what effect? What kind of dramatic technique is used to stage a certain kind of politics? What do bodies do to each other in their unequal relations? Where lies the “political in the performative”?
• How do we imagine human security? How does political violence in the region impact the meaning of security? How are bodies disciplined and the life managed? How does the logic of violence speak to administration of life and death? What are the conditions that produce the homely, unhomely, homeless, refugee, immigrant, and diaspora?
Crossing Boundaries: One of Fluid states Performance of Unknowing host

PSi #21 Fluid States decentralized PSi conference with activities across Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Americas and the Pacific throughout 2015. Countries Boundaries Festival and Conference is the one and the only host of Performance Studies International events in Africa. List of host globally are;

Panama city, Panama: Interoceanic; Isthmu, Zone, Canal 5th - 11th January, 2015.


New Delhi, India: Rethinking Labor and Creative Economy from 27th February to 1st March, 2015.

Omarska, Bosnia: Four Faces of Omarska May 1st 2015.

Santorini, Greece: Aural Lighthouses 16th May to 23rd, 2015.


Aomori, Japan: Beyond Contamination August 29th - September 1st, 2015.

Montreal, Canada: Trans- Montréal 17th to 19th September,2015.

Regina, Canada: Performing Turtle Island ; 17th to 19th September,2015.

Melbourne, Australia: Perrming Mobilies 9th to 11th October,2015.

Manila, Philippines: On Tilted Earth 5th to 8th November,2015.

Beirut, Lebanon: In-Flix, IN -Satbility, IN- Sensitivity 1st to 30th December,2015.
On the academic part of the conference, Plenary sessions, Round tables and keynote speeches were part and parcel of Crossing Boundaries Festival and Conference. Full papers will be published in a separate publication, however, topics and discussions are listed below to give you some highlights on what had been discussed, when, where and by whom.

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<th>September 25th, 2015 @Alle school of Fine Arts and Design</th>
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<td>9:20AM: Trends In African Arts and Cultural Initiatives in Tanzania, by Habiba Isa [Tanzania]</td>
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<td>Day I: Plenary Session II</td>
<td>9:00AM: Interpretation of the Comedy of Animals, by Mahlet Solomon /Ethiopia/</td>
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<td>9:20AM: Theatre and Politics in Ethiopia by Eyerusalem Kassahun [Ethiopia]</td>
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<td>Day I: Plenary Session III</td>
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<td>9:20AM: Struggle for Survival in Twenty First Century: Global Migration in Ethiopian Films by Teferi Nigussie [Ethiopia]</td>
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<td>9:40AM: The Efficacy of Indigenous Performances in Constructing Guraghe Women's Identity: The Case of Kurfiwe, Gichamue and Neque by Asteway Mellese [Ethiopia]</td>
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<td>August 25th, 2015 @Mekonnen Hall, Institute of Ethiopian Studies</td>
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<td>11:30PM: Droplets of Dust, Particles of Water: Portraits of Survival from the Lake Turkana Desert delivered by Mshai Mwangola/PHD/ Kenya/</td>
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<td>Upstream-Downstream Discursive</td>
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<td>Struggle in the Nile Basin:</td>
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<td>The Need for a Negotiated Discourse by Zerihun Abebe Yigzaw</td>
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<td>Representing Ethiopian Rural Space</td>
<td>Sarit Cofman-Simhon</td>
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<td>Public Space in Addis Ababa:</td>
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<td>Revolutionary Theatre and Theatre</td>
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<td>During and After Egyptian Revolution by Dalia Basiouny</td>
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<td>Performing a Revolution: Political</td>
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<td>Movement, Ideas and Bodies with</td>
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Droplets of Dust, Particles of Water: Portraits of Survival from the Lake Turkana Desert
Fluid States 2015, Ethiopia
African Leadership Center

Nestled deep in the heart of the Horn of Africa is the sparkling jewel that is Lake Turkana, all the more precious given its surroundings in the harsh environment that is the arid wilderness of the Great African Rift Valley as it enters the liminal space of the borderlands where Kenya meets its northern neighbours, Uganda, Ethiopia and South Sudan.

“Droplets of Dust, Particles of Water” is a performance project - in - development showcasing real-life lessons from the peacebuilding conundrum that is the Kenyan North Rift. It reflects the landscape of possibilities challenging imposed political boundaries as fluid as the rhythms of those whose cartographies are determined less by state-imposed legalities, and more by the changing realities of the environments of their existence. Differing notions of Security; understandings of Home as both a psychological and physical space; the complicated relationship between Life and Death are all explored through the deployment of Story.

This presentation engages the lives of four women whose past, present and future are intertwined with the people and land, that are, like the lake, named Turkana. Beginning with the factional story of little Ajem, moving on to the compelling mother-daughter duet at the heart of Yvonne Adhiambo Owour’s compelling novel, Dust, and finally tying it all up in the true drama of Ikal Angalei’s battle to save Lake Turkana, it explores the additional value these life-stories bring in illuminating scientific data in ways that nuance our understanding of this region and its peoples.
Roundtable Discussion
with
Dr. Elisabeth Woldegrigis
Dr. Ananya Chatterjea
Dr. Mshaï Mwangola

What: On <Movement, Ideas and Bodies>
When: Saturday, September 26 @ 11:00AM- 12:30AM
Where: Goethe Institute
Duration: 1 hour 30 Minutes
Plenary Sessions

Theatre of People: Possibility of Dialogue and Reconciliation
Dr. Justin Jumma
juumma@gmail.com

At this critical moment of South Sudan, we believe in the voice of hope and human; for that reason we call back to the natural drama where by people come as human to take part in big festival with love and respect, to create space for dialogue among themselves in order to narrow the gap between these cultural borders aiming to achieve what I call (real reconciliation) as starting point for long journey called ‘Home for all South Sudanese through Art and Culture’.

What we are doing through theater of people is to test every time through practice how far we are from what we believe in, how up to date the theories we use are effective to achieve our goals in our local communities, what changes we need to be, so that we understand our (un known enemy).

UPSTREAM-DOWNSTREAM DISCURSIVE STRUGGLE IN THE NILE BASIN: THE NEED FOR A NEGOTIATED DISCOURSE
Zerihun Abebe Yigzaw
zerihun.yigzaw@graduateinstitute.ch

For palpable reasons constructed and reconstructed through different historical trajectories, for long the rule in the Nile Basin had been a zero-sum-game where a few downstream states were determined to win. But two contemporary developments in the Basin—the signing of the Cooperative Framework Agreement on the Nile Basin (CFA) by six riparian states and Ethiopia’s unilateral dam project—the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) are signals that the old game is waning and a new Nile basin is emerging. But this transition is characterized by a discursive struggle of its type. The most important modus operandi and strategies utilized in these struggles are evolving discourses of different sorts characterized by a discursive struggle. What are these evolving discourses? How these...
discourses are manifested? Why? What is the way forward for the basin? These are the core issues that the article deals with in order to understand contemporary issues on the Nile Basin and their implication to the future interactions between the riparian states and argued that the already available negotiated discourse is a solution on the Nile to ensure mutual benefit in the Basin.

Keywords: Nile, CFA, GERD, discourse, discursive struggle, hegemony, negotiated discourse

REVOLUTIONARY THEATRE AND THEATRE DURING AND AFTER EGYPT’S REVOLUTION
Dr. Dalia Basiouny
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The presentation discussed what constitutes revolutionary theatre, giving an overview from different historic moments, and then focused on theatre before, during and after the January 25th Revolution in Egypt and its aftermath. It explored different forms of theatre, especially theatre that appears to be discussing revolutionary topics, while it undermines the basic principles of the revolution.

INTERPRETATION OF THE COMEDY OF ANIMALS
Lealem Berhanu and Mahlet Solomon
mishuyid@gmail.com

This article presents a new interpretation of the first Ethiopian play by Teklehawariat Teklemariam, The Comedy of Animals. The interpretation focused on the historical, religious and linguistic aspects of the play. All Amharic texts quoted in this paper are our translations. The interpretation is based on three equally important aspects. The first one is, a meticulous scrutiny of the language, acting/stage directions and the symbolic representation of the animals in the play text. The second, a careful analysis of the historical and political context at the time the play was written and performed. The last one is based on the views of the playwright and his position in the political affairs at that particular time. By doing so the article clarify previous misconceptions
and misunderstandings surrounding the play; offer a correct reliable interpretation of the play; give a clear picture of the playwright and explain the position he took when he crafted his play. Further, the contribution of this article is to introduce Ethiopian theater, language and culture to the outside world and to offer a springboard for anyone who wish to study Ethiopian Theater.

**REPRESENTING ETHIOPIAN RURAL SPACE IN ISRAELI PERFORMING ARTS: MEMORY AS IDENTITY**

**Dr. Sarit Cofman-Simhon**  
saritcogman67@gmail.com

Since 1992, local theatre companies presenting plays in both Amharic and Hebrew have been warmly received by Israeli spectators. At the same time, a variety of singers and dance companies are making use of Ethiopian tunes, language, and dances. In these performances, the memory of Ethiopian rural space is negotiated and reconfigured as identity, by performers who were born in Ethiopia, and came to Israel as children. The images are drawn from the rural life of small pastoral communities in their country of origin.

First, Dr. Sarit discussed Beta Dance, that presents traditional Ethiopian dance (mainly “eskesta” – shoulder dance), and original contemporary dance based on the culture of Ethiopian Jewry. The troupe went on a trip to Ethiopia, to uncover the community’s treasure of dance-movements, by focusing on their natural language of motion, imagery, and history as a rural community.

Next, addressed the show, “Teret-Teret” (I Will be Telling a Story), staged by the Hullegeb Ensemble. It is a stylized retelling of Ethiopian folktales, passed down from father to son. Presented in both Amharic and Hebrew, with Ethiopian music in Amharic accompanying them, the stories run the gamut from the old man whose son does not respect him to the monkey who wants to wed a lioness.

Finally, Dr. Sarit discussed the monodrama “It Sounds Better in Amharic,” written and performed by Yossi Vasa, who was eight years old when he came to Israel. In the show, he tells of his rural childhood in Ethiopia, starting with how he used to count sheep on the mountain, and ending with how this skill helped him during math classes. Thus, the abstract world of mathematics becomes concretized, by the epistemic universe of rural life.
TRENDS IN AFRICAN ARTS AND CULTURAL INITIATIVES IN TANZANIA

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Theatre practices in Tanzania have a very long tradition that goes far back into the history of the nation's existence. Theatre has always been considered as a part of our daily life used not just for entertainment, but in promoting the implementation of developmental projects in communities, and also as a unifying weapon/tool where there is tension. Theatre comprises of stage drama, dance, poetry, acrobatics, storytelling, singing, drumming, etc. However, while the earlier theatre practices were monopolized by communities and local villages, recently many theatre practitioners, including independent companies and producers, have arrived in the scene. A close scrutiny of the recent theatre practices reveals two emerging trends: commercial theatre practices and cultural theatre practices.

The paper defined and discuss processes of the cultural and original theatre production within the emerging trends and underscore the challenges that the theatre practitioners face. The argument which this paper advances forward was that the initiatives on the development of theatre practices in Tanzania need to take account of the emerging trends and the other trends in the development of other entertainment industries. The paper concluded by recommending that the two trends both be equally considered in the development of the entertaining industry in order to have a vibrant and meaningful theatre industry in Tanzania and Africa as a whole.

THEATER AND POLITICS IN ETHIOPIA

Eyerusalem Kassahun

Theatre frequently serves the artists and the society as a validation of reality by putting different tents for every human activity that should be critically observed. Beyond evoking laughter and tears, some plays present stories that ask hard questions about the social, political, and economic aspects of the world around us. By doing so, the plays leave the viewers to talk about the theme for hours, and for years. In order to control lambaste potent of the plays, the politics tries to impose different mechanisms which micromanage the art and everyone in it.

This paper tried to show the relationship between theatre and politics in Ethiopia and their inseparable nature by commencing its analysis starting from the Haile Selssie regime to the present day.
THE EFFICACY OF INDIGENOUS PERFORMANCES IN CONSTRUCTING GURAGHE WOMEN’S IDENTITY: THE CASE OF KURFIWE, GICHAMUE AND NEQUE

Asteway Mellese
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Ethiopia is a multi-nation country that has numerous indigenous performances which are capable enough to cross boundaries. These indigenous performances pass on among others, Ethiopian identity, culture, indignity, and thought of life through generations. Indigenous performances from every corner of the country have their own colour, way of performance and social context. They are pillars of societal continued existence. But nowadays, it is clearly seen that these multifaceted indigenous performances are being washed away by Eurocentrism and other global influences. They are much abused and are not taking their rightful place, especially in the current generation. As a result, many young generations lack awareness about their identity, culture, idiomatic expressions of themselves. They cannot fit in the outside world as they do not have their own unique identity.

This study investigated three selected indigenous performances of Guraghe people. Guraghe is a zone in the Ethiopian Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region (SNNPR), situated in the northern tip of the southern nation and south west of the capital Addis Ababa. Indigenous performances particularly chosen to this study were Kurfiwe, Gichamue, and Neque. These performances, which are performed only by women, survived centuries, strengthening the Guraghe people’s social ties and construction of their identity.

The study revealed that two of these indigenous performances (Kurfiwe and Neque) are extinct, while Gichamue is in danger of extermination because of lack of awareness and concern which comes due to the introduction of Christianity and Islam and assimilation of culture. Findings showed that there is great potential for indigenous performances in Guraghe community to make significant contribution to create favourable conditions for living, easy ways of life, enhance similar social spirit, build their identity, and be constituents of the country’s image, like it is doing elsewhere. Findings of this study also showed that children of this time are not willing to dig out their social capital. Parents on their part are not strong enough to educate their children about their past and indigenous knowledge.

Guraghe people are well known in Ethiopia by their migration and adaptation to new places. We can find Guraghes in every corner of the country creating new business and introducing hard work. Therefore, they leave home for better life and remain
assimilated by other cultures. With all this, it was evident that the Guraghe indigenous performances which are performed only by women are falling apart by the gravity of its own weight. This study contributes to an understanding of women's indigenous performance practices and its contribution for the construction of Guraghe women's identity.

Nowadays, sources of Guraghe women's identity, indignity and social context is questionable. Likewise the contributions of these indigenous performances are considered to be inconsequential, even though it is crucial to understand the identity and livelihood of Guraghe women. In order to scrutinize the problem and answer the question, in this paper, I will analyse the motive behind performing the selected indigenous performances, how they are composed and its influence on the trend of Guraghe women's living. By giving a social, political and artistic account on the performances, I will argue that these indigenous performances are among major building blocks of Guraghe women's identity.

THE CONTESTATION OF IDENTITY ON THE LINGUISTIC CITYSCAPE OF WELKITE
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This article reports the findings from the study of linguistic landscape on shops, hotels and billboards in Welkite town of the Gurage Zone, which is within the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) of Ethiopia. The town is located 150 kilometers south west of Addis Ababa. The research method followed is Qualitative; texts and pictures were collected, and the collected data were analyzed thematically.

The main street that runs from Addis Ababa to Jimma was the focus of the sample area within the town. The purpose of the study was to find out how signs on buildings and road sides in a multilingual setting and sociolinguistic contacts are used to express identity (linguistic, religious, ethnic...) and power relations, in addition to their commercial, cultural and artistic values. The study showed that Guragina, which is not used in any official settings in the Gurage Zone, is fairly used in signs, posters and trade marks in the Welkite town. Though dialect variation within Gurage was reflected in a few cases, the Cheha language variety, often mixed with Amharic, was more frequently used. Semantically, the signs used expressed, wishes, ambitions, successes, surprises, dilemmas and religious affiliations of the people who posted or inscribed them. It was also found that the signs in the town were mainly mixes of English-
dominant International language, Amharic-language of wider communication in Ethiopia and Guragina which represented local regional Gurage identity. The code mixing is not random, but it is systematically patterned. The first word is often Guragina, and the second code word(s) is Amharic. English is mainly used as a gloss for Guragina and Amharic versions of the signs. The linguistic cityscape of Welkite generally manifests cultural, sociolinguistic power and contact situations in the area. A further study of the linguistic cityscape may uncover more sociolinguistic, cultural and political facts of humanity.

Keywords: Cityscape, Identity, Language, Multilingualism, Power

COLLECTIVE MEMORY OVER THE NILE: THE TALES OF TWO DAMS
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Nile does not respect boundaries. It traverses mountains, forests, wetlands, gorge and deserts. Dams force the Nile waters to respect boundaries. Dam animates the waterscape into national space. A simply Nile-scape can easily be transferred into the site of collective memories. In the Nile Basin, the Egyptian Aswan High Dam, AHD and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, GERD have been defining water structures. Both dams collect not only Nile waters, but also collective memories. But, Egypt and Ethiopia have different, if not divergent, collective memories over the Nile. Memory, just like power, is contestable. As Foucault (1977) put it, ‘memory is actually a very important factor in struggle, if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism” and hence there is ”counter-memory… that differ from, and often challenge, dominant discourses” (cited in Ibid.:126). Hodgkin and Radstone (2003) succinctly put that “to contest the past is also, of course, to pose questions about the present, and what the past means in the present. Our understanding of the past has strategic, political, and ethical consequences. Contests over the meaning of the past are also contests over the meaning of the present and over ways of taking the past forward.” (ibid. 4). In similar vein, Edward Wadie Said (1979) once said that appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of
the present. In the Nile Basin both power and memory have been countered and contested. The Nile politics of memory is full of fierce struggles and misperception. There are contesting perceptions of the Nile and that they may reflect divergent memories about the Nile and “the other”. These conflicting memories that Egypt and Ethiopia accumulated over hundreds of years impinge on the past water agreements, the present dams (AHD and GERD) and future water security. Put differently, Egypt romanticizes the past and wants to sustain the status-quo, while Ethiopia regrets the past and imagines a different Nile-scape. This paper, therefore, tries to respond to the following questions: What do the Basin people remember and forget about Aswan High Dam and Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam? What role does collective memory play in transboundary water analysis? What is the role of collective memory and the dominant ways in which the Nile River in Ethiopia and Egypt were imagined at a popular “national” level? How do such memories and imageries shape the politics of the Nile, its ‘cooperation’ and ‘conflict narrative?

Keywords: Nile River, Collective Memory, Power, Aswan High Dam, Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

THE QUEST FOR SPECTATOR: THRONE OF WEAPON AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM
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Any type of art work that show its own society history and life tell the story of that society for today and for tomorrow. Such type of art work is considered to be a monument and memory of the society. Museums nowadays are criticized for taking away such type of art works from their own place of engagement to another place where the understanding and interpretation of the art work differs. The essay, argued how such commercial works of museums affect in defining and interpreting an art work for the perspective of its own society taking one art work in the British museum as a case.

Keywords: Nile River, Collective Memory, Power, Aswan High Dam, Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
INTEGRATION OF THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE INTO THE SOCIO-POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN EAST AFRICA

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The conscience of the average East African is under siege. Enslaved by religious dogma and traditional customs on the one hand, it is also imprisoned by the systematic indoctrination of one-sided political ideologies that may continue to sideline and alienate the majority.

Theatre can be successfully employed as a tool to help guide intellectual liberty and dialectical consciousness.

Drawing from practical examples, Rogers explored methodologies that could be used in the radicalization of theatre for socio-political awareness and dialogue.

A TALE OF TWO LANGUAGES IN THE PUBLIC SPACE IN ADDIS ABEBA: CONTESTATION AND DISLOCATION

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Department of Linguistics, Addis Ababa University

Urban areas are the locus of diversity and movement. With its close to 4 million residents, Addis Ababa is home to the speakers of almost all Ethiopian linguistic groups (about 90) and many foreign languages as the city is the diplomatic capital of Africa and host to international organizations. The last ten years, the city has undergone dramatic changes in terms of culture and physical appearance; and with that, one also notes a change in the environmental print in the linguistic landscape of the city.

This research paper attempts to interrogate the ever-growing neglect of the use of Amharic in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia which is showing strong signs of replacement by the foreign language English in some domains of public use. The shift from Amharic (which has a long tradition of written culture and spoken by more than 30 million people) to English (which is considered an international language in Ethiopia) is mainly
done with the intention of appearing ‘modernized’ and ‘catching-up’ with ‘modernization’. The preference in the frequent use of English through the dislocation of Amharic is increasingly noted in the choice of the former as a prominent language of information and the commercializing of products in the public space (i.e. billboards and signage). The study attempted to systematically collect the pictures billboards and signage in two major roads in Addis Ababa and investigate their language use. It also made an effort to understand the reasons why English is getting a prominent place in the public signage in the ever-changing Addis Ababa.

**LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE IN THE MULTILINGUAL CITY OF HARAR**

*Moges Yigezu*

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The ancient city of Harar is the capital of the Harari Region of Ethiopia, one of the nine ethno-linguistic regions constituting the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Harar is one of the most diverse cities in Ethiopia in terms of ethnicity, language, religion, economic development and interethnic relationships. There are five major languages spoken in the city, namely Amharic, Harari, Oromo, English and Arabic, and all of them are used in primary education as a school subject and as a medium of instruction as well as in the mass media. There are also other languages that have some importance in the city. These are: Somali, Gurage, Tigringa and Argoba which are used by members of their respective ethnic groups for in-group communication (Moges 2010).

The city is characterized by the socio-linguistic history of competition among some dominant languages. Harari, for instance, is culturally and historically dominant, as it is an ‘identity-preserving language’ for the Harari ethnic group and has also been a written language since the 16th century. Amharic is societally and institutionally dominant since it is the language of wider communication (LWC) and the lingua franca of the people in the region. Oromo has numerical dominance as it has the majority of speakers in the Harari region (52%) and also spoken as an official language in the neighboring region. Ge’ez and Arabic, both languages of religion, which are affiliated to Christianity and Islam respectively, are mostly limited to uses for spiritual purposes. Whereas English is globally dominant in the modern era and is given as a school subject as of grade one in all schools and it is the medium
of instruction at the secondary level. Three scripts are in use for the five major languages being used in the school system, namely, Latin, Ethiopic and Arabic.

The study of the linguistic landscape (LL) of a city may reveal some interesting underlying ideas, ideologies, conflicts as well as power struggle between different stakeholders (Gorter 2012:11). The two official languages Harari and Oromiffa on the one hand and Amharic and English on the other happened to be formidable contenders for the domination of the public space in the city of Harar. Evidently there are two processes taking place simultaneously, namely, the process of globalization and the process of regionalization or localization. The process of globalization is taking its root through the educational policy of the region and it is made visible in the linguistic landscape of Harar through the presence of English in both official and non-official signs. The process of regionalization or localization has been taking place over the last two decades as a result of the language policy implemented by the regional government through giving emphasis to the visibility of the regional languages as an expression of their identity. This has also been demonstrated through the desire of the authorities to assert power by determining which languages may appear in the official signs and the order of their appearance. Gorter (2006:81-82) refers to the two processes of globalization and localization or regionalization as ‘glocalisation’, and further elaborates that the process of globalization become observable in the LL through the presence of an international language and the process of regionalization or localization focuses on regional identity or the promotion of regional languages. In Harar, the two processes seem to be in competition for now though the combined effect of these two processes is working in the same direction, i.e. towards multilingualism and an increase in linguistic diversity.

PERFORMING A REVOLUTION: POLITICAL MODERNITY IN ETHIOPIA

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Following a Benjaminian understanding of historiography and Lyotard’s notion of anamnesis, this paper wants to answer to the re-calling of the present to reflexively engage with the past by interrogating the ways in which the revolution has been made intelligible and limits of the possibilities engendered by the social movement. First, I argue that the ways in which the Ethiopian Student Movement has been established as a “midwife” of the 1974 Ethiopian revolution in particular and Ethiopian modernity in general mask multifarious contingent realities of the 20th century Ethiopian political modernity. Informed by interdisciplinary and intersectional dialectical intervention, this study, therefore, wants to show how
a seemingly ‘liberatory’ politics of the ‘oppressed’ constrains possibilities and sustains and even incubates repressions in the conspicuous neoliberal present. At stake here is not filling the lacuna in the study of the revolution in question or re-centering of performance/culture, but flaking of the camouflage which shrouded heterogeneous spaces in the past and foreclosures of possibilities in the present. Thus, using a Lefebvrian understanding of space-time, I would like to resingularize the revolutionary moment and attend to the contradictions in the artistic field and their relations with other spaces. Particularly I look into a constellation built in and around a protest staged by artists of the Ethiopian National Theatre.

Addis Ababa (and also other cities in Ethiopia) has never received adequate attention in the study of African urbanisms due to the assumption that: because Addis Ababa is not a colonial city, it shares little with other African cities. I contend that this story of exceptionalism, however, shuns intellectual inquiry into the ways in which Addis Ababa could be compared to other African cities. Therefore, in this paper I will try to examine the relationship of Addis Ababa with other African cities to call into question, and make more complex, the debate over Addis’s exceptionalism. Through an attempt to show the relationship between city making, demographic flow of people from rural to urban spaces and the expansion of urbanization and its sociological and cultural impact in transforming subjects of empire in Addis Ababa (the imperial metropolis) I argue that city making and social and cultural change had a role in the making of revolution in Ethiopia.
Other Activities of Crossing Boundaries

Story Telling performance and Workshop Participants September 26, 2015
@ Ethiopian National Museum
Workshop facilitated by Zamaleo Singana Storytellers

Dinner Invitation by Ministry of Culture and Tourism
@ Totot traditional Restaurant  September 26, 2015
Ananya Dance Theater Met Yellow Movement AAU students September 22, 2015

Ananya Dance Theater Performing at 75th Exchange program of Embassy of the United States @ Hilton Hotel September 24, 2015

Workshop with Ananya Dance Theater and Destino Dance Company and independent Dancers September 22, 2015

Meeting with participant delegates on Future collaboration September 27, 2015 at Ethiopian National Theater actors studio
Crossing Boundaries Press Conferences

The First Press Conference
@ Ethiopian National Theater on August 25, 2015

From left to right Beniam Worku, Meaza Worku, Azeb Worku, Surafel Wondimu and Nebiyou Baye

Media Party
This is an Informal Press Conference held @ Mamas Kitchen on September 17, 2015 with the media Partners and Festival and conference Collaborators.

From left to right Meaza Worku, Mohammed Kassa, Azeb Worku, Beniam Worku, Nebiyou Baye and Ato Desta Kassa
Moments of Crossing Boundaries in Picture

Welcoming Dinner Invitation by Ethiopian Theater Professionals Association and Romina Cafe and Restaurant @ Addis Ababa Theater and Culture Hall
Who said what about Crossing Boundaries Festival and Conference

"Reflecting on an amazing week in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the “Crossing Boundaries” conference and festival. This was the African forum for Performance Studies International (PSi) Fluid States 2015 gathering, which is happening in different venues through the year. Honoured to be invited to present the keynote lecture. In addition to the conference, there was a wonderful performance programme with performances from all over the Nile Basic countries and diaspora. Ananya Dance Theatre presented the keynote performance."

Dr. Mshai Mwangola |Kenya|

"Still basking in the after-glow of a brilliant festival, Crossing Boundaries, in Addis Ababa. Brilliant because intentional space-making, mindful community-building, meaningful and critical engagement. Congratulations and gratitude to organizer Surafel Wondimu, for creating this frame of possibilities! And thank you to The Reporter and Tibebe Selsie Tigabu for this fabulous review of Roktim: “How would the world turn out if it is controlled by Monsanto-like overlords? This week’s vibrant performance by the American group Ananya Dance Theater at the National Theater in Addis Ababa gave an insight of that dystopian world.”"

Dr. Ananya Chatterjea |USA|

Precisely 2 weeks ago, I performed Roktim with Ananya Dance Theatre at the O’Shaughnessy. The next morning, we went straight to Ethiopia, where we conducted three workshops with university students and local dance groups, performed for a US Embassy event, performed at Ethiopian National Theatre as part of the Crossing Boundaries festival, attended an academic conference (in conjunction with the festival - Discussion of modernity, history, colonial encounters, contemporary dance, bodies, ideas, border crossing, healing, home, and so much more!), stayed up for seemingly endless feasts and parties, climbed the mountain by Addis Ababa, attended a Holy Day celebration along with 700,000 people before flying back to Minneapolis. I also just taught a week of Sociology classes, where I told my students about my experience in Ethiopia - a place where forces of modernity clash with (but haven’t taken over) values of community and relationship. I guess I shouldn’t be surprised that my throat is a bit sore… [It’s a] journey that has made me a better person. Thank you everyone! Thank you Ethiopia! Thank you Universe!

Dr. Hui Wilcox |USA|
“The past week I went to Addis Ababa with Ananya Dance Theatre to be a part of the Crossing Boundaries Festival. It is difficult to find words for the beauty of this experience. I feel so inspired by the energy and love that explodes when passionate artists are brought together. Also sending love to our incredible new friends, the women of the Yellow Movement and the amazing Dawit Sahile and Eden Gebre for all your help. The artists in Ananya Dance... you have my heart. Early mornings, long days, and late nights, I love you all so much, thank you for teaching me and being the sunshine on the growth I feel in myself and in this world. Thank you অনন্যা চট্টোপাধ্যায় for being a fierce fearless dragon dream and bringing us together and across oceans. Thank you Lela Pierce Renée Copeland Chitra Vairavan Hui Wilcox Magnolia Yang Sao Yia Kealoha Ferreira Emma Marlar Jay Galtney QueenDrea Voice-Loopsneffects for being the beautiful people you are.”

Leila Awadallah [USA]

“One of the memorable highlights from Addis Ababa was the Meskel celebration. Meskel is an Ethiopian Orthodox commemoration of Saint Helena’s finding of the True Cross (the remnants of the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified). Tens of thousands of Ethiopians show up to Meskel Square for a huge parade whose climax is the lighting of candles and a huge bonfire. They then go home to light their own smaller bonfires and celebrate into the night. You can see the thousands of candles merge into a sea of light in the background, and you can hear the crowd celebrate as the bonfire burns away.”

Mugambi Nthiga [Kenya]

“We are still in the afterglow of the Crossing Boundaries Ethiopia festival. The hospitality of our fellow artists and the smart young hosts from the Rotary club there was astounding, as were the beauty of the people and the deliciousness of the food. In Addis, folks line up around the block to watch theatre, and sell out the 1200 seat theatre weekly. The festival was a reminder to be generous and open, and to dance even when you aren’t sure which way to wiggle your shoulders. It was a privilege to present #RadioPlay at the National Theatre and imagine where the emperor used to sit, and challenging to see how this dark comedy about censorship and the news would translate. The reaction of the crowd to our boundary-crossing attempts was as generous; one crowd member told us “You thought you were telling your story but you have told us ours.”

The work of the other artists ranged from one man and woman shows (new for Ethiopia) to Ethiopian installations on hair and the globalized markets effect on artisans to contemporary Indian dance from my home state of Minnesota (represent!) to storytelling from TZ and Kenya to pantomime from South Sudan. The quality and diversity of the work was evidence of the way art can keep us all a little sharper, a little more open, a little more human. Three days back and still brimming with gratitude.”

Mugambi Nthiga [Kenya]
Thank you to the whole team: Surafel Wondimu, Azeb Worku, Meaza Worku and Mohamed (shhh!) and the rest and to all the artists who shared their work. With Kimenyi Herve Mugambi Nthiga Sitawa Namwalie Wesley Macari RAida Nambi Evrard Niyomwungere”

Elizabeth Spackman | Rwanda |

Ethio-Theatrical Landscape: Travelled just north of Nairobi and crossed the border into our neighbouring Habesha Land to exchange notes on Theatre-scapes. In Addis Abeba alone, 4 Major Theatres take pride of place: Ethiopian National Theatre, the 80 years old Hager Fiker (For Love of Country) Theatre, Ras Theatre and City Hall Theatre. A brand new latest addition is the magnificent Oromo Cultural Centre built recently next to the historical Meskel Square. Some notes indeed taken home!

Aghan Odero | Kenya |

“Reflecting on Ethipoia/ 1st Crossing Bounderies Theatre and Conference Festival:
I still feel challenged as an artist and inspired as a human being by the Ethiopian spirit of Africanization and their deep reverence for the theatre. In a conversation with someone yesterday, she pointed out that as Kenyans we are generally shallow and yet we are not stupid ...Our shallowness then may simply come from a lack of connection with our roots. We are in the process of mobilizing people who believe in a cultural identity no matter how diverse and democratic it is and people willing to go to the next stage, which is the real kusema na kutenda. It has to start with someone. Why not you....why not me ?”

Rogers Otieno | Kenya |


Habiba Issa | Tanzania |

“I am really honored to be here and to participate in this lovely festival and conference. It’s a MIGHTY job you did to pull all these artists and academics together for this event. It was a special experience to share my performance with the Ethiopian audience.”

Dalia Basiouny | Egypt |
How would the world turn out if it is controlled by Monsanto-like overlords? This week’s vibrant performance by the American group Ananya Dance Theater at the National Theater in Addis Ababa gave an insight of that dystopian world.

By merging forms of Indian dance, yoga and martial arts, the performance gives a critical look at industrial farming, pesticides and genetic modification.

This piece titled “Roktim: Nurture Incarnadine” celebrates the role of women in protecting the land and promoting sustainable food production.

“This piece reflects the age-old work of women who cultivate, nurture, and protect land and agriculture with emotion and blood to create a just and sustainable food system for our shared future,” Chitra Vairavan, founding company member, says.

“Roktim”, which comes from a Bengali term meaning ‘blood’, depicts the struggle women had to endure in order to protect land. They used their bodies’ movement working as a machine to depict the super seeds produced by multinational corporations. Through exploring the injustice, the piece offers a form of resistance. This captivating dance performance also included poetry and ancient tales.

“Women’s loving labor produces the elements of our sustenance. Women from global societies have also defended the land eco-systems with their lives and their continued works from the onslaught of aggressive industrialization
but the food system in which we exist often obscure these stories,” Chitra adds.

The audience at the National Theater was fully engaged with this social justice-themed dance performance and was cheering after each section of the production.

Organized by the Ethiopian Theater Professionals Association in collaboration with Addis Ababa University College of Performing and Visual Arts and the Ethiopian National Theater, this performance was part of the Crossing Boundaries International Festival and Conference which was held from September 24 to 27. Some 19 performances from various countries were part of this festival.

Apart from that, conferences on issues such as “Collective Memory Over the Nile: The Tales of Two Dams”, “Performing a Revolution: Political Modernity in Ethiopia”, “City Making From Below: Social, Cultural Change and Revolution in Ethiopia, 1941-1974”, “Movement, Ideas and Bodies”, “Integration of Theatrical Performance Into the Socio-political Discourse in East Africa” were presented by various scholars.

The festival focused on countries namely Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and Egypt focusing on crossing boundaries as well as to spark a conversation on territorializing the region (colonial as well as post-colonial logics).

According to Surafel Wondimu, one of the organizers, they used River Nile, which touches the lives of 300 million people in East and North Africa region, “as a literal and figurative mode of thought through which we ask myriads of questions about the life forms, episteme and practices of the region.”

This festival was conceived at Sundance Institute East Africa in New York and wanted to extend a platform for Africans by Africans.

“This was not only for festivities rather a space of thinking and interaction,” Surafel says.

Marginalization being the main theme for the Egyptian performance artist, Dalia Basiouny, her piece titled ‘Solitaire’ told the feeling “otherness” and “immigrant”. It was a performance of depicting her life in America, the effect of 9/11, un-belongingness and being a threat.

Basiouny started her show with a ritual of prayers and sprinkling of “holy water”. Her unconventional methods were felt among the murmuring crowds at the Addis Ababa Theater and Culture Hall.

Singing and dancing, she combined pictures of her family and footages of some of the bombing scenes of the world trading center harmoniously to tell her story in which she also talks about her belongingness to the Egyptian revolution.

“The festival was not only an amazing way to connect and meet beautiful artists and potential future collaborators, it was also a fantastic reunion of East African directors that I met in Addis in 2012 through Sundance,” Aida Nambi, a Ugandan theater director, says.

She directed an Ethiopian play by Meaza Worku ‘Ke Selamta Gar’ which was titled in English as ‘Desperate to Fight’ which featured Ugandan actors Philip Luswata and Nasuna Zimbe and Ethiopian contemporary dancers.

“In the art we created we didn’t showcase our region. We actually showcased what cross-cultural collaboration can look like,” Nambi says.

She was in a celebrative mood after a show at Alliance Ethio-Française on Saturday, September 26. But she raises some of the “minor setbacks” which included a power cut after the first scene of the show. The night was
saved by a diesel powered generator.

Since many of the performances were happening simultaneously at different venues, art fans were divided.

Nambi says she was keen to perform their show more than once had opportunities allowed it.

“I am so proud of the Ethiopian team who put this festival together through hard work and tapping into local resources. They have set the bar very high and we must continue to be inspired by the possibilities of making magic happen, which this festival clearly demonstrated,” Nambi says.

The Kenyan theater crew, Zamaleo Singana, brought back the ancient story telling with their piece entitled “Fumo Iyongo” – a warrior with an exaggerated height and bravery.

The performers interacted with the audience with their dance and songs with their performance at the Ethiopian National Museum.

Crossing boundaries being the main theme of the festival, it provided for new ideas to be entertained and their acceptance by the society to be tested. And many expressed the importance of the platform.

“We celebrated a coming together of identities, cultures, art people in a space that is not overtly American or Eurocentric. This is first the most important element of creatively breaking, crossing and permeating boundaries of power, privilege and access for a better future. In my opinion, the conference created a space for unlikely intersections,” Chitra says.

The founder of Ananya dance group, Ananaya Chatterjea, adds: “the festival helped us imagine what might happen if we managed to shift the paradigm under which we operate: what would happen if global communities of color occupied the center, and operated from a position of power”.

“These kinds of questions became possible because of their deliberate framing of the event,” she says praising the organizers of the festival.

One of the other interactive performances was ‘Radio play’, a satire on societal and political issues.

“Radio is still extremely popular in the Great Lakes region, and yet radio was also one of the primary ways to spread propaganda during the genocide. So the legacy is complicated, tragic and deep,” Elizabeth Spackman, one of the performers, says.

Collaborating with Kenyan artists, Mugambi Nthiga and Sitawa Namawalie, they performed this piece in different countries applying local contexts.

“I am so conscious of what we have in common and how the western narratives dominate and obscure us. This festival helped to move the western blanket for a moment for me to see something else,” Namawalie says.

Apart from that, Ethiopian theaters such as ‘Yebirhan Menged’, ‘Yemistoche Baloch’ and ‘Mandefro Feredeh’ were also highlighted at the event.

The event was concluded with Demera celebration with a bonfire in Taitu Hotel which brought tears to many.

“The richness of Ethiopia’s culture and how integrated in the lives of ordinary Ethiopians is a lesson for us who are searching for ways of incorporating our African-ness in our lives,” Namawalie says.

Though it was a successful event for the organizers, Surafel says it was not easy to pull it off with funding being one of the major challenges.
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