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Studios Kaboko

In Search of Dinozord

**2020 TEACHERS
RESOURCE**

**New Zealand
Festival** OF THE ARTS

Curriculum Links

Dance, History, Culture, Drama

Contents

Cast and Creatives

About the Show

Production and Techniques

Further Resources

Provocations and Activities

[Download SchoolFest 101 here.](#)

Your guide to make the most of the festival experience.

CAST AND CREATIVES

Studios Kabako (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Founded in 2001 in Kinshasa by Faustin Linyekula, Studios Kabako is a space dedicated to dance and visual theatre, providing training programmes, as well as supporting research, creation and touring. In 2007, the organization moved to Kisangani, embracing music, film and video.

In the city centre, Studios Kabako's venue includes a professional recording studio, a video postproduction room, rehearsal spaces for music, dance and theatre, as well as offices and storage spaces.

Studios Kabako now focuses on the people of Lubunga, one of the most vulnerable districts in Kisangani. 2013 a series of surveys, workshops, debates and events have been implemented around drinking water, education and environment, while a group of 12 young people from Lubunga have been trained in film and production.

Watch a video about Studios Kabako here: youtu.be/jOrpqLidqFw

Faustin Linyekula (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

Faustin Linyekula is a dancer, choreographer, director, and storyteller. After studying literature and theatre, he founded a company in Kenya before coming back to the Republic of Congo to create a "space" of training, exchange and creation: Studios Kabako first in Kinshasa, then in Kisangani. His shows, which are like storytelling sessions, have been performed throughout the world.



ABOUT THE SHOW

"Summons past friendships and political struggles, reckoning with what it means to seek beauty, to write or sing or dance, when surrounded by violence and loss." *New York Times*

Created by the award-winning Congolese choreographer Faustin Linyekula this lyrical dance/theatre/operatic hybrid meditates on creating a new story of life from dreams and the wreckage wrought by decades of war, trauma and poverty in the former Zaire.

From the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Linyekula left his country during the political upheaval on which *Dinozord* is based. Invited by Peter Sellars to make a creation on the 250th anniversary of Mozart's death, the composer's Requiem permeates this deeply personal and political work, as it recounts how the troubled history of Linyekula's country has dramatically impacted personal stories of his friends in Kisangani, the city where he grew up. Central too is Kabako, a writer-friend who died of the plague, "a disease I thought only existed in books".

The performance is named for a young man Linyekula met in Kinshasa. Introducing himself as "Dinozord (a misspelling of the French word for dinosaur) ...the last of his kind".

GENRE

Linyekula is a choreographer of contemporary dance, incorporating theatre, storytelling and in his work with Studio Kabako - social justice. *In Search of Dinozord* merges contemporary dance techniques such as contact improvisation (one of the most characteristic forms of postmodern dance) with spoken word performances, classical European dance and traditional African forms such as the fast-paced hip swinging Congolese Ndombolo dance style.

PRODUCTION AND TECHNIQUES

HISTORY

“Once upon a time, there was Vumi, sentenced to death for high treason; one upon a time, there was Aimé, Jean-Paul, Akim, Mobutu, Kisangani, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the former Zaire, the former Belgian Congo, the former Congo free state. Once upon a time, under the crust of familiar names and places, there was the hope of a new magic fairytale ...”
Faustin Linyekula

The Democratic Republic of Congo (formally Zaire) has had a volatile existence over the last century due to colonial rule by Belgium, successive dictatorships and uncertain political leaders since gaining independence in 1950. The harrowed history of the country is always beneath the surface of *In Search of Dinozord* though we are led towards a hopeful future. Although speaking about a politically charged topic, Linyekula does not position himself as a ‘political’ artist and avoids the trap of being an unwilling spokesperson for all of Congo or all of Africa. Instead he points to the space and role of the individual in making change, he believes that in understanding who we are and our relationship to others we can begin to take responsibility for our own position and community.

MUSIC

In Search of Dinozord uses a mix of music spanning eras, the reoccurring motif of Mozart’s Requiem, French composer Joachim Montessuis, Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, and Jimi Hendrix alongside traditional chants. A version of the performance was commissioned in 2006 by Peter Sellars for a festival in Vienna commemorating the 250th anniversary of Mozart’s death. Linyekula saw the connection between Requiem, written as the composer was dying, with the feeling of loss and disconnection embodied in *In Search of Dinozord*.

SPOKEN WORD

Linyekula often uses spoken and projected words in his performances. Here it is presented in French with translations. In the first iteration of this performance, Antonie Vumilia Muhindo smuggled a cassette tape of his writing out of the Congolese prison he was in for 10 years, and this was played during the performance. Now a refugee in Sweden, having escaped from prison in 2010 (he walked out the doors of the prison dressed as a woman) Muhindo has performed his writing in *In Search of Dinozord* both via video and live on stage.

STORYTELLING

“Poetry is always a step ahead of censorship.” [Faustin Linyekula to RNZ’s Kim Hill](#)

In Search of Dinozord is made up of fragments of stories woven together to reveal the narrative of a ravaged nation and a dream of changing the world. Retelling the real story of his return to the Congo, collaborators, friends and writer Antonie Vumilia Muhindo are woven through with symbolism and exploration of the body. These stories are supported by photographs projected on stage - giving us a reminder of the realities behind this poetic retelling.

FURTHER RESOURCES AND READINGS

LISTEN

Hear Faustin Linyekula speaking with Kim Hill about the backstory of *In Search of Dinozord*: [rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/saturday/audio/2018726949/faustin-linyekula-congolese-choreographer-and-dancer](https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/saturday/audio/2018726949/faustin-linyekula-congolese-choreographer-and-dancer)

Listen to Mozart's Requiem, a motif repeated throughout the performance: youtu.be/sPlhKPOnZII

WATCH

A 10 minute video on Studios Kabako and the work they do to address social memory, fear and hope in the aftermath of civil war: youtu.be/jQrpqLidqFw

A full poetic and performative artist talk with Faustin Linyekula at the Walker Art Centre: youtube.com/watch?v=tIdABul4wpA

READ

"My Africa is Always in the Becoming: Outside the Box with Faustin Linyekula" Brenda Dixon Gottschild, the Walker Art Centre: walkerart.org/magazine/2007/my-africa-is-always-in-the-becoming-outside-t

"...the dancers swallow music like food and drink. They become inflamed by music as by a drug. And in so doing, they seem to protect us from harm." A review of *In Search of Dinozord* by Mark Swed of the Los Angeles Times: latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-faustin-linyekula-review-20170930-htmstory.html

"Accompanied by Mozart, traditional chants and Jimi Hendrix, this ragged work bears witness to beauty and abjection, dreams and futility, and, most of all, to rage. Yet the quiet, persistent background noise of Muhindo at his typewriter suggests a fragile hope. Even one finger that keeps on tapping might, despite everything, shake the earth – and change the world." Read this review of *In Search of Dinozord* on the Guardian: theguardian.com/stage/2018/jun/17/in-search-of-dinozord-review-the-place-london-faustin-linyekula

GO FURTHER

Take a look at a timeline of events from the Kongo empire, Belgian colonisation, independence and the political leaders that followed: bbc.com/news/world-africa-13286306

Read about Studio Kabako's win of the Curry Stone Design Prize, the most well known social impact design awards: currystonefoundation.org/practice/studios-kabako/

"Mixes the tumultuous history of his homeland and the beauty of storytelling through dance in one place" *New York Amsterdam News*

"Quite possibly the most important artist working on the African continent today" *Frieze*

"A work of memory and sadness as well as promise" *Los Angeles Times*

PROVOCATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

PRE-FESTIVAL

Discuss as a class the issues facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This BBC timeline is a useful resource for understanding the key events: [bbc.com/news/world-africa-13286306](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13286306)

Using the information, you have available to you (advertising, Festival information and trailers) what are you expecting from the performance?

AT THE FESTIVAL

What do you notice about the stage and theatre space as you are coming in? What captures your attention?

What thoughts and feelings are you having as you watch the performance?

What captures your attention during the performance? The set, the props, the performers, the dancers?

AFTER THE FESTIVAL

What was the performance about? What story was being told? Was the mode of storytelling effective?

How successful were the performers in keeping the audience engaged throughout the performance? How did they do this?

How did the performers use their bodies to create the different characters in the piece?

How did the performers interact with each other during the performance? What effect did this have?

What did you notice about staging, lighting, sound, music, costume and other production elements? How did the production elements support or enhance the performance?

Were there parts of the performance you felt you didn't understand?

If 'the personal is political' where did you see this in the performance?

In Search of Dinozord utilises dance, drama and spoken word to tell the story of Linyekula and his friends. How did these different forms of storytelling work together to create the performance? What effect did they have?

Watch this video about Studio Kabako: <https://youtu.be/jQrpqLidqFw>

What are the ways that Linyekula and Studio Kabako are working with communities in Kisangani? What ideas and methods are they working with?

Can you think of or find any other examples of performance being used to give voices to communities and bring them together?

Need something more? Contact your SchoolFest team with any questions about the performance.

schoolfest@festival.co.nz | (04) 473 0149