

JUSTICE FOR KABWE!

A tribunal, an opera, a campaign

For over 10 years, a European-Congolese team of lawyers, artists and activists around the director Milo Rau have been dealing with the civil war in the east and south of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, often referred to as "The African World War". And indeed: the war, which has claimed millions of victims so far, is a war in which the whole world is involved. China, Europe, the USA: they all need the so-called conflict minerals - cobalt, gold - of which the Congo is richer than any other part of the world.

Rau and his team have investigated the crimes of the international mining business in their *Congo Tribunal* (since 2015), a global economic tribunal described by *The Guardian* as "the most ambitious political theater of all time". Now, with *Justice*, they are staging the first mining opera in history: an allegorical requiem about business, guilt and corruption, based on a real case.

On the day of the premiere at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, one of the most important opera stages in Europe, January 22, 2024, starts the international crowdfunding campaign JUSTICE FOR KABWE! The money will benefit the victims of a terrible accident near Kolwezi in South Congo - whose story the opera *Justice* tells.

THE OPERA

After his controversial take on Mozart (*La Clemenza di Tito*), Milo Rau's new music theatre work *Justice* (libretto: Fiston Mwanza Mujila, music: Hèctor Parra) takes us to the heart of the Congolese mining industry. It is the first lyric work on the crimes of transnational companies ever, developed with a Congolese-European artistic team: "How can we decolonize the gaze without taking such a situation into account?" (Mwanza Mujila)

At the center of *Justice* is a terrible accident: In 2019, an acid truck belonging to the supplein chain of Swiss company Glencore, one of the world's biggest mining companies, crashed into a market place in South Congo near the city of Kolwezi. Dozens of people died in agony: a crime of "almost cosmic proportions" (Parra) for which there was never any justice. Written together with the Congolese Man Booker Prize Nominee Fiston Mwanza Mujila ("Train 83"), set into music by Catalan composer Hèctor Parra ("The Kindly Ones"), with Congolese singer Serge Kakudji in one of the main roles and Congolese guitar player Kojack Kossakamvwe, it is the first Congolese-European opera collaboration of this size: "A requiem against forgetting as well as a manifestation of the truth." (Mwanza Mujila)

Developed with the victims of the accident, *Justice* includes hundreds of instrumentalist and singers from all over the world, like the mythical baritone Sir Willard White. This "bridge between the continents" (Mwanza Mujila) will premiere 22 January 2024 in Geneva, performed by the choir and the orchestra of the Grand Théâtre de Genève - and open the Tangente St. Pölten Festival in April.

THE CONGO TRIBUNAL

“Where politics fail only art can help,” wrote DIE ZEIT about Milo Rau's first major *Congo Tribunal* in 2015 in the eastern Congolese city of Bukavu. A panel of Congolese and European lawyers had set itself the goal of finally ending the impunity of the large transnational mining corporations. Further tribunals were held in Berlin, Zurich and the “world capital of cobalt” Kolwezi, and a cinema and television film were made. The opera *Justice* is based on this decades-long work, in particular the so-called *Glencore Tribunal*, which Rau and his team held in Kolwezi's parliament in December 2021.

“Is it the most ambitious political theater ever staged?” asked THE GUARDIAN, Radio France Internationale saw the “craziest theatre project of our time”. *Justice* is the latest chapter in this **attempt at transnational solidarity**, a “completely new step in opera history” (Parra). Or as singer Serge Kakudji, born in Kolwezi, puts it: “An opera about the Congo of today, developed with those affected and performed at one of the largest opera houses in the world, next to Glencore's headquarters: that is an artistic revolution.”

JUSTICE FOR KABWE: THE CAMPAIGN

On Wednesday 20 February 2019, a deadly accident occurred on a road near Kolwezi, in the village of Kabwe in Tenke. A truck carrying sulphuric acid destined for the Mutanda Mining (MUMI) concession which belongs to the Swiss mining company Glencore overturned and hit a large group of passers-by and vendors. The sulphuric acid spilled on the roadway and ran down the side of Kabwe village. 21 people died, 7 were seriously injured, many fields in Tenke village were contaminated, houses were damaged and vendors suffered material damage.

MUMI intervened on the evening of the accident and provided help with a crane to lift the truck to clear the dead and injured. A few days after the accident, Mumi's delegates meet the villagers and start paying food rations for 5 months. The victims took their case to court. Only the driver of the truck was put on trial. Due to pressure from the companies, the trial didn't come to a legal end until this day. A public apology from Glencore's subcontractor and legally regulated compensation for those affected never materialized.

The **crowdfunding campaign** has two objectives: firstly, it supports the lawyers' association *CAJJ - Centre d'aide juridico-judiciaire*, which is providing free legal representation for the victims of the acid accident in Kabwe. The victims' lawyers are still trying to obtain fair compensation for their clients - making the Kabwe case a symbolic case for hundreds, if not thousands of similar cases.

Secondly, through the NGO *Afrewatch* (with whom Milo Rau and his team already worked on *The Congo Tribunal*), the money raised through crowdfunding will directly benefit the victims, who have received little or no compensation to date. For example, Milambo Kayamba, who lost both legs in the accident and is still waiting for suitable prostheses; or Theophista Kazadi, whose child lost her eyesight in the accident: people on whose stories the opera *Justice* is based.

Art can raise awareness and create metaphorical justice - real justice is just one step away. Let's do it together.

In addition to direct legal and material assistance to those affected locally, we call for:

1) An investigation into Glencore's business practices and the crimes against humanity and the environment in the Democratic Republic of Congo by an independent commission of experts, appointed by the Swiss Parliament.

2) A public statement by Glencore on the allegations made against the business practices of their company, their subcontractors and the role of the Swiss legal system in them.

Justice for Kabwe!

For a fair, humane and sustainable global economy!