

NGWATILO MAWIYOO

Ngwatilo Mawiyoo's talent is undisputed across, and beyond, the African continent, her voice at once bold and thoughtful on paper and in performance. A native of Nairobi, Kenya, Ngwatilo has steadily built a name for herself as a poet, performer, actress and musician.

Ngwatilo grew up acting and singing at school and in church. While abroad in college she began to take music more seriously, leaving with a Bachelor's degree in the field, as well as extensive study of creative writing after she discovered the art form in 2004. By her final year, she had begun to embark on ways to combine both art forms.

Upon her return to Kenya, Ngwatilo began a new adventure on the small screen, even landing the lead role in M-net's Africa-wide TV drama "The Agency." Ngwatilo's other notable credits include "Makutano Junction," which shows in various African countries.

But poetry remains her core passion: to date Ngwatilo has presented her work at major festivals and literary events in Africa and Europe. Her work has been published in literary journals in Kenya and abroad and translated into German and Swedish.

Ngwatilo's first book, *Blue Mothertongue* (2010), is a collection of poems set in Nairobi and the African diaspora, around notions of identity, loss and healing.

Her open and adventurous spirit has earned Ngwatilo a reputation of being able to create unique poetry-in-performance experiences. She's been invited on multiple occasions to curate poetry performance events for various audiences in Kenya.

Her own productions include "The Poesic Project," which debuted at Alliance Francaise in December 2010 to a sold-out audience. Poesic [Pew-zik] is named for Ngwatilo's consistent experiments into the fusion of music and poetry, as well as other art forms like dance and film.

In 2011, she released her first EP album, "Introducing Ngwatilo," which she launched at the Michael Joseph Centre in Nairobi in an intimate concert. The new work features new poetry and innovative collaborations with some of Kenya's most gifted musicians, including Kavutha Mwanzia Asiyu, Sara Mitaru, Wambura Mitaru, and introducing Lisa Noah.

With a birth name that literally means, "to hold on to," perhaps it is no wonder that Ngwatilo labors toward and increasingly receives opportunities to create work that is worth "holding on to." Ngwatilo also enjoys sharing the lessons she has learned on life and poetry as often as possible, typically through high school visits, and increasingly by offering creative writing workshops.

Ngwatilo's current work explores the lived experience of diverse rural Kenyan communities. At it's completion, *This Kenyan Life* will have seen her live with 20 diverse rural Kenyan families over 200 days. It will inform, among various multimedia products, the writing of a second book of poems.

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