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SPECIAL GRATITUDE TO:
Dr. Nemata Blyden, George Washington University
Gregory Shanck, Managing Director, Aaron Davis Hall
Derek Quinlan, Box Office Manager, Aaron Davis Hall
Piero Ramos, Aaron Davis Hall
SCAN staff and Desiree Barmore
D’lyne Plummer and Exponent Collaborative

All printed materials and apparel provide by 4Identites and Clifton Muhammed

The art installation and exhibition at the gallery is Júlio T. Leitão’s reinterpretation and exploration of the Chokwe and Luba traditions of Angola. Júlio links these traditions to his life in New York, where he has resided for nearly 30 years. Through sculpture and life-size ritual masquerade costumes, Leitão reveals how colonization, racism, and other socioeconomic factors have effects both seen and unseen. While the stories they tell are complex, they are also designed to be simple, serene, and to bring peace to their surroundings.

Told from the perspective of the “Kimbanda,” an ancient shaman, providing a dramatic and historical overview of the highly-developed culture of the pre-colonial Kingdom of Kongo, 500 years ago.

Created and Choreographed by
Júlio T. Leitão
In the middle of the fifteenth century, Africa's Kongo Kingdom was the most powerful of a series of states along Africa's West coast known as the Middle Atlantic Kingdoms. The kingdom evolved in the late fourteenth century when a group of Ba-Kongo (Kongo people) moved south of the Congo River into northern Angola.

The kingdom of the Kongo had a population of five million people. It stretched from today's country of Gabon to Angola and was organized into six provinces with a sophisticated political structure.

The people of Kongo mined, created elaborate iron tools and ornaments, forged copper, and created exquisite woven cloth.
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The story begins with an ancient healer's search for the people of his village that was ravaged by the slave trade 500 years ago.

In August of 1619, a ship carrying 20-30 enslaved people originally from the Kingdom of Ndongo in modern Angola landed at Port Comfort in the colony of Virginia. These enslaved Africans had been part of a larger group heading to Mexico, and were taken to Virginia after an attack on their Portuguese slave ship by English privateers. Their arrival is seen as a starting point for African-American history, given that they were the first group of enslaved Africans in mainland British America.

In 1990, on a Harlem playground, Júlio T. Leitão taught seven African American children how to dance. Within weeks, these children and others from Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx took to the stage, performing traditional African dance for a live audience at the United Nations. Batoto Yetu (Swahili for “Our Children”) was born.

For nearly 30 years, hundreds of Batoto Yetu’s young artists have performed on great stages around the globe—Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe—and in the U.S. at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Apollo Theatre, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, Jacob’s Pillow, and Radio City Music Hall, among other venues. Their involvement in Batoto Yetu has sparked a love for the arts, enhanced their academic performance, developed leadership and mentorship skills, and inspired them to become teachers, policy makers, lawyers—and even professional dancers.

A man without a memory, is a man without a history, is a man with no identity.

A remembrance and a family reunion 400 years in the making, since the arrival of the enslaved in Hampton Virginia.

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Queen Nzinga—the 17th-century queen of the Ndongo and Matamba Kingdoms of the Mbundu people in Angola—provided leadership to her people in their fight against the slave trade for more than 30 years.

The kimbanda further explains the abolition of slaves in 1864 and the Conference of Berlin in 1884, which formalized the European colonization of Africa and the participation of enslaved Angolans/Congolese in the founding of their present nations.
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**PANEL DISCUSSION**

The History of the People of African Descent and their Impact on society

Dr. Nemata Blyden  
George Washington University

Júlio T. Leitão  
Founder, Artistic Director  
Batoto Yetu

Leslie Schwartz  
Batoto Yetu board member  
Former Assistant Superintendent of  
Education in Morris County, New Jersey

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**THE LIFE AND SPIRIT OF A WARRIOR QUEEN:**  
*Nzinga Mbandi of Matamba*

Told from the perspective of the “Kimbanda,” an ancient shaman, providing a dramatic and historical overview of the highly-developed culture of the pre-colonial Kingdom of Kongo, 500 years ago.

*Created and Choreographed by*  
Júlio T. Leitão

This performance and the programs of Batoto Yetu are made possible through generous support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, The George Lucas Family Foundation, St. Vincent de Paul Foundation, and individual contributions.