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## **Innovative Performing Arts Festival in Rwanda**

**21 years after the Rwanda Genocide that shocked the world, impressive grass root movements have come up to aid in the country's recovery and peace building processes. One of the most promising of such is the Ubumuntu Arts Festival.**

The Genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group started on the 7th of April 1994 and lasted for 100 days and saw over 1,000,000 dead. Each year since, Rwanda holds a 100 day commemoration period in which genocide perpetrators give testimonies and victims tell their stories. Public performative arts form part of the commemoration activities and have played a big role in seeing victims forgive perpetrators.

Designed to be part of the commemoration period, Ubumuntu Arts Festival is set at the end of the 100 day mourning period. This festival is not only aimed at Rwanda but is open to international artists to raise the topics of conflict, trauma and reconciliation in diverse ways and act as a platform and catalyst for national and international peace building processes.

Ubumuntu Arts Festival is the first of its kind in Rwanda, where performing arts still struggle for ground. Founder Hope Azeda says: „Art has manifested itself world over as an efficient form of communicating, expressing opinions, airing issues and sharing values about all aspects of life that affect humanity.” Azeda and her team aim at spreading messages of hope through theatre and other forms of performing arts. When it was launched in 2015 the festival featured 11 participating countries, each with powerful performances and attracted a multi-cultural audience of around 5,000 attendees each day.

The 2nd edition of Ubumuntu Arts Festival will be held 14<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2016 at the outdoor amphitheater of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre. The event has grown since last year and will have two more days, one fully dedicated to art for young audiences and one to women's topics. The organizers confirmed the participation of 16 countries and are expecting an even bigger crowd of attendees from the world over.