

THE ONE THROUGH THE OTHER

The Verses of Peace
a performance by
Guila Clara Kessous
UNESCO Artist for Peace



– דַּעְלָךְ סִנִּי לְחֶבְרֶךְ לֹא מַעֲבִיד –
– זֶה הִיא כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוּלָּהּ, וְאִידֶךְ –
פִּירוּשָׁה הוּא, זֵיל גָּמוּר.

– Babylonian Talmud

καὶ καθὼς θέλετε ἵνα
ποιῶσιν ὑμῖν οἱ
ἄνθρωποι, ποιεῖτε
αὐτοῖς ὁμοίως.

– Luke VI

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى
يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ أَوْ قَالَ
لِجَارِهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ

– Hadith Sahih

Peace
سَلَامٌ



A “CRY FOR PEACE” – *LE DAUPHINÉ LIBÉRÉ*

Selections of verses, poems, and prayers from the three Abrahamic religions that convey coexistence, respect, and peace.



In a world torn by religious differences, connection with sacred texts is essential to prevent diversions from the message of togetherness evoked by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions.

These words, from texts validated by the highest religious authorities, strive to remind us of the importance of the foundation of these monotheistic traditions. This same foundation that cries for coexistence creates an ethical relationship with the Other.

BECAUSE ONE COULD NOT BE WITHOUT THE OTHER.

Divine unity could not exist without a relationship to the human: A human being who praises, who prays, and who makes the One exist through a relationship with the Other. The religions of Abraham address this question in a non-negotiable way at the core of their texts, prayers, and mystic poems, to the point of speaking of *love* of thy neighbor as a condition of just faith—a faith that is real and sincere.

Today, these words must be recalled and repeated so that any message of hate or violence is considered a deliberate act of deviating from and distorting the very essence of that which is considered most sacred at the heart of these religions: life.

It will offer another way to re-link to the re-ligious in accordance with the guiding principles of ethics and social morals.



TEXTS OF PEACE

"What is hateful to thee, do not unto thy fellow; this is the whole law. All the rest is a commentary to this law; go and learn it."

– Babylonian Talmud

דַּעַלְךָ סִגִּי לְחֻבְרָךְ לֹא תַעֲבִיד –
זוֹ הִיא כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוּלָּהּ, וְאֵיֶדְךָ –
פִּירוּשָׁהּ הוּא, זֵיל גִּמּוּר.

Do unto others as you would have them do to you.

– Luke VI

καὶ καθὼς θέλετε ἵνα
ποιῶσιν ὑμῖν οἱ
ἄνθρωποι, ποιεῖτε
αὐτοῖς ὁμοίως.

"None of you will believe until you love for your brother what you love for yourself."

– Hadith Sahih

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى
يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ أَوْ قَالَ
لِجَارِهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ

THE ONE
THROUGH THE OTHER



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2015

CONTACT: theonethroughtheother@gmail.com

UNESCO Artist for Peace Awarded Medal of Honor at Premiere of “The One Through the Other: The Verses of Peace”

Original performance emphasizes interreligious and intercultural dialogue

Avignon, France – UNESCO Artist for Peace Guila Clara Kessous today brought to the stage an original performance uniting sacred texts and prayers of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions. The performance, titled “The One Through the Other: The Verses of Peace”, was produced by Rachel Deitch, Master of Theological Studies candidate at Harvard Divinity School. Accompanied by music, calligraphy, and dance, the performance premiered at Europe’s largest theater festival, the Festival of Avignon, in partnership with Avignon City Hall.

Exploring the Abrahamic religions’ responsibilities to others, this initiative responds to recent attempts to misrepresent these traditions and diminish their ethical messages. The production seeks to build and strengthen bridges, highlighting the similarities in each tradition by bringing together three representatives of faith for an evening of community. The performance will be staged in select cities throughout the world chosen for their religious and political significance.

“Throughout my career, I have worked tirelessly to foster interreligious and intercultural dialogue through the arts, but the recent events coming from distortions of religion have shaken me to my core,” said Director and Executive Producer, Guila Clara Kessous. “This performance is a response to those misappropriations. By centering our words on the sacred texts and prayers of these religions, we can connect with each tradition’s humanist call for compassion and tolerance of the other. The beauty of this universal message resounds with believers and nonbelievers alike in a joint quest for peaceful coexistence.”

Prior to the performance, Mayor Cécile Helle presented Medals of Honor on behalf of the city of Avignon to Guila Clara Kessous, Latifa Ibn Ziaten, and Michael Lonsdale for speaking out in the name of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. At the conclusion of the performance, Harvard Divinity master’s candidate Rachel Deitch spoke about theater’s unique ability to serve as common ground in the midst of religious and cultural difference.

The following is a complete list of participants in the performance and ceremony:

Guila Clara Kessous, UNESCO Artist for Peace

Michael Lonsdale, award-winning actor

Latifa Ibn Ziaten, President and Founder of the Imad Ibn Ziaten Association for Youth and Peace
(Association Imad Ibn Ziaten pour la Jeunesse et la Paix)

Frank Lalou, calligrapher

Tina Bosi, choreographer and dancer

Cécile Helle, Mayor of Avignon

Rachel Deitch, Master in Theological Studies candidate, Harvard Divinity School

#

THE ONE
THROUGH THE OTHER

EXECUTIVE PROFILE



Guila Clara Kessous

Guila Clara Kessous is a specialist in Arts and Human Rights attached to intercultural and interreligious issues. She conceives drama as a socially conscious reflection pervading multiple aspects of society and culture.

As an actress, she has benefited from American and European theatrical approaches. Her awards include State Diploma Recognition as a Theatre Professional from French Minister of Culture, Gold Dikalo Best Actress Trophy, Gold Medal of performing arts from French Conservatory, Cannes Movie Festival Official Selection, Avignon/New York Film Festival Award Young Talent as a movie director, and “The Voices of Universality” Medal for artistic direction of the tribute to the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the UN in New York under the high Patronage of His Excellency Ambassador Moussa M. Camara. She has performed in and directed numerous plays in France and abroad in support of human rights and intercultural dialogue with the help of international leaders such as Malala Yousafzai, John Malkovich and Peter Brook. For her work in arts and philanthropy, she received the Global Gift Philanthropist Award from actress Eva Longoria.



Kessous obtained a doctorate under the direction of Nobel Prize recipient Elie Wiesel from Boston University. She also holds degrees from Harvard University, Sorbonne and ESSEC MBA School. Kessous created the course “Theater and Human Rights” at Harvard University Kennedy School and SciencesPo. She created workshops through the program “Peace through Performing Arts” as a fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She was awarded the Teaching Excellence Award from the Bok Center at Harvard University.

She is the co-founder of the Center for Promotion of Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue, which received the prestigious prize, “Peace Above Differences”. The center will serve a network of scientific scholars and religious communities dealing with intercultural and interreligious research and dialogue in affiliation with the United Nations. Kessous is a member of the ARIAS laboratory (CNRS/Paris III/ENS) and holds a Post-doctorate scholarship from Harvard University Center for European Studies. She was a research associate at the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute for Gender Studies in 2011 working on “Religiosity, Theatre and Femininity”.

For her numerous humanitarian missions for intercultural dialogue and her work on women’s rights, Guila Clara Kessous was awarded the title of “UNESCO Artist for Peace” in 2012, presented by the UNESCO General Director. She was knighted by the French government and is also the youngest recipient of the title of Officer of Arts and Humanities (Officier Arts & Lettres).

In 2015, she has been nominated Young Leader in Foreign and Security Policy at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and is a visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School to work on interreligious dialogue through performance art.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT

The Cry for Peace of Three Believers

By Mirielle Martin

Le Dauphiné Libéré, July 21, 2015

For those who wonder what remains after Charlie, there is this encounter: a trio of voices and one message, a cry for peace. This spiritual moment of emotion took place late yesterday afternoon in the Grand Hall of Avignon City Hall.



On this official stage, three believers brought to life an interreligious and intercultural dialogue: Michael Lonsdale, for the Christian tradition, Latifa Ibn Ziaten, for the Islamic tradition, and Guila Clara Kessous for the Jewish tradition. It is this actress, UNESCO Artist for Peace, spending her time between Harvard University and Paris, who had the idea of “The One Through the Other: The Verses of Peace.”



Lonsdale were equally striking.

And lastly, Latifa Ibn Ziaten is known throughout France as the president of the Imad Ibn Ziaten Association for Youth and Peace in France, named for her son in the military who was killed by

Mohamed Merah. “She has so much courage. So many other Muslim artists refused to participate,” admires Guila Clara Kessous.



“The verses of the Torah, the Qur’an, and the New Testament draw a picture of love for the other, of roots that are desperately needed today. It is the responsibility of believers such as those believers who will represent the religious traditions tonight. It is a call to exist together,” explained the producer and scenographer to the hundred audience members.

“In this troubled time, all that brings us closer must be valorized,” declared Mayor Cécile Helle, who presented Medals of Honor of the city of Avignon to Michael Lonsdale, Latifa Ibn Ziaten, and Guila Clara Kessous [...]





MEDIA HIGHLIGHT

Qur'an, New Testament, and Torah in One Voice for Peace.

**Interview by: Cecile Bodarwé,
Midi Libre, July 19, 2015**

Interview: Guila Clara Kessous, UNESCO Artist for Peace, brings together in Avignon Michael Lonsdale and the mother of a Merah victim.

French actress and playwright, engaged in human rights, Guila Clara Kessous presents on Monday, July 20 (6pm) in Avignon religious texts for peace, accompanied by actor Michael Lonsdale and Latifa Ibn Ziaten (the mother of a soldier assassinated in Toulouse by Mohammed Merah in 2012).

Why did you decide to produce a reading of texts from these three monotheistic religions? I am a believer in the Jewish faith. After the Charlie attacks, my responsibility as a believer is to show how in the religious texts of the three Abrahamic religions there is a message of respect and a call for peace. Before the performance, we will distribute booklets in which we have included portions from the Torah, the New Testament, and the Qur'an, as well as mystical poems and prayers, chosen for their universal messages and goodwill. The common ground of these three religions is coexistence. But the problem is how the texts have been interpreted. We must return to the texts. The word *Islam* comes from *salam*, which means peace.

There will be three of you on stage – two actors and a the mother of a victim of Mohammed Merah... I will read extracts from the Torah, Michael Lonsdale will read from the New Testament, but I was unable to find a Muslim actor to read the verses from the Qur'an. I invited numerous Muslim artists, but none dared to participate. The only person who accepted was Latifa Ibn Ziaten, who has founded an association for interreligious dialogue. She is a tremendous person.

Have you previously organized this type of performance? No, this is a premiere in Avignon,

but the performance will travel. This production will be presented at the Vatican, in Jerusalem, in Amman...

You obtained your doctorate under the mentorship of Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize recipient. How did you meet him? After reading his play, *The Trial of God* (written in 1979), I was deeply moved. The play put God on trial for allowing the genocide of the Jews. I wrote to Elie Wiesel, who at that time was a professor at Boston University. In his response to me, he mentioned that he had written other plays that he wanted to publish and he asked me to join him. So I went and did my PhD under his direction! The second important person for me is actor John Malkovich, who appreciated my approach to theater. He invited me to join his troupe in Chicago.

What is your approach to theater? I do social theater, drama therapy (the use of theater as a therapeutic process) like the Brazilian director Augusto Boal who wrote *Theatre of the Oppressed*. With the direct relationship between theater and the public, there is no possibility of politicization. I went to meet the survivors of genocide in Rwanda, Armenia, Bosnia, Central Africa. In my work, I refer to ancient Greece. Theater was a communion of souls, an act of freedom and equality. There is something of an immediate connection between theater and human rights.

HIGHLIGHT

UNESCO Artist for Peace: Trained at the National Conservatory of Paris, Guila Clara Kessous holds degrees from Boston University, Harvard, and ESSEC MBA. At Harvard and Sciences Po Paris, she created the course "Theater and Human Rights". Guila Clara Kessous has also been affiliated with the Kennedy School, a prestigious American school that produces political leaders. In 2012, she was nominated as a "UNESCO Artist for Peace"

She produces and directs plays in France and abroad about the defense of human rights and she has collaborated on a number of theatrical works related to humanitarian causes.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT

Three Voices for Interreligious Dialogue,
By Margaux Subra-Gomez
La Provence, July 20, 2015

...A ceremony will take place tonight at Avignon City Hall and it will bring together Actor Michael Lonsdale, Director Guila Clara Kessous, UNESCO Artist for Peace, and Latifa Ibn Ziaten, the mother of Imad, a soldier assassinated by Mohammed Merah on March 11, 2012.

What do these three people have in common? Without a doubt, each is an unconditional herald for intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Each in their own chapel, they preach coexistence, respect, and tolerance. This evening, they will present in three voices the “Verses of Peace”, selected portions of the sacred texts of the New Testament, Qur’an, and Torah.



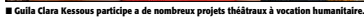
“We will see the texts, only the texts,” explains Guila Clara Kessous. “We must show that these three Religions of the Book are founded on common ground and that it can be impossible to know the difference.” A perilous mission in the context of religious tension? For this young Jewish director and actress, it is more than necessary. After the attacks in January, she asked herself about a believer’s responsibilities to her beliefs and she aims, with this project of an ecumenical “choir” to empower the faithful. Texts have been chosen and approved by researchers and believers to show that tolerance and religion, most of the time, can coexist. “The problem is the interpretations of texts by religious commentators,” confides Guila Clara Kessous. “People often do not have access to the whole message.”

The three readers will receive the Medal of Honor from the city of Avignon. [...] “This presentation will be a sort of small survival manual for constructive discussions,” argues Guila Clara Kessous. We hope that her optimism will be contagious.

■ Grand Avignon

Lecture | Guila Clara Kessous, artiste de l'Unesco, réunit à Avignon Michael Lonsdale et la mère d'une victime de Merah.

Vous avez passé un doctorat sous la direction d'Élie Wiesel, prix Nobel



Je suis partie à la rencontre des survivants de génocides au Rwanda, en Arménie, en Bosnie, en Afrique centrale. Dans mon travail, je me réfère à la Grèce antique. Le théâtre était alors une communion des âmes, un acte de liberté et d'égalité.

cbodarwe@midilibre.com

► **"L'un par l'autre les versets qui font du bien"**, lectures avec Michael Lonsdale, Latifa Ibn Ziaten, Guila Clara Kessous, et le calligraphe hébraïque Frank Lalou. Lundi 20 juillet, 18 h, mairie d'Avignon, entrée libre. Les médailles de la ville seront remises aux trois lecteurs de confessions différentes.

n histoire

Exposition | Engage

voient les plus grands noms du théâtre d'aujourd'hui, Gérard Philippe, Marc Cassès, Georges Wilson, Michel Bouquet... à la Maison Jean-Vin, consacrée au fondateur du Festival d'Avignon, costumes et photos, et les visiteurs de la collection d'œuvres dans son dispositif scénique de Richard II en 1947, accueillent les visiteurs au rez-de-chaussée.

Dans une grande salle obscure et aux murs blancs, tout l'épisode du Festival qui se retrace dans l'exposition "Avignon, le rêve que nous faisons", à travers des chroniques, chroniques aux textes, chroniques aux textes des vidéos d'archives. Une histoire, vue à travers un prisme

Qu'y a-t-il donc de commun entre ces trois personnes ? Sans doute un combat inconditionnel pour le dialogue entre les cultures et les religions. Chacun dans leur chapelle, ils prêchent le vivre-ensemble, le respect et la tolérance. Ce soir, ils présenteront à trois voix les "Versets qui font du bien", morceaux choisis des textes sacrés de la Bible, du Coran et de la Torah.

"On va regarder les textes, rien que les textes, explique Gui-

montrer que la tolérance et la religion font, le plus souvent, bon ménage. "Le problème, ce sont les interprétations des textes par les commentateurs religieux", confie Guila Clara Kessous. Les gens n'ont souvent pas accès à l'intégralité du messa-

Margaux SUBRA-GOMEZ

AVIGNON | Michael Lonsdale, Latifa Ibn Ziaten et Guila Clara Kessous réunis pour une lecture publique

« Elle. Je voulais frapper les esprits avec des messages de bien. » Le talent et la voix de Michael Lonsdale se sont imposés aussitôt.

Et puis, rapidement, le nom de Latifa Ibn Ziaten, qui parcourt la France à la rencontre des jeunes avec son association Imad Ibn Ziaten pour la jeunesse et la paix, du nom de son fils militaire tué par Mohamed Merah. « Elle a beaucoup de courage car plusieurs artistes musulmans ont refusé », admire Guilla Clara Kessous.

« Les versets de la Torah, du Coran, de l'Evangile et des prières, dessinent un



« En ces temps troubles, tout ce qui rapproche doit être valorisé », déclare à son tour Cécile Helle, qui a remis la médaille de la ville, « impressionnée », à Michael Lonsdale, Latifa Bziatien et Guila Clara Kessous. « Nous sommes heureux d'accueillir une telle manifestation », en



Latifa Ibn Ziaten, elle aussi, se rend dans les écoles, les prisons, les quartiers pour parler avec les jeunes. Elle

ieux

à
re.
ne
ette
s fils



L'acteur Michael Lonsdale, Latifa Ibn Ziaten, mère d'Imad, militaire assassiné par Mohammed Merah, et la metteur en scène Guila Clara Kessous, artiste de l'Unesco pour la paix. / PHOTOS SPEICH T. GARRO V. SIAI

THE ONE THROUGH THE OTHER



STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

This vision is really a passion -- a passion for expression, for finding the right words, the precise way to express the color of human dreams and the character of experience.

UNESCO will stand with you now as you move forward.

– UNESCO Director General **Irina Bokova**

I am pleased to endorse and support your performance, *The One Through the Other* as you prepare to stage it around the world.

I applaud your effort and dedication to bring together Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in a simple, yet effective, program that addresses the responsibility we all have to those who may not share our beliefs. It is through performances like yours that we can make a lasting impact on interreligious and intercultural understanding and action.

I wish you nothing but success in this endeavor.

– Nobel Peace Prize Laureate **Elie Wiesel**

Thank you so much, Guila, for your warm welcome and for permitting me to participate in this interreligious and interconnected reading to show that we share a common path to peace.

– President of the Imad Ibn Ziaten Association for Youth and Peace
Latifa Ibn Ziaten

What a joy to have shared this beautiful moment of reading in God's glory in love for your brother above all else.

– Award-Winning Actor **Michael Lonsdale**