

AHILAN RATNAMOHAN

&

STAR BOY COLLECTIVE

STAR

BOY

PRODUCTIONS

Personages

Lateef

Junior

Aloys

The audience enters the space to be greeted by the performers dressed smartly in suits and shiny shoes. Lights shine from behind them giving them a Godly sort of presence. They shake the hands of the audience and welcome them, handing them a small printout. Its contents read:

WEEKLY GLIMPSE // ATTAINING YOUR PASSPORT

The applicant must have permission for an unlimited staay. He or she must hold an electronic identity card; types B, C, D, E, E+, F, F+.

Prayer is the key

Prayer is the key

(come closer)

Prayer is the key

(starting and finishing)

Prayer is the master key

(Solomon Papa moa)

Star Boy started with prayer and ended with prayer

Prayer is the master key

PROCESSIONAL/VIEWING

Prayer Etuwe Bright
Junior

Gospel

Prayer is the Key

Refelctions.....'The real Christians'.....Etuwe Bright
Junior

Welcome.....'Star Boy or Hell'.....Aloys
Kwaakum

Part 1 – Integration

Selection.....'Speaking in tongues'.....Etuwe Bright
Junior

Practical

Survival

Ceremony.....'Exorcism'.....Etuwe Bright
Junior

Part 2 – Getting Your Papers

Message.....'Asylum'.....Aloys
Kwaakum

Witness.....'Love'.....Lateef
Babatunde

Practical

Your Age

Part 3 – Survival

Service.....'Work'.....Aloys
Kwaakum

Practical

Identity

Blessing.....'Star Boy'.....Etuwe Bright
Junior

The seating is divided into four sections forming a cross in the middle. The performers walk solemnly through the cross to the stage. They will continue to move through the audience and through this cross throughout the piece. They kneel before the audience with eyes closed.

lateef Prayer

alloys and junior Is the key...

lateef Praaaaayer!

alloys and junior Is the master key...

lateef Praaaaaaaaaayer!

alloys and junior Is the only key...

They stand up at once and begin to sing. The mood changes from solemn to upbeat, they move through the audience infecting them with their prayer and urging them to clap and sing along in call-and-response fashion.

call Prayer is the key...

response Come closer.

call Prayer is the...

response Starting and finishing.

call Prayer is the master key...

Star Boy started with prayer

and ended with prayer,

Prayer is the master key...

mc/interjection: My children/brethren/sisters one more time.

call Prayer is the key...

response Come closer.

call Prayer is the...

response Starting and finishing.

call Prayer is the master key...

Star Boy started with prayer
and ended with prayer,
Prayer is the master key.

the real christians

Junior returns to the stage and takes the microphone. Note: the performers will speak in a dialect in-between English and Pidgin English. The sentence constructions are intended as they are.

junior For the past three Sundays you've looked out your window. And you see Belgians. Coming from restaurants. Going to cafes to drink p i n t j e s . On a Sunday! I know you are probably thinking this is strange. Because the Europeans, they brought Christianity to Africa, your expectation was that on a Sunday, Belgians are supposed to carry bible in their hands to church. You even ask some Belgians, 'Why don't you go to church on a Sunday?' They answer you, 'N e e , n e e , n e e , Sunday is when I have time for l o p e n , l o p e n . '

LOPEN, LOPEN

'lopen' is echoed by the other pastors as will continue throughout the show.

'On Sunday I like to watch the football'

Yes!!!! It's true.

And I know some of you might have noticed... For the past three Sundays, me, your big pastor J, also I haven't been to church...

TELL THEM PASTOR

But let me first give you one example: me and you, in church, we pay our tithes. Tithes is one tenth of what you get in the month, your salary. We pay it to the pastor.

The Europeans, they pay over 40% of what they get in the month! They transform this tithes. They call it taxes. They pay this 'taxes' to the government and what is the government doing with this taxes? They build good roads, schools, even give money to those who do not have a job,

like OCMW, stempelen, chomage... even give student loans. Yes!

Me and you, one tenth of our salary we give to the pastor. And what is the pastor doing with this money? The pastors don't joke on this topic.

THE PASTOR DON'T JOKE!

They go to buy them nice X5 jeep

BMW!

Morano jeep, some of them even buy jet, with one tenth of me and your money. You know the worst part of the story? You are going to church on a Sunday, the same direction as your pastor... me and you can't even afford a bike to go to church. The worst part is, you see your pastor going, 'Pastor, oh, good morning!' he rolls down the window slowly, he greets you, 'Good morning, God bless you, my son.'

Now the X5 – which he bought with 10 percent of me and your salary – is holy. He can't even give you a ride to the church. Yes!

The Europeans are the real christians.

Yes, I see the expression on your face. It sounds strange. They don't even know it!

The Europeans live by a social system and this social system is based on the christian principles.

I'm going to introduce my brother Pastor Aloys Kwaakum.

star boy or hell

Aloys runs to the stage and grabs the microphone.

alloys Fellow brothers and fellow sisters. Immediately you walked through that door, grabbed a seat. Let me tell you something.

The Belgian man, if he were to walk into this building, is not going to say you are from Ghana, you are from Cameroon, you are from Togo. Do you know how he is going to call us?

A f r i k a a n .

All of us in this house, we are all Africans. Please, like an African brother or sister, look to the person closest to you. Look to the person next to you. Please. Tell that person, 'the African in me, sees The African in you'

THE AFRICAN IN ME
SEES THE AFRICAN IN YOU

Wait, I can see that some of you here are still like, ‘I’m from Senegal,’ ‘No, me, I’m from Naija’... The Belgians are going to call you Africans. So please look at the person next to you, ‘The African in me loves The African in you!’

THE AFRICAN IN ME
LOVES THE AFRICAN IN YOU

You still don’t realise it, you are now in Belgium. You are not from Senegal. Forget it Moussa, they are going to call you African.

We are now brothers and sisters. United we are going to stand, if we divide we will fall. The European people they have formed what they call the EU. European Union. But let me tell you a secret. They are not united at all. Not like we Africans. They have created the EU but they have kicked some of those who are like them out. Like Serbia and Macedonia. They are greedy.

Our union, as Africans... it doesn’t matter if you are poor, young, old... we are all Africans.

Look to the person closest to you and say: ‘The African in me knows the African in you.’

THE AFRICAN IN ME
KNOWS THE AFRICAN IN YOU

I can see that you guys are now ready to listen to me. We are going to talk to you guys today. We are three pastors. Pastor J, Pastor Aloys and Brother Lateef.

Whenever I, or any of the pastors, say something that encourages you, that makes you feel like you are in the house, please, at any moment, like an African brother or sister, just shout, ‘Right on pastor!’

RIGHT ON PASTOR!

‘Carry on pastor!’

CARRY ON PASTOR!

Feel free. The only people that I know who are shy are Belgians. You, like Africans, I want to see fire in you. Please encourage me by saying, ‘Right on...’ ‘Carry on.’

If you feel me say...

RIGHT ON PASTOR,
CARRY ON PASTOR!

There's a moment in the house when I will tell you, 'Star Boy is good.' You will answer, 'All the time.'

When I say, 'All the time,'
you say 'Star Boy is Good.'

Star Boy is good!

ALL THE TIME

All the time.

STAR BOY IS GOOD

Aloys drills the audience making sure they are with him.

We have our tradition of welcoming newcomers. If you know you are new in the house, please put up your hand.

junior You can't afford to miss your blessing.

alloys I will leave Big Pastor J to welcome you... I can see the old members are at the back hiding. You didn't listen to us last time, that is why you have returned.

Junior counts the new members before launching into his routine.

junior Three bosas for the new members...

all BOSA! BOSA!! BOSA!!!

alloys New members, you are all welcome. Let me tell you, you came in socially... today you will go out wisely. Clap for yourselves.

alloys What we teach you today, keep in your head. But before we go on teaching. I will tell you something sad. Something I wouldn't wish upon any of you. It's a sad story. You left a big family back home in Africa. You just want to give them some crumbs, the Belgian man won't give you a piece of the cake.

It is deportation. Don't let these people deport you.

First of all the police will get you. They will keep you for two weeks.

In this period, they are investigating you. When they are done with the investigation they will hand you over to the immigration officers. They will carry you to the immigration camp.

At the deportation camp, heyyy wahalla, it is like a prison.

By now Lateef and Junior have made their way to the stage alongside Aloys.

lateef You see, where you find yourself it's just because you want to make money too fast!

alloys You will live with a lot of people from other countries, some of them are from Iraq, Morocco, Surinam, some of them are even big criminals. You will be sleeping and eating with them.

You can even remain there for up to six months. When you are there, they are still investigating about you. The final stage of this is when your documents are sent to your

consulate for your ambassador to sign so that you, you or you, can be repatriated back to Africa.

junior But there is still a way, if you look for someone who knows the consulate of your embassy and can convince them not to sign, you still stand a chance of staying in Europe!

aloys When your ambassador signs this document... It is finished. The Belgian people say, *het is klaar*. They will book a flight for you. They will carry you to the airport in handcuffs.

lateef If you start fighting everybody in the airport, they cannot deport you. Start fighting.

Junior and Lateef start boxing, throwing elbows, ripping imaginary arms off them.

aloys When you get to the airport, you will fly like any passenger. Except with handcuffs on.

junior Old boy, if that is not working, you have to act crazy! You can't afford to go back.

Junior and Lateef start to twitch nervously, acting as if they are possessed by some spirit or mentally ill.

alloys But my friends it doesn't end there, when you are in that plane prepare yourself with some bribes, some money, because when you get to Africa, even the police in there are waiting for you.

junior Old boy, you can't afford to go back, you came from a family of nineteen.

You need to tell them you have 3 kids, then they cannot deport you!

all If you say you have 3 kids here, they will not deport you.

If you say you have 3 kids here, they will not deport you.

If you say you have 3 kids here, they will not deport you.

aloys If you start jumping up and down
they will not deport you...

all If you start jumping up and down
they will not deport you...

If you start jumping up and down
they will not deport you...

If you start jumping up and down
they will not deport you...

If you start jumping up and down
they will not deport you...

lateef If you tell them you have Ebola,
they will not deport you...

Aloys, Lateef and Junior begin coughing profusely, it feels as if their guts are about to come up at any moment. In his coughing fit Lateef grabs the microphone...

lateef Integration time with Big Pastor J.

part i –
integration

speaking in tongues

Junior walks into the audience brushing off the coughing fit.

junior You've been looking at me since I came up to this stage... you don't need to tell me I look good. I know it. I know, you can't wait to start spending your money on clothes right now because you've seen me and my suit. And I know... you are probably thinking if this suit is not from Armani, it's from D&G. But I'm going to tell you a little secret. Don't tell anybody.

This suit, I bought it from China.

It took me four years to get to this level I am right now!!!

I know... You wanna take those nice photos, you need to prove a point to your friends that you are in the promised land right now. You wanna take those nice photos, at the Central Station, Antwerpen Central – Facebook hwooooh...

He blows into the mic as if to send the picture.

Your friends will google it, ‘Ahhh we just saw that Antwerp is in Belgium, are you in Belgium right now?’

‘Ja, ja, ’t is normaal, ’t is normaal.’

You wanna take those nice photos at the Meir. You don’t need backdrop, white people they make it for you already.

You put it on Facebook hwooooh!

You wanna take those special photos. In Africa it don’t snow, so once they see you with the snow, you don’t need to add description, they know you are in the promised land.

Yes.

But!!! With your situation right now, that is not what you need. What you need is integration. Netherlands.

Your mood has changed now. This is not what you want to hear. I know you are probably thinking, where did the Belgians discover this language anyway? Why are they

speaking so fast? Did they discover this language from
Kazakhstan? How can people speak like this?

But my friend, they say if you are in Rome,
you do like the Romans. If you are in Belgium, not only in
Belgium, in Antwerp, you do like the Antwerpenaars.

Look to your neighbour and say, neighbour!

NEIGHBOUR!

Your brain is you...

MONEY!

Kijk naar jouw buurman en zeg...

Buurman!

BUURMAN!

Your brain is your...

MONEY!

Yes, you want to make money. It's simple. N e d e r l a n d s equals money.

You want to send Western Union.

N e d e r l a n d s equals Wester Union.

You want to get your papers.

N e d e r l a n d s equals papers.

If I can remember when I made a decision to learn this language – Belgians can be so sweet when it comes to this – I just walked into a place where Belgians are eating and I said s m a k e l i j k , everybody was smiling at me, waving at me, ‘ d a n k u w e l , d a n k u w e l ’ , I was feeling like Tom Cruise that day. So proud of myself, like I'm speaking N e d e r l a n d s already. The worst part of it is, I want to go back to say it again, but it's not possible because it's one s m a k e l i j k per meal... The basics! Say it... ‘ s m a k e l i j k . ’

Junior puts the microphone to someone in the audience encouraging them to repeat after him.

It means enjoy your meal.

audience member S m a k e l i j k .

junior G o e d z o . Deze generatie of Africa they are strong.

You will succeed in this land. Look to your neighbour and
say, neighbour!!

NEIGHBOUR

You will surely succeed.

YOU WILL SURELY SUCCEED

junior G o e i e d a g ... It means 'Good day', say it.

audience member G o e i e d a g .

junior Yes!!! The basics!

'H o e g a a t h e t m e t j o u ?' it means how are you
doing.

audience member H o e g a a t h e t m e t j o u ?

junior Goed zo! The basics, if you must survive in this
land, you need to know the basics.

‘Ik kan niet goed Nederlands praten,
English is beter’

it means... ‘I can’t speak good Dutch, English is better.’

audience member Ik kan niet goed Nederlands
praten, English is beter.

junior Yes!! Goed zo!

Look to your neighbour and say, neighbour!

NEIGHBOUR!!

Look to your neighbour and say, neighbour!

NEIGHBOUR!!

We are getting there.

WE ARE GETTING THERE

survival

Aloys, Lateef and Junior start walking in a strange manner.

Legs bent inwards, arms swaying exaggeratedly, they keep doing this.

It becomes almost a dance.

lateef I know you are looking at me thinking if you want to make money you are going to act like a handicap. Here in Europe, that doesn't work!

They stop abruptly.

junior Old boy, you think only you Africans want to make money... Even Belgians in Belgium, they want to make fast money...

lateef Even with their documents!

junior There is this style I call the Belgian style. It is perfect.

If you have a beard it's good, if you don't it's OKAY. You just need to go with your dirty jacket, your dirty clothes. Look for a good spot, like the Central Station and go like this...

They all sit down cross-legged.

junior No fuss... With your two cans, one to the left, one to the right. You don't need to make noise. And don't forget, you need to have your dirty dog!

lateef Pastor J, if you don't have a dog, what are you going to do?

junior Go with a dirty cat my friend! Because if they don't give you money, they will give your animal, in Europe they love them more than people.

And I still have another style... I call this one, the Albanian style... Kudos to any Albanians in the house... The Albanians make it look easy.

Junior pulls out three pieces of cardboard handing one to a piece to the others. On the cardboard in large letters:

SIR, MADAM,
I AM DEAF AND I CANNOT SPEAK
I HAVE NOT EATEN FOR DAYS
GOD BLESS YOU

The three stand still, looking into the audience for an uncomfortable amount of time.

junior And if this one is not working... there is another one, the OCMW deaf and dumb style. Yes, a friend of mine introduced me to a guy, this guy has been receiving social benefits from the government for ten years!!! Serious. If he is home with his family he's normal. But once he goes out there, he acts like who he says he is. You see him in the city... Julius, how are you doing?

all mmmmmmmmmmm.

junior Julius, where are you coming from?

all mmmmmmmmmmm...

lateef There is one style, we call it Boko Haram style. You have to act like they killed all your family, you are the only one that remain. You just need to keep your one hand behind your back...

junior So it's good with suit?

lateef With suit is perfect.

He folds his arm into the back of his suit and re-buttons it, one sleeve of the suit flops limp.

lateef You have to make your eyes very strong. Make them red like palm oil. Like you have experienced things they can't imagine.

Aloys and Junior copy him and the three stare into the audience, their body arched over, their 'one' hand extending out toward the audience.

alloys I call this one 'The Specialist'.

Target places like the post office, where there is little security and the police is not passing by. In the morning

you will wake up, you will put ketchup on a bandage and tie it around your waist. Then you will cover it. When you're leaving the house, your neighbours shouldn't know what you are doing. When you get to the post office, don't just go to any Belgian. Look at their faces, if you see ones looking questioningly, don't even try my friend. Go to the ones with the sympathetic faces, ik heb pijn, I have a pain.

Some with very kind hearts, they will give you something straight away. But you know, most Belgians they think they are smart, they will tell you, if you have pain go to the hospital. You will tell them, 'I cannot go to the hospital here, because my insurance is in Holland. I need money to take the train back to Holland.' If they are still doubting you, because you know the Belgians, they want to know everything, then you flash your bandage...

All three pull their shirts out of their pants revealing blood-soaked bandages wrapped around their abdomen.

aloys I need money!

lateef What if some person takes you to the station to buy
you a train ticket?

aloys If they buy you a train ticket, brothers and sisters,
take the train ticket, wait for that person to go and sell that
ticket! You need money. Collect the money and go on.

all ‘I need to take a train, I can’t go to the hospital here, I
need to take a train to Holland.’

‘I can’t disobey the European law.’

‘My insurance is in Holland...’

aloys If they are rejecting you, make them feel guilty, tell
them ‘God bless you!’ they will come back later.

all Ahhh, I’m in pain... i k h e b p i j n ...

I need to take a train, I can’t go to the hospital here, I need
to take a train to Holland.

I can’t disobey the European law.

My insurance is in Holland...

*The three keep repeating these sentences which slowly morph
into a mantra. As they continue to repeat them the words*

muffle and transform into a gibberish-like language which gradually becomes more and more empowering. They are talking in tongues.

exorcism

Junior emerges from this state of being, in the middle of the audience, traversing the cross-shaped path in the audience. He changes directions and moves more and more frantically as if possessed. His eyes are closed. It's as if he is being guided by some greater force.

junior The spirit is moving,
ahhhshakalakaklaaa...

alloys Let it move!

junior The spirit is moving, the spirit moving.

I can feel the spirit right now.

I can feel the spirit right now.

I can feel the spirit right now.

I can feel the spirit right now.

Ahhhshakalakaklaaa...

Every spirit that is coming here to try to act what kind of nonsense.

Every spirit, ahhhhhhh!

He stops abruptly at a point in the space.

He continues speaking very pointedly in the direction of an audience member.

junior Yes, you are looking at me right now, each time you take bus, you don't want to take ticket for 1 euro 80, the spirit say I should tell you to STOP IT!!!

aloys and lateef Stop it!

junior Otherwise you will get deported for nothing.

He starts moving again.

junior I can feel the spirit right now.

The spirit is moving, the spirit moving.

The spirit is moving, the spirit moving.

The spirit is moving, the spirit moving.

ahhshakalakaklaa shikashabaa

ahhshakalakaklaa shikashabaa.

Every spirit has a sp... AHHHHH!!

stopping again

junior The spirit is here. You are looking at me right now.

Each time you eat with Belgians, they give you chicken and you eat the bones. And you think Belgians look at you as if you are crazy. The spirit tell me I should tell you to continue!

alloys and lateef EAT!

junior You are African-African it is your culture.

continuing

The spirit is moving, the spirit moving.

The spirit is moving, the spirit moving.

It is moving... A spirit that don't belong to the Star Boy Building, you are moving around, I can feel it here.

In the middle of the path through the audience he starts stomping his feet.

GET OUT!!!

Lateef appears from nowhere in front of Junior screaming as if possessed. Junior is extremely calm.

junior The spirit... the spirit... ssssss!

lateef *in a daze, with eyes closed* I'm going to look for my close friends, I'm going to meet the first one with a sad face. He's going to ask me what is the problem. I will tell him, my mamma in Africa she's sick. Before I know he's going to give me money. The second one, I will do the same thing also...

junior The spirit, I can feel the spirit...

lateef The third one I will lie to him also... I think that by the end of the month, I'm going to have close to 150 euro in my wallet.

junior Ahhhhhhhhhh!!! Every spirit of you thinking you can come here and gather friends to make money... OUT!!!

Lateef feels the shudder of this scream reverberate through his body.

Every spirit of you thinking you can perpetuate these poverty stories to make money, OUT!!!!

With this call, Lateef falls to the floor dramatically, as if he's dead.

The spirit is moving. *whispered*

Lateef slowly rises to his feet, his eyes now open, but still in a daze.

lateef Pastor J, what am I doing here?

junior Nothing brother... It is well with you...

Do you remember what you just said?

lateef I don't say anything.

junior Yes, you don't say anything... That is the spirit...

part 2 –

getting your papers

asylum

alloys Is there any person in this house who knows Dr.
Sinngraf?

He is sitting on the stage, wearing sunglasses.

alloys You know Dr. Sinngraf? Please clap for him. Fellow
African brothers and sisters, your brain is your...

MONEY

alloys Your brain is your...

MONEY

alloys Dr. Sinngraf was a German. He came to Africa during the colonial period. His job was to supervise our grandparents' work. Dr. Sinngraf, like a German, was hard! He would make our grandparents work, work, work, for hours. They didn't even have chance to rest. When he, Dr. Sinngraf, was tired, he would tell our grandparents, 'Young men, young women, I am going to sleep. Nobody should stop working. If you stop, these my eyes *points to his glasses* will see you and when I'm back they will tell me.'

Our grandparents would look at the eyes and work, work, work for hours non-stop. Even today that is how the European people think about us.

The reason I am telling you this story is because asylum starts at the airport.

If you declare asylum at the airport, you stand 80% chance of getting a positive. But since you guys are already here, there is a solution. That's why you came into the house of Star Boy.

Star Boy is good!

ALL THE TIME

My brothers and sisters, fellow Africans...

The white man has always been smart. He thinks you, from Africa, are dumb. You should be careful with the story you tell him about asylum. If you talk to him about political stories, there is a chance he will see you are lying. So keep those political stories away.

When the Belgian man tells you, 'j o n g e ,
g a n a a r r e c h t s , ' boy, go to the right.

You, like an African, go l i n k s , go to your left. Then that white man will look at you like this...

That evening he will go home to his wife,
'h é s c h a t , i k h e b e e n d o m A f r i k a a n
o n t m o e t v a n d a a g . ' You've got him! Now he thinks
you are stupid. But you are not.

My friend, if you want to tell the white man a story about
Aziel, tell him a story that concerns the African culture.
Something he will not understand. The Belgians are not

comfortable when you are smart, intelligent. Tell them a story about witchcraft, they won't understand that. They live in the modern world. They don't know how we live.

I will tell you a story and you guys will laugh. It looks stupid. But it works. In the white man's world.

At the asylum centre I was friends with a Moroccan guy. Do you know the story this Moroccan guy told the white people in Brussels. This guy, during his interview, they asked him, why are you in Belgium? He told the interviewer, 'I was very intelligent back in Morocco. There was this witch-doctor who was jealous of my family. He came to my father and told my father if we don't worship him, he's going to kill all of us. My father told this witch-doctor, 'I will never worship a witch-doctor. I will worship only Allah.' The witch-doctor got angry, he slapped this guy (in Rabat, Morocco) and the Moroccan guy appeared in Brussels.

junior With a slap?

alloys The interviewer asked, ‘hoe kan dat?’ How is that possible?

The Moroccan guy said, ‘I don’t know.’

junior They slapped him from Rabat to Brussels?

alloys They slapped him in Rabat, he appeared in Brussels.

That is what he told the Belgian guy. This guy even went so far as to create two email addresses. He was writing to himself like his cousin was writing to him, he said, ‘hey, the witch-doctor has found out you are in Brussels, he’s going to slap you again and you will appear in Canada.’

The guy doing the interview was like, ‘dat kan niet.’

That’s not possible.

The Moroccan guy said, ‘I don’t know.’

This Moroccan guy went even further. He pretended that he didn’t like to live in Belgium, he made the people feel as if he wanted to go back to Morocco, he even refused to eat.

Went on hunger strike. At the end the Belgian people believed him and they gave him his asylum papers.

Positive. Me, I had a real story. The truth. I got a negative.

My brothers and sisters, if you are in Europe, like an African, you need to be smart, you need to be flexible. You came all the way from Africa to this place just to eat bread if they can't give you pie. Sometimes they won't even allow you to get the crumbs of that bread. You remember I told you at the start? Your brain is your?

MONEY

alloys Some people have forgotten. You people can't survive in Europe! Your brain is your money in Europe. Your brain is your?

MONEY

alloys Your brain is your?

MONEY

alloys Your brain is your?

MONEY

alloys If you use your brain you will send Western Union
back home to feed mamma, pappa and your aunts and that
is all we need.

My friends, the doors to Europe are closing.

It is getting difficult. Some of our brothers are on their way
to Asia now. You should be happy you are here. I know
some of you are sitting there saying, 'So what? If I don't
get asylum,

I will find a European girl to marry'. Ta! Marriage is
difficult.

love

alloys Lateef, please can you tell our brothers and sisters how it's been going with your woman?

Lateef is shy. He talks only to Aloys.

lateef Sorry Pastor Kwaakum, you shouldn't ask me how it's going with my woman, you should ask me how it's going with my love.

alloys Sorry, Brother Lateef. I mean, how is it going with your love?

lateef You know...

alloys Please, Lateef tell them, talk to them...

lateef You know in Africa if you find a girl you love, it's simple, you take a cow to her family and some gifts and

they will give the girl to you. But in Europe, they are asking you to prove you love someone.

alloys Prove you love someone, Brother Lateef, how can you do this?

lateef Yes, prove! The government will be asking you for photos, text messages and other things. To the extent that the police even came to my house one day to see if I am actually living there.

They went through my laundry, even my underwear...

alloys The police were checking your underwear?

lateef You know I saw one report on Al Jazeera recently, one Belgian couple they were fighting.

By now he has become more impassioned, he addresses the audience directly.

If you saw the girl you wouldn't believe it, she had blood coming out of her face. Two months later, they got a wedding. Do you think the police came inside their

marriage? You think the police asked them to prove their
love?!?

your age

Walking to the centre of the stage as if to round off the interview.

alloys You need to be flexible, you need to adapt to the situation, don't feel guilty.

You need to eat, you need to be creative. If you go around thinking, 'oh I want to be truthful,' the white man will give you nothing. Be flexible... Say you came to Belgium, you had a good political story, a real one and your age is only 18.

The white man will say, how come an 18 year-old boy is involved in politics? He should be in school.

You have to be flexible. So you have to do something.

lateef I'm 35 years old.

alloys Love doesn't have boundaries. Don't make the Belgians make you feel guilty. If you meet a woman who is 30, 35, 40, if you're in love with her, no problem. The only

thing you have to do... Be flexible. Feel the situation. An 18 year-old boy is not going to get married to a 40 year-old woman, these people don't want to believe it. Be flexible.

junior I'm 38.

aloys I left Africa, I came because I wanted education. I don't have money. Free education in Belgium is from birth to the age of 18.

lateef I'm 17 years old.

aloys I'm 25 years old. Do you think these guys will allow me to go to school? I need to be flexible.

junior I'm 17.

aloys I'm 32 years old.

lateef I'm 29 years old.

alloys You're looking at me like you don't believe it, I said
I'm 27 years old.

junior I'm 40.

lateef I'm 30 years old.

alloys I'm 20.

junior No, really... I'm 27.

alloys I said I was 36 years old, is there a problem with that?

part 3 –
survival

Junior approaches someone in the audience.

junior Hi, how you doing? You're the one, right? Yeah we spoke on Facebook. That's the guy. Actually his Dutch and English are not real good, he just arrived. But that's okay. How old did you say you were?

Depending on if there are responses or not, Junior responds or intimates responses from the person he has chosen.

junior 35? But on your Facebook it says 28?
It's okay...

Junior yells to Lateef, still up on the stage, in Yoruba, Lateef responds animatedly.

junior He says it's okay, he's willing to do any fucking thing to be with you...

Okay, okay, normally it's no problem...

Junior returns to Lateef. From their Yoruba conversation the words '10 press-ups' are clear. Lateef takes his jacket off. He goes down to the floor and proceeds to do 10 push-ups.

Junior turns back to the person.

junior You see what I mean, he's willing to do any fucking thing to be with you...

Okay, I'll check.

Junior turns back to Lateef. Again in Yoruba. After some discussion Lateef begins to undo his bow-tie. He then unbuttons his shirt, taking it off to reveal his body. Junior turns back to the person in the audience to gauge whether they are satisfied.

junior Mmmm... okay, okay, one second.

Junior discusses with Lateef again. The conversation is a little bit heated.

junior Normally it's against his religion, but like I said, he's willing to do any fucking thing to be with you.

Lateef takes his pants off on Junior's cue.

He stares back into the person's eyes perfunctorily. Junior turns back to the person.

junior Okay, okay... it shouldn't be a problem, you know as Africans it's a part of our culture.

Lateef begins to dance, in his underpants only, his pants still round his feet. Until he is disrupted by...

work

alloys Heeeeeyyyy! Out of every 10 Belgians, my friends and fellow Africans, at least 9 have done what they call black jobs, *zwart werk*, *travail au noir*... This stuff is also illegal! They are avoiding their taxes, their tithes. But you don't need to feel guilty my brothers and sisters, you need to feed yourself. And the only way out is to work. But since you came to the house of Star Boy, I have another option for you. I am going to go to the *interim kantoor*, the job office. I am going to use my ID, I am legal, I will register myself. I will do the interview, I will give them my bank account number. My phone number. When they call me for a job, you or you will take my place.

When you get to this job site you have to work hard, really hard. I want you all to close your eyes. Fellow Africans, I want you to imagine you are me, you live my life, you have my documents. You are Aloys.

Open your eyes, the job office could call any time so you have to be ready.

Remember when you are at the job site to keep a low profile...

You have to work hard.

All I ask is that you give me 20% commission from your salary. I am the one paying you remember.

junior 20%?!?

Aloys My friends, I'm only asking 20%. In the UK, in London, they give 40. In USA it's 50!

I heard in Canada it's even 60! My friends, do you know how I suffered to get my papers?

I was travelling from Antwerp every day to Brussels. 3 times in a week, by bus not by train! I spent 3 hours every day to get my papers and now I want to help, you're telling me 20%? You want to work for free? Feed me, I feed you. Nothing is for free.

Aloys walks through the audience and selects two audience members.

alloys Congratulations brother and sister, you are ready for
the test that awaits, please come with me.

identity

alloys We are going to play a game. To see if you guys are ready for what awaits you out there. In this envelope, I have two ID cards.

I am going to give you both one minute to memorise them and then we will see which one of you is ready for Europe...

lateef *interrupting standing in the middle of the audience*

Hello my friend, you are looking nice. I see by the way you are dressing like you are enjoying Europe. But let me remind you in four months it's going to get cold and for sure you're going to get sick. Because you are new here, you can't compare yourself to this woman.

You take P a n a d o l and I b u p r o f e n , but it doesn't get better. In Africa you can go to any hospital and they will treat you. But here in Europe you need to have this... I mean your health insurance card, most Europeans carry it

wherever they go. But, no problem, brother. What you need to do, you need to find your black brother that has one. You know on the health insurance card, there's no photo.

But it's very important that you remember the person's name, their date of birth, their address and also the last time they went to the hospital. Please, brother come with me. Sisters you too, come with me. You are ready.

All three personally invite other audience members to join them on the stage. Once all of the audience has arrived on the stage, they ask them to form three single-file lines. They each take a position at the front of the line.

aloys We are going to play a game to see if you guys are ready for what awaits you out there. You will each receive a SIS card. You will have one minute to memorise the details on it and then we will see who here is ready for Europe.

The first person in each line is given a SIS Kaart or an ID card and then asked to move to the back of the line. When they arrive back at the front of the line they are asked for their card by Aloys, Lateef or Junior, who respectively take on

the role of a doctor, police officer, train conductor, etc., to ask the person to recall their personal details. Depending on their answers, they are praised or admonished. They are then given a small chocolate biscuit, blessed and told to return to their seats.

star boy

junior Brothers and sisters, we have given you advice from our own personal experiences so that you can go out there and survive. Here in this land, you will go to extreme lengths to survive. Many who started this journey with us are no longer to be found. Star Boy always told me, judge not that you may not be judged. Your circumstances determine who you are. You too can be a Star Boy. On my right is Aloys Kwaakum. On my left Lateef Babatunde. I'm Etuwe Bright Junior.

Star Boy Productions ging in première op 26 september 2014
in Monty Kultuurfactorij, Antwerpen

Spel Etuwe Bright Junior

Lateef Babatunde

Aloys Kwaakum

Regie Ahilan Ratnamohan

Ahilan Ratnamohan (Melbourne, 1984) is een Sri Lankaans-Australische performancekunstenaar woonachtig in Antwerpen. Hij studeerde film aan de University of Technology van Sydney en probeerde daarna een carrière op te bouwen als profvoetballer in Nederland, Zweden en Duitsland. Sinds 2007 is hij werkzaam in het theater. Hij werkte met diverse gezelschappen in Sydney voordat hij in 2014 in residentie kwam bij Monty Kultuurfactorij in Antwerpen. Met Star Boy Collectief, een groep van West-Afrikaanse voetbal-migranten, maakt hij sindsdien sociaal-politieke voorstellingen waar choreografisch en tekstueel verschillende cultureel geladen thema's onder de loep worden genomen.

Toneelwerk

*Look On The Bright Side** – 2019

Klapping – 2018

Mercenary – 2018

Valodas Triloģija / Language Trilogy – 2017

Reverse Colonialism – 2017

Drill – 2015

*Star Boy Productions** – 2014

SDS1 – 2013

*Michael Essien I want to play as you...** – 2013

* Teksten uitgegeven door De Nieuwe Toneelbibliotheek

Het Star Boy Collectief (Antwerpen, 2013) is ontstaan vanuit de samenwerking voor *Michael Essien I want to play as you...* Tijdens dit proces was het duidelijk dat er andere urgente ideeën waren buiten de omvang van dat project. Het collectief representeert een heel andere groep binnen ons kunstenveld; het zijn recent-aangekomen, economische migranten, sans papiers (vroeger) en mensen zonder een kunsteducatie of artistieke achtergrond, maar met een zeer sterke inhoudelijke bevlogenheid om hun ervaringen te delen. Met Monty Kultuurfactorij en het Cultuurcentrum Luchtbal als thuisplekken begonnen Etuwe Bright Junior, Lateef Babatunde en Aloys Kwaakum verder met Ahilan Ratnamohan te werken. Door hun soms preciaire statuten in Europa bleven andere lieden van *Essien* betrokken voor tournees naar bijvoorbeeld Engeland en Zwitserland. De ongeplande ontmoeting is nu uitgegroeid tot een acht-jarige samenwerking.