Let me begin by saying Hip Hop has always been theatre. Like theatre, Hip Hop can be done pretty much anywhere there are performers, audience, and space. Hip Hop is forever telling stories. And Hip Hop loves to transform the people from what they were, to what they could be. Hip Hop has always been theatre, but it was in my freshmen year of college, as an acting major at Howard University, where I encountered and fell in love with Hip Hop Theatre. It was then that I was transformed by actors who could rhyme, DJ's on the stage, dancers who told stories with their bodies, and graffiti as set pieces. I left the theater feeling transformed, perhaps how Yoruba people in Nigeria feel after an Egungun masquerade, or how Greeks felt after Thespis stepped away from the chorus to impersonate Dionysus. Hip Hop Theatre inspired me to the power of living theatre, and I wanted to do it. But could I? As the famous Tribe Called Quest lyric goes “Can I kick it?” “Yes you can” replied the voice inside of me.

Fast forward to 2014 and I am in the Emerging Writers Group at the Public Theater in New York. They ask me, “So NSangou, what play will you write?” I pause. I know I want it to be transformative. I know I want it to welcome people into the theatre who didn’t think theatre was for or about them. I know I wanted people to see Hip Hop as Theatre, not the stereotypes and misrepresentations they’d seen in media. And then it hit: write about your journey from a young man into a master of the ceremony. Write about how you found your voice, and a power you didn’t know you had. Write about the genius of freestyling, the ability to create rhymes on the spot, without writing them down. That’s the play. But what to call it? Another pause. And then, Rakim’s voice ran through my head, quoting one of his most famous lyrics “I start to think/and then I sink into the paper/like I was ink.” And so, here you are. Here you are in my ritual. A ritual of theatre designed to transform you from who you were to the possibilities of who you can become. A ritual designed for the theatre goer who’s seen it all to see something new, something that engages every aspect of the human experience. A ritual designed to bring in new theatre goers who have never seen themselves, their stories, their truths onstage before, but who would feel like someone finally recognized and respected them. This ritual is for the young teenage kid, who has a gift that was never recognized, but they know they “can kick it.” This is for them. This is for the dreamers who never let their dream go completely. You, too, “can kick it.” This is for the future of theatre, a future that, now more than ever, calls for us to connect to the deepest and most potent levels of humanity… the Rhythm of Life. The Spirit. Syncing Ink will have you bobbing your head, snapping your fingers, but more importantly it will have you seeing yourself and others as fellow spirits on the journey of life. And that’s why I wrote this. That’s why we are all here. To Sync, to connect, to dream and watch our dreams manifest [Ase]. Just like The Yoruba People. Just like the Greeks. Just like freshmen year. Welcome to the ritual of Syncing Ink. And before I go to get the show started, let me ask you…

"Can I Kick It?"