IT BEGAN seven years ago as a labor of love. Musician Matt Gould (left) and actor Griffin Matthews, whose lives had taken them separately to Africa, created Witness Uganda, a soulful “musical documentary” about the trials and triumphs of an earnest, small-scale effort to educate impoverished teenagers in Uganda. The show debuted as a one-night, 25-minute benefit to fulfill Matthews’ promise to the teens, but Gould (CFA’01) and Matthews, partners in life as well as work, developed the show into a full musical production that would find its way to its Cambridge, Mass., debut. Witness Uganda earned critical praise in a winter 2014 run at the American Repertory Theater (ART) under the direction of Tony Award–winner Diane Paulus. After a string of scaled-down road productions that doubled as fundraisers, the show, renamed Invisible Thread, opened in New York City in October at Second Stage Theatre, an off-Broadway company.

The production’s name change—“Our show is about connection and the ways that small, seemingly infinitesimal actions can reshape the world,” says Gould—is one of several ways Witness Uganda has been revamped. At ART, the character of struggling entertainer Ryan was a young white woman who was the best friend of lead character Griffin, played by Matthews. Now, Ryan is a white man and Griffin’s boyfriend. “It was a way for us to turn up the heat and the drama in the piece overall,” says Gould.

On the Uganda front, Gould reports that 3 of the 10 sponsored Ugandan students are graduating from university. And a fundraiser allowed Gould, Matthews, and 17 cast members and musicians to visit the country. In August, they spent a week volunteering in service projects and taking part in dance and language classes.
CFA alum’s vibrant and inspirational musical, *Invisible Thread*, opens at Second Stage

BY SUSAN SELIGSON

PHOTOGRAPH BY DIANA KING