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Nassim Soleimanpour
White Rabbit, Red Rabbit
November 3–5 and 9, 2013
Copresented with the Chicago Humanities Festival

Written by Nassim Soleimanpour
Featuring (in alphabetical order)
Usman Ally
Fawzia Mirza
Yasen Peyankov
Michael Shannon

White Rabbit, Red Rabbit was originally produced by Volcano Theatre in association with Necessary Angel and Wolfgang Hoffmann.

Dramaturgy by Daniel Brooks and Ross Manson

Edlis Neeson Theater
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

As part of the Chicago Humanities Festival, generous underwriting for White Rabbit, Red Rabbit is provided by Carol Rosofsky and Robert B. Lifton.

White Rabbit, Red Rabbit is presented in association with Aurora Nova Productions.
Welcome

It is our tremendous pleasure to present a highlight of the fall season for both MCA Stage and the Chicago Humanities Festival.

Each year, we strive to highlight distinctive artists whose visions reflect and refract the annual theme of the Festival. In recent years, MCA Stage and the Chicago Humanities Festival have collaborated to bring forward memorable performances by Big Dance Theater, Liz Lerman/Dance Exchange, and Mike Daisey, just to name a few.

The current theme of Animal: What Makes Us Human has been especially stimulating, and so this year we are expanding by copresenting two intriguing projects. First, Elephant Room is a feat of misdirection. What seems to be an off-the-wall magic show turns out to be experimental theater fueled by our imaginations and our unwitting suspension of disbelief. Along the way, we are drawn into a secret society located at a point in the space-time continuum somewhere between baroque nostalgia and Paterson, New Jersey.

White Rabbit, Red Rabbit is an entirely different animal. Iranian playwright Nassim Soleimanpour refused his country’s mandatory military service as a conscientious objector and was therefore refused a passport for international travel. His experience is that of many in his generation—computer literate and well informed, but living within parameters circumscribed by the Islamic Republic. Created to travel the world when he can’t, his play requires no director or set, and each performance features a different actor who receives the script for the first time he or she takes the stage.

Dramatically distinct, these two works prompt us to explore what distinguishes the human animal from others. Both Elephant Room and White Rabbit, Red Rabbit explore creativity and self-awareness.

Peter Taub
Director of Performance Programs
MCA Chicago

Mary Kate Barley-Jenkins
Managing Director, Programming and Production
Chicago Humanities Festival

Reduction
Dec 21
Copresented with Asian Improv Arts Midwest


Buy tickets online at mcachicago.org

MCA STAGE
at the Edlis Neeson Theater

Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago
**About the work**

White Rabbit, Red Rabbit is staged without Soleimanpour, a director, or a set, and features a different guest performer each night. The performer is handed the script for the first time as he or she steps onstage before the live audience. Using a menagerie of allegorical animals, the play is “not about Iran,” Soleimanpour has stated. It grapples with the social phenomena of power, obedience, and manipulation.

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**Artists Up Close**

Gain insight into the creative process through these intimate opportunities to engage with the artists.

**First Night Talks**

**Nov 3–5 and 9**

Following every performance the audience members are invited to participate in a moderated post-show discussion. Invited moderators are Jamil Khoury (Founding Artistic Director, Silk Road Rising); Katie Watson (Second City; Medical Humanities and Bioethics Program, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine); Nejla Yasmina Yatkin (ny2dance); and Narimon Safavi (WBEZ contributor, Worldview; National Iranian-American Council).

**American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation**

**Nov 9, 3 pm performance**

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**Chicago Dancemakers Forum Break Out! Nov 16**

Celebrating ten years of supporting new explorations by Chicago Dancemakers, this exuberant event features performances throughout the museum all day.

**Buy tickets online at mcachicago.org**
About the Artists

Nassim Soleimanpour
is an independent multidisciplinary theater maker and resides in Tehran, Iran. Written to travel the world when he couldn’t, White Rabbit, Red Rabbit has been named the Dublin Fringe Festival Best New Performance, received the SummerWorks Outstanding New Performance Text Award and the Arches Brick Award (Edinburgh Fringe), and has also been nominated for Total Theatre and Brighton Fringe Pick of Edinburgh Awards. Soleimanpour most recently participated as a panelist in the World Theatre Festival In Conversation series in Brisbane, Australia.

Usman Ally
was born of Pakistani parents and raised in southern and eastern Africa. He has originated several roles in world premieres of award-winning productions, including the Pulitzer Prize–winning Disgraced, for which he was nominated for a Jeff Award for Actor in a Principal Role, and the Pulitzer finalist, The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity. Most recently he originated the role of Bagheera in The Jungle Book at the Goodman Theatre. His work has been seen in major theaters around the country, as well as on television and film. Ally is a recipient of the highly prestigious Fox Foundation/Theatre Communications Group Fellowship. He holds an MFA in Acting from the University of Florida (Magna Cum Laude) and a BA in Theatre and Cultural Anthropology from Lewis & Clark College.

Fawzia Mirza
is a former-attorney-turned-actor, producer, and writer. Recent Chicago theater credits include the Goodman Theatre’s The Happiest Song Plays Last and Teddy Ferrara, Silk Road Rising’s The DNA Trail and Scorched, Theatre Seven’s In the Heart of America, and 16th Street Theater’s Dental Society Midwinter Meeting. She has produced documentaries and starred in a number of Chicago-made indie films and web series, including her own comedic series, Kam Kardashian. For the last seven years she has been doing sexual violence prevention work at colleges, universities, and military institutions around the world, performing the comedic-educational show Sex Signals. In 2014, she will premiere her one-woman show about her experiences as a South Asian Muslim American woman, entitled Me, My Mom & Sharmila Tagore.

Yasen Peyankov
has been an ensemble member of Steppenwolf Theatre since 2002 and last appeared in Three Sisters. Other Steppenwolf appearances include The Hot L Baltimore, The Diary of Anne Frank, Lost Land, Cherry Orchard, Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune, The Time of Your Life, Hysteria, The Berlin Circle, Morning Star, The Pillowman, Time to Burn, The Tempest, and Superior Donuts. Additional theater credits include Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Ivanov, Scenes from an Execution, Agamemnon, and Caligula (European Repertory Company); The Odyssey (Goodman Theatre); Hamlet, Piano, Twelfth Night (Court Theatre); and Medea (American Theater Company). Film credits include A Very Harold and Kumar Christmas, Contagion, Transformers 3, Crime Fiction, The Company, Novocaine, U.S. Marshals, and Payback. Television credits include The Mob Doctor, The Beast, Gifted Hands, Karen Sisco, Alias, Early Edition, The Unit, The Evidence, Numb3rs, E-Ring, and others. His translation of Chekhov’s Ivanov, produced by European Repertory Company, was published by Ivan R. Dee. He is the recipient of a Jeff Award and a Fox Fellowship and is Head of Theatre Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he teaches acting. Peyankov is originally from Bulgaria, where he graduated from the National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts.

Michael Shannon
Jeff Award–winning actor Michael Shannon began his career as a stage actor in Chicago, where he helped found A Red Orchid Theatre. He has worked with notable Chicago theater companies such as the Steppenwolf Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre, and Northlight Theatre, among others. A celebrated film actor, his credits include Pearl Harbor, 8 Mile, Kangaroo Jack, Bug, Take Shelter, Man of Steel, and Revolutionary Road, for which he received his first Academy Award nomination. Shannon has a recurring role as Nelson Van Alden on the hit HBO series Boardwalk Empire.
The Chicago Humanities Festival has welcomed world-class artists, writers, thinkers, and performers to Chicago since 1990. By celebrating great ideas in public programs featuring creative and insightful speakers, the Festival has become a vital component of Chicago’s cultural community.

This year’s festival includes more than eighty events at venues in Evanston, Chicago’s Lincoln Park, Loop, and Hyde Park neighborhoods, and features concerts, performances, discussions, lectures, and more. For more information and tickets, visit chicagohumanities.org or call the CHF Box Office at 312.494.9509.

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**24th annual Chicago Humanities Festival**
*Animal: What Makes Us Human*

October 13 | Evanston
October 20 | Hyde Park
November 1–10 | Downtown

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**Thank You**

Lead support for the 2013–14 season of MCA Stage is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman. Additional generous support is provided by Graff, David Herro and Jay Franke, Caryn and King Harris, Lois and Steve Eisen and The Eisen Family Foundation, and Mary Ittelson. MCA Chicago is a proud member of Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

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The performance-based programming of CHF’s nationally recognized spring festival appeals to a wide audience, including children and families. The fifteenth annual Stages, Sights & Sounds festival takes place in May 2014. Please visit chicagohumanities.org for more information in early 2014.

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As one of the nation's largest multidisciplinary museums devoted to the art of our time, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago offers exhibitions of the most thought-provoking art of today. The museum's performing arts program, MCA Stage, is the most active presenter of theater, dance, and music in Chicago, featuring leading performers from around the globe in the 300-seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

MCA Stage is committed to presenting groundbreaking performances that focus on collaboration; working closely with artists; converging with the larger programming of the museum; and offering a contemporary view of the traditional roots of performance.

Parking
Validate your ticket at the coat check for $11 parking in the MCA garage (220 East Chicago Avenue) and Bernardin garage (747 North Wabash Avenue). The $11 parking is limited to six hours on the date of the performance.

Lost and found
To inquire about a lost item, call the museum at 312.280.2660. Unclaimed articles are held for 30 days.

Seating
Please switch off all noise-making devices while you are in the theater.

Patrons are seated at the management's discretion. Food and open beverage containers are not allowed in the seating area.

Reproduction
Unauthorized recording and reproduction of a performance is prohibited.

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago
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Chicago, IL 60611
mcachicago.org

General information 312.280.2660
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Museum hours
Tuesday: 10 am–8 pm
Wednesday–Sunday: 10 am–5 pm
Closed Mondays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day