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On June 23, 2011, MCA Chicago celebrated the achievements of MCA Stage with the *remixed/reimagined* Performance Benefit. This innovative evening was co-chaired by MCA Trustee Sara Albrecht and MCA Performance Committee member Jay Franke. Our sincere thanks to all who contributed to the event and to all who continue to support MCA Stage in its 15th season.

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**Lucky Plush Productions The Better Half**

October 27–29 and November 3, 5, and 6, 2011

**Museum of Contemporary Art**

Chicago
**Support for The Better Half**

The Better Half is generously provided by Pamela Crutchfield.

**The Better Half** is a National Performance Network Creation Fund Project commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in partnership with Clarke Smith Performing Arts Center and NPN.

The National Performance Network Creation Fund is supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency).

The Better Half is also supported in part by Audience Architects’ New Stages for Dance Initiative. Leadership support for the New Stages for Dance Initiative is provided by Metlife Foundation and Dance/USA.

The creation and presentation of The Better Half is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with the New England Foundation for the Arts through the National Dance Project.

Major support for NDP is provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the Community Connections Fund of the Metlife Foundation. Additional support for The Better Half is provided through project grants to Lucky Plush Productions from Boeing, The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation, and the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.

**Special thanks:** Peter Taub, Yolanda Gesta Cursach, Surinder Martingetti, Richard Norwood, Erin Baldwin, Chaz Ogilvie, Mia Nicklund, and the rest of the fantastic staff at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Paul Brohan and the Clarke Smith Performing Arts Center; Elaine Adams and the Lucky Plush Board of Directors for their ongoing and Better Half Gala support; Pamela Crutchfield for her many contributions to the project; Susan Manning, Ginger Farley, and Matt Glavin for their early project support; Heidi Coleman and the University of Chicago Summer Lab Inc.; Nick Pupillo, Sarah Robinson and the staff at Visceral Dance Studio; Chicago Moving Company for presenting an early in-progress version of the work at Hamlin Park Studio Theater; Cheryl Mann (photography) and Carol Genetti (graphic design) for their contributions to the project; Alex Brennen of tech and web support; and Lauren Nixon, Angela Lumen, Ivan Sygoda, and everyone else at Pentacle for their ongoing advocacy and representation.

**Co-created and co-directed by:**

Leslie Buxbaum Danzig and Julia Rhoads

**Collaboratively devised and performed by The Ensemble:**

Adrian Danzig, Kim Goldman, Tim Heck, Julia Rhoads, Meghann Wilkinson

**Original Script:**

Leslie Buxbaum Danzig, Julia Rhoads, and the Ensemble

**Text Excerpts:**

Gaslight, stage play titled

Angel Street

(Patrick Hamilton)

Scenes from a Marriage

(Ingmar Bergman)

The Bourne Identity

(Robert Ludlum)

Trust

(Hal Hartley)

Flirt

(Hal Hartley)

All the Real Girls

(David Gordon Green)

**Composition/Sound Design:**

Mikhail Fiksel*

**Lighting Design:**

Heather Gilbert*

**Costume Design:**

Jeff Hancock

**Stage Management:**

Clare Roche

**Additional music by:**

*Member of United Scenic Artists (USA)
Lucky Plush Productions is a Chicago-based dance-theater company that devises works with a focus on strong ensembles, complex choreography, innovative uses of technology, and intellectually bold content. Led by choreographer Julia Rhoads, Lucky Plush is known for its lush and evocative movement, witty commentary, and artful integration of dance, theater, and visual design. Since its founding in 1999, Lucky Plush has premiered 30 original works including performance installations, two dance films, and nine evening-length productions. The company has been presented by a wide range of venues including Joyce SoHo (NY), Jacob’s Pillow (MA), Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago, Steppenwolf Garage (IL), Chicago Humanities Festival, Cusp Conference (IL), Grace Street Theater (VA), Spring to Dance (MO), Madame Walker Theater (IN), and the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival (AK). Lucky Plush’s world premiere of Cinderbox 18 was created in residence and presented by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in 2007. Upcoming tours by the company include Doudna Fine Arts Center (IL), Hancher Auditorium (IA), and Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center (MD). Lucky Plush’s work has been supported through regional and national awards to Julia Rhoads including a Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artist grant, two Illinois Arts Council fellowships in Choreography, and a fellowship from the Maggie Alieese National Center for Choreography. The company has been recognized by the Chicago Reader’s “Best of Chicago 2010”; Time Out Chicago’s “The Decade’s 10 Best Original Dance Works” (for Endplay); the Chicago Tribune’s “Best of Dance 2008”; Chicago Sun-Times “Lasting memories in Dance” for 2005 and 2007, and a Time Out Chicago feature cover story “5 reasons to love dance in Chicago.”

Lucky Plush Productions is a member of Pentacle (DanceWorks, Inc.), a non-profit service organization for the performing arts, Mara Greenberg and Ivan Sygoda, Directors (www.pentacle.org). Information about Lucky Plush Productions’ activities may be obtained by contacting Lauren Nixon at 212-278-8111 ext. 305, or at laurenn@pentacle.org. For additional information about Lucky Plush Productions, or to learn about our Board of Directors and other volunteer activities, please contact us at www.luckyplush.com.

Leslie Buxbaum Danzig is co-founder of the Chicago-based physical theater company 500 Clown, where she co-created and directed 500 Clown Macbeth, Frankenstein, Elephant Deal, and Christmas. 500 Clown has played in Chicago at venues including Steppenwolf and Lookingglass, tours regularly throughout the US, and has received commissions/fellowships from Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center (MD), College of St. Benedict’s/Saint John’s University (MN), and University of Chicago. Other credits include directing Redmoon’s Hunchback at New Victory Theater (NYC) and Float (About Face Theater); touring nationally and internationally as an actor with NYC’s Elevator Repair Service; assisting director Julie Taymor; dramaturging for choreography.
pher Molly Shanahan; and this past summer appearing as Masha in The Seagull in Chekhov on Lake Lucille in NY (director Brian Mertes). Buxbaum Danzig received her BA from Brown University and PhD in Performance Studies at Northwestern University, and trained in physical theater and clown with Jacques Lecoq and Philippe Gaulier. For the past five years, she has taught at the University of Chicago and recently began a new role at the University as Program Curator for the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry.

Julia Rhoads is choreographer and founding Artistic Director of Lucky Plush Productions. Her work with the company has been presented in Chicago venues including the MCA Stage, Dance Center of Columbia College, Steppenwolf Garage, Cusp Conference, and Chicago Humanities festival, and recent and upcoming tours include Joyce SoHo (NYC), Jacob’s Pillow (MA), Grace Street Theater (VA), Spring to Dance (MO), and Steppenwolf Studio, Berkeley Rep, Brooklyn Theater’s The Great Fire. Currently on faculty at Columbia College Chicago, she has taught at Northwestern University, Dance Center Evanston, and Visceral Dance Chicago and has organized for the Chicago Seminar on Dance and Performance and the Society of Dance History Scholars.

Leslie Buxbaum Danzig is a graduate of Northwestern University and is in her eighth season as a collaborating ensemble member with Lucky Plush Productions. She is a former company member of Mordine and Company Dance Theater and has appeared in Chicago with Smith/Wymore Disappearing Acts, Cie Felix Ruckert, Raizel Performances, NU Group, and Peter Carpenter Performance Project. Wilkinson has been a guest teacher and choreographer for the Cacio&Pepe/Salvador Dali Corporation and the Evanston Dance Ensemble and was Assistant Choreographer for Lookingglass Theater’s The Great Fire. Currently on faculty at Columbia College Chicago, she has taught at Northwestern University, Dance Center Evanston, and Visceral Dance Chicago and has organized for the Chicago Seminar on Dance and Performance and the Society of Dance History Scholars.

Meghann Wilkinson is originally from Siberia. He is on the faculty at Loyola University and works as sound designer, composer, musician and DJ. He is an ensemble member of StrawdogTheatre Company and 2nd Story, and Artistic Associate with Teatro Vista, Collaboration, and Redmoon Theatre. His recent Chicago credits include work for The Goodman Theatre, Writers Theatre, Redmoon, Victory Gardens, Linelfie, Northlight, Albany Park Theatre Project, The Hypocrites, Teatro Vista, About Face, and Collaboration. His regional and off-Broadway credits include The Geffen Playhouse, 2nd Stage, St. Louis Repertory, and Milwaukee Chamber Theatre. He has worked at TukkersConnexion (Arnhem, Holland) and Festival FiLO (Londrina, Brazil), and his film composition credits include The Wise Kids, In Memoriam, and both/and. He has received five Joseph Jefferson Awards, a Lucille Lortel Award, and an After Dark Award for an
Original Musical. He was nominated for the Henry Hewes Design Award and recently honored with The Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award. He performs regularly with his band Seeking Wonderland and Dynamic DJ Duo, The Ordeal.

Heather Gilbert has designed lighting for the Chicago productions of The Detective’s Wife, A Streetcar Named Desire, and The Old Settler (Writers’ Theatre); Home, Comedy of Errors, and The Mystery of Irma Vep (Court Theatre); Honus and Me, Esperanza Rising, and The Hundred Dresses (Chicago Children’s Theatre); The Front Page, Master Harold and the Boys, and Not Enough Air (Timeline Theatre); Our Town and Cabaret (Hypocrites); and A Separate Peace (Steppenwolf Theatre Company). Her regional credits include A Streetcar Named Desire (Williamstown Theatre Festival) and The Farnsworth Invention (Alley Theatre), and Off-Broadway credits include Our Town (Barrow Street Theatre). Upcoming projects include assistant lighting designer for Death and Harry Houdini (House) and stage manager for Three Times a Lady at The Broad Stage in LA. She is a 1999–2001 recipient of the NEA/TCG Development Program Award. She serves as the Head of Lighting Design at Columbia College and received her MFA from The Theatre School at DePaul.

Jeff Hancock has been designing and constructing costumes for over 20 years, and his design company, -ish, was formed in 2007. He has created costumes for River North Dance Chicago, Hubbard Street Inside/Out, Gus Giordano Dance Chicago, Danceworks Chicago, Peter Carpenter, Molly Shanahan Mad/Shak, and Lucky Plush Productions, among many others. Hancock is a founding member of River North Dance Chicago, has danced for Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and the Lyric Opera, and formerly directed Same Planet Different World Dance Theater. His independent choreography has been created for River North Dance Chicago, Hubbard Street 2, the Edinburgh Festival, Same Planet Different World, among others. He has been nominated for Ruth Page Awards for his dancing and choreography, is an Illinois Arts Council grant recipient, and teaches at Northwestern University.

Clare Roche has worked as stage manager for the Chicago productions 13 Clocks (Lifeline); Macbeth and A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Lakeside Shakespeare Theatre); 500 Clown Trapped (Adventure Stage/500 Clown); Sinbad: The Untold Tale (Adventure Stage); Cabaret (Hypocrites); Red Noses (Strawdog); Woody Guthrie’s American Song (Blind Faith); and On My Parent’s 100th Wedding Anniversary (Slide Project). She has toured with 500 Clown productions of Frankenstein and Macbeth. Roche works as Master Electrician at Loyola University Chicago and resident designer at Sacred Heart Academy. She was assistant lighting designer for Cyrano (House Theatre). Her forthcoming projects include assistant lighting designer for Death and Harry Houdini (House) and stage manager for The Giver (Adventure Stage).

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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.

Program notes compiled by
Yolanda Cesta Cursach