

MARC BAMUTHI  
JOSEPH/ THE LIVING  
WORD PROJECT

*/peh-LO-tah/ —  
ā futbol framed  
freedom suite . . .*

Program  
Notes

Thu-Sun  
Oct 5-8, 2017

MCA STAGE  
Fall 2017

Edlis Neeson  
Theater

Eyes  
Wide

Lights  
Low

at MCA  
Stage

*/peh-LO-tah/* total run  
time is ninety minutes with  
no intermission.

*/peh-LO-tah/* has been commissioned by the Kennedy Center for the Arts and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. It is made possible with funding support by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater Project, with lead funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; The MAP Fund (a program of Creative Capital, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation), Panta Rhea Foundation, Wattis Foundation, the Zellerbach Family Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Critical developmental residencies have been provided by Southern Methodist University, Georgia Tech, Wesleyan University Center for the Arts and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Thanks to Clyde Valentin (SMU), Madison Cario (Georgia Tech), Pamela Tatge and Barbara Ally (Wesleyan), and Peter Taub and Yolanda Cursach (MCA) for making this happen.

Support for the pilot of *moving and passing* in Harlem and the Bronx, New York, is funded by Guggenheim Social Practice, an initiative supported by the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations.

Marc Bamuthi Joseph is a participant in the Global Connections—ON the ROAD program, funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the professional not-for-profit American Theatre. Marc Bamuthi Joseph wishes to thank the many individuals who contributed to the GoFundMe campaign to support this work. There are too many of you to list but you know who you are. Your support has meant more to me than you can know.

The company wishes to thank our ancestors, our families, and our professional colleagues for their inspiration

Conceived and written by Marc Bamuthi Joseph/  
The Living Word Project

Developed with and directed by Michael John Garcés  
Choreography by Stacey Printz

Composed by Tommy Shepherd

Performed by The Living Word Project:  
Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Amara Tabor-Smith,  
Tommy Shepherd, Traci Tolmaire, and Yaw Agyeman

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MUSIC AND PROSE

"No Looking Back"  
Written and composed by Yaw Agyeman

"Known to do the Impossible"  
Written by Bassey Ikpi

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ADMINISTRATION/PRODUCTION

Producer MAPP International  
Productions

Worldwide  
Representation  
and Booking for  
Marc Bamuthi Joseph Sozo Artists, Inc.  
sozoartists.com

Scenic and  
Video Design David Szlasa

Lighting Design Tom Ontiveros

Sound Design Rob Kaplowitz

Costume Design Meghan Healey

Production  
Manager Josh Johnson

Stage Manager Michael Garcia

Sound Engineer Zachary McKenna

This work is presented in association with the Chicago  
Humanities Festival.

The MCA supported the development of */peh-LO-tah/—  
a futbol framed freedom suite* . . . through a New  
Works Initiative residency. In August 2016, Joseph and  
his collaborators held a ten-day development  
residency and an in-progress showing at the MCA's  
Edlis Neeson Theater to assess the technical and  
design aspects of the project's development  
and to shift the depth and tourability of his work.

## FROM THE CURATORS

My long relationship with Marc Bamuthi Joseph, founder  
of the Living Word Project, has involved a process of  
learning to spot poetry and intention in movement. French  
poet Stéphane Mallarmé said: "You can't make a poem  
with ideas . . . you make it with words." I am inspired by  
Marc's concrete examples of this in his many works staged  
at the MCA.

In 2006, he wrote and debuted *Word Becomes Flesh* at the  
museum. The choreopoem, in which he described a letter  
to his unborn son, was performed at the intersection of  
body politics, body language, and the body as pen. *Word*  
came on the heels of another spoken-word piece, *Scourge*  
Remix, written in collaboration with teen authors whom  
he mentors as part of his organization Youth Speaks, the  
pride of the artist. *Scourge* was performed in 2006 at my  
first poetry-based festival for the MCA, which also fea-  
tured dance and live music. In his next intermedia piece at  
the museum, *the break/s: a mixtape for stage* (2009), Marc  
tested conventions for speaking about race, masculinity,  
class, and cultural difference. His first work commissioned  
by the MCA, *red, black & GREEN: a blues* (2012)—also  
his first collaboration with Chicago-based artist Theaster  
Gates—addressed environmental issues from the per-  
spective of communities of color. In preparation, they  
literally and figuratively harvested material for the project  
over several years in interviews and community events in  
Chicago, Houston, Oakland, and New York, a process Marc  
began during his residency for *the break/s* at the MCA.

The Living Word Project not only brings performers,  
sculptors, choreographers, and media designers into the  
conversation but also promotes effective collaboration by  
insisting on a process in which, Marc describes, "everyone  
involved grows by the exponent of collective investment."  
Thanks to the MCA's history with Marc, I have come to see  
how changes in understanding and in experience are  
related. He continues to push new experiences, focusing on  
the flux of life instead of trying to recapture something  
known. And so, we meet him where ideas become public—  
what we see on the stage is not merely movement but the  
embodiment of intention.

—Yolanda Cesta Cursach  
Curator of Performance

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and support. The author wishes to thank Christine Marie, Paul Turbiak, Catherine Adell, Brittney Leanne Williams, Corrie Besse, and TaiRecka Glover for their work on the development on this project. Much love to Erik Mayo for your unbridled support and facilitation, and to Deborah Cullinan and the staff of YBCA for your understanding and permission.

This piece is dedicated to Diana Cohn, a beacon of belief on our path, without whom this work quite literally could not have been made.

SUPPORT FOR THIS  
MCA STAGE PROJECT

Lead support for the MCA Stage New Works Initiative is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

Touring support for */peh-LO-tah/* is provided by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater Project, with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Accessible programming for */peh-LO-tah/* is supported by artist/scholar Carrie Sandahl, director of Bodies of Work: A Network of Disability Art and Culture and faculty in the Department of Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

MCA Stage acknowledges the support of Jeanine Pollard, master's candidate in museum and exhibition studies at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and primary liaison for Bodies of Work at MCA Stage in the 2017-18 season.



ART WORKS.

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Endowment  
for the Arts  
arts.gov

## ABOUT THE WORK

In my first memory of the game, we are running barefoot, uphill, on limestone. Baby Doc Duvalier is chillin' in a mansion in the distance, but here, every boy on my grandpa's block is chasing a tennis ball bandaged in loose socks, passing it with our feet. NYC kid visiting for the summer, USA kid in the hemisphere's poorest country, only time I fit in with the rest is inside of the game. My love of soccer is a heritage story . . .

From childhood through the recent past, I've been growing toward this new work . . .

As my questions have deepened and grown more emotionally charged, I've charted a path of inquiry that connects macro issues of economy to personal confrontations with my own body as a positioned figure in the languages of sport and art. This path has taken me to South Africa, Brazil, soccer capitals across Europe, local leagues across the US, moving forward on a hypothesis that links local and global economic hierarchies to behaviors, allegiances, and government investment in the infrastructure of the world's game. My plan is to draw concurrent narrative maps through this research leading to the writing and dramaturgy of a new work.

*/peh-LO-tah/* explores the ecology of egalitarianism played out inside the world's game. It is a story of my body in its late summer years; the physics of a globally networked economy running in tandem with the fragile network of a dancer's anatomy. It is a bet that sweat has currency to transition both narrative point of view and visual dimension. For my company of collaborators, it is a structural experiment: physically demanding, visually deft, viscerally reaching, and linguistically twisted in hip-hop and hope.

Ultimately, I'm intrigued by the elusive riddle of equality and am fascinated by the curiosity that soccer is the only thing the entire planet can agree to do together. It is the official sport of this spinning ball. My inquiry involves the joy of the game against the complexity of the global sites of the last two World Cups. It acknowledges that all conversations tied to ecology are ALSO tied to democracy and economy. The work is sprung from the bliss of a goal scorer's run; it shares what his countrymen do after the ball beats the goalie, the closest thing going to freedom . . .

—Marc Bamuthi Joseph



Marc Bamuthi Joseph/The Living Word Project  
*/peh-LO-tah/—a futbol framed freedom suite . . .*  
Photo: Bethanie Hines Photography

## RELATED PROGRAMS

MCA Stage's series of artist-centered talks, workshops, and open studios engages the public with the artists in intimate settings and provides a closer look at the creative process.

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### THE CLOSEST THING GOING TO FREEDOM

Mon, Oct 2

Hosted by the League of Chicago Theatres

Marc Bamuthi Joseph led a professional development session addressing how artists can bridge the gap between the personal and the institutional in pursuit of cultural shift. Another session is being held for MCA staff members on Monday, October 9.

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
### POSTSHOW TALK

Fri, Oct 6

The audience is invited to a conversation with the artists, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Yaw Agyeman, Amara Tabor-Smith, and Traci Tolmaire, directly after the performance. The conversation is moderated by MCA Curator of Performance Yolanda Cesta Cursach.

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### SPORTS AND BELIEF WITH MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH

Sat, Nov 4, 6-7 pm 

In partnership with the Chicago Humanities Festival

Marc Bamuthi Joseph returns to Chicago to discuss the connection between sports, politics, and belief and how teamwork or group movement can be a bridge for discussing immigration, international diplomacy, and global economies. In conversation with his long-time friend and fellow poet, Roger Bonair-Agard. This program is ticketed.

## ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

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### OPEN-CAPTIONED PERFORMANCE

Fri, Oct 6, 7:30 PM

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

THE LIVING WORD PROJECT (LWP) was formerly the resident theater company of Youth Speaks, Inc. of San Francisco. Now operating independently, LWP is committed to producing literary performance in the verse of our time. Aesthetically urban, pedagogically Freirean, LWP derives personal performed narratives out of interdisciplinary collaboration. Though its methodology includes dance, music, and film, the company's emphasis is spoken storytelling. LWP creates verse-based work spoken through the body, illustrated by visual and sonic scores, and in communication with important social issues and movements of the immediate moment. LWP is the theater's connection from Shakespeare's quill to Kool Herc's turntables; from Martha Graham's cupped hand to Nelson Mandela's clenched fist: a new voice for a new politic.

MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH is an inaugural recipient of both the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship and the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, and winner of the 2011 Alpert Award in Theater. He's served as an advisor and panelist for the Rockefeller MAP Fund, the PEW Charitable Trust, and the Zellerbach Family Fund, among other national philanthropies. He is the founding program director of the exemplary non-profit Youth Speaks and a cofounder of Life is Living, a national series of one-day festivals designed to activate under-resourced parks through hip-hop, art, and focused environmental action. Joseph recently premiered the Creative Time commission *Black Joy in the Hour of Chaos* in New York's Central Park and completed a new work with Bill T. Jones for the Opera Philadelphia. He serves as Chief of Program and Pedagogy at YBCA in San Francisco.

MICHAEL JOHN GARCÉS'S (DIRECTOR)

previous work with the Living Word Project includes directing *red, black & GREEN: a blues* and *the break/s*. He is artistic director of Los Angeles's Cornerstone Theater Company

where recent directing projects include *Urban Rez* by Larissa FastHorse, *California: The Tempest* by Alison Carey, and *Plumas Negras* by Juliette Carrillo, as well as writing *Magic Fruit* and *Los Illegals*. Directing credits include *Wrestling Jerusalem* by Aaron Davidman, *District Merchants* by Aaron Posner (The Folger Theatre), and *The Box* by Sarah Shourd (Z Space). He is a member of Woolly Mammoth Theater Company, where he has helmed *Lights Rise on Grace* by Chad Bekim and *The Convert* by Danaï Gurira. Garcés is the recipient of the Princess Grace Statue and the Alan Schneider Director Award.

STACEY PRINTZ (CHOREOGRAPHER)

is the artistic director of Printz Dance Project and a Bay Area-based choreographer, dancer and educator. She graduated Cum Laude from UC Irvine with degrees in sociology and dance. Printz teaches for A.C.T's MFA program and at Alonzo King's LINES Dance Center where she has been on faculty for fifteen years. She has taught her hybrid contemporary-jazz technique across the United States and in Europe. Her company has performed in San Francisco for fifteen years and has toured internationally. Reviewers of her show *Hover Space* considered it "a slam dunk" with its "talented cast, unique concept, and inventive movement." Printz has also choreographed Aaron Davidman's *Wrestling Jerusalem*, Sarah Shourd's *The Box*, and Marc Bamuthi Joseph's *Scourge*, *the break/s*, and *red, black & GREEN: a blues*.

DAVID SZLASA (SCENIC AND VIDEO DESIGN)

is a video artist and designer spanning performance, installation, public art, and social practice. His work revolves around ideas of remix and reappropriation, using popular imagery, ideas, and actions in unexpected ways to challenge structures of authority and question social standards. His project Studio 1 was dubbed a Living Innovation Zone by the City of San Francisco, and he has taught design at Stanford, NYU, and St. Mary's College.

SUPPORT FOR THIS  
MCA STAGE PROJECT  
(Continued)



## ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION

Select MCA Stage performances include open-captioning, sign-interpretation, listening devices, or are relaxed-sensory.

Please call 312-397-4010 in advance to reserve seats and include services.



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Collaborators include Sara Shelton Mann, Joanna Haigood, Dohee Lee, Yuri Zhukov, Hope Mohr, Bill Shannon, Rennie Harris, Deb Margolin, Myra Melford, and others.

## TOM ONTIVEROS (LIGHTING DESIGN)

Recent awards include Best Lighting Design (LADCC, *My Barking Dog*), Nomination for Best Projection Design (Stage Raw, *Shiv*), Nomination for Best Lighting Design (Ovation!, *Completeness*). Ontiveros has developed designs for the La Jolla Playhouse, South Coast Repertory, Cornerstone, Hungarian National Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, LA Opera, Culture Project, Park Avenue Armory, Danspace Project, MCA Chicago, San Diego Museum of Art, Ojai Music Festival, Phoenix Symphony, and the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music. Upcoming work includes *Vicuña* (CTG, Kirk Douglas Theatre) and *They Don't Talk Back*. Tom is assistant professor of Lighting Design at USC.

## ROBERT KAPLOWITZ (SOUND DESIGN)

has been honored with an OBIE for Sustained Excellence and a Tony® for *Fela!* A Philadelphian since 2010, he has designed there for PlayPenn, Interact, Arden, Lucidity Suitcase, Pig Iron, Lantern, PTC, and others; other regional credits include the Guthrie, Alley, Sundance, O'Neill, and National Theatre of England. Previous work with Michael Garces includes *The Body of An American* and *Light, Raise the Roof*. In New York, his work has been heard on Broadway, at Lincoln Center, The Public, MCC, 2nd Stage, the Vineyard, MTC, and innumerable 99-seat venues (Perseverance Theatre).

## TOMMY SHEPHERD (COMPOSER AND PERFORMER)

is an actor, playwright, composer, educator, rapper, drummer, beatboxer, and cofounder of the live hip-hop collective Felonious, a resident company at Intersection for the Arts. Shepherd created the original music for and performed in their recent project *Babylon Is Burning*. He is a longtime member of performance group Campo Santo, a Parents Choice Award-winning educational hip-hop group, Alphabet Rockers, and Oakland's

own Antique Naked Soul. Shepherd has performed and toured internationally with Marc Bamuthi Joseph, collaborating on *Scourge*, *the break/s*, *Spoken World* and *red, black & GREEN: a blues*.

## MEGHAN HEALEY (COSTUME DESIGN)

Recent work includes costumes for *The Body of an American* (Wilma Theater), *WE ARE PROUD . . .* (Woolly Mammoth Theater), *URBAN REZ*, and *Love On San Pedro*, and scenery for *Plumas Negras* (Cornerstone Theater). She has designed for world premiere productions from playwrights such as Larissa Fasthorse, Octavio Solis, Eduardo Machado, Lars Noren, Jose Rivera, Andrea Thome, Clive Barker, Najla Said, Nilaja Sun, and Rob Handel, among others. She received her MFA in design from NYU's Tisch School, and is chair of the Department of Drama, Theater, and Dance at Queens College CUNY.

## JOSH JOHNSON (PRODUCTION MANAGER)

is a technical artist using the tools of our time to support the emotional expression of theater artists. Josh has engineered performances in airplane hangars and train stations, toured to 35 countries, and worked with such notables as Robert Wilson, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Robert Rauschenberg, and the Flying Karamazov Brothers. A highlight of his career was the time he spent as resident lighting designer for Merce Cunningham, who taught him how to see again.

## MICHAEL GARCIA (STAGE MANAGER)

has worked on stage management and production teams for organizations such as Cornerstone Theater Company, South Coast Repertory, Special Olympics World Games, and Boston Court Performing Arts Center. He is passionate about using theater to activate community and the relationships between art and self-knowledge, culture and change. Currently, he is directing a workshop of a new play around the experiences of veterans returning from combat at Rio Hondo College in Whittier, California. He holds a BA from the University of California, Irvine.

## ZACK MCKENNA (SOUND ENGINEER)

is a sound designer, engineer, and composer based in Philadelphia. Previous works include *ALIVE!* (2nd place Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival National Award winner; Arcadia University), *The Radicalization of Bradley Manning* (Barrymore Award nominated; Inis Nua Theatre), and *JIB!* (Windmill Collective and The Old Sound Room).

## AMARA TABOR-SMITH (PERFORMER)

is an Oakland-based performer/choreographer who has performed in works by choreographers such as Ed Mock, Joanna Haigood, Pearl Ubungen, Ronald K. Brown, Adia Tamar Whitaker, and Faustin Linyekula, and by theater artists such as Anna Deveare Smith, and Aya de Leon. A former associate artistic director and dancer with Urban Bush Women, Tabor-Smith is artistic director of Deep Waters Dance Theater and coartistic director of Headmistress, a collaboration with Sherwood Chen. She is on faculty in the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies at UC Berkeley. Awards and residencies include Creative Capital, The Headlands Center for the Arts, CounterPULSE, ODC Theater (artist in residence), CHIME Mentorship Exchange, and Green Choreographers Exchange at Dance Exchange.

## TRACI TOLMAIRE (PERFORMER)

is an actor, dancer, singer, and choreographer from Chicago. Credits include *The High Priestess of Dark Alley* (Le Petit Theatre), *Cherchez La Femme* (La MaMa), *Dancing On Eggshells* (The Billie Holiday Theatre), *Black Joy In the Hour of Chaos* (Creative Time), *The Circle Unbroken is a Hard Bop* (651 Arts/MAPP), *red, black & GREEN: a blues* (MAPP/Living Word Project), *Plenty of Time* (New Federal Theatre), *Mirrors In Every Corner* (Intersection for the Arts/Campo Santo), *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Fulton Opera House), and *Trouble in Mind* (Actor's Express). Choreography credits include *Gee's Bend* (Hartford Stage), *Rejoice!*, a holiday musical (Lorraine Hansberry Theatre), and *Dancing On Eggshells*.

## YAW AGYEMAN (PERFORMER)

has toured with *red, black & GREEN: a blues* (MAPP/The Living Word Project) and performed in the world premiere of *Mister Chickee's Funny Money* (Chicago Children's Theater), featuring music from the Motown Great, Lamont Dozier. He has been featured on VH1's *Soul Cities*, a show produced by Nelson George that showcases singers in cities across the country, and on the Africa Channel's, "Soundtracks at Red Kiva," which focuses on artists of African descent. Agyeman is a member of the artistic collaboration, Black Monks of Mississippi, headed by Theaster Gates.

## MAPP INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTIONS

is a nonprofit producer of major performing arts projects that raise critical consciousness and spark social change. We support all phases of an artist's creative process, from concept and production to premiere and touring, while also engaging audiences in the issues behind the art. Through this heightened focus, we support an evolving and elite cadre of creators whose work ignites communities worldwide.

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Marisol. Photo: Herman Hiller.

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Sep 7-10

600 HIGHWAYMEN  
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Oct 5-8

Marc Bamuthi Joseph/  
The Living Word Project  
*/peh-LO-tah/-a futbol  
framed freedom suite . . .*

Nov 9-12

Faye Driscoll  
*Thank You For  
Coming: Play*

Dec 7-10

Twyla Tharp  
*Minimalism and Me*

2018

Jan 25-28

Federico León  
*Las ideas*

Feb 8-11

Claire Cunningham  
and Jess Curtis  
*The Way You Look  
(at me) Tonight*

Apr 6-7

Mind Over Mirrors  
*Bellowing Sun*

Apr 12-15

Okwui Okpokwasilli  
*Poor People's TV Room*

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Program notes  
compiled by  
Tara Aisha Willis

MCA  
CHIC  
AGO

The MCA's newest affinity group, Enact, is a group of MCA donors dedicated to supporting the renowned programs of MCA Stage. Join today for opportunities to meet artists, gain behind-the-scenes access, and discuss groundbreaking directions with leading curators—all while providing vital support.

#### BENEFITS OF ENACT MEMBERSHIP INCLUDE:

- Members-only programming throughout the MCA Stage season, such as intimate gatherings with MCA performance leadership, pre- and post-performance discussions with artists, and behind-the-scenes access to select rehearsals
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Circle Donor membership is required to join Enact. Enact dues are an additional \$1,000 annually. For more information, contact us at [enact@mcachicago.org](mailto:enact@mcachicago.org).

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\*Enact Chair  
As of September 2017

**SUPPORT FOR MCA STAGE**  
Lead support for the 2017-18 season of MCA Stage is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

Generous support is provided by Lois and Steve Eisen and The Eisen Family Foundation, Ginger Farley and Bob Shapiro, the Martha Struthers Farley and Donald C. Farley Jr. Family Foundation, Sharon and Lee Oberlander, Maya Polsky, Carol Prins and John Hart/The Jessica Fund, Susan Manning and Doug Doetsch, D. Elizabeth Price and Lou Yecies, and Ms. Shawn M. Donnelley and Dr. Christopher M. Kelly.

Additional generous support for MCA Stage is provided by Enact, the MCA's performance affinity group.

The MCA is a proud member of the Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

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As an internationally renowned institution devoted to contemporary culture, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago presents the most thought-provoking visual art and performing arts of our time. MCA Stage is a vibrant series presenting theater, dance, and music by leading artists from the United States and around the world in the MCA's three-hundred seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

MCA Stage's groundbreaking performances are an integral part of the MCA's artist-activated, audience-engaged programming. Along with the museum's exhibitions and educational initiatives, they encourage a broad and diverse community to experience and discuss the work and ideas of living artists.

#### PARKING

Validate your ticket at coat check for \$12 parking in the MCA garage (220 E Chicago Ave) and the Bernardin garage (747 North Wabash). The \$12 parking is limited to six hours on the date of performance.

#### LOST AND FOUND

To inquire about a lost item, call the museum at 312-280-2660. Unclaimed articles are held for thirty 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 are prohibited.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

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