Poor People's TV Room

Running time is ninety minutes with no intermission.

Winter/Spring 2018

Eyes Wide

Lights Low

at MCA

Stage

MCA

Edlis Neeson Theater

Thu-Sun Apr 12-15, 2018

Program Notes

Poor People's TV Room

Okwui Okpokwasili
Okwui Okpokwasili focuses Poor People’s TV Room on erased movements of resistance and collective action. Two historical incidents in Nigeria drive the artist’s theater work: the Women’s War of 1929 and the Boko Haram kidnappings of more than 270 girls in 2014. Poor People’s TV Room draws attention to the echo effect of knowingness. In our connected age, in our personal TV room, we can be almost infinitely knowing. There’s a kind of liberty in consuming facts cheaply, but what is the cost? For many years, Okwui has been interested in the ways that knowledge is possessed in the mind and body. She is also realistic. Multitudes of people wear their knowledge heavily, constrained by poverty, marginalization, oppression, and the bad luck of their birthplace. The rest can collect knowingness from a position of comfort. Okwui binds Poor People’s TV Room to a deep belief that knowledge is something that we all must endure. She is interested in the politics of that possession, and in the brutal wisdom of what we have to go through in order to understand how little, in the end, we know.

I am grateful to Marion Malcome and Franklin Cosey-Gay at the Chicago Center for Youth Violence Prevention at the School of Social Service Administration at The University of Chicago, and to Cynthia Henderson and Khari Matthew Humphries at Oakwood Shores for organizing a gathering this week with Okwui and other remarkable women for conversation, writing, and reflection.

–Yolanda Cesta Cursach, Curator of Performance
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.

SCREENING: ANDREW ROSSI AND OKWUI OKPOKWASILI, BRONX GOTHIC
Sun, Apr 22, 3–5 pm

Join us for a screening of *Bronx Gothic*, Andrew Rossi’s electrifying portrait of writer and performer Okwui Okpokwasili and her acclaimed solo show of the same title. The film gives insight into Okpokwasili’s creative process and the complex social issues it embodies. Rooted in her childhood memories, she creates a mesmerizing space in which audiences engage with a story about two 12-year-old black girls coming of age in the 1980s. After the screening, join Chicago artists Brendan Fernandes, Darrell Jones, and Amina Ross in a conversation about race and the process of making live performance. Copresented by the Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago.

Admission to *Bronx Gothic* is free with purchase of a ticket to *Poor People’s TV Room*.

WORKSHOP: SITTING ON A MAN’S HEAD
Mon, Apr 9, and Mon, Apr 16, at Oakwood Shores

Thanks to Franklin Cosey-Gay and Marion Malcome of the Chicago Center for Youth Violence Prevention at the University of Chicago and to Khari Humphries of The Community Builders for helping to organize this conversation in two parts between Okwui Okpokwasili and a group of women community leaders. The workshop investigates performance through writing and draws from themes that informed the creation of *Poor People’s TV Room*: genetic memory, public shaming as a resistance method, and the powerful and specific cultural context of violence in society.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

OKWUI OKPOKWASILI
is a New York-based writer, performer, and choreographer. In partnership with collaborator Peter Born, Okpokwasili creates multidisciplinary projects. Their first New York production, Pent-Up: A Revenge Dance and Performance Bessie Award for Outstanding Production; an immersive installation version was featured in the 2008 Prelude Festival. In 2014, they presented an installation entitled Bronx Gothic: The Oval as part of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s River to River Festival. An early iteration of Poor People’s TV Room was presented at Lincoln Center’s David Rubenstein Atrium in June 2014. As a performer, Okpokwasili frequently collaborates with award-winning director Ralph Lemon, including Home Charley Patton (for which she also won a New York Dance and Performance Bessie Award), a duet performed at The Museum of Modern Art as part of On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century, and, most recently, Ralph Lemon’s Scaffold Room. Okpokwasili’s residencies and awards include the Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography Choreographic Fellowship (2012), Baryshnikov Arts Center Artist-in-Residence (2013), New York Live Arts Studio Series (2013), Under Construction at the Park Avenue Armory (2013), New York Foundation for the Arts’ Fellowship in Choreography (2013), Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s Extended Life Program (2014–15), The Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists in Dance (2014), BRIClab (2015), Columbia University (2015), and the Rauschenberg Residency (2015). She is a 2018 USA award grantee and was a Hodder Fellow at Princeton in 2018–19.

PETER BORN
is a director, designer, and filmmaker. In addition to his work with Okpokwasili on Pent-Up: A Revenge Dance and Bronx Gothic, he has collaborated with David Thomson on a cycle of installation/performances revolving around a post-sexual incarnation of Venus. He designed and created the set for Nora Chipaumire’s rite/riot, and he has created performance videos with Chipaumire, Thomson, and Daria Fain, among others. He works as a performance director and prop stylist for video and photo projects with clients such as Vogue, Estée Lauder, Barneys Co-op, Bloomingdale’s, Old Navy, 25 Magazine, Northrup Grumman, and The Wall Street Journal, with collaborators including Kanye West, Barnabby Roper, Santiago and Mauricio Sierra, Quentin Jones, and No Strings Productions. He is a former New York public high school teacher, an itinerant floral designer, corporate actor-facilitator, and furniture designer. His collaborations with Okwui Okpokwasili have garnered two New York Dance and Performance Bessie Awards.

THULI DUMAKUDE (PERFORMER)
is winner of the Sir Lawrence Olivier Award in London and the Obie in New York for her lead role in Poppie Nongena. She’s the winner of three Audelco Awards in New York for writing, directing, and performing her one-woman show Buya Africa, for which she also won the FNB Vita Award for performances at the Civic Theatre in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her performance credits include Rafiki in The Lion King on Broadway, Poppie Nongena in New York, London, Toronto, Australia, and Chicago; Bongi in Bonga’s Journey at Crossroads Theatre; Lost in the Stars; MaMadonsela (Lady Macbeth) in Welcome Psimi’s Umebatha in South Africa, London, Israel, and New York City; Halele the musician; Sheila’s Day at Crossroads Theatre, Grahamstown Festival, and The Market Theatre in Johannesburg; Madre in Juan Dariein, directed by Julie Taymor; and Grandma in Generations at Soho Rep. Dumakude
is the cofounder and director of a female a cappella group, THOKOZA, which sang at Nelson Mandela’s 80th birthday celebration in South Africa. They also performed at Riverside Church for Mandela’s memorial service; Carnegie Hall with Ladysmith Black Mambazo; Riverside Church in The Footsteps of Mandela; The Playroom Theater Off-Broadway; and I Sing for Freedom at Lincoln Center. Dumakude was the vocal coach for Sarafine on Broadway and vocal coach and musical director for Sheila’s Day. She was the assistant director and choreographer for Umebetha (The Zulu Macbeth). She choreographed for Chicago’s Muntu Dance Theatre and Dinizulu Dance Company and was Dance Director for Izulu Dance Theatre Company for ten years. Film credits include Cry Freedom and Power of One where she appeared as a soloist, and Serengeti for IMAX. During apartheid, Dumakude toured globally in live concerts raising awareness about the plight of her fellow South Africans. She continues to work with Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and the Lion King Companies in America, providing them with hand-beaded merchandise to raise funds for HIV/AIDS, part of which goes to AIDS organizations in South Africa.

NEHEMOYIA YOUNG (PERFORMER) is a Brooklyn-based dancer, choreographer, educator, and cultural artist. She has worked with Maria Bauman Dance, André Zachary/Renegade Performance Group, and Sydnie L. Mosley Dances. When offstage, she works as a dance and creative movement teaching artist for GlobalArts to Go, a multicultural arts, education, training, and entertainment organization which serves diverse community programs and NYC Public Schools.

MAPP INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTIONS (PRODUCER) was a nonprofit producer of major performing arts projects that raised critical consciousness and inspired social change from 1994 until 2017. MAPP produced and managed international tours of multidisciplinary projects by artists including Ralph Lemon, Nora Chipaumire, Lars Jan, Dean Moss, Emio Greco/ICK Amsterdam, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Yasuko Yokoshi, Okwui Okpokwasili, David Zambrano, Los Munequitos de Matanzas, and many more. It also managed the Africa Contemporary Arts Consortium, supporting and often touring the work of contemporary African dance artists including Gregory Maggs, its Vuyani Dance Theatre, Faustin Linyekula, Bouchna Ouizguen, and others.

PERFORMANCEPRACTICE.ORG (MANAGER) is the national touring extension of Los Angeles Performance Practice, a nonprofit organization devoted to the production and presentation of contemporary performance by artists whose work advances and challenges multidisciplinary artistic practices. Founded by Miranda Wright in 2010 and codirected by George Lugg since 2017, its mission is to support a unique and diverse constellation of artists and audiences through the active creation and presentation of groundbreaking experiences that use innovative approaches to collaboration, technology, and social engagement. Anchored in Los Angeles, its artists and projects have national and global reach.
SEASON CALENDAR

2017
Sep 7–10  600 HIGHWAYMEN
           The Fever

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
           & Jess Curtis
           The Way You Look
           (at me) Tonight

Apr 6–7 Mind Over Mirrors
           Bellowing Sun

Apr 12–15 Okwui Okpokwasili
           Poor People’s TV Room

May 24–26 Kaneza Schaal
           JACK &

Join us for dinner or drinks before or after the theater at
Marisol, named one of the hottest restaurants in Chicago
by Zagat and one of Vogue’s "Six Chicago Restaurants You
Should Know About Now." Call 312-799-3599 to make
reservations.

Marisol Escobar. Photo: Herman Hiller.
SUPPORT FOR MCA STAGE

Lead support for the 2017–18 season of MCA Stage is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

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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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*Enact Chair
As of March 2018

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
- Invitation to Season Reveal, an annual preview of the upcoming season
- Opportunities for complimentary drinks and tickets

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.

ABOUT MCA STAGE

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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