Eyes Wide
Lights Low
at MCA Stage

Winter/Spring 2018

JACK & running time is seventy-five minutes with no intermission.

Edlis Neeson Theater
Thu-Sat May 24-26, 2018
FROM THE CURATOR

In our very first conversations, Kaneza Schaal described J ACK & as an occasion to hold bigger conversations inside and beyond theater walls. I admire Kaneza’s dedication to the possibilities that rise to the surface when social justice and creative practice come together—in informal conversations after the show, in interactions between artist and student, and in the performers’ navigation of a carefully staged scene. J ACK & uses the flexibility of avant-garde theater to deftly transition between expressive styles, shifting the logic of a scene instantaneously. But that changeable nature is the very thing that keeps us on our toes and provides a rich set of entry points. I am grateful to Project& for supporting the broadening of audiences and engagement projects, as well as our other partners in connecting the creative team with Chicago’s education, organizing, and theater communities: Prison + Neighborhood Art Project, League of Chicago Theatres, Marwen, and the MCA’s own SPACE and TCA programs. The spirit of generosity and mutual care with which these artists embrace one another, their audiences, and their unique approaches to theater becomes more evident every time I see them in action.

—Tara Aisha Willis
Associate Curator of Performance
ABOUT THE WORK

PART I: THE MONOLOGUES
What had happened was . . .

PART II: THE SITCOM
The Good Life . . .

PART III: THE COTILLION
Goldfish with wings . . .

“Jack” works the night shift at an industrial bakery. He returns home to bake a cake for his wife, “Jill.” “Jack” ends up whirling through a dance—part dream, part ritual—reentering his own internal life. The performance draws from aspirational class stories like those in *The Honeymooners* and *Amos ’n’ Andy*; the paintings of Agnes Martin, Ellen Gallagher, and Ruth Azawa; tigers in Harlem; real and imagined society-entrance ceremonies like Cotillion balls; and markers of transition from John Canoe traditions, to the mirroring and mimicry found in African American dance pageantry of the late nineteenth century. The performance considers reentry into society after prison; focusing not on the time one has served, but the measure of one’s dreaming that is given to the state.

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.

TCA ACTIVITY
Sat, May 26, 6 pm

The MCA’s Teen Creative Agency lead an activity for audiences in the Street prior to the evening performance. Rewrite history by typing your own story over historical documents and discuss who has been left out of history.

TALK: IMAGINING CHANGE IN CYCLES OF INCARCERATION
Tue, May 22

Kaneza Schaal and Cornell Alston joined Heidi Mueller, Director of Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, and Shawn Reddy, Social Science Specialist for Elementary Schools (K–8) for Chicago Public Schools, on a panel moderated by Natalie Moore, WBEZ’s South Side Bureau Reporter, to discuss how imagination and art, both inside and outside of the prison experience, can interact with civic efforts to interrupt the cycles of neglect and isolation that prison creates.

TCA WORKSHOP SERIES
Fri–Sat, Mar 16–17

Schaal and Alston led two workshops to share their creative practices with the MCA’s Teen Creative Agency (TCA) and students from Marwen Lab, a local arts education program.

STORIES THAT BUILD OUR FUTURE: EXCELLENCE, EXPERIMENTATION, AND AUDIENCE
Wed, Mar 14

Schaal joined theater professionals and artists from the League of Chicago Theatres to discuss the myth that experimental art forms are inherently for small, elite audiences. The group also explored how we build theater that embraces the dreaming capacity of all audiences—our desire to synthesize the abstract and enjoy the hybrid.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

KANEZA SCHAAAL (CREATOR AND DIRECTOR)
is a New York City–based theater artist. Schaal's work GO FORTH premiered at Performance Space 122, then showed at the Genocide Memorial Amphitheater in Kigali, Rwanda; Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's River-to-River Festival; Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans; Cairo International Contemporary Theater Festival in Egypt; and Veseyan University. Schaal received a 2017 MAP Fund award, a 2016 Creative Capital Award, and is the current Asta New Voices Fellow at Hartford Stage. J&K was co-commissioned by the Walker Arts Center, REDCAT, On The Boards, PICA, and the Center for Contemporary Art Cincinnati with support from the National Performance Network and NEFA National Theater Project. This spring, her new piece, CARTOGRAPHY, will be workshopped through New Victory Theater Lab and NYU Abu Dhabi, and will show at The Kennedy Center's New Vision New Voices. Schaal's work has been supported by Broadway Center Stage, Performance Space 122, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Theater Communications Group, and a Princess Grace Award. Her work with The Wooster Group, Elevator Repair Service, Richard Maxwell/New York City Players, Claude Wampler, Jim Findlay, and Dean Moss has brought her to venues across the globe including Centre Pompidou, the Royal Lyceum Theater in Edinburgh, The Whitney Museum, and MoMA.

CORNELL ALSTON (LEAD PERFORMER)
is a longtime member of Rehabilitation Through the Arts, a nonprofit that uses the arts as an intervention to teach life skills to individuals both inside and outside of state correctional facilities. He started the Youth Empowerment Through the Arts initiative launched in Queens, NY, and he continues to work as an arts-in-education advocate. He is the recipient of a 2016 Creative Capital Award. Alston performed and collaborated with Kaneza Schaal on PLEASE, BURY ME at Baryshnikov Arts Center and GO FORTH during a Performance Space 122 RAMP residency. Other performance highlights include One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, 12 Angry Men, and the title role in Me Reiney’s Black Bottom.

MODESTO FLAKO JIMENEZ (PERFORMER)
is a Dominican-born, Bushwick-raised theater maker, producer, and educator. Jimenez was the ATJ Best Actor Award Winner for 2016, HOLA Best Ensemble Award Winner for 2015, and HOLA Outstanding Solo Performer for 2017. He has also been profiled by the New York Times and Wall Street Journal. Jimenez is best known for original productions and three signature festivals—Ghetto Hors D’Oeuvres, One Catches Light, and Oye! Avant-Garde Night!—produced with his company Oye Group. Jimenez has appeared on TEDxBushwick, ¡Oye! Avant-Garde Spirituels (The Wooster Group), Last Night At The Palladium (Bushwick Starr/3LD), Yoleros (Bushwick Starr/IATI Theater). Conversation: How to Make it in Black America, Pt.1 (JACK), Take Me Home (3LD/Incubator Arts Project), Richard Maxwell’s Semara (Soho Repertory), iOye! For My Dear Brooklyn (Abrons Art Center). Jimenez received the 2016 Princess Grace Award Honorarium in Theater. In 2018 he became the first Dominican-American Lead Artist in The Public Theater Under the Radar Festival.

JANE JUNG (PRODUCER)
is a manager and producer for individual artists, artist-led companies, and theater projects. Jung is currently working with Ping Chong + Company, Writer and Performer Diana Oh, and Gung Ho Projects. From 2014–17, she was Managing Director of The Civilians, where she oversaw all administrative, fundraising, general management, and producing areas of the company. During her time at The Civilians, she was also a New York Times and Wall Street Journal. Jimenez is best known for original productions and three signature festivals—Ghetto Hors D’Oeuvres, One Catches Light, and Oye! Avant-Garde Night!—produced with his company Oye Group. Jimenez has appeared on TEDxBushwick, ¡Oye! Avant-Garde Spirituels (The Wooster Group), Last Night At The Palladium (Bushwick Starr/3LD), Yoleros (Bushwick Starr/IATI Theater). Conversation: How to Make it in Black America, Pt.1 (JACK), Take Me Home (3LD/Incubator Arts Project), Richard Maxwell’s Semara (Soho Repertory), iOye! For My Dear Brooklyn (Abrons Art Center). Jimenez received the 2016 Princess Grace Award Honorarium in Theater. In 2018 he became the first Dominican-American Lead Artist in The Public Theater Under the Radar Festival.

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The Civilians, the company was the first theater company in residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and produced premieres of a new musical Pretty Filthy, which was nominated for Lucille Lortel and Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding New Musical, and The Undertaking, which premiered at BAM Next Wave Festival and toured to Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, France. Previously, she was General Manager at Ping Chang + Company from 2010–14. She has worked as a producer with Little Lord and the Women’s Project and produced new works presented at the New Ohio Theater’s Ice Factory Festival, The Public Theater’s Under the Radar Festival, City Center Stage II, and The Bushwick Starr. She is a board member of Network of Ensemble Theaters and is on the artistic staff of the Yale Theater Management Knowledge Base.

MEGAN LANG (LIGHTING) has a BA from Fordham University and has designed lighting at BAM, La Mama, Abrons Arts Center, EST, Under St. Mark’s, the Wild Project, Dixon Place, 59E59, JACK, and Atlantic Theater Company Stage 2, among other projects. Recent designs include A Star Has Burnt My Eye (BAM Next Wave, directed by Paul Lazar), Riot Antigone (La Mama, directed by Seonjae Kim), and Furry!/La Furia! (The Bushwick Starr, directed by William Burke). She is the resident lighting designer for the Ubumuntu Arts Festival in Rwanda. Assistant or associate special effects work includes Sting’s The Last Ship, Our Lady of Kibeho, and An Act of God.

CLARISSA MARIE LIGON (STAGE MANAGER) is a stage manager, designer, and classically trained singer. She makes art because she believes it can change the world. Recent production work includes Cruel Intentions: The Musical at Le Poisson Rouge, The Rise and Fall of Marcus Monroe at Jeffrey and Paula Gural Theatre, 3/15ths at 3LD, Penny Arcade’s Longing Lasts Longer at St. Ann’s Warehouse, and La Paloma Prisoner at Hi-ARTS.

RUCYL MILLS (SOUND DESIGNER) is a sonic new media artist. Her work revolves around a live experimentation performance process, centering sound as a medium to represent non-tactile concepts like time, emotion, identity, and physics. During her live performances, she uses MIDI controllers, loopers, and effects processors, often with accompanying visual vignettes composed of found footage and abstract personal video.

CHRISTOPHER MYERS (DESIGN AND TEXT) is an artist and writer who lives in New York. While he is widely acclaimed for his work with literature for young people, he is also an accomplished fine artist who has exhibited internationally. His practice can be divided into two categories: interventions in historical narratives and work crafted with artisans from around the globe. Myers’s work has been exhibited at MoMA PS1 and included as part of Greater New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Prospect Biennial in New Orleans, and Contrasts Gallery Shanghai. Myers has travelled from P.S. 122 in New York City to the Genocide Memorial of God in Kigali, Rwanda, and collaborated with Hank Willis Thomas on the film Am I Going Too Fast, which premiered at Sundance. Myers participated in the Whitney Independent Studio Program. He has written essays that have featured in New York Times and is currently working on a book comparing global censorship methodologies.

STACEY KAREN ROBINSON (PERFORMER) is a multidisciplinary theater artist. She performed her new solo work, You Never Can Always Sometimes Tell, in New York at JACK. She developed the show with the support from the Foundation of Contemporary Arts, a 2017 Process Space Residency from the Lowner Manhattan Cultural Council, and a work-in-progress production at Salvage Vanguard Theater, Texas. Her previous one-woman show, Quiet Frenzy, is published in solo/blocks/vvomen: scripts, interviews, and essays, Northwestern University Press, 2014. Performances of Quiet Frenzy included JACK, the John L. Warfield Center for African and African American Studies, Northwestern University, and the Wild Project. A Bronx native, she is a proud recipient of the Bronx Recognizes Its Own (BARIO) Award for Playwriting, 2009. Robinson has appeared at Ping Chang + Company in many productions, including Daniel Alexander Jones’s Duét (Soho Rep.), Toshiki Okada’s Quiet, Comfort (Hoi Polloi), and Erik Ehn’s Her Speech (Planet Connections – Playwrights for a Cause).

RACHEL SILVERMAN (PRODUCER) is a New York City–based theater artist and producer. She works on the editorial board of York Theatre Workshop as a curator and producer of all workshops and artist development programs, NYTW’s NEXT DOOR series for artists and companies producing their own work, and the 2050 Fellowship for early career directors and playwrights. Silverman served as festival producer for PRELUDENYC in 2012 and 2015 and was the associate director for its final years. Other producing credits include 13P’s OBE Award–winning A Map of Virtue and UglyRhino’s site-specific What It Means to Disappear Here. She holds a BA from Wesleyan University in Theater and Sociology.

ASHLEY VELLANO (LIGHTING DESIGNER) produces from the University of Mississippi with a BFA in Technical Theater emphasis in Lighting Design. She has been designing lights in New York City since 2008. She is one of the founding members of Kidz Theater in NYC, which provides a free professional training ground for young performers. Vellano has worked with Kaneza Schaal since 2014 and designed the lighting for GO FORTH.

CHEYANNE WILLIAMS (DESIGN AND PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE) is a New York–based theater artist. Recent design collaborations include Assistant Set Designer for Mylingerieplay, Rattlesick Theatre and Props Designer for Cute Activist, The Bushwick Starr. Upcoming projects include Props Design for Big Green Theater at The Bushwick Starr in spring 2018, as well as the premiere of up your aesthetic, a devised retelling of the ancient Greek myths of the Amazons, at the DC Fringe Festival this summer.
DATE NIGHT

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.

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 &
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
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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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Maya Polsky and Nicolas Bridon
D. Elizabeth Price and Lou Yecies
Carol Prins and John Hart/
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Linda and Michael Welsh

*Enact Chair
As of May 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
312-280-2660

BOX OFFICE
312-397-4010

VOLUNTEER FOR PERFORMANCES
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