

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TOSHIKI OKADA
GOD BLESS BASEBALL
January 28-30, 2016



MCA Stage presents **God Bless Baseball**, a new contemporary theater work by the playwright-director **Toshiki Okada**, with an international cast of Japanese and Korean actors. With Okada's signature odd and unmistakable logic, *God Bless Baseball* takes baseball as its central metaphor—the most American of games, which is hugely popular in Japan and Korea—and gives a sense for how Asians assimilate and change American exports such as sports, pop culture, and the military. *God Bless Baseball* is commissioned in part by the MCA and takes places January 28 through 30 in the MCA's Edlis Neeson Theater.

This project re-examines the history of Japan and Korea through the lens of baseball, the quintessential American sport. Baseball came to Japan in 1872 and to Korea in 1904. Since then, the sport has become completely integrated into the culture and society of these two nations, as well as the lives of the people.

This piece also explores the influence and differences between America and modern Asian culture. Visual design by multimedia artist Tadasu Takamine provides a spare yet dramatic setting. The play is performed in Japanese and Korean with English subtitles.

Toshiki Okada is known as a foremost playwright and director in Japanese theater today. His works are intrinsically Japanese, emerging from a contemporary setting with particular idiosyncrasies, anxieties, and forms of expression. He founded his company, chelfitsch, in 1997 naming it after a deliberate mispronunciation of the English word selfish. chelfitsch's plays are distinctive in the ways they bring the intimacy of individual concerns into conversation with overshadowing issues, like the economic crisis and the cultural aftershocks of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Winner of the Kishida Kunio Drama Award, Japan's most prestigious honor for playwrights, Okada was first introduced to Chicago audiences by the MCA in 2009 with his award-winning play *Five Days in March*.

Tadasu Takamine is collaborating with Okada to create the visual design for *God Bless Baseball*. He is known for being a provocative and irreverent video and installation artist working in Japan. Takamine's performance and moving-image works engage focus on sexuality, humanity, and the body. He has exhibited extensively throughout Asia, North America, and Europe, as well as Australia, Latin America, and South Africa.

TICKET INFORMATION

God Bless Baseball takes place January 28, 29, and 30 at 7:30 pm. Tickets are \$30 and available at the MCA Box Office at 312.397.4010 or www.mcachicago.org.

MCA Studio: Toshiki Okada Workshop

Saturday, January 23, 1 – 4 pm

Toshiki Okada leads a workshop introducing his characteristic theater techniques and everyday movements of fidgets and twitches that expand the conventional vocabularies of theater and dance. Professional theater or dance performance, or directing experience is required. Call MCA Box Office for information and reservations: 312.397.4010.

MCA Talk: God Bless Baseball

Thursday, January 28, immediately following the performance

Following the opening night performance, audience members are invited to stay for a moderated conversation with the ensemble.

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Image: Toshiki Okada, *God Bless Baseball*. Photo: © Asian Arts Theater (Moon So Young).

Toshiki Okada *God Bless Baseball* U.S. tour is funded by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan in the fiscal year 2015, Tokyo Metropolitan Government, The Japan Foundation through the *Performing Arts JAPAN* Program, and the Asian Cultural Council. This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. *God Bless Baseball* is commissioned by Asian Culture Complex–Asian Arts Theatre; coproduced by Asian Culture Complex–Asian Arts Theatre, Festival/Tokyo, and Taipei Arts Festival; additional commissioning support provided by FringeArts, Philadelphia; Japan Society, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland; and Wexner Center for the Arts at The Ohio State University. Research and workshop support by Doosan Art Center in cooperation with Kinosaki International Arts Center, Steep Slope Studio, and Sample.

Lead support for the 2015-2016 season of MCA Stage is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman. Generous support for MCA Dance is provided by David Herro and Jay Franke. Additional generous support is provided by Caryn and King Harris, and Lois and Steve Eisen and the Eisen Family Foundation. The MCA is a proud member of the Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District. Season support is provided by Alphawood Foundation. MCA Stage is a proud partner of the National Performance Network.

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The museum is generously supported by its Board of Trustees; individual and corporate members; private and corporate foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and government agencies, including the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. Museum capital improvements are supported by a Public Museum Capital Grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The MCA is a proud member of Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

The MCA is located at 220 E. Chicago Avenue, one block east of Michigan Avenue. The museum and sculpture garden are open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm and Tuesday from 10 am to 8 pm. The museum is closed on Monday. Tuesdays are Community Free Days with free admission for Illinois residents. Suggested general admission is \$12 for adults and \$7 for students and seniors. Children 12 years of age and under, MCA members, and members of the military are admitted free. Information about MCA exhibitions, programs, and special events is available on the MCA website at mcachicago.org or by phone at 312.280.2660.