

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 2016

Media Contacts:

Elena Grotto 312.397.3828 egrotto@mcachicago.org

Karla Loring 312.397.3834 kloring@mcachicago.org

Images: www.mcachicago.org/media



TIM ETHELLS / FORCED ENTERTAINMENT

THE NOTEBOOK | FEBRUARY 18-19

SPEAK BITTERNESS | FEBRUARY 20

(IN)COMPLETE WORKS: TABLE TOP SHAKESPEARE | FEBRUARY 25-27

Over the course of two weeks, **MCA Stage** presents three distinct projects by the experimental British theater group **Forced Entertainment**, led by director and writer **Tim Etchells**. Forced Entertainment's works are often concerned with the mechanics of the live event—disrupting conventions and audience expectations about contemporary theater. They are performing **The Notebook**, **Speak Bitterness**, and **(In)Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare**, copresented with the Chicago Shakespeare Theater as part of the city-wide Shakespeare 400 festival.



The first of the three projects is **The Notebook**, based on the award-winning novel by Hungarian writer Ágota Kristóf and set during WWII. Kristóf created twin narrators—unnamed boys who describe their troubled lives in the countryside as the war drags to its conclusion and the new reality of Hungary under the Soviet Union takes hold—to have a style that is poised between a kids' picture book and hard-boiled detective fiction. The children are social outsiders who survive

and understand the world by harsh codes. As the war deepens, the brothers are slowly revealed as struggling moralists, trying to live by consistent principles while Central Europe is crumbling into cruelty and opportunism. The two actors who perform *The Notebook* speak every word in sync with one another, even matching their breaths. This marks the first time that Forced Entertainment has used an existing text, a departure from devising and writing their own work.



The second of the three projects is **Speak Bitterness**, which is performed over a period of six hours and shows a group of penitents whose task is to confess to everything. They are by turns cowed, breezy, anguished, reluctant, jovial, and determined. In a brightly lit space, a group of performers behind a long table take turns competing to confess the most horrific, amusing, or convincing things—from crimes as serious as forgery, murder, and genocide to nasty indiscretions, such as reading others' diaries and not taking the dog for a walk. Somewhere between a catalogue of human infamy and a strange and comical show-trial, this exhaustive work draws on the culture of confession in society at large. The audience is free to arrive, leave, and return at any point.



The third and final project is Forced Entertainment's newest work, and its Chicago debut coincides with Shakespeare 400, the largest global celebration of Shakespeare's legacy, taking place throughout Chicago in 2016. **(In) Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare** features a selection of four different one-hour Shakespeare plays each night for three nights. These plays are selected from their marathon Complete Works project, where condensed versions of Shakespeare plays are performed on a table top using a collection of ordinary everyday objects as characters.

In this program, specially created for the MCA, members of Forced Entertainment perform a selection of plays to explore the dynamic force of storytelling through the use of language alone, in simple and distinctive retellings of some of the Bard's most famous works. Each night's performance of *(In) Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare* presents a different group of four plays:

- Feb 25: Timon of Athens, Measure for Measure, Henry V, Much Ado About Nothing
- Feb 26: The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, Macbeth, The Winter's Tale
- Feb 27: Loves Labours Lost, Antony and Cleopatra, All's Well That Ends Well, The Tempest

For over 30 years, **Forced Entertainment** has made formative works that search for identity in a fractured, uncertain world. Based in Sheffield, England, and acclaimed internationally as one of the most important devised theater companies in the world, Forced Entertainment is a group of six artists who make theater and performance works, as well as installations, site-specific pieces, books, web projects, and more. Their artistic director, **Tim Etchells**, writes for and with the performance collective, and for his own print and online projects, and makes text-driven visual art. The core members and performers of the ensemble are Robin Arthus, Time Etchells, Richard Lowdon, Claire Marshall, Cathy Naden, and Terry O'Connor.

RELATED PROGRAM

MCA Talk: Forced Entertainment

February 18, immediately following the performance

Audience members are invited to stay after the performance for a moderated conversation with the members of Forced Entertainment.

TICKET INFORMATION

The Notebook takes place February 18-19 at 7:30 pm, with a running time of two hours, no intermission. This performance contains mature content, and is recommended for ages 16+. *Speak Bitterness* takes place February 20 at 4 pm, with a running time of six hours. *(In)Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare* takes place February 25-27 at 7:30 pm, with a running time of four hours.

Tickets are \$30 for each performance and available at the MCA Box Office at 312.397.4010 or www.mcachicago.org.

#

Images: Forced Entertainment, *The Notebook*. Photo: Hugo Glendinning. Forced Entertainment, *Speak Bitterness*. Photo: Hugo Glendinning. Forced Entertainment, Photo: Hugo Glendinning.

Support for this project is generously provided by the British Council. 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, Shawn M. Donnelley and Christopher M. Kelly, Lois and Steve Eisen and The Eisen Family Foundation, and Ginger Farley and Bob Shapiro. Additional generous support is provided by the Martha Struthers Farley and Donald C. Farley Jr. Family Foundation; Mary E. Ittelson; Sharon and Lee Oberlander; Maya Polsky; Carol Prins and John Hart/The Jessica Fund; Ellen Stone Belic; Amphion Foundation, Inc.; Leigh and Henry Bienen; Mark Light; Melynda Lopin; Maecenas; Herbert R. and Paula Molner; Elizabeth Price and Lou Yecies; and Ms. Patricia F. Sternberg.

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

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.