

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2015

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Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago News

EIGHTH BLACKBIRD NAMED MCA ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE

September 2015 - June 2016



Building on a long-standing and rich history of working with **eighth blackbird**, the **Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago** announces the acclaimed Chicago-based ensemble as this year's artists-in-residence. Throughout the residency—spanning September 2015 through June 2016—the artists will be **embedded** in the galleries, utilizing the MCA as their studio space. They will **rehearse and perform** throughout the museum sharing the creative process of making music with MCA visitors. During the residency, there will be a regular series of accessible and engaging talks, workshops, and live performances that showcase the work of eighth blackbird.

The eighth blackbird residency occupies the museum's third-floor galleries, which are divided into two designated spaces: a studio/rehearsal room and a visitor engagement space. eighth blackbird will be at the museum rehearsing in the studio space to allow visitors to experience their creative work up close. Outside of rehearsal times, visitors can see what rehearsals are like through an immersive video soundscape that projects footage from a previous rehearsal of David Lang's *these broken wings* across the walls of the galleries.

Through accompanying audio, visitors can listen to the compositions that the musicians are preparing for upcoming concerts and hear the discussions that the artists have with each other as they rehearse. Instruments and scores will also be in the space when the artists are not on-site.

In the adjacent engagement space, an installation showcases eighth blackbird's collaborations with visual artists, dramatists, choreographers, and set designers by highlighting a few of their recent productions. Staging elements culled from a music-theater dance production, *Colombine's Paradise Theatre* illustrates their unique method of working, which synthesizes music, dance, performance, and scenic design to create a new music genre related to opera, musical theater, and music videos. When eighth blackbird performed this work, the musicians played the roles of Colombine, a feisty woman, and her two suitors, the frenzied Harlequin and the timid Pierrot. During the performance, the musicians shifted between roles while singing, dancing, and playing; blurring the lines between music, dance, and theater.

In addition to occupying the gallery spaces, eighth blackbird will hold two performances presented by MCA Stage in the museum's Edlis Neeson Theater. Other members of the new music community will also contribute to the residency by leading performances, talks, and workshops on the second Tuesday of each month, from October through May (specific programs will be announced each month).

Rehearsal Schedule

A schedule is posted on the MCA website.

Performances

MCA Stage presents eighth blackbird: Hand Eye

January 23–24, 2016

Hand Eye connects two groups in one vibrant project—the six members of eighth blackbird are paired with Sleeping Giant, a collective of six composers. Each composer has written a different section of *Hand Eye*, composing each in reference to a different visual artwork, and the sections each highlight one eighth blackbird musician. The entire evening is accompanied by a set and visual design by Deborah Johnson, aka CandyStations, who has collaborated with musicians including Sufjan Stevens, Ray LaMontagne, St. Vincent, Lucius, Wilco, and ETHEL.

MCA Stage presents eighth blackbird: Ghostlight

March 25–26, 2016

Ghostlight features two pieces that were written for eighth blackbird—David T. Little's *Ghostlight* and Bryce Dessner's *Murder Ballades*. *Ghostlight* is inspired in part from ancient ceremonies, and was developed throughout the course of eighth blackbird's yearlong residency at the MCA. *Murder Ballades* explores acts of revenge and betrayal, recounted through simple, upbeat melodies. Its first iteration was commissioned in part by MCA Chicago, and features on the 2016 Grammy-winning *Filament* CD. Bryce

Dessner has now expanded the composition for this concert. The evening also features a very special guest performer, Will Oldham AKA Bonnie “Prince” Billy, who joins the ensemble for Rzewski's *Coming Together*, and the ensemble joins him on several of his songs.

About eighth blackbird

eighth blackbird, the Chicago-based, three-time Grammy Award-winning sextet has provoked and impressed audiences for twenty years across the country and around the world. One of the industry's most formidable ensembles, eighth blackbird began in 1996 as a group of six entrepreneurial Oberlin Conservatory students. Over the course of two decades, eighth blackbird has commissioned and premiered hundreds of works by dozens of composers including David T. Little, Steven Mackey, Missy Mazzoli, and Steve Reich, whose commissioned work, *Double Sextet*, went on to win the Pulitzer Prize (2009).

The ensemble's mission extends beyond performance to curation and education. They served as Music Director of the Ojai Music Festival (2009), enjoyed a three-year residency at the Curtis Institute of Music, and holds ongoing Ensemble-in-Residence positions at the University of Richmond and the University of Chicago. The name “eighth blackbird” derives from the eighth stanza of Wallace Stevens's poem, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* (1917). eighth blackbird is managed by David Lieberman Artists.

Percussionist **Matthew Duvall** is a founding member of eighth blackbird and holds a double degree in Percussion Performance and Classical Civilization, with minors in Art History and Religion, from Oberlin Conservatory and Oberlin College. Duvall completed additional degrees at the University of Cincinnati with The Percussion Group: Cincinnati, and Northwestern University.

Flutist **Nathalie Joachim**, a member of eighth blackbird since 2015, is a composer, producer and singer, and co-founded the internationally acclaimed urban art pop duo, Flutronix. She has performed with artists and ensembles including Miguel Zenón, Vampire Weekend, the International Contemporary Ensemble, Richard Reed Parry and Dan Deacon. Her original compositions have been premiered and featured at Park Avenue Armory, the Brooklyn Museum, and National Flute Association Conventions.

Pianist **Lisa Kaplan** is a founding member of eighth blackbird and has premiered new pieces by composers, including Andy Akiho, Derek Bermel, Jennifer Higdon, Amy Beth Kirsten, David Lang, Nico Muhly, George Perle and Steve Reich. Kaplan has collaborated with Mario Batali, Jeremy Denk, Bryce Dessner, Glenn Kotche, Gustavo Santaolalla, Steve Schick, Robert Spano, Dawn Upshaw and Michael Ward-Bergeman.

Violinist **Yvonne Lam**, a member of eighth blackbird since 2011, served as Assistant Concertmaster for the Washington National Opera Orchestra from 2008-2011 and has performed

chamber music with such distinguished artists as Paul Katz, Roger Tapping, Anthony Marwood, Ida Kavafian, Ani Kavafian, Gil Kalish, and Fred Sherry.

Clarinetist and bass clarinetist **Michael J. Maccaferri** is a founding member of eighth blackbird and has performed as soloist with leading orchestras such as the Cleveland Orchestra, Toronto Symphony and the Atlanta Symphony. Maccaferri has also performed with the Hong Kong Philharmonic and the Green Bay Symphony and serves as bass clarinetist with the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra.

Cellist **Nicholas Photinos**, a member of eighth blackbird since 1996, has performed as a member of the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra and Canton and Columbus Symphony Orchestras, and performed and recorded with artists including Björk, Wilco, Autumn Defense, violinist Zach Brock, bassist Matt Ulery and singer Grazyna Auguscik. Photinos has recorded for numerous labels including the Cedille, Nonesuch, and Naxos labels.

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Image: eighth blackbird, photo: Luke Ratray.

Lead support for the eighth blackbird residency is provided by Helen and Sam Zell. Additional generous support is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Anne L. Kaplan, New Music USA, Judy and Bob Duvall, and the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation.

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.