

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ONEOFUS Julie Atlas Muz and Mat Fraser**

**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**

**December 1-4 and 8-11**



**The Museum of Contemporary Art** presents **Beauty and the Beast**, featuring burlesque star Julie Atlas Muz and English actor Mat Fraser, who are founders of the new arts production company ONEOFUS. Partners in theater and life, Muz and Fraser use love, humor, and nudity to expose the social undercurrents of this eighteenth-century fairy tale. Fraser, who plays the Beast, was born with phocomelia and has spent his life aware that he looks different due to his physical disability. In this explicit, adult-themed work, the Beast is repositioned as a natural-born freak to the beauty queen who loves him. Directed by Phelim McDermott, Muz and Fraser perform this fabled romance in a sweet, raunchy, and unself-conscious style on two weekends, December 1-4 and 8-11, at the MCA Stage.

Throughout this Dominant and submissive story, the artists employ song, dance, puppetry, and shadow play, and Fraser's custom-made prosthetic arms—which he has said he rarely uses. Muz and Fraser are joined by two supporting puppeteers from the London-based theater company Improbable, who are extravagantly costumed and use their own arms to fill in for Fraser in his transformation from the Beast to Prince.

This production of *Beauty and the Beast* launched at the Extravagant Bodies Disability Arts Festival in Croatia in 2007. After many self-produced, successful one-night-only performances at various international disability arts festivals, Muz and Fraser were awarded a 2010 R & D grant from the Arts Council England to expand the production, and they became Associated Artists with London-based theater company Improbable. Muz and Fraser then established ONEOFUS, and in conjunction with Improbable, had a six-week tour in the UK in 2013, including London's Young Vic. In 2014, they followed up with a New York run at the Abron Arts Center.

**Julie Atlas Muz** is a Detroit-born performance artist, dancer, stage director, and actor. She is best known as a performer in the New York City burlesque scene and neo-burlesque revival. She was the crown holder of the 2006 Miss Exotic World and Miss Coney Island pageants. She performs original work at numerous stages including P.S. 122, HERE, The Performing Garage and Art at St. Anne's Warehouse, LaMama, and The Kitchen, and has been awarded artist-in-residencies at Chashama, Joyce Soho, Dixon Place, and Movement Research. She was a 2004 Whitney Biennial Artist and a 2005 Valencia Biennale Artist.

**Mat Fraser** is a London-born actor and writer specializing in theater, cabaret, and sideshow, and he is one of the most well-known performers with a disability. He is interested in the relationship between disability and entertainment, and he makes challenging and humorous works. He also appears in films and television, including AMC's popular *American Horror Story*. Muz and Fraser met as performers in the Coney Island Circus sideshow, subsequently married, and have created several shows together.

Formed in 1995, **Improbable** is a London-based theater company led by Artistic Directors Phelim McDermott and Lee Simpson. Improbable's artists use improvisation, ensemble, and puppetry in exciting combinations to create epic spectacles, such as *Sticky*, an outdoor piece with giant Sellotape structures and fireworks. They also make smaller delicate pieces, such as *Animo* and *The Still*, both of which are improvised live. Their best-known large theater pieces include *Theatre of Blood*, produced at the National Theatre, and *Satyagraha*, which played at English National Opera and the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

**Phelim McDermott**, the Obie award-winning director, is best known for *Shock Headed Peter*, *The Enchanted Island*, and the Philip Glass operas *Satyagraha* at the Metropolitan Opera, and *The Perfect*

*American* about Walt Disney. He has woven Muz and Fraser's real-life courtship into the narrative of *Beauty and the Beast*.

## **RELATED PROGRAMS**

### **Post-Show Talk**

Thursday, December 1, and Thursday, December 8, following the performances

The audience can join the artists for a moderated conversation directly following the performance.

### **Relaxed Performance**

Friday, December 9, 7:30 pm

This performance of *Beauty and the Beast* is open to everyone, but the artists are offering it as a "relaxed performance," which creates a welcoming environment for people with learning disabilities and/or sensory communication impairments. Attendees on this night should expect a more relaxed attitude toward noise and movement in the seating area and modified house lighting and sound. For more information, please call the MCA Box Office at 312-397-4010.

### **MCA Studio: ONEOFUS Workshop**

Saturday, December 10, 1-3 pm, Tickets are \$25 or free with performance ticket

The creators of *Beauty and the Beast* put the experience of disability in society at the center of their work as they lead an inclusive workshop for professionals on reconfiguring collaboration, creation, and performance in theater and burlesque. ASL interpretation is offered at this workshop, and it is organized in partnership with Bodies of Work.

### **MCA Talk: Crip Culture**

Sunday, December 11, 11 am - 1 pm, Free with museum admission or performance ticket

Mat Fraser and Director of Bodies of Work Carrie Sandahl lead a discussion on sexuality in the disability community. In relation to Fraser's work as part of ONEOFUS, they speak about current policies and social implications. This talk features ASL and open captioning, and it is organized with Bodies of Work and in association with Access Living, the leading agency for disability advocacy in Illinois.

## **TICKET INFORMATION**

*Beauty and the Beast* runs 80 minutes with no intermission and takes place over two weekends: December 1-3 and 8-10 at 7:30 pm and December 4 and 11 at 3 pm. Tickets for the performances are \$30 and available at the MCA Box Office at 312.397.4010 or [www.mcachicago.org](http://www.mcachicago.org). ASL interpretation is offered at the performances on Thursdays, December 1 and 8, and open captioning is offered at the performances on Saturday, December 3 and Sunday, December 4.

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Image: *Beauty and the Beast*, Photo: Bronwen Sharp.

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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](http://mcachicago.org) or by phone at 312.280.2660.