<table>
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<td>Silencio Blanco&lt;br&gt;Chiflón, El Silencio del Carbón</td>
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<td>Feb 11-12</td>
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<td>Feb 18-19</td>
<td>CCN—Ballet de Lorraine&lt;br&gt;Works by Merce Cunningham, and&lt;br&gt;Petter Jacobsson and Thomas Caley</td>
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<td>Mar 23-25</td>
<td>Charles Atlas/&lt;br&gt;Rashaun Mitchell/&lt;br&gt;Silas Riener&lt;br&gt;Tesseract</td>
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<td>Apr 5-8</td>
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MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART<br>CHICAGO
TESSERACT

A two-part work by
Charles Atlas/
Rashaun Mitchell/
Silas Riener

TESSERACT, a stereoscopic, three-dimensional video, is a six-chapter work of science fiction. It is also Charles Atlas’s first dance video in more than a decade. Filmed with a mobile camera rig that moves with the choreography, TESSERACT traverses a series of hybrid and imagined worlds. It was staged and filmed over a series of production residencies at EMPAC/Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Each chapter combines a specific set, choreography, and camera motion to encompass duet and ensemble pieces choreographed and performed by Rashaun Mitchell and Silas Riener. Manipulating the three-dimensional footage to combine live dance with animation, Atlas’s distinctive video effects reach into otherworldly dimensions beyond the stage.

The second part, Tesseract O, expands the view from film frame to proscenium stage. A performance for six dancers and multiple mobile cameras—the footage of which Atlas will manipulate in real-time and project back onto the stage—Tesseract O superimposes the space of dance with live cinematic production, rendering a choreographic analogue to the four-dimensional cube from which the piece takes its title.

TESSERACT total running time is two hours including one intermission.

Presented in conjunction with the exhibition Merce Cunningham: Common Time, on view through April 30, 2017.
PART II—**TESSERACT**

Choreography by Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener

Video by Charles Atlas

Music by Mas Ysa

Performers
- David Rafael Botana
- Eleanor Hullihan
- Kate Jewett
- Cori Kresge
- Rashaun Mitchell
- and Silas Riener
- Kayla Farrish (understudy)

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Lighting Design
- Davison Scandrett

Costume Design
- Rashaun Mitchell and Silas Riener with Mary Jo Mecca and Yvette Helin

Steadicam Operation
- Ryan Thomas Jenkins

Assistant Camera
- Lazar Bozich

Stage Management
- Dani Prados

Costume Construction
- Yvette Helin and Mary Jo Mecca

General Management
- Katy Dammers

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Generous support for MCA Dance is provided by David Herro and Jay Franke.

Lead support for Merce Cunningham: *Common Time* is provided by the Harris Family Foundation in memory of Bette and Neilson Harris; Caryn and King Harris, Katherine Harris, Toni and Ron Paul, Pam and Joe Szokol, Linda and Bill Friend, and Stephanie and John Harris; Cori and Michael Sacks; and Helen and Sam Zell.

Major support is provided by the Walter and Karla Goldschmidt Foundation, Abby McCormick O’Neil and D. Carroll Joynes, anonymous, and the Nancy Lauter McDougal and Alfred L. McDougal Exhibition Fund.

Additional generous support is provided by the Irving Harris Foundation, Joyce E. Chelberg, NIB Foundation, Robert Lehman Foundation, Jennifer and Alec Lilowitz, and Carol Prins and John Hart/The Jessica Fund.

Special thanks to the exhibition chairs, Sara Albrecht and Anne L. Kaplan.

The MCA is proud to partner with the Harris Theatre, Hubbard Street Dance, and the Joffrey Ballet.

Merce Cunningham: *Common Time* is organized by the Walker Art Center with major support provided by the Barnett and Annalee Newman Foundation and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Generous support is also provided by Agnes Gund and the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation.

**Tesseract** by Charles Atlas / Rashaun Mitchell / Silas Riener was commissioned and produced by EMPAC/Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and co-commissioned by Triangle France.

**Tesseract** by Charles Atlas / Rashaun Mitchell / Silas Riener was commissioned and produced by EMPAC/Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the Walker Art Center, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and On the Boards.

Tesseract was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts’ National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Additional funding from the Deann’s Grant administered by the Tisch School of the Arts through New York University. Tesseract was developed, in part, through residencies at EMPAC/Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, The Watermill Center, and the Walker Art Center.

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**ABOUT MERCER CUNNINGHAM:**

**COMMON TIME**

**FEB 11-APR 30, 2017**

The MCA and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis—instutions dedicated to multidisciplinary programming—are simultaneously presenting the largest surveys ever of work by the influential choreographer and dancer Merce Cunningham and from his multidisciplinary collaborations. This immersive exhibition shows how Cunningham’s groundbreaking practice changed the course of modern dance in the twentieth century and continues to influence generations of artists, composers, and choreographers. The core of the exhibition is drawn from the Walker’s Merce Cunningham Dance Company (MCDC) Collection, which includes costumes, backdrops and décor, and sets, and is accompanied by works by Jasper Johns, Rei Kawakubo, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Ernesto Neto, Robert Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, Andy Warhol, and many others. These artworks illuminate the contemporaneous practice of these artists as well as the influence of Cunningham’s collaborations on pivotal art movements and transformational moments of artistic reinvention across more than six decades of creation. The MCA’s and Walker’s exhibitions, which showcase a series of commissioned performances, open with events by international touring companies and former dancers with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.
Robert T. Browne, *The Mystery of Space*

Rotations through a fourth dimension can’t affect a three-dimensional figure any more than you can shake letters off a printed page. . . . As I see it, in a four-dimensional figure a three-dimensional man has two choices every time he crosses a line of juncture, like a wall or a threshold. Ordinarily he will make a ninety-degree turn through the fourth dimension, only he doesn’t feel it with his three dimensions. . . . it must be a matter of subconscious orientation.

—Robert A. Heinlein, *And He Built a Crooked House*

Robert A. Heinlein’s 1941 novella *And He Built a Crooked House* describes a California architect who designs a house based on a four-dimensional cube, a tesseract, comprised of eight cubed rooms. Unbeknownst to him or his clients, however, an earthquake has caused the invisible fourth dimension to shift prior to their first tour through the building. The tesseract house then takes its new inhabitants on a disorienting journey through multiple rooms, perspectives, and timescales that ends with another earthquake-induced slip of space/time as they are dropped with a jolt into the desert landscape of Joshua Tree National Park.

Charles Atlas, Rashaun Mitchell, and Silas Riener’s *Tesseract* charts a similar course: worlds shift and flip, and dancers spin and fall across unstable planes. Parallel timescales are reflected back on themselves, and emotions run high as speed, scale, and gravity refuse to remain constant. This journey starts from the perspective of three-dimensional stereoscopic vision and progresses to the performative dimensionality of the theater stage. Although the artists had previously worked together with Merce Cunningham, *Tesseract* marks their first independent collaboration, and like the architect’s project in Heinlein’s novella, this ambitious work is conceived of as a chance to explore the potential of imagined architectures that can drift from cinema screen to proscenium stage.

**ABOUT TESSERACT**

The hypercube or tesseract is described by moving the generating cube in the direction in which the fourth dimension extends.

—Robert T. Browne, *The Mystery of Space*

Industrially produced science fiction, like the three-dimensional animation and live-action hybrid *Jupiter Ascending* (2015), the constrained B movie horror effects of *Cube2: Hypercube* (2002) and the world-bending stereoscopic effects of *Doctor Strange* (2016) all provide material inspiration through which each element of *Tesseract*—the choreography, the sets, and the image manipulation—emerge. Far from telling a narrative that posits three-dimensional film as an on-screen duplicate of how we see in reality, the media has the potential to engender a different sort of vision, one in which sci-fi dimensionality can be explored.

*Tesseract* moves through these wildly divergent visual worlds in order to transport the protagonists, and audience, into the fourth dimension. *Tesseract O* takes the opposite approach.

An empty black stage resists fantastical sets or computer-generated environments to give sole focus to the choreography. As in Atlas’s film, the dancers respond to divergent situations, but this time the environments are invisible to them and the choreography alone communicates entirely new worlds. At times the performers come together to build and define spatial geometries. At other times, they appear caught between dimensions, defined only by their responses to unusual atmospheric or gravitational effects. As Atlas projects the dancers’ doubles back onto the space of the stage, viewers are sucked beyond the void to imagined worlds as vivid as any Hollywood blockbuster. The dancers shape-shift, moving between roles and personalities, between affect and effect, marked as much by cinematic pathos as the recorded images previously on-screen.

Of course, in some ways this attention to extra-dimensionality is present in all three artists’ previous work. Atlas, well known for his pioneering approach to the relationship between technology and the body, has developed a vivid cinematic language for articulating dance on screen using an active, mobile camera that not only mediates but also draws attention to the camera. In his work, the camera is not just witness but also dancer, resulting in an image...
wholly inseparable from the dance it records. Riener and Mitchell are equally driven by the potential of choreography to reach beyond the limits of its inherent language of dimensionality. Tesseract combines Riener's work at the interstitial space between language and movement with Mitchell's approach to choreographing at the edge of spiritual and physical transformation.

**DURING THE PRODUCTION OF TESSERACT, THIS NOTION OF DIFFERING TIMESCALES AND PARALLEL UNIVERSES REMAINED AT THE FOREFRONT OF OUR DISCUSSIONS, ALTHOUGH NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF ARTISTIC INSPIRATION.**

The friction between the necessary rhythms of those in front of the camera and those behind it, who switch the lenses, adjust the lights, balance the rig, and review the footage, remains resolutely opposed. At a very practical level, the dancers need to stay warm and mobile for performance and to prevent injury. This organic, bodily timeframe works against the staccato starts and stops of a movie production. This is especially the case on a three-dimensional film set, which requires an extra crew-member, the stereographer, who measures the convergence of the two focal lengths before every take in order to have the image protrude or recede from the screen.

**RATHER THAN DENY OR AVOID THESE FRICTIONS, ATLAS, MITCHELL, AND RIENER INCORPORATE THESE DIFFERENT MODES OF PRODUCTION INTO A MULTIFACETED ARTWORK THAT COMBINES THE CONTRASTING TIMESCALES OF THE RECORDED AND THE LIVE IN ORDER TO USE THE MATERIAL FACT OF THE ARTWORK'S PRODUCTION AS AN UNDERLYING DRAMATURGICAL AND CHOREOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY.**

This technique and its contradictions are especially foregrounded in one scene from Tesseract, in which the camera continually circles the dancers as dense fog swirls at their feet. However, by deliberately eschewing montage in favor of showing the continuous time of the dance, the Steadicam operator's body feels the double strain of the technical and the physical by undertaking a series of "straight-takes" while carrying a seventy-five-pound, two-camera, three-dimensional rig to frame the dancers' duet. While this work remains invisible, the effect on-screen is one of the camera's delicate switch from observer to participant, as its close-up and mobile viewpoint traces a liminal space beyond the theatrical language implied by the choreography.

In response, Tesseract reveals the means of production of Tesseract, as Mitchell and Riener's choreography places the Steadicam and its operator center stage. The camera operator, Ryan Jenkins, now takes on the dual role of operator-performer, both foil and accompaniment to the dancers through his presence both in front of the audience and behind the camera. In essence he represents the collapse of two parallel universes. This gesture dramatizes the elliptical relationship between film time and theatrical time, between the technical and the artistic.

**TESSERACT POINTS TO THE RICH HISTORY OF THIS SUBJECTIVE CAMERA, OF WHICH THE DEVELOPMENT OF STEADICAM FOR COMPLEX TRACKING SHOTS IS KEY, WHILE THE USE OF THE STRAIGHT-TAKE PRESENTS THESE TWO MEDIA TIMESCALES AS ONE.**

The word tesseract is derived from the Greek tessares, or four, and aktis, a ray of light. Atlas, Mitchell, and Riener's Tesseract alludes not only to the romance of science fiction's beaming rays, but also to light as the principal element of cinematography, projection, and theatrical technique. The artists combine aktis with the fourth dimension, usually understood as time. However, there is an extra-dimensionality here that is revealed through the interaction of the real and the imaged, the live and the recorded. In the midst of Tesseract, the dancers find themselves in a sci-fi desert landscape, which recalls both the end of Heinlein's novella and also Edwin Abbott Abbott's 1884 society-baiting satirical novel Flatland. Yet as Flatland describes a class society in which the protagonist's geometry equals hierarchy, here the interaction of the dancers with their designated geometries is imagined with humor as an alternate framework. Like the space between our two eyes that nevertheless see as one, this framework articulates an alternate fourth dimension with the potential to become visible.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

CHARLES ATLAS
has been a pioneering figure in the creation of time-based visual art for more than four decades, extending the limits of his media and forging new territory in a wide range of genres, stylistic approaches, and techniques. Over the years he has made media/dance works, multichannel video installations, feature-length documentaries, video art works for television, and live electronic performances. Throughout his career, he has fostered collaborative relationships, working intimately with such artists and performers as Leigh Bowery, Michael Clark, Douglas Dunn, Marina Abramovic, Yvonne Rainer, Anohni, and most notably Merce Cunningham, for whom he served as filmmaker-in-residence for a decade from the early 1970s through 1983. Since 2003, Atlas has been interested in exploring different contexts that exploit the use of live video, such as in Instant Fame (2003–06), which consisted of a series of real-time video portraits of performers and artists created live in the gallery space. His recent live video/installations include The Pedestrians (2011), in collaboration with Mika Tajima at the South London Gallery, and Charles Atlas and Collaborators (2013) at the Tate Modern. Atlas has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, three Bessie Awards (New York Dance and Performance), the Foundation for Contemporary Art’s John Cage Award, and a 2016 USA Gracie Fellowship.

DAVID RAFAEL BOTANA
was introduced to movement at a young age through Spanish dance, gymnastics, and Goju-Ryu Karate. He has a BFA in dance performance from New World School of the Arts (2006) under the direction of Daniel Lewis, and also studied tai chi and contact improvisation. He worked with Jonah Bokaer as a performer in On Vanishing (2011) at the Guggenheim Museum and in Filter (2011) at festival de danse Les Hivernales in Avignon. He was also part of the last Merce Cunningham Repertory Understudy Group (2010–11). He has worked with Pam Tanowitz, Bill Young, and sculpture/painter Jonathan Van Dyke, and has collaborated with Leslie Satin and Bradley Teal Ellis. Since 2011 Botana has been a cast member of Punchdrunk’s Sleep No More at the McKittrick Hotel. He has been a dancer with Rashaun Mitchell and Silas Riener since 2015.

CHRISTIAN FENNESZ
is a guitarist and composer active in electronic music and records who is known as Fennesz. He uses guitar and notebook computers to make multilayered compositions that
RASHAUN MITCHELL AND SILAS RIENER have created dance since 2010 in response to complex and active spatial environments, often merging elements of fantasy, absurdity, and quiet contemplation into challenging multifaceted performance. After working together for...
years in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Mitchell and Riener developed a keen interest in the way abstraction and representation coincide in the body. Their collaborative work takes many forms, including site-specific installations, improvisational dances, and traditional proscenium pieces, as well as highly detailed and intimate immersive experiences. Their historical influences and aesthetic forms collapse into a visually charged hybrid physical language. Together they have been part of Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s Extended Life Dance Development program and the New York City Center Choreographic Fellowship, and have been artists in residence at EMPAC, Mount Tremper Arts, Wellesley College, Jacob’s Pillow, and Pieter. Their work has been presented at MOMA PS1 as part of Greater NY, The Chocolate Factory, New York Live Arts, Danspace Project, the Vail International Dance Festival, REDCAT, ICA Boston, and the O, Miami Poetry Festival.

Davison Scandrett has supervised lighting and technical production for more than 1,000 performances in forty-six states and twenty-eight countries. He met Silas Riener, Rashaun Mitchell, and Charles Atlas during his 2008-12 tenure as Director of Production for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. His lighting and visual designs for Mitchell and Riener include the productions Nox, Veal, Interface, Taste, Way In, Performance, Light Years, and Blue Name. Scandrett’s other lighting design credits include works by Pam Tanowitz, Sarah Michelson, Andrew Ondrejcak, Rebecca Lazier, Paris Opera Ballet, and the Off-Broadway productions of Mike Birbiglia’s Thank God for Jokes and Neal Brennan’s 3 Mics. His production management credits include Wendy Whelan’s Restless Creature, Marina Abramovic’s Goldberg, Jennifer Monson’s Live Dancing Archive, Denis O’Hare and Lisa Peterson’s An Iliad, and numerous productions for the Lincoln Center Festival. He was the recipient of a 2007 Bessie Award for his collaboration with Sarah Michelson and Parker Lutz on the visual design of DOGS. Scandrett would not have been able to do any of it without the guidance and support of his colleague and best friend Carrie J. Wood (1979–2016).

Thomas Arsenault (Mas Ysa) composes and performs as Mas Ysa. Born in Montreal, Canada, he spent his formative years in Sao Paulo, Brazil, before moving to the United States to study modern composition at the Oberlin Conservatory. While living between Brooklyn and Woodstock, NY, he released two albums, Worth (2014) and Seraph (2015), both of which received critical acclaim. He has also toured internationally. Tesseract marks Arsenault’s third collaboration with choreographer Rashaun Mitchell, having previously collaborated on Nox and Interface. He currently resides in New York City, where he is working on a new collection of songs and compositions.
The MCA’s newest affinity group, Enact, is a group of MCA Circle 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.

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THANK YOU

Lead support for the 2016–17 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, Ms. Shawn M. Donnelley and Dr. Christopher M. Kelly, Lois and Steve Eisen and The Eisen Family Foundation, Ginger Farley and Bob Shapiro, 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, Melynda Lopin, D. Elizabeth Price and Lou Yecies.

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

For more information, contact us at enact@mcachicago.org. *Enact Cochair
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Program notes compiled by Yolanda Cesta Cursach