

WINTER/SPRING SEASON

Jan 19–22

Silencio Blanco
*Chiflón, El Silencio
del Carbón*

Feb 11–12

*MCA Cunningham
Event*

Feb 18–19

CCN—Ballet de
Lorraine
*Works by Merce
Cunningham, and
Petter Jacobsson
and Thomas Caley*

Feb 25–26

Music for Merce

Mar 11

Spektral Quartet,
Morton Feldman
String Quartet No. 2

Mar 23–25

Charles Atlas/
Rashaun Mitchell/
Silas Riener
Tesseract

Apr 5–8

Peter Brook and
Marie-Hélène Estienne
Battlefield

Apr 23

Matthew Duvall + guests
Whisper(s)

MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
CHICAGO

April 23, 2017

WHISPER(S)

Matthew Duvall and guests

Copresented with Contempo

Curated and performed by Matthew Duvall
Voice of the Winds is codirected by Third Coast Percussion,
beyond this point, and Matthew Duvall

Stage Direction	Matthew Ozawa Jodi Gage
Production Management	Madeleine Borg
Lighting Design	Erik S. Barry
Sound Design	Grayson Elliott Taylor
Photography	Elliot Mandel

CONTEMPO/UCHICAGO PRESENTS ADMINISTRATION

Executive Director	Amy Iwano
Director of Production and Education	Hugo Seda
Marketing Coordinator	Samantha Farmilant
Communications and Production Assistant	Justin Peters
Communications Assistant	Hannah Edgar

Special thanks to Brianna Trainor for her assistance with
Voice of the Winds.

Running time is approximately ninety minutes with one
intermission.

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

WHISPER(S)

PROLOGUE

Erik Satie *Vexations* (1893–94)

PART I

With Lisa Kaplan

Matthew Burtner "Broken Drum" (2003)

John Luther Adams "Wail" (2002)

Richard Reed Parry "Heart and Breath" (2014)

PART II

With Third Coast Percussion

David Lang "Wed" (1992)

David Lang "Composition as Explanation 5"
(2017)—World Premiere

Morton Feldman "The King of Denmark" (1964)

John Cage "Inlets" (1977)

PART III

Marta Ptaszyńska: *Voice of the Winds* (2016, revised
2017)—World Premiere
For a large percussion orchestra
playing softly

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.

Lead support for the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago's presentation of *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; Cari 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 Litowitz, 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.



IRVING HARRIS
FOUNDATION

ABOUT MERCE CUNNINGHAM: COMMON TIME FEB 11-APR 30, 2017

The MCA and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis—institutions 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 of 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 Merce Cunningham's collaborations on pivotal art movements and transformational moments of artistic reinvention across more than six decades of creation. The exhibition, which showcases a series of commissioned performances, opens with events at the MCA and the Walker by international touring companies and former Merce Cunningham Dance Company dancers.



Merce Cunningham and John Cage with Merce Cunningham Dance Company, bus trip, Paris to Hamburg, 1966. © Hervé Gloaguen/Rapho, courtesy of Gamma-Rapho.

FROM THE ARTISTS

WHISPER(S)

Quiet music is distinctive. In experience. In the perception of time passing. Perhaps quiet music is more meaningful when given a reference. Music created by percussion is also distinctive. The medium is so diverse that it effectively isn't any one thing in particular and almost anything can be manipulated to musical effect. Artists like John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol successfully made the case that by holding the observer accountable anything can be conceptualized artistically.

The trajectory of this program isn't an arc—it's a descent.

PROLOGUE

Erik Satie: *Vexations* (1893–94)

Satie was an enormous influence on those who would redefine art in the twentieth century. He made people consider art differently, and it so happens that he had an unabashed appreciation for beautifully quiet sound. In *Vexations*, he instructs the performer to play two alternating phrases nested within a cycling bass line for a total of 840 times. It takes around twenty-eight hours to perform at a properly slow tempo. Please imagine that I've been sitting here for the full duration and am marking each pass by dropping a sheet to the floor. The concert hasn't really started yet, so feel free to keep chatting with your fellow concertgoers. The experience of playing *Vexations* is deeply hypnotic, intended to deceptively lull the listener into believing this will be a predictable program of quiet music. It is called *Whisper(s)*, after all.

PART I

With Lisa Kaplan

Matthew Burtner: "Broken Drum" (2003)

John Luther Adams: "Wail" (2002)

Richard Reed Parry: "Heart and Breath" (2014)

The concert begins with "Broken Drum," the top of the mountain, a bait and switch from an instrument that essentially defines the classical tradition to an object (instrument?) from a scrapyard. If you're curious, percussionist Maria Finkelmeier (@improvaday on Instagram) posts short improvisations on a rattling old window, some ice, an apple pie, or whatever happens to be available. It's delightful. Percussion can be anything.

"Wail" is excerpted from the multimovement work *The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies*, taking us from loud angular jarring sound to loud sustained encompassing sound. Our object/instrument is an air-raid siren. The MCA exhibition *Merce Cunningham: Common Time* has other wonderful examples of functional objects employed

artistically, such as bicycle tires and tin cans. It feels appropriate for a production titled *Whisper(s)* to consider breath. Lisa Kaplan and I have been performing together for twenty-four years (so far). In "Heart and Breath," the tempo of the piano is determined by the rate of her heartbeat (she's wearing a stethoscope) and the tempo of the bowing is determined by the rate of my breathing. Softer sustained visceral sound.

PART II

With Third Coast Percussion

David Lang: "Wed" (1992)

David Lang: "Composition as Explanation 5" (2017)
World Premiere

Morton Feldman: "The King of Denmark" (1964)

John Cage: "Inlets" (1977)

David Lang is a master of whittling away everything except the essential, at which point everything really matters. His music is stripped of anything that is not absolutely crucial. What remains is devastatingly fragile, so deceptively simple on the page. The story behind "Wed" is that a friend in a relationship of many years was diagnosed with terminal illness. In her final days, the couple decided to get married in the hospital, and David was asked to be their witness. I think that in his heart David is a percussionist, and that no matter what instruments he is composing for, really he is always writing percussion music. When I hear this composition, I don't hear piano; I hear little gongs, and I'm pretty sure David does, too. This is for my dad.



Matthew Duvall. *Whisper(s)*. Photo: Elliot Mandel.

"Composition as Explanation" is a lecture on art composed by Gertrude Stein. It is also an upcoming production David is creating for Eighth Blackbird. This is the first performance of this excerpted material as a stand-alone piece. It's an absurdist conversation about how art is created, except that it's really not so absurdist. It's mostly true.

"The King of Denmark" is a defining examination of the phenomena of volume. Feldman said in an interview that he was at a beach, hearing sounds close and far away, and thinking about how the soft close sounds seemed to be the same volume as the far away loud sounds. Then he wondered whether the far away loud sounds were really soft sounds. Maybe they were all the same, depending on one's perspective. So he created a piece that eliminates everything except static soft sound. No form, no time signature, no phrasing, no key signature and—regardless of instrument—no dynamic variation. Only ethereal quiet sounds, ephemeral, like vapor.

LET SOUNDS BE THEMSELVES RATHER THAN VEHICLES
FOR MAN-MADE THEORIES, OR EXPRESSIONS OF
HUMAN SENTIMENTS.

—JOHN CAGE

And then we have "Inlets" by John Cage, whom we have to thank for questioning everything. At this point we've traveled from the most sophisticated of manufactured classical instruments to soft sounds performed on materials from the natural world. My sincere thanks go to Third Coast Percussion for joining me.

It was later in the process of programming this performance that I learned of *Voice of the Winds*, Marta's large-scale work for percussionists playing softly. *Whisper* became *Whisper(s)*.

—MATTHEW DUVALL

PART III

Marta Ptaszyńska: *Voice of the Winds* (2016, revised 2017)

World premiere

For a large percussion orchestra playing softly

In the late 1960s, Marcel Duchamp scrawled some text on a piece of scrap paper and gave it to John Cage. It read: "Sculpture musicale. Sons durant et partant de différents points et formant une sculpture sonore qui dure." (Musical sculpture. Sounds that last or leave from different places and form a lasting sound sculpture.)

In this spirit, my large-scale work for percussion *Voice of the Winds* is a sonorous musical sculpture, heavily inspired by John Cage and Morton Feldman, and in equal measure by visual artists Mark Rothko, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Jackson Pollock.

John Cage favored percussion above all instruments, describing the medium as "instruments of noise." He believed that "the use of noise to make music will continue and increase until we reach a music produced by all sounds that can be heard." My percussion work reflects the Cagean philosophy of treating "noise" as an object of art, as well as embracing Cage's fascination with silence. The percussionists perform in the most delicate and soft way, making the music as light as a feather.

Inhabiting different levels of the MCA, the building materials for this immersive musical sculpture are delicate sonorities, sounds of wood, metal, and skin, and intricate rhythms, all subordinate to an overarching form.

Voice of the Winds comprises two movements. The first introductory movement is an aleatoric processional. The second main movement places the percussion orchestra throughout the interior space of the museum, giving the music exceptional spatial qualities and affecting the movement of sounds in space. In John Cage's words, it is "live musical sculpture searching for silence through movement, sound, and a change of light."

—MARTA PTASZYŃSKA

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

MARTA PTASZYŃSKA

is one of the most successful internationally known Polish composers working today. She is the author of such works as the *Concerto for Marimba*, *Winter's Tale*, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, and *Moon Flowers*, as well as numerous compositions for percussion (*Siderals*, *Graffito*, *Spider Walk*, *Space Model*, *Letter to the Sun*), which have been performed frequently around the world. Ptaszyńska has received commissions from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Polish Chamber Orchestra, and Sinfonia Varsovia, from the National Opera in Warsaw, Polish television, and from chamber ensembles including the Pacifica and Wilanow string quartets, Warsaw Wind Quintet, Motion Trio, and from artists such as Ewa Podleś, Keiko Abe, and Evelyn Glennie. She is the composer of four critically acclaimed operas, *Oscar of Alva*, *Mister Marimba*, *Magic Doremik*, and *The Lovers of the Valldemosa Monastery*, the latter having been commissioned by the Grand Opera Theatre in Łódź, Poland for the 2010 Chopin Bicentennial. Her *Holocaust Memorial Cantata* gained international recognition after several performances in 1993 under the baton of Lord Yehudi Menuhin.

Ptaszyńska has been honored with many prizes and awards, including from the Guggenheim Foundation, American Academy of Arts and Letters, Fromm Music Foundation, Union of Polish Composers, and the Polish Ministry of Culture. In 1995, she received the Officer Cross of Merit of the Republic of Poland. Her music



Marta Ptaszyńska. Photo courtesy of the artist.

has been performed at prestigious international festivals, including the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Salzburg Festival, Warsaw Autumn International Festival, and Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival.

She has taught composition at many educational institutions, including the Chopin Academy of Music, Bennington College, University of California in Berkeley and in Santa Barbara, Cincinnati College - Conservatory of Music, Indiana University, and Northwestern University. In 1998, Ptaszyńska was appointed Professor of Music and the Humanities at the University of Chicago. Since 2005, she has held an endowed chair and is Helen B. and Frank L. Professor of Composition.

Her music is published by PWM (Polish Music Publications) in Poland and by Theodore Presser in the United States. Her works are recorded on many various labels around the world (CD Accord-Universal, Muza Polish Records, Olympia, Chandos, Dux, ProViva, and Bayers Records). She became artistic director of Contempo in the 2015/16 season.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Matthew Duvall. *Whisper(s)*.
Photo: Elliot Mandel.

MATTHEW DUVALL

is a cofounder, co-artistic director, and the percussionist of the arts organization Eighth Blackbird, currently in its twenty-second season. Championing a performing aesthetic that redefines the chamber music experience, the group's notable accomplishments include four Grammy Awards, the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, Musical America Ensemble of the Year 2016, Chamber Music America Visionary Award 2016, competition wins with Concert Artists Guild and the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, a catalogue of studio recordings with Cedille records, and ensemble-in-residence positions with the Curtis Institute of Music, the University of Chicago, the University of Richmond, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

Duvall studied at Oberlin College and the Oberlin Conservatory, completing degree work in percussion performance (with Michael Rosen), classical civilization, art history, and religion. He completed additional masters and post-graduate degree work at the University of Cincinnati and Northwestern University. He endorses Pearl Drums and Adams Musical Instruments, Vic Firth Sticks and Mallets, Zildjian Cymbals, and Black Swamp Percussion Accessories.

JODI GAGE

is a Chicago-based director and actor who has worked for the San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Pittsburgh CLO (formerly Civic Light Opera), and Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre. She has directed opera and experimental work. This season she assisted Tony Award-winning Director Rob Ashford for *Carmen* at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Her notable acting credits include: Lady Windermere in *Lady Windermere's Fan* (Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre), Becky in *Becky's New Car* (The REP of Point Park Playhouse), Heidi in *[Title of Show]* (The Company of Pittsburgh), and Belle in *A Christmas Carol* (Pittsburgh CLO).

LISA KAPLAN

was born in Detroit, Michigan, and is a pianist specializing in the performance of new work by living composers. Kaplan is also the founding pianist of the four-time Grammy Award-winning sextet Eighth Blackbird. She has won numerous awards, performed throughout the United States, and has premiered new pieces by hundreds of

composers, including Andy Akiho, Derek Bermel, Jennifer Higdon, Amy Beth Kirsten, David Lang, Nico Muhly, George Perle, and Steve Reich. She has collaborated and created music with an eclectic array of artists, such as Mario Batali, Jeremy Denk, Bryce Dessner, Bon Iver, Glenn Kotche, Will Oldham, Gustavo Santaolalla, Robert Spano, Dawn Upshaw, and Michael Ward-Bergeman. Recently she has also composed and arranged music for Eighth Blackbird.

MATTHEW OZAWA

has an international career as a stage director for a range of artistic disciplines at venues including Lyric Opera of Chicago, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Canadian Opera Company, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, the Macau International Festival, and Opera Siam. His recent directing credits include *Don Quichotte* and *Nabucco* (Lyric Opera of Chicago), *Hand Eye* (world premiere, Eighth Blackbird/Carnegie Hall/MCA), *Romeo & Juliet* (Minnesota Opera), *L'Opera Seria* and *Les mamelles de Tirésias/Le Pauvre Matelot* (Wolf Trap Opera), David Hanlon's *After The Storm* (world premiere, Houston Grand Opera), *Arizona Lady* (American premiere, Arizona Opera), Matt Aucoin's *Second Nature* (world premiere, Lyric Unlimited), *Tsuru* (world premiere, Houston Ballet/Asia Society), *Y Portraits* (world premiere art gallery event, Mozawa), and *Snow Dragon* (world premiere, Skylight Music Theater/Opera Siam). He is the founder and artistic director of the performing arts company Mozawa.

BEYOND THIS POINT

was founded in 2014 by Chicago percussionists John Corkill and Alex Monroe and is a collaboration that aims to develop work and engage audiences through the exploration of resonances across mediums, including theater, dance, and ritual. The collaboration has performed at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, Ear Taxi Festival, Frequency Series, Chicago Park District's Night Out in the Parks, and venues such as the University of Chicago's Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry, A Red Orchid Theatre, The Artistic Home, and Kamehachi Sushi Bar. beyond this point has commissioned work by Samuel Adams, John Elmquist, Pierce Gradone, Igor Santos, and David Skidmore. Recent projects include theatrical collaborations with Chicago directors Dado and Scott Westerman, musical collaborations with Amphion Percussion and Matthew Duvall of Eighth Blackbird, and a series of commissioned performative installations by Chicago composers performed live in and around Chicago Transit Authority train stations. In 2015, beyond this point was nominated for a Joseph Jefferson Award for acoustic sound design of *Macbeth* by The Artistic Home.

THIRD COAST PERCUSSION

is a Grammy-winning, artist-run quartet of classically trained percussionists based in Chicago. For more than ten years the ensemble has forged a unique path in the musical landscape with virtuosic performances that celebrate the musical possibilities in the world of percussion. The four members

of Third Coast are also accomplished teachers, and since 2012 have served as ensemble-in-residence at the University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center. A direct connection with the audience is at the core of all of Third Coast Percussion's work, from stage remarks about a new music score to invitations for the public to play along in a concert or create new music using one of the free mobile apps.

Third Coast Percussion has toured in thirty-two states in the United States as well as in Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Poland, performing in a range of venues such as the concert halls of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and De Doelen to clubs and alternative spaces such as New York's Le Poisson Rouge and the National Gallery's West Garden Court. The quartet's collaborators have included engineers at the University of Notre Dame, architects associated with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, dancers of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and musicians of traditional forms such as mbira of Zimbabwe's Shona people as well as indie rock and contemporary new music.

Many of the quartet's commissions were realized through collaborations with notable composers Augusta Read Thomas, Donnacha Dennehy, Glenn Kotche, Lei Liang, Gavin Bryars, Christopher Cerrone, Timo Andres, Marcos Balter, Ted Hearne, and several up-and-coming composers through their Emerging Composers Partnership Program. Third

Coast Percussion's recordings include three full-length albums, three EPs, and a number of appearances on other releases. They have recorded iconic works for percussion by John Cage and Steve Reich and commissioned works by Augusta Read Thomas, David T. Little, and Ted Hearne, in addition to recordings of the ensemble's own compositions. In 2017, the ensemble was nominated for a Grammy for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble performance for their recording of Steve Reich's works for percussion.

ABOUT OUR PARTNER

CONTEMPO

Dedicated exclusively to the performance of new music, the University of Chicago's Contempo—formerly known as the Contemporary Chamber Players—is one of the most successful new music groups in the nation. Now in its fifty-second season, Contempo has earned an enviable reputation for outstanding performances of music by living composers.

Its distinguished list of world premieres, by both established and emerging composers, includes works by Roger Sessions, Ralph Shapey, George Perle, Mario Davidovsky, John Harbison, Sofia Gubaidulina, Gunther Schuller, Shulamit Ran, and John Eaton.

Contempo was founded in the fall of 1964 by renowned composer and conductor Ralph Shapey, who continued to direct the ensemble until his retirement in 1993. Shapey was succeeded by Stephen Mosko, who held the position of music director from 1994 to 1998. Seeking to more closely integrate its artistic vision with its educational mission, Contempo underwent a major restructuring by the Department of Music in 1998. Over the next four seasons, conductors Cliff Colnot, Barbara Schubert, and Carmen Helena Tellez served consecutively as Resident Conductors, with the award-winning Pacifica Quartet and Eighth Blackbird joining Contempo as Artists-in-Resi-

dence in 1998 and 2000. In 2002, Shulamit Ran was appointed Contempo's Artistic Director, and in 2004—the ensemble's fortieth year—the group forged a bold new artistic path that included new downtown venues and audiences, a broadened notion of new music including jazz and other genres, and a change of name. The Contempo of this era defines itself as a new-music collective—"collective" in the sense of emerging from the joint efforts of its conductor, artistic director, resident ensembles, guest performers, and composers.

Ran retired in 2015 and is now succeeded by the Polish composer Marta Ptaszyńska, the Helen B. and Frank L. and Sulzberger Professor of Music, who brings a fresh and incisive continental vision to the group.

Contempo's international cohort of doctoral candidates at the University of Chicago has been a defining feature of the group since its inception. The active engagement of young composers, working with faculty and performers during the drafting stages, participating in the rehearsal process, and hearing their work realized by a world-class ensemble, greatly enhances the living art of composition that Contempo works to promote.

Contempo is generously supported by the Catherine L. Dobson Music Fund, the Amy and David Fulton Fund, the Claire Dux Swift Music Endowment Fund, and the Lowell and Elita Wadmond Endowment in Music.

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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As an internationally renowned institution devoted to contemporary culture, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago presents the most thought-provoking visual art and performing arts of our time. MCA Stage is a vibrant series presenting theater, dance, and music by leading artists from the US and around the world in the MCA's three-hundred-seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

MCA Stage's groundbreaking performances are an integral part of MCA Chicago's artist-activated, audience-engaged programming. Along with the museum's exhibitions and educational initiatives, they encourage a broad and diverse community to experience and discuss the work and ideas of living artists.

PARKING

Validate your ticket at coat check for \$12 parking in the MCA garage (220 East Chicago Avenue) and the Bernardin garage (747 North Wabash). The \$12 parking is limited to six hours on the date of performance.

LOST AND FOUND

To inquire about a lost item, call the museum at 312-280-2660. Unclaimed articles are held for thirty days.

SEATING

Please switch off all noise-making devices while you are in the theater.

Patrons are seated at the management's discretion. Food and open beverage containers are not allowed in the seating area.

REPRODUCTION

Unauthorized recording and reproduction of a performance are prohibited.

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312-280-2660

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312-397-4010

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312-397-4072

mcastage@mcachicago.org

Museum hours

Tuesday: 10 am–8pm

Wednesday–Sunday: 10 am–5 pm

Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas

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