

MIND OVER MIRRORS
Bellowing Sun

Program
Notes

MCA
STAGE

Fri-Sat,
Apr 6-7, 2018

Edlis Neeson
Theater

Eyes
Wide

Lights
Low

at MCA
Stage

Winter/Spring
2018

Bellowing Sun running
time is ninety minutes with
no intermission.

SUPPORT FOR THIS
MCA STAGE PROJECT

Lead support for the
MCA Stage New Works
Initiative is provided by
Elizabeth A. Liebman.

Bellowing Sun is a
National Performance
Network/Visual Artists
Network (NPN/VAN)
Creation and
Development Fund
Project co-commissioned
by the Museum of
Contemporary Art
Chicago in partnership
with Alverno Presents
and NPN. Additional
support comes from
the NPN Forth Fund
and from the NPN
Performance Residency
Program. Major
contributors of NPN
include the Doris Duke
Charitable Foundation,
the Andrew W. Mellon
Foundation, the Ford
Foundation, and the
National Endowment
for the Arts (a federal
agency).



SUPPORT FOR
THE ARTISTS

National Performance
Network (NPN) is the
fiscal sponsor of Mind
Over Mirrors.

Additional support for
Bellowing Sun has been
provided by The Richard
H. Driehaus Foundation
and by an Individual
Artist Program Grant
from the City of Chicago
Department of Cultural
Affairs & Special Events,
as well as a grant from
the Illinois Arts Council
Agency, a state agency
through federal funds
provided by the National
Endowment for the Arts.
This production is also
partially supported by
an Individual Artist
Support Grant from the
Illinois Arts Council
Agency, the record label
Paradise of Bachelors,
and individual donors.



CONTINUES IN
MARGIN ON PAGE 4

Created and performed by Mind Over Mirrors in
collaboration with Timothy Breen, Eliot Irwin,
and Keith Parham.

PERFORMERS

Oberheim SEMs, OB-6 synthesizer, and Indian harmonium	Jaime Fennelly
Lead vocals, zither, and percussion	Janet Beveridge Bean
Fiddle and vocals	Jim Becker
Drums and vocals	Jon Mueller

PRODUCTION

Artistic Director	Jaime Fennelly
Music Composition	Jaime Fennelly, in collaboration with Janet Beveridge Bean, Jim Becker, and Jon Mueller
Stage and Visual Concept	Timothy Breen and Jaime Fennelly
Zoetrope Textile Painting	Timothy Breen
Zoetrope Design and Metal and Motor Fabrication	Eliot Irwin, with assistance by Jaime Fennelly
Lighting Design	Keith Parham
Live Sound Engineer	Elliot Dicks
Coproducers	David Ravel and Jaime Fennelly
Record Label	Paradise of Bachelors
Album Public Relations	Jonathan Williger / Motormouth Media

Bellowing Sun is a commission by the MCA New
Works Initiative, which provided design, sound, and
technical residency support for Mind Over Mirrors
and their collaborators using the theater between
May and December of 2017. Additional MCA support
included video documentation and a taped live
interview with Jaime Fennelly for future netcasting
and for the museum's archive.

ABOUT THE WORK

*"For a moment of night we have a glimpse of
ourselves and of our world islanded in its
stream of stars—pilgrims of mortality, voyaging
between horizons across eternal seas of space
and time."*

—Henry Beston, *The Outermost House* (1928)

In 1925, a thirty-seven-year-old American writer and WWI
vet named Henry Beston bought fifty acres of desolate
dune land on Coast Guard Beach on Cape Cod—the
peninsula's furthest fingers reaching into the gray Atlantic—
and designed and built a small cottage overlooking the
ocean. He named it the Fo'castle. For an entire year
beginning in September 1926, he lived alone there in the
hostile, briny wilderness and dedicated himself to closely
observing the multifarious but unforgiving ecology of ever-
changing sand and sea and to integrating his mind and
body within its clamorous calm. He walked, he watched,
he listened, and he wrote. The result was his masterpiece
*The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach
of Cape Cod* (1928). A seminal work of naturalist literature
that remains revered by environmentalists, animal
rights activists, and poets alike, it elevates description of
the natural world to an incandescent metaphysical pitch.

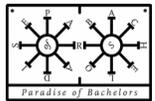
Ninety years after Beston's book was published, composer,
harmoniumist, and synthesist Jaime Fennelly completed
his ambitious multimedia production *Bellowing Sun*.
Commissioned for its world premiere performance by the
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the work
developed over the course of nearly three years, gradually
accreting into a rapturous, prismatic seventy-three-minute
composition. In live iterations, the audience encircles the
musicians—Fennelly, Janet Beveridge Bean, Jim Becker,
and Jon Mueller—each of whom plays multiple instruments,
with a large kinetic light sculpture hovering suspended
above the players. This monumental zoetrope which rotates
to create an ever-changing architectural kaleidoscope of
organic shapes and color, a delicate but imposing
firmament-tent that simultaneously evokes astronomical
objects and microscopic life-forms.

A twelve-faceted sonic inquiry into celestial cycles, the
rhythms of the natural world, and the illuminating nature

MIND OVER MIRRORS *Bellowing Sun*

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Mind Over Mirrors would like to thank David Ravel and Yolanda Cesta Cursachs for initiating and supporting an idea to create beyond what we think is possible. Additional thanks go to the following, who have been supportive over the last three years in the creation of this work: Brendan Greaves, Chris Smith, Jonathan Williger, Phill Cabeen, John Rich, Peter Taub, Richard Norwood, Dennis O'Shea, Andy Kauf, and all of the staff at the MCA, Stanlyn Breve and all at NPN, John McEntire, Bob Weston, MINBAL, Jeff Pachman, Bob Shook, Saverio Truglia, Julia Dratel, Martin Andrew, Glenn Kotche, Marcy Dinius, Haley Fohr, Doug McCombs, Miguel Gutierrez and Sally Timms. And to Serena Lander, Mike Wilke, Matt Rizzo, Michelle Hartley, Teresa Mueller, Meghan Ryan Breen, Janet Ecklebarger and Jackie Stone for their limitless love. In memory of Lenore Dorse (1965-2017). Rest in Power.

of darkness, *Bellowing Sun* is the majestic culmination of Fennelly's immersive explorations of the natural world's sensory dimensions and the dialogues between musical traditions—acoustic and electronic, vernacular and avant-garde. It deliberately situates its questing, edge-of-earth spirit within the context of Beston's Fo'castle. The link to Beston is not merely intellectual, but rather experiential and geological. The solitary compositional genesis of the piece, and a significant portion of its early recording (before tracking and mixing sessions with John McEntire of Tortoise), occurred at Bean's home atop a dune of fine quartz "singing sands" on the shore of Lake Michigan, an environment akin to the Cape. Beston directly inspired certain moments: the gulls he describes frantically "Feeding on the Flats" are mirrored here by a percolating synthesizer that mimics their dance with surf and sand; "Lanterns on the Beach" is named for a chapter about night in *The Outermost House*; and "Pause to Wonder" draws directly from his gorgeous description of butterfly migrations. But his methodology of extended, observational contemplation of nature, of carefully transcribing a world of witness, pertains most prominently.

Sonically, *Bellowing Sun* is both kaleidoscopic and telescopic in nature, offering a radiant palette of rhythmic, textural, and tonal complexity, as well as rapid shifts in scale, from the intimately corporeal to the dizzyingly cosmic. Though long associated with his meditative solo work for harmonium, tape delay, and other effects, with *Bellowing Sun* Fennelly has ascended to a thrilling new communicatory stratum, departing from the solo, interior monologues of his early work and the deeply focused dialogues of the album's recent predecessor *Undying Color* (2017) for something broadly communal, massively polyphonic, and unabashedly spiritual in its scope and scale. All four J's—Jaime, Janet, Jim, and Jon—appeared together on *Undying Color*, but have since solidified into a formidable, cohesive unit, a true band capable of increasingly expansive arrangements. Though divided into twelve movements, or aspects—zodiacal sectors, perhaps—the piece functions as a heroic, integral whole. Several instrumental components and vocal motifs function as modular and parallaxic, originally recorded for different sections but interchangeably transposable elsewhere, much as certain constellations share stars in common. The album's sequence reveals a dynamic push and pull between contemplative stasis and headlong momentum, imparting a palpably physical mass to the cataracts of sound.

Throughout, Fennelly's Oberheim synths and sequencers stitch together a colossal quartet counterpoint, driven by a new emphasis on interlocking full-band rhythmic grooves. He relies less than ever before on the harmonium, though it still features prominently, contributing an airy link to the rhythms of human breathing. Bean sings on half of the tracks, including early stunner "Matchstick Grip" and the spectacular closer "Pause to Wonder." Whether articulating words or intoning phonemes, her powerful, lucent voice elevates the proceedings to a devotional plane whenever it emerges from the saturated field of sound.

The mood is at once ecstatic and elegiac; death and decay are present here. The exuberant *kosmische* pulse of "Zeitgebers" (the title refers to environmental cues, such as light or dark, that synchronize an organism's biorhythms) is tempered by the seething dirge of "Vermillion Pink." Timothy Breen cites the elaborate funerary textiles of the Paracas culture of Peru as an inspiration for his paintings on the zoetrope. ("Oculate Beings" is not coincidentally a reference to the Pre-Columbian coastal society that shared beliefs of regularly communing with the spirit world.) But the degradation of our planet, and particularly the impending end of deep night, provides a melancholy, reverent subtext to the otherwise celebratory tones. In most places on Earth, careless and overzealous artificial lighting, coupled with overpopulation, mean that many of us will never see a truly dark night sky, with its vertiginous, multihued clots of seemingly infinite stars, planets, comets, and galaxies punctuating the black. As Beston wrote even back in 1928, "*The world today is sick to its thin blood for lack of elemental things, for fire before the hands, for water welling from the earth, for air, for the dear earth itself underfoot . . . Our fantastic civilization has fallen out of touch with many aspects of nature, and with none more completely than with night.*"

In 1978, a decade after Beston's death, a violent winter storm spun the Fo'castle out to sea, leaving nothing but the glint of a commemorative brass plaque in the lucent moonlight. Can you imagine the sound of that? Mind Over Mirrors can, and does, with *Bellowing Sun*. It's an elemental thing.

—Brendan Greaves, Paradise of Bachelors, 2018

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

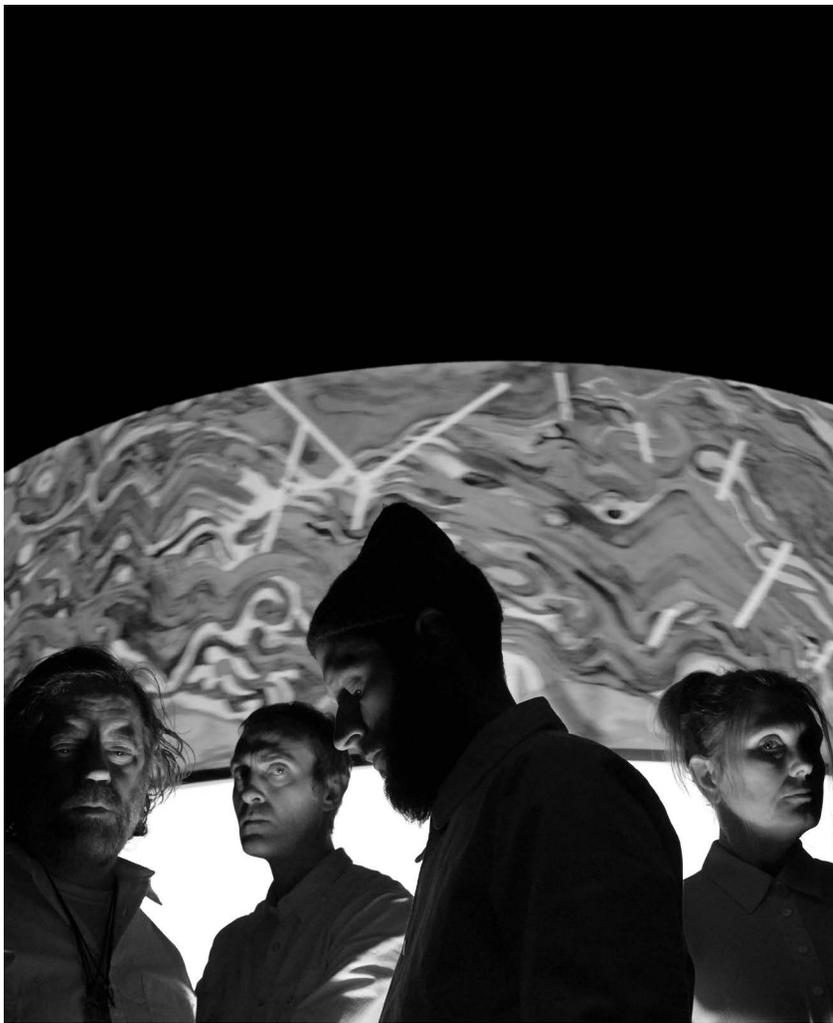
JAIME FENNELLY is an artist, composer, and musician who has been making work as Mind Over Mirrors since 2010. Buttressing his modest instrumental foundation of Indian harmonium with an array of tape delays, effect processors, and synthesizers—which belong to the world of classic analog electronic composition—he creates immersive interdisciplinary work that NPR has described as “an out-of-body experience.” His explorations of the natural world’s sensory dimensions and the dialogues between cultural traditions—vernacular and avant-garde—have led him down a path of creating work that deliberately situates itself in a questing, edge-of-earth spirit. After five solo albums on several labels, Paradise of Bachelors released Fennelly’s first work for an ensemble, *Undying Color* (2017), and now *Bellowing Sun* (2018). Since 2001, Fennelly has fostered a close collaborative relationship with dance artist Miguel Gutierrez. Recently, they have performed their long-standing duo at Centre Pompidou (2014), Thalia Hall (2016) and American Realness (2013). In 2002, he cofounded the musical group Peeesseye in Brooklyn. Fennelly received his MFA from Bard College (2006), where he studied music and sound with Maryanne Amacher, David Berhman, and Pauline Oliveros, among other sonic and visual luminaries.

JANET BEVERIDGE BEAN joined her first band at age sixteen as a means to get into twenty-one-and-over punk rock clubs. Thirty-five years and more than thirty critically acclaimed full-length albums later, she’s still at it. The multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, and songwriter is a founding member of the long-standing post-punk band Eleventh Dream Day (Thrill Jockey Records) and the genre-bending gothic folk country band Freakwater (Bloodshot Records). More recent projects include playing the jazz folk ensemble The Horse’s Ha (Fluff and Gravy Records) and along with Sally Timms of the legendary band The Mekons, the dadaist response to disaster capitalism duo !MOXIE TUNG.

JIM BECKER is a Chicago-based musician, producer, and sound engineer who has played around the world since the 1980s. He has recorded and collaborated with a long list of rock, folk, and experimental bands including Califone (2000–2010), Iron & Wine (recently nominated for a Grammy for their album *Beast Epic*), Dirty Three (*Cinder Tour*), Scott Tuma, and Bitchin’ Bajos. He is a founding member of old-time string band The Paulina Hollers, with Lea Tshilds, around since 1996. Jim plays guitar, banjo, fiddle, mandolin; is known for his original improvisations and use of effects; and draws from a wide range of inspirations, from classic rock to Appalachian music. Becker has been a member of Mind Over Mirrors since 2016.

JON MUELLER has been a drummer and percussionist for more than twenty-five years, performing throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, the United Kingdom, and Japan. His solo recordings have been released by Table of the Elements, Type Recordings, Taiga, Important Records, and others. He was a founding member of the bands Volcano Choir, Collections of Colonies of Bees, and Pele, and also directed the multidisciplinary project *Death Blues*.

TIMOTHY BREEN is an artist and designer residing in Chicago. His multimedia work weaves color and topographic pattern into psychic-expressionist imagery. His art practice, which includes painting and printmaking, stop-motion animation, and large-scale installation, deals with morphological movement, prehistoric spirituality, and the construction of dreams. As the founder of Field Of Grass design, he has worked with a multitude of collaborators, publications, and labels—including the design of the Environments app, a digital catalogue of the historic long-form field recordings of Irv Tiebel and Syntonic Research, Inc. He was awarded two Grammy nominations in 2017 for best boxed-set and special packaging design with The Numero Group.



Mind Over Mirrors: *Bellowing Sun*, Band and Zoetrope
Pictured left to right: Jim Becker, Jon Mueller, Jaime Fennelly, and Janet Beveridge Bean
Photo: Saverio Truglia, © Mind Over Mirrors 2018

ACCESSIBILITY
INFORMATION

Select MCA Stage performances include open-captioning, sign-interpretation, listening devices, or are relaxed sensory.

Please call 312-397-4010 in advance to reserve seats and inclusive services.



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Timothy has helped to realize the physical documents of *Mind Over Mirrors* since 2011.

ELIOT IRWIN is an artist/craftsman who enjoys solving design problems in a variety of media, mostly metals. Mesmerized by how things work, he constantly adds to his inner library of components, processes, and procedures. Using 3-D modeling and exercising the art of tinkering, he investigates mechanics, form, connections, and aesthetics for a multitude of applications. Irwin maintains a studio practice in North Carolina.

KEITH PARHAM is an Obie Award-winning lighting designer working in the fields of theater, opera, and music. He is a company member of TUTA, where his credits include *Gentle*, *The Edge of Our Bodies* and *Music Hall*, among others. On Broadway he designed the world premiere of *Thérèse Raquin* at Studio 54 with Roundabout Theatre Company and has worked extensively on many Off-Broadway productions, with Austin Pendleton, Adam Rapp, and David Cromer being his closest collaborators. In addition to working in New York theater, he designs regularly for most of the major regional theatres in the United States. In the field of live music, he has designed Karen O's *Stop the Virgins* at St. Ann's Warehouse and the Sydney Opera House. He also designed her concert tour of *Crush Songs*, which played in the United States and Europe.



Performance view, *Mind Over Mirrors: Bellowing Sun*, MCA Chicago. April 6-7, 2018
Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago



Mind Over Mirrors: Bellowing Sun, Band and Zoetrope
Pictured left to right: Jon Mueller, Janet Beveridge Bean, Jaime Fennelly, and Jim Becker
Photo: Saverio Truglia, © Mind Over Mirrors 2018

DATE NIGHT



Marisol Escobar. Photo: Herman Hiller.

Join us for dinner or drinks before or after the theater at Marisol, named one of the hottest restaurants in Chicago by Zagat and one of *Vogue's* "Six Chicago Restaurants You Should Know About Now." Call 312-799-3599 to make reservations.

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Feb 8-11

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Apr 6-7

Mind Over Mirrors
Bellowing Sun

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Program notes
compiled by
Tara Aisha Willis

MCA
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AGO

SUPPORT FOR MCA STAGE

Lead support for the 2017-18 season of MCA Stage is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

GENEROUS SUPPORT IS PROVIDED BY:

Lois and Steve Eisen
and The Eisen Family
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Ginger Farley and
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Additional generous support for MCA Stage is provided by Enact, the MCA's performance affinity group.

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

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As of March 2018

The MCA's newest affinity group, Enact, is a group of MCA 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.

BENEFITS OF ENACT MEMBERSHIP INCLUDE:

- Members-only programming throughout the MCA Stage season, such as intimate gatherings with MCA performance leadership, pre- and post-performance discussions with artists, and behind-the-scenes access to select rehearsals
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Circle Donor membership is required to join Enact. Enact dues are an additional \$1,000 annually. For more information, contact us at enact@mcchicago.org.

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ABOUT MCA STAGE

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 United States and around the world in the MCA's three-hundred seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

MCA Stage's groundbreaking performances are an integral part of the MCA'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 E Chicago Ave) 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.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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