

THURMAN
BARKER AND
BEN LAMMAR GAY

*South Side Suite and
Hecky Naw! Angles!*

Program Notes
Fri, Aug 30

Edlis Neeson
Theater



MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
CHICAGO

SUMMER 2019

Celebrate
black
creativity
with music
and
dance that
transform
expecta-
tions.

FROM THE CURATOR

What would it sound like to map the influences, choices, and experiments within an artist's creative process? In 2017, Thurman Barker wrote his first orchestral piece, an ode to the music he grew up playing in Chicago, including with AACM founder Muhal Richard Abrams. It's also an homage to the long history of Chicago's black communities and jazz music. Tonight, Thurman shares some of the part-scored, part-improvised result—*South Side Suite*—in quintet form. After his own recent homage to Abrams, "Muhal," Ben LaMar Gay also embarks on a new format; his work-in-progress *Hecky Nawv! Angles!* joins music, video, and choreography to reverently rearticulate the rhythmic structures of the popular music that shaped the Chicago black social and line dances he grew up with. Together, these compositions connect across the history and future of music experimentation and across the city itself. Thurman has eagerly awaited this Chicago homecoming, alongside a next-generation AACM artist like Ben. Some "backyard barbecue knowledge," as Ben calls it, will surely be shared tonight.

Tonight concludes our series of performances, developed within the MCA's New Works Initiative, that speak to and about Chicago, transform familiar forms into something new, and alter our expectations of what black performance can be. Thank you for helping us support performance that conscientiously engages with this city's artists, histories, and ideas.

Tara Aisha Willis
Associate Curator, Performance & Public Practice

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SUPPORT FOR THIS
MCA PROJECT

The creation of Ben LaMar Gay's *Hecky Naww! Angles!* and this performance of Thurman Barker's *South Side Suite* are supported in part by the MCA's New Works Initiative.

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

Special thanks to Michael Byrd of the Illinois Youth Center Chicago, Heidi Mueller of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, and Frayne Lewis of the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events.

Thurman Barker and Ben LaMar Gay *South Side Suite* and *Hecky Naww! Angles!*

Running time is 80 minutes with one intermission.

Thurman Barker,
South Side Suite, 1st and 2nd Movements

Composition and drums	Thurman Barker
Clarinet	Paavo Carey
Electric guitar	James Emery
Double bass	Dean Torrey
Piano	Noah Barker
Management	Lucette Ostergren-Barker

This performance of *South Side Suite* is dedicated to
Muhai Richard Abrams.

INTERMISSION

Ben LaMar Gay, *Hecky Naww! Angles!*

Composition, cornet, vocals, synth, and diddley bow	Ben LaMar Gay
Violin and vocals	Renée C. Baker
Alto flute, bike wheel, and vocals	Rob Frye
Bass and vocals	Katie Ernst
Talking drum, gung gong, and lap steel guitar	Carlos Pride
Choreography and movement	Raquel Monroe
Video and projection	Kim Alpert

ABOUT THE WORK

"When I came up in the late 1950s and 60s, the South Side was a thriving community with a middle class and folks of color were buying homes. . . . When I look at the history of it, well, Chicago has always been a very rich musical city since the 1920s. . . . *South Side Suite* [is] my way of honoring [that history]."

—Thurman Barker

"I'm thinking about line dances, with these cats calling out the dance moves. You get lost in those callings and those words . . . the Black fiddler used to make those calls for everybody's dance and these musicians used to travel. It's all connected."

—Ben LaMar Gay

For the full conversation with the artists, visit
TheTRiiBE.com.

RELATED PROGRAMS

AUDIO-DESCRIBED PERFORMANCE

Audio description for this performance is provided by Victor Cole. Headsets are available upon request at the box office.

POST-SHOW TALK

Please stay after the performance for a brief conversation with Barker, Gay, and their collaborators, moderated by Tara Aisha Willis, Associate Curator, Performance & Public Practice.

TUESDAYS ON THE TERRACE

Tue, Aug 20

Summer Tuesdays come alive on the MCA's Anne and John Kern Terrace Garden with free music highlighting artists from Chicago's internationally renowned jazz community. In advance of tonight's premiere, Ben LaMar Gay brought his genre-defying sounds to the MCA's backyard for two sets.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

THURMAN BARKER
South Side Suite

THURMAN BARKER (Composition/ Drums) is a world-renowned drummer and percussionist as well as a composer and professor. His professional career has spanned decades and his talent is so extensive that it encompasses and crosses over into many musical genres including, but not limited to, jazz, blues, contemporary, and classical. His percussion performances are forces to be reckoned with that cannot, and should not, be pigeon-holed by anything as limiting as a label. He was the house drummer at the Shubert Theatre for ten years and has played behind the likes of Bette Midler, Marvin Gaye, Billy Eckstine, Vikki Carr, and blues legend Mighty Joe Young. He was a founding member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and is a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. He has five recordings under his own label, Uptee Productions, and has recorded as a sideman on fifty albums.

NOAH BARKER (Piano) hails from Jeffersonville, New York, via New York City and currently resides in Louisville, Kentucky. He is the son of avant-garde jazz drummer Thurman Barker. The younger Barker started playing piano at age seven and began studying classical music and playing in churches at thirteen. He began studying jazz at fourteen, pursuing it at the University of Louisville and finishing the graduate jazz performance program at State University of New York, Purchase College, in May 2014. In school, Barker found a serious interest in composing jazz, experimental, pop, and electronic music. As an outlet for his composition, Barker started Never Forever Records in 2013; it has three physical releases and numerous digital releases to date, including *You Are Here* (2013), *Men Are Particles, Women Are Waves* (2014), *Working For the Sun* (2015), *Upstream Dreams* (2015), *Condition* (2016), and *In the Pouring Sun* (2017).

PAAVO CAREY (Clarinet) is a celebrated saxophonist, flautist, clarinetist, composer, arranger, and educator who has held versatility and diversification at the center of his efforts. For the past thirty years he has served students of all ages from New York to Maine and currently works in Massachusetts. Carey is now re-emerging onto the scene as an accomplished performer who has been active in the jazz, pop, orchestra, Latin, rock, and world music styles. As a sideman, Carey has recently joined the popular Boston-based Makanda Project where he plays alto, tenor, and soprano saxophones, as well as flute and clarinet. Carey has performed and/or recorded with the big bands of James Jabbo Ware and the Me, We, and Them Orchestra, Tito Puente, Lionel Hampton, Jaki Byard, and many more. Jazz combos Carey has performed with include Thurman Barker's Time Factor, Steve Jordan's Spot 5, Ted Curson's Jazz Septet, Walter Davis Jr. Quartet, Doc Cheatham, and more. Additionally, Carey has been a pit orchestra/production show musician for The Big Apple Circus, Aretha Franklin, Johnny Ray, The Fifth Dimension, and many regional and school musicals. In 2019 Carey is set to release his first solo album, *Back To The City Life*.

JAMES EMERY (Electric guitar) is a virtuoso guitarist and composer and has received international recognition for his distinctive and highly original approach to improvisation and composition. Acclaimed as "one of the world's finest guitarists" in *All About Jazz*, writer Glenn Astarita praised his "encyclopedic jazz vocabulary as a technician and composer [and his] staggering technical virtuosity [and] remarkable creative spirit." Emery has been active on the international jazz and contemporary music scene since 1975. He has recorded twenty-six albums as a leader or coleader and has performed his works in over twenty-five countries. His recordings have been described as "innovative and imaginative" and "utterly distinctive" by the *Penguin Guide to Jazz*, which selected his orchestral recording *Transformations* for its edition titled

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Program notes
compiled by Laura
Paige Kyber

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

"The History of Jazz in the 1001 Best Albums." He has received international critical acclaim for his work leading various ensemble formations and the groundbreaking String Trio of New York, which he cofounded in 1978. A Guggenheim Fellow, Emery has performed and recorded with Henry Threadgill, Steve Reich, Wadada Leo Smith, Anthony Braxton, Klangforum Wien, the Human Arts Ensemble, and others. As a composer, he has written pieces for chamber groups, jazz ensembles, solo guitar, and symphony orchestra.

DEAN TORREY (Double bass) was born in Connecticut in 1992 and took up the bass at age eight. During his college years he was a student of bassists Doug Weiss, Scott Colley, Lynn Seaton, Joe Sanders, and Bach specialist Jeff Bradetich, as well as pianist Hal Galper (who would go on to hire Torrey for his own quartet). Since moving to New York in 2014, Torrey has quickly distinguished himself as one of the leading voices on bass of his generation, having been tapped for sideman work by veteran creatives such as NEA Jazz Master Muhal Richard Abrams, AACM percussionist/composer Thurman Barker, Rodney Green, Francisco Mela, and Dizzy Gillespie alum Ed Cherry; as well as contemporaries closer to his own age like Tivon Pennicott, Micah Thomas, Immanuel Wilkins, Joel Ross, Adam O'Farril, Jure Pukl, and the widely acclaimed Onyx Collective, among others.

BEN LAMAR GAY
Hecky Naw! Angles!

BEN LAMAR GAY (Composition/Concept/Performer) is a composer and cornetist who moves components of sound, color, and space through folkloric filters to produce brilliant electroacoustic collages. The Chicago native's true technique is giving life to an idea while exploring and expanding on the term Americana. Inspired by the vibrant experimental music scene of Chicago, and a three-year residency in Brazil, Gay collaborates with some influential figures in the world of music, dance,

and visual arts including George Lewis, Itiberê Zwarg, Onye Ozuzu, Qudus Onikeku, Nicole Mitchell, Jeff Parker, Catherine Sullivan, Mike Reed, Joshua Abrams, Celso Fonseca, Tomeka Reid, The Black Monks of Mississippi, Bixiga 70, and AACM. His musical influences derive from his collection of experiences in all of the Americas and the gathered data channeled by technology and its amplifying accessibility. Embracing international vision while remaining true to his roots, Gay's creative output aligns with the honest notion that he only knows how to be a man from the South Side of Chicago.

KIM ALPERT (Video/Projection) combines analog and digital technologies, movement, music, and interactivity to create sculptural and performance-based video systems. Alpert's visual practice centers on her humanism and inquisitions into psychology and spirituality—understanding and translating the impact of visual language to create meaning and peace. Alpert uses synthesis, feedback, and found footage to weave dream tapestries both recorded and improvised. A significant part of Alpert's performed work is in collaboration with improvisational musicians, blending pre-rendered content with live visualizations. She performs in collaborative and cross-disciplinary works such as Mike Reed's *Flesh and Bone*, The Instigation Orchestra, and her own project Scan Lines. Her interactive room, *Bodyphonic*, a gesture-driven instrument and longitudinal sound visualizer, is on permanent display at the National Music Center of Canada.

RENÉE BAKER (Violin/Vocals) is a recontextualist, a sonic concepts artist, and a violinist. She is the founder of the internationally acclaimed Chicago Modern Orchestra Project (CMOP), and for twenty-three years she was the principal violinist of the Chicago Sinfonietta. Baker layers movement and film projections to create surrealist sonic theatre. She is a member of the world-renowned AACM, and has performed to critical acclaim in Berlin, Poland, London, Scotland, France, and Vietnam.

Baker was involved in starting more than twenty cutting-edge new music ensembles including the Mantra Blue Free Orchestra (Chicago), PEK' Contemporary Project (Berlin), and the Bleueblue Walkers/Bass Kollektief. She has composed over two thousand traditionally notated contemporary and classical works that range in genre from classical to jazz. She has received commissions from the Chicago Sinfonietta, Berlin International Brass, Joffrey Ballet Chamber Series, University of Chicago Film Studies Center, Indiana University Black Film Center, and Brandeis University, among others. Baker is the artistic consultant for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's African American Network among many other classically oriented organizations.

The Chicago Reader calls KATIE ERNST (Bass/Vocals) "one of the brightest lights on the Chicago jazz scene." *The Chicago Tribune* calls her "a versatile young bassist who plays in far-flung bands and sings with uncommon delicacy and authenticity." Ernst's creative projects include a Dorothy Parker poetry project, *Little Words*, which premiered in 2014 at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, a duo of folk/hymns/improvised music with clarinetist James Falzone called *Wayfaring*, and an indie jazz trio *Twain Talk*, which recently released their third studio album on PEOPLE, a streaming music platform created by members of Bon Iver and The National.

ROB FRYE (Alto flute/Bike wheel/Vocals) is a multi-instrumentalist living in Chicago since 2006. In 2010 he initiated Flux Bikes, a project that travels on two wheels throughout the United States and abroad, amplifying bike-tire beats through a solar-powered sound system. His recording and touring for the last several years with jazz, rock, and experimental groups has been complemented by three seasons conducting bird surveys for the Institute for Bird Populations in California and four summers working for the Chicago Park District's Inferno Mobile Recording Studio. The Hideout has called him "a constant collaborator [who] is able to give a unique voice in a variety of ensembles."

RAQUEL MONROE, PHD (Choreography/Movement) has been an avid social dancer most of her life, which led her to the classroom to study concert dance forms. Ironically, this project brings her full circle back to social dance, as both an object of study and enjoyment. A Chicago resident for ten years, her first attempt at learning step five years ago exposed her to the depth of urban line dancing in the city, and this project provides deeper access to Black Chicago. Monroe is a performance scholar completing a monograph analyzing performances of Black Power by black female cultural producers in popular culture. Monroe performs with the Propelled Animals creating immersive, interdisciplinary performance installations. She is an associate professor of dance and the Co-director of Academic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Columbia College Chicago.

CARLOS PRIDE (Talking drum/Gung gong/Lap steel guitar) grew up in a musical home on the South Side of Chicago where his passion for music began with a guitar and a pair of bongos. As a teenager he studied drums with Fred White of Earth, Wind & Fire and Famoudou Don Move of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Getting his professional start in Chicago's blues and jazz clubs, Pride has shared the stage with J. W. Williams, Valerie Wellington, the late Lefty Dizz, and Buddy Guy. In the early 1980s Pride was a member of the Imports Etc. record pool along with Frankie Knuckles who taught him to splice tape and create remixes, leading him into the world of dance music. As a student at the American Conservatory of Music, Pride studied with Ghanaian master drummer, Midawwo Gideon Foli, who introduced him to the Talking Drum. Pride founded his own ensemble, Rhythm Testament, and has performed professionally with many artists, including Talking Drum master Rasaki Aladokun (King Sunny Ade), saxophonist Ari Brown, N'Dea Davenport of the Brand New Heavies, George Clinton, Meshell Ndegeocello, The Indigo Girls, Sinead O'Connor, Natalie Merchant, and Talib Kweli.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

Sat-Sun, Sep 14-15 and 21-22,
Noon, 3 pm, 7 pm, and 8 pm

THE STOREFRONT PROJECT

What happens when you ask six artists to make shows from scratch, with no rulebook or script, performed back-to-back in spaces across the city? Over two weekends, directors Dado Gyure, Lucky Stiff, Denise Yvette Serna, Coya Paz, Sydney Chatman, and Mikael Burke with April Cleveland demonstrate Chicago theater's uncanny ability to pop up anywhere.

For performance dates and locations, visit mcachicago.org/stage.



Lucky Stiff, collaboration with Boy Friday Dance Company.
Choreography: Erik Abbott-Main. Photo: Effy Grey.

Tue, Oct 1, 3 pm and 6 pm
Wed-Thu, Oct 2-3, 12:30 pm
Free with admission

KIM BRANDT, *LEVEL*

How do we share space with others? How does architecture influence how we move? Choreographer Kim Brandt brings performance out of the theater and into the museum with a critical mass of dancers from Chicago and New York that navigates movement scores amidst visitors. Featuring live sound by composer Nate Wooley.

Dinner and a Show



Asparagus with chilled mussel vinaigrette and tarragon raita. Photo: Neil Burger.

Transform your performance experience into an evening out. Marisol offers a \$45 seasonally inspired prix fixe menu exclusively for MCA event ticket holders.*

Book your table at marisolchicago.com or call 312-799-3599.

*Menu does not include tax or gratuity. Please allow at least 75 minutes before showtime.

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ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION

Select 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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Single performance tickets starting at \$30; \$10 for students, limited availability.

Groups of ten or more save 20% on full-price tickets; call 312-397-4010.

FREE MUSEUM ADMISSION WITH TICKET

Present your performance ticket stub to receive FREE ADMISSION* and 10% off your purchase at the MCA Store.** Or become an MCA Member and save 15%.

Ticket stub is valid during regular hours up to seven days after the performance date.

* Not accepted for special ticketed exhibitions.

** Regular price, in-stock merchandise only; no other discounts apply.

SUPPORT FOR MCA PERFORMANCES

Lead support for the 2019–20 season is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

Generous support is provided by 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, Susan Manning and Doug Doetsch, Ock Ju Noh, Sharon* and Lee Oberlander, and Carol Prins and John Hart/The Jessica Fund.

Additional support is provided by Ms. Shawn M. Donnelley and Dr. Christopher M. Kelly, Nicholas and Nancy Giampietro, Anne L. Kaplan, and 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.

*Enact Chair as of March 2019

MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
CHICAGO

ABOUT ENACT

MCA performances are supported by Enact, a group of MCA donors dedicated to supporting the museum's renowned performance programs.

Join today for opportunities to meet artists and gain behind-the-scenes access alongside MCA curators—all while providing vital support.

Circle Donor membership is required to join Enact. Enact donations begin at \$1,000 annually. For more information on benefits or how to join, contact us at enact@mcachicago.org or 312-397-4044.

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ABOUT MCA PERFORMANCES

As an internationally renowned institution devoted to contemporary culture, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is committed to presenting the most thought-provoking visual and performing arts of our time. The MCA commissions and presents theater, dance, and music by leading artists from Chicago and around the world, holding performances in spaces throughout the museum, including the three-hundred seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

The MCA's groundbreaking performances are an integral part of the museum's cutting edge, multidisciplinary programming. Along with exhibitions and public programs, MCA performances welcome visitors to experience the work and ideas of living artists and find their own civic voices.

PARKING

Validate your ticket at the coat check for \$12 parking in the MCA garage (220 E Chicago Ave) and the Bernardin garage (747 N Wabash Ave). 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 noisemaking 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

312-280-2660

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