

George Lewis, Catherine Sullivan, Sean Griffin

Afterword, an Opera

October 16-17, 2015

Presented by MCA Stage in association with the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago.

In conjunction with *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now*, through November 22, 2015.

Purchase tickets

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Afterword is supported by the MCA Stage New Works Initiative with lead funding from Elizabeth A. Liebman; a Mellon Collaborative Fellowship for Arts Practice and Scholarship at the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago; the Multi-Arts Production (MAP) Fund, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; and the Edwin H. Case Chair in American Music, Columbia University.

Afterword is being developed in partnership with the Chicago Performance Lab through the Theatre and Performance Studies Program at the University of Chicago, and the MCA New Works Initiative's Design Residency.

The University of Chicago's Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry was founded in 2011 to serve as a laboratory for experimental collaborations between artists and scholars. Its Mellon Collaborative Fellowship for Arts Practice and Scholarship Program supports long-term collaborative projects that involve experimentation in research, in production, and in the classroom (graycenter.uchicago.edu).

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FOR ARTS AND INQUIRY

MCA Studio

Afterword, an Opera



Photo: Ross Karre

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About the Event

Taking a pause during their weeklong design residency at the MCA, the artists behind the new opera *Afterword* discuss their vision for the upcoming performance. Premiering in October, this multimedia chamber opera explores the relation between the aesthetic and the social, viewed through the experiences of the early members of the African American experimental music collective, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). The panel includes:

George Lewis, composer and librettist
Sean Griffin, director
Catherine Sullivan, director

About the Project

Founded on the South Side of Chicago in 1965, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians has long played an internationally recognized role in American experimental music. On the occasion of the AACM's 50th anniversary, George Lewis, Catherine Sullivan, and Sean Griffin have joined forces with the trail-blazing new music group, International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), to fashion a multimedia opera that functions not as a history of the collective, but as a "*Bildungsoper*"--a coming-of age opera of ideas, positionality, and testament. The libretto is drawn from Lewis's award-winning 2008 book, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (University of Chicago Press).

Sullivan and Griffin have collaborated since 1996, creating historically minded performances in immersive theatrical environments that deploy unexpected turns of logic and deconstructed modes of behavior. The staging and choreography they have created deploy a very tangible and essential sense of ensemble that grows out of a rehearsal process born in improvisation.

Afterword eschews direct character representation of AACM artists. Rather, vocal and instrumental sections become avatars for young black experimentalists facing issues of power, authority, identity, culture, aesthetics, self-fashioning and representation. The awareness that we are hearing history, as it was being made in real, human time, brings us face to face with contingency, empathy, and wonder.

About the Artists

George Lewis is the Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music at Columbia University. A MacArthur and Guggenheim Fellow, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) since 1971, Lewis's work is documented on more than 140 recordings, and has been presented by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonia Orchestra, Ensemble Dal Niente, Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart, and others. In 2015, Lewis received the degree of Doctor of Music (DMus, honoris causa) from the University of Edinburgh. MCA Stage has presented Lewis's work several times, most recently in a portrait concert with ICE (International Contemporary Ensemble).

Sean Griffin is a Los Angeles-based composer and director. The director of Opera Povera, an interdisciplinary consortium devoted to the creation and performance of new operatic, performance and exhibition projects, Griffin's work often features the unique talents of the instrumentalists and performers with whom he collaborates, and ranges through musical compositions, immersive operas, installations, films, and stage works. Griffin has collaborated extensively with artists Catherine Sullivan, Charles Gaines, and Aiyun Huang, and has been a resident fellow at Yaddo, MacDowell, and EMPAC. Griffin's works have been presented at venues including the 2015 Venice Biennale, MoMA, REDCAT, LACMA, Berlin's Volksbühne and the Tate Modern.

Catherine Sullivan is an associate professor in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Chicago. Her work engages theater, film, video, photography, writing, sculpture, and more. She produces performances and theater works that address a broad spectrum of historical and cultural reference, wherein the performers are often coping with written texts, stylistic economies, re-enactments of historic performances, gestural and choreographic regimes, and conceptual orthodoxies. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at the UCLA Armand Hammer Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, Metro Pictures, Tate Modern, London; Opéra de Lyon, and the Volksbühne (Berlin), Galerie Catherine Bastide, Brussels and Galerie Christian Nagel, Antwerp/Berlin.