

MUSIC

TALK:

Justin
Vivian Bond
with
Jim Hodges

MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
CHICAGO

OCT 30, 2021,
3 PM CST

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FROM
THE
CURATOR

A decade ago, while working at a New York City music venue, I got to watch Justin Vivian Bond perform once a week for several months straight. Hearing songs I had heard before become completely new again—and remain bitter-sweet, funny, and politically incisive—each week forever changed my sense of what performance can do. When we met with Bond and Jim Hodges to prepare for this event, what struck me most was the way that their tenderness toward each other was undergirded by their experiences over the years: through the AIDS epidemic, growing their careers in the 1990s, admiring each other’s work in recent times, and now watching new generations of queer activism unfold.

In fact, the blurring between the personal and the political and the way that the beautiful and the difficult are inherently meshed are integral to both these artists’ prolific bodies of work. In 1999, the MCA produced the exhibition *Jim Hodges: Every Way*, which included one of Hodges’s iconic fabric flower curtains, hung from the museum’s fourth-floor mezzanine. These multicolored works are known for “their combination of elegant beauty and commemoration of loss,” as the museum press release described it, but Hodges’s work *The end from where you are* (1998; see image on p. 6), made from black flowers, expressed a “darker and more haunting sense of mourning.”

In 2005, Bond performed in the MCA’s Edlis Neeson Theater with pianist Kenny Mellman as one half of the beloved cabaret duo *Kiki and Herb*; a year later, Bond was at The Kitchen, performing in the self-authored musical *Re:Galli Blond (A Sissy Fix)*. Writer Joy Episalla *put it perfectly in 2015*: Bond “has the rare ability to make one laugh, cry, and be moved all in the turn of a song, a phrase, or the exquisite rendering of a watercolor.” If there is anyone who can mesh conversation, art, and song into one powerful experience, it is Justin Vivian Bond.

This fall, the MCA’s programming continues to explore *dissent*: how pushing against existing structures strengthens our connections and social bonds. I am thrilled to share with you our second-ever Music Talk, which takes up that theme, but also digs into what music and art reveal about each other—and about the artists themselves.

—Tara Aisha Willis
Associate Curator, Performance
and Public Practice

MUSIC
TALK:

Justin
Vivian
Bond
with Jim
Hodges

Running time is 90 minutes.

Coproduced with The Kitchen at Queenslab.

ACCESSIBILITY:
Auto-generated captioning is available for this event.

This program contains discussions about sex. There is some profanity.

Performers/ Speakers	Justin Vivian Bond and Jim Hodges
Music director/ piano	Matt Ray
Guitar	Nath Ann Carrera
Violin	Claudia Chopek

THE KITCHEN PRODUCTION STAFF

Curators	Lumi Tan and Matthew Lyons
Production manager	Zack Tinkelman
COVID-19 supervisor/Stage manager	Randi Rivera
Recording engineer	Andrya Ambro
Lighting design	Nicholas Houfek
Videographers	Joseph Bacon and Iki Nakagawa
Technical crew	Shannon Clarke, Joe Galan-Kaiser, and Kathrine R Mitchell
Queenslab Production Staff	Jarrold Anderson, Manuela Donoso, Kayla Gibbons, Brad Hampton, Jessie Henson, Carlos Marques da Cruz, and Kazue Taguchi



Performance view, *Justin Vivian Bond: Under the Influence*, The Public Theater (NYC). September 27–October 2, 2019. Photo: Kevin Yatarola.

ABOUT THE WORK

“This isn’t my first pandemic. As a queer person coming of age during the AIDS crisis with Reagan as president, it became very clear to me that a lot of people in this country took great delight at the thought of people like me dying. So, the ignorance of people—even in my own family—never shocks me and I never underestimate it. I was also on the streets during the racial unrest ignited by the brutal beating Rodney King received at the hands of vicious, racist, and corrupt policemen in 1990. None of this is new. We have to keep fighting and never give up. Making art saved me then, and it’s saving me now. The ridiculous thing about

it is, we’re fighting for the haters, too. They’re just too blind to realize it.”

—Justin Vivian Bond, *Interview Magazine*, September 17, 2020

“Ask a Sane Person: Justin Vivian Bond on the Inevitability of Assholes”



Justin Vivian Bond. Photo: Bob Krasner.



Jim Hodges. Photo: Tim Hailand.

“Through art we can think beyond a kind of primitive response to things and we can imagine a better world. Other solutions to problems. Part of our current chaos and tragedy is there is a lack of imagination and starving and illiteracy in the arts. What I fear the most is the lack of investment in the human spirit and humanity itself through creativity and curiosity and invention. There will be a correction. Art will win out, as does love . . . If we don’t recognize our role, if you don’t feel that you have agency, that your voice doesn’t matter, then you’re left with the most

limited palette of ideas. We have to be helping people understand the broadness, the endlessness of their potentiality. And art does that, because art is always about ‘yes.’ It encourages us to think more, more, more. Art never lets you rest. It always wants you to be completely expanding and to continue asking questions.”

—Jim Hodges, radio interview for KJZZ 91.5, April 24, 2018

“World Renowned Artist Jim Hodges on How Art Can Save Us All”

ABOUT
THE
ARTISTS

MX JUSTIN VIVIAN BOND has appeared on stage (Broadway and off-Broadway, London’s West End), screen (*Shortbus*, *Can You Ever Forgive Me?*, *Sunset Stories*), television (*High Maintenance*, *Difficult People*, *The Get Down*), nightclub stages (most notably a decades-long residency at Joe’s Pub at The Public Theater in New York), and in concert halls worldwide (Carnegie Hall, The Sydney Opera House). Their visual art and installations have been seen in museums and galleries in the United States (Participant, Inc, The New Museum) and abroad (Vitrine, London). Their memoir *Tango: My Childhood, Backwards and in High Heels* (Feminist Press) won the Lambda Literary Award for Transgender Nonfiction. They are the recipient of an Obie, a Bessie, and a Tony nomination, an Ethyl Eichelberger Award, The Peter Reed Foundation Grant, The Foundation for Contemporary Art Grant for Artists, and The Art Matters Grant. They have self-released several full-length recordings: most notably *Dendrophile* and *Silver Wells*. As one half of the legendary punk cabaret duo Kiki and Herb, they toured the world and released two albums: *Do You Hear What We Hear?* and *Kiki and Herb Will Die For You at Carnegie Hall*. Mx Bond has been at the forefront of Trans visibility and activism since the early 1990s. They have a Master’s degree in Live Art from Central Saint Martins College in London and have taught performance composition and Live Art Installation at NYU and Bard College. Currently Bond divides their time between residences in New York City’s East Village and the Hudson Valley. In December 2019 they made their debut at The Vienna Staatsoper in the world premiere of Olga Neuwirth’s *Orlando* as Orlando’s child.

NATH ANN CARRERA (guitar) has been described as “heavenly” (*The New York Times*) and “wonderful, striking,” with “essayistic songs about female revenge and politics” (*Hilton Als*, *The Paris Review*). Carrera has had solo shows at Joe’s Pub, Wild Project, and the Afterglow Festival (*I Don’t Want To Throw Rice, I Want To Throw Rocks: The Early Southern Gothicism Of Dolly Parton*), La MaMa (Death To The Patriarchal Rape Heads). Carrera sings as WITCH CAMP with Amber Martin, performs with Justin Vivian Bond, has opened for Martha Wainwright at City Winery, and has sung at P.S. 122, The Kitchen, Abrons Arts Center, Le Poisson Rouge, SFMOMA, MoMA PS1, Lincoln

Center, and The Kennedy Center, as part of Joe’s Pub’s *What’s Your Safe Word?*.

CLAUDIA CHOPEK (violin) has for over the past decade shared stages and/or been in the studio with The Last Shadow Puppets, Father John Misty, Hurray For The Riff Raff, Bruce Springsteen, Moby, and TV on the Radio, and just finished a run performing in the Broadway musical *Natasha, Pierre, & The Great Comet Of 1812*. She can currently be seen performing with Justin Vivian Bond and with her original music project *Echo Of The Ghost*.

JIM HODGES was born in 1957 in Spokane, Washington. He lives and works in New York. Hodges’s work explores themes of fragility, temporality, love, and death in a highly original and poetic vocabulary. He frequently employs different materials and techniques: from ready-made objects to traditional media such as graphite and ink. Often disarmingly simple or executed with minimal means, Hodges’s works express a sentiment of deeply felt experience and encourage a visceral and communal response. Whether working in materials such as curtains woven from artificial silk flowers, metal chains, glass, or using saliva to create ink transfer impressions on paper, Hodges’s works are inhabited by the presence of the body. Incorporated in his choice of media and articulated in text and image is a narrative of human experience, one of life and death and of the proximity of contingency that affects us all. Drawing has remained a primary activity for the artist since the late eighties. The practice is diaristic—observing the passage of time and documenting the intensely personal, the mundane, and the overlooked. Hodges has stated, “It always starts inside my body, and I use drawing as a way of getting it out.” From 2013 to 2015, Hodges was the subject of a major touring retrospective, *Give More Than You Take*, which started at the Dallas Museum of Art and toured to the Walker Arts Center; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; and the Hammer Museum. From April to September 2019 *Unearthed*, a monumental tree stump cast in bronze, was installed at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. In 2016 a text-based sculpture *With Liberty and Justice For All* was installed on the exterior of the new building at the Aspen Art Museum and is now permanently installed on the roof of The Contemporary Austin.

MATT RAY (musical director, piano) is a Brooklyn-based pianist, singer, songwriter, arranger, and music director. His arrangements have been called “wizardly” (*Time Out NY*) and “ingenious” (*The New York Times*), and his piano playing referred to as “classic, well-oiled swing” (*The New York Times*) and “to cry for” (*Ebony*). For his work on Taylor Mac’s *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*, he and Mac shared the 2017 Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired By American History. Notable live performances include playing at Carnegie Hall with Kat Edmonson, playing the Hollywood Bowl with reggae legend Burning Spear, performing at the Théâtre de Chaillot with Justin Vivian Bond, and touring the Caribbean and Central America with his own piano trio as a United States Department of State Jazz Ambassador.

SUPPORT FOR THE
ARTISTS

Programs at The Kitchen are made possible with major support from Lambent Foundation Fund of Tides Foundation and Howard Gilman Foundation, and in part by public funds from New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



Jim Hodges, American, b. 1957. *The end from where you are*, 1998. Silk, cotton, polyester, and thread; 16 x 16 ft. (4.9 x 4.9 m). Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, restricted gift in memory of John S. Baran with additional restricted support from the Meta S. and Ronald Berger Family Foundation, 1999.4. Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

RELATED PROGRAMS

SOUNDTRACK

Today's Music Talk, Justin Vivian Bond and Jim Hodges cocreated a playlist for the MCA's Soundtrack series. Mining a shared history of exchanging songs and playlists throughout decades of friendship and collaboration, the two artists explored themes of resistance, power, and tenderness through music. Find the playlist [here](#).

For the MCA's Soundtrack series, contemporary sound-based artists transform the MCA experience on select Fridays with custom soundtracks reflecting their perspective on the works on view in the museum.

SUPPORT FOR MCA
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Lead support for the 2021-22 season of MCA Performance and Public Programs is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

Major support is provided by the Alphawood Foundation and by Julie and Larry Bernstein.

Generous support is provided by Lois and Steve Eisen and The Eisen Family Foundation; Ginger Farley and Bob Shapiro, Martha Struthers Farley and Donald C. Farley, Jr. Family Foundation, N.A., Trustee; Susan Manning and Doug Doetsch; Carol Prins and John Hart/The Jessica Fund; and Anonymous.

Additional generous support is provided by Ms. Shawn M. Donnelley and Dr. Christopher M. Kelly, Cynthia Hunt and Philip Rudolph, Ashlee Jacob, Anne L. Kaplan, Sharon and Lee Oberlander, D. Elizabeth Price and Lou Yecies, and Enact, the MCA's Performance & Public Programs 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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PERFORMANCE AND
PUBLIC PRACTICE

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is committed to fostering social connections and presenting the most thought-provoking creative arts of our time. The MCA commissions and presents performing arts and opportunities for dialogue with leading artists and scholars from Chicago and around the world. These events serve as spaces for gathering throughout the museum and online. The MCA's groundbreaking live experiences are an integral part of the museum's cutting-edge, multidisciplinary programming. Along with exhibitions, publications, and programs, MCA Performance and Public Practice welcomes visitors to experience the work and ideas of living artists and exercise their own civic voices.

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Membership at the MCA isn't just discounts—it's about belonging to a community that supports living artists and their work. Members see it first: access invitations to previews, events, and more. Members see it most: receive admission for a year, plus guest passes. Members see it best: shop, dine, and park with exclusive discounts. Join today at mcachicago.org/join.

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Questions about getting connected or questions about virtual events at the MCA? Visit mcachicago.org/virtual-help to learn more.

ACCESSIBILITY
INFORMATION

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Issue designed by
Greta McGuire.

Video edited by David
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