

WINTER/SPRING SEASON

Jan 23–24	eighth blackbird <i>Hand Eye</i>
Jan 28–30	Toshiki Okada/chelfitsch <i>God Bless Baseball</i>
Feb 4 and 6–7	Ingri Fiksdal, Ingvild Langgård & Signe Becker <i>Cosmic Body</i>
Feb 11–14	Faye Driscoll <i>Thank You For Coming: Attendance</i>
Feb 18–27	Tim Etchells/Forced Entertainment <i>The Notebook, Speak Bitterness, and (In) Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare</i>
Mar 5–6	Joffrey Academy of Dance <i>Winning Works</i>
Mar 25–26	eighth blackbird featuring Will Oldham (Bonnie “Prince” Billy) <i>Ghostlight</i>
Mar 31–Apr 3	Blair Thomas & Co. <i>Moby Dick</i>
Apr 7–10	Teatrocinema <i>Historia de Amor (Love Story)</i>
Apr 12 and 14–16	Taylor Mac <i>The History of Popular Music</i>
Apr 28–May 1	Kyle Abraham/ Abraham.In.Motion <i>When the Wolves Came In</i>

Mar 31–Apr 3, 2016

Blair Thomas & Co.

Moby Dick

or The Brotherhood of the Monastic Order of Ancient Mariners Purges the Ills of Society Through a Reading of the Tales of Moby-Dick

From the book
by Herman Melville

Conceived by Blair Thomas
and created in collaboration
with the company

THE MONASTIC ORDER OF ANCIENT MARINERS

Puppeteer	Michael Montenegro
Balladeer	Michael Smith
Puppeteer	Blair Thomas
Musician	Michael Zerang

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director and co-adaptor	Greg Allen
Production designer and co-adaptor	Blair Thomas
Codesigner	Michael Montenegro
Songwriter	Michael Smith
Sound score composer	Michael Zerang
Costume designer	Ana Kuzamic
Lighting designer	Sarah Hughey
Projection designer	John Boesche
Projections assistant	Joe Burke
Production stage manager	Madeleine Borg

Technical director

Jim Moore

Hurdy-gurdy coffin and
wind machine constructor

Erik Newman

Puppet builder and
set constructor

Tyler Culligan

Costume constructor

Uber Costume

Additional puppet and set construction by Hannah Chavez,
Eryka Dellenbach, Max McDermott, Erik Newman, Lucinda
Sponholz, and Chris Wooten.

SPECIAL THANKS

The production crew at the Moss Arts Center in Blacksburg,
Virginia, David Catlin, Shawn Pfautsch, Derek Matson,
Angel Ysaguirre, Danny Thompson, Robin Young, Sheri Doyel,
Tom and Carolyn Doyel, Dan Kerr-Hobert, Sarah Fornace,
Julia Miller, Lizi Briet, Sam Deutsch, Max Callahan, Matthew
Duvall, Julia Rhoads, and Peter McDowell

The performance runs approximately one hour and twenty
minutes without intermission.

Blair Thomas & Co. developed *Moby Dick, or The Brotherhood of the Monastic Order of Ancient Mariners Purges the Ills of Society Through a Reading of the Tales of Moby-Dick* in part through the MCA Stage New Works Initiative, which provided commissioning support and a production design residency in August 2015. Established in 2014, the New Works Initiative meaningfully expands MCA Stage's ongoing commitment to supporting artists and bringing important new performances to audiences.

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

Additional lead commissioning support for this production is provided by The Boeing Foundation, The Jim Henson Foundation, Elizabeth A. Liebman, Rick Stoneham, Nina and Steve Schoeder and Ellen Stone Belic.

Moby Dick, or The Brotherhood of the Monastic Order of Ancient Mariners Purges the Ills of Society Through a Reading of the Tales of Moby-Dick is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation Fund/Forth Fund Project co-commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in partnership with Virginia Tech University, College of St. Ben's/St. John's University and NPN. The Creation Fund is supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency). The Forth Fund is supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.



For more information,
visit npnweb.org.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Melville's singular achievement in writing *Moby-Dick* was articulating a prescient vision of the American experience that resonates with us today. The thirty men of the Pequod represented a nation-state driven by the charismatic Captain Ahab, who led a righteous mission to rid the world of evil, as Ahab perceived it to exist in the white whale Moby Dick. Melville's book abounds with biblical themes, principally a central theme from the book of Job: if God exists, how is there evil in the world? This question leads Ahab to challenge the authority of God by going after his agent of chaos, the great Leviathan Moby Dick.

But Ahab could not have acted without his crew. Our play imagines a time after the rescue of Ishmael, when a group of men who are still wrestling with the issues raised by Ahab attempt to liberate themselves from torment by forming a Monastic Order of Ancient Mariners. Their performance—part ritual, part religious service—functions as the rhythm recounted by Coleridge's famous poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Ahab's story is a cautionary tale, but the stories of the other sailors of the Pequod resonate anew in the performance by members of this new devotional order.

I am very grateful to Peter and Yolanda and the performance staff at the MCA who have supported the fruition of this project over the past year.

—Blair Thomas

BLAIR THOMAS & CO. AND THE MCA

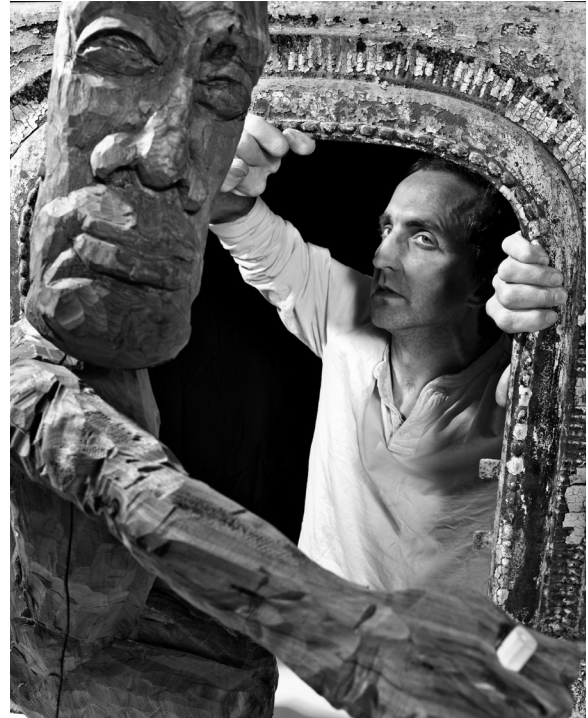
Thomas's contemporary interpretation of Herman Melville's classic overflows with seemingly impossible-to-stage symbolism. He began the exploration in 1990 as a large-scale retelling of the story on North Avenue Beach, conceived and designed by Thomas with Redmoon Theater and Greg Allen as Ahab.

MCA Stage first presented work by Thomas with *Pierrot Lunaire* (2006), his collaboration with the Grammy Award-winning sextet eighth blackbird. His subsequent MCA presentation, *The Ox-Herder's Tale* (2008), featured music direction by Michael Zerang, who performed with fellow percussionist Hamid Drake.

The Ox-Herder's Tale, based on the ancient Zen-Buddhist teaching parable, was Thomas's interpretation set in a contemporary Western world. It followed the story of a washed-up magician

who decides to attempt an amazing magical feat—to pull a bull out of a hat by the ring in its nose.

Moby Dick, or The Brotherhood of the Monastic Order of Ancient Mariners Purges the Ills of Society Through a Reading of the Tales of Moby-Dick is Thomas's latest exploration of the implications of storytelling and how the attempt becomes a path to enlight-



Blair Thomas & Co., *Moby Dick*
Photo: Kipling Swehla

enment. In the book, Melville searches for words to describe the whale; for Ishmael, the whale can never be seen because once it is caught and pulled from the ocean, it is no longer what it was, and when it is swimming below the surface of the water it is too vast to be conceived. Thomas uses puppet theater to stage this paradox and to also unsettle our trust in what the eye sees.

MCA has supported the development of *Moby-Dick* with two commissions and a design residency in August 2015, provided in part by the New Works Initiative. The creative team performed a public work-in-progress on August 21.

Apr 7-10
at MCA Stage

Teatrocinema



Photo: Montserrat Quezada A.

Historia de Amor

Tickets at mcachicago.org

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

GREG ALLEN

is the founding director of the Neo-Futurists and creator of *Too Much Light Makes The Baby Go Blind* and more than fifty other productions.

His award-winning work as director and playwright has been produced in Chicago at the Goodman, Steppenwolf, Northlight, Court, and dozens of other theaters, as well as throughout the United States and internationally. His current productions are running in New York, San Francisco, Italy, Taiwan, Australia, Tanzania, and Norman, Oklahoma.

His adaptations include *The Strange and Terrible True Tale of Pinocchio (the Wooden Boy) as Told by Frankenstein's Monster (the Wretched Creature)*, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, *The Last Two Minutes of the Complete Works of Henrik Ibsen*, and *K.*, his award-winning version of Kafka's *The Trial*. His play *What Happened in Pinkville? (A Cubist Dialectic on the Massacre at My Lai)* was a finalist for the National Playwright's Conference in 2015. Allen directed and adapted Ibsen's *Ghosts* for Mary-Arrchie's final season last winter. He is adapting the works of Edgar Allan Poe for Blair Thomas & Co. and the works of Kafka with Michael Montenegro. He is also arranging an international tour of his seven-hour production in nine acts of Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, and creating a Harold Pinter festival for the spring of 2017. In addition, Allen teaches performance and

playwriting at University of Chicago, the Theatre School at DePaul, and the National Theater Institute at the O'Neill Center in Connecticut, as well as at the Neo-Futurarium and in several residencies across North America.

JOHN BOESCHE

has created media and scenic designs for more than 120 professional theater, opera, and dance productions. His Broadway credits include *The Glass Menagerie* directed by Frank Galati at Roundabout Theatre, and his off-Broadway credits include *Beyond Glory* directed by Robert Falls at Roundabout Theatre, among others. Regionally, his work has been seen at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Geffen Playhouse (Los Angeles), Goodman Theatre (Chicago), Lookingglass Theatre Company (Chicago), McCarter Theatre (Princeton), Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, New York Shakespeare Festival (NYC), Remy Bumppo Theatre (Chicago), Seattle Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare at the Folger (Washington DC), Steppenwolf Theatre (Chicago), Theater On The Square (San Francisco) and Victory Gardens Biograph Theatre (Chicago), and elsewhere. He has designed for dance companies including the Joffrey Ballet in Chicago, Cincinnati Ballet, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange (Washington, DC), and Lucky Plush Productions (Chicago), as well as Erica Mott (Chicago). His design work has been recognized with three Joseph Jefferson Awards, a Metro DC Dance Award, and a Los

Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award, among others. Boesche is the chair of digital media for live performance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

SARAH HUGHEY

has designed lighting for numerous Chicago productions, including Northlight Theatre, Theatre Wit, Victory Gardens Biograph Theatre, About Face Theatre, Griffin Theatre, Remy Bumppo Theatre, Haven Theatre, Writers' Theatre, Steep Theatre, Next Theatre, Two Pence Theatre, the Gift Theatre, Court Theatre,

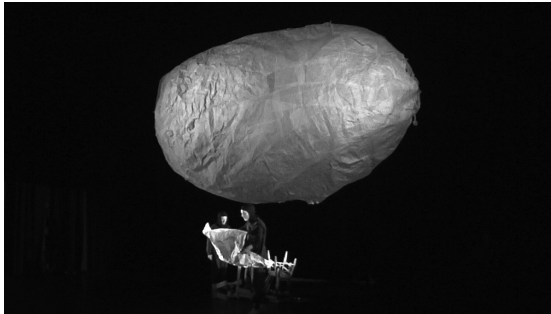
Chicago Children's Theatre, Fox Valley Rep, Teatro Vista, The House, Lifeline Theatre, A Red Orchid Theatre, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Regionally she has designed at Kansas City Rep, City Theatre (Pittsburgh), St. Louis Black Rep, and Ash Lawn Opera (Charlottesville, VA). She is the recipient of a Jeff Award (*Scorched*, Silk Road Rising) and a Jeff Nomination (*The Iron Stag King*, The House). She was the 2013 recipient of Chicago's Maggio Emerging Designer Award. Hughey is an Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theatre,

has been the resident designer at Silk Road Rising, and is a collaborator with the performance collective Yellow House. She holds an MFA in stage design from Northwestern University, and has taught lighting design at Northwestern, Columbia College Chicago, and North Central College.

ANA KUZMANIC

is a native of the former Yugoslavia and a prolific costume designer for theater and opera. Her upcoming projects include *Disgraced*, directed by Marcela Lorca at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, *Wonderful Town*, directed by Mary Zimmerman at the Goodman Theatre, and *Peter Grimes*, directed by Robert Falls at the Lyric Opera. This season she designed costumes for the Goodman Theatre production *2666*, an adaptation of Roberto Bolaño's novel directed by Robert Falls and Seth Bockley, and *Treasure Island*, directed by Mary Zimmerman at the Looking-glass Theatre Company. Other Chicago credits include The Lyric Opera (*Don Giovanni*, directed by Robert Falls), and numerous productions at The Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Court Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, and the House Theatre of Chicago. Costume designs for Broadway include Tony Award-winning *August: Osage County*, Robert Falls's *Desire Under the Elms*, and *Superior Donuts* directed by Tina Landau. Kuzmanic's off-Broadway credits include *The Jacksonian*, directed by Robert Falls. Regionally, she has designed costumes for

Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center, the Shakespeare Theatre Company, Trinity Repertory Company, the Geffen Playhouse, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Kuzmanic is the recipient of a Jeff Award for *The Comedy of Errors* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater and a Drama Desk nomination for *August: Osage County* on Broadway. She has a BFA in costume and fashion



LEFT AND
BOTTOM
Blair Thomas
& Co.
Moby Dick
Video still © MCA
Chicago

RIGHT
Blair Thomas
& Co.
Moby Dick
Photo: Kipling
Swehla



from Faculty of Applied Arts in Belgrade and an MFA in stage design from Northwestern University. She is also an associate professor of costume design at Northwestern University.

MICHAEL MONTENEGRO

is artistic director of Theatre Zarko which has produced numerous original puppet theater works including *He Who, Haff (The Man)*, *Sublime Beauty of Hands*, *Klown Kantos*,

and *Iktu Blas*. Over the past twenty years, Montenegro has developed a unique style of puppet and mask theater in the Chicago community as a solo artist and a collaborator. His projects include commissions by the Lookingglass Theatre Company for *Argonautica*, directed by Mary Zimmerman; by Next Theatre for *The War With the Newts* and *The Long Christmas Ride Home*; and by Writers' Theatre for *The Puppetmaster of Lodz*, which garnered a Jeff Award for puppet design.

MICHAEL PETER SMITH composed and performed the music for the Tony Award-winning Steppenwolf production, directed by Frank Galati, of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. He wrote and performed in *Michael, Margaret Pat & Kate* at Victory Gardens Biograph Theatre, a production that won four Joseph Jefferson Awards. With Jamie O'Reilly he wrote and performed *Pasiones* at Theater On The Lake and *Hello Dali* at Victory Gardens. He adapted, composed, and performed songs in the Victory Gardens's production of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, Smith's first collaboration with Blair Thomas. He also collaborated with Thomas in creating, writing, and performing the songs for the Chicago Children's Theater production of Oscar Wilde's *Selfish Giant*. Smith also played the role of Captain Harry Pedersen in *Eastland* at Lookingglass Theatre Company.

BLAIR THOMAS is a puppeteer and director/designer working in Chicago for the past thirty years. He cofounded and was codirector of Redmoon Theater from 1989-98. Following his tenure, he staged Manuel de Falla's puppet opera *Master Pedro's Puppet Show* with Chicago Opera Theater and served as a curator for the City of Chicago's International Puppet Theater Festivals in 2000 and 2001. He is founder of Blair Thomas & Co. and in its fourteen-year history has created *The Vinegar Works*, a toy theater staging of Edward Gorey's little books; *Cabaret of Desire*, an adaptation of short works by Federico Garcia Lorca; and *The Ox-Herder's Tale*, an interpretation of the ten Buddhist paintings of enlightenment. For young audiences, Blair Thomas & Co. has adapted Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant* and staged a fantasy inspired by Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Recent company collaborations include creating puppets and visual design for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Children's Theater, Victory Gardens Biograph Theatre, and the Trinity Repertory Company of Providence Rhode Island.

In 2014, the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry in Connecticut presented an exhibition of Thomas's stage renderings for solo works from the past fifteen years. His upcoming collaborations include designing puppets for Lookingglass Theatre Company and the Lyric Opera. In 2015, Thomas founded the Chicago

International Puppet Theater Festival in partnership with presenters and venues across Chicago, including the MCA. He was the first Jim Henson artist-in-residence at the University of Maryland and has been an adjunct faculty member at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago since 1991. He has a BA from Oberlin College.

MICHAEL ZERANG

is a Chicago native and a first-generation American of Assyrian descent. He has been a professional musician,

to thirty-five countries. He founded and was artistic director of Link's Hall Performance Series in Chicago from 1985-89, presenting more than 300 music concerts. He also presented concerts at Cafe Urbus Orbis (1994-96) and at the Candlestick Maker in Chicago's Albany Park neighborhood (2001-05). He was a board member of Links Hall from 1989 to 2013. Zerang has taught performance technique, sound design, and sound/music as a guest artist at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago;



Blair Thomas & Co., *Moby Dick*
Photo: Kipling Swehla

composer, and producer since 1976, focusing on improvised music, free jazz, contemporary composition, and collaborations on puppet theater, experimental theater, dance, and multidisciplinary work. He has received three Joseph Jefferson Awards for Original Music Composition in Theater in collaborations with Redmoon Theater (1996, 1998, and 2000). As a percussionist and composer, Zerang has more than ninety titles in his discography and has toured nationally and internationally

rhythmic analysis for dancers at Columbia College Chicago, Northwestern University, and MoMing Dance and Arts Center; and composer/choreographer collaborations at Northwestern University. He has taught music to children at the Jane Adams Hull House. Zerang tours and holds workshops in improvisational music and percussion technique, and teaches private lessons in rhythmic analysis, music composition, and percussion technique.

Apr 28–May 1
at MCA Stage

Kyle Abraham/ Abraham.In.Motion



Sam Pratt, Catherine Ellis Kirk
Photo: Tim Barden

When the Wolves Came In

Tickets at mcachicago.org

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apology and contact
Sarah Augusta at Sarah@CreativePartnersArts.org.

The MCA's newest affinity group, **Enact**, gives longtime performance fans and newcomers alike the opportunity to meet artists, discuss ground-breaking directions with leading curators, and choose key performers to sponsor.

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Each year, Enact members choose—through discussion and voting—one performance to sponsor, thereby increasing the impact MCA Stage programming has on the community.

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For more information, contact us at enact@mcachicago.org.

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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 the coat check for \$12 parking in the MCA garage (220 East Chicago Avenue) or the Bernardin garage (747 North Wabash). Discounted 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 is prohibited.

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Program notes compiled
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