

FALL SEASON

Sep 17

Burnt Sugar the
Arkestra Chamber
Sweet Sweetback's
Baadasssss Song

Nov 4-6

Dorrance Dance
ETM Double Down

Copresented with
Chicago Human
Rythm Project and
Chicago Humanities
Festival

Dec 1-4, 8-11

ONEOFUS Julie Atlas
Muz and Mat Fraser
Beauty and the Beast

Dec 16-17

Tatsu Aoki
Reduction

Copresented with
Asian Improv aRts
Midwest

Dec 17-18

Tatsu Aoki
Tsukasa Taiko Legacy

Copresented with
Asian Improv aRts
Midwest

Museum of
Contemporary Art
Chicago

Sept 17, 2016

Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*

JAMILA WOODS

Bass	Erik Hunter
Guitar	Brian Sanborn
Percussion	Chris Paquette

INTERMISSION

BURNT SUGAR THE ARKESTRA CHAMBER

Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber performs *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, the original soundtrack by Melvin Van Peebles.

Vocals, Harmonica, Conduction	Mikel Banks
Vocals, Percussion, Conduction	Shelley Nicole
Alto Saxes, Vocals	Micah Gaugh
Guitar	Ben Tyree
Keyboards, Samchilleam	Leon Gruenbaum
Drums	Lafrae Sci
Electric Bass	Jared Michael Nickerson

SWEET SWEETBACK'S BAADASSSSS SONG

"Sweetback Medley: Sweetback Theme" (1971)—featuring Sandra Z, Bow Wow Wow, and Birth Certificate

"Unnatural" (1971/2010)

"Ain't Gonna Be" (1971/2010)

"Hoppin John" (1971)

"Mojo Woman" (1971)

"Sandra Z" (1971)

"Moo Moo's Song" (1971/2010)

"Sandra Z Reprise" (1971)

"Come On Feet" (1971)

"Won't Bleed Me" (1971)

"What the You Mean I Can't Sing?!" (1973)

"Riding Tonight" (1971/2010)

"World's All Stage" (1971/2010)

"Bow Wow Wow" (1971/2010)

"Sweepback's Theme" (1971)

Running time: 120 minutes, with one intermission

The performance of Melvin Van Peebles's soundtrack is presented in conjunction with *Kerry James Marshall: Mastry*.

The MCA and Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber acknowledge and thank Melvin Van Peebles—godfather of the 1970's "blaxploitation" genre of African American action films and a seminal member of the modern black film movement and independent cinema worldwide—for his contributions to cinema and the arts.

Nov 4-6
at MCA Stage

Dorrance Dance



Dorrance Dance
Photo: Christopher Duggan

ETM: Double Down

ABOUT THE FILM

Melvin Van Peebles's *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) is an important film in the history of American cinema that has made a lasting impression to this day. The largest grossing independent film at the time it was released, it remains on *Variety's* list of all-time top grossing films forty-five years later. The film—which follows the life of an African-American man on the run from white authorities—heralded a new era in black film and independent filmmaking.



Burnt Sugar Arkestra
Photo: Ken Weiss

Van Peebles was born in Chicago in 1932. In 1954, after graduating with a BA in literature from Ohio Wesleyan University, he joined the US Air Force and served for three years. He married German actress and photographer

Maria Marx, and they moved to Mexico, where they lived briefly before settling in San Francisco. It was there that Van Peebles first began to think critically about the way movies portrayed people of color.

A prolific director, screenwriter, playwright, novelist, and composer, Van Peebles scripted, directed, and wrote the music score for *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*. He also shot the film himself. His fast paced montages and jump cuts were innovative techniques at the time, and they created a paranoid and psychedelic effect that embodied the protagonist's alienation and the nightmare his life had become.

Van Peebles sought complete control in the making of the film after struggling with the limitations imposed by studios. He funded it himself—using much of his own money and hiring primarily nonprofessional actors and crew members—shot the film over a period of nineteen days, and edited it himself. He gave his music score to the then little-known Earth, Wind & Fire to play for the soundtrack recording. He also directed the film's entire marketing campaign. Not having any money for traditional advertising methods, he released the soundtrack album prior to the film's release in order to generate publicity.

Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song's gross of ten million dollars in 1971 was the largest of any independent film up to then, despite its wide censoring in markets and mixed critical reviews. It inspired Hollywood studios to create films targeting black audiences at the same time that it prompted Huey P. Newton to devote an entire issue of *The Black Panther* to the film's revolutionary implications. Spike Lee has stated, "*Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* gave us all the answers we needed. This was an example of how to make a film (a real movie), distribute it yourself, and most important, get paid."

In 2010, Van Peebles decided to bring his film to the stage and chose Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber to be his twenty-first-century Earth Wind & Fire. The combined work made its theatrical world premiere at the Sons d'Hiver Festival in Paris, France, in February 2010.

Dec 1-4, 8-11
at MCA Stage

ONEOFUS Julie Atlas Muz and Mat Fraser



ONEOFUS Julie Atlas Muz and Mat Fraser, *Beauty and the Beast*
Photo: Sin Bozkurt

Beauty and the Beast

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Mikel Banks

(aka the Spirithood)

performs as a vocalist, musician (digital horn, harmonica, percussion, and flute), actor (in Beyoncé and Jay Z videos), storyteller, and teaching artist. He currently performs with Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber, Digital Diaspora, the Roughstars, and the Dustbin Brothers. His new project Mr. Mikel's Tot Rock & Reggae Experience (ABC's, 123's, and Positives for Pre-Schoolers and First Graders) is an outgrowth of his being a preschool music teacher. Banks has developed new songs and adapted some traditional ones to reggae and rock styles, all with sing-along messages for the little ones.

Micah Gaugh

was born in Colon, Panama, and has lived most of his adult life in the East Village, New York. Gaugh has collaborated with artists such as Lady Miss Kier from Dee-lite, Arto Lindsay, Marc Ribot, James 'Blood' Ulmer, Melvin Gibbs, Vernon Reid in both studio and live performance settings. He has written two operas (*Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights* and a piece for the artist Rirkrit Taravaniija), music for the Matthew Barney movie *Di Lama Lamina* and a choral work commissioned by the Chiesa Rosa in Milan, and he

collaborates with James Iha (of Smashing Pumpkins) on remixes for The Sounds, Ladytron, and The Yeah, Yeah, Yeahs. Gaugh acted in the season five premier of *Sex in the City* and is in a play entitled *American Book of the Dead*. He also paints and writes novels.

Leon Gruenbaum

has been a part of the New York music scene for more than twenty-five years. After receiving classical training early on in piano and clarinet, Gruenbaum developed an interest in jazz, funk, and avant-garde music. He conceived the world's first relativistic music keyboard, a patented MIDI controller called the Samchillian Tip Tip Tip Cheeepeeeee, and has recorded and performed internationally with this instrument alongside guitarist Vernon Reid (Living Colour). He has also collaborated with The Roots, Vernon Reid, Burnt Sugar, and others. His most recent project, "Genes and Machines," features Gruenbaum performing Samchillian and vocals accompanied by acoustic and electronic drummers. In 2003-04, Gruenbaum was a visiting artist at Harvard University, where he led students in an Interactive Anti-Fashion Show.

Jared Michael Nickerson

was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and reared in Dayton. He started playing bass in high school talent shows as part

of the legendary Dayton funk scene, which spawned many musicians, such as the Ohio Players, Slave, and members of Heatwave. He advanced his music studies at the University of Notre Dame under the direction of Father Wiskerchen, who is noted for developing three members of the band Chicago's horn section. After graduating, Nickerson studied at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. He moved to New York with The Human Switchboard, the first band he joined, during the 1980s, before starting his own band, JJ Jumpers, which became part of the Black Rock Coalition. Nickerson has been the business manager for Burnt Sugar Index LLC since its inception in 1999. As a freelancer, he has played with various groups and musicians, including The Roots, Katell Keineg, Marc Anthony Thompson, Catie Curtis, Marc Cary, and DJ Logic. He has made multiple television appearances on Late Night with David Letterman, The Tonight Show with Conan O'Brien, and The John Stewart Show and appeared in Nelson George's "Finding the Funk" documentary, which was accepted to numerous film festivals.

Shelley Nicole

is an active member in the New York music scene who founded the label Red Butterfly Music. Her band, blaKbüshe, performs

throughout New York City, the United States, and Europe. Nicole—named one of the "Hot 100 Celebrities" by AfterEllen.com in 2010—has shared the stage with notable artists and bands, including Vernon Reid, Toshii Reagon, India Arie, Erykah Badu, and Nona Hendryx. Nicole's hit single "blak Girls" earned a spot in the forthcoming film *Homecoming*, written and directed by Eugene Ashe. The song has already been featured in the documentary and soundtrack of the film *U People* and was featured along with songs by Alicia Keys, Faith Evans, and Beyoncé on the *Fuse Box Radio Mixtape: A Female Rise to Power*. Nicole's acting credits include the rock documentary *Electric Purgatory*, for which she wrote the song "Release." Her latest project, *The Quick and Dirty EP*, is set to release this fall.

LaFrae Sci

is an internationally sought-after composer, drummer, and educator, as well as the director of the Middle School Jazz Academy, Brooklyn chapter for Jazz at the Lincoln Center. She is also a founding teaching member of the Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls in New York City. As a Cultural Ambassador for the US State Department, she has taught master classes and performed in more than thirty countries. Sci's band, The 13th Amendment?,

recently premiered her second commissioned orchestral jazz work, written for eighty pieces, titled *The Time Traveler Suite: An Afro-Futurist Travel Journal*.

Greg Tate

was born in Dayton, Ohio, and reared in Washington, DC. In 1999, he founded Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber, a twelve-to-twenty-six member conductor-led improvisation ensemble, which has since released sixteen albums. In addition to being a musician and composer, Tate is also an accomplished writer. His writings on culture and politics have been published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Rolling Stone Magazine*. *The Source Magazine* named him one of the “Godfathers of Hip-hop Journalism” for his development of the black film genre and his work’s groundbreaking influence on the social, political, economic, and cultural landscape of his time. Tate has also written numerous books, the play *My Darling Gremlin* (1993), and the short film *Black Body Radiation* (2006). He is a founding member of the Black Rock Coalition, an organization begun in 1985 that supports black musicians. Tate has served as the Sterling Brown Fellow in African Studies at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, as visiting professor of Africana studies at Brown University, and as

Louis Armstrong Fellowship Professor at Columbia University’s Jazz Studies Center. He has also taught in Yale’s graduate art department.

Ben Tyree

is a product of the diverse music scene in Washington, DC. He began playing the guitar at age four and studied both jazz and classical music in high school—all while writing rock songs and going to nightly jam sessions at blues clubs. He continued his studies at DC’s prestigious Duke Ellington School of the Arts and at Howard University. In 1998, Tyree cofounded the band Miscellaneous Flux, which performs a fusion of jazz, hip-hop, and punk rock. Their acclaimed 2002 full-length CD, *Dead in Dreams*, won a “Wammie” (Washington Area Music Association award) and garnered four other nominations for the band members, including Best Urban Contemporary Instrumentalist for Tyree. He has collaborated with many artists, including Vernon Reid, Kyp Malone, and Nicholas Payton, sharing high-profile stages such as the Apollo, New York City’s Blue Note, Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center. He performs regularly and has scored several independent films as well as composed pieces for television, which have appeared on ESPN and in advertising campaigns.



Jamila Woods
Photo: Zoe Rain/Whitney Middleton

Jamila Woods

is a Chicago-based soul singer, songwriter, and poet. She is widely known for her collaborative works that reflect upon the African American experience. She worked on the hit song “Sunday Candy” with Chance the Rapper, who featured in Woods’s single “Blk Girl Soldier.” Woods also performed a part in the Macklemore and Ryan Lewis song “White Privilege II.” In January 2016, she signed to the independent Chicago hip-hop label Closed Sessions, which released her first album, *Heavn*, in July; composed of thirteen tracks, it focus on black girlhood and Chicago and features performances by Chance the Rapper, Noname, Saba, Lorine Chia and Donnie Trumpet. Woods is the associate artistic director of Young Chicago Authors, the non-profit organization behind the Louder Than a Bomb youth poetry slam festival.

ABOUT THE ENSEMBLE

Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber

was conceived in 1999 by Greg “Iron Man” Tate, who coleads the ensemble with bassist Jared Michael Nickerson. The group offers a New York-based forum for improvisational musicians to compose, record, and perform material that reflects the breadth and depth of American diasporic music in the twenty-first century. The Arkestra Chamber uses Butch Morris’s conduction system to access a wide swath of the soul, jazz, hip-hop, and rock spectrum and make every performance a fresh interpretation of its constituent parts.

Rather than limit themselves to the straightjacket imposed by the commercial recording industry that markets contemporary black music, Burnt Sugar moves freely among styles, eras, and genres to devise its own exciting hybrids. These hybrids are based on a solid foundation of various musical traditions and make use of cutting-edge technology. In this sense, the group’s mission honors its greatest inspirations, the first post-modernists of American music: Duke Ellington, Sun Ra, Parliament Funkadelic, and The Art Ensemble of Chicago.



Burnt Sugar Arkestra
Photo: Libby McLin

To support their ambitious venture, the group pursues audience development in many forms—live performance, magazine and newspaper profiles, and, most importantly, avant-garde recordings. Burnt Sugar generates new products to highlight their continual metamorphosis, integrating rhythm and blues, vocal extrapolations, rock-and-roll brio, free jazz—horn explorations, twentieth-century string dissonance, and up-to-the-minute electronic manipulations.

The group's manifesto—that music, especially music designed to expand current boundaries, must be heard—has led to the creation of the newsletters *TruGroid* and *Avant Groidd Musica*. These publications fill a major vacuum, reestablishing a presence and profile for American experimental music on the world stage that

is conversant with the idioms and recording techniques of hip-hop, drum and bass, jazz, and alternative rock. In today's musical context, there are few American bands that are as innovative on stage and in the recording studio.

Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber has released fourteen recordings and has spent the last three years "caramelizing" the songbooks of Sun Ra, Steely Dan, James Brown, Melvin Van Peebles, David Bowie, Miles Davis, and Chuck Brown for concerts set in venues as disparate as The Apollo Theatre, Sons d'Hiver Festival in France, Rikers Island Prison, Cleveland Museum of Art, the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, Bryant Park, and Lincoln Center. Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber alumni include Matana Roberts, Vijay Iyer, Julia Kent, Graham Hayes, DJ Mutamassik, Okkyung Lee, and Swiss Chris.

Dec 16-18
at MCA Stage

Tatsu Aoki



Tatsu Aoki, *Reduction*
Photo: Ken Carl

Reduction and Tsukasa Taiko Legacy

Tickets at mcachicago.org

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MCA Stage's groundbreaking performances are an integral part of MCA Chicago'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 East Chicago Avenue) 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.

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312-280-2660

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312-397-4072

mcastage@mcachicago.org

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Wednesday–Sunday: 10 am–5 pm

Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas

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Program notes compiled
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