

CLAIRE
CUNNINGHAM
& JESS CURTIS

*The Way You Look
(at me) Tonight*

Program
Notes

Thu-Sun
Feb 8-11, 2018

MCA
STAGE

Edlis Neeson
Theater

Eyes
Wide

Lights
Low

at MCA
Stage

Winter/Spring
2018

*The Way You Look (at me)
Tonight* running time is
one hundred minutes with
no intermission.

SUPPORT FOR
THE ARTISTS

The Way You Look (at me) Tonight was created with support from Unlimited, celebrating the work of disabled artists, using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, Creative Scotland and Spirit of 2012, co-commissioned by Tramway Glasgow and supported by The Place London, Norfolk & Norwich Festival and British Council; The New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from The Kenneth Rainin Foundation, The San Francisco Arts Commission, The Zellerbach Family Foundation, San Francisco Grants for the Arts and copresentation support from CounterPulse; Fonds Darstellende Künste, Kofinanzierungsfonds des Regierenden Bürgermeisters von Berlin—Senatskanzlei | Kulturelle Angelegenheiten and copresentation support from TanzFabrik.

The artists would like to thank Judith Smith, AXIS Dance, Sally Clay, Mickel Smithen, Jenny Sealey, Chloe Phillips, Maria Oshodi, Helen Hall, EJ Raymond, Jeni Draper, Caroline Bowditch, Laura Hook, Marc Brew, Alice Sheppard, Kenny Fries, Julia Watts Belser, Bill Shannon, Martin Siedler, Clara Giraud and Jo Verrent at Unlimited, Yolanda Cesta Cursach, John Rich, and Phill Cabeen, and all the staff of the MCA.

SUPPORT FOR THIS
MCA STAGE PROJECT

Touring support for *The Way You Look (at me) Tonight* is provided by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Created and performed by Claire Cunningham
and Jess Curtis

Philosophical Consultant	Alva Noë
Video Design	Yoann Trelu
Music Composition	Matthias Herrmann
	Jerome Kern and Dorothy Fields's "The Way You Look Tonight," performed by Fred Astaire
Dramaturgy	Luke Pell
Costumes and Set	Michiel Kuiper
Set Construction Assistance	Saskia Schoenmaker
Text	Claire Cunningham, Jess Curtis, and Alva Noë
	Excerpts from <i>Varieties of Presence</i> and <i>What We Know Best</i> by Alva Noë and Nicole Peisl
Lighting Design	Chris Copland
Audio Description	Emma Jane McHenry
Sign Language Consultation	Catherine King
ASL Interpretation (Sun, Feb 11)	Amy Kisner and Shannon Moutinho
Producers	Claire Cunningham Projects and Jess Curtis/Gravity
Gravity Production Manager	Alley Wilde
Claire Cunningham Projects Executive Producer	Nadja Dias
Assistant Production Management	Sheena Khanna
Marketing Management (UK)	Vicky Wilson
Access Coordination	Jak Soroka and Geraldine Wong
Technical Direction	Beth Hersh and Chris Copland

Presented in Association with Bodies of Work

FROM THE CURATOR

This Chicago debut by Claire Cunningham and Jess Curtis is part of a crucial dance movement lineage that includes AXIS Dance Company and Bill Shannon (aka Crutch Master), who—some may recall—also debuted in Chicago at the MCA. Claire, a classically trained soprano, began dancing in the early 2000s after working with Jess, who is a leading figure in San Francisco's music and Contact Improvisation scenes. More than ever, their investigations of perception as it relates to dance, especially in the context of social justice and embodied differences, is hugely relevant.

Sound heady? Think of *The Way You Look (at me) Tonight* as a positive disruptor. The artists' collage of dance, song, and text by their brilliant collaborator, philosopher of perception Dr. Alva Noë, invites a collective "object-ion" to oversimplified notions of empathy and other dangerous misunderstandings of how we experience one another.

Next week, the MCA is providing Claire commissioning support and a residency to develop her forthcoming work *Thank you very much . . .*. Conceived for five performers including Claire, the piece looks at notions of impersonation versus tribute—of grooming and training to be someone else yet never reaching the supposed ideal—through the lens of the Elvis Presley phenomenon and the competitive world of Elvis tribute artists. My special thanks go to the Hyde Park Art Center for hosting Claire's initial MCA residency, which, for the first time, brings her together with two of her Chicago-based collaborators: writer-choreographer Barak adé Soleil and media artist Chun-Shan (Sandie) Yi.

—Yolanda Cesta Cursach,
Curator of Performance

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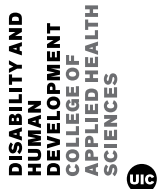
Accessible programming for *The Way You Look (at me) Tonight* is supported by artist/scholar Carrie Sandahl, director of Bodies of Work: A Network of Disability Art and Culture and faculty in the Department of Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Commissioning and development support for Claire Cunningham's *Thank you very much . . .* is provided by the MCA Stage New Works Initiative with lead funding from Elizabeth A. Liebman. Additional support for Claire Cunningham's creative residency is provided in part by the Hyde Park Art Center.



ART WORKS.

National
Endowment
for the Arts
arts.gov



RELATED PROGRAMS

MCA Stage's series of artist-centered talks, workshops, and open studios engages the public with the artists in intimate settings and provides a closer look at the creative process.

POSTSHOW TALK

Sat, Feb 10

The audience is invited to a conversation with Claire Cunningham and Jess Curtis directly after the performance, moderated by MCA Curator of Performance Yolanda Cesta Cursach.

The talk includes ASL interpretation by Amy Kisner.

AUDIO DESCRIPTION WORKSHOP

Sat, Feb 10, 11 am

In this free workshop for dance and theater artists, Claire Cunningham and Jess Curtis explore the creative potential of audio description for movement-based performance.

Registration required. Call the Box Office at 312-397-4010.

IN PROGRESS: CLAIRE CUNNINGHAM

Tue, Feb 13, 6–8 pm

Join Claire Cunningham in the Commons to hear about *Thank you very much . . .*, her latest radical collaboration, which considers the notion of training and grooming through the lens of the Elvis Presley phenomenon and the competitive world of Elvis tribute artists.

The talk includes ASL interpretation by Amy Kisner.

OTHERNESS AND DIFFERENCES

Tue, Feb 13, 1–2 pm

Claire Cunningham engages MCA staff in a talk about practice, process, and perspectives about “otherness” and “difference.” What we share—in the studio, in public—or keep private reveals our empathy, sympathy, or indifference more than we think.

ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

All the performances of *The Way You Look (at me) Tonight* offer optional audio description.

TOUCH TOUR

Sat, Feb 10, 6:30 pm

Blind or low-vision patrons are invited to explore the stage, experience the movements of the performers, and touch elements on the set of *The Way You Look (at me) Tonight*.

Registration required. Call the Box Office at 312-397-4010.

RELAXED PERFORMANCE WITH ASL-INTERPRETATION

Sun, Feb 11, 2 pm

Relaxed performances are for people, with or without disabilities, who prefer some flexibility in terms of noise and movement in the theater. Stage lighting and sound have been adapted by the artists to be less intense. Patrons are free to leave and reenter the theater as necessary, and the theater lights are kept at a glow to facilitate movement. Sensory rest areas are available outside the theater for patrons to take a break before returning to the show. Trained volunteers are present to assist.

Amy Kisner and Shannon Moutinho are the ASL interpreters for this performance.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

CLAIRE CUNNINGHAM (CREATOR AND PERFORMER) is a Glasgow-based performer and creator of multidisciplinary performance and a current Factory Artist with Tanzhaus NRW Düsseldorf, Germany. One of the United Kingdom's most acclaimed and internationally renowned disabled artists, Cunningham's work is often rooted in the use/misuse of her crutches and the exploration of the potential of her specific physicality, with a conscious rejection of traditional dance techniques (which are developed for non-disabled bodies). This runs alongside her deep interest in the lived experience of disability and its implications not only for choreographers but also in terms of societal notions of knowledge, value, and interdependence.

JESS CURTIS (CREATOR AND PERFORMER) is an award-winning choreographer and performer committed to an art-making practice informed by experimentation, innovation, critical discourse, and social relevance. He has created and performed multidisciplinary works throughout the United States and Europe with the radical San Francisco performance groups Contraband and CORE and with the experimental French circus company Cahin-Caha. In 2000, he founded his transcontinental performance company, Jess Curtis/Gravity. Curtis is also an active researcher, writer, teacher, advocate, and community organizer in the fields of contemporary dance and performance. He holds an MFA in Choreography and a PhD in Performance Studies from the University of California at Davis.

ALVA NOË (PHILOSOPHICAL CONSULTANT) is a writer and philosopher living in Berkeley, CA, and New York. He is the author of *Action in Perception* (2004), *Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness* (2009), *Varieties of Presence* (2012), and *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature* (2015). He is Professor of Philosophy and a member of the

Center for New Media and the Institute for Cognitive and Brain Sciences at the University of California, Berkeley. Noë is a 2012 recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a 2018 winner of the Judd/Hume Prize in Advanced Visual Culture. He is a contributor to National Public Radio's science and culture blog *13.7 Cosmos and Culture*.

LUKE PELL (DRAMATURGY) is a Scotland-based artist fascinated by detail, nuances of time, texture, memory, and landscape. Maker, curator, and dramaturg, he collaborates with other artists and organizations to imagine alternative contexts for performance, participation, and discourse that might reveal wisdoms for living. Noticing threads that weave among people and places, his artistic projects take form as intimate encounters, poetic objects, installations, and designed environments—choreographies—for physical and digital spaces. Pell is a Dance Base Associate Artist 2017–19, Dramaturg in Residence with South East Dance 2018, an Associate Artist of Fevered Sleep, and regular collaborator with Janice Parker Projects.

YOANN TRELLU (VIDEO DESIGN) is a French video artist based in Berlin. He started working with live projection in 1999, first using photography and slide projections, but quickly moving to computer, video projection, and real-time media software such as Max/Msp/Jitter. He creates video content and develops custom video applications for performance and theater. In the last ten years, he has worked on more than forty productions in Germany, France, and the United States with Post Theater (Berlin, New York, Tokyo), Konzert Theater Bern (Switzerland), Landestheater Coburg (Germany), Tatraum Projekte Schmidt (Germany), TEN PEN CHii (Berlin), Shang-Chi Sun (Berlin, Taiwan), Junge Staatsoper (Berlin), Theater Strahl (Berlin), and Jess Curtis/Gravity.

MATTHIAS HERRMANN (MUSIC COMPOSITION) studied cello with Rudolf Mandalka at the Robert Schumann Hochschule,

ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION

Select MCA Stage 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.



BUY TICKETS

ONLINE
mcachicago.org/stage

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AT THE MCA
BOX OFFICE

220 E Chicago Ave
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Single performance tickets starting at \$30; \$10 for students, limited availability

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Present your MCA Stage 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

Düsseldorf, Germany. He has created numerous award-winning scores for the productions of international dance theater companies, including Do Theatres (Saint Petersburg, Russia), Fabrik Company (Potsdam, Germany), Howard Katz (Berlin/New York), and Jess Curtis/Gravity. He cofounded the internationally touring band PostHolocaustPop.

CHRIS COPLAND

(LIGHTING DESIGN)

graduated from Goldsmiths College with an MA in theater arts in 2001 and has worked extensively in theater and dance since 1993. He has worked as a production manager for Bedlam Dance, Nigel Charnock, Ursula Martinez, Laila Diallo and Wendy Houston, and Flexer & Sandiland, among many others, and as a lighting designer for Nigel Charnock, H2 Dance, Tavaziva Dance, Candoco Dance Company, Ursula Martinez, Kate McIntosh, and Wendy Houston. Chris regularly gives lectures on acting and devising for the theater.

MICHEL KEUPER (COSTUMES AND SET)

graduated in fashion design from ArtEZ Institute of the Arts in Arnhem, Netherlands. With his fashion label, Keupr/van Bentm, he presented his collections during Paris Fashion Week for several years, and his autonomous fashion work is represented in museum collections and exhibited internationally. In recent years, he has extended his practice to fine arts, performance, and art direction—including painting and set and costume design for contemporary dance—as well as singing. Recently he has worked with Hana Lee Erdman, Jeremy Wade, Miguel Gutierrez, Antonija Livingstone, and Sheena McGrandles.



Claire Cunningham and Jess Curtis, *The Way You Look (at me) Tonight*.
Photo: hagolani.com.

DATE NIGHT



Marisol. Photo: Herman Hiller.

Join us for dinner or drinks before or after the theater at Marisol, named one of the hottest restaurants in Chicago by Zagat and one of *Vogue's* "Six Chicago Restaurants You Should Know About Now." Call 312-799-3599 to make reservations.

MARISOL

RESTAURANT AND BAR
AT THE MCA

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SEASON CALENDAR

2017

Sep 7-10

600 HIGHWAYMEN
The Fever

Oct 5-8

Marc Bamuthi Joseph/
The Living Word Project
*/peh-LO-tah/-a futbol
framed freedom suite . . .*

Nov 9-12

Faye Driscoll
*Thank You For
Coming: Play*

Dec 7-10

Twyla Tharp
Minimalism and Me

2018

Jan 25-28

Federico León
Las ideas

Feb 8-11

Claire Cunningham
& Jess Curtis
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Apr 6-7

Mind Over Mirrors
Bellowing Sun

Apr 12-15

Okwui Okpokwasili
Poor People's TV Room

May 24-26

Kaneza Schaal
and Cornell Alston
Jack &

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Program notes
compiled by
Tara Aisha Willis

MCA
CHIC
AGO

The MCA's newest affinity group, Enact, is a group of MCA donors dedicated to supporting the renowned programs of MCA Stage. Join today for opportunities to meet artists, gain behind-the-scenes access, and discuss groundbreaking directions with leading curators—all while providing vital support.

BENEFITS OF ENACT MEMBERSHIP INCLUDE:

- Members-only programming throughout the MCA Stage season, such as intimate gatherings with MCA performance leadership, pre- and post-performance discussions with artists, and behind-the-scenes access to select rehearsals
- Invitation to Season Reveal, an annual preview of the upcoming season
- Opportunities for complimentary drinks and tickets

Circle Donor membership is required to join Enact. Enact dues are an additional \$1,000 annually. For more information, contact us at enact@mcachicago.org.

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*Enact Chair
As of January 2018

SUPPORT FOR MCA STAGE
Lead support for the 2017-18 season of MCA Stage 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, Sharon and Lee Oberlander, Maya Polsky, Carol Prins and John Hart/The Jessica Fund, Susan Manning and Doug Doetsch, D. Elizabeth Price and Lou Yecies, and Ms. Shavvn M. Donnelley and Dr. Christopher M. Kelly.

Additional generous support for MCA Stage is provided by Enact, the MCA's performance 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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ABOUT MCA STAGE
As an internationally renowned institution devoted to contemporary culture, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago presents the most thought-provoking visual art and performing arts of our time. MCA Stage is a vibrant series presenting theater, dance, and music by leading artists from the United States and around the world in the MCA's three-hundred seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

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 coat check for \$12 parking in the MCA garage (220 E Chicago Ave) 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.

GENERAL INFORMATION
312-280-2660

BOX OFFICE
312-397-4010

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CHICAGO, IL 60611
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