



Photo: John Hodgkiss

**Handspring Puppet
Company
Woyzeck on the Highveld**

**Thursday—
Sunday,
September
27–30, 2012**

**Museum of
Contemporary Art
Chicago**

**Edlis Neeson
Theater**

Artists Up Close

Artists Up Close

Gain insight into the creative process through these intimate opportunities to engage with the artists.

First Night

Thursday, September 27
Following the opening-night performance, audience members are invited to engage in a conversation with the artists about the work, moderated by Peter Taub, Director of Performance Programs at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

MCA DNA: William Kentridge

On view through March 17, 2013
Organized in conjunction with Handspring Puppet Company's *Wayzeck on the Highveld*, this exhibition is part of an ongoing exhibition series featuring iconic works from the MCA Collection. Acclaimed for his work in animated film, visual art, theater, and opera, William Kentridge had his first survey exhibition in the United States in 2001 at MCA Chicago. From this exhibition, the MCA acquired more than a dozen drawings and two of his best-known films: *Felix in Exile* (1994) and *History of the Main Complaint* (1996), both of which are on view.

The drawings featured in the exhibition are those used to make this latter film—charcoal sketches that Kentridge erased and reworked to create the memorable segments that depict his alter egos and their struggles in late and post-apartheid Johannesburg: Felix Teitlebaum, the romantic artist who is always shown nude, and Soho Eckstein, the self-absorbed, wealthy mine owner and land developer who always wears a pinstriped suit.

Also on view is the torn-paper collage *Portage* (2000), which features pages from a vintage French-language encyclopedia as its background. Created specifically for the catalogue that accompanied the MCA's 2001 exhibition of the artist's work, this collage depicts the march of variously weary, stalwart, and exuberant characters in silhouette and is a poignant commentary on the human condition, rooted in the dramatic events of South Africa's recent history.

MCA DNA: William Kentridge is organized by Lynne Warren, Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

Generous support for *MCA DNA: William Kentridge* is provided by Susan and Lew Manilow, and Lois and Steve Eisen and The Eisen Family Foundation.

Handspring Puppet Company

Woyzeck on the Highveld

A play for puppets and
animated projections

Based on the play by
Georg Büchner

Directed by William Kentridge
Assisted by Janni Younge

Designed by Adrian Kohler and
William Kentridge

Animation by William Kentridge

Lighting design by
Wesley France

Mncedisi Shabangu,
*The Barker, The Miner,
Margaret, and Andries*
Nkosinathi Gaar, *The Captain*
Jason Potgieter, *The Doctor*
Mongi Mthombeni, *Woyzeck*
Busi Zokufa, *Maria*

Sound engineering by
Simon Mahoney

Stage management by
Bruce Koch

Music produced by
Steve Cooks and
Edward Jordan
Sound design by
Wilbert Schoubel
Clara Hooyberg, *cello*
Alfred Makgalemele,
piano accordion
Isaac Van Graan,
piano accordion

Puppet construction by
Adrian Kohler
Puppet construction assisted
by Francois Viljoen and
Erica Elk
Animation assisted by Erica Elk
Video edited by Thabo Nel
Original lighting design
by Mannie Manim
Set construction by
Francois Viljoen
Costumes by Hazel Maree

Produced by Basil Jones
Production management
by Wesley France

Generous support for *Woyzeck on Highveld* is provided by Susan and Lew Manilow, and Lois and Steve Eisen and The Eisen Family Foundation.

Major Revival 2008. Original Production 1992. Support provided by The Standard Bank National Arts Festival, the Johannesburg City Council, the Foundation for the Creative Arts, the German Embassy in South Africa, and the Department of National Education and Art Bureau (Munich).

Handspring Puppet Company's activities in the Americas and the Pacific Rim are produced by Deirdre Valente, Lisa Booth Management, Inc.

www.handspringpuppet.co.za

MCA Stage

Theater

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About the work



Photo: John Hodgkiss

From the 1992 original production:

I first came across the play *Woyzeck* in Barney Simon's remarkable production in the old Arena Theatre in Doornfontein [Johannesburg, South Africa] in the 1970s. Characters and images from the play have floated on the edges of my consciousness since then. For many years I have wanted to do some form of production of the work as it seemed to me that the anguish and desperation of Büchner's text does not need to be locked into the context of Germany in the 19th century, and that the similar circumstances that exist in South Africa today make this play completely eloquent in a local setting.

The second source of this production is to be found in the desire to work with puppetry in general and the Handspring Puppet Company in particular—to work in an area in which performance and drawing come together, to try to see if one could find an emotional depth and weight without recourse to the obvious techniques of psychological transformation of an actor's face.

The third source is the animated films that I have been making. The cumbersome and archaic technique of charcoal drawing and erasure that I use imposes severe limitations on the mobility and interaction of the drawn figures. Working with puppets and these animated films attempts

to bring the possibilities of versatile three-dimensional movements into the work I have been doing.

This is my first experience of working with puppets and the discoveries have been enormous. Each day of rehearsal has brought revelations of the things that puppets can do better than their living counterparts (try training a rhinoceros to write or an infant to fly on cue). Also worth watching out for is that strange condition where the manipulation of the puppets is completely transparent, where, in spite of seeing the palpable artificiality of the movement of the puppet, one cannot stop believing in the puppet's own volition and autonomy.

William Kentridge
Director, *Woyzeck on the Highveld*

From the 2008 revival:

In the strange, convoluted world of oppression and enlightenment that constituted Prussia in the 19th century, there was a law which stated that anyone condemned to death, had first to be examined by a psychiatrist before he could be executed. The psychiatric report of one such person, a private in the army condemned to death for the murder of his common law wife, formed the basis of the play *Woyzeck*, written by Georg Büchner, in 1875. The play was an unfinished series of fragments at the time of the author's death at the age of 25, and it was not performed until some 40 years later. Since then its mixture of fragmentation, rationality and irrationality have made it a central text in 20th-century theatre. Handspring Puppet Company and I were drawn to the text both

for its substance but also for its abbreviated, fragmentary form. Both puppetry and animation are short forms, puppetry because of the conflict between the weight of a puppet and the strength of an arm, animation because of the hours of labor needed to draw even short sequences.

This production was the first collaboration between me and Handspring Puppet Company, and when we made it some 15 years ago, we had the blessing of absolutely not knowing what we were doing: making the form, and the grammar of the form, as we went along. In the subsequent productions of *Faustus in Africa!*, *Ubu Tells the Truth*, *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse*, and *Confessions of Zeno*, we have always worked with the disadvantage of hindsight. In this presentation, there are some changes of puppetry controls, some changes of manipulation, but essentially we are making a restaging of the original production. We hope new audiences find pleasure both in Büchner's remarkable text, and our production of it. But in truth this restaging is a gift to ourselves, as we try to rediscover some of the things we did not know.

William Kentridge
Director, *Woyzeck on the Highveld*

About the artists

Handspring Puppet Company

has explored the boundaries of puppet theater since 1981, and is directed by Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones. Based in Cape Town, South Africa, with a new second home in London, the company provides an artistic and professional base for a core group of performers, designers, theater artists, and technicians. Thys Stander, Handspring's chief puppet maker, is responsible for ongoing training at Handspring's factory in Cape Town.

Handspring's productions have been presented at major venues and festivals in more than thirty countries around the world. It has toured the United States extensively, starting in 1994 with *Woyzeck on the Highveld*, the first of six collaborations with William Kentridge. This team's subsequent productions to tour the United States include *Faustus in Africa* (1994), *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1998), *Zeno at 4AM* (2001, which included performances at MCA Stage), *Confessions of Zeno* (2002 and 2003), and *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse* (1998, 2004, and 2009). *Tall Horse*, made in collaboration with Yaya Coulibaly's Sogolon Troupe from Mali, and initiated by the Kennedy Center, opened the Next Wave Festival at BAM and toured the United States in 2005. In 2010, Handspring partnered with playwright and director Neil Bartlett on *Or You Could Kiss Me*, produced by the National Theatre. Handspring's most recent production, *Ouroboros*, directed by Handspring's associate director, Janni Younge, was presented at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town in 2011.

Handspring UK, launched in 2012, is run by British puppeteers under the leadership of artistic director Mervyn Millar. It has a new

workshop and offices in London, adjacent to the National Theatre's Studio. As part of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, Handspring UK presented *Crow*, a new dance/poetry piece with puppets, inspired by the writing of British poet laureate Ted Hughes.

The programs of Handspring Trust for Puppetry Arts, a nonprofit organization, identify, mentor, and champion the next generation of puppetry artists through workshops, academic engagement, and the support of ongoing projects in rural areas and townships. The Trust has premises in the informal settlement of Vrygrond near Handspring's Cape Town puppet factory. The book *Handspring Puppet Company* is a comprehensive survey and catalog raisonné of the company's work that includes essays, drawings, and hundreds of detailed full-color photographs. It was produced by David Krut Publishing in 2010.

Handspring was entrusted with the puppet direction, design, and fabrication of the creatures in *War Horse*, the National Theatre of Great Britain's theatrical hit that is currently playing on three continents. The complex cane sculpture techniques, required for the horses of *War Horse*, were developed by Thys Stander, Handspring's chief puppet maker. *War Horse* has earned Handspring many accolades, including an Olivier, Evening Standard, London Critics' Circle, Tony, and Outer Critics Circle Award as well as a special Drama Desk award for Thrilling Stagecraft.

William Kentridge

is a South African artist who makes innovative use of charcoal drawing, prints, collages, sculpture, stop-animation, film, opera, and



Photo: John Hodgkiss

theater. Kentridge sees his work as a personal route across the legacy of apartheid and colonialism rooted in Johannesburg—the city in which he was born and continues to work today. His works have been exhibited and staged around the world since the 1990s. In 2010, he was awarded the Kyoto Prize and made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera, staging and designing Dmitri Shostakovich's *The Nose*. *William Kentridge: Five Themes*, a large-scale exhibition that surveys nearly three decades of work and underscores the interrelatedness of his media and disciplines has been presented around the world since 2009, notably at the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Jeu de Paume (Paris), Albertina Museum (Vienna), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (Texas), Australian Centre for the Moving Image (Melbourne), the Israel Museum (Jerusalem), and the

Vancouver Art Gallery. Other works include *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, a solo lecture/performance piece and installation, and *Black Box/Chambre Noire*, a miniature piece with mechanized puppets and projection with original music by Philip Miller, commissioned by Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin.

MCA Stage

Theater

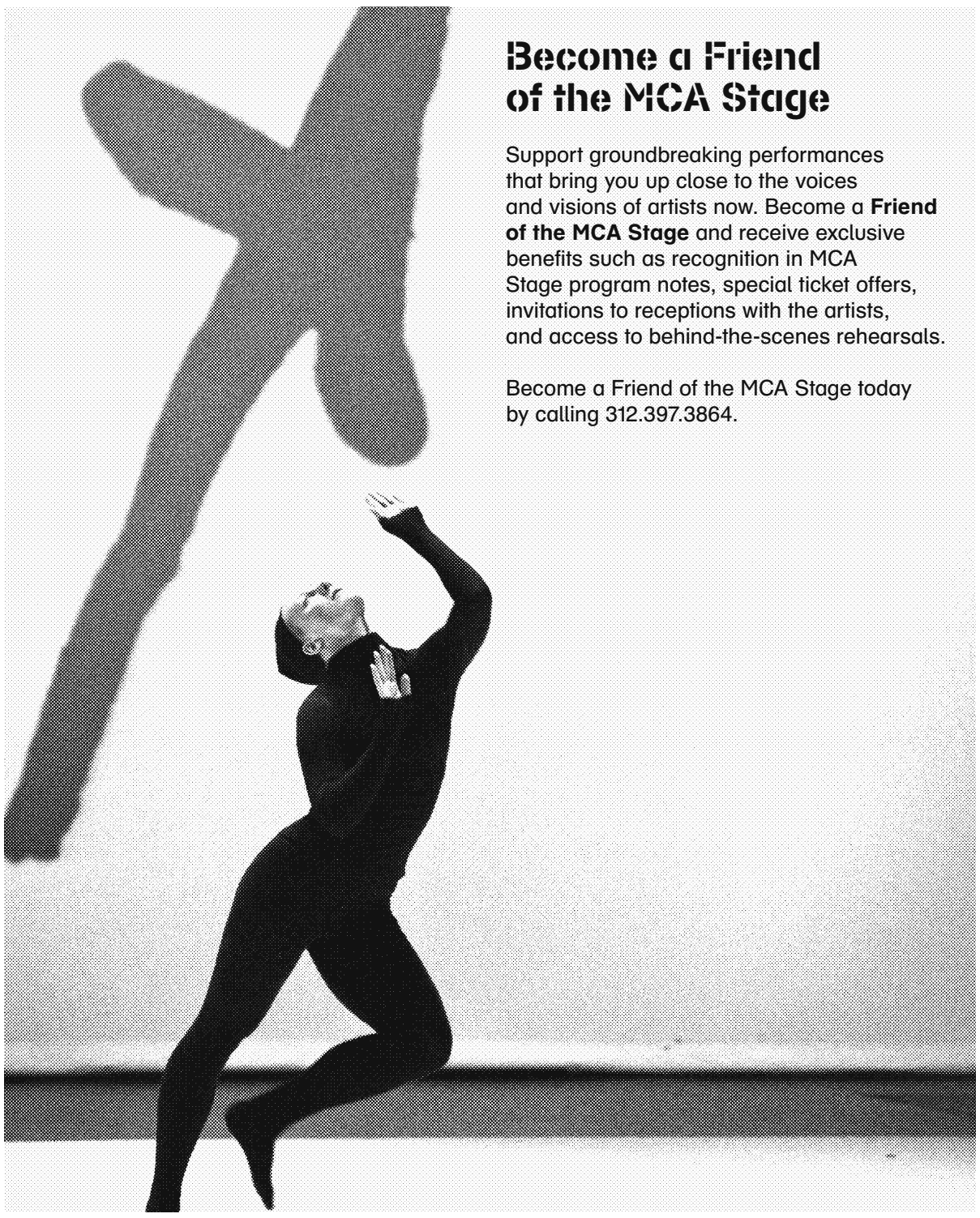
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A black and white photograph of a person in a black jumpsuit reaching up towards a large, stylized 'X' shape on a wall. The person is in a dynamic pose, with one leg bent and arms reaching upwards. The 'X' is a large, dark, textured shape that dominates the upper left portion of the image. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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As of August 2012

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As one of the nation's largest multidisciplinary museums devoted to the art of our time, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago offers exhibitions of the most thought-provoking art of today. The museum's performing arts program, MCA Stage, is the most active presenter of theater, dance, and music in Chicago, featuring leading performers from around the globe in the 300-seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

MCA Stage is committed to presenting groundbreaking performances that focus on collaboration; working closely with artists; converging with the larger programming of the museum; and offering a contemporary view of the traditional roots of performance.

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Program notes compiled by
Yolanda Cesta Cursach

Courtesy Guidelines and Information

Parking

Validate your ticket at coat check for \$11 parking in the MCA garage (220 East Chicago Avenue) and Bernardin garage (747 North Wabash Avenue). The \$11 parking is limited to six hours on date of performance.

Lost and found

To inquire about a lost item, call the museum at 312.280.2660. Unclaimed articles are held for 30 days.

Seating

Switch off all noise-making devices while you are in the theater.

Late arrivals are seated at the management's discretion. Food and open beverage containers are not allowed in the seating area.

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Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago
220 East Chicago Avenue
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mcchicago.org

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