



Photo: Armen Elliott

**International
Contemporary Ensemble
Correspondence:
Cage and Boulez**

**Saturday,
October 6, 2012**

**Museum of
Contemporary Art
Chicago**

**Edlis Neeson
Theater**

Correspondance: Cage and Boulez

Steven Schick, *conductor*

Jessica Aszodi, *voice*

International
Contemporary Ensemble
Eric Lamb, *flutes*
Maiya Papach, *viola*
Daniel Lippel, *guitar*
Nathan Davis, *percussion*
Ross Karre, *percussion*
Matthew Gold, *percussion*



Photo: Erin Baiano

All Boulez compositions from
Le marteau sans maître (1954)

Pierre Boulez: *Avant*
"l'artisanat furieux," for alto
flute, percussion, guitar,
and viola

John Cage: *Music for two, for
flute and viola, from Music
For* _____ (1984–87)

Boulez: *Commentaire I de*
"bourreaux de solitude," for
alto flute, percussion,
and viola

Cage: *Amores, Mvt. II, for*
tom-toms (1943)

Boulez: "L'artisanat furieux,"
for voice and alto flute

Cage: *Aria*, for voice (1942)

Boulez: *Commentaire II de*
"bourreaux de solitude," for
percussion, guitar, and viola

Cage: *59 and 1/2" for a string
player*, for viola (1953)

Boulez: "Bel édifice et les
presentiments," version I,
for voice, alto flute, guitar,
and viola

Cage: *4' 33"* (1960)

Boulez: "Bourreaux de
solitude," for voice, alto flute,
percussion, guitar, and viola

Cage: *Radio Music*, for eight
radios (1956)

Boulez: *Après "l'artisanat
furieux,"* for alto flute,
percussion, and guitar

Cage: *Solo for flute, from
Concert for Piano* (1958)

Boulez: *Commentaire III de*
"bourreaux de solitude," for
alto flute and percussion

Cage: *Atlas Eclipticalis*, for
ensemble (1961–62)

Boulez: "Bel édifice et les
presentiments," version II,
for voice, alto flute,
percussion, guitar, and viola

Cage: *Amores, Mvt. III for
woodblocks* (1943)

This performance runs
approximately 70 minutes
without intermission.

Support for this project is
generously provided by the
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ICE's 2012/13 residency at MCA
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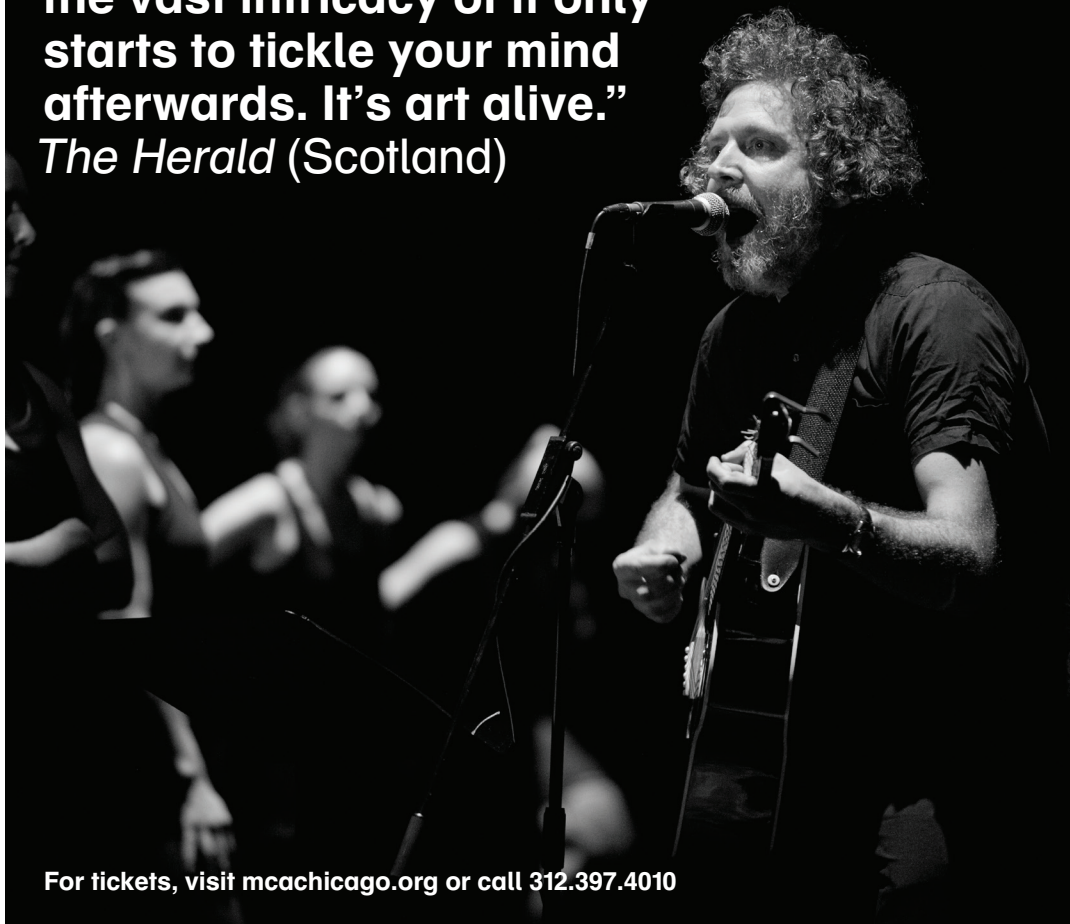


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Work No. 1020, 2009. Theater show including ballet, talk, and music. Photo: Hugo Glendinning, courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York

The residency

Today's concert is the first of three distinct performances you'll hear this season by ICE (International Contemporary Ensemble), the ensemble in residence at MCA Stage.

In 2010 ICE and MCA Stage embarked on a shared three-year commitment to an entrepreneurial approach to music by originating work and devising its rehearsal and concert performance in ways that actively engage composers, and by opening the process to the public in myriad settings. The residency is also distinguished by the nontraditional formats, intimate settings, and popular technology that shape most of the public offerings. We invite you to come along for this captivating musical adventure.

Additional performances by ICE at MCA Stage

Carla Kihlstedt and Phyllis Chen

Saturday, February 16, 2013

The winter concert is a finely textured double portrait of young composers who worked closely with ICE to write the commissioned works and who also perform in this program.

David Lang: *The Whisper Opera*

Thursday–Sunday, May 30–June 2, 2013

The audience joins the musicians on stage for this world premiere of Lang's chamber opera, written for ICE and based on inspiring visits he made to small opera houses in rural Italy. puppet's own volition and autonomy.

MCA DNA: John Cage:

On view through March 3, 2013

Today's performance by ICE was inspired by and aims to illuminate the exhibition *MCA DNA: John Cage*. In the exhibition, curator Lynne Warren traces the fruitful and decades-long relationship that MCA Chicago enjoyed with John Cage. The MCA supported Cage from the very beginning, inviting him to perform a work with fellow Fluxus collaborators Dick Higgins and Allison Knowles as part of the October 1967 opening celebration of the museum's inaugural exhibition, *Pictures to be Read/Poetry to be Seen*. Over the years Cage returned numerous times to Chicago, where he lived in the early 1940s, often stopping at the MCA to execute various projects or see friends.

Perhaps his best-known project associated with the MCA was part of the 1982 New Music America festival. For this pioneering music festival, administered by the MCA, Cage realized *A Dip in the Lake: Ten Quicksteps, Sixty-two Waltzes, and Fifty-six Marches for Chicago and Vicinity* (1978), a score created on a map of Chicago. Materials demonstrating how to interpret the score of this important work, which later entered the MCA Collection, are on view along with scores and books drawn from the more than eighty items associated with Cage in the MCA Artists' Books Collection. Ephemeral materials, such as letters written to MCA staff and other historical documents that trace Cage's legacy at the MCA, are also displayed.

From the conductor

Legend has it that around 1950 the thirty-eight-year-old John Cage and the twenty-five-year-old Pierre Boulez became good friends. Each saw in the other a kindred spirit, and for several years they exchanged letters that testify to a close even intimate rapport. But as their friendship grew so did fundamental differences of opinion about music and the creative process. Boulez was developing complex and disciplined compositional strategies while Cage sought to release himself from dogma and structure. Eventually friction became greater than fluency and their relationship ground to a halt. Like other famous flawed friendships—Morton Feldman and Philip Guston, who quarreled over the value of the perfected object in art; John Lennon and Paul McCartney, who fought about whether music needed to reach beyond itself to embrace the *real* world—Cage and Boulez became another object lesson in aesthetic compatibility. Apparently opposites do not attract. It's best to stick with a like-minded cohort.

That's the legend. But I don't buy it.

Mind you, I don't have even the slightest actual insight into the Boulez-Cage friendship other than having read their famous correspondence.

But I do know their scores from this period, and the myth that Boulez was the serious defender of musical rigor while Cage was the all-inclusive Zen master doesn't pass the sniff test.

Betty Freeman, the great doyenne of contemporary music, once told me that their friendship failed because Boulez couldn't accept Cage's assertion that eating mushrooms

was art. This may have been a symptom, but it couldn't have been the cause.

The Boulez-Cage correspondence is a series of letters, written mostly in French, starting in the late 1940s and ending in 1954 about the time that Boulez was hard at work on *Le marteau sans maître*, the work that forms the spine of tonight's concert.

They are at times generous and warm, often full of wonky composition talk, occasionally tending toward the banal. They tell us a lot about how different life was for young composers in the early 1950s (letters addressed to hotels along tours rather than as texts or e-mail), and they show some commonalties (how to get a new piece played for a receptive audience). They reinforce that Cage was by far the older and more experienced composer (see Boulez's innocent question when Cage invited him to teach at Middleboro: "You will blush at my ignorance . . . where is Vermont?")

But what the letters do not show is much serious disagreement about the fundamental musical issues facing them. Each articulated the need for a highly constructed compositional methodology that tied the surface of music to deep structures. Each was suspicious of the conventional expressive markers of emotion and intuition in musical composition and performance.

In fact looking at their letters in combination with their scores leads this writer to imagine that their friendship faltered not because their philosophies were so different but precisely because they were so similar.

Revolutions are celebrated when they are no longer dangerous.
—Pierre Boulez

There is nothing we need to do that isn't dangerous.
—John Cage

They had remarkably similar goals, of formal and interpretative purity, but their strategies for realizing them differed substantially. Boulez endeavored to extend the rational project of Anton Webern and the rhythmic one of Olivier Messiaen—in essence rephrasing the past—whereas Cage, equally rigorously, had embarked on the search for new chance structures rooted in the ontology of the unknown and thereby to divorce himself from the past. One of them wanted to remember and the other to forget.

We seek to capture the flavor if not the particulars of their rapport by interposing short pieces by Cage between the movements of *Le marteau*.

We'll hear the pulsating multi-cultural percussion writing in Boulez's *Commentaire I de "Bourreaux de solitude"* followed by its prequel from 1943 in the Chinese tom-toms of Cage's *Amores*. The angularity of *Avant l'Artisanat Furieux* is mirrored by its indeterminate twin *Music For* _____.

At the mid-point of our concert each composer deploys his most formidable weaponry. Featuring his first use of the full ensemble and full array of harmonic strategies, "*Bourreaux de solitude*" is Boulez's essay on musical saturation, more indebted in terms of texture to Maurice Ravel than to Darmstadt. In the Cagian universe saturation is represented in its purest form by silence.

Directly preceding "*Bourreaux*" is 4'33"—possibly the purest (and perhaps most beautiful) musical statement of the twentieth century. To the extent that the narrative of

the Cage-Boulez friendship is embedded in this concert, the juxtaposition of these two pieces represents its most intimate apogee.

From here the gulf widens. "*Bourreaux*" is followed by the noise of an ensemble of radios; the second "*Commentaire*" by the star chart of *Atlas Eclipticalis*. Finally there is the "double" version of "*Bel édifice*," a study in memory where the disparate threads of musical materials and René Char's atomized verse are drawn together in symbiosis. In *Le marteau* the past has been remembered and reformulated; the voice has become an instrument; the apparent similarities between *Le marteau sans maître* and *Pierrot Lunaire* have been made evident. But the last word is given to the third movement of *Amores*. This is music nearly without precedent—as simple a statement of formal intent rendered with as simple a set of sounds as has been heard since Guillaume de Machaut.

Our aim is not to be didactic; we were simply curious. As products of a dichotomous musical education in which modernism and experimentalism were often falsely pitted against one another, we wondered whether two of the most profiled representatives of those schools were really antithetical to one another. Might Cage and Boulez continue to correspond even today through their music? We'll leave final observations to you. But as we celebrate Cage's hundredth birthday this year it's worth returning to a letter Boulez wrote to Cage on his seventieth birthday, in 1982. "If you had not existed," Boulez wrote, "history would have had to invent you. Fortunately for us, though, you had the genius to invent yourself."—Steven Schick

Le marteau sans maître

“L'artisanat furieux”

La roulotte rouge au bord du clou Et cadavre
dans le panier Et chevaux de labours dans
le fer à cheval Je rêve la tête sur la pointe
de mon couteau le Pérou.

“Bourreaux de solitude”

Le pas s'est éloigné le marcheur s'est tu
Sur le cadran de l'Imitation Le Balancier
lance sa charge de granit réflexe.

“Bel édifice et les presentiments”

J'écoute marcher dans mes jambes La mer
morte vagues par dessus tête Enfant la
jetée promenade sauvage Homme l'illusion
imitée Des yeux purs dans les bois Cherchent
en pleurant la tête habitable.

“The furious craftsmanship”

The red caravan on the edge of the nail
And corpse in the basket And plowhorses in
the horseshoe I dream the head on the point
of my knife Peru.

“Hangmen of solitude”

The step has gone away, the walker has fallen
silent On the dial of Imitation The Pendulum
throws its instinctive load of granite.

“Stately building and presentiments”

I hear marching in my legs The dead sea
waves overhead Child the wild seaside
pier Man the imitated illusion Pure eyes
in the woods Are searching in tears for
a habitable head.

From the 1934 poem by
René Char (French, 1907–88)

MCA Stage

Music

Tacit Group
Nov 30, 2012

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About the Artists

John Cage (1912–92)

was born in Los Angeles and studied with Richard Buhlig, Henry Cowell, Adolph Weiss, and Arnold Schoenberg. In 1940 he invented the prepared piano, a piano with objects placed between the strings to create a percussion orchestra. The prepared piano was the first of many innovations in nonstandard use of instruments, including electroacoustic music, such as his rigorous assembly of the tape music work *Williams Mix*.

For many years, Cage composed works using chance operations based on the I Ching, exploring non-intention and ambient sound. Perhaps Cage's most influential theory, indeterminacy, emerged at this time, first through a chance-based composition process, as in *Music of Changes*. Cage went on to leave much to chance in not only composition but also performance, as in his *Variations* series, composed "for any number of players and any sound producing means," such that no two performances are alike. His most famous composition, *4'33"*, is four minutes and thirty-three seconds of the performer not playing, such that only unintentional noise is heard.

From the early 1940s, Cage was associated with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, where musical indeterminacy expanded into choreography, and a fruitful collaboration radically innovated both musical and choreographic compositions. In their works, Cunningham's choreography and Cage's composition are coexistent rather than codependent, a concept Cage expanded in his *Europerras*. Invited by Heinz Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn with the assistance of Andrew Culver, Cage wrote, designed, and directed

Europerras 1 & 2 for the Frankfurt Opera in 1987. *Europerras 3 & 4* followed in 1990, commissioned by the Almeida Music Festival and Modus Vivandi Foundation.

Cage's many awards and honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship and an Honorary Doctorate of Performing Arts from the California Institute of the Arts. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the fifty-member American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters in France.

Pierre Boulez (b. 1925)

was born in Montbrison, France, and initially trained in mathematics. He pursued studies in piano, composition, and choral conducting at the Paris Conservatory, where his teachers included Olivier Messiaen and René Leibowitz. His numerous compositions are considered hugely influential and are widely performed, including *Pli selon pli*, three piano sonatas, *Le visage nuptial*, *Répons*, . . . *explosante-fixe* . . . and *Notations*. His compositions significantly contribute to serialism, controlled chance, and electronic music. His 1954 landmark composition, *Le marteau sans maître*, for ensemble and voice, synthesizes disparate movements in modern music, combining structured serialism with small, local uses of chance, as well as incorporating non-Western influences.

A tireless advocate for new music, he founded, in 1954, the Concerts du Petit Marigny, one of the first concert series entirely dedicated to the performance of modern music, and which later became the Domaine Musical series. His difference of opinion about state intervention

in the arts in France, as espoused by André Malraux, led Boulez into voluntary exile for several years. He returned in 1974, when the government under President Georges Pompidou decided to build a music research center at the Pompidou Centre and invited Boulez to be its creator and director. From the Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM) sprang the creation of a major and permanent instrumental group, the Ensemble Intercontemporain, one of the world's finest contemporary music ensembles, which Boulez has conducted in France as well as on extended tours abroad.

Boulez began his conducting career in 1958 with the Südwestfunk Orchestra in Baden-Baden, Germany, and in 1965 with the Cleveland Orchestra. In 1971, he became chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and that same year he became music director of the New York Philharmonic, garnering him a reputation as a foremost interpreter of music by Berg, Webern, and Schoenberg as well as Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, and Wagner. In 2006, he was appointed the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus.

His many awards and honors include honorary doctorates from Leeds, Cambridge, Basel, and Oxford universities, among others; Commander of the British Empire; and Knight of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 2009 he was awarded the Inamori Foundation's 25th Annual Kyoto Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Arts and Philosophy. He also received the 1999 award for Best Classical Contemporary Composition for his *Répons*, recorded with the Ensemble Intercontemporain. He has won twenty-six Grammy Awards since 1967.

Steven Schick

was born in Iowa and raised in a farming family. For the past thirty years he has championed contemporary percussion music as a performer and teacher, by commissioning and premiering more than one hundred new works for percussion. He was the percussionist of the Bang on a Can All-Stars of New York City from 1992 to 2002, and from 2000 to 2004 served as Artistic Director of the Centre International de Percussion de Genève in Geneva, Switzerland. Schick is founder and Artistic Director of the percussion group red fish blue fish. In 2007 he was named Music Director and conductor of the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus. Schick founded and is currently artistic director of "Roots and Rhizomes," an annual summer course on contemporary percussion music held at the Banff Centre for the Arts. In 2011 he was named Artistic Director of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players.

His recent publications include a book on solo percussion music, *The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams*; a three CD set of the complete percussion music of Iannis Xenakis (Mode); and a 2012 DVD release of the early percussion music of Karlheinz Stockhausen. Schick is Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego. In 2012 he became the first ever Artist in Residence with the International Contemporary Ensemble.

Jessica Aszodi

is from Melbourne, Australia. Her performance practice encompasses opera, chamber music, experimental, conventional, and contemporary-classical music. She is an alumna of the Victorian Opera Company's

Artist Development Program, where she studied opera performance in 2008–09. She later gained a Master of Contemporary Music Performance degree from the University of California. Aszodi has sung roles for Victorian Opera including Mozart's Elvira (*Don Giovanni*); Richard Strauss's Echo (*Ariadne auf Naxos*); Walton's Popova (*The Bear*); Elliot Carter's Rose (*What Next?*); Handel's Atalanta (*Serse*); and Sesto (*Guilio Cesare*), for which she was nominated for a Greenroom Award. Her roles for other companies include Stockhausen's Eve (*Dienstag aus Licht*), Menotti's Monica (*The medium*), Mozart's Aminta (*Il re pastore*) and the title role in Satie's *Socrates*. Aszodi has performed with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the Center for Contemporary Opera New York, Speak Percussion, the La Jolla Symphony, the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Orchestra, Astra Chamber Music Society, Bang on a Can, and eighth blackbird. She has sung at the Aldeburgh Festival (UK); the Macau International Music Festival (China); Music X (Switzerland); and the Melbourne International Biennale of Exploratory Music, Melbourne International Arts Festival, and Vivid Sydney Festival (Australia). Upcoming projects include performing works by Percy Grainger with Sir Colin Davis and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Aszodi is co-director of the vocal ensemble Aria Co. She has received grants from the Australia Council for the Arts, the City of Melbourne and Arts Victoria.

ICE (International Contemporary Ensemble)

is dedicated to reshaping the way music is created and experienced. With a modular makeup of thirty-three leading instrumentalists performing in forces ranging from solos to large ensembles, ICE functions as performer,

presenter, and educator, advancing the music of our time by developing innovative new works and new strategies for audience engagement. ICE redefines concert music as it brings together new work and new listeners in the twenty-first century. Since its founding in 2001, ICE has premiered more than 500 compositions, the majority of these new works by emerging composers, in venues ranging from alternate spaces to concert halls around the world. The ensemble received the American Music Center's Trailblazer Award in 2010 for its contributions to the field, and received the ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming in 2005 and in 2010. ICE is Ensemble in Residence at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago through 2013. The ICE musicians also serve as Artists in Residence at the Mostly Mozart Festival of Lincoln Center through 2013, curating and performing chamber music programs that juxtapose new and old music.

ICE has released acclaimed albums on the Nonesuch, Kairos, Bridge, Naxos, Tzadik, New Focus and New Amsterdam labels, with several forthcoming releases on Mode Records. Recent and upcoming highlights include headline performances at the Lincoln Center Festival (New York), Musica Nova Helsinki (Finland), Wien Modern (Austria), Acht Brücken Music for Cologne (Germany), La Cite de la Musique (Paris) and tours of Japan, Brazil and France. ICE has worked closely with conductors Ludovic Morlot, Matthias Pintscher, John Adams, and Susanna Malkki.

With leading support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, ICE launched ICElab in early 2011. The program places teams of

ICE musicians in close collaboration with six emerging composers each year to develop works that push the boundaries of musical exploration. ICElab projects are featured in more than one hundred performances from 2011–14 and documented online through DigitICE, a new online venue.

ICE's commitment to build a diverse, engaged audience for the music of our time has inspired The Listening Room, a new educational initiative for public schools without in-house arts curricula. Using team-based composition and

graphic notation, ICE musicians lead students in the creation of new musical works, nurturing collaborative creative skills and building an appreciation for musical experimentation. Read more at www.iceorg.org.

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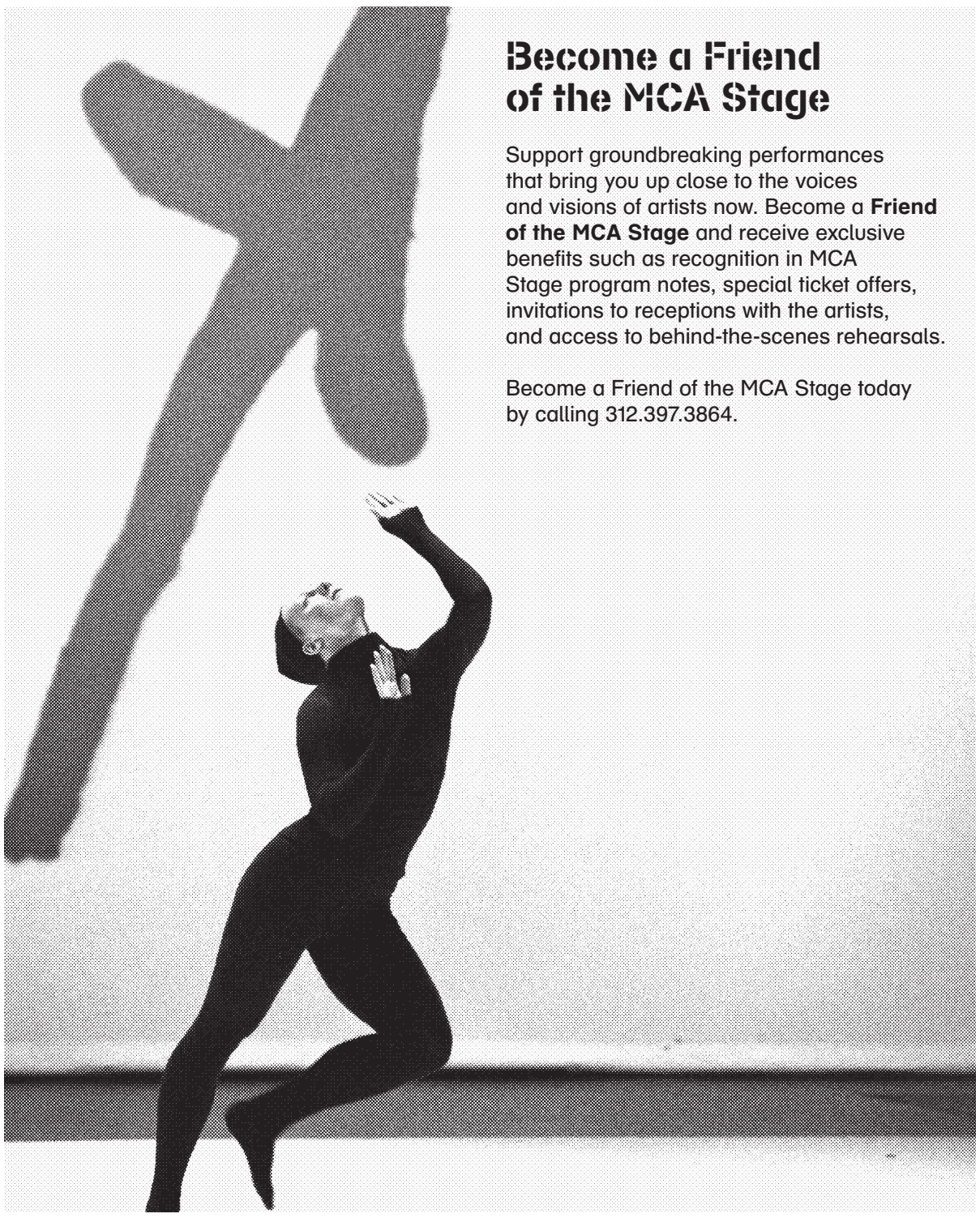
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Photo: Bill Dean

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 September 2012

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

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

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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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