

MCA Stage 2014–15

Theater
Dance
Music

at the
Edlis
Neeson
Theater

Winter/Spring

Manual Cinema

Mementos Mori

Jan 15–18, 2015

Stan's Cafe

The Cardinals

Jan 22–24, 2015

Sònia Sánchez

Le Ça (The Id)

Feb 13–15, 2015

Mariano Pensotti

Cineastas (Filmmakers)

Feb 26–Mar 1, 2015

Joffrey Academy of Dance

***Winning Works: Choreographers
of Color***

Mar 7–8, 2015

The Seldoms

Power Goes

Mar 20–29, 2015

Ragamala Dance +

Rudresh Mahanthappa

Song of the Jasmine

Apr 10–12, 2015

International Contemporary Ensem-

ble (ICE): Anna Thorvaldsdottir

In the Light of Air

Apr 25, 2015

Creative Music Summit:

Nicole Mitchell

May 2, 2015

Renée Baker

May 3, 2015

Third Coast Percussion with

Glenn Kotche

Wild Sound

May 21–22, 2015

Creative Music Summit
Nicole Mitchell:
Mandorla Awakening: Emerging Worlds
May 2, 2015
(world premiere)



Nicole Mitchell, Photo: Brad Walseth

Nicole Mitchell: Original music

Ulysses Jenkins: Video and lighting

Black Earth Ensemble
Nicole M. Mitchell,
Music Director

Nicole M. Mitchell, *flute and electronics*
Kojiro Umezaki, *shakuhachi and electronics*
Tomeka Reid, *cello and banjo*
Renée Baker, *violin*
Tatsu Aoki, bass, *shamisen and taiko*
avery r young, *vocals*
Jovia Armstrong, *percussion*
Alex Wing, *bass, electric guitar and oud*

Running time is seventy minutes with no intermission.

Nicole Mitchell: Mandorla Awakening: Emerging Worlds is a commission of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

The MCA presentation is in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), and contributes to the legacy and continuing bold and exciting directions that the AACM has charted for decades.

Support for Ulysses Jenkins as part of Creative Music Summit is generously provided by Black Cinema House and by Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture; Department of Cinema and Media Studies; Film Studies Center; Arts + Public Life; and the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago. Additional support is provided by the School of the Art Institute.

Special thanks to Jacqueline Najuma Stewart and to Rashayla Marie Brown.

Edlis Neeson Theater

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Creative Music Summit
Renée Baker:
Sunyata: Towards Absolute Emptiness
May 3, 2015
(world premiere)



Renée Baker, Photo: Michael S. Baker

Renée Baker: Original music

Chicago Modern Orchestra Project
Renée C. Baker, Music Director

Violin: Terrance Gray, Todd Matthews, Phyllis Sanders, Renaudo Christiansen-Robinson
Viola: Kevin Lin, Robert Fisher
Cello: William Porter, Ruth Archer
Bass: Karl EH Seigfried
Clarinet: Louis Gdalmán
Flute: Greg Blackburn, Elizabeth Diaz, Nicole M. Mitchell
Saxophone: David Boykin
Trumpet: Ben Lamar
Vibes: Bruce Nelson
Traps: Dushun Mosley
Guitar: Bill MacKay
Keyboard: Steward Wilson

Vocals: Dee Alexander, Taalib-din Ziyad, Saalik Ziyad, Ann E. Ward, Rae Myra Hilliard, Yoseph Henry, Dwayne Lee

The Bridge—a transatlantic network for creative music
Trumpet, flugelhorn: Jean-Luc Cappozzo
Woodwinds: Douglas R. Ewart
Double bass: Joëlle Léandre, Bernard Santacruz

The Pritzker College Prep Concert Choir, directed by Brian Pavloff.

Choreography and dance: Wannapa Pimtong-Eubanks, Cristal Sabbagh

Lighting design: Richard Norwood

Running time is ninety minutes.

Renée Baker: Sunyata: Towards Absolute Emptiness is a commission of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

The MCA presentation is in conjunction with the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), and in tribute to creative musicians and composers everywhere.

Artists Up Close

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. Join us today.

**First Night
May 2 & 3**
Audience members are invited to stay at the end of the performance for conversations with Nicole Mitchell and Ulysses Jenkins (May 2) and Renée Baker, Douglas R. Ewart, Dee Alexander, and Joëlle Léandre (May 3), both moderated by Yolanda Cesta Cursach, Associate Director of Performance Programs.

MCA Talk and Screen
On April 26, in partnership with Black Cinema House, the MCA hosted Nicole Mitchell, Renée Baker, media artist Ulysses Jenkins, film scholar



Above:
Renée Baker
Photo: Michael S. Baker

Below:
Michael Zerang
Reduction2
Photo: Ken Carl

Jacqueline Stewart, and film producer Don DiNicola for a conversation about the intersections of music and media as social practices. Following the panel discussion, Ulysses Jenkins introduced selections from his works, including *Cake Walk*, *Two Zone Transfer*, and *Secrecy: Help Me to Understand*. Concluding the day, Don DiNicola introduced his restored print of Oscar Micheaux’s *Body and Soul* (1925), which features a new score by Renée Baker.

On May 1, Stewart, Curator at Black Cinema House, hosted Jenkins for a screening of his video “griot trilogy” *Self-Divination*, *Mutual Native Duplex*, and *The Nomadics*. Earlier in the week, Jenkins participated in Graduate Studies Critiques at The School of the Art Institute, and engaged students and faculty at The University of Chicago in a series of talks and studio visits, organized by Stewart, Professor in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies, in coordination with the Gray Center for Arts & Inquiry, Art & Public Life, and Department of Visual Arts.

About the Work

by Nicole M. Mitchell

Mandorla Awakening: Emerging Worlds

Synopsis
In 2099, in the midst of the inevitable decay of World Union society, a vibrant, diverse, and technologically adept culture emerges on an obscure island on the Atlantic. Mandorla is a richly fertile land of special earth power and crystal waters that has remained hidden to the World Union government due to the vibrational work of its inhabitants. Mandorla is an egalitarian society designed by people who have awakened their ability to communicate directly with “The Source.” Having survived the destructive forces of the Egoes Wars and the global virus, the Mandorlians have made a biological transformation after two generations of a natural lifestyle, making them permanently immune to the virus.

The story unfolds when a couple embarks on a journey outside the boundaries of the World Union and discovers Mandorla. Seeking amnesty in this foreign culture, the couple is astonished by the different life that Mandorla offers. Their own transformation beckons them as they resist letting go of their old ways. Shocked and inspired by the ways of the Mandorlians, they are confronted with the reality that their home, the World Union, is coming to an end. When confronted with images of their world shattering, the couple must choose to adapt to Mandorla or face death by struggling to help their old world survive.



From the artist
My latest project illustrates an alternative vision for our future.

Mandorla Awakening represents the unification of the duality that we perceive: It portrays a transformation of human consciousness that can ultimately heal the environment, promote peace, and awaken spirituality. I titled it after the mandorla, an almond shape created by two merging circles that is an ancient symbol of wholeness. While the image is most often recognized as the aura (halo) in early Christian art, the shape itself is much older as a symbol of the feminine, described in

Nicole Mitchell
Photo: Kristi Sutton Elias

Hindu art as the “yoni,” symbolizing the fertility of the “Great Mother.”

As satisfying as the multifaceted expression of sound has been for sharing my ideas, narrative and visual concepts have always been integral to my composition process as well.

Upon meeting the work of Ulysses Jenkins, I was stunned by our parallels in aesthetics and purpose. Our artistic collaboration has been a doorway to a new adventure in art-making, one in which the inner symbology, texture, and narrative that previously stayed within my mind could actually be manifested in visual forms for audiences to experience along with sound. Our first collaboration, *Mandorla Awakening: Dora Awakens*, was first performed as a work-in-progress at University of California, Irvine. It included original music and video as well as the choreography of Lisa Naugle. The MCA iteration is our second collaboration and we welcome new members Tatsu Aoki, Kojiro Umezaki, and a very young to *Mandorla’s* Black Earth Ensemble.

Mandorla Awakening continues to probe a question that I first began to explore in two projects inspired by the work of Afrofuturist author Octavia Butler, *Intergalactic Beings* (2010), which I performed at the MCA; and *Xenogenesis Suite* (2008): how can we as humans be so capable of beauty and enormous possibility and yet be so committed to our own demise and the destruction of the planet? This paradox both fascinates and horrifies me.

Conceptually informed by the socio-archaeological work of feminist author

Riane Eisler and her book *The Chalice and the Blade, Mandorla Awakening: Emerging Worlds* further investigates the issue. Eisler’s research into ancient Europe and the globe re-examines history through the duality of two types of societies that have competed thousands of years for existence: one symbolized by the chalice (cooperative societies that have been nurturing, prolifically creative, and non-violent) and one symbolized by the blade or sword (hierarchal societies that have been aggressive, prosperous, and expansive through dominance and fear).

Emerging Worlds is the third installment in *Mandorla Awakening*, which I conceived of as a science-fiction narrative that unfolds through a series of performances that all respond to the prompt: what would a technologically advanced world that is in collaboration with nature look like? Using varying instrumentation and electronics, the piece encompasses a work for orchestra, workshops for community groups of all ages, and multi-arts collaborations that include live music, video, choreography, and text, *Mandorla Awakening* offers a developing storyline about the future.

About the Work

by Renée C. Baker

Sunyata: Towards Absolute Emptiness

I wrote this music while in residence in Vietnam. Created for chamber ensemble, voice, and dance, it is inspired by the earliest Buddhist writings to reach Tibet, Padma Sambhava’s *Book of the Dead (The Bardo)*. To the modern reader, Sambhava is towering and opaque, but in his time he was known for his playfulness. He would hide his writings in unusual and remote locations in the belief that people recovering them would do so at a time when his spiritual messages would have the most beneficial impact.

My artistic quest engages his writings in the same belief. A lush and full-bodied score for twenty-nine musicians, seven vocalists, and two dancers staged on a minimalist set, *Sunyata: Towards Absolute Emptiness* only begins to skim the surface of one of the most potent events in our lives: the transition from living to dying. At the same time, I was interested in testing the limits of today’s creative music, to reconstruct the materials typically used, and to build something fantastic, unexpected, and unknown.

I have fragments, origins, stories, and implications that lend themselves to my story logic, but ultimately the music is organically composed and magically executed, with delicious differences every time a creation gets to live. Whether it belongs to this world or another, I don’t know.

I invite you to access *Sunyata* by meditating on six verses from *The*

Bardos, which I paraphrase here, and allow yourselves to be transformed.

Six Bardos from Padma Sambhava’s Book of the Dead

Paraphrased by Renée C. Baker

Now when the bardo of birth is dawning
upon me
I will abandon laziness for which life
has no time
Enter the undistracted path of study,
reflection and meditation
Making projections and mind the
path.....
There is no time on the path for the
mind to wander.

Renée Baker
Photo: Michael S. Baker



Now when the bardo of dreams is
dawning upon me
I will abandon the corpse-like sleep of
careless ignorance
And let my thoughts enter their natural
state without distraction
Controlling and transforming dreams in
luminosity..

Now when the bardo of Samadhi-
meditation dawns upon me
I will abandon the crowd of distractions
and confusions..
Resting in the boundless state without
grasping or disturbance..
Visualization and complete, at this time
of meditation
I will not fall into the power of confused
emotions

Now when the bardo of the moment
before death dawns on me
I will abandon all grasping, yearning
and attachment
Enter distracted into clear awareness of
the teaching
And eject my consciousness into the
space of the unborn mind
As I leave the compound body of flesh
and blood
I will know it to be a transitory illusion.

Now when the bardo of dharmata
dawns upon me
I will abandon all thoughts of fear and
terror
I will recognize whatever appears as
my projection and know it..
Now that I have reached this crucial
point
I will not fear my own projections, the
peaceful or wrathful ones



Douglas R. Ewart
Photo: Lauren
Deutsch

Now when the bardo of becoming
dawns upon me
I will concentrate my mind one-
pointedly
Striving to prolong the results of
good karma
Closing the womb-entrance and
thinking of resistance.
This is the time of perseverance and
pure thought.
Abandon jealousy..

With mind far off...not thinking of
death's coming
Performing meaningless activities....
Returning empty handed would now
be complete confusion..
Your need is now and has always been..
recognition....

Third Coast Percussion with Glenn Kotche

Wild Sound

May 21–22



While touring with Wilco, drummer and
composer Glenn Kotche made field recordings
of cities around the world. Now Kotche has
composed a new piece for the groundbreaking
ensemble Third Coast Percussion, integrating
those recordings into a new work that explodes
the distinction between music and noise.

MCA Stage
2014–15

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**Theater
Dance
Music**

**at the
Edlis
Neeson
Theater**

Photo: Saverio Truglia

About the Artists

(In order of appearance)

May 2

Nicole M. Mitchell

is a flutist, composer, bandleader, and educator. As the founder of Black Earth Ensemble, Black Earth Strings, Ice Crystal, and Sonic Projections, Mitchell has been named “Top Flutist of the Year” for the last five years (2010-2014) in *DownBeat’s* Critics Poll and by the Jazz Journalists Association. Mitchell’s music celebrates African American culture while reaching across genres and integrating new ideas with moments in the legacy of jazz, gospel, experimentalism, pop, and African percussion through albums such as *Black Unstoppable* (Delmark, 2007), *Awakening* (Delmark, 2011), *Arc of O* (Rogue Art, 2012), and *Xenogenesis Suite: A Tribute to Octavia Butler* (Firehouse 12, 2008), which received commissioning support from Chamber Music America’s New Jazz Works.

Mitchell formerly served as the first woman president of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), and has been a member since 1995. In recognition of her impact within the Chicago music and arts education communities, she was named “Chicagoan of the Year” in 2006 by the *Chicago Tribune*. With her ensembles, as a featured flutist, and as a composer, Mitchell has appeared at festivals and art venues throughout Europe, the US, and Canada. Her work has been featured on National Public Radio, and in publications *Ebony*, *Downbeat*, *Jazziz*, *Jazz Times*, *Jazz Wise*, and *American Legacy*.

Mitchell was among the first class of Doris Duke Artists (2012) and a recipient of the Alpert Award in the Arts (2011). She has been commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, for *Mandorla Awakening* and the 2010 premiere of *Intergalactic Beings* (part two of *Xenogenesis Suite*) as well as by the Ravinia Festival, the Chicago Jazz Festival, International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), the Chicago Sinfonietta Orchestra, and Maggio Fiorentino Chamber Orchestra (Florence, Italy). In 2009, she created *Honoring Grace: Michelle Obama* for the Jazz Institute of Chicago. Her composition, *Flight for Freedom for Creative Flute and Orchestra, a Tribute to Harriet Tubman*, premiered in 2011 in a performance by the Chicago Composers’ Orchestra, and was performed again by the CCO in 2014. She was commissioned by Chicago Sinfonietta for *Harambee: Road to Victory*, for Solo Flute, Choir and Orchestra in January 2012.

Mitchell is Professor of Music, teaching in Integrated Composition, Improvisation and Technology, a new and expansively-minded PhD program of the Claire Trevor School of Arts at University of California, Irvine. She has previously been a faculty member at the Vancouver Creative Music Institute, the Sherwood Flute Institute, Banff International Jazz Workshop, Chicago State University, and the University of Illinois, Chicago. She is endorsed by Powell Flutes.

Ulysses Jenkins

is a widely recognized video and performance artist. As part of the Getty Research Institute’s *Pacific Standard Time* exhibitions (2011) he performed

a preview of his *Black Gold Fever* at LACE gallery for *Los Angeles Goes Live: Exploring a Social History of Performance Art in Southern California, 1970-1983* (2010). His multimedia installation, *Notions of Freedom*, which employs motion-capture technology and video, as well as a soundtrack for *Chief Concern* by Kei Akagi, were shown in the exhibit *Sound Migrationz* in the New Belgrade at the Block Gallery, Serbia (2009).

Jenkins’s *Mass of Images* (c.1978) was included in the Long Beach Museum’s Video Collection program as part of the *California Video* exhibition presented by the Getty Research Institute (2008). He participated in the Committee on Los Angeles Culture’s panel on the history of the African American avant-garde art movement in Los Angeles, which took place at the Getty Research Institute in 2009. He also screened his *Dream City* (1980) at Getty Research Institute. He was a presenter on the panel “Transformations: New Directions in Black Art at the Third Annual Conference on African American Art” at the Maryland Institute College of Art’s Center for Race and Culture, in Baltimore, Maryland, where he screened *Visoes Culturalis da Bahia* (2009, work-in-progress).

In 2006, he contributed to *SIDE by SIDE Part II*, a collaboration with Maren Hassinger, Senga Nengudi, David Hammons, and Franklin Parker, for the exhibition *Les Soriee Nomades, cycle Nuits Noires*, at Foundation Cartier pour l’art contemporain in Paris. In the aftermath of 9/11, Jenkins initiated a project in reaction to the treatment of the women of Afghanistan, which resulted in the video DVD project

Bequest (2002). This video work was screened at the exhibitions *RE - Birth ~ Tono* at Tropico De Nopal, Los Angeles (2002); *911 - A Memorial for All* at Boswell-Crowe Fine Arts Gallery, Los Angeles (2002), and *Fade: African-American Artists in Los Angeles, A Survey Exhibition (1990-2003)*. *Bequest* was also screened by the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department at California State University, Los Angeles (2004). Jenkins completed the video *Planet X* (2006) for the alumni exhibition *Otis-LA: 9 Decades* of Los Angeles Art at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery. The video was subsequently shown in the *Cross Sections* exhibition at the 18th Street Arts Center (2007).

Jenkins is Professor of Art at the Claire Trevor School of Art at the University of California, Irvine. Previously, he taught video production at the University of California, San Diego and Otis College of Art as well as performance art at California State University, Dominguez Hills.

Tatsu Aoki

is a native of Tokyo and a prolific composer and performer of traditional Japanese and experimental music forms. He is also a composer, filmmaker, and educator. He is a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he is Adjunct Full Professor in the Film, Video, and New Media Department. He has produced more than thirty experimental films and is one of the most in-demand performers of bass, *shamisen*, and *taiko*, contributing more than ninety recording projects and touring internationally during the last twenty-five years. Aoki is Founder and Artistic Director of Chicago Asian

American Jazz Festival, and President of San Francisco–based Asian Improv Records (AIR).

He was named one of 2001’s “Chicago-ans of the Year” by *Chicago Tribune* for his music and has performed with music masters such as Roscoe Mitchell, Don Moye, pipa virtuoso Wu Man, and the late Chicago legend Fred Anderson. Aoki’s *ROOTED: Origins of Now*, a four-movement suite for big band, premiered in 2001 at Ping Tom Memorial Park, and was performed at the Chicago Jazz Festival and at MCA Stage as part of Chicago Asian American Jazz Festival. Additional notable releases include *Basser Live* (1999) and *Basser Live II* (2005), recorded live at the MCA; *The MIYUMI Project* (2000); *Symphony of Two Cities* (2002); and *Posture of Reality* with Wu Man (2003). The Asian American Institute awarded Aoki the Milestone Award in 2007 for his contribution to Chicago-area arts. In 2010, he received the Japan America Society of Chicago’s Cultural Achievement Award as well as a 3Arts Siragusa Foundation Artist Award. He received the “Living in Our Culture” award by the Japanese American Service Committee in 2014.

JoVia Armstrong

is a Detroit native who is based in Chicago. She has performed with El DeBarge, Rahsaan Patterson, Eric Roberson, Frank McComb, Res, Omar, Nicole Mitchell and Michael Franti & Spearhead. She tours widely in the US and Europe with JC Brooks & the Uptown Sound. She writes for the world jazz group Musique Noire, which debuted in 2008 with the CD *Good Hair* and have since received three Detroit Music Awards and a nomination for Armstrong for Best



Tatsu Aoki
Tsukasa Taiko and Reduction2
Photo: Ken Carl

World Musician. She released her debut album *Fuzzy Blue Robe Chronicles* in 2009. Armstrong is a 3Arts Siragusa Foundation Artist Award grantee (2011), and in 2014 was named Best Black Female Percussionist by the Black Women in Jazz Awards. She recorded percussion and was an engineer in JC Brooks & the Uptown Sound album *Howl*, which received seven Grammy nominations. She is currently writing new compositions for Musique Noire’s third album.

Tomeka Reid

is a cellist, composer, and educator who is equally adept in classical and jazz contexts. Her compositional range includes big band and chamber ensemble, and for her own trio with guitarist Matt Schneider and bassist Josh Abrams. She has received compositional commissions from the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), Chicago Jazz Festival, and Chicago Jazz Ensemble and her original works

have been performed at festivals such as Umbria Jazz, An Insolent Noise, and Vignola Jazz. She was a nominee and recipient of composition residencies by the Ragdale Foundation, the Make Jazz Fellowship of the 18th Street Arts Organization, and in 2012 the Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Reid is a prolific musician in recordings and collaborations in live experimental and improvisatory settings. She is an integral part of Dee Alexander’s Evolution Ensemble, Nicole Mitchell’s Black Earth Ensemble/Strings, Mike Reed’s Loose Assembly, and the AACM Great Black Music Ensemble. As co-leader of the string trio, Hear in Now, she toured nationally and to Poznan (Poland), Paris, Rome, Venice, Milan, and Soazza (Switzerland). Other highlights include performing with Anthony Braxton, George Lewis, Roscoe Mitchell, Jeb Bishop, Myra Melford, Fred Lonberg-Holm, Mary Halvorson, Denis Fournier, Edward Wilkerson Jr., and Harrison Bankhead. She teaches string improvisation workshops, and has directed Vancouver Jazz Festival’s Summer High School Jazz Intensive since 2012. She co-directed the string program at The University of Chicago’s Laboratory School for students grade five through twelve, and is a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Kojiro Umezaki

was born to a Japanese father and Danish mother and reared in Tokyo. He is a prolific performer of the *shakuhachi*, a composer of electro-acoustic works, and a technologist with interests in integrating global musical practices with electronics. He is Associate Professor of Music at the University of California,

Irvine and a core member of the Integrated Composition Improvisation and Technology (ICIT) faculty. He performs regularly with the Grammy-nominated Silk Road Ensemble with whom he appears on multiple recordings including *Off the Map* and *A Playlist Without Borders*. Other recordings with his work have been released on Brooklyn Rider’s *Dominant Curve*; Yo-Yo Ma’s *Appassionato*; Beat in Fractions’ *Beat Infraction*; *The Silk Road: A Musical Caravan* (Smithsonian Folkways); and Huun Huur Tu’s *Ancestors Call*. His new album (*Cycles*) features mostly original works and was released in April 2014.

Alex Wing

is a guitar, bass, and oud player, and educator. He performs with numerous composers/musicians including Nicole Mitchell, David Boykin, Renee Baker’s Chicago Modern Orchestra Project, the Hanah Jon Taylor Artet, Wanees Zarour, Bad Mashadi, Saalik Ziyad, Mwata Bowden, the Mingus Awareness Project, and many more.

avery r young

is a writer, performer, and visual artist. He is alum of Cave Canem, the national residency for important voices of African American poetry, and a 3Arts Siragusa Foundation Artist Award grantee. His work has been published in American Studies Journal *AIMPrint*, *Coon Bidness*, and other anthologies. His work with language, visual text, and sound design has been exhibited in galleries and online. For his recent artist-in-residence at The University of Chicago, young completed a collection of sound designs which are being featured in his forthcoming full-length debut album *booker t. soltreyn:e:a race rekkid* and companion collection of “cullud sign(s).”

May 3
Renée C. Baker
is a composer, conductor, ensemble leader, violinist, and violist. She is founding music director and conductor of the Chicago Modern Orchestra Project (CMOP), a polystylistic organization that brings together classical music, jazz, and other genres. CMOP has been chosen to work with NewMusicUSA and the EarShot program of the American Composers Orchestra. A member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), Baker is an accomplished developer of ensembles, founding or leading several large contemporary music projects, including Mantra Blue Free Orchestra (Chicago); PEK' Contemporary Project (Berlin), which was the progenitor of Bleueblue Walkers/Bass Kollektief; and Twilight Struggles (Berlin). She has also started more than twenty cutting edge new music ensembles, among them: TUNTUI, Wrinkled Linen, Chocolate Chitlin' Caucus, Red Chai Watch, FAQtet, Project 6, Renee' Baker's AWAKENING, Baker ArTet, Strings Attached, and the Butoh ensemble BODY STRATA.

As a musician, Baker's engagements have included major halls such as Bimhuis (Amsterdam) and Symphony Center (Chicago), and she is a founding member and has been Principal Violist of Chicago Sinfonietta for twenty-six years. She is a prolific collaborator with other projects such as Nicole Mitchell's Black Earth Strings and Black Earth Ensemble, the Chicago Jazz Orchestra, the David Boykin Expanse, and Orbert Davis's group.

She is composer of more than two-hun-

dred works for ensembles ranging from solo instruments, ballet, and opera to large orchestral works that bridge classical, jazz and creative music. Her range has led to multiple commissions by the Berlin International Brass, PEK' Contemporary Project, and Dance-Wright Project, among others. The Chicago Sinfonietta premiered her first two symphonic works, *Sundown's Promise*, which featured *taiko* drumming; and her work for orchestra and six jazz soloists. In 2010, her piece *Brass Epiphany* premiered at MCA Stage as part of AACM's forty-fifth anniversary.

Baker's innovation in compositional language has led to her creation of a gestured conducting language called CCL/FLOW (Cipher Conduit Linguistics), which she is employing in active collaborations with avant-garde music groups in Cologne, Berlin, Netherlands, London, Chicago, Portland (Oregon), and other locales. She has developed a signature notation using painting which she calls "exploratorium pieces." These are for ensembles of variable sizes. She is also a popular lecturer in nontraditional composition techniques, as well as in what she calls large ensemble "comprovisation," a combination of composition and improvisational development. Her latest experiment with art, tactile-score sculpture works, is being presented as part of the MCA premiere of her new commission *Sunyata: Towards Absolute Emptiness*.

Baker's composing range has recently expanded to film soundtracks. Her new score for the restored print by Don DiNicola of Oscar Micheaux's *Body and Soul* (1925) premiered at MCA Stage as part of the Creative Music Summit in

April 2015. She is embarking on a three-year project to produce original music scores for twenty forgotten film masterpieces of Oscar Micheaux, Spencer Williams, and DW Griffith.

Dee Alexander
is a vocalist acclaimed for her versatility and experimental approach to music. A frequent collaborator of Renée Baker and a member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), Alexander has worked with Ramsey Lewis, Orbert Davis, Nicole Mitchell, and many others, including Ahmad Jamal, Joshua Redman, and David Sanborn. She leads two bands, the Dee Alexander Quartet and the Evolution Ensemble, which emphasize her original compositions. Her 2007 *Sirens of Song* tribute to Nina Simone and Dinah Washington was commissioned by the Jazz Institute of Chicago, premiering at the Pritzker Pavilion and touring later years to France, Finland, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and Poland. Alexander was named "Chicagoan of the Year" (*Chicago Tribune*, 2008) and "Jazz Entertainer of the Year" (Chicago Music Awards). Her 2009 album *Wild Is The Wind* received five stars (highest honor) from *Downbeat* Magazine, which named it among the Top Ten recordings of the new millennium. Her newest project, *Songs My Mother Loves*, was released in 2014.

Yoseph B. Henry
is an upcoming vocalist in contemporary gospel music known for his distinctive balladry and range. Exposed for the first time to music and receiving his earliest voice training in church, his varied musical influences include soul, pop, and big band jazz. After fortuitous-



ly meeting the composer and ensemble leader at a local Caribou Coffee, he has become a regular featured artist in the projects of Renée Baker and the Chicago Modern Orchestra Project.

Rae Myra Hilliard
is from Buffalo and began her studies on piano and violin at the age of four and seven, respectively. She received a BA in Physical Education from Oberlin College, and while working full time in mortgage banking for eight years sang professionally with the Greater Buffalo Opera Company, Buffalo Opera Unlimited, the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus, and in solo recitals around the Buffalo area. She earned her second BA in 1993 in Performing Arts from the State University College of New York at Buffalo, and an MA in Vocal Performance in 1996 from the University of Northern Iowa. Her Chicago debut was with the Civic Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Duain Wolf in 2001 as a soloist in Ralph Vaughn Williams' *Serenade to Music*, which was performed at the South Shore Cultural Center. In 2002, Hilliard sang for the late Maestro Mstislav Rostropovich as the soprano cover for

Dee Alexander
Image courtesy of
ABC Jazz

Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem* with the Chicago Symphony Chorus.

Operatic credits include the roles of the Countess in Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Serena in Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*, and the world premiere in 2001 at MCA Stage of Wendell Logan and Paul Carter Harrison’s *Doxology* with the New Black Music Repertory Ensemble under the direction of the late Maestro Coleridge Taylor-Perkinson. Hilliard was founder of the annual *Black History* recital (2000-2010), sponsored by the Austin Corinthian Baptist Church. The recital introduced classical music and black classical singers to the inner-city community, and also featured others programs of spoken word, poetry, and musical theater. As a professional chorister, she has performed with the Chicago Symphony Chorus for ten years, and as part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Musician Residency Program at the South Shore Cultural Center until 2003. She has held the positions of soprano section leader, group and private voice instructor, assistant conductor and guest conductor. She is the music director and pianist/organist for Zion Lutheran Church in Deerfield, Illinois.

Dwayne Lee

is a native Chicagoan. He has performed alongside numerous gospel music legends, notably with The Reverend Jackie McCullough on *This Is For You Lord* (singing lead on “I’m Not Finished”); the Brooklyn Tabernacle on its Grammy-nominated *Light of the World* (singing lead on “Light of the World” and “His Plan”); and music director, composer, and arranger Tim Janis. He has also



Dwayne Lee
Courtesy of the
artist

appeared on the Emmy nominated Fox television program *Christmas Glory* (from Lee’s home church, the Apostolic Church of God) and at the Umbria Jazz Festival of Italy; the Chicago Gospel Fest; and Six Flag’s Great America Gospel Fest.

His work for the stage production includes the role of Uncle Eli in the play *War of the Spirits*, produced by Walter King of Spellbinder, Inc. He has also been featured live on the local CBS news station (Channel 2), and on WTTW (Channel 11)’s *Artbeat Chicago* in the story *A Night with Dwayne Lee* for on as well as on the station’s *Chicago Tonight*. He has toured London in support of his release *Victorious Praise*, and appeared with various gospel and jazz talents such as Babbie Mason, Fred Hammond, Donnie McClurkin, Kirk Whalum, and the 3 More Tenors. His 2000 debut release *God’s Gift / My Praise* features the well-known track “Deliverer.” Describing his Psalmist work, Lee cites “being

blessed by God to use my gift to minister in song...throughout the US and abroad, I have combined musical talents with acting in an attempt to reach as many people as possible with the good news of Jesus Christ.”

Ann E. Ward

is a composer, vocalist, pianist, and African percussionist who developed her skills in genres such as church music, musical theater, classical, and jazz vocal piano. Music education has also been crucial to her. She started as concert pianist and organist while studying under George Williams at the Chicago Musical College of Roosevelt University, and earned a degree in music composition from Kentucky State University. She debuted in Chicago with the Ken Chaney Experience, as part of that group’s vocal ensemble, which included her family members Barbara and Ben Farnandis. She has appeared in productions with Kuumba, eta, Chocolate Chip, Steppenwolf, North Light, and the Chicago Theater Company. She has worked with Charles Michael Moore, Nora Brooks, Blakeley Val, Gray Ward, and Oscar Brown Jr. as composer, pianist, and musical director. A member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, she performs regularly with several of the groups including the AACM Great Black Music Ensemble, the Experimental Ensemble, Samana, the AACM Vocal Ensemble, and Spiritual Connections. Encouraged by Rita Warford, Steve Berry, and Mwata Bowden, she has taught piano, theory, and voice to children and adults at the AACM School.

Ward has collaborated with countless artists including George Lewis, Douglas R. Ewart, Renée Baker, Dee Alexander,

Regina Harris Baiocchi, Janis Misurell-Mitchell, and Cook, Dixon and Young (the Three Mo’Tenors). In addition to AACM, she contributes compositions as one of the Six Degrees, an all-female composer collective that presents new music in concert bi-annually. Her devotion to teaching music extends to coordinating the Arts and Humanities Program for the Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools where she currently runs performing arts classes, and she continues to volunteer as Director of the AACM School of Music on the campus of Chicago State University. Every Sunday, Ward can be heard at the St. George St. Matthias Episcopal Church where she sings in, conducts, and, on piano and pipe organ, accompanies the choir.

Saalik Ziyad

is a native Chicagoan who began singing at the age of seven. Accepted as a member of the Chicago Children’s Choir, he performed from a young age with Charlie Haden, Amina Claudine Myers, Willie Pickens, and renowned institutions such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He studied at the AACM School and has a BA in Vocal Performance from Northern Illinois University (NIU). He is a founder of The 5 after 7 Project, a collaborative of diverse musicians based in the Chicago area, and a member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). He was lead jazz vocalist with the Northern Illinois University Jazz Ensemble, and toured with Hammiet Blueitt, Steve Turre, and Rufus Reid. Highlight engagements include *Porgy and Bess*, directed by Bobby McFerrin for the Ravinia Music Festival, with The Chicago Sinfonietta under the direction

of Maestro Paul Freeman; the Sons D’hiver Jazz festival in Paris, France; and the Umbria Jazz Festival in Italy. He performed as part of the Made in Chicago Jazz Festival in Poznan, Poland. He has appeared in theatrical productions such as *Dido & Aeneas*, Carlisle Floyd’s *Susannah*, and the dinner theater work *The All Night Strut*. As a member of the doo-wop group The El Dorados, he tours the US widely, including to the Viva Rock Vegas Show in Las Vegas. Ziyad is a dedicated educator for Chicago Public Schools, an artist in residence for the Jazz Institute of Chicago, and has conducted multiple clinics with the Polyhythms Organization.

Taalib-Din Ziyad

is a vocalist, flutist, composer, arranger, and instructor. He began his musical career at an early age by singing in a choir. As a teenager, he received vocal training with the renowned Lena McLin, and classical training with voice instructor Thelma Wade Brown at the Chicago Music School/Roosevelt College. While singing in various recitals throughout the Chicagoland area and Indiana in his early teens, he began to develop his interest in the music of John Coltrane, Johnnie Hartman, and other innovative musicians of that time. In 1991, he became a member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), and leader of the trio, 7th Sphere. Later he became a vocalist and flutist with Vandy Harris’s groups Obade and Vandy’s Front Burners. He has performed with many notable musicians, including Ari Brown, Phil Kelan Cohran, Adegoke Steve Colson, Jodie Christian, Renee Baker, the AACM’s Great Black Music Ensemble,

and the AACM Experimental Ensemble. Recently he completed a CD with band leader Art Turk Burton; the CD features Ari Brown, Harrison Bankhead, Kirk Brown, Avreeayl Ra, Sammi “Cha Cha” Torres, and Luis Rosario. He has performed in Paris, Poznan (Poland), Perugia (Umbria Jazz Festival, Italy), at the Chicago Jazz Festival, and at many other venues. As a member of the AACM Vocal Ensemble, he is touring this October to Frankfort, Germany to perform at the Frankfort Jazz Festival.



Taalib-Din Ziyad
Photo: Saalik Ziyad

Thank you

Lead support for the 2014–15 season of MCA Stage is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

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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 US and around the world in MCA's three-hundred-seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

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.

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Program notes compiled
by Yolanda Cesta Cursach

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Courtesy guidelines and information

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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312.280.2660

Box office

312.397.4010

Volunteer for performances

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mcastage@mcachicago.org

Museum hours

Tuesday: 10 am–8 pm

Wednesday–Sunday: 10 am–5 pm

Closed Mondays, Thanksgiving,
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