

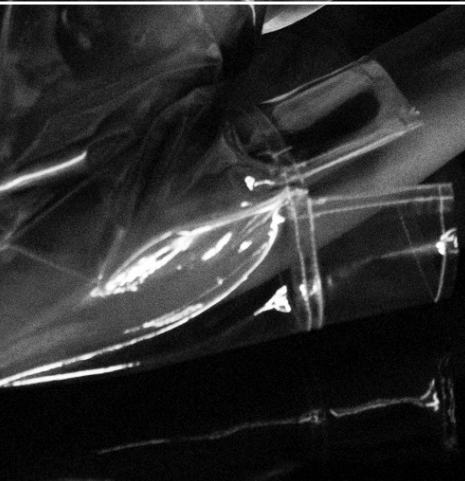
Ligia Lewis *Water Will (in Melody)*

Program Notes

Edlis Neeson
Theater

Thu, Jan 30-
Sat, Feb 1, 8 pm

Running time:
60 minutes



MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
CHICAGO

WINTER/SPRING 2020

POWER- HOUSE WOMEN WILLFULLY CREATING NEW WORLDS.

Cover, clockwise from top: Ligia Lewis, *Water Will (in Melody)*. Photo © Maria Baranova; Naomi Rincón Gallardo, *Axolotl Healing Capsule* from *The Formaldehyde Trip*, 2017. Photo: Fabiola Torres Alzaga, courtesy of the artist. Meshell Ndegeocello. Photo: Charlie Gross.

FROM THE CURATOR

Ligia Lewis's preceding work, the Bessie-award winning *minor matter*, was described as "a sensitive argument" for centering minority perspectives. The word "sensitive" attributed to Lewis's way of making dances is just right. She is not interested in bluntly explaining her works' politics, which are grounded in deep theoretical and physical research into how race and blackness operate in society, nor in ignoring the loaded significance of images and actions altogether. Rather, she is sensitive to the *feelings* generated when we try to make meaning and symbolism out of the world around us. Lewis creates onstage worlds that won't let us take for granted our own assumptions about what a theater or a body can be and do.

A new year, a new decade, and new artists on our stage this spring bring fresh perspectives and approaches to big topics. Yet many of the questions they ask are exhaustingly familiar: How do we reckon with painful or violent histories? How do our bodies deal with race and gender? What can a dark theater do about any of it? The women behind these shows each grab those questions and wrangle them through powerful, lush creative visions of our world: imagined possibilities, alternate realities, invisible truths. It's not always pretty, but that work is bound to get us thinking in new directions. I hope you'll join us along the way!

Tara Aisha Willis
Associate Curator, Performance and
Public Practice

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SUPPORT FOR THIS
MCA PROJECT

Water Will (in Melody)
is a program supported
by the Goethe Institut.

Special thanks to our
colleagues in Facilities
and operations, Security,
Visitor Experience,
Special Events and
Rentals, and Housekeeping
teams for their support
of this performance.



SUPPORT FOR THE
ARTISTS

Hebbel am Ufer (HAU)
is the lead producer of
Water Will (in Melody)
with co-production
support by Biennale de
l'Image en Mouvement
2018 / Centre D'Art
Contemporain (Geneva),
tanzhaus nrw
(Düsseldorf), Arsenic
Centre d'art scénique
contemporain (Lausanne),
donaufestival (Krems),
Walker Art Center
(Minneapolis), and
Münchner Kammerspiele.
The work is funded by
the Berlin Senate
Department for Culture
and Europe, with
additional support from
Baryshnikov Arts Center
(New York). Special
thanks to Jarrett Gregory
for residency support.

LIGIA LEWIS

Water Will (in Melody)

Running time for *Water Will (in Melody)* is 60 minutes
with no intermission.

Concept, choreography/
direction, and performance

Ligia Lewis

Co-creation and
performance

Titilayo Adebayo,
Dani Brown, and
Susanne Sachße

Understudy

Jolie Ngemi

Dramaturgy

Maja Zimmermann

Lighting design

Ariel Efraim Ashbel

Sound design

S. McKenna

Stage design

Eike Böttcher

Technical direction/
Lighting technician

Catalina Fernandez

Costume design

sowrong studio

Assistants

Gilad Bendavid and
Carina Zox

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Hannes Frey and
Sabine Seifert

Touring/distribution

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Nicole Schuchardt

Production

Ligia Lewis/Hebbel
am Ufer (HAU)

ABOUT THE WORK

"Something awful lurks in this theater: that inexhaustible heart, white supremacy, beating here as everywhere. What else could a letter addressed to this country contain than its violence?"

—"Dancing in the Dark: Catherine Damman on Ligia Lewis," *Artforum*, September 2019

What does it mean to be human? Descartes' famous aphorism "I think, therefore I am" associates human-ness exclusively with cognition, but our desire and ambition also form who we are as people. *Water Will (in Melody)* is the third piece in her *Blue, Red, White* triptych, and in this iteration, Lewis uses the theater to frame the double standard around willfulness, highlighting the ways society rewards precocious men and dehumanizes femmes and people of color by discouraging their drives and desires.

RELATED PROGRAMS

PRE-SHOW SIP AND CHAT

Thu, Jan 30, 7-7:45 pm, The Commons

Audience members were invited to arrive early for a participatory conversation led by MCA staff on the themes and content of the performance. Together the group read and discussed the short Grimms' fairy tale that opens this mysterious exploration of how society shapes our understanding of willfulness. Check mcachicago.org/stage for future opportunities to learn about performances together.

Read along with the group:

"Once upon a time there was a child who was willful and would not do what her mother wished. For this reason, God had no pleasure in her, and let her become ill. No doctor could do her any good, and in a short time the child lay on her deathbed. When she had been lowered into her grave, and the earth was spread over her, all at once her little arm came out again and reached upward. And when they had pushed it back in the ground and spread fresh earth over it, it was all to no purpose, for the arm always came out again. Then the mother herself was obliged to go to the grave and strike the arm with a rod. When she had done that, the arm was drawn in, and at last the child had to rest beneath the ground. And everything went back to normal."

– "The Willful Child," *Children's and Household Tales* (1812), Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

ACCESSIBLE PERFORMANCE WITH AUDIO

DESCRIPTION 

Fri, Jan 31

Victor Cole provides audio description for patrons who are blind or have low vision. Headsets are available in the box office.

POST-SHOW TALK

Fri, Jan 31, immediately following the performance

Performance scholars Tina Post (University of Chicago) and Joshua Chambers-Letson (Northwestern University) are joined by choreographer and performer Ligia Lewis for an in-depth conversation on her work and process.

IN PROGRESS: MLONDI ZONDI

Tue, Jan 28, 6 pm, The Commons

Chicago-based movement artist and scholar Mlonzi Zondi has corresponded with Ligia Lewis over the course of creating Lewis's *Blue, Red, White* triptych. Both artists reflect on the ways performance can expose biases and present new perspectives. For this program, Zondi presented an in-progress version of his work *the most efficient, most collegial negro in the whole entire world (Ariel's treatise)*. In Progress is a series designed to give artists, thinkers, and curators a platform for developing new works, giving patrons a glimpse into the creative process.

WATER AFTER ALL

Through Jun 14, second floor

This exhibition coincides with the spring performance season and is centered around the MCA's recent acquisition of Ghana-born British filmmaker John Akomfrah's *Vertigo Sea*. Akomfrah's work also uses water as a metaphor to highlight greed, the impact of human ambition on our natural landscape, and the role of slavery and resource exploitation throughout history.

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Program Notes
compiled by
Laura Paige Kyber

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

TITILAYO ADEBAYO (Performance) was born in the United Kingdom with Nigerian decent, studied musical theater at Birmingham Ormiston Academy for two years, and graduated from University of Roehampton in dance. During this time she also did a semester studying abroad in New York. Since graduating she has been working as a freelance dance artist in Europe. She worked closely with Akram Khan for Big Dance in 2016 during her final year in university. Early in her career, she has collaborated with Trajal Harrell (Barbican and Onassis), Jeremy Nedd (Palais de Tokyo), and Paul Maheke (Chisenhale Gallery, London and Lafayette, Paris).

DANI BROWN (Performance) was born and raised in Rochester, New York. She completed her freshman and sophomore years at Virginia Commonwealth University in the department of Dance and Choreography. Brown finished her BDa, specialization Dance Maker at the ArtEZ, College of Art in Arnhem, Netherlands. She received the Dance WEB scholarship in 2009. Her *Lap Dance: Series #1* premiered in 2015 at The Museum for Contemporary Art Freiburg. Her productions including her first solo work "HOW DO YOU IMAGINE THE DEVIL?" (Kampnagel, 2012), as well as *THE INVITATION* and *IT'S GONNA BLOW* (both codirected with Marta Navaridas; Kampnagel, 2008/2010) and *BODY SWAP* (codirected with Joavien Ng; Kampnagel, 2009) have been presented internationally in Europe, Africa, and Asia. When she isn't busy with her own productions, research, or teaching, Brown performs internationally for Alexandra Waierstall, Margrét Bjarnadóttir, Antje Pfundter, Anat Eisenberg, Lea Moro, Josep Caballero, Vincent Riebeek, Dragana Bulut, Davis Freeman, and the Japanese clothing label Cosmic Wonder.

CATALINA FERNÁNDEZ (Technical direction/Lighting technician) was born in Pereira, Colombia. She is a lighting designer, video artist, and photographer and works regularly in various fields such as performance,

film, music, and visual arts. She studied film and photography at the Unitec University in Bogotá, Colombia, and lighting design for theater at the Instituto Universitario Nacional del Arte (IUNA) Buenos Aires.

LIGIA LEWIS (Concept/choreography/direction/performance) is a dancer and choreographer. She has worked in multiple contexts including that of the theater and museum. Engaging with affect, empathy, and the sensate, her choreography considers the social inscriptions of the body while evoking its potentiality. Her work can be described as experientially rich and complex. Within her practice, Lewis continues to provoke the nuances of embodiment. In 2017, Lewis was awarded a Bessie for Outstanding Production for her latest stage work, *minor matter* (2016) and was awarded the Prix Jardin d'Europe for her work *Sorrow Swag* (2014). In 2018 she was granted a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Award in the field of dance. Both her stage works *minor matter* and *Sorrow Swag* continue to tour internationally. Her work has been shown at various venues and festivals including the American Realness Festival at Abrons Art Center (New York), Fahrenheit by FLAX (Los Angeles), Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Tate Modern (London), Julidans Festival at the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Pacific Standard Time at REDCAT (Los Angeles), and Tanz im August presented by Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin). As a dancer, Lewis has performed and toured extensively for artists including Ariel Efraim Ashbel, Mette Ingvarsen, and Eszter Salamon. She has collaborated with visual artist Wu Tsang, musical artist Twin Shadow, and with the DJ collective NON Worldwide. Ligia Lewis is currently managed and produced by Hebbel am Ufer Berlin (HAU) and is a factory artist at tanzhaus NRW, Düsseldorf.

S. MCKENNA (Sound design) is a multimedia artist and DJ from the Pacific Northwest, now based in Berlin. They create sound design and

music for theater and dance, as well as producing films, images, and books.

SUSANNE SACHBE (Performance) is an actress. She was a member of Berliner Ensemble, where she worked with Heiner Müller, Robert Wilson, and Einar Schleef. Sachbe is widely known for her starring roles in numerous films of Bruce LaBruce, including *The Raspberry Reich*, *Pierrot Lunaire*, and *The Misandrists*. She has worked in various performance, film, and art contexts with Yael Bartana, Zach Blas, Phil Collins, Vaginal Davis, Josiah McElheny, Vegard Vinge, Ida Müller, and Xiu Xiu. She also worked with Natascha Süder Happelmann for the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2019, where she acted as "Helene Duldung." In 2017 Sachbe was honored with a Premio Maguey Queer Icon Award at the Guadalajara International Film Festival in Mexico. She is also lyricist, singer, and bassist of the band GIRLS. At the moment she is working with the Slovenian band Laibach for a musical with texts by Heiner Müller.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

Fri, Mar 6, 7-8:30 pm
Music Talk: Meshell Ndegeocello with
Staceyann Chin

A pared-down evening of performance, conversation,
and playful collaboration between singer-songwriter and
bassist Meshell Ndegeocello and her collaborator, spoken-
word artist and LGBTQ activist Staceyann Chin.

Apr 2-4, 8 pm
Naomi Rincón Gallardo
The Formaldehyde Trip

In this film-based experience with live musical
accompaniment, a lush environment is created through
songs, video, and costumes. Murdered Mixtec activist
Alberta "Bety" Cariño goes on an imagined, psychedelic
journey where indigenous rights and speculative fictions
wind together through the underworld.



Naomi Rincón Gallardo, *The Formaldehyde Trip*, 2017.
Photo: Fabiola Torres Alzaga, courtesy of the artist.

Check mcachicago.org/stage for up-to-date listings.

Dinner and a Show



Sunflower hummus with artichoke, oregano, and flaxseed cracker. Photo: Neil Burger.

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Lead support for the 2019–20 season 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, Susan Manning and Doug Doetsch, Ock Ju Noh, Sharon* and Lee Oberlander, Carol Prins and John Hart/The Jessica Fund, and Ellen Stone Belic.

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The MCA is a proud member of the Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

*Enact Chair as of
January 1, 2020

MUSEUM OF
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CHICAGO

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MCA performances are supported by Enact, a group of MCA donors dedicated to supporting the museum's renowned performance programs.

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ABOUT MCA PERFORMANCES

As an internationally renowned institution devoted to contemporary culture, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is committed to presenting the most thought-provoking visual and performing arts of our time. The MCA commissions and presents theater, dance, and music by leading artists from Chicago and around the world, holding performances in spaces throughout the museum, including the three-hundred seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

The MCA's groundbreaking performances are an integral part of the museum's cutting-edge, multidisciplinary programming. Along with exhibitions and public programs, MCA performances welcome visitors to experience the work and ideas of living artists and find their own civic voices.

PARKING

Validate your ticket at the coat check for \$13 parking MCA garage (220 East Chicago Ave) and Northwestern Medicine Lavin Family Pavilion Garage (259 East Erie St), operated by InterPark. \$13 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 noisemaking 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

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