

# CHICAGO PERFORMS

SEPTEMBER 26-29

2024



MUSEUM OF  
CONTEMPORARY ART  
CHICAGO

MCA

## A Note from the Curator

I am thrilled to welcome you to the MCA's annual *Chicago Performs* festival, now in its third year!

*Chicago Performs* showcases the vitality of local artists as they develop their work with and for Chicago (and beyond). This year's artists, including cat mahari, Lykanthea, and Every house has a door, have carefully crafted new works or reimagined existing performances for the occasion. These works have been made possible with the support of the MCA's New Works Initiative, a program designed to develop new projects and foster connections between artists, audiences, and communities.

The goal of *Chicago Performs* is to present an annual cross section of current works of performance art being made by Chicagoans. Beyond that, projects need not be tied together by a particular theme. Nonetheless, throughlines often emerge. This year, each of the three works explores a diverse range of ideas while drawing on childhood experiences—including play, rites of passage, and fantasy—as tools for experimentation and envisioning change.

Interdisciplinary choreographer cat mahari's *blk ark: the impossible manifestation* is a multimodal project that includes a stage-based performance, an interactive installation, and a film with live scoring, presented here on the MCA Stage as an excerpt of the larger performance. Mahari's work uses childhood games like hopscotch, basketball, and jump rope to imagine a freer future. The collective Lykanthea, led by Lakshmi Ramgopal, presents *Some Viscera*, a poignant song cycle based on a celebrated coming-of-age ritual for students of Indian dance and music that can also be fraught in the context of the Indian-American diaspora. Performance collective Every house has a door, led by Lin Hixson and Matthew Goulish, debuts a reimagined version of their work *Broken Aquarium*, which surveys an impossible ecosystem of endangered sea creatures (featuring costumes by Essi Kausalainen). Their performance responds to composer Camille Saint-Saëns's 1922 musical suite for children, *The Carnival of Animals*, suggesting that even a childlike reverie may contain vital insight into our world.

Together, these artists invite us to consider: what might the creative and imaginative possibilities of play teach us about freedom? How might a youthful rite of passage help us conceive of life's transitions



at any age? And can the interplay between fantasy and reality offer a means of envisioning a changed world?

The use of play as a creative strategy in performance is nothing new. In the 1950s Merce Cunningham transformed dance with his use of "chance procedures," such as dice rolling or coin flipping, as improvisatory methods in choreography. Yet these artists push further, using play and other experiences drawn from childhood to imagine a future that is more just, more free, and more joyful.

The interplay between performance and activism is fertile ground, so perhaps it's no surprise that activist movements for social justice have employed the methods of performance for decades. In her 2007 book, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, cultural historian Barbara Ehrenreich offers this insight: "Whatever its shortcomings as a means to social change, protest movements keep reinventing carnival . . . Almost every demonstration I have been to has featured some element of the carnivalesque: costumes, music, impromptu dancing, the sharing of food and drink."<sup>1</sup>

When we play, we step back from stark reality to conjure up new possibilities for the present and our common future. With these four days of performance, I invite audiences to enter the imaginative worlds of the artists with an openness to experimentation and the childlike wonder needed to imagine the future that might exist.

—Laura Paige Kyber  
Assistant Curator of Performance

1. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (Holt Paperbacks, 2007), 259.

## THANK YOU

*Chicago Performs* is supported by the New Works Initiative, which puts the creative process at the heart of the MCA's relationship with Chicago by supporting the development of new performances and creative projects. Lead support for the New Works Initiative is provided by Elizabeth A. Lieberman.

Lead support for the 2024–25 season of MCA Performance and Public Programs is provided by Elizabeth A. Lieberman.

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## SCHEDULE

### SEPTEMBER 26

7:30 pm  
*Lykanthea, Some Viscera*  
Edlis Neeson Theater

### SEPTEMBER 27

7:30 pm  
*Lykanthea, Some Viscera* CART  
Edlis Neeson Theater

### SEPTEMBER 28

2 pm  
*Every house has a door, Broken Aquarium*  
Anne & John Kern Terrace Garden

7:30 pm  
cat mahari,  
*blk ark: the impossible manifestation*  
Edlis Neeson Theater

8:30 pm  
*Chicago Performs After-Party*  
At the close of cat mahari's evening performance, celebrate and meet this year's *Chicago Performs* artists at a post-show dance party in the MCA Commons. Cash bar.

### SEPTEMBER 29

2 pm  
cat mahari,  
*blk ark: the impossible manifestation* CART  
Edlis Neeson Theater

4 pm  
*Every house has a door, Broken Aquarium* CART  
Anne & John Kern Terrace Garden



## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Visit  
[mcachicago.org/  
chicagoperforms](https://mcachicago.org/chicagoperforms)  
to read interviews  
with the artists,  
see complete  
billing information,  
and buy tickets.

COVER IMAGE: *Lykanthea*, ACRE residency, Steuben, WI. Photo: Ashley King. Image courtesy of the artist.

INTERIOR IMAGES, LEFT TO RIGHT:

cat mahari: *blk ark: the impossible manifestation*, Culture Hub, New York City, November 18, 2022. Photo: Livia Sá, courtesy of Culture Hub.

*Every house has a door: Broken Aquarium*, Humboldt Park, Chicago, September 11, 2022. Image courtesy of the artists.

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