



Advance Program Notes

Julia Wolfe, SITI Company, and Bang on a Can All-Stars
Steel Hammer
Tuesday, November 17, 2015, 7:30 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

Julia Wolfe SITI Company Bang on a Can All-Stars *Steel Hammer*

Anne Bogart, director
Julia Wolfe, music and lyrics
Kia Corthron, Will Power, Carl Hancock Rux, and
Regina Taylor, original text
Music performed by Bang on a Can All-Stars
Play performed and created by SITI Company
Brian H Scott**, lighting design
James Schuette**, scenic and costume design

Barney O'Hanlon*, choreography
Andrew Cotton and Christian Frederickson, sound
design
Ellen Mezzera*, production stage manager
Jason Pacella*, assistant stage manager
Laura Sheedy, assistant director
Jacob Sexton, directing assistant
Michelle Preston, SITI Company executive director
Kenny Savelson, Bang on a Can executive director

CAST

Akiko Aizawa*
Eric Berryman*
Patrice Johnson Chevannes*
Gian-Murray Gianino*
Barney O'Hanlon*
Stephen Duff Webber*

BANG ON A CAN ALL-STARS

Ashley Bathgate, cello
Robert Black, bass
Vicky Chow, piano
David Cossin, percussion
Mark Stewart, electric guitar, mountain dulcimer,
harmonica
Ken Thomson, clarinets, harmonica
with
Emily Eagen, voice
Katie Geissinger, voice
Molly Quinn, voice

**Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers of the United States.*

***Member of the United Scenic Artists Union (USA).*

Anne Bogart is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.

The performance will last approximately 115 minutes, and there will be no intermission.

Steel Hammer the score was commissioned by Bang on a Can with generous support from Maria and Robert A. Skirnick and Carnegie Hall. The play Steel Hammer premiered at Actors Theatre of Louisville in the 2014 Humana Festival of New American Plays with support from the National Endowment for the Arts. The dramatized stage production of Steel Hammer featuring SITI Company and Bang on a Can All-Stars was developed and premiered at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts/University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and was commissioned by the Krannert Center and by BAM for the 2015 Next Wave Festival.

Program Notes

JULIA WOLFE, *composer*

Steel Hammer was inspired by my love for the legends and music of Appalachia. The text was culled from the over 200 versions of the John Henry ballad. The various versions, based on hearsay, recollection, and tall tales, explore the subject of human versus machine in the quintessential American legend. Many of the facts are unclear: some say he's from West Virginia; some say he's from South Carolina; some say he's from New Jersey. But regardless of the details, John Henry, wielding a steel hammer, faces the onslaught of the industrial age as his super-human strength is challenged in a contest to out-dig an engine.

I drew upon the extreme variations of the story, fragmenting and weaving the contradictory versions of the ballad that have circulated since the late 1800s into a new whole—at times meditating on single words or phrases—in order to tell the story of the story and to embody the simultaneous diverse paths it traveled. The Bang on a Can All-Stars add a chorus of instruments, including mountain dulcimer, wooden bones, banjo, harmonica, and body percussion, and are joined by a trio of three female voices.

ANNE BOGART, *director*

Steel Hammer traces the trajectory of a powerful story passed from one generation to next, a fable pitting the work of a man against a machine. John Henry, a railroad worker, equipped with only a steel-driving hammer, raced in a competition against a powerful steam engine to tunnel through a mountain. He won the race and became a folk hero but lost his life in the process. This poignant tale of human struggle survived in ballads, songs, and poetry, and it travelled from one person to the next through time and across many territories. Perhaps the story of John Henry was a cautionary tale that warned other railroad workers to slow down in order to survive. Possibly it was based upon a real man or was an amalgamation of different individual struggles of African Americans in the post civil war period.

Julia Wolfe originally composed *Steel Hammer* as an oratorio inspired by her love of the Appalachian music tradition and the many faceted stories of John Henry. She drew inspiration from both the music and oral traditions of the Appalachian region, using a chorus of instruments including mountain dulcimers, wooden bones, banjo, steel hammers and more. The Bang on a Can All-Stars have performed *Steel Hammer* in concert at many music venues around the country. Julia and I wanted to work together, and the prospect of expanding *Steel Hammer* into a music-theatre piece delighted both of us.

Our production explores two basic themes: the ancient human necessity for telling stories and the cost of hard labor on the body and the spirit. We began by asking questions about both subjects: Why do we tell stories? How do stories work? Who owns a story? How do stories travel through time? What is the function of stories in society? Are we too easily slaves to ambition and striving? Do we live in an era where work is killing us? Is the 24-hour electronic connection creating more useless work than it is purporting to alleviate? We wonder whether we are currently pitted against the machine in an even more insidious way than John Henry?

For thousands of years humans have stood in front of one another to tell stories. This impulse to use spoken narrative to explain and shape our life experiences lies at the heart of *Steel Hammer*. I invited playwrights Kia Corthron, Carl Hancock Rux, Will Power, and Regina Taylor to each write their version of the John Henry story, and we wove their work into the fabric of *Steel Hammer*.

What you will experience tonight is a meeting of hearts, minds and bodies: Julia Wolfe's extraordinary music composition, the brilliance of the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the fluency of four remarkable playwrights, and the shared sensibilities of SITI Company's actors and designers.

Texts

SPOKEN

Tunnel Tale by Kia Corthron
Migrant Mamie Remembers John Henry by Carl Hancock Rux
John Henry, Polly Ann by Will Power
John by Regina Taylor

SUNG

Steel Hammer lyrics by Julia Wolfe

SOME SAY

Some say he's from
some say he
some say he's from
some say
some say he
say he
he

THE STATES

Georgia
Tennessee
Columbus, Ohio
Kentucky
Alabama
New Jersey
Yew Pine Mountains
Mississippi
Mountain
West Virginia
South Carolina

DESTINY

John Henry
was a little boy
sitting on his papa's knee
John Henry
was a little man
sitting on his mama's knee
a baby boy
sitting on his daddy's knee
John Henry
he said, "I'm gonna be a steel
drivin' man."
He picked up his hammer and a
little piece of steel
He said, "This hammer's gonna
be the death of me."

MOUNTAIN

The mountain was so tall
John Henry was so small

CHARACTERISTICS

He was small
He was tall
He was black
He was white
He was true
He was false
He was two hundred pounds
He was two twenty-five
He's a worker
Convict
Singer
Thirty-five years
Twenty-two
Fifty
Cotton picker
Steel Driver (hammer, hammer,
steel, steel)
He was true
He was false
He was six feet tall
He was five foot one
He was tall
He was small
He was small
He was tall

POLLY ANN

John Henry had a little woman
And her name was
Polly Ann, Mary Ann, Julie Ann,
Sary Ann, Sally Ann,
Martha Ann, Liza Ann, Lucy Ann,
Mary Magdalena, Magdalena
John Henry had a little woman
and she was all dressed in blue,
dressed in red,
red, blue, black
John Henry's woman said to him,
"My darling Johnny, I've been
true."
true to you, true to you
John Henry had a little woman
and her name was Ida Red,
and her name was Liza Jane,
and her name was Maggadee,
Polly Ann, Mary Ann, Julie Ann,
Sary Ann, Sally Ann,

Martha Ann, Liza Ann, Lucy Ann,
Mary Magdalena, Magdalena
Ida Red, Maggadee, Liza Jane,
Polly
When John Henry he took sick to
bed,
then Polly drove steel just like a
man.

THE RACE

The captain told John Henry
"gonna bring that steam drill
'round"
John Henry told the captain
"a man ain't nothin' but a man"
nothin', nothin', nothin'
but a man, but a man
John Henry on the right side
the steam drill's on the left
right, left, right, left
"Before I let your steam drill beat
me down,
I'll hammer my fool self to
death."
nine pound hammer
ten pound hammer
twelve pound hammer
twenty pound hammer
two nine pound hammers
two twenty pound hammers
sixteen pound hammer
hammer, hammer, hammer,
hammer

WINNER

The man that invented the steam
drill,
he thought he was mighty fine.
John Henry sunk the steel
fourteen feet,
while the steam drill only made
nine,
Lord Lord,

LORD LORD

Lord Lord
This old hammer rings like silver
This old hammer shines like gold

Biographies

ANNE BOGART, director

Anne Bogart is one of the three co-artistic directors of SITI Company, which she founded with Japanese director Tadashi Suzuki in 1992. She is a professor at Columbia University, where she runs the Graduate Directing Program. Works with SITI include *the theater is a blank page*; *Persians*; *Steel Hammer*; *A Rite*; *Café Variations*; *Trojan Women (After Euripides)*; *American Document*; *Antigone*; *Under Construction*; *Freshwater*; *Who Do You Think You Are*; *Radio Macbeth*; *Hotel Cassiopeia*; *Death and the Ploughman*; *La Dispute*; *Score*; *bobrauschenbergamerica*; *Room*; *War of the Worlds*; *Cabin Pressure*; *War of the Worlds – The Radio Play*; *Alice's Adventures*; *Culture of Desire*; *Bob*; *Going, Going, Gone*; *Small Lives/Big Dreams*; *The Medium*; Noel Coward's *Hay Fever and Private Lives*; August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*; and Charles Mee's *Orestes*. She is the author of five books, including *A Director Prepares*; *The Viewpoints Book*; *And Then, You Act*; *Conversations with Anne*; and *What's the Story*.

JULIA WOLFE, composer

Composer Julia Wolfe is the winner of the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her oratorio, *Anthracite Fields*, based on life in the Pennsylvania coal mines. The CD of *Anthracite Fields* is available on Cantaloupe Music. Wolfe draws inspiration from folk, classical, and rock genres, bringing a modern sensibility to each, while simultaneously tearing down the walls between them. Recent works include her body concerto *riSE and fLY* performed by Colin Currie and the Cincinnati Symphony in fall 2015, and *Anthracite Fields*, which will receive its west coast premiere with the L.A. Masters Chorale at Disney Hall and its European premiere in Scandinavia in spring 2016. Recent recordings include *Steel Hammer*, *Cruel Sister*, and *Dark Full Ride* on the Cantaloupe label. Wolfe has collaborated with theatre artist Anna Deveare Smith, filmmaker Bill Morrison, director Francois Girard, scenic designer Jeff Sugg, and choreographer Susan Marshall, among others. Wolfe is professor of music composition at the Steinhardt School at NYU. She is cofounder/artistic director of the new music collective Bang on a Can.

KIA CORTHRON, playwright

Kia Corthron was most recently awarded a Windham Campbell Prize for Drama, the USArtists Jane Addams Fellowship, and the Simon Great Plains Playwright Award (Honored Playwright). Plays have been produced in New York by Playwrights Horizons, Ensemble Studio Theatre, NY Theatre Workshop, Atlantic, Manhattan Theatre Club, and American Place; in London by the Royal Court and Donmar Warehouse; and regionally by Minneapolis' Children's Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Alabama Shakespeare, Yale Rep, Huntington, NY Stage & Film, Baltimore's Center Stage, Goodman, Hartford Stage, and elsewhere. Other theatre awards include the Lee Reynolds Award, NEA, McKnight National Residency, and Bellagio residency, and in television she was awarded Writers Guild and Edgar Awards for *The Wire*. In January her first novel, *The Castle Cross the Magnet Carter*, will be published by Seven Stories Press. She serves on the Dramatists Guild Council, is a member of the Authors Guild, and is a New Dramatists alumnus.

WILL POWER, playwright

Will Power is an award-winning playwright and performer. Plays include *Stagger Lee* (Dallas Theater Center), *Fetch Clay, Make Man* (New York Theatre Workshop, Marin Theatre Company, Roundhouse Theatre, and True Colors), *Steel Hammer* with SITI Company (Humana Festival and upcoming at Brooklyn Academy of Music), *The Seven* (Lucille Lortel Award Best Musical, New York Theatre Workshop, and La Jolla Playhouse), *Five Fingers of Funk!* (Children's Theatre Company), *Honey Bo and The Goldmine* (La Jolla Playhouse), and two internationally acclaimed solo shows, *The Gathering* and *Flow*. Power's numerous awards include a United States Artist Prudential Fellowship and the TCG Peter Zeisler Memorial Award. Power's numerous film and television appearances include *The Colbert Report* (Comedy Central) and *Bill Moyers on Faith and Reason* (PBS). Power was a guest of the U.S. State Department on five separate occasions, traveling to South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. On these trips and others, Power taught community workshops in shantytowns, worked with poets in former regimes of the Soviet Union, and lectured at various libraries, grammar schools, and colleges. Power is currently on the faculty at The Meadows School of the Arts/SMU and is the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation playwright in residence with the Dallas Theater Center.

Biographies, continued

CARL HANCOCK RUX, *playwright*

Carl Hancock Rux's work has been presented at McCarter Theatre Center, the Walker Art Center, Penumbra Theatre, and Off-Broadway at Lincoln Center Theater, The Public Theater, Playwrights Horizons, 651 Arts, and BAM's Next Wave Festival. Rux's work has also been produced at Maison des arts de Créteil, Montclair State College, Hong Kong Arts Festival, Esplanade Theatre of Singapore, Scuola di Danzi Mimma Testa in Trastevere, and Teatro de natal infantile Raffaely Beligni. Rux has received an Obie Award, an Alpert Award in the Arts, and a New York Press Club Journalism Award for Entertainment News. He is a New York Foundation for the Arts Gregory Millard Fellow, as well as the recipient of a NYFA Prize and a CINE Golden Eagle Film and Video Award. Published works include *Pagan Operetta* (SemioText); the Obie Award-winning play, *Talk* (TCG); and *Asphalt* (Simon & Schuster). Rux's play, *The Exalted* (BAM Next Wave 2015), is also directed by Anne Bogart.

REGINA TAYLOR, *playwright*

With a body of work that encompasses film, television, theatre, and writing, Regina Taylor's playwriting credits include *Crowns* (four Helen Hayes awards), *Trinity River Plays* (Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award), *Oo-Bla-Dee* (American Critics' Association new play award), *Drowning Crow* (Broadway, Manhattan Theater Club), *The Dreams of Sarah Breedlove*, *Escape from Paradise*, *Ties that Bind*, and *stop. reset.*, which she also directed at NYC's Signature Theatre Company and Goodman Theatre. Taylor is an artistic associate of the Goodman Theatre and a resident playwright at Signature Theatre. She has also received a Golden Globe Award, two Emmy nominations, a NAACP Image Award, a Jeff Award, and an Oscar Micheaux Award from the Chicago Film Critics Association. Taylor is best known to television audiences for her role as Lilly Harper in the series *I'll Fly Away*, as Molly Blane in *The Unit*, and as Ambassador Ruth Ridell in USA's *Dig*. For more information, please visit www.reginataylor.com and www.stopreset.org.

BRIAN H. SCOTT, *lighting designer*

Brian H. Scott hails from New York City. He is a SITI Company member and has designed lighting for *Café Variations*, *Trojan Women (After Euripides)*, *Antigone*, *American Document* in collaboration with the Martha Graham Dance Company, *Under Construction*, *Who Do You Think You Are*, *Hotel Cassiopeia*, *Death and the Ploughman*, *bobrauschenbergamerica* (Henry Hewes Design Award 2004), *War of the Worlds – The Radio Play*, *Macbeth*, and a dance collaboration with the musical groups Rachel's and *systems/layers*. Additionally, he has had the pleasure of assisting Mimi Jordan Sherin on *Bob*; *Cabin Pressure*; *War of the Worlds*; *The Medium*; *Small Live/Big Dreams*; *Going, Going, Gone*; *Miss Julie*; *Private Lives*; *Alice's Adventures*; *Culture of Desire*; and *The Adding Machine*. Scott has worked with Christopher Akerlind on the SITI productions *Room*, *Score*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

JAMES SCHUETTE, *scenic and costume designer*

James Schuette has designed scenery and/or costumes for over 17 SITI Company productions. His work has been seen at American Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, BAM, Berkeley Rep, Classic Stage, Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Long Wharf Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Manhattan Theatre Club, McCarter Theatre, NY Live Arts, New York Theatre Workshop, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Papermill Playhouse, Playwrights Horizons, The Public Theatre/NY Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Rep, Steppenwolf, Signature Theatre, Trinity Rep, Vineyard Theatre, Wexner Center, Yale Rep, Boston Lyric Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Chicago Opera Theatre, Glimmerglass Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Minnesota Opera, New York City Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and Seattle Opera, as well as internationally.

Biographies, continued

BARNEY O'HANLON, *choreographer and ensemble*

Barney O'Hanlon has been collaborating with Anne Bogart since 1986 and joined the SITI Company in 1994. He most recently choreographed Verdi's *Macbeth* for the Glimmerglass Festival, directed by Anne Bogart. He also choreographed Anne Washburn's *10 out of 12* at Soho Rep, directed by Les Waters; Charles Mee's *The Glory of the World* for the Humana Festival, also directed by Les Waters; and Sarah Ruhl's *The Oldest Boy* for Lincoln Center Theater, directed by Rebecca Taichman. International credits include Dublin Theatre Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, Prague Quadrennial, MC93 Bobigny (France), Bonn Biennial, Festival Iberoamericano (Bogota, Colombia), and Kaleideskop Theatre (Copenhagen, Denmark). O'Hanlon's New York credits include BAM's Next Wave Festival, The Public Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, PS 122, Dance Theater Workshop, and New York Live Arts. His opera credits include New York City Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Washington National Opera, and Opera Omaha. O'Hanlon has collaborated with SITI Company on *American Document* with the Martha Graham Dance Company, *A Rite* with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, and *the event of a thread* with visual artist Ann Hamilton.

ANDREW COTTON, *sound designer*

In his role as designer, tour manager, and engineer, Andrew Cotton works closely with both composers and musicians in creating new works. Cotton works closely with several major London producers, specializing in contemporary music projects with artists and concert series as diverse as Elvis Costello & John Harle, the BBC Promenade Series, Meltdown, George Russell, Carla Bley, and Talvin Singh. He collaborates with composers Michael Gordon, Julia Wolfe, and David Lang on their pieces for the All-Stars, as well as large ensemble, dance & theatre pieces. He also acts as technical manager and sound collaborator with percussionist Evelyn Glennie DBE.

CHRISTIAN FREDERICKSON, *sound designer*

Christian Frederickson is a violist, composer, and sound designer living in New York. He is a frequent collaborator with SITI Company, writing music and designing sound for *Steel Hammer*, *Trojan Women (After Euripides)*, *Antigone*, *365 Days/365 Plays*, and *systems/layers*. Frederickson is a founding member of the band Rachel's, who released six albums on Touch and Go/Quarterstick Records and toured widely in the United States, Europe, and South Korea. He is a graduate of The Peabody Conservatory and The Juilliard School. Other selected credits include *The Master Builder* (BAM); *Glory of the World*, *At the Vanishing Point*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Edge of Our Bodies*, and *The Tempest* (Actors Theatre of Louisville); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Unnatural Acts*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Tempest* (Classic Stage Company); *Through the Yellow Hour* (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, 2013 Drama Desk Nomination); *The Painted Bird Trilogy* (The Wexner Center); *The Emperor Jones* (Irish Repertory Theater, Lortel Nomination); and *The Awake* (59E59, NYIT award). For more information, please visit www.christianfrederickson.com.

ELLEN MEZZERA, *production stage manager*

Originally from San Francisco, Ellen Mezzera now resides in New York City. Her Broadway credits include *The Lion King*, *Annie*, *Les Misérables*, and *Matilda*. In New York, Mezzera has worked on *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* with New York City Center Encores!; *Macbeth* and *A Man's a Man* with Classic Stage Company; and with Shen Wei Dance Arts at the Park Avenue Armory. Regional credits include *Steel Hammer* at Actors Theatre of Louisville, *Persians* at The Getty Villa, and *the theater is a blank page* at the Wexner Center for the Arts. Mezzera has toured internationally through China, Georgia, Hong Kong, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, and Switzerland. Additionally, Mezzera had the opportunity to work on *The Sound of Music Live!* (NBC Universal) and the 2013 Tony Awards. She received a master of fine arts from Columbia University and bachelor of the arts degree from Gonzaga University. Mezzera is a member of the Actors' Equity Association and Theatrical Wardrobe Union Local 764.

Biographies, continued

JASON PACELLA, *assistant stage manager*

Jason Pacella's work with SITI Company includes *Steel Hammer* and *Café Variations*. Additional credits include *The Odyssey*, *The Tempest*, the *Total Bent* workshop, and the *Jane Says* workshop at The Public Theater; *Scenes from a Marriage* at New York Theatre Workshop; *Dot*, *Dracula*, and *A Christmas Carol* at Actors Theatre of Louisville; and *One Night* and *North of the Boulevard* at the Contemporary American Theater Festival. Pacella's other theatre credits include *The Shakespearean Jazz Show*, *I Am Gordafarid* workshop with The Rising Circle, and two seasons at Totem Pole Playhouse in Pennsylvania. He has also worked on film and television, including NBC's *Peter Pan Live!* and *Jim Norton: American Degenerate*. Pacella received a bachelor of fine arts in stage and production management from Emerson College.

MICHELLE PRESTON, *SITI Company executive director*

Michelle Preston holds a master of fine arts in performing arts management from Brooklyn College and a bachelor of fine arts in dance performance from Northern Illinois University. She began her career in arts administration at the Columbus Symphony Orchestra before coming to New York, where she worked as a fundraiser for modern dance companies, such as Urban Bush Women and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. Prior to coming to SITI Company, she spent nearly three years as the manager of planning and projects for the School of American Ballet. She has served on the board of Immediate Medium since 2009; was a participant in the 2011 Arts Leadership Institute, hosted by the Arts and Business Council of New York; and has served as a panelist for the Brooklyn Arts Council regrant program and the TCG Global Connections grant. She is an active member of the Brooklyn College Arts Management alumni group, the New York chapter of Women in Development, and the Emerging Leaders of New York Arts—a program of the Arts and Business Council of New York.

KENNY SAVELSON, *Bang on a Can executive director*

Kenny Savelson has managed the creation, production, and touring of all of Bang on a Can's programs since 1997 and has produced over 30 Bang on a Can Marathon concerts at venues throughout New York City, the U.S., and internationally. He has developed and/or booked the Bang on a Can All-Stars' touring projects in the U.S. and internationally since 1998, including the group's annual New York concert appearances at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall and its acclaimed collaborations with many of the most celebrated artists in contemporary music, such as Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Meredith Monk, Terry Riley, Don Byron, Ornette Coleman, Brian Eno, Cecil Taylor, and more. Staged production credits include *A House in Bali* (Cal Performances 2009, BAM Next Wave Festival 2010), *Lightning at Our Feet* (BAM Next Wave 2008), *Lost Objects* (BAM Next Wave 2004), and *The Carbon Copy Building* (Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, Settembre Musica Torino 2000), among others. Together with Bang on a Can artistic directors Michael Gordon, David Lang, and Julia Wolfe, Savelson is a co-founder of Cantaloupe Music, an independent record label with over 60 recordings released since 2001.

Biographies, continued

PERFORMERS

AKIKO AIZAWA, *ensemble*

Akiko Aizawa joined SITI Company in 1997 and credits include *the theater is a blank page* (with Ann Hamilton), *Persians*, *Steel Hammer* (music by Julia Wolfe, Bang on a Can All-Stars), *A Rite* (with Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company), *Café Variations*, *Trojan Women (After Euripides)*, *American Document* (with Martha Graham Dance Company), *Antigone*, *Under Construction*, *Freshwater*, *Who Do You Think You Are*, *Radio Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hotel Cassiopeia*, *Intimations for Saxophone*, *La Dispute*, *bobrauschenbergamerica*, *War of the Worlds—The Radio Play*, *Culture of Desire*, and *systems/layers* (music by Rachel's). Other theatre and festival credits include American Repertory Theater, Arena Stage, ArtsEmerson, BAM, Carolina Performing Arts, Getty Villa, Humana Festival, Joyce Theater, Krannert Center, Los Angeles Opera, New York Theatre Workshop, New York Live Arts, Royce Hall, The Public Theater, and The Wexner Center. International festival and venue credits include Edinburgh, Dublin, Bonn, Helsinki, Melbourne, Bogotá, São Paulo, Vienna, Moscow, Toga, Tokyo, and Tbilisi.

ASHLEY BATHGATE, *cello*

American cellist Ashley Bathgate has been described as an “eloquent new music interpreter” (*New York Times*) and “a rising star of her instrument” (*Albany Times Union*) who combines “bittersweet lyricism along with ferocious chops” (*New York Magazine*). Her “impish ferocity,” “rich tone,” and “imaginative phrasing” (*New York Times*) have made her one of the most sought-after performers of her time. The desire to create a dynamic energy exchange with her audience and build upon the ensuing chemistry is a pillar of Bathgate’s philosophy. Her affinity to dynamism drives Bathgate to venture into previously uncharted areas of sounds and techniques, breaking the mold of a cello’s traditional voice. Collaborators and fans alike describe her vitality as remarkable and magical. She is a member of the award-winning, internationally acclaimed sextet, Bang on a Can All-Stars, as well as two chamber groups of which she is a founding member: TwoSense and Bonjour. For more information, please visit www.ashleybathgate.com.

ERIC BERRYMAN, *ensemble*

Eric Berryman’s off-Broadway credits include *pool, no water* at Barrow Street Theater. His regional theatre credits include *Steel Hammer* and *Glory of the World* at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Humana Festival; *The Amen Corner* at the Guthrie Theater; *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* at The Kennedy Center; *I Wish You Love* at Hartford Stage, Penumbra Theatre, and The Kennedy Center; *Fly* at Ford’s Theatre; *Red, Topdog/Underdog*, and *A Raisin in the Sun* at Everyman Theatre (resident company member); *The History Boys* at Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre; *Persians* at Getty Villa; and *The Dangerous House of Pretty Mbane* at InterAct Theatre. Berryman’s international credits include *Medea* (Australia); *Elegies for Angels, Punks, and Raging Queens* (England); and the Bunraku puppet play *Hidagakawa Iriazakawa* (Iida, Japan). He received a bachelor of fine arts from Carnegie Mellon University and he is Lessac practitioner and social media director of The Lessac Institute. Berryman won the Arthur Kennedy Acting Award and the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship.

Biographies, continued

ROBERT BLACK, *bass*

Robert Black tours the world creating unheard-of music for the solo double bass. He collaborates with the most adventurous composers, musicians, dancers, artists, actors, and technophiles from all walks of life. He has commissioned, collaborated, or performed with musicians from John Cage to D.J. Spooky, Elliott Carter to Meredith Monk, Cecil Taylor to young emerging composers, as well as Brazilian painter Ige D'Aquino, Japanese choreographer Yoshiko Chuma, American actor Kathryn Walker, English sound artist/DJ Mira Calix, and Swiss-American film-maker Rudy Burckhardt. Black is a founding member of the Bang on a Can All-Stars, and he maintains a full teaching schedule at The Hartt School at the University of Hartford, the Festival Eleazar de Carvalho (Brazil), and the Manhattan School of Music's Contemporary Performance Program. His current project, *Possessed*, is a series of solo improvisatory outdoor performances in Utah's rugged canyon/desert landscape, which will be released in DVD and CD format on Cantaloupe Records in 2016. Other projects include *Modern American Bass* (New World Records 2011), *State of the Bass* (O.O. Discs), *The Complete Bass Music of Christian Wolff* (Mode Records), and *The Complete Bass Music of Giacinto* (Mode Records). Black has also recorded for Sony Classical, Point/Polygram, Cantaloupe, Koch International, CRI, Opus One, Artifact Recordings, and Folkways Records, among others. For more information, please visit www.robertblack.org.

PATRICE JOHNSON CHEVANNES, *ensemble*

Patrice Johnson Chevannes is an award-winning actress whose Broadway credits include *The Crucible* opposite Liam Neeson and Laura Linney, directed by Richard Eyre. Her credits include *Tamburlaine*, directed by Michael Boyd (Theatre for a New Audience); *Steel Hammer*, directed by Anne Bogart (Actors Theatre of Louisville, upcoming in the fall at BAM); *Desdemona*, opposite Patrick Stewart, in *Othello*; *Familiar* (Yale Rep); *Banished Children of Eve* (Irish Rep); *The Devils* (New York Theatre Workshop); and *All's Well That Ends Well* (The Public Theater). Chevannes received an Audelco nomination for *Angelique*, an Audelco Award for *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*, and a 2010 Barrymore nomination for Best Actress in *Coming Home* (The Wilma Theater). Additional film and television credits include *Undertow*, *The Guardian*, *ER*, and *Without a Trace*, among others. Chevannes has directed three award-winning feature films through her company God-And-All-O-Wee Productions: *Kings County*, *NY's Dirty Laundry*, and *Hill and Gully*, currently on the festival circuit.

VICKY CHOW, *piano and keyboards*

Canadian pianist Vicky Chow has been described as "brilliant" (*New York Times*) and "one of the new stars of new music" (*Los Angeles Times*). Joining the All-Stars in 2009, she is now also a member of New Music Detroit, X88, and GRANDBAND. Two recent recordings include her innovative recording of Steve Reich's *Piano Counterpoint*, released on Nonesuch records, and Tristan Perich's epic hour-long *Surface Image* for solo piano and 40 channel one-bit electronics on New Amsterdam Records. Her next projects include commissions from American composers Chris Cerrone and Molly Joyce, as well as Canadian composers Adam Basanta and Jocelyn Morlock. Chow also produces and curates *Contagious Sounds*, a new music series focusing on adventurous contemporary artists and composers in New York City. She receives continuous support from the Canada Council for the Arts and has received grants from the Aaron Copland Fund, Yvar Mikhashoff Trust, Fromm Foundation, Vancouver Foundation, and the BC Arts Council. Originally from Vancouver, Canada, Chow studied at The Juilliard School with Yoheved Kaplinsky and Julian Martin before continuing studies at Manhattan School of Music with Christopher Oldfather. She made her orchestral debut at the age of 10 with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and she made her New York orchestral debut appearance at Alice Tully Hall with the Juilliard Symphony. Chow is based in Brooklyn. For more information, visit www.vickychow.com.

Biographies, continued

DAVID COSSIN, *percussion*

David Cossin was born and raised in Queens, New York, and studied classical percussion at the Manhattan School of Music. His interest in classical percussion, drum set, non-western hand drumming, composition, and improvisation has led to performances across a broad spectrum of musical and artistic forms to incorporate new media with percussion. Cossin has recorded and performed internationally with composers and ensembles, including Steve Reich and Musicians, Philip Glass, Yo-Yo Ma, Meredith Monk, Tan Dun, Cecil Taylor, Talujon Percussion Quartet, and the Real Quiet trio. Numerous theatre projects include collaborations with Blue Man Group, Mabou Mines, and director Peter Sellars. Cossin was featured as the percussion soloist in Tan Dun's Grammy- and Oscar-winning score to Ang Lee's film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Cossin is also happy to have performed with Sting on his world tour for *Symphonicity*. He has performed as a soloist with orchestras throughout the world, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orchestra Radio France, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Sao Paulo State Symphony, Sydney Symphony, Gothenburg Symphony, Hong Kong Symphony, and the Singapore Symphony. Cossin ventures into other art forms, including sonic installations, which have been presented in New York, Italy, and Germany. He is the curator for the Sound Res Festival, an experimental music festival in southern Italy, and also teaches percussion at Queens College in New York City. For more information, please visit www.davidcossin.com.

EMILY EAGEN, *voice*

Emily Eagen is a versatile singer who performs in a variety of styles ranging from baroque to folk to avant garde. She studied early and contemporary music in the Hague and moved to New York in 2007. Eagen sings with the M6: Meredith Monk Music Third Generation, she toured for several years with the eclectic vocal ensemble moira smiley and VOCO, and she has worked with artists ranging from Sufjan Stevens to Mandy Patinkin to Gyan Riley. She is a regular faculty member at the Amherst Early Music Festival in Connecticut and the Augusta Heritage Center in West Virginia, and she is a teaching artist for Carnegie Hall. Also a two-time international whistling champion, Eagen can be heard whistling, singing, and playing the ukulele with the Brooklyn blues and old-time band, The Whistling Wolves.

KATIE GEISSINGER, *voice*

Katie Geissinger's previous work with Julia Wolfe includes *Steel Hammer* at MASS MoCA and the Obie Award-winning *The Carbon Copy Building* (Canteloupe), co-composed by Bang on a Can composers Michael Gordon, David Lang, and Julia Wolfe. Geissinger is a long-time member of Meredith Monk's Vocal Ensemble, with whom she tours staged productions and concerts worldwide and regularly records (including the Grammy-nominated *Impermanence*). Recent performances include *On Behalf of Nature* at BAM and in San Francisco, as well as several concerts in Brazil and at Carnegie Hall. Previous performances at Carnegie include Bach's *Magnificat*, the Witch in Honegger's *Le Roi David*, and *Einstein on the Beach* (Elektra Nonesuch). She also appeared at BAM in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, directed by Jonathan Miller. Broadway credits include *Coram Boy* and *La Boheme*, directed by Baz Luhrmann.

GIAN-MURRAY GIANINO, *ensemble*

As a member of SITI Company, Gian-Murray Gianino has helped create roles in *the theater is a blank page*, *Persians*, *Café Variations*, *Trojan Women (After Euripides)*, *Radio Macbeth*, *bobraschenbergamerica*, *systems/layers*, and *Freshwater*. New York credits include work at BAM, Second Stage, Signature Theatre, The Public Theater, The Women's Project, SoHo Rep, and HERE Arts. He has performed regionally and internationally, including at Yale Rep, Arena Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville (Humana Festival), Berkshire Theatre Festival, Penguin Rep, Getty Villa (Los Angeles), The Court (Chicago), Krannert Center, Walker Art Center, Wexner Center, MC93 Bobigny (Paris, France), Bonn Biennale, Dublin Theatre Festival, and GIFT festival (Tbilisi, Georgia). Television and film credits include *White Collar*, *Law & Order*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *All My Children*, *Dead Canaries*, and *Hospitality*. Gianino received a bachelor of arts degree from Wesleyan University. He is the third generation of a New York theatre family, and he is a member of the Actors' Center.

Biographies, continued

MOLLY QUINN, *voice*

Molly Quinn has captivated audiences with her “radiant” soprano, possessing an “arresting sweetness and simplicity” (*New York Times*) in diverse repertoire, ranging from Monteverdi to the Rolling Stones. She is a soloist on Trinity Choir’s Grammy-nominated recording of Handel’s *Israel in Egypt*, and she has appeared with them in London, Moscow, and Paris and joined them in singing backup for The Rolling Stones at The Barclay Center. Quinn has been a long-time collaborator with TENET. The ensemble is currently recording a follow-up album to 2013’s critically acclaimed *Uno + One: Italia Nostra*. Having strong roots in the music of Appalachia and Ireland, Quinn has performed in the programs *Come to the River* with Apollo’s Fire and *The Music of Dublin* with The Folger Consort. Quinn was a 2013 season Adams Fellows at the Carmel Bach Festival and holds a master’s degree in vocal performance from College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati. For more information, please visit www.mollyquinn.com.

MARK STEWART, *guitar, mountain dulcimer, and harmonica*

Raised in America’s dairy land of Wisconsin, multi-instrumentalist, singer, composer, and instrument designer Mark Stewart has been heard around the world performing old and new music. Going to conservatory to study both guitar and cello, he came to New York City to work as a performer on both instruments; however, upon completing school he was most drawn to the electric guitar. Today Stewart plays regularly with a wide range of musicians; since 1998 he has been musical director for and recorded and toured with Paul Simon. A founding member of the Bang on a Can All-Stars, Stewart is also a member of Steve Reich & Musicians and the comic duo Polygraph Lounge, with keyboard & theremin wizard Rob Schwimmer, and he has performed with Anthony Braxton, Bob Dylan, Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen, Bobby McFerrin, Paul McCartney, the Everly Brothers, David Byrne, and James Taylor. Stewart has collaborated extensively with composer Elliot Goldenthal on music for the feature films *The Tempest*, *Across the Universe*, *Titus*, *The Butcher Boy*, *The Good Thief*, *In Dreams*, and *Heat*, often playing instruments of his own design and construction. He is on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music, and his New York “lab” is home to an instrument workshop and sonic salon, where traditional and new instruments cohabit. He lives in New York City making a living playing and writing popular music, semi-popular music, and unpopular music.

KEN THOMSON, *clarinets and harmonica*

Ken Thomson is a Brooklyn-based clarinetist, saxophonist, and composer. In demand as a composer and freelancer in many settings, he moves quickly between genres and scenes, bringing a fiery intensity and emotional commitment to every musical situation; *Time Out NY* called him “the hardest-working saxophonist in new-music show business.” In addition to the All-Stars, Thomson has been an anchoring force with Bang on a Can as music director and saxophonist with Asphalt Orchestra, as well as acting as a faculty member of Bang on a Can’s Summer Music Festival at MASS MoCA. With his quintet, Slow/Fast, he has toured and released two discs, including *Settle* (NCM East Records, 2014), about which the *Chicago Reader* said, “few musicians travel as assuredly and meaningfully between jazz and new music,” and the *New York Times* wrote, “Thomson’s compositions are intricately wrought and incident-steeped.” His 2013 CD, *Thaw* (Cantaloupe Music), featuring his compositions performed by the heralded JACK Quartet, was called the number one classical CD of 2013 by Rhapsody.com, and it was listed on NPR’s “Top 10 Songs Public Radio Can’t Stop Playing.” Thomson co-leads the chamber/punk/jazz band Gutbucket, with whom he has toured extensively throughout the U.S. and internationally over 16 years. As a composer, he has been commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra, Bang on a Can, and Doug Perkins, among others, and has received awards from ASCAP and NewMusic USA. He is a Conn-Selmer/Selmer Paris and D’Addario Woodwinds Artist. Visit www.ktonline.net for more information.

Biographies, continued

STEPHEN DUFF WEBBER, *ensemble*

Stephen Duff Webber has performed with SITI Company all over the world since 1994 in *Persians*; *Steel Hammer*; *A Rite*; *Café Variations*; *American Document*; *Antigone*; *Radio Macbeth (Macbeth)*; *Hotel Cassiopeia*; *Under Construction*; *Freshwater*; *Death and the Ploughman*; *War of the Worlds (Orson Welles)*; *bobraschenbergamerica*; *systems/layers (with Rachel's)*; *La Dispute*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Cabin Pressure*; *Going, Going, Gone*; *Culture of Desire*; *The Medium*; *Private Lives*; *Hay Fever*; *War of the Worlds—The Radio Play (Orson Welles)*; and *Short Stories*. Webber's New York credits include *Death and the Ploughman* (Classic Stage Company); *War of the Worlds*, *Hotel Cassiopeia*, and *A Rite* (BAM); *Culture of Desire* (New York Theatre Workshop); *Trojan Women 2.0* (En Garde Arts); *Freshwater* (Women's Project Theater); *The Golden Dragon* (Play Company); *Radio Macbeth* (The Public Theater); *American Document* (Joyce Theater); *Antigone* (New York Live Arts); and *Radio Play* (Joe's Pub). His regional credits include American Repertory Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville (*Betrayal* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*), Milwaukee Repertory Theater, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Magic Theatre, Portland Stage Company, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Court Theatre, and Stage West.

Biographies, continued

BANG ON A CAN

Founded in 1987 by composers Michael Gordon, David Lang, and Julia Wolfe, Bang on a Can has been creating an international community dedicated to innovative music, wherever it is found, and has grown from a one-day New York-based Marathon concert to a multi-faceted performing arts organization with a broad range of year-round international activities. Current projects include the annual Bang on a Can Marathon; The People's Commissioning Fund, a membership program to commission emerging composers; the Bang on a Can All-Stars, who tour to major festivals and concert venues around the world every year; recording projects; the Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival—a professional development program for young composers and performers led by today's pioneers of experimental music; Asphalt Orchestra, Bang on a Can's extreme street band that offers mobile performances re-contextualizing unusual music; Found Sound Nation, a new technology-based musical outreach program now partnering with the State Department of the United States of America to create OneBeat, a revolutionary, post-political residency program that uses music to bridge the gulf between young American musicians and young musicians from developing countries; and cross-disciplinary collaborations and projects with DJs, visual artists, choreographers, filmmakers, and more. Each new program has evolved to answer specific challenges faced by today's musicians, composers, and audiences, in order to make innovative music widely accessible and wildly received. Bang on a Can's inventive and aggressive approach to programming and presentation has created a large and vibrant international audience made up of people of all ages who are rediscovering the value of contemporary music.

Formed in 1992, the Bang on a Can All-Stars are recognized worldwide for their ultra-dynamic live performances and recordings of today's most innovative music. Freely crossing the boundaries between classical, jazz, rock, world, and experimental music, this six-member amplified ensemble has consistently forged a distinct category-defying identity, taking music into uncharted territories. Together, the All-Stars have worked in unprecedented close collaboration with some of the most important and inspiring musicians of our time, including Steve Reich, Ornette Coleman, the virtuoso Chinese singer Gong Linna, Tan Dun, and DJ Spooky, among others. The group's celebrated projects include their landmark recording of Brian Eno's ambient classic *Music for Airports*, as well as live performances with Philip Glass, Meredith Monk, Don Byron, Iva Bittova, Thurston Moore, and Terry Riley, among others.

Recent project highlights include the premiere performances and recording of Julia Wolfe's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Anthracite Fields* for the All-Stars and guest choir; the record release of Wolfe's acclaimed *Steel Hammer*, featuring Trio Mediaeval; plus a brand new staged collaboration with SITI Company and director Ann Bogart; *Field Recordings*, a major new multi-media project and CD/DVD package featuring over 20 commissioned works by Tyondai Braxton, Mira Calix, Anna Clyne, Bryce Dessner, Florent Ghys, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Christian Marclay, Steve Reich, and Todd Reynolds, among others; the world premiere, performances, and recording of Steve Reich's *2x5*, including a sold-out performance at Carnegie Hall; the world premiere of *The Lord in the Clouds*, a new collaboration featuring Chinese superstar singer Gong Linna; and more. With a massive repertoire of works written specifically for the group's distinctive instrumentation and style of performance, the All-Stars have become a genre in their own right. The All-Stars record on Cantaloupe Music and have released past recordings on Sony, Universal, and Nonesuch.

Get free music now. Email music@bangonacan.org for an immediate link to streams and free downloads of music from Bang on a Can. For more information, please visit www.bangonacan.org.

Biographies, continued

BANG ON A CAN STAFF

Michael Gordon, David Lang, and Julia Wolfe, *artistic directors*

Kenny Savelson, *executive director*

Tim Thomas, *development director*

Philippa Thompson, *project manager*

Yisroel Lazaros, *production manager*

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Bang on a Can's 2015 programs are made possible with generous lead support from Amphion Foundation, ASCAP and ASCAP Foundation, Atlantic Records, Daniel Baldini, Robert D. Bielecki Foundation, Bishop Fund, Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs, Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, Exploring the Arts, Randy Ezratty and Jo Ann Corkran, Jeremy Geffen, Howard Gilman Foundation, Jaffe Family Foundation, Alan Kifferstein and Joan Finkelstein, Michael Kushner and Carol Dauman, Herb Leventer, MAP Fund, MASS MoCA, Henry S. McNeil, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Jeremy Mindich and Amy Smith, Elizabeth Murrell and Gary Haney, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts (with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature), Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Scopia Capital Management, Paul Simon, Matthew Sirovich and Meredith Elson, Maria and Robert A. Skirnick, Jane and Dick Stewart, Trust for Mutual Understanding, U.S Department of State, Williamson Foundation for Music, Adam Wolfensohn and Jennifer Small, and Wolfensohn Family Foundation.

Biographies, continued

SITI COMPANY

SITI Company was built on the bedrock of ensemble. We believe that through the practice of collaboration, a group of artists working together over time can have a significant impact upon both contemporary theatre and the world at large. Through our performances, educational programs, and collaborations with other artists and thinkers, SITI Company will continue to challenge the status quo, train to achieve artistic excellence in every aspect of our work, and offer new ways of seeing and being as both artists and global citizens. SITI Company is committed to providing a gymnasium-for-the-soul, where the interaction of art, artists, audiences, and ideas inspire the possibility for change, optimism, and hope.

Founded in 1992 by Anne Bogart, Tadashi Suzuki, and a group of likeminded artists, SITI Company began as an agreement to redefine and revitalize contemporary theatre in the United States through an emphasis on international cultural exchange, training, and collaboration. Originally envisioned as a summer institute in Saratoga Springs, New York, SITI Company expanded to encompass a year-round season inclusive of touring, the creation of new work, and running a conservatory program for nine months of the year to cultivate the next generation of independent theatre artists. Based in New York City, SITI Company continues to operate its international training program during its summer season in Saratoga. The company is known nationally and internationally as a top-level artistic collective that generates groundbreaking theatre.

In addition to Co-Artistic Directors Anne Bogart, Leon Ingulsrud, and Ellen Lauren, SITI Company is comprised of eight actors, four designers, and a playwright. The company represents a change in thinking about the relationships between artists and institutions. Offering performances from our varied repertoire and workshops in the unique theatre training we champion, SITI Company is dedicated to establishing long-lasting relationships with theatre presenters and their communities around the world.

SITI COMPANY

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J. Ed Araiza
Anne Bogart
Will Bond
Gian-Murray Gianino
Leon Ingulsrud
Ellen Lauren
Kelly Maurer
Charles L. Mee Jr.
Tom Nelis
Barney O'Hanlon
Neil Patel
James Schuette
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Stephen Duff Webber
Darron L. West

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Biographies, continued

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To become a contributor to the SITI Company, call the office at 212-868-0860 x102 or visit www.siti.org.

Engagement Activities

Monday, November 16, 2015

OPEN DIALOGUE WITH BANG ON A CAN ALL-STARS, SITI COMPANY, AND UNIVERSITY HONORS STUDENTS

Hosted by Amber Smith

Members of SITI Company and Bang on a Can All-Stars will meet with students in Virginia Tech's University Honors program for this intimate dialogue about the production *Steel Hammer*.

Monday, November 16, 2015

WORKSHOP: VIEWPOINTS WITH SITI COMPANY

Hosted by Natasha Staley

Members of SITI Company lead a workshop in Viewpoints—a technique for movement and theatrical composition, developed by Mary Overlie and later adapted by Tina Landau and Anne Bogart, artistic director of SITI Company—for students in the School of Performing Arts' Theatre Arts program.

Monday, November 16, 2015

CLASS VISIT: BAND ON A CAN ALL-STARS

Hosted by Bob McGrath

Bang on a Can All-Stars speak with students of script analysis and directing in the School of Performing Arts.

Tuesday, November 17, 2015, 6:30 PM

AMERICAN VERNACULARS: THE LEGEND OF JOHN HENRY

Gena E. Chandler-Smith, PhD, associate professor, Department of English

John Henry is an African-American folk hero whose legend intersects with the real life of the man who is known to have worked as a "steel-driving man" during the building and expansion of America's railways. Steel-driving was a process of hammering a steel drill into rock to make holes for explosives. The technique was commonly used to clear a path for America's early railways. Facing the often racist world of the railway and the impending rise of industrialization and the steam-powered drill, legend claims that John Henry challenged the steam-powered drill to a race and won, only to be awarded with death from exhaustion. While the physical heart of John Henry failed, his heart or spirit invigorates his legend and lives on in ballads, stories, songs, novels, and American folklore's narrative about hard work, the perseverance of the American man, and the indomitable American spirit. In African-American narratives, John Henry is emblematic of the strength and spirit of men and women who refused to be bloodied or bowed by a segregated, racist society. This talk considers the unique intersections of the story of John Henry—myth and man, past and present—with a variety of cultural expressions. Gena E. Chandler-Smith is a university award-winning teacher; she teaches courses in African-American literature, 19th and 20th century American literature, and postcolonial literature and theory. She has published articles on the work of contemporary writer Charles Johnson and is currently completing a book manuscript examining the figure of the wanderer in African-American literature.

Tuesday, November 17, 2015, Following the performance

Q&A WITH THE STEEL HAMMER ARTISTS

Cube

Following the performance, interact with members of the Bang on a Can All-Stars and SITI Company in this question-and-answer discussion.

Special thanks to University Honors, Gena E. Chandler-Smith, Greg Justice, Bob McGrath, Amber Smith, Patty Raun, Cara Rawlings, Susanna Rinehart, and Natasha Staley

In the Galleries

Mark your calendars: the Center for the Arts has some incredible exhibitions coming this winter.

WINTER EXHIBITIONS OPENING RECEPTION

Thursday, December 3, 2015, 6-8 PM

Grand Lobby

Free, refreshments and cash bar

CHARLIE BROUWER: KNOWN/UNKNOWN

December 3, 2015-February 7, 2016

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Charlie Brouwer, an established artist and longtime resident of Floyd County, is well known for his sculpture, community projects, and ladder installations. For this exhibition Brouwer will take over the Ruth C. Horton Gallery with a large-scale ladder installation that incorporates a video titled *Known/Unknown*.

PAUL RYAN: *the sun that never sets: New Paintings*

December 3, 2015–February 7, 2016

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery, Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery

Paul Ryan, an accomplished artist and art critic based in Staunton, Virginia, incorporates shapes and forms derived from commercial packaging in this new body of oil and acrylic paintings on canvas. Visually intriguing, Ryan's abstract paintings are both delightful but complex, with underlying associations to our culture of consumption, desire, accumulation, and mindless waste.

GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday-Friday, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.; closed for Virginia Tech home football games