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Chicago Humanities Festival

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Chicago Humanities Festival Announces Casting for

***White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* | Nov. 3–9, 2013**

Performances by Usman Ally, Fawzia Mirza, Yasen Peyankov, and Michael Shannon
Co-presented with the Museum of Contemporary Art

***Birds Do It, Bees Do It...* | Nov. 5, 2013**

A Cabaret Performance Created by Rob Lindley and Doug Peck

Featuring Molly Brennan, Felicia P. Fields, Rebecca Finnegan, Robbie Fulks, Beckie Menzie, and More
Debuting Commissioned Songs from Cheryl Coons, Michael Mahler, Alan Schmuckler, and More

CHICAGO, IL—Sept. 25, 2013—The **Chicago Humanities Festival** (CHF) announced casting today for two theatrical productions in November: ***White Rabbit, Red Rabbit***, the Iranian absurdist play about isolation co-presented with the **Museum of Contemporary Art** (MCA), running **Nov. 3–9, 2013**, and ***Birds Do It, Bees Do It...***, the annual cabaret performance **Nov. 5, 2013**, created by **Rob Lindley** and **Doug Peck**. ***White Rabbit, Red Rabbit***, written by Iranian conscientious objector **Nassim Soleimanpour**, will feature a different actor for each performance, with readings by Chicago-based actors: **Usman Ally**, **Fawzia Mirza**, **Yasen Peyankov**, and **Michael Shannon**. Each actor will receive the script just prior to going on stage, and as part of the intrigue, audience members will not know who is performing until the play begins. The animal inspired ***Birds Do It, Bees Do It...*** will explore the odd mating habits of animals, paired with the Great American Songbook. The cabaret revue will feature Chicago's top musical theater talent, including **Molly Brennan**, **Felicia P. Fields**, **Rebecca Finnegan**, **Robbie Fulks**, **Beckie Menzie**, and more. The cabaret will also debut songs commissioned for the performance from composers **Cheryl Coons**, **Michael Mahler**, **Alan Schmuckler**, and more.

White Rabbit, Red Rabbit

Imagine being 29 and forbidden to leave your country. In ***White Rabbit, Red Rabbit***, Iranian playwright **Nassim Soleimanpour** dissects the experience of a whole generation in a wild, utterly original piece. Forbidden to travel, he turned his isolation to his own advantage with a play that requires no director, no set and a different actor for every performance. Voted Best New Performance at the Dublin Fringe Festival and recipient of the Arches Brick Award at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, ***White Rabbit, Red Rabbit*** makes its Midwest premiere at the **Museum of Contemporary Art** as part of the 24th Annual **Chicago Humanities Festival**.

White Rabbit, Red Rabbit will feature four notable Chicago-based actors, who will receive the script just prior to going on stage: **Usman Ally**, **Fawzia Mirza**, **Yasen Peyankov**, and **Michael Shannon**.

- **Usman Ally's** credits include originating the role of Amir in the Pulitzer Prize-winning play ***Disgraced*** at American Theater Company (Jeff Award Nomination, Actor in a Principal Role), VP in the Pulitzer Finalist ***Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity*** at Victory Gardens Theater, and most recently, originating the role of Bagheera in ***The Jungle Book*** at Goodman Theatre.
- Attorney-turned-actor, producer and writer **Fawzia Mirza's** credits include ***The Happiest Song Plays Last*** at Goodman Theatre, ***Scorched*** at Silk Road Rising, and ***In the Heart of America*** at Theatre Seven, along with producing, writing, and starring in her own comedic web series ***Kam Kardashian***.
- Steppenwolf Theatre Company ensemble member **Yasen Peyankov's** credits include ***Morning Star*** (Jeff Award, Actor in a Supporting Role), ***Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune***, ***Hysteria***, ***The Duel*** (produced in association with European Repertory, co-founded by Peyankov), ***Three Sisters***, and the upcoming production of ***The Wheel***.
- Academy Award-nominated actor **Michael Shannon's** credits span both stage and screen, with roles in the films ***Man of Steel*** and ***Revolutionary Road*** (the latter for which he received his first Academy Award nomination), HBO's ***Boardwalk Empire*** as agent Nelson Van Alden, and most recently on stage at A Red Orchid Theatre as Carter in ***Simpatico***.

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Nassim Soleimanpour is an independent multidisciplinary theatre maker from Tehran, Iran. Best known for his play *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit*, written to travel the world when he couldn't, his work has been awarded the Dublin Fringe Festival Best New Performance, Summerworks Outstanding New Performance Text Award, and The Arches Brick Award (Edinburgh Fringe), as well as picking up nominations for a Total Theatre and Brighton Fringe Pick of Edinburgh Award. Currently developing a new play, Nassim lives happily in Tehran with his wife and new puppy.

Birds Do It, Bees Do It...

Birds Do It, Bees Do It... is the fourth CHF collaboration with Jeff Award-winning actor/director/writer **Rob Lindley** and Jeff Award-winning music director **Doug Peck**. Previous CHF productions with the duo include *Follies*, *A Night at the Oscars*, and *Assassins*. The **Nov. 5** all-star cabaret revue will explore the odd mating habits of animals and feature songs from the Great American Songbook, with music from composers Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, George and Ira Gershwin, and Cole Porter. The cabaret will also debut several creature-themed songs commissioned for the production. The evening will include performances with a live orchestra, and some comedic insight into the pursuit of love, sex, and happiness (in any species).

Hosted by Lindley and actor/writer **Molly Brennan** (*Alice*, Lookingglass Theatre Company; *A Second City Guide to the Opera*, Lyric Opera), the cabaret will include performances by **Felicia P. Fields** (*The Color Purple*, Broadway; *Crowns*, Goodman Theatre), **Rebecca Finnegan** (*A Catered Affair*, Porchlight Music Theatre; *Fiorello!*, TimeLine Theatre Company), **Robbie Fulks** (alternative country artist and guitar teacher at *Old Town School of Folk Music*), and **Beckie Menzie** (three-time winner of Chicago's After Dark Award for Outstanding Cabaret Artist). Additional performers include: **Allison Bazarko**, **Sean Blake**, **Dara Cameron**, **Cheryl Coons**, **Joan Curto**, **Cory Jamison**, **James Earl Jones II**, **Michael Mahler**, **Tom Michael**, **Meghan Murphy**, **Alan Schmuckler**, **Anne Sheridan Smith**, and **Bethany Thomas**. *Birds Do It, Bees Do It...* will also feature several newly commissioned songs from playwright/lyricist **Cheryl Coons** (*River's End*, *Measure for Measure*), composer/lyricist **Michael Mahler** (*Hero The Musical*; *How Can You Run With A Shell On Your Back?*), and composer/lyricist **Alan Schmuckler** (*We Three Lizas*; *Days Like Today*—Writers Theatre world premiere in 2014), as well as **Robbie Fulks** and **Beckie Menzie**.

Rob Lindley's acting credits include *Carousel* (Jeff nomination) at Court Theatre, *Candide* at Goodman Theatre and Shakespeare Theatre in Washington D.C., *Cabaret* at Drury Lane Oakbrook, and *Oh Coward!* at Writers Theatre (Jeff Award, Best Actor in a Revue). Directing credits include *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill* and *A Wonderful Life* at Porchlight Music Theatre, where he is an Artistic Associate. **Doug Peck** is the winner of five Jeff Awards (*Porgy and Bess*, *Caroline, or Change*, *Carousel*, *Fiorello!*, *Man of La Mancha*) and two After Dark Awards (*Guys and Dolls*, *Hello Again*). He has worked with numerous Chicago-based theaters, including: Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Writers Theatre, Marriott Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, TimeLine Theatre Company, Paramount Theatre, Drury Lane Oakbrook Theatre, Porchlight Music Theatre, and Ravinia Festival. Lindley and Peck also produce gala concerts for many organizations, including: Court Theatre, Writers Theatre, and Porchlight Music Theatre's annual "Chicago Sings" event.

The *Birds Do It, Bees Do It...* orchestra features: Percussionist **Sarah Allen**, Guitarist **Gavin Kirk**, Bassist **Larry Kohut** and Music Director/Pianist **Doug Peck**. The artistic team includes: Lighting Designer **Michael Stanfill**, Set Designer **David Wimsatt Jr.**, and Video Designer **Jon Runnfeldt**.

Event Information

[White Rabbit, Red Rabbit](#)

Co-presented with the Museum of Contemporary Art

Sunday, Nov. 3, 7:30 p.m.; Monday, Nov. 4, 7:30 p.m.; Tuesday, Nov. 5, 6 p.m.; Saturday, Nov. 9, 3 p.m.

Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Edlis Neeson Theater | 220 East Chicago Avenue

Tickets: \$18, CHF/MCA Members: \$15, Teachers: \$15, and a limited number of Student tickets for \$10

The Nov. 9 performance of White Rabbit, Red Rabbit is an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreted Performance.

Artists Up Close Post-Show Talk

Following each performance of *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit*, audience members are invited to participate in a moderated post-show discussion with the cast member.

[Birds Do It, Bees Do It...](#)

Tuesday, Nov. 5, 7:30–9 p.m.

Francis W. Parker School, Diane and David B Heller Auditorium | 2233 North Clark Street

Tickets: \$20, Students/Teachers: \$10

Tickets to *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* and *Birds Do It, Bees Do It...* are on sale now and can be purchased at chicagohumanities.org or through the **CHF Box Office** at **312-494-9509, Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.** One free MCA admission is granted with a *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* ticket stub, valid up to seven days after the performance.

Fall 2013 Chicago Humanities Festival Dates:

- **Sunday, Oct. 13, 2013** – Morry and Dolores Kohl Kaplan Northwestern Day, Northwestern University campus
- **Sunday, Oct. 20, 2013** – Hyde Park Day, University of Chicago campus
- **Friday, Nov. 1–Sunday, Nov. 10, 2013** – In and around downtown Chicago

To download a PDF listing of all CHF fall events, click: <http://chf.to/list2013fall>. To download photos, visit the CHF Press Room: chicagohumanities.org/press.

About the Chicago Humanities Festival

The Chicago Humanities Festival began in 1989 as a dream shared by a determined group of Chicago's cultural leaders eager to extend the riches of the humanities to everyone. Since that first year, some of the world's most exciting thinkers, artists, and performers have come to Chicago each fall for a festival that celebrates ideas in the context of civic life. Past Festival themes include Laughter, The Body, tech knowledge, America, and this year's **Animal: What Makes Us Human, Oct. 13, 20, and Nov. 1–10, 2013**. Under the leadership of **Executive Director Phillip Bahar** and **Artistic Director Matti Bunzl**, CHF partners with Chicago's premier cultural institutions, and the festival has become an annual highlight for thousands of people from Chicago and beyond. In addition to the annual fall festival, CHF also presents the spring **Stages, Sights & Sounds**, a global performance festival for families, students, and theatergoers of any age, and programs throughout the year that encourage the study and enjoyment of the humanities. Visit chicagohumanities.org for more information.

About the MCA Stage

MCA Stage is a nationally recognized presenter of contemporary theater, dance, music, and multimedia performances. Featuring leading performers from around the globe, including Chicago's most innovative artists, MCA Stage is the most active interdisciplinary performing arts presenter in Chicago. MCA Stage enjoys working year round with numerous arts and community organizations for the co-presentations of the performing arts, making the MCA a shared resource for the cultural life of our city. MCA Stage celebrates artists and their creative process, connecting audiences with artists in meaningful discourse with its **Artists Up Close** series of post-show talks, panels, roundtable discussions, workshops, and residencies. Audiences at MCA Stage performances receive one free museum admission with each ticket stub on the performance date or during the following week. For information and tickets, call the MCA Box Office at 312.397.4010 or visit www.mcachicago.org.

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