



CARL HANCOCK RUX, CARRIE MAE WEEMS AND
MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO: *THE BAPTISM*

JUNE 9, 2022

8:30pm

co-presented by
CalArts Center for New Performance
REDCAT
Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater
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We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandeño, and Ventureño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

CARL HANCOCK RUX, CARRIE MAE WEEMS AND MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO: *THE BAPTISM*

THE BAPTISM (RHETORIC)

Including live performances of writings by Carl Hancock Rux

- *Baptism (of The Sharecropper's Son & The Boy From Boonville)*
- *Dream Work and the Mimesis of Carrie Mae Weems*
- *Democratic Vistas of Space*

Followed by a conversation between Carl Hancock Rux and California African American Museum Curator and Writer Taylor Renee Aldridge

THE BAPTISM CREDITS

Written and Performed by Carl Hancock Rux

Directed by Carrie Mae Weems

Music Composed by Meshell Ndegeocello

Pianist: Deron Johnson

Guitarist: Zac Burgenbauch

Each of tonight's lead collaborators is a recipient of The Herb Alpert Award in the Arts—Rux, 2003 in Theatre; Weems, 1996 in Visual Arts; and Ndegeocello, 2019 in Music.

Special Thanks to Mabou Mines.



Commissioned by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts with the West Coast premiere presented by CalArts Center for New Performance.

ABOUT THE WORK

“... I could only realize that as a Black man in America, I owed a great ‘thank you’ to the many men and women who had already confronted the world, and did something in order to change it.”

—Carl Hancock Rux

Baptism (of The Sharecropper's Son & The Boy From Boonville) by Alpert Award Award-winning poet and artist Carl Hancock Rux is a three-part poem and the artist's tribute to the legacies of civil rights leaders John Lewis and C.T. Vivian. Written and performed by Rux, the work is also part of a short abstract film in two iterations—*The Baptism* and *The Baptism (rhetoric)*—directed by artist Carrie Mae Weems and commissioned by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

Additionally, the project has a companion web site where you can view the films, read the poem, learn more about the artists, and watch an in-depth interview with Rux as he talks about John Lewis, learning about the Civil Rights Movement, and the profound moments that shaped his life and art. Visit thebaptismpoem.org.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Carl Hancock Rux is an American poet, playwright, novelist, essayist, actor, director, singer/ songwriter. He is the author of several books including the Village Voice Literary Prize-winning “Pagan Operetta,” the novel, *Asphalt*, and the Obie Award-winning play, *Talk*. Rux is also a singer/songwriter with four CDs to his credit, as well as a frequent collaborator in the fields of dance, theater, film, and contemporary art. Notable collaborators include Nona Hendryx, Toshi Reagon, Bill T. Jones, Ronald K. Brown, Nick Cave, Anne Bogart, Robert Wilson, Kenny Leon, Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Jonathan Demme, Stanley Nelson Jr., Carrie Mae Weems, Glenn Ligon and others. He is the recipient of numerous awards including the Alpert Award in the Arts, Doris Duke Award for New Works, the Doris Duke Charitable Fund, the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) Prize, the Bessie Award, and a 2019 Global Change Maker award by WeMakeChange.Org. His archives are housed at the Billy Rose Theater Division of the New York Public Library, the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution as well as the Film and Video/Theater and Dance Library of the California Institute of the Arts. Rux is a co-Artistic Director of Mabou Mines, currently serves as Associate Artistic Director/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Curator in Residence at Harlem Stage, and is curating and directing a New York City-wide Juneteenth series of performance, art installation and panel discussion to be held at Lincoln Center, Park Avenue Armory and Harlem Stage June 16–19, 2022.

Carrie Mae Weems, widely renowned as one of the most influential living American artists, examines how our society structures power through deeply embedded stories, images, and ideas. A gifted storyteller who works porously between text and image, Weems has developed a revolutionary approach to the expression of narratives about women, people of color and working-class communities, “conjuring lush art from the arid polemics of identity” (*The New York Times*). With a complex body of work encompassing photography, text, fabric, audio, digital image, installation, performance, and video, Weems’ work asks us to look deeply at the two-dimensional image, to explore complex realities and revisit unexamined perspectives. Weems has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions at major national and international museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Frist Center for Visual Art, the Solomon Guggenheim Museum in New York, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo in Seville, Spain. Weems has received numerous awards and honors, including the Alpert Award in the Arts, MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship, the Rome Prize, the U.S. Department of State Inaugural Medal of Arts, BET Honors Visual Artist Award, and W.E.B. Du Bois Medal from Harvard University. She is represented in public and private collections around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; MoMA, NY; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; MOCA, Los Angeles; Whitney Museum, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and Tate Modern, London. Weems resides in Syracuse and Brooklyn, New York. She is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery.

Meshell Ndegeocello has survived the best and worst of what a career in music has to offer. She eschewed genre for originality, celebrity for longevity, and musical trends for musical truths. Fans have come to expect the unexpected and follow her on sojourns into soul, R&B, jazz, hip-hop, rock, all bound by the search for love, justice, respect, and resolution. Those sonic investigations have defied and redefined the expectations for women, for queer artists, and for black music for over 30 years, and she remains one of few women who write the music, sing the songs, and lead the band. A bass player above all else, Meshell has been nominated for eleven Grammy awards, is a recipient of the Alpert Award in the Arts, and brings her warm, fat, and melodic groove to everything she does. She has appeared alongside the Rolling Stones, Madonna, Alanis Morissette, James Blood Ulmer, The Blind Boys of Alabama, Tony Allen, John Medeski, Billy Preston, and Chaka Khan. As for her own bass-playing influences, she credits Sting, Jaco Pastorius, Family Man Barrett, and Stevie Wonder. Meshell is always grateful for the opportunity to share the stage and believes music is a fellowship. She looks to spread that gospel with every creation and collaboration.

Curator and writer **Taylor Renee Aldridge** joined the California African American Museum (CAAM) in August 2020. Her first project at CAAM was *Enunciated Life*, a contemporary art exhibition in which Black spiritual beliefs—as well as the movements, sounds, and other bodily expressions that have engendered communication within and beyond Black churches—operate as a point of departure for considering modes of surrender. Aldridge has organized critically acclaimed exhibitions with the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Artists Market, Cranbrook Art Museum, and The Luminary (St. Louis). In 2015, along with art critic Jessica Lynne, she co-founded ARTS.BLACK, an influential journal of art criticism for Black perspectives. Her writing has appeared in *Artforum*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Art21*, *ARTNews*, *Canadian Art*, *Contemporary And*, *Detroit Metro Times*, *Hyperallergic*, and SFMOMA's *Open Space*. She is the recipient of the 2016 Creative Capital | Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant for Short Form Writing and the 2019 Rabkin Foundation Award for Art Journalism. She holds an M.L.A. from Harvard University with a concentration in Museum Studies and B.A. from Howard University with a concentration in Art History.

Zac Burgenbauch is a guitarist and composer based in Los Angeles. Originally from the small mountain town of Mammoth Lakes, he began his musical career as a three-year-old banging on hubcaps in the forest, and the concept of Rural America is still something that resides in his spirit and his music. He co-leads the American primitive and spiritual jazz group *You, Me, + the Whales* as well as playing solo, in groups, and organizing around the L.A. area. He is currently pursuing a masters degree at California Institute of the Arts.

Deron Johnson is an American composer who scores films and podcasts and creates solo albums. Johnson studied jazz and classical music and at the age of 24 started playing with the legendary Miles Davis, performing in the last group that Davis had. He also toured with Stanley Clarke, Seal, Davis Sanborn, Marcus Miller and many others. In 2013 Johnson became Head of Music at the Weinstein Company, where he worked on films like *August Osage County*, *Big Eyes*, *Tulip Fever*, and *Hellraiser: Judgment*, and scored most of the company's trailers between 2013 and 2018. He went on to become Head of Music at Qcode Media, an industry leader in narrative podcasting, and has scored over twenty of their podcast projects like *Left Right Game* (Tessa Thompson), *Borrasca*, *Dirty Diana* (Demi Moore), *Edith* (Rosalind Pike) and many others. He also worked closely with Jason Blum on his project for Hulu called *Into The Dark* by scoring "Midnight Kiss." Recently he was called to score *The Prank*, which is a nod to the Golden Age of film scoring.

Founded in 2002, **CalArts Center for New Performance (CNP)** is the professional producing arm of California Institute of the Arts. Established to provide a unique artist- and project-driven framework for the development and realization of original theater, music, dance, media, and interdisciplinary projects, CNP extends the progressive work carried out at CalArts into a direct dialogue with professional communities at the local, national, and international levels. CNP offers seminal artists from around the world resources to develop new works that expands the language, discourse, and boundaries of contemporary theater and performance. By infusing the work of transformative artists with the talent, vitality and impulses of emerging artists in the CalArts community, CNP fosters the future of live performance.



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