



REDCAT

Anna Martine Whitehead

- **FORCE!** an opera in three acts

Dance, Music, Theater

MAY 23 - 25, 2024

8:30 PM

**REDCAT
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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.

Anna Martine Whitehead

• FORCE! an opera in three acts

Creator, Choreographer, Librettist, Co-Composer, Performer: ANNA MARTINE WHITEHEAD

RAGE-A-THA WORLD/Dance: JENN FREEMAN | PO' CHOP

WHO KNOWS/Dance: RAHILA NAOMI STADEM COATS

WORN'N LOVIN' HUSTLE/Dance: ZACHARY NICOL

RAGE-A THA WORLD/Voice: DANIELLA HOPE

WHO KNOWS/Voice: NEXUS J

WORN'N LOVIN' HUSTLE/Voice: EVA SUPREME

DOWN'N BATTER'D/Voice: BRITTANY BROWN

Lead Composer/Co-Music Director: AYANNA WOODS

Co-Composer: ANGEL BAT DAWID

Co-Music Director/Keys: TEIANA DAVIS

Drums/Percussion: KAI BLACK

Bass: WYATT WADELL

Lighting Artist and Set Designer: TUÇE YASAK

Stage Manager/Tour Production Manager: CARISSA PINCKNEY

Costume Designer: SKY CUBACUB

Sound Engineer: NAJEE-ZAID SEARCY

Special thanks to Phillip Armstrong and Danya Abdel Hameid for their support of this project.

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Please note: FORCE! an opera in three acts contains loud sounds and bright lights. Ear plugs are available upon request. The performance will begin in the theater lobby and audiences will be guided to their seats by ushers.

Runtime: Approx. 90 minutes, no intermission

ABOUT THE WORK

Over years of making performances inside and around prison, and visits with incarcerated friends and family, Anna Martine Whitehead meditates on the relationships of women and femmes in the waiting areas—the loved ones forced into a complex intimacy both tied and always resistant to the institution. *FORCE! an opera in three acts* is a Black femme story of interior lives and shared fantasies where characters become fractals for the abundant relationships blooming in the shadows of the state and carceral power. Queer and dreamy, ambitious and angsty, and inspired by Black girls, abolition feminists, and waiting rooms everywhere, Whitehead’s powerful opera imagines a strange sisterhood with the power to disintegrate walls and features collaborations with composer Ayanna Woods and Angel Bat Dawid, and a constellation of freedom dreamers. Using sound, movement, and the prison as a particular prism through which we can bear witness to the ways carceral systems replicate themselves, *FORCE!* is also an attempt to abolish the Prison Industrial Complex in our heads, hearts, and houses.



Scan the QR code or visit redcat.org/program to access the libretto of this performance.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Anna Martine Whitehead (Creator, Choreographer, Librettist, Co-Composer, Performer) does performance from the homelands of the Council of the Three Fires; the Miami, Ho-Chunk, Sauk, and Meskwaki; as well as the Kickapoo, Peoria, and Sioux Nations. They make art and write about race, gender, and moving bodies; and support coalition movements committed to repair and transformation. Their solo work and collaborative processes have been presented by the Renaissance Society, the San José Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. They have received fellowships and awards from the Vera List Center, Dance/USA, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the Graham Foundation Fellow, 3Arts, Chicago Dancemakers Forum, and the MAP Fund.

Genre-defying artist **Kai Black** (Drums/Percussion) brings a fresh and intensely-felt expression to the Chicago music scene. A virtuosic multi-instrumentalist born and raised in St. Louis, Kai developed their artistry as a drummer, supporting acts such as The Oh My’s, Rich Jones, Via Rosa of Drama Duo, Drea the Vibe Dealer, and more. While studying music performance at Columbia College Chicago, Kai joined fellow emerging artists Loona Dae, Gem Tree, Schenay, and Ora in forming The Highness Collective. The group’s eclectic synthesis of funk, soul, and hip-hop quickly made waves through Chicago’s underground scene. After the successful release of their self-titled EP in 2012, The Highness Collective agree to support and nurture one another in pursuing their personal projects.

Brittany Brown (DOWN’N BATTER’D/Voice) was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago. She has always had a strong passion for music and has been singing professionally since the age of 14. She

has performed for and recorded with Donald Lawrence, Todd Dulaney and Sir the Baptist. She was also a lead instructor at Gallery 37 and has been a part of numerous productions for the Black Ensemble Theater.

Rahila Naomi Stadem Coats (WHO KNOWS/Dance) is an improviser, choreographer, and dancer based in Chicago. Through the support of Twenty Percent Productions, her works have been shown at the 2018 Jerusalem Jazz Festival, MN Fringe Festival, Company Projects, Synapse Arts, Thodos Dance and Dance Works, and University of Ghana-Legon. She currently dances for Red Clay Dance and is a vocalist with music group Family Junket. She is excited to continue this journey with *FORCE!* and its loving constellation.

Sky Cubacub (Costume Designer) is a non-binary queer and disabled Filipinx human from Chicago. They are the creator of Rebirth Garments, a line of wearables for trans, queer, and disabled people of all sizes and ages, which started in summer 2014. Sky is the editor of the *Radical Visibility Zine*, a full color cut and paste style zine that celebrates disabled queer life, with an emphasis on joy. As a multidisciplinary artist, Sky is interested in fulfilling the needs for disabled queer life, with an emphasis on joy. They have had over 45 fashion performances and lectured at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Rhode Island School of Design, the University of Utah, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and Northwestern University. Rebirth Garments has been featured in *Teen Vogue*, *Nylon*, *Playboy*, *Huffington Post*, *Buzzfeed*, *VICE*, *Wussy Mag*, and *The New York Times*. Sky was named 2018 Chicagoan of the Year by the *Chicago Tribune* and is a 2019/2020 Kennedy Center Citizen Artist and a Disability Futures Fellow.

Teiana Davis (Co-Music Director/Keys) is a multidisciplinary artist hailing from the South Side of Chicago. A student of music and a pianist of over a decade, her cornucopia of talents also includes guitar, voice, and music production.

Angel Bat Dawid (Co-Composer) is a Black American composer, improviser, clarinetist, pianist, vocalist, educator, and DJ. In 2019 she released her debut album *The Oracle* with Chicago label International Anthem Recording Company. Recorded using only her cell phone in various locations, the album received widespread critical acclaim, with *Pitchfork* declaring it “a vibrant, spiritual, free-jazz document of black life as it stands today.” Known for her prowess as a bandleader and performer, Angel has composed and performed several live pieces, including her latest release *Requiem for Jazz*—which was originally performed at the Hyde Park Jazz Festival in 2019—and *Peace: A Suite for Skylanding*, commissioned by the Art Institute of Chicago as a creative response to Yoko Ono’s outdoor *Sky Landing* installation. She tours globally with her ensemble Tha Brothahood, with whom she released the album *LIVE* in October 2020, which received numerous accolades and was selected for NPR Music’s “Best Albums of 2020” and *Pitchfork*’s ‘Best New Music’. Angel also leads the all-woman ensemble Sistazz of the Nitty Gritty. As an educator, Angel teaches her “Great Black Music” course at Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center through Old Town School of Folk Music. She is clarinetist in Damon Locks’ Black Monument Ensemble, and she hosts a monthly music show on NTS Radio. All of this and more is why *Pitchfork* recently highlighted Angel’s work in their recent “Pitchfork 25 Next” cover story and

included her on the “Pitchfork 25 Next” list, which identifies a select group of artists shaping the future of music. She was also selected as the artist-in-residence for Winter Jazz Fest 2022, where she debuted her “fearless expedition to ‘Afro Town’” (WBGO). In 2021 she was named The Chicago Tribune’s “Chicagoan of the Year,” shortly following the Juneteenth release of her *Hush Harbor Mixtape Vol. 1 Doxology* which toured internationally. As Co-Founder and member of the performance research group Autophysiopsychic Millennium, Angel performed at Carnegie Hall’s Afrofuturism Festival in 2022. As a composer, Angel also scored original music for season two of the critically acclaimed HBO series *Random Acts of Flyness*; the show was created by Terence Nance, with whom Angel expressed an ode of veneration to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in their latest co-release titled “Re-Birthday.” Angel’s latest release *Requiem For Jazz* is out on all platforms.

Chicago-based performance artist **Jenn Freeman** (RAGE-A THA WORLD/Dance)—also known as **Po’Chop**—uses elements of dance, storytelling, and striptease to create performances and inspire students and collaborators across the country. Po’Chop is the co-founder of House of the Lorde and creator and author of the blogzine, The Brown Pages. She has performed at the Brooklyn Museum in Brown Girls Burlesque’s Bodyspeak, at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance for TEDx Chicago 2022, and headlined shows in New Orleans, Minneapolis, Denver, St. Louis, and New York. Po’Chop is a board member & cast member for Jeezy’s Juke Joint, an all-Black burlesque revue. Po’Chop performs on Netflix’s *Easy* (Season 2), appears in music videos for songs by Jamila Woods and Mykele Deville, and creates and performs in experimental dance films such as *LITANY*. Jenn Freeman was recognized as a 2022 United States Artist Fellow; a 2022 Dance/USA Fellow; a 2021 Foundation of Contemporary Art Grant for Artist recipient; selected as a 2019-2020 Urban Bush Women Choreographic Fellow; and as a 2018 Chicago Dancemakers Lab Artist. Po’Chop has been voted among the top 50 Most Influential Burlesque Artist by 21st Century Magazine in 2022, 2021, and 2020, and was dancer-in-residence at Rebuild Foundation in 2020.

Daniella Hope (RAGE-A THA WORLD/Voice) is a multifaceted healer that channels various mediums—especially music and poetry—to encourage listeners to feel, acknowledge, and accept the complexities of being. Hailing from the South Side of Chicago, she received her BA in Africana Studies from Oberlin College and was the first person to graduate with a BM in Jazz Voice from Oberlin Conservatory. Recently, she received her Master’s of Music from the Manhattan School of Music for Jazz Voice. Currently she resides in New York, and is often found performing around the city.

Nexus J. (WHO KNOWS/Voice) is the Rap-Soul-Rock Goddess making noise in Chicago. A vocal powerhouse with visceral lyricism, they seamlessly blend and bend genres to create a uniquely moving experience. It’s Nina Simone meets Megan Thee Stallion meets Hayley Williams meets Beyoncé meets Childish Gambino as Poet Laureate and yes, it’s just as iconic as it sounds. As a Black Queer celestial sent to save the world, Nexus conjures up a spectrum of storytelling to help humans believe in the magic of honest connection. Their recent series of singles *Bad Girl Trilogy* is packed with thrilling dynamics that culminate as an infectious celebration of femme power and unapologetic pleasure. From Thalia Hall to Lollapalooza, you may have also seen them buzzing with Chicago staple The Fly Honeys as a dancer, vocalist and/or host.

Zachary Nicol (WORN'N LOVIN' HUSTLE/Dance) is an artist and performer based in Chicago. Their work uses research in dance, movement, site, and image to unfold problems of representation and the performing body. Their work has been presented and performed in Chicago at Blanc Gallery, Links Hall, Pivot Arts Festival, Trap Door Theatre, Co-Prosperity, Lumpen Radio, filmfront, OuterSpace, and Compound Yellow, as well as the National Museum of Romanian Literature in Bucharest and S1 Gallery in Portland. Nicol is a 2023 Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artist and has been artist-in-residence with Ragdale Foundation, Annas Projects, ACRE, and Links Hall. Nicol works frequently as a collaborative and performing artist and has contributed to dance, film, and performance projects by artists such as Anna Martine Whitehead, Adam Linder, Joe Namy, Mlondi Zondi, Alexandra Pirici, Ginger Krebs, and Catherine Sullivan, among many others.

Carissa Pinckney (Stage Manager/Tour Production Manager) is a performance artist, sound artist, and educator. After receiving her BFA from Tisch School of the Arts and her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, she now spends her time acting, directing, writing, producing, stage managing, and teaching. She is currently based in Chicago.

Najee-Zaid Searcy (Sound Engineer) is a Chicago-based interdisciplinary artist focusing on makeup, music, and the arts.

Meet the extraordinary and versatile vocal artist **Eva Supreme** (WORN'N LOVIN' HUSTLE/Voice), whose stunning voice has graced the stages of theater, opera, jazz, and numerous other musical genres for over a decade. With a rich and soulful timbre, Eva has captivated audiences worldwide with her powerful performances and unmatched vocal range. Hailing from a background deeply rooted in the traditions of gospel and blues, Eva seamlessly transitions between genres, infusing each with her unique flair and emotional depth. Her theatrical journey began at a young age which honed her skills in the spotlight, while her operatic prowess showcases her impeccable vocal control and classical training. Throughout her career she has garnered critical acclaim for her ability to convey raw emotion through her music, making her a sought-after artist in the world of jazz, where improvisation and storytelling are paramount. With a decade of artistic exploration under her belt, Eva Supreme continues to push boundaries and redefine what it means to be a dynamic and genre-blending vocal artist, inspiring audiences to experience the magic of music in new and profound ways.

Wyatt Wadell (Bass) is a singer, songwriter, and bass player from Chicago. He is a very versatile musician and loves to learn and absorb knowledge about his craft.

Ayanna Woods (Lead Composer/Co-Music Director) is a GRAMMY-nominated performer, composer and bandleader from Chicago. Her music explores the spaces between acoustic and electronic, traditional and esoteric, and wildly improvisational and mathematically rigorous.

Tuçe Yasak (Lighting Artist and Set Designer) has been following light since her move from Istanbul to New York in 2009, creating over 100 site-specific light installations for performance in the US and abroad. Yasak received the 2018 BESSIE (...Memoirs of a... Unicorn by Marjani Forte-Saunders) and

2019 BESSIE (*Oba Queen Baba King Baba* by Ni'Ja Whitson) for Outstanding Visual Design with her lighting design. Among her recent collaborations: *Wednesday*, *UGLY*, *HYSTERIA* and *BLUE* by Raja Feather Kelly & the feath3r theory (NYLA, Bushwick Starr, Chelsea Factory and ImPulsTanz and Kampnagel), *This Bridge Called My Ass* by Miguel Gutierrez (The Chocolate Factory/NY, Montpellier Dance Festival, The Walker, The Wesner, PICA), *M—ER* and *NOTHING* by Autumn Knight (On The Boards, Abrons Arts Center, MCA Chicago and PSNY), *Cannabis* by Baba Israel & Grace Kalu (La Mama and HERE Arts), *The Path of Pins* by Pig Iron Company in Philadelphia, Jacqueline Woodson's *The Day You Begin* at the Kennedy Center, *Haint Blu* by Urban Bush Women (a site specific/site responsive installation work presented in various venues including MASS MoCA throughout 2023), *Dirt Trip* by Alex Tatarsky at MoMA PS1, *River* by Every Ocean Hughes at the Whitney Museum, and *The Malady of Death* by Haegue Yang at the Guggenheim Museum, among others. Light, movement and architecture intertwine in Yasak's work to support space-making and storytelling. Her *Light Journals* were presented in March 2021 by Ars Nova. In 2021, she was one of the resident artists at JACK Brooklyn. Her first solo installation *light is generous* was presented by Five Myles Gallery in July 2022. Yasak is one of the 2023 Resident Artists of Watermill Arts Center, where she created her installation *The light comes through the heart of darkness* as a homage to the lives lost from the February 2022 earthquake in Turkey.

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UPCOMING AT REDCAT

Beth Morrison Projects, Danielle Birrittella, Zoe Aja Moore, and Marie Howe: *Magdalene*

June 4 - 5, 7 - 8

Magdalene is a chamber opera in thirteen movements—a wild meditation on transformation and desire scored by the collective voice of fourteen women composers: Leila Adu, Ruby Kato Attwood, Danielle Birrittella, Sheena Birrittella, Christina Courtin, Gabrielle Herbst, Molly Joyce, Emma O’Halloran, Tanner Porter, Ellen Reid, Kamala Sankaram, Bergrún Snæbjörnsdóttir, Annika Socolofsky, and Gyða Valtýsdóttir. Set to Marie Howe’s *Magdalene* poems, the opera invites an audience into the interior world of the archetypal figure Mary Magdalene—enlarging her to cross time and space, she appears as a woman alive now, who strives to heal the unyielding split between the sacred and the sexual. Encountering her life in flashes—wandering through a hotel, lighting birthday candles, making love in the ocean—Magdalene finds transcendence in the mundane to finally become the subject of her own story.

PARTCH Ensemble: *LSD Ride*

June 14 - 15

PARTCH Ensemble—the Grammy Award-winning ensemble specializing in the music and instruments of the iconoclastic American Maverick composer Harry Partch—returns to REDCAT with an evening of alluring and powerful music performed on the extraordinary orchestra of instruments Partch designed and built himself. This year’s program includes Partch’s *Three Dances*, *Progressions/Abstractions & Delusions*, and *Five Intrusions*, as well as the world premiere of Jeffrey Holmes’ *Reið (Raidō)* [Ride, Journey] and a staged concert version of new scenes from Anne LeBaron’s latest opera, *LSD - Huxley’s Last Trip*.



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