



Past Tense

Carrie Mae Weems

Director

Friday Evening, February 15, 2019 at 8:00

Saturday Evening, February 16, 2019 at 8:00

Power Center

Ann Arbor

30th and 31st Performances of the 140th Annual Season
Theater Series

This weekend's performances are supported by Michigan Medicine, The Wallace Foundation, and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Endowment Fund.

Media partnership provided by WDET 101.9 FM.

Special thanks to Morgan Breon, Christina Hamilton, Jillian Walker, the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, and the Penny Stamps Distinguished Speaker Series for their participation in events surrounding this weekend's performances.

Special thanks to Tiffany Ng, assistant professor of carillon and university carillonist, for coordinating Friday evening's pre-concert music on the Charles Baird Carillon.

Past Tense appears by arrangement with THE OFFICE performing arts + film.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

PERFORMERS

Artist / Carrie Mae Weems

Vocalists / Francesca Harper, Alicia Moran Hall, Imani Uzuri

Poet / Carl Hancock Rux

Dancer / David Parker

MUSICIANS

Trumpet / Eddie Allen

Bass / Calvin Jones

Keyboards / Adam Klipple

Saxophone / James Brandon Lewis

Drums / Tony Lewis

CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION TEAM

Writer and Director / Carrie Mae Weems

Music Director / Craig Harris

Costume Designer / Abby Lutz

Video Artists / Carrie Mae Weems, James Wang

Production Manager and Lighting Designer / Brendon Boyd

*Producers / THE OFFICE performing arts + film: Rachel Chanoff,
Noah Bashevkin, Laurie Cearley, Olli Chanoff, Gabrielle Davenport,
Catherine DeGennaro, Diane Eber, Chloe Golding, Lynn Koek*

Past Tense runs approximately one hour in duration and is performed without intermission.



Following this evening's performance, please feel free to remain in your seats and join us for a post-performance Q&A with members of the company.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"The tears of the world are a constant quantity." — Samuel Beckett

Any work begins with a vague notion, an angry itch, a throbbing at the edge of consciousness — something troubling that keeps you grasping, yearning, anxious. Day after day these feelings drive artists back into their studios, determined to hammer out nonsense on their keyboards until clarity of thought slowly takes shape. *Past Tense* began in just that way — with a deep desire to get at what was troubling me.

So, I began to write. I put to paper the simple words and phrases, images and elements, that moved around in my mind and yearned for a physical form to emerge and be shown to the world.

I am by no means a playwright. As a visual artist, working the last 35 years predominantly in photography and video, I approached this as I would any other project, starting with images and then building music, songs, and text around them. The outcome — *Past Tense* — is a performance that brings together some of the country's most celebrated artists, poets, musicians, and composers to explore the dynamic role of grace and its meaning in the pursuit of democracy.

There are only a handful of stories in the world; the difference often lies in the telling. After working on *Past Tense* for months it occurred to me that I was telling the story of Antigone, wherein an innocent man dies by unjustified means and his sister fights for the right to bury him honorably. But the wider community refuses her; her right to justice, and to peace, is denied.

Likewise, *Past Tense* examines the wider social implications of tensions at work in communities across America. These tensions are marked and defined by recent escalations in violence, the killings of young black men, the rise of nationalism and white supremacy, and the tragic events of the Emanuel Nine. These events and nationwide responses have been contextualized as a song cycle, and the piece incorporates music, song, and spoken word interwoven with text, dance, photography, and video projection to explore the dimensions of its theme.

In our context, grace functions as a sustaining metaphor and an overarching conceptual frame for a dynamic performance calling for new approaches to old questions. I prefer to work with artists who share a common language and have a visceral understanding of the collaborative process. So, from the beginning, we started from a central place — a common but varied knowledge of the dark maze of life.

Past Tense includes works by poet Carl Hancock Rux and composer Craig Harris. They are joined by dancer David Parker and singers Alicia Hall Moran, Imani Uzuri, and Francesca Harper, who bring a wealth of talent and nuance to the performance. What began as a gift to our first Black President quickly morphed into a series of profound reflections that critically engaged the tumultuous and remarkable time in which we now find ourselves — both tragic and liberating.

— *Carrie Mae Weems*

ARTISTS

Considered one of the most influential contemporary American artists, **Carrie Mae Weems** (*writer and director*) has investigated family relationships, cultural identity, sexism, class, political systems, and the consequences of power. Determined as ever to enter the picture — both literally and metaphorically — Ms. Weems has sustained an ongoing dialogue within contemporary discourse for over 30 years. During this time, Ms. Weems has developed a complex body of art employing photographs, text, fabric, audio, digital images, installation, and video. In a *New York Times* review of her retrospective, Holland Cotter wrote, “Ms. Weems is what she has always been, a superb image maker and a moral force, focused and irrepressible.”

Ms. 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, Solomon Guggenheim Museum in New York, and the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo in Seville, Spain. Ms. Weems has received numerous awards, grants, and fellowships, including the prestigious Prix de Roma, National Endowment of the Arts, Alpert, Anonymous was a Woman, and Tiffany Awards. In 2012, Ms. Weems was presented with one of the first US Department of State’s Medals of Arts in recognition for her commitment to the State Department’s Art in Embassies program.

In 2017 *Ebony* magazine named Ms. Weems one of the most influential women of the century, and in 2013 she received the MacArthur “Genius” grant as well as the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation’s

Lifetime Achievement Award. She has also received the BET Honors Visual Artist award, and the Lucie Award for Fine Art photography. She was one of four artists honored at the Guggenheim’s 2014 International Gala and is a recipient of the ICP Spotlights Award from the International Center of Photography and The W.E.B. DuBois Award from Harvard University, as well as honorary degrees from California College of the Arts, Colgate University, Bowdoin College, the School of Visual Arts, and Syracuse University.

Her work is represented in public and private collections around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and Tate Modern, London. Ms. Weems has been represented by Jack Shainman Gallery since 2008 and is currently artist-in-residence at the Park Avenue Armory. She lives in Syracuse, New York, with her husband Jeffrey Hoone, who is executive director of Light Work.

Craig Harris (*music director and composer*) is a world-renowned trombonist and composer who for three decades has shared his distinctive talent and take on the African-American music vocabulary with a global audience. A born collaborator, Mr. Harris has created and performed with such jazz greats as Sun Ra, Sam Rivers, Lester Bowie, Cecil Taylor, Muhal Richard Abrams, Oliver Lake, and David Murray. Although his career is clearly rooted in the world of progressive jazz, he has successfully branched out into multimedia and





performance art as composer, performer, conceptualist, curator, and artistic director. He has blended his musical talent and innovation with that of other musicians and vocalists in and out of the jazz world, as well as with the words of acclaimed poets and the works of world-class choreographers. Recent projects include *Souls Within the Veil*, composed to commemorate the centennial of W.E.B. DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk*; *Brown Butterfly*, a multimedia work based on the movement of Muhammad Ali with video, dance, and music; and *God's Trombones*, based on James Weldon Johnson's classic collection of poems that refigure inspirational sermons by itinerant Negro preachers.

Francesca Harper is an internationally acclaimed multi-faceted artist. After being named Presidential Scholar in the Arts and performing at the White House, Ms. Harper attended Columbia University for a summer studying philosophy and computer programming, but could not deny a passion inside that moved her to pursue a professional career as a dancer. She joined the Dance Theater of Harlem's junior company that same summer and joined the main company the following year. After Dance Theater of Harlem, she fell in love with the choreography of William Forsythe, and joined his company, Ballet Frankfurt. While a member of Ballet Frankfurt, she was chosen to perform with designers Issey Miyake and Gianni Versace, and to perform in a film, *Dancing Pleats*, a 30-year retrospective of Issey Myake's design work in Japan, and in their fashion shows in Paris and Milan. She also began singing on the Frankfurt stage and was invited to record her first single *Slow Groove*, which was produced on a compilation album and distributed in the UK and throughout Europe. Ms. Harper self-produced her own

album, *Modo Fusion*, which is currently available on iTunes. She is currently in the cast of the interactive show *Sleep No More*, where she sings every week at The McKittrick Hotel in New York as jazz vocalist Cecilia Robertson.

Alicia Hall Moran (*vocalist*) is known primarily as a classically trained singer (as Bess in *The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess* on national tour) and performing artist (Venice Biennale, Whitney Biennial, MoMA, Guggenheim, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Walker Art Center, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Frieze Projects). Ms. Moran is also known by her performances as chanteuse at Village Vanguard, The Stone, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Highline Ballroom, San Francisco Jazz, and the Kennedy Center; as diva/muse in films by Ragnar Kjartansson, Simone Leigh, Liz Magic Laser, Carrie Mae Weems, Joan Jonas, and Dorothy Darr; as vocalist in Bill T. Jones's *Chapel/Chapter*; as soloist with symphony orchestras including the National Symphony Orchestra Pops, Chicago Philharmonic, Austin Symphony, Roanoke Symphony, Dayton Philharmonic, Opera Southwest, and Opera of the North; and at recitals and festivals worldwide. Ms. Moran has served as artist-in-residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and National Sawdust, and she has been commissioned by ArtPublic/Miami Art Basel, MoMA, and The Kitchen, authoring concert works for the classical-pop hybrid singer, including the Motown Project, The Five Fans, The Ice Project, and Black Wall Street. She has recorded two albums: *Heavy Blue* and *Here Today*. For more information, please visit aliciahallmoran.com.

Imani Uzuri (*vocalist*) is a vocalist, composer, and cultural worker called "a post-modernist Bessie Smith" by the *Village Voice*. Ms. Uzuri creates concerts,

experimental theater, performance art, theater compositions, chamber orchestra compositions, and sound installations to be presented in international venues and festivals including Performa Biennial, France's Festival Sons d'hiver, London's ICA, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Central Park SummerStage, Joe's Pub, The Blue Note, The Whitney Museum, The Public Theater, and MoMA. Her work has been called "stunning" by *Vulture*, and she has been praised in the *New York Times* for her "gorgeously chesty ruminations." She has also collaborated with noted artists across various disciplines including Carrie Mae Weems, Vijay Iyer, Robert Ashley, Herbie Hancock, John Legend, Sanford Biggers, and Wangechi Mutu. Her most recent album, *The Gypsy Diaries*, received critical acclaim.

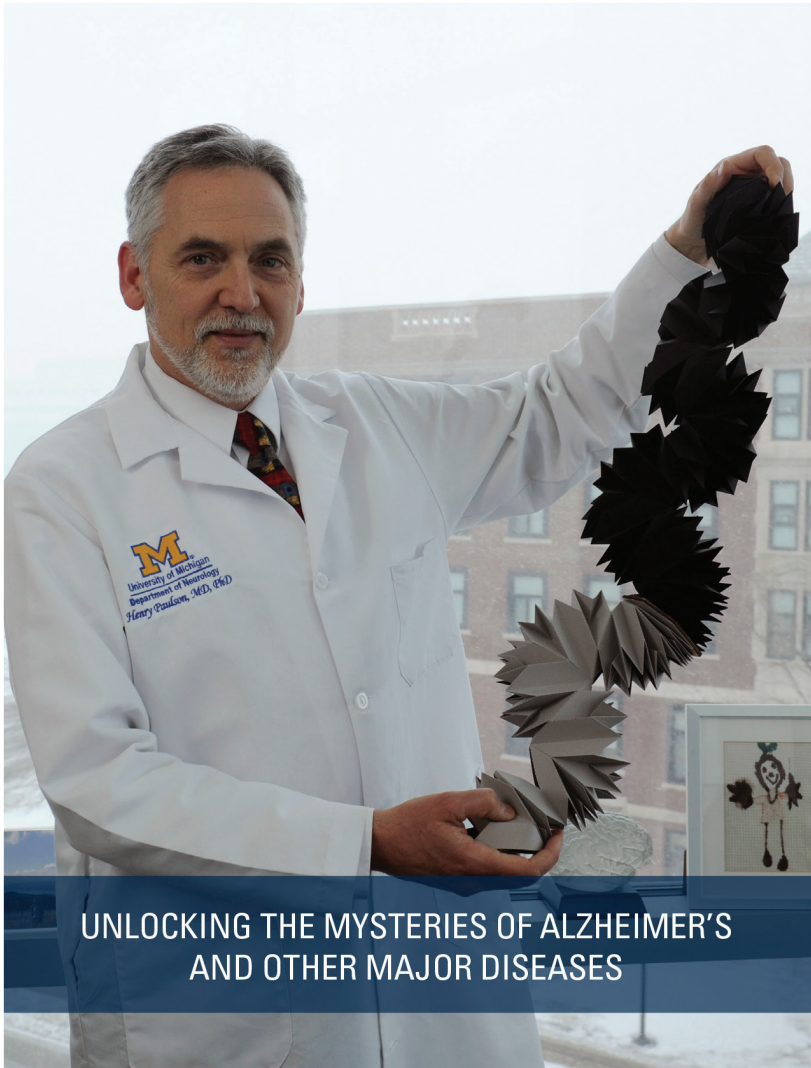
In 2016 Ms. Uzuri made her Lincoln Center American Songbook debut and was also a featured performer on BET for *Black Girls Rock!* She recently received her MA in African American Studies from Columbia University and was the 2017 keynote/performer at Harvard University's Graduate Music Forum. Ms. Uzuri has recently been a Park Avenue Armory artist-in-residence and a MAP Fund grantee to begin composing her contemporary opera *Hush Arbor*. She is a recent Jerome Foundation Composer/Sound Artist Fellow alumna which supported her travel, research, and composition of a large music work celebrating the iconography of the Black Madonna. For more information, please visit imaniuzuri.com.

Carl Hancock Rux (*poet*) is an award-winning poet, playwright, novelist, essayist, and recording artist. Mr. Rux is the author of the novel *Asphalt*, the OBIE Award-winning play *Talk*, and the *Village Voice* Literary Prize-winning collection of poetry *Pagan Operetta*. He is the former head of the MFA

Writing for Performance Program at the California Institute of the Arts (2006–09) and has taught or been in residence at the University of California–San Diego, Stanford University, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Hollins University, the University of Iowa, and Brown University. Mr. Rux has also worked as a writer and frequent guest performer in dance, collaborating with Marlies Yearby's *Movin' Spirits Dance Theater*, Urban Bush Women, Jane Comfort & Co., Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and Martha Clark. Mr. Rux received a Bessie Award for his direction of the Lisa Jones/Alva Rogers dance musical *Stained*. His film credits include *The Grand Inquisitor* (as The One) directed by Tony Torn; *Brooklyn Boheme* (documentary) and *Migrations* directed by Nelson George; and *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*: a film about Gil Scott-Heron (documentary).

Mr. Rux was host and programming director of the WBAI radio show *Live from The Nuyorican Poets Cafe*, contributing correspondent for XM Radio's *The Bob Edwards Show*, and frequent guest host on WNYC's *Soundcheck*. Mr. Rux co-wrote and narrated the radio documentary *Walt Whitman: Songs of Myself*, awarded the New York Press Club Journalism Award for Entertainment News. He is the recipient of several awards including the Herb Alpert Prize, NYFA Prize, NYFA Gregory Millard Fellow, and NEA/TCG Artist-in-Residency Fellow. He is currently visiting faculty at Lang College, New School University; curator of Brooklyn Next at Restoration ART; and working on the libretto for a new opera, as well his forthcoming novel.

David Lee Parker (*dancer*) is a native from Long Island, New York. He started his dance training at Long Island High school for the Arts and continued his studies at



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Mason Gross School of the Arts where he graduated with honors and received his BFA in dance performance. Mr. Parker has trained at the Alvin Ailey Summer Intensive, American Ballet Theater Summer Collegiate Program, Gibney Summer Contemporary Dance Program, and has had the privilege to study abroad for a year in Israel at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. He has performed works by Camille A. Brown, Netta Yerushalmy, Ohad Naharin, Noa Zuk, Reggie Wilson, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Noa Wertheim, and Maxine Doyle. He has also had the special opportunity to perform at the Suzanne Dellal Theatre in Tel Aviv and the Joyce Theater in New York City. He is currently an apprentice with Ronald K. Brown and a dancer with QBC Company.

THE OFFICE performing arts + film

(*producer*) is an independent curator and production company based in New York and London. THE OFFICE works in ongoing partnerships with festivals, venues, and institutions including BRIC Celebrate Brooklyn!, the Sundance Institute, MASS MoCA, and the New York Jewish Film Festival to create cultural programming that is unique and mission-specific. THE OFFICE also produces events around the world and provides strategic planning, assessments of public programming, and other creative consulting services for all manners of cultural organizations as well as corporate philanthropies, foundations, brands, and municipalities. For more information, please visit theofficearts.com.

Brendon Boyd (*production manager*) of BoydDesign, Inc. has been production managing and lighting concerts, theater, and special and corporate events for nearly two decades. After receiving his MFA from the University of Connecticut in 2002, Mr. Boyd moved to New York City to further his

career in production, specifically lighting design. He has worked with clients such as Danny Elfman and Tim Burton, Jack Daniels, Disney, Ralph Lauren, Heineken, Kristin Chenoweth, The US Army, Rosanne Cash, David Byrne, NYC Parks Department, Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad, NFL, The Czech Symphony Orchestra, Lou Reed, Dos Equis/ Tecate, The American Cancer Society, Microsoft, Macy's, Rock & Republic, St. Ann's Warehouse, Top of the Rock, Cipriani, New York University, and BRIC Celebrate Brooklyn!. His theater credits include William Kentridge's *Paper Music* (Carnegie Hall), *Refuse the Hour* (Brooklyn Academy of Music and Yale), Carrie Mae Weems' *Grace Notes* (Yale), *House of Bernarda Alba* (ConnRepTheatre), *Violet* (CRT), (*Nob*)*Odyssey* (La Mama ETC), and *Trojan Women* (CRT), which was elected to represent part of the US exhibit at the 2003 Prague Quadrennial.

UMS welcomes Carrie Mae Weems and the company as they make their UMS debuts this weekend.

THIS WEEKEND'S VICTORS FOR UMS:



Michigan Medicine

—

The Wallace Foundation

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Endowment Fund

Supporters of this weekend's performances of Past Tense.

MAY WE ALSO RECOMMEND...

- 2/27 Yo-Yo Ma: Culture, Understanding, and Survival
3/15–16 *Triptych (Eyes of One on Another)* (world premiere)
4/14 Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour featuring Cécile McLorin Salvant & Christian Sands

Tickets available at www.ums.org.

ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

- 2/18 Artist Talk with Las Cafeteras: Bridging Art, Activism and Community (Michigan League Ballroom, 911 N. University Avenue, 6:00 pm)
- 2/20 Post-Performance Community Dialogue with Las Cafeteras: Action Steps for Immigration Justice (Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty Street)
Must have a ticket to that evening's performance by Las Cafeteras to attend.
- 2/21 International Contemporary Ensemble: Meet the Musicians (Hill Auditorium Lower Lobby, 6:30 pm)
Must have a ticket to that evening's performance by International Contemporary Ensemble to attend.

Educational events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.