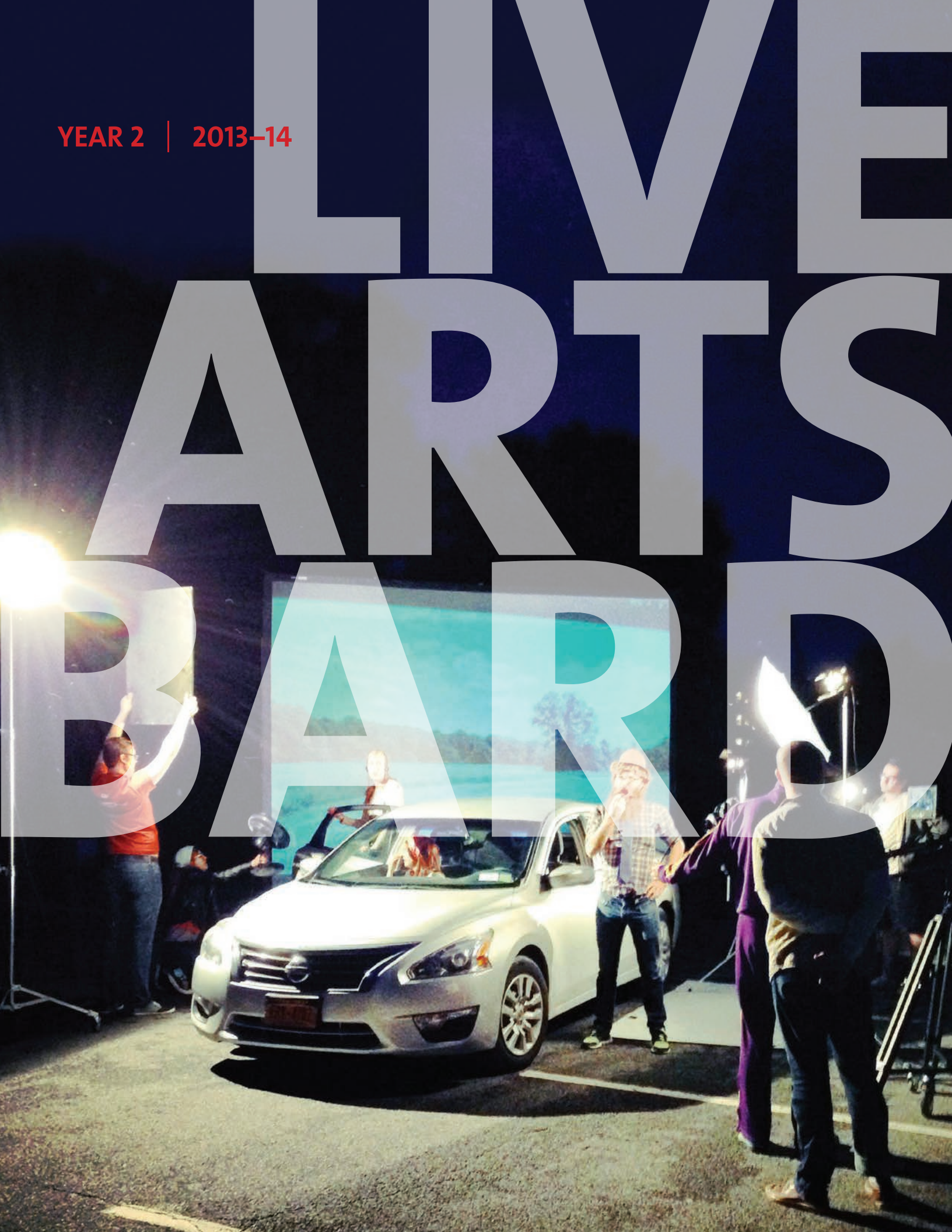


YEAR 2 | 2013-14







# INTRODUCTION

The 2013–14 season of Live Arts Bard received lead support from Jeanne Donovan Fisher, the Live Arts Bard Creative Council, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Image: Nilaja Sun teaching a course in solo performance. Photo by Brendan Hunt '16.

Cover: Nature Theater of Oklahoma filming *Life and Times*: Episode 7. Photo by Caleb Hammons.

“LAB artists share a common commitment to rigorous inquiry and innovation.”

GIDEON LESTER, DIRECTOR OF THEATER PROGRAMS

Live Arts Bard (LAB) is the interdisciplinary residency and commissioning program of The Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College. LAB creates a community of professional artists and students who develop work side by side and inspire one another to create and experiment. The program provides studio and stage time, production support, and essential funding to emerging and established professional artists and ensembles. LAB’s visiting artists present public showings of the work they develop at Bard, teach courses and master classes for Bard undergraduates, and perform for public audiences and the Bard community at the Fisher Center.

During LAB’s second year of operation, the program evolved and grew thanks to the support of our Creative Council and a generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The LAB operating budget increased by 50 percent from 2013 to 2014, and provided residency and commissioning support for eight professional artists and ensembles representing a wide range of practices across theater, dance, and performance. LAB artists included theater ensembles Nature Theater of Oklahoma and rainpan 43, solo performer and writer Nilaja Sun, choreographer Joanna Kotze, director Robert Woodruff, performance artist John Kelly, and writer Neil Gaiman.

Though their projects and working methodologies vary widely, LAB artists share a commitment to rigorous inquiry and innovation. At a time when developmental resources and commissioning funds for contemporary performing artists are increasingly scarce both nationally and internationally, LAB provides much-needed support for artists who are creating groundbreaking and unconventional projects.

LAB provides important benefits for the wider Bard community as students are mentored and taught by a roster of master artists from across the performing arts, and audiences enjoy a full season of performances and works in progress at the Fisher Center. The program’s impact also is being felt far beyond Bard and the Mid–Hudson Valley. Projects developed during LAB’s first two years have been performed at more than 50 venues worldwide, including Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), On the Boards (Seattle), and the Edinburgh Festival.

For those who have already experienced and supported LAB, we’re grateful for your interest and generosity. To learn more about ways to become involved in LAB, please contact Bob Bursey, senior producer, at [bbursey@bard.edu](mailto:bbursey@bard.edu) or 845-758-7980.

GIDEON LESTER



“I’m so proud of the students I taught at Bard.”

NILAJA SUN, ACTOR, PLAYWRIGHT, AND TEACHING ARTIST

# NILAJA SUN

Nilaja Sun is an actor, playwright, and teaching artist most known for her Obie Award-winning solo piece *No Child*. . . . During her LAB residency she performed *No Child* . . . and taught an undergraduate course in solo performance. She also developed and gave a work-in-progress showing of a new play, *Pike Street*.

“The inspiration point was Hurricane Sandy. I was at my parents’ home and everyone was stuck with each other. One of the characters is a Navy SEAL who’s come home from Afghanistan. There are so many men coming home from the war. It’s important to allow their presence to be part of the American theater. This is going to be my healing play. I’m not the kind of person who sits and writes. Most of the characters in my work I’ve known for years. First, I hear their story in my mind, then I’m in the mirror and I inhabit the character. After that the piece just takes off and has a life of its own. As I was doing *Pike Street* at Bard, I was ‘listening’ to the audience in order to help me decide how to restructure the map of the piece.

“I’m so proud of the students I taught at Bard. It’s important for them to see their teacher going through what they’re experiencing. I don’t need to tell them what to do. I see my job as giving them the space to tell the story they have to tell.”

NILAJA SUN

“She makes you unafraid to fail. Otherwise I wouldn’t have had the guts to put myself out there. The experience helped me understand that focusing on how people see you and want to cast you isn’t the only way to approach making theater as an actor. Being able to create theater on my own has transformed the way I approach the work, and how I think of myself.”

PAULINE CHALAMET ’14, THEATER & PERFORMANCE





# GEOFF SOBELLE

“Developing my skills as a clown allowed me to become more vulnerable as a performer. The clown experiences the world with awe and delight. It gave me a new vocabulary to explore things I thought I knew, but really didn’t. It’s the hardest thing I’ve ever done. My Senior Project could not have existed without this experience.”

MARY GILBERT '14, THEATER & PERFORMANCE

Theater maker and performer Geoff Sobelle is the cofounder of rainpan 43, a theater company that creates innovative, actor-driven, absurdist plays. During his LAB residency, Sobelle developed and performed a new version of rainpan’s production *Elephant Room*, taught undergraduate courses in mask and devised theater, and led public workshops in comedy and magic.

“I believe in reinventing the term ‘theater’ every time I work on a new play. My artistic partner in crime and I started a conversation ten years ago, and it’s still going. I always wanted to be part of a family that told stories using magic and special effects. It’s subversive. I believe in creating total theater—for me a lighting cue is like a piece of text. What I do and what I teach is called ‘play’—allowing one’s brain to be open and responsive. It’s the best way I know to discover what’s funny about ourselves, and to appreciate what makes us idiots. And then you have to figure out how to get it right, as in perfect.”

GEOFF SOBELLE

LAB development and presentation of *Elephant Room* was funded in part by the New England Foundation for the Arts National Theater Project, with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Additional support was provided by a grant from Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour, a program developed and funded by the Heinz Endowments; William Penn Foundation; Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency; Pew Charitable Trusts; and administered by Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation.



“Every artist who works at LAB has an incredible practice and great skills. What I’ve discovered in working with them is that to be truly experimental you need to have exceptional technique, because with technique comes the freedom to experiment, like a jazz musician playing an improvised riff.”

BEN HOPKINS '14, THEATER & PERFORMANCE

“Bard is my alma mater. I loved returning here to teach, because it allowed me to reflect deeply on my own creative work. The students question all the ‘rules’ of theater. Since they’re younger, they have optimism, which gives them confidence to bust out of the conventions and just create. Their supreme willingness to ‘go for it’ was amazing.”

ANNE GRIDLEY '02, NATURE THEATER OF OKLAHOMA

# NATURE THEATER OF OKLAHOMA

Nature Theater of Oklahoma is an Obie Award–winning art and performance group under the direction of Pavol Liska and Kelly Copper. During its LAB residency, the company performed *Romeo & Juliet*, and filmed Episode 7 (a LAB commission) and Episode 8 of *Life and Times*, an epic documentary in 10 parts. Anne Gridley '02, a core member of the ensemble, taught an undergraduate course in devised theater.

“We’ve been making *Life and Times* for seven years. We try to put ourselves into a place of incompetence in order to create the beginner’s mindset. That’s why we’re making a film, because we don’t know how to do it. As soon as we get an idea, we go do it. It’s not a conceptual process; we don’t prepare for it. Our work is impulsive, not a considered set of decisions. We have to fill a rectangle, so we make movies. We have to fill speakers with sound. It’s a very practical job. Our dreams are not necessarily there to come true. Rather, they are a provocation to carry out activities that are completely new to us. Each episode is different from what we planned. All our best work comes out of asking questions.”

PAVOL LISKA AND KELLY COPPER, NATURE THEATER OF OKLAHOMA

Special support for the LAB residency and commissioning of *Life and Times*: Episode 7 was provided by **KING’S FOUNTAIN**



“This is an amazing opportunity. I’ve been dancing since I was three, and doing film projects since I was a kid. I’m committed to this project, but I’m scared about pushing my body to the limit. That’s daunting.”

REBECCA CAPPER '17, THEATER & PERFORMANCE

# SARAH MICHELSON

Choreographer Sarah Michelson won the 2012 Whitney Museum of American Art’s Biennial Bucksbaum Award, and is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship. Since 2013 she has been working with a group of Bard students to develop a new work that is set to premiere in the 2017 Bard SummerScape festival. The work is commissioned by LAB as part of the Choreographic Fellowships program.

“I don’t have a goal in mind when I begin working on a new piece. I’m really inventing myself in this project. Having a plan seems reductive, limiting, because it would immediately call on me to filter things out. But the working environment is not haphazard, because I’m constructing it in real time by developing a pathway between me and the students, testing their diligence toward developing a work ethic. We are embarking on a professional relationship, and I am asking them to commit to the prospect of a four-year process.”

SARAH MICHELSON

Sarah Michelson is a LAB Choreographic Fellow for 2013–17. LAB Choreographic Fellowships are made possible by the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Sarah Michelson with students from Class of 2017. Photo by Brendan Hunt '16.



## Additional 2013–14 LAB Artists

### Joanna Kotze

Choreographer Joanna Kotze performed her award-winning work *it happened it had happened it is happening it will happen* at the Fisher Center, taught a master class in the undergraduate Dance Program, and led a public discussion of her work.

### Neil Gaiman

Writer Neil Gaiman taught an undergraduate course, Writing the Fantastic, and inaugurated a series of public forums at the Fisher Center with a conversation with the graphic novelist Art Spiegelman.

### Robert Woodruff

Theater director Robert Woodruff taught two courses, one in the undergraduate Theater & Performance Program, one through the Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities. While in residence at LAB, he began developing a new work based on the writings of Arendt.

### John Kelly

Performance and visual artist John Kelly taught two undergraduate courses in the Theater & Performance Program and utilized a LAB residency to create video material for his new piece *Escape Artist Redux*, which the Fisher Center will present in November 2014.

## Update on Recent LAB Projects

Projects developed at Live Arts Bard in 2012–13 have gone on to be performed in more than 50 cities at venues including *Crossing the Line* festival and Abrons Arts Center (New York City), and *On the Boards* (Seattle). LAB projects have also toured internationally in France, Norway, Austria, and the Netherlands.

### LAB Projects on Tour:

Kyle DeCamp, *Urban Renewal*

Annie Dorsen, *A Piece of Work*

Jack Ferver, *All of a Sudden*

Julian Koster and the Music Tapes,  
*The Traveling Imaginary*

Amanda Palmer, *Theatre Is Evil*

## Year 3 Preview

### Jack Ferver and Marc Swanson MFA '04

Commission, residency, and presentation of the world premiere of *Chambre*; Jack Ferver teaching

### John Kelly

Teaching, residency, and presentation of *Escape Artist Redux*

### Ralph Lemon

Co-commission, residency, and presentation of *Scaffold Room*

### Jennifer Monson

Presentation of *Live Dancing Archive*

### Tad Beck

Exhibition of photographs from the series *Double Document*

### Neil Gaiman

Teaching and two public forums with celebrated artists, writers, and thinkers

### Miguel Gutierrez

Developing *Age & Beauty Part 2: Asian Beauty at the Werq Meeting*, the second installment in a dance trilogy

### Tankred Dorst and Ursula Ehler

Researching and writing a new play, *Discovery of America*

### Skin Horse Theater

Developing a new theater project

### Aaron Landsman

Developing a new performance about urban planning, *Perfect City*

Joanna Kotze's *it happened it had happened it is happening it will happen*.  
Photo by Brendan Hunt '16.



## Bard College and The Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts

Bard College has distinguished itself as a leader in the field of liberal arts and sciences for more than 150 years by providing a first-rate undergraduate education for its students. The College is known for its pioneering ideas in education, its passionate commitment to the highest standards of artistic inquiry and practice, and its vigorous advocacy of liberty, citizenship, individual dignity, and tolerance of differences.

The Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, designed by architect Frank Gehry, is the most ambitious capital project in Bard's history, and illustrates the commitment of the College to bringing performing artists of the first rank to perform and work with its students, faculty, staff, and the public. The Center's programs in opera, dance, theater, music, film, and cabaret, along with its world-class facilities, provide an outstanding venue in which to create and learn.

Together these institutions provide an exceptional environment for resident artists to create original pieces, work in close collaboration with faculty and staff, and inspire students' thinking and practice.

### Supporters

The 2013–14 season of Live Arts Bard (LAB) was made possible by the generous support of the Live Arts Bard Creative Council: Alicia Davis, Steve Dawson, Jeanne Donovan Fisher, Dr. Terry Gotthelf, Amy Guttman, Richard and Jane Katzman, Joseph LaPiana, and Juliane Fuerst and Coram Williams.

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