

Media Release

**HIRSHHORN
MUSEUM**

 Smithsonian

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**Theaster Gates To Present New Performance “Plantation Lullabies”
Second Event in Acclaimed “Processions” Series Takes Place Oct. 13**



The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden announces the second installment in its acclaimed “Processions” performance series organized by artist **Theaster Gates**. “Plantation Lullabies,” held Friday, Oct. 13, at 6:30 p.m., will be the second in a series of four collaborative performances that introduce unexpected and unexplored connections between sacred music, African and African American culture and history, theater, world dance and chant.

Inspired by the harmonies and expansive artistry of Meshell Ndegeocello’s influential 2014 album *Comet, Come to Me*, Gates will invite interdisciplinary artists, including **Mikel Avery** and **Eliana Lewis**, to create an evening of musical expression that defies categorization. Working on

stage at the Hirshhorn, the artists will respond through music and movement to the legacy of what Gates refers to as “negrobilia”—vintage cultural objects that depict stereotypical and caricatured images of people of color, created over a hundred years of U.S. history.

Free tickets will be released [online](#) at noon Monday, Oct. 2.

“Through their performance, each musician involved in the project will bring new life to artifacts and sheet music, reclaiming the stereotypes and stigmas that constructed the black experience after the 1890s,” said Gates. “‘Plantation Lullabies’ reexamines the negative imagining of black bodies and black lives, bringing intelligence, creativity and humor to these objects and songs of disgrace to demonstrate their relevance to the present moment.”

“Building upon the energy and momentum of his last performance, ‘The Runners,’ ‘Plantation Lullabies’ will once again explore important questions surrounding national identity and cultural heritage,” said Hirshhorn Director **Melissa Chiu**. “Key to the museum’s mission is providing a platform for artists to respond to the social and political issues most significant to them, and we are proud to present Theaster’s performance series, which, through his unique artistic expression, engages some of the biggest concerns of our time.”

Gates’ Stony Island Arts Bank in Chicago acquired nearly 4,000 items of “negrobilia”—old sheet music, coin banks, signs, figurines, pamphlets—as part of the Edward Williams Collection. Similar pieces are on view at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture, which is celebrating its one-year anniversary in September.

The series complements the Hirshhorn’s 2017–18 schedule of diverse contemporary artists whose work reflects global conversations that shape history, politics and culture, including Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, German artist Markus Lüpertz, Swiss artist Nicolas Party and American artists Yoko Ono and Mark Bradford.

The inaugural “Processions” performance in fall 2016, titled “The Runners,” featured student-athletes from Howard University in Washington, D.C., alongside the experimental musical ensemble The Black Monks of Mississippi, responding with voice, instrument and gesture to artworks on view in the Hirshhorn’s third-floor galleries.

Subsequent performances will continue to tap into the Washington region’s rich heritage of jazz, folk and gospel musicians, as well as dancers, artists and students. A third performance is planned for spring 2018.

About Theaster Gates

Gates’ practice includes sculpture, installation, performance and urban interventions that aim to bridge the gap between art and life. Gates works as an artist, curator, urbanist and facilitator and his projects attempt to instigate the creation of cultural communities by acting as catalysts for social engagement that leads to political and spatial change.

Gates has exhibited and performed at the National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), Studio Museum in Harlem (New York), Whitechapel Gallery (London), Art Gallery of Ontario (Canada), Punta della Dogana (Venice) and Documenta 13 (Kassel, Germany), Kunsthaus Bregenz (Austria) and Fondazione Prada (Milan). He has received awards from Artes Mundi 6, Creative Time, the Vera List Center for Art and Politics, United States Artists and, most recently, the Nasher Sculpture Prize 2018. Gates’ most ambitious project to date is the ongoing real-estate

development known as “Dorchester Projects.” In 2006, Gates purchased an abandoned building on 69th and Dorchester Avenue on Chicago’s South Side, collaborating with architects and designers to gut and refurbish the buildings using found materials. Gates is the founder and executive director of the non-profit Rebuild Foundation, which now oversees a network of buildings across the South Side, including Dorchester Projects and the Stony Island Arts Bank, as well as a professor in the Department of Visual Arts and director of arts and public life at the University of Chicago.

About the Hirshhorn

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden is the national museum of modern and contemporary art and a leading voice for 21st-century art and culture. Part of the Smithsonian, the Hirshhorn is located prominently on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Its holdings encompass one of the most important collections of postwar American and European art in the world. The Hirshhorn presents diverse exhibitions and offers an array of public programs on the art of our time—free to all, 364 days a year. For more information, visit hirshhorn.si.edu.

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