

Natural Information Society Performance
as part of *Shape of Artifact Time*

Performance is a central factor in Lisa Alvarado's materials and the structures they take: the free-hanging works she creates double as portable stage sets, as Natural Information Society often performs accompanied by Alvarado's paintings. *Mandatory Reality*, Natural Information Society's 2019 album that will be performed twice within the liminal, light-altered stage Alvarado creates, was originally recorded in one take with eight musicians, and has only been performed live only a handful of times. Alvarado has assembled the space to be particularly fitted for this complex work and its own relationship to time: the album, dedicated to family and elders who had recently passed, has a slow and gradual pace—echoing the geologic temporalities Alvarado's work elicits. Per the artist, it “aspires towards owning one's own attention and not forgoing lived experience to the ever increasing digitalization of our day to day lives.”

Alvarado says, “My work is experienced differently with performance, with the vibration of sound's transforming and changing nature. There is a durational aspect of experiencing a work over an hour or more, where one can become aware of their inner timings of breath and thought. We are putting the frame of a performance around the time of the sunset so all three (the sunset, the exhibition, and the performance) can be experienced as they gradually reflect off of each other.”

Founded in 2010 by composer and multi-instrumentalist Joshua Abrams, The Natural Information Society (NIS) is acclaimed for broadening the conceptual foundations, cultural influences, and membership of musical collaboration. Their sound can be described as an expansive take on minimalism, built around layered modal structures and rhythmic patterns. Core members include Joshua Abrams (guimbri, composition), Lisa Alvarado (harmonium, setting), Mikel Patrick Avery (drums), and Jason Stein (bass clarinet).

BIOS

Joshua Abrams is a composer, bassist, and improviser. His early formative musical experiences include performing in a chamber group conducted by Earle Brown, and busking on the streets of Philadelphia as an original member of The Roots. Since the mid-1990s, Abrams has been a key figure in Chicago's creative music communities and an international touring musician across genres. Since 2010 Joshua Abrams has performed and recorded his compositions in the context of Natural Information Society (NIS). NIS represents a convergence of musicians & artists to create sonic harbor, meditative space & kinetic momentum music. Working the seams between minimalism, jazz & experimental practice, the group has become a reference for contemporary non-idiomatic creative music. The band has recorded seven albums for eremite records including *Since Time Is Gravity*, two collaborations with Bitchin Bajas for Drag City Records and toured extensively in North America, Europe & Brazil. Abrams has also worked extensively with artists including Fred Anderson, Bonnie “Prince” Billy, Ari Brown, Hamid Drake, Theaster Gates, Sam Prekop, Nicole Mitchell, Jeff Parker, Mike Reed & Matana Roberts. Abrams scored the music for ten feature films including *Life Itself*, *Abacus: Small Enough To Jail* and *The Trials of Muhammad Ali*. He currently collaborates with Chad Taylor in the duo Mind Maintenance, serves

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as the musical director of The Harvest Time Experiment & is a member of Hamid Drake's ensemble Turiya Honoring Alice Coltrane. Abrams was a 2018 Grants for Artist recipient from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts.

Lisa Alvarado is an artist and musician based in Chicago. Her practice gravitates towards creative traditions of overcoming and exuberant forms of resilience. She plays harmonium in the band Natural Information Society and uses her free-hanging paintings as mobile stage sets for their performances. Alvarado's perspective is rooted in the under-represented American history of the Chicana/ Mexican American diaspora. Her recent solo exhibitions include *Spiral Yellow* at The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2024); *Spinning Echo* at Bridget Donahue, New York (2023); *Lisa Alvarado / MATRIX 192* at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford (2023); *Pulse Meridian Foliation* at RedCat, Los Angeles (2023). She has been included in the recent group exhibitions *Resonant Earth* at the Moody Center for the Arts, Houston (2024); *Calling* at Kunstverein Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2023); *Contemporary Cartographies* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Jacksonville (2023); *File Under Freedom* at Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2022); *Whitney Biennial: Quiet As It's Kept* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2022). Alvarado played harmonium on ten albums released on Eremite, Aguirre, and Drag City records. She has recently performed at Inhotim Museum, Brazil (2024); Knockdown Center, New York (2024); Le Guess Who Festival, Utrecht (2023); Jazzfest Berlin, Germany (2023); Pioneer Works, New York (2023); Jazz em Agosto, Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon (2023); Jazztopad, Poland (2022); Vision Festival, New York (2022); Pitchfork Music Festival, Chicago (2022).

Now residing in Philadelphia, multidisciplinary artist **Mikel Patrick Avery** had been actively working out of Chicago and New Orleans for the past 17 years. Established as a jazz drummer, he is commonly recognized for his orchestral and melodic style of drumming that often involves the use of unconventional "non-musical" objects. Adjacent to being a performing musician, Avery is a dedicated filmmaker, composer, photographer, designer, and educator, whose body of work invariably draws upon ideas of 'unstructured-play' commonly applied to learning environments found in early education. In recent years, Avery has become an integral voice in varying ensembles, including Rob Mazurek's Exploding Star Orchestra, Joshua Abrams' Natural Information Society, The Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, and Theaster Gates's Black Monks of Mississippi as well as leading several of his own projects, including 1/2 Size Piano Trio, Wazella, Sore Thumb, PARADE, and MPA 'PLAY'. Mikel has had the privilege to perform and exhibit either his own work or in accompaniment to others at a variety of venues and cultural institutions around the world. Most notably at, The Art Institute of Chicago, New Museum NYC, Art Basel (Switzerland), Hyde Park Jazz Festival, The Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago), Documenta, Drunk Lunch Gallery, Pitchfork Music Festival, Oto (London), & White Cube (London).

Mexican-born vibraphonist, marimbist, improviser, and composer **Patricia Brennan** "has recently started to make her presence known on the New York avant-garde, working with such prominent bandleaders as Matt Mitchell and Michael Formanek," observed The New York Times. Patricia is a member of Grammy-nominated John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble and Michael Formanek Ensemble Kolossus. She is also a member of Phalanx Ambassadors, a project led by pianist Matt Mitchell; the Webber/Morris Big Band; and Tomas Fujiwara's 7 Poets Trio along with cellist and composer Tomeka Reid. She has collaborated with pianist Vijay Iyer and as a member of Blind Spot along with writer Teju Cole and bassist Linda Oh. Other projects led by Iyer that Brennan has performed in include his large ensemble project Open City and several small ensemble performances with

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renowned musicians such as bassist Reggie Workman and trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith. Patricia's own projects include the newly recorded solo project MAQUISHTI and MOCH – a collaborative duo with percussionist, drummer, and turntablist Noel Brennan (DJ Arktureye) and special guests. Patricia has appeared on several recordings, including the Michael Formanek Ensemble Kolossus release on ECM entitled *The Distance* and Matt Mitchell's *A Pouting Grimace* and Phalanx Ambassadors (Pi Recordings). She also appears on the Grammy-nominated John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble album *All Can Work* (New Amsterdam Records, 2019). Patricia released her debut single, "Sonnet," on all digital platforms in 2020 under Valley of Search, and will be releasing the full album in January 2021. Patricia Brennan is a Valley of Search and a BlueHaus Mallets artist.

Darius Jones has created a recognizable voice as a critically acclaimed saxophonist and composer by embracing individuality and innovation in the tradition of African-American music. Jones has been awarded the Van Lier Fellowship, Jerome Foundation Commission, Jerome Artist-in-Residence at Roulette, French-American Jazz Exchange Award, and, in 2019, the Fromm Music Foundation commission at Harvard University. Jones has released a string of diverse recordings featuring music and images evocative of Black Futurism. His work as a new music composer for voice culminated in a major debut performance at Carnegie Hall in 2014. Jones has collaborated with artists including Gerald Cleaver, Oliver Lake, William Parker, Andrew Cyrille, Craig Taborn, Wet Ink Ensemble, Jason Moran, Trevor Dunn, Dave Burrell, Eric Revis, Matthew Shipp, Marshall Allen, Nasheet Waits, Branford Marsalis, Travis Laplante, Fay Victor, Cooper-Moore, Matana Roberts, JD Allen, Matthew Shipp, Nicole Mitchell, Georgia Ann Muldrow, and many more. In 2021, Darius released a new album on Northern Spy Records, entitled *Raw Demoon Alchemy* (A Lone Operation). Jones' music is a confrontation against apathy and ego, hoping to inspire authenticity that compels us to be better humans.

William Parker is a bassist, improviser, composer, writer, and educator from New York City. He has recorded over 150 albums, published six books, and taught and mentored hundreds of young musicians and artists. He has been called "one of the most inventive bassists/leaders since [Charles] Mingus," and "the creative heir to Jimmy Garrison and Paul Chambers...directly influenced by '60s avant-gardists like Sirone, Henry Grimes and Alan Silva." The Village Voice called him, "the most consistently brilliant free jazz bassist of all time" and Time Out New York named him one of the "50 Greatest New York Musicians of All Time." Parker's current active bands include the large-band Little Huey Creative Orchestra, the Raining on the Moon Sextet, the In Order to Survive Quartet, Stan's Hat Flapping in the Wind, the Cosmic Mountain Quintet with Hamid Drake, Kidd Jordan, and Cooper-Moore, as well as a deep and ongoing solo bass study. His recordings have long been documented by the AUM Fidelity record label and on his own Centering Records, among others. He also has a duo project "Hope Cries For Justice" with Patricia Nicholson Parker which combines music, story telling, poetry and dance. Over the decades, Parker has developed a reputation as a connector and hub of information concerning the history of creative music, recently culminating in a two hefty volumes of interviews with over 60 avant-garde and creative musicians, *Conversations I & II*. He is also the subject of an exhaustive 468-page "sessionography" that documents thousands of performances and recording sessions, a remarkable chronicle of his prolificness as an active artist. He has been a key figure in the New York and European creative music scenes since the 1970s, and has worked all over the world. He has performed with Cecil Taylor, Don Cherry, Peter Brotzmann, Milford Graves, Peter Kowald, and David S. Ware, among many others. William Parker works all over the world but he always returns to New York's Lower East Side, where he has lived since 1975.

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Jason Stein is among the mere handful of improvisers who play the bass clarinet exclusively. Stein leads the acclaimed trio Locksmith Isidore as well as his own quartet. He contributes to several of the leading bands on Chicago's new-music scene and has brought a vital voice to the freest of free-jazz jams. Stein's playing showcases an extraordinary expertise on the bass clarinet, which ranges from powerful post-bop lines to ear-grabbing wails in the altissimo range. Chicago writer Neil Tesser notes that "Stein's playing has a rawboned swagger particular to Chicago jazz in all its manifestations – from the trad playing of Bud Freeman and Jimmy McPartland in the 20s, through the tenor titans of the 50s, through the adventurers who formed the AACM in the 60s, and right up to the city's renowned modern cadre of new-music improvisers." Stein moved to Chicago in 2005 and has since recorded for such labels as Leo, Delmark, Not Two, Atavistic, 482 Music, Clean Feed, Astral Spirits, and Northern Spy. Stein has performed throughout the US and Europe as both a bandleader and sideman and has amassed a discography of over 40 albums.

Chris Ryan Williams is an interdisciplinary artist and musician based in Brooklyn, NY. His work takes the form of electroacoustic composition and performance installation and deals with decoding family history, ambience, and time-space compression. His debut EP *Live* received praise from Jazz Right Now and The Quietus for "dazzling collaged pieces that ricochet between improvised passages and written material" (Peter Margasak, The Quietus). Williams' work has been performed and presented extensively throughout Chicago's new-music scene and has brought a vital voice to the freest of free-jazz jams. Stein's playing showcases an extraordinary expertise on the bass clarinet, which ranges from powerful post-bop lines to ear-grabbing wails in the altissimo range. Chicago writer Neil Tesser notes that "Stein's playing has a rawboned swagger particular to Chicago jazz in all its manifestations – from the trad playing of Bud Freeman and Jimmy McPartland in the 20s, through the tenor titans of the 50s, through the adventurers who formed the AACM in the 60s, and right up to the city's renowned modern cadre of new-music improvisers." Stein moved to Chicago in 2005 and has since recorded for such labels as Leo, Delmark, Not Two, Atavistic, 482 Music, Clean Feed, Astral Spirits, and Northern Spy. Stein has performed throughout the US and Europe as both a bandleader and sideman and has amassed a discography of over 40 albums.

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For more information about CANNY, please visit <https://can-ny.org/>.

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