



Photo by LazyEye

Cha Wa

Sat, Mar 1, 2025 at 8 pm
The Nimoy

**CENTER
FOR THE ART OF
PERFORMANCE
UCLA**

WELCOME TO THE 2024–25 SEASON

UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) is dedicated to the advancement of the contemporary performing arts in all disciplines – dance, music, spoken word and theater, as well as emerging digital, collaborative and cross cultural platforms – by leading artists from around the globe.

Our mission aligns with UCLA's mission of education, research and civic engagement by providing cultural and experiential programs that provoke inquiry and facilitate connection and creativity.

cap.ucla.edu



The poetics of movement and migration

Welcome to my inaugural season at CAP UCLA. Inspired by the diversity of Los Angeles and the city's ability to shape-shift, the 2024–25 season encompasses narratives of change, adaptation and a quest for new perspectives. The works presented speak to our universal urge for exploration and our innate desire for belonging. The visionary artists whose work will bring the season to life ask us to ponder our origins, our trajectory, and the nature of human existence.

Across thirty performances, scores of artists from Los Angeles, around the US, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, South Africa and the United Kingdom inspire thought-provoking conversations and seek to create a more just world together. Each performance adds another thread to the ever-evolving tapestry of existence, a testament to the resilience and beauty found in movement and migration.

The performing arts provide fertile ground for transformation and evolution, creating spaces that encourage reflection, connection, and action. My hope is that when you exit a performance, you will be transformed by the desire for a more dignified and empathic world.

In these times of global strife, we must create new ways of being with one another. I invite you to join us this season: ignite your curiosity, partner with us as we fuel new aspirations, and embrace the power and possibility of change.

I look forward to welcoming you.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Edgar Miramontes', is positioned to the left of the photograph.

Edgar Miramontes
Executive and Artistic Director





Photo by LazyEye

CAP UCLA presents

Cha Wa

Sat, Mar 1, 2025 at 8 pm
The Nimoy

Program duration: 80 minutes
No intermission



PALIHOTEL
WESTWOOD VILLAGE

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

In 2021, Cha Wa released its third album, the Grammy-nominated *My People*, on Single Lock Records as the follow-up to 2018's Grammy-nominated *Spyboy*. But the true history of the music goes back much further.

The first documentation of Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans dates back to the late 19th century. These were African-American men who paraded on the city streets on Fat Tuesday morning and St. Joseph's Night in celebratory groups, playing handheld percussion like glass bottles, tambourines and cowbells. They shouted and chanted in a unique dialect that scholars have tried to explain the roots of, but never quite agreed on. "Cha Wa" is a traditional Mardi Gras Indian shout from which the band took its name; so is "jock-a-mo-fee-nah-nay", familiar to music fans from the enduring tune "Iko Iko." Some suggest that Black Masking Indian phrases can be traced to Native American languages, which is a distinct possibility since the culture is meant to pay tribute, in song and spirit, to the Native American groups that gave shelter to fleeing slaves.

My People is Cha Wa's first project with Single Lock, the respected Muscle Shoals and New Orleans-based record label. Single Lock has been dedicated to teasing out the threads and throughlines of creative tradition in Southern music, from legendary veterans like the Blind Boys of Alabama and Donnie Fritts to young torchbearers like Cedric Burnside and St. Paul and the Broken Bones, drawing a map of South's diverse musical identity. The sweeping palette of unmistakably New Orleans sound on *My People* fits beautifully into that mission.

Some of the songs are deliberately, powerfully organic and raw, like the raucous closer "Shallow Water" – a traditional call and response tune that was recorded live at the storied Indian barroom Handa Wanda's in under an hour as the first take. Others embrace sounds of more recent vintage, like the fierce, taut title track, powered by industrial-strength horns, or the playful, swirling organ on "Bow Down." The shivering piano that introduces "Morning Glory," punctuated by yelps and drum

slaps, is a taste of Dr. John's own Mardi Gras Indian-tinged '60s psychedelia; "Love in Your Heart," is a swellingly gorgeous slice of vintage, romantic soul powered by Angelika "Jelly" Joseph's passionate vocals. Throughout, there's plenty of propulsive, syncopated second-line rhythm, joyful shouts and Indian swagger – it's an album as unstoppable, alive, and multi-voiced as a parade moving through the streets.

The clattering, hollering song of Mardi Gras Indians on the move is primal and powerful. There's a feeling that you're somehow witnessing a deeper, stronger spirit breaking through the structures that govern city life, and the only thing more arresting than the sound is the sight of it: the Indians wear towering, elaborate suits that require months' worth of work, topped with billowing ostrich plumes in riotous colors and festooned with painstakingly hand-beaded patches and panels that glitter in the sun or under streetlights: Some of the beadwork art might be Native American or African imagery, in homage to the culture's roots, and some might depict images from an Indian's own community, or personal life.

The Mardi Gras Indian sound had crept into broader culture already in pop and R&B form with 1950s and '60s hits like "Iko Iko." The first time the greater public really got a *look* at what Indians were about, though, was on the covers of two funky 1970s releases from the Wild Magnolias, which featured Monk Boudreaux: the first a close-up of a beaded and bejeweled patch, the second featuring the band fully suited up, blazing with color like a gang of extraordinary birds. These albums, which melded the traditional percussion and chants with slick, gritty and electric New Orleans funk, began a new chapter in the Indian tradition. Cha Wa bears that torch today, and also expands its horizons: the music on *My People* is a collage of multiple New Orleans sounds, from second-line brass to hip-hop to smooth soul music. That is, after all, how Southern stories get told – passed down through the years, acknowledging history as each generation adds its own part of the tale.

Bandleader and drummer Joe Gelini was first captured by the sound of '70s New Orleans funk, the Meters and the Neville

Brothers, in high school. “My mind was blown by that New Orleans style of drumming, all those incredible rhythms,” he said. Later, as a student at the Berklee College of Music, he had the chance to take a lesson from the great New Orleans drummer Idris Muhammad. “And I had this moment of clarity – he said, all these rhythms we’re playing are based on Mardi Gras Indians.”

After graduating, Gelini moved to New Orleans and made himself a student of the sound. He was such an apt one that he quickly began playing with Monk, soaking in the rhythm and the culture both onstage and at more informal neighborhood practices, as well as out in the streets. “I felt like such a guest of the culture, and I also felt like family,” he said.

New Orleans culture exists uniquely in time. It treats its musical history with reverence: origins a century old, or more, are always audible in the sounds that define it, from jazz to brass-band to Indian music. Yet it constantly welcomes new growth, too – funk and hip-hop and contemporary R&B meld easily with all of its venerated sonic traditions, keeping the city’s singular culture vital, vivid and honest.

My People is the latest in the catalog of a young band that has always typified this essential part of the character of America’s most interesting musical city. It sounds like New Orleans today. “We try to take the influence of Monk and Bo and Willie Tee [from the original Wild Magnolias] back in the day, when they were interpreting the music of their time – the deep funk, disco, Afrobeat and tinges of reggae,” said Gelini. “And we’re also trying to interpret and write new music that we’re inspired to play that’s relevant to our generation, and our current social environment.”

With regard to the latter, a chilling cover of Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War,” fronted by guest Alvin “Youngblood” Hart and textured by its African-influenced arrangement, stands out as a timely statement of protest. But at its core, the Mardi Gras Indian tradition itself is as much a defiant one as it is a celebratory one. For Black people, like the first Indians, to take to the streets in a display of beauty and power was dangerous a hundred years ago; it still is, of course, today. To take joy in their own loud voices

and physical glory – crowned in feathers and jewels - is its own certain kind of protest. My People feels like pure joy, a distillation of generations of New Orleans expression, but it also never fails to remind us how hard-won that joy was and still is: not least in the tense, funky and explosive title track, with its declaration “My people, we’re still here.”

“Mardi Gras Indian songs are inherently songs about freedom,” Joe Gelini said. “And that struggle is as relevant today as it’s ever been.”



Photo by LazyEye

DESIGN FOR SHARING (DFS)

Each year, Design for Sharing (DFS) brings thousands of K-12 public school students from across Los Angeles to CAP UCLA venues for free performances and interactive workshops with professional artists.

DFS programs are open to any public school in greater Los Angeles, and are always free to attend.

cap.ucla.edu/dfs





Inua Ellams ***Search Party***

Sat, Mar 8, 2025 at 8 pm

The Nimoy

Award-winning poet and playwright Inua Ellams (*Barber Shop Chronicles*, *The Half-God of Rainfall*) brings his chaotic, audience-led poetry event to The Nimoy. Prompted by audience suggestions, Ellams will search through his extensive archive of work and perform a reactive and spontaneous selection.

cap.ucla.edu/inua



UCLA NIMOY THEATER

CAP UCLA has a new home for live performance
in Westwood!

Located near the UCLA campus on Westwood Boulevard,
The Nimoy is a reimagining of the historic Crest Theatre as a
flexible, state-of-the-art performance space.

This dynamic and intimately scaled venue immerses
audiences in a profoundly engaging experience of live
performance – while providing contemporary performing
artists from Los Angeles and around the world expanded
opportunities to develop and present new work.

cap.ucla.edu/nimoy





Tren Al Sur
L.A. Omnibus Series

Thu, Mar 13, 2025 at 7 pm

The Nimoy

Former Los Angeles Times art critic, the beloved writer and critic, Carolina Miranda, joins writer Raquel Gutierrez in a conversation on art, culture and movement in Los Angeles. Both writers will also read from works-in-progress memoirs on their respective journeys to politically active homelands caught in the crosshairs of a 20th-century cold-war policy. With musical performance by Rubén Martínez, Juan Pérez and Marco Amador.

cap.ucla.edu/tren-al-sur



LA ARTS COMMUNITY

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We at UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance acknowledge the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and South Channel Islands).

As a land grant institution, we pay our respects to the Ancestors (Honuukvetam), Elders (Ahihirom), and relatives/relations (Eyoohinkem) past, present and emerging.

There is no room for racism, intolerance, or inequity.

Anywhere

Not on our stages, in our offices, on our loading docks, in the box office lines, or on the dance floor.

With anyone

Not with our staff, crew, artists, volunteers, ushers, audiences or fans.

We uphold and embrace principles of antiracism, equity, diversity and **AUTHENTIC** inclusion as integral to our mission.

We must **EMPOWER** the historically underrepresented.

We must **UPLIFT** excluded voices.

We must **RESIST** structural racism.

We will **COMMIT** fiercely to our responsibility to observe, absorb, consider, contemplate, endure, share and engage in this change.

We **STAND AGAINST** all forms of discrimination.

We will **STRIVE** to make our organization more equitable and inclusive.

As part of UCLA's School of Art & Architecture (SOAA), we – UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) and Theater Management Services (TMS) – are committed to connecting and creating space for the arts and for all communities.

We acknowledge our organizations' histories as being predominantly white institutions. We are facing uncomfortable truths about systemic racism as we work to make the deep changes necessary to transform the organizational dynamics in our work culture and business practices and dismantle existing oppressive structures. We know there will be shortcomings, which we will face head on. We commit to continually addressing and adapting to changes as they arise. It is only in an improved, supportive work environment that everyone can be fully present, and respected as their true authentic selves.

This statement was drafted by a committee of staff members from both the Center for the Art of Performance and Theater Management Services, from a variety of backgrounds, viewpoints and perspectives.

Together we stand with UCLA's School of Art and Architecture's EDI statement.



CAP UCLA COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

CAP UCLA Executive Producer Council

The Executive Producer Council is CAP UCLA's philanthropic leadership group, which develops and contributes resources vital to CAP UCLA's programming and mission. The Council champions the creative development and presentation of live programs and public dialogue with contemporary performing artists by providing direct support for CAP UCLA's annual programming. The Council is engaged in dialogue about the artistic and curatorial practices that inform annual programs, long-term initiatives and collaborative planning efforts which stand at the heart of CAP UCLA's mission and public purpose.

Design for Sharing (DFS) Council

The Design for Sharing Council is a group of dedicated supporters whose efforts help to resource the K-12 arts education programs of DFS.

cap.ucla.edu/councils



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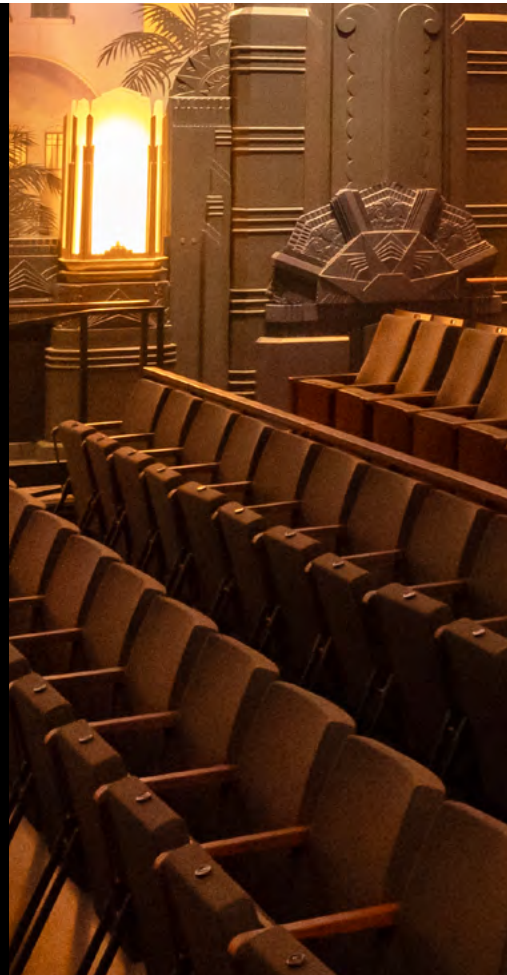
Over time, many generous individuals have initiated leadership gifts to establish endowments that support the performing arts at UCLA in perpetuity. We gratefully acknowledge:

Barbara and Bruce Dobkin, James A. Doolittle, Arthur E. Guedel, Kevin Jeske, Henry and Ginny Mancini, Merle & Peter Mullin, José Luis Nazar, Evelyn & Mo Ostin, Beatrix F. Padway, Mimi Perloff, Lloyd E. Rigler, Sally & William A. Rutter, Shirley & Ralph Shapiro, Roslyn Holt Swartz & Allan J. Swartz, and Mimi & Werner Wolfen.

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The opening of The Nimoy offers donors a rare opportunity to create a lasting legacy while celebrating their passion for contemporary performing arts at UCLA. Learn more about naming a seat in The Nimoy – CAP UCLA’s newest home for live performance – and other opportunities to become a part of this state-of-the-art theater.

cap.ucla.edu/give-nimoy



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We invite you to become a CAP UCLA Member and support our ability to create a space for shared experiences, extraordinary artistry and the exchange of ideas.

- > Enjoy priority access and discounts
- > Support extraordinary artistry
- > Deepen relationships with artists and other arts enthusiasts

Become a member
cap.ucla.edu/membership

