

December, 19-21, 2025

La MaMa Presents Birth + Carnage: A Bold Fusion of Dance and Astrophysics as a Metaphor for the Human Condition

Company: La MaMa
Venue: La MaMa
Location: New York, NY

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La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club presents the World Premiere of Birth + Carnage, a dance work by choreographer and director Marla Phelan from December 19–21, 2025 at The Ellen Stewart Theatre, 66 East 4th Street, New York, NY, 10003. Tickets are \$35 and \$30 for students and seniors (includes fees). Ten tickets to every performance are \$10 each, first-come, first-served – in advance, online only. For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit <https://www.lamama.org/birth-carnage/>.

Birth + Carnage is a dance work fusing choreography, astrophysics, and video installation. Born from the collaboration between choreographer Marla Phelan and astrophysicist Dr. Blakesley Burkhart, the piece is inspired by the astrophysical phenomenon of stellar birth as both visceral metaphor and choreographic framework.

In collaboration with director Tim Richardson and video artists KLSR and REINFECTED ME, astrophysical data is abstracted into shifting visual fields that echo cycles of creation. An ensemble of dancers performs against the backdrop of a monolithic digital installation, creating a feedback loop of allegory and sensation. The original score by James Newberry deepens the emotional terrain through epic sonic landscapes.

Birth + Carnage invites audiences into a theatrical abyss where cosmic and human systems mirror one another—bridging the vastness of the universe and the depths of human connection.

Project Background

In 2022, The Simons Foundation partnered with Gibney Center to create Open Interval, a residency that supported the research between astrophysicist Dr. Burkhart and choreographer Marla Phelan. Their collaboration led to the development of Birth + Carnage, where Phelan transposes computational simulations of Star Formation into a unique choreographic process that physically and emotionally mirrors the dynamic systems of stellar birth.

Birth + Carnage is supported by the Simons Foundation's Science, Society & Culture division. Developed with residency support from the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), New Directions Choreography Lab (NDCL) at The Ailey School, and Simons Foundation & Gibney's Open Interval Residency Program.

"I'm fascinated by how the smallest gesture can mirror the movements of galaxies – how every heartbeat is a kind of cosmic echo. This work lives in that overlap between the cellular and the celestial." —Marla Phelan

"Birth + Carnage moves between the macro and the micro – from the infinite churn of the cosmos to the trembling pulse of a single body. —Marla Phelan

"Creation and destruction are never separate. Birth + Carnage lives in that tension."

—Marla Phelan

Production Credits

Choreographer + Director: Marla Phelan

Director: Tim Richardson

Composer: James Newberry

Digital Artist: REINFECTED.ME

Digital Artist: KLSR

Producer: Yazmany Arboleda

Producer: Cameron Sczempka

Producer: Lisa kjerulff

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Marla Phelan is a choreographer and performer whose work spans stage, film, and immersive installations. She is the founder and Artistic Director of Movement Museum, a multidisciplinary company fusing choreography, theater, science, film, and technology to craft visceral worlds of physical rigor and emotional depth. Her choreography has been presented at Lincoln Center, The Joyce Theater, La MaMa Experimental, The Juilliard School, Dixon Place, and Gibney Center, with features in V Magazine, Nowness, and New York Magazine. She has choreographed for Kinlaw, Fischerspooner, Michael C. Hall, Maison Margiela, Mugler, Mazda, Emursive llc, The McKittrick Hotel (Creative Director), City Springs Theater, Theater Aspen, and Broadway's Fiddler on the Roof National Tour. Phelan is a Simons Foundation, LMCC, and AKC Fund awardee, NYFA/NYSCA Fellow Finalist in dance, and past Ailey NDCL, Gibney MTJ and Open Interval Fellow. Phelan has danced with Gibney Company, Hofesh Shechter Company, Akram Khan (The Shed), and Punchdrunk's Sleep No More and The Drowned Man. A Juilliard graduate, she is on faculty at the Mark Morris Dance Center and has taught workshops for NYU Tisch, Bard College, Brigham Young University, and Washington University.

Blakesley Burkhart, Ph.D is an Associate Research Scientist in Galaxy Formation at the Center for Computational Astrophysics, Flatiron Institute. Burkhart is a leader in the study of magnetic turbulence across all scales of the universe. Her areas of focus include star formation, studies of the dynamics of the gases that fill the space between stars, and the turbulent nature of galaxies near and far. That work will improve the understanding of galaxy evolution. Guided by analytic theory, she employs innovative techniques to compare observational data with numerical simulations. In addition to her position at the Flatiron Institute, she is an assistant professor at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Burkhart received her Ph.D in astronomy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was an Einstein Postdoctoral Fellow at Harvard in the Institute for Theory and Computation. She has received numerous research awards including the AAS Annie Jump Cannon Award and the APS Maria Goeppert Mayer Award. She is a 2020 Packard Fellow in Science and Engineering and a 2021 Sloan Fellow, which are among the most prestigious awards available to young scientific researchers.

Tim Richardson makes imagery acutely attuned to its time. From his breakthrough projects with Lady Gaga and Nike to installations for Epic Games and Iris van Herpen, Tim has embraced storytelling in all its forms. His creative voice has attracted commissions for Dior, LVMH, Givenchy, Maison Margiela, NARS, Lexus and L'Oréal. Tim's signature approach has led to several artistic collaborations including Billie Eilish, Bill Skarsgård, Lady Gaga, LCD Soundsystem, and many more. Richardson's body of work has been screened and exhibited internationally. He is featured in the collections of Sir Elton John, Deutsche Bank, and ModeMuseum Hasselt. Three books have been published on Richardson's work including his first monograph, *Spiritual Machine*, released by Prestel in 2014. His recent film, *Neon Rapture*, was commissioned by Epic Games. Upon release, *Neon Rapture* received over a million views in 48 hours. It was also screened by Epic Games alongside HBO's *House of Dragon* and Amazon's *Rings of Power* as an example of game-changing visual effects. Tim is based in New York and is the founder and director of RCHRDSN Studio.

About the Simons Foundation

The Simons Foundation's mission is to advance the frontiers of research in mathematics and the basic sciences. Since its founding in 1994 by Jim and Marilyn Simons, the foundation has been a champion of basic science through grant funding, support for research and public engagement. We believe in asking big questions and providing sustained support to researchers working to unravel the mysteries of the universe.

The Simons Foundation's Science, Society and Culture division seeks to provide opportunities for people to forge a connection to science — whether for the first time or a lifetime. Through our initiatives, we work to inspire a feeling of awe and wonder, foster connections between people and science and support environments that provide a sense of belonging.

About La MaMa

La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club is dedicated to the artist and all aspects of the theatre. La MaMa's 64th Season, LA MAMA NOW, focuses on creating solidarity and building community, exploring ways to build connections for cross-sector coalition and invite artists, activists, organizers and community members into the creative process.

La MaMa has been honored with 30+ Obie Awards, dozens of Drama Desk, Bessie Awards, Villager Awards, the 2018 Regional Theatre Tony Award, and most recently a 2023 New York Drama Critics' Circle Special Citation. We are a creative home to artists and resident companies from around the world, many of whom have made lasting contributions to the arts, including Blue Man Group, Bette Midler, Ping Chong, Jackie Curtis, Robert De Niro, André De Shields, Adrienne Kennedy, Cole Escola, Bridget Everett, Harvey Fierstein, Diane Lane, Charles Ludlam, Tom Eyen, Spiderwoman Theater, Tadeusz Kantor, Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, Meredith Monk, David and Amy Sedaris, Stephanie Hsu, Julie Taymor, Kazuo Ohno, Tom O'Horgan, Andrei Serban, Liz Swados, and Andy Warhol. La MaMa's vision of nurturing new artists and new work from all nations, cultures, races and identities remains as strong today as it was when Ellen Stewart first opened the doors in 1961.

La MaMa
66 E 4th St New York, NY 10003
New York, NY, 10003
6467654773
<https://www.lamama.org/birth-carnage/>

Schedule
December 19, 2025: 8:00pm
December 20, 2025: 4:00pm, 8:00pm
December 21, 2025: 4:00pm

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