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## Swim

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

PEAK Performances at Montclair State University

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# **Peak Performances**

THE 2014|15 SEASON

# SWIM

**A Theater Piece  
by Robert Whitman  
March 26–29, 2015  
Alexander Kasser Theater**



**MONTCLAIR STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

Photo by Terry Doyle

Dr. Susan A. Cole, President  
Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts  
Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director,  
Arts & Cultural Programming

**World Premiere!**

# SWIM

Written and Directed by **Robert Whitman**  
Coordinating Producer **Julie Martin**  
Consultant **Emilie Gossiaux**

Sound Design by **Jacob Burckhardt**  
Sound Provided by **Jacob Burckhardt**  
and **Jacob Kirkegaard**  
Filming by **Jacob Burckhardt**

Singer/Songwriter **Fiona**  
Guitarist **Jeff Ciampa**  
Performers **Lama Abdo, Irena Pejovic,**  
**Derek Wright, Mina Zarfsaz**  
Swimmers **Erich Homenik,**  
**Jacob Burckhardt**

Automation **David O. Smith**  
Additional Filming and Archival Photography  
**Ann Marie Williams,**  
**Brian Keith Williams**  
Installation Crew **Jeff Cierniak,**  
**Marc Critelli, Jason Flamos,**  
**Elizabeth Flynn, Caitlin Knowles,**  
**Noelle Rasco, Steven Rust,**  
**Will Senedzuk, Rocco Terranova**  
Run Crew **Jesse Haack, Chris Ollo,**  
**Rocco Terranova**

Produced by  
Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ).

Duration: 1 hour, no intermission.

**Please do NOT silence your cell  
phone for this performance! Ask  
someone to call you during the  
performance: let your phone ring,  
answer it, and then hang up.**

The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording  
equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted in  
the theater.

# About the Artist

Robert Whitman was born in New York City in 1935. He received a BA in English Literature from Rutgers University in 1957 and studied art history at Columbia University in 1958.

As a pioneer of artists' theater of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Whitman, together with Jim Dine, Red Grooms, Allan Kaprow, and Claes Oldenburg, presented performances that combined performers, props, sound, and lights in nontraditional theater spaces throughout lower Manhattan. Notably, with his pioneering piece *The American Moon* (1960), Whitman became the first artist of his generation to incorporate slides and film into his performances. During this time he also exhibited mixed-media works at some of New York's more important contemporary venues, including the Hansa, Reuben, Martha Jackson, and Sidney Janis galleries.

During the 1960s, Whitman became increasingly interested in creative

collaboration with scientists, engineers, and specialists beyond the realm of the visual arts world, which led to his participating in *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering* at the 69th Regiment Armory in New York City in 1966. The same year Whitman co-founded, with engineers Billy Klüver and Fred Waldhauer and artist Robert Rauschenberg, Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), a foundation that provided artists with access to technology through collaborations with engineers and scientists. He also collaborated on the design, construction, and programming of the Pepsi Pavilion at Expo '70, in Osaka, Japan, and made a new work for the Art & Technology Show, shown at the US Pavilion at Expo '70 and at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1971).

His one-person exhibitions have been presented at such venues as the Jewish Museum, New York (1968); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1968); Museum of Modern Art, New York (1973); and Pace Gallery, New York (1995, 1997, 2004, 2007). He has presented theater works in various European venues, including Moderna

Museet, Stockholm (1987 and 1989); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2001 and 2002); the New Media Festival in Leeds, England (2004); and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2010).

Dia Art Foundation organized a retrospective of his theater works in 1976 and, in 2003, presented *Playback*, an exhibition bringing together a selection of key works from the early 1960s to late 1970s spanning various media, including presentations of *Light Touch* (1976) and *Prune Flat* (1965). The exhibition traveled to Museo Serralves, Porto, Portugal, in 2004 and to Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona in 2005.

In 2005 Whitman launched a large-scale communications project, *Local Report*, the latest version of a series of telephone pieces that began with *NEWS* in New York in 1972, where reports from participants using pay phones all over the city were played over radio station WBAI. *Local Report* consisted of live performances held on successive weekends at five different places around New York City in which participants used video cell

phones to create and send short video films and sound reports from their areas, the final playback resulting in a multiscreen video and sound installation shown at the Guggenheim Museum, New York. An international version of the work, *Local Report 2010*, produced by Creative Time, gathered reports from more than 90 participants in cities around the world, and these visual and audio reports came into and continued to play on a five-screen installation at Eyebeam Center in New York City.

*Passport* was co-commissioned in 2011 by Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ) and Dia Art Foundation. This ambitious work was performed simultaneously in two places: indoors at the Alexander Kasser Theater at Montclair State and outside on the banks of the Hudson River near Dia:Beacon. During the simultaneous performances, images and activities performed at one site were transmitted to, and projected at, the other performance site: for example, a person “walking” upside down across the stage was projected on a large screen outdoors, while a woman crossing the outside space lying

on the back of a white horse appeared as a video projection crossing the stage of the Kasser Theater.

*Local Report 2012* was an international media and telecommunications work in which Whitman used cell phone video clips and live voice reports from approximately 90 participants in cities around the world to create a live sound and video performance and continuing installation, composing in real time what he calls “a cultural map of the world.” The work was produced by Creative Time and performed on October 11, 2012, at Eyebeam Art + Technology Center in New York City. The Stanford Institute for Creativity and the Arts at Stanford University, as well as George Mason University in Alexandria, Virginia, and Le Consortium in Dijon, France, participated in the project as satellite performance receiving sites.

Whitman is represented by the Pace Gallery, New York.

## Acknowledgments

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