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*“There was a gloom within my body after this thought came to me, and I waited with the most anxious longing for the appearance of the Ba. Yet, it gave no sign it was ready to show. But the Ba, I remembered, can be seen as the mistress of your heart and might or might not decide to speak to you, just as the heart cannot always forgive. The Ba could have flown away already—some hearts are treacherous, some can endure no suffering.”*

Norman Mailer  
*Ancient Evenings*



The use of any recording device, either audio or video, and the taking of photographs, either with or without flash, is strictly prohibited. **Please turn cellular phones off**, as it interferes with audio recording equipment and telecommunications. Thank you.



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## ANCIENT EVENINGS

In 2007, Matthew Barney and Jonathan Bepler began to develop a new collaborative project inspired by American author Norman Mailer's 1983 novel *Ancient Evenings*. Barney and Bepler's story was conceived as a nontraditional opera with a series of one-time-only live acts performed across the American landscape over a five-year period. The first act, *REN*, was performed at a car dealership in south Los Angeles in May 2008. The second act, *KHU*, was performed in Detroit along the River Rouge and Detroit River in October of 2010. *BA*, the third and final act, takes place at locations along New York City's East River, culminating in a scene at a dry dock in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Each live act generates sculpture as the narrative unfolds, and for this reason, is only possible to perform once.



Production still, *REN*

The overarching opera has developed as a film, titled *River of Fundament*, and combines documentation of the three live acts with scenes set primarily in a reconstruction of Norman Mailer's brownstone apartment in Brooklyn Heights. Borrowing from Mailer's Egyptian-themed novel, the opera is structured corresponding to the seven stages of the soul's departure from the body as it passes from death to rebirth according to Egyptian mythology: the *ren* representing the departure of one's secret name; the *sekhem* of one's power; the *khu* of one's light; the *ba* of one's spirit; the *ka* of one's double; the *khabit* of one's shadow; and finally the *sekhu*, one's remains.

While Mailer's novel chronicles the soul's progression through death and rebirth as told through the story of an Egyptian nobleman who is reincarnated three times, Barney and Bepler's story replaces the body of a man with the body of an automobile in the American landscape. Three generations of American automobile design act as vehicles that carry the narrative impulse: a 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial (known for its crashworthiness) is transmogrified into a 1979 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am (known as the last high-performance engine of the original muscle-car generation) and finally as a 2001 Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor (known for its tireless service in the U.S. government fleet).

The story began in south Los Angeles with *REN* and the 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial from *Cremaster 3*, as it underwent its first death and was prepared for rebirth as the 1979 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am. The second performance, *KHU*, was set in Detroit, bringing the Chrysler back to its birthplace, a city built upon the vast expanses of salt beds beneath Michigan. *KHU* is the only act that featured all three automobiles. *BA*, the final live act, takes place in New York City as the automobile is further transformed into the 2001 Ford Crown Victoria.

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Production still, *KHU*

Set amid the American landscape, "Ancient Evenings" uses the language of modern industrial processing and recycling to tell the story of its automobile protagonist, alongside the character agents deployed from *Cremaster 3* (the Entered Apprentice and Entered Novitiate) and the Egyptian pantheon activated by Mailer (Osiris, Isis, Set, Nephthys, Horus, Anubis, and Khepera). The mythologies inherent to the previous life of the 1967 Chrysler Imperial and to Mailer's Egyptian-themed novel are met at each site with a set of local mythologies, symbolisms, and indigenous musical traditions as diverse as Native American, American, Mayan, and Celtic.

Each performance employs local talent, while the set of characters inherent to *Cremaster 3* and Egyptian mythology continue to evolve and reappear, pervading the transformation of the automobile protagonist as it endures the seven soul states toward the journey of its three embodiments. Sculpture is generated with each transformation and as the narrative is materialized. Each act is further characterized by musical instruments that are constructed according to the logic of the narrative, so that the story unfolds sculpturally, theatrically, and musically with an evolution of new forms in a moving arena where personal, local, and cultural mythologies are interwoven.

Primarily excerpted from Mailer's *Ancient Evenings*, the libretto also includes historical rites from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* and *The Pyramid Texts*, along with texts from American authors Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William S. Burroughs, offering a confluence of meditations on the timeless concerns of mortality and regeneration.



Production still, *BA*

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# KHU

On October 2, 2010, a chilly, gray day that would become a frigid and tempestuous night, an audience of 200 gathered at the Detroit Institute of Arts for the eight-hour performance of Matthew Barney and Jonathan Bepler's *KHU*, the second live act of their "Ancient Evenings" opera. Inspired by Norman Mailer's 1983 novel of that title set in Middle Kingdom Egypt, the "Ancient Evenings" opera would feature three American automobiles as manifestations of its noble protagonist within the American landscape: the 1967 Chrysler Imperial from *Cremaster 3*; a 1979 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am; and a 2001 Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor. *KHU* would be the only setting in which all three cars would appear, bringing them back to their birthplace in Detroit, Motor City.

The day began at the DIA among Diego Rivera's *Detroit Industry* murals (1932–33), gifted to the museum by Edsel Ford and setting the tone for what would follow: a journey through the channels of Detroit's automotive industry, founded upon the prehistoric Michigan Basin Salt Deposit. From Henry Ford's River Rouge and through the Detroit River, a barge carrying performers, musicians, and their audience became a mobile stage for discovery and metamorphosis. As the barge traversed a landscape richly permeated with histories geologic, industrial, cultural, and personal, the narrative of *KHU* would unfold as a contemporary retelling of the myth of Osiris, and his cult of regeneration and rebirth.



*Khu*, the loss of one's light, is the third of seven states the soul passes through after the death of the body, according to Egyptian mythology; the preceding soul state, *sekhem*, is the loss of one's power. SEKHEM, the 45-minute filmed prologue to *KHU*, was shot in Detroit in December 2009 and was screened at the DIA just before the performance of *KHU* began. In SEKHEM, the automobile protagonist was united with its human counterpart portrayed by Barney, also a manifestation of three characters who share a preoccupation with the ritualized performance of death: *Cremaster 3*'s Entered Apprentice is conjoined with James Lee Byars (who was born in Detroit and died in Cairo) and Harry Houdini, who performed his first bridge jump from the Belle Isle Bridge and later died in Detroit. Acting out the death of Osiris at the hand of his brother Set, Barney's character, blindfolded and straightjacketed, was placed inside the gold Trans Am as it loudly idled inside the nave of a Catholic church that is surrounded by the Detroit Wastewater Treatment Plant. After a forensics team sealed the car closed, Set, portrayed by baritone Eugene Perry, speared a wrecking bar through the windshield to put the Trans Am in gear, which then followed a police car through the streets of Detroit at high speed, eventually crashing off the Belle Isle Bridge and inescapably into the depths of the Detroit River. Intercut with scenes and sounds of the sewage treatment plant, Set's deep, repetitive baritone invoked *The Death of James Lee Byars* (1982/94): "Quietly lie down, and quietly get up."

The audience then boarded buses that drove through downtown Detroit to a derelict glue factory on the banks of the River Rouge. Inside the factory, a group of assembly-line workers began to construct metalins to be played alongside trombonists in an overture that accompanied an aria sung by contralto Belita Woods. With lyrics modified from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the haunting dirge ushered the audience aboard the funeral barge, which then began to make its way along the River Rouge. At the mouth of the river, the barge came upon a crime scene investigation, led by Aimee Mullins's character, who simultaneously depicted an FBI agent, *Cremaster 3*'s Entered Novitiate, and Isis, the sister-wife and widow of Osiris.

After arriving on the banks of the river in the 2001 Crown Victoria, Isis and her sister Nephthys found evidence of a car in the river. Four patrol boats, each carrying a saxophone quartet and percussionist, arrived on the scene from different directions, surrounding the barge and encroaching upon the crime scene with alarming sounds. Isis ordered the car to be dredged up and placed on the barge and cried an aria from the *Book of Going Forth by Day*, hoping that the remains of the car would be those of the 1967 Chrysler Imperial: Osiris. After her chorus of agents performed their investigation and deemed what Isis knew to be true, that she has at long last found the Crown Imperial, Isis mounted the four-cylinder engine and employed magic to become posthumously impregnated by Osiris with their son, Horus. A foreboding lament on the poisonous semen of Set was sung by Isis' sister Nephthys, from the text of Mailer's *Ancient Evenings*.

The barge veered past Zug Island onto the Detroit River for a one-hour intermission, passing over the ancient salt deposit beneath the earth. Salt, iron, coke, limestone, petroleum: the natural abundance of raw materials accessible to Detroit via its waterways led to the birth of the Big Three, and in turn led Henry Ford to dream of building the Rouge Complex in 1917 – the world's first completely integrated factory, along with its largest steel foundry. Other plants and foundries cropped up along the nine miles of coursing River, until the barge came to dock at Detroit Steel, with its five monumental, extinct blast furnaces towering in the distance.

As the sun continued its descent, the barge was angrily met by two embodiments of Set, portrayed by SEKHEM's Eugene Perry and his twin, baritone Herbert Perry. A confrontation with Isis ensued, as she demanded the Chrysler be craned onto shore. Upon realizing that Isis had salvaged the body of Osiris, Set's army forced Isis into the back of her Ford Crown Victoria and then carefully dismembered the Imperial body of Osiris into 14 parts.



The Crown Victoria was driven up a ramp to the edge of a massive casting pit, and the audience, in succession, fanned out to witness the scene before them. Each of the five monumental 125-foot towers was presided over by an identical James Lee Byars character in gold costume. Five 25-foot furnaces resembling giant termite mounds were actively stoked at the pit's back wall. The full cast and ensemble were assembled across the landscape in a fury of sound and activity: percussionists pounded metal trash bins; string players plucked amplified cables extending from the casting pit to the tops of the extinct towers; the vocalists let out a turbulence of dissonant emotion; and a dump truck roared in the distance, furiously making its way to the burning furnaces. The sky turned black as a storm hovered above the scene, contributing its own ominous wrath of thunder and lightning and cold, heavy rain.

The 14 body parts of Osiris were fed into the five incinerators, stoked and operated by a professional crew of ironworkers from all over the world. The furnaces were opened and 25 tons of molten iron flowed down five rivers into a reservoir in the casting pit, which overflowed into a mold of the undercarriage of the Chrysler Imperial, refashioned in the form of the *Djed* of Osiris. As the glowing orange *Djed* began to cool, Nephthys sang an aria from Mailer's novel: "Khu is a light in the mind of the living, but in death, it must return to heaven for the Khu is also eternal..." The five James Lee Byars characters released a gold liquid that flowed down the five extinct towers. An African vulture perched on Isis's Crown Victoria, as Belita Woods sang to its departure, the departure of the *khu*. And the light was gone, and the *Djed* tempered to gray.



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# BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

SATURDAY JUNE 29, 2013  
*(one time only)*

# BA

## ACT 3 OF RIVER OF FUNDAMENT

*Directed by*

MATTHEW BARNEY AND JONATHAN BEPLER

*Written by*

MATTHEW BARNEY

*Music by*

JONATHAN BEPLER

*Produced by*

MATTHEW BARNEY AND LAURENZ FOUNDATION

*with*

BRENNAN HALL, HERBERT PERRY, BOBBI STARR, TAYLOR STARR,  
MAGNO GAMA, AND PABLO SILVA

*Director of Photography*  
PETER STRIETMANN

*Production Design*  
MATTHEW D. RYLE

*Producer*  
MIKE BELLON

*Assistant Director*  
SARAH GYLLENSTIERNA

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# MYRRH'S CLARION CALL

Sean Campbell

I greet you;  
Offer my foundation;  
Bended in posture;  
In the safety of the sacred repository;  
I will uphold your good name.

**“I have created my Ba about me in order to make it know what I know, for the sake of my corpse, my Ba shall not burn, my Ba shall not be held up by the bodyguard of Osiris. I copulate and my Ba copulates; whenever my Ba copulates with the men who dwell in the Island of Flame, I copulate with the goddesses.” (C.T. I: 360–366)**

Ram of Mendes, your Ba is in the serpents, and may the twelve goddesses of the ninth hour set your path ablaze:

**and the satyr shall cry to his fellow/. (Isa 34:14)**

Osiris was the original Pharaoh of Egypt. He campaigned throughout the ancient world. Plutarch tells us so. Osiris took with him an army of satyrs who enforced his policies on all earth. He taught mankind to fertilize the soil and abstain from the practice of cannibalism. He civilized the planet. Osiris is one of the first great neurotic metaphors.

**“I am the one who uncovers the great red crown of Osiris, which gods fear when it is unveiled, because I am this great Ba of Osiris, by means of which the gods have commanded him to copulate, which lives by striding by day, which Osiris has made of the efflux which is in his flesh, of the seed which came forth from his phallus, in order that it may come forward on the day he copulates.” (C.T. II: 70–71)**

Old Moses scribed the Pentateuch. It was through Egypt he came. It is declared:

**And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water. (Ex 2:10)**

And Nilus from the depths did come forth. It was in Egypt where Moses experienced initiation, passing, and raising; as the risen Osiris, raised again as the avenging Horus. Egypt was where Moses attained the secrets of his craft and the magic of his cult.

**And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. (Acts 7:22)**

And it is written early in the first book, during the antediluvian times:

**And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. (Gen 4:19)**

And Adah bare Jubal, and she also bare Jubal:

**he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ/. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah. (Gen 4:21-22)**



Tubal-cain at his forge  
Andrea Pisano 1334–36

And before Lamech was Methusael; and before Methusael was Mehujael; and before Mehujael was Irad; and before Irad was Enoch.

**And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. (Gen 4:17)**

And Cain was the original creation that followed Eve after her ascent into own-ness as a result of transgression with the serpent. And later Cain also ascended into own-ness as a result of transgression.

**And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod/. (Gen 4:16)**

And there they dwelled, in the land of Nod. In the land of Nod, Jubal did sputter his song on bells forged by Tubal-cain, and from Jubal's magic song so too did Tubal-cain sharpen the working tools for definition of the rough ashlar. Very little is documented about Tubal-cain. As iterated by Mackey, the ancient writer, Sanconiatho, from his archived fragment, in Eusebius's *Praeparatio evangelica*, referred to Tubal-cain as "Chyros," which denotes "worker in fire." Josephus, in *Antiquities of the Jews*, wrote that he "was very expert and famous in martial performances. He procured what tended to the pleasures of the body by that method; and first of all invented the art of making brass." Ezekiel also informed on Tubal-cain, the ambiguous bright one:

**every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. (Ezek 28:13)**

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# MYRRH'S CLARION CALL

(continued)

And through a natural drive toward self-sharpening, the children of the lesser light: Jabal, Jubal, Naamah, and Tubal-cain founded the beginning of all the sciences: geometry, music, weaving, and smith-craft. The withdrawal of the clan's secrets was humiliating to God, but was also simultaneously stimulating, as it motivated certain genocidal action. And Jabal, Jubal, Naamah, and Tubal-cain did stroke the great red crown of Osiris with the same resolution as Isis had possessed in the conjuring of the old prick, and were thus emboldened through their arts. The power formed a barrier from poisonous semen terror attacks, sprayed out through the vise of obligation and common sense via scripture or state, and spewed by priests. The model for such priestly tyranny was formed by Osiris himself and documented in the Coffin Texts. Turning now once again to words of the Judean prophet in Babylon:

**Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. (Ezek 28:14)**



The Temple of Seti I and the Osireion at Abydos

And the anointed fortress that covereth was breached, but the antediluvian secrets remained preserved. The lore was pounded into a left-hand pillar of brass and a right-hand pillar of brass. The pillars stood underground by way of subterranean erection, and their height was 18 cubits. Entry to the secrets was only attainable through a hidden middle pillar. And thusly so was how Tubal-cain prepared for the inevitable facial assault, god's ultimate ejaculation: the Deluge. And the holy commander rained down his harsh artillery. To the ancient Egyptians, as Faulkner translated, semen was considered poison, thusly forcing our beloveds to execute fine caution while folding lettuce. Avert a straight glance for:

**thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness/. (Ezek 28:17)**

And privileges from the land of Nod revolve around self-cultivation and the deep, ripe scent of regeneration and decay: the fungal altar. True godliness is found in the fleshy

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and smelly; it is found in the church of embellishment and foot worship and other bodily rituals. From the previously stated angle, masturbation then acts as an observance of daily prayers, while the ritual comes to pass in the partaking of the flesh, through embracement of another's feet. The prayers are the daily mediations, building up, and coming to fruition in the actual acquisition of the flesh. The action of prayer, and resulting pressure and advancement, becomes a time for enrichment, a time to tend thy grounds. From the proposed statement masturbation is pious work: Now, attend to your daily prayers. Freud informs, in "The Sexual Aberrations": "psychoanalysis has filled the gap in the understanding of fetichisms by showing that the selection of the fetich depends on a coprophilic smell-desire which has been lost by repression. Feet are strong smelling objects which are raised to fetiches (*sic*).” Freud's ideas about foot fetishism and "coprophilic smell-desire" demonstrate the ancients were insightful and natural in their associations. Freud concluded: "the foot is a very primitive sexual symbol already found in myths." And all the sciences originate from that river of fundament.

**And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water of the river. (Ex 7:18)**



Production Still, River of Fundament, East River, New York City

And so begins the first step; the lustration, in preparation for the sacred drama. The riches of the river are attained by way of initiation, passing, and raising through its waterway. The crowning path into the lodge of Nod follows crooked and protruding banks. The weeds of which surround it are obese and slovenly, with an almost ruddiness to their complexion, like fat men in the center of an orgy, they ooze fecal virility. Grab hold and use them as guides on the thorny path to crowning glory. Onward to wage battle against the Ram of Mendes; the eternal skull crush war, in which the taking of hammer to horns results in synthesis with the body and the becoming of the ever-recurring ram.

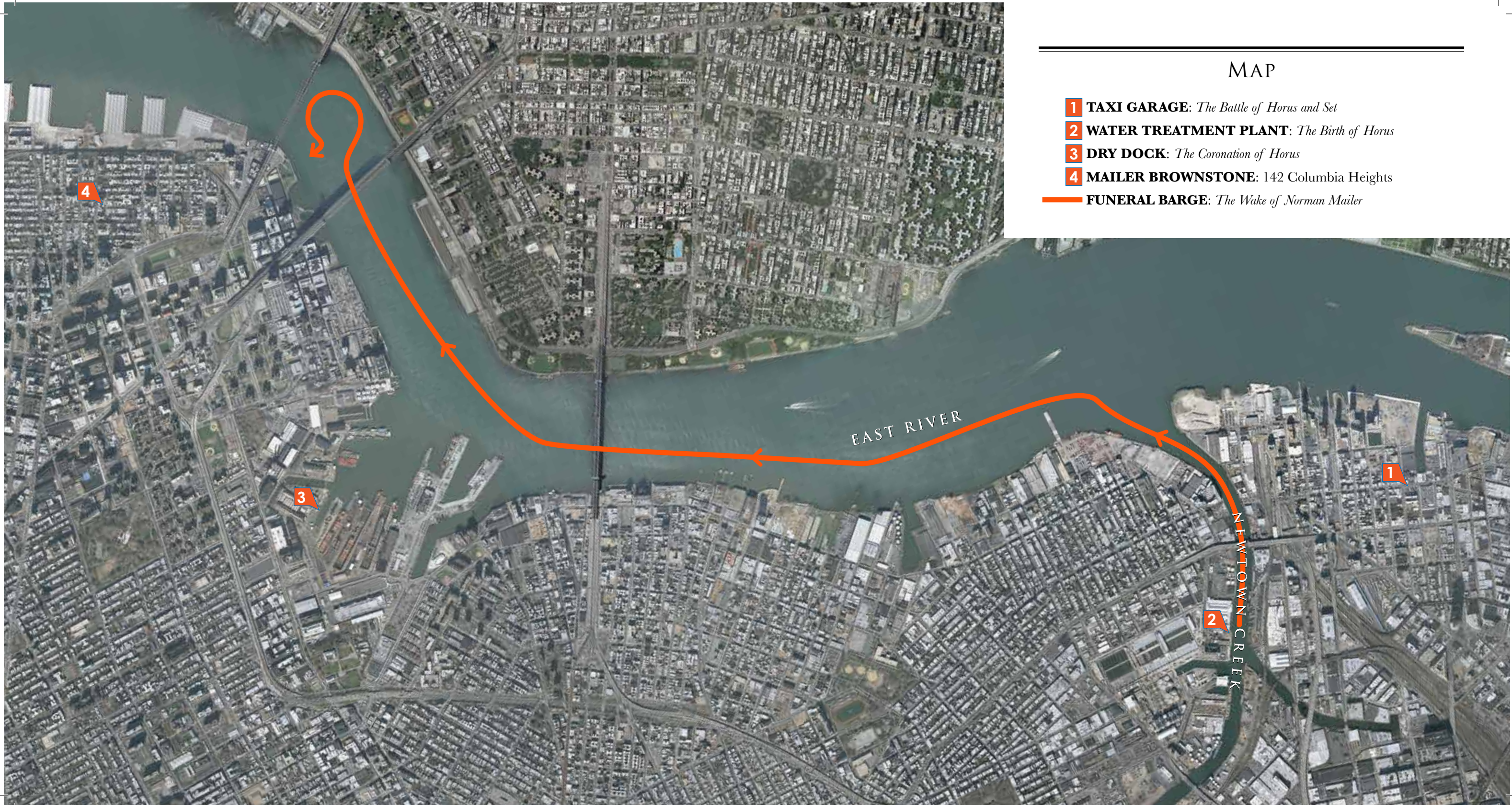
**And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. (Dan 8:6)**

And maul crushes skull. Thus spake the hammer raised on high by Tubal-cain; the eternal war against one's self. The god of Abraham thirstily suckled the gleaming red crown of Osiris. Strapped with Isis' apex of devotion, he longed to penetrate Tubal-cain, but upon inspection of the glorious hole, all that could be perceived was the rising sun.



# MAP

- 1 TAXI GARAGE:** *The Battle of Horus and Set*
- 2 WATER TREATMENT PLANT:** *The Birth of Horus*
- 3 DRY DOCK:** *The Coronation of Horus*
- 4 MAILER BROWNSTONE:** 142 Columbia Heights
- FUNERAL BARGE:** *The Wake of Norman Mailer*





## LIBRETTO

### **Navy Yard: The Entrance of Horus and Set**

HORUS (Brennan Hall, countertenor)  
 SET (Herbert Perry, baritone)  
 400 CROWD MEMBERS (chorus)  
 SET'S ENTOURAGE: Manager, Trainer, Bodyguards, Banjos (2), Baglamas (2)  
 HORUS'S ENTOURAGE: Manager, Trainer, Bodyguards, Fiddles (2), Chaparekes (2)

A CROWD of people has gathered at the Brooklyn Navy Yard Harbor. The CROWD is in two large groups, and they have congregated outside the two entry gates at opposite ends of a drydock. A buzz begins to grow in the CROWD as they begin to look toward their respective gates. There is a feeling of anticipation.

(chorus)

HORUS' CROWD:  
*Horus, The rising sun!*

SET'S CROWD:  
*Set, Set, Set, Set!*

SET and HORUS advance toward the drydock. They are each surrounded by their ENTOURAGE. The CROWD follows behind them, cheering them on. At the edge of the drydock, SET and HORUS stop and turn toward one another in a stand-off.

As SET and HORUS stare each other down, their bodies are heavily greased by their assistants. Each of the gods begins to warm up, making a display of confidence and power.

(chorus)

HORUS'S CROWD:  
*Set, Set – going down!*  
*Horus will fuck you!*  
*Ass fuck Set, Shitted on Set!*

SET'S CROWD:  
*Set will dominate!*  
*Set of the New York sky!*  
*King of all lands!*

The CROWD makes its way down the stairs on each side of the dry dock, which now resembles an amphitheatre. In a pile of silt lies the upside-down gold 1979 TRANS AM.

(chorale)

CROWD:  
*We have seen the battle. Crown Victoria. We await our King*

### **Taxi Garage: The Battle of Horus and Set**

MECHANIC 1 (Magno Gama)  
 MECHANIC 2 (Pablo Silva)  
 AUTOWORKER (Craig Machado)

At a taxi garage in Queens, a Ford CROWN VICTORIA is raised on a lift. Inside the car, an AUTOWORKER is violently swinging a crowbar, smashing the surfaces with the skill of a martial artist.

Two MECHANICS begin shoving at one another beneath the CROWN VICTORIA. The floor beneath them is soaked with car fluids. MECHANIC 1 strikes first, throwing MECHANIC 2 to the mat using a judo throw. He pushes his thumb into the eye socket of MECHANIC 2. Bleeding profusely, MECHANIC 2 breaks free.

MECHANIC 2 reverses power with a single-leg takedown. He reaches into MECHANIC 1's pants and tears off his scrotum. Blood floods from MECHANIC 1's crotch. In a rage, MECHANIC 1 escapes.

## LIBRETTO

### **Taxi Garage: The Battle of Horus and Set**

GARAGE MANAGER (Bobbi Starr)  
 MANAGER'S LOVER (Taylor Starr)

In the taxi garage office, the garage MANAGER has been visited by her LOVER. Both women are pregnant, and they are caressing and kissing one another. The LOVER suddenly removes her glass eye as the MANAGER parts open her legs, exposing her gaping anus. The LOVER gently inserts her eye into the MANAGER'S anus.

Aroused by her LOVER'S eye, the MANAGER takes a half-smoked, curved cigar and begins to coat it with chassis grease. The LOVER takes the greased cigar and carefully inserts it into the MANAGER'S vagina. The LOVER severs the cigar with a cigar cutter and removes the phallus from the MANAGER'S vagina. The two women gaze at one another with adoration.

### **Navy Yard: Coronation of Horus**

HORUS (Brennan Hall, countertenor)  
 DSNY WORKERS (8)

The TRANS AM is craned out of the silt leaving behind a negative impression at the bottom of the dry dock. A group of WORKERS from the New York Department of Sanitation fill the impression with molten sulfur from a tanker truck.

As the sulfur reaches the top of the impression, shallow trenches branch out from the perimeter and create an array of extending radiating lines. HORUS stands and looks out over the surface of the fluid. The sulfur's surface begins to crystallize a brilliant acidic yellow. The circular sulfur casting with its radiating beams resembles a sun.

(aria)

HORUS:  
*I come to my throne as Horus, And on my death I join Osiris.*  
*I descend from you, the sun. Amon Ra! Amon Ra!*  
*You taught me your ways and your might.*  
*When you rise, I rise! When you set, I die!*

*You yourself are lifetime, one lives by you*  
*no other knows you, you are in my heart. <sup>1</sup>*

### **Taxi Garage: Coronation of Horus**

AUTOWORKERS (5)  
 MECHANIC 1 (Magno Gama)  
 MANAGER'S LOVER (Taylor Starr)

In a back room in the garage, a group of AUTOWORKERS stand around a copper basin containing an iron element. They urinate into the basin, creating a galvanic reaction, forming a crude battery.

Two AUTOWORKERS lower the CROWN VICTORIA grill into an electroplating bath which has been charged by the battery. The grill emerges from the tank with a gleaming gold surface. MECHANIC 1 and the MANAGER'S LOVER slowly approach the electroplating bath. The two AUTOWORKERS hold the golden grill over the head of MECHANIC 1 and the LOVER in a gesture of victory.

[1] Reconstructed from the *Book of Going Forth by Day* (1250 BC)



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## NOTES ON THE MUSIC

### ON SEEING THE MUSIC OF JONATHAN BEPLER

Ross Simonini

Opera is a performance in which music and text and characters and story and speech and singing are all integrated into one unified art form. The music is a product of the situation; the situation is a product of the music – no difference between them. This means the music doesn't need to comment on the situation, or distract from it, or reinforce it, because it *is* the situation.

Jonathan Bepler breeds his music with situation. His hybrid filmic-operatic music doesn't come from off-screen or from a pit under the stage – the hidden places we're supposed to pretend aren't there – but directly in front of us. All the sonic events – not just the vocals – manifest, in some circumambulatory way, within the frame of the screen, so we can connect what we see with what we hear. Then, once the eye and ear are seemingly coordinated, he pulls the rug out and shows us how seeing and hearing are, of course, never the same. What we see is categorically not what we hear, ever, even though film scores usually try to tell us that it is. They cradle our ears with adagio, honey-glazed cellos when the romantic narrative reaches its ecstatic climax and honk brass horns when the soldiers slog off to war – as if we can't already see what's happening.

In this way, Bepler's music for BA doesn't fit to the screen, it gets born from inside of it. We watch an instrument being rolled and cast, first as a visual object, then tuned and tested out loud, so that we can follow him transforming incidents into accidents into composition. The music melts into the environment. The ears start to play tricks on the eyes. An image of a crowd at a sporting event has a familiar, accompanying sound of ovation, but Bepler's cheering crowd produces an alien sound: prickly textures of chants and vitriolic curses and eerie, atonal melodies that no mass of people in any worldly situation would produce.

With Barney and Bepler's collaboration, seeing and hearing do conjoin, but deep down, below aesthetics, at the level of process and conceit. As Barney casts his sculptures by filling molds with liquid (vaseline, lead, sulphur, melted car parts), Bepler writes his music by filling scenes and people with aural propositions. He fits his music to the performer, not the other way around, as is usually the case. Even if the performer is not a trained musician – and they often are not in *River of Fundament* – the music still pours into them and sprays out as naturally as digestion. Barney cracks open his mold and watches the volatile matter slip and break apart; Bepler cues the musicians and listens for the first time as his ideas react to their environment. He doesn't have to choose the notes or the rhythms; he just has to acknowledge the sounds that are already there.

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## MATTHEW BARNEY, JONATHAN BEPLER



Matthew Barney was born in 1967 in San Francisco and lives and works in New York. He has received numerous awards, including the Aperto prize at the 1993 Venice Biennale; the Hugo Boss award in 1996; the 2007 Kaiser Ring Award in Goslar, Germany; and the 2011 Golden Gate Persistence of Vision Award, 54th San Francisco International Film Festival. Barney has been included in group exhibitions such as Documenta IX in Kassel, Germany; the 1993 and 1995 Whitney Biennial; and the 1993 and 2003 Venice Biennale. A one-person exhibition “The Cremaster Cycle,” organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, traveled to the Museum Ludwig, Cologne and the Musée d’ Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2002–03). A retrospective of the *Drawing Restraint* series organized by the 21st Century Museum for Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan, traveled to Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Serpentine Gallery, London; and Kunsthalle Vienna (2005–08). Recent exhibitions include “Matthew Barney” at the Fondazione Merz, Torino (2008–09), and “Matthew Barney: Prayer Sheet with the Wound and the Nail” at Schaulager Basel, Switzerland (2010). “Subliming Vessel: The Drawings of Matthew Barney,” will be on view through September 2 at the Morgan Library & Museum, New York, and travels to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, in October 2013. “Matthew Barney: River of Fundament” will open in 2014 at Haus der Kunst, Munich.

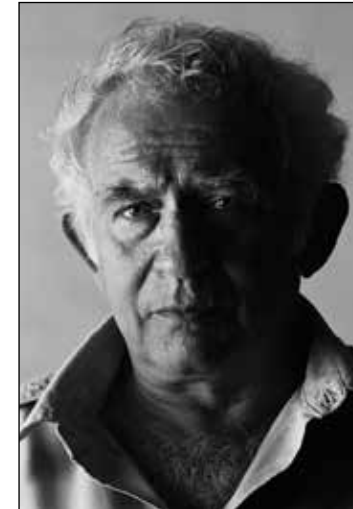


Jonathan Bepler was born in Philadelphia, and was self-taught on many instruments by the time he attended Bennington College in 1982. Major studies were Composition with Louis Calabro, Improvisation with Bill Dixon, Percussion with Milford Graves, and Performance Studies with artists and choreographers including Lisa Nelson and Min Tanaka. His interest in collaboration and interdisciplinary work continued in New York City, his work often involving the co-mingling of many seemingly disparate elements, a love of chaos, and a thirst for reconciliation. He has collaborated often with choreographers, including John Jasperse, Sasha Waltz, Jennifer Lacey and Wally Cardona. A multi-instrumentalist, he has led ensembles of both improvised and pre-composed music and has appeared often in New York and in Europe. His concert music includes a commission for the Ensemble Modern, the Glenn Branca Ensemble, and the Basel Synfonietta. A collaboration with artist Ann-Sofi Siden, featuring actors, technicians and architecture of the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Sweden, was shown in Stockholm and Berlin. His work with Barney has spanned nearly 20 years and has included some 7 films and 9 performances. He lives and works in Berlin.

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## NORMAN MAILER



Norman Mailer (1923–2007) was an American novelist, journalist, essayist, playwright, screenwriter and film director who is considered to have been an innovator of New Journalism, a form of creative nonfiction that wove autobiography, real events, and political commentary into unconventional novels. During his 60-year career, Mailer wrote more than 40 books, winning the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction and the National Book Award in 1968 for *The Armies of the Night*, and a second Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1980 for *The Executioner’s Song*. In 2005 he was awarded the National Book Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

Mailer worked on *Ancient Evenings* from 1972 to 1983, spending more time writing this book than any other. Set in Egypt between 1290 and 1100 BC and chronicling the lives of its protagonist Menenhetet I, *Ancient Evenings* was declared “an ambitious and daring work of fiction,” by one critic, though it received generally negative reviews at the time it was published. As Harold Bloom wrote in the *New York Review of Books*: “Mailer’s is too formidable a case of an authentic literary drive to be dismissed, and dismissal is certainly not my intention. *Ancient Evenings* is on the road of excess, and what Karl Kraus said of the theories of Freud may hold for the speculations of Mailer also—it may be that only the craziest parts are true. Mailer probably is aware that his Egyptian obsessions are in the main tradition of American literature, carrying on from much of the imagery of the major writers of the American renaissance.”

*The Executioner’s Song* was the inspiration for Matthew Barney’s 1999 film *Cremaster 2*, in which Mailer portrayed Harry Houdini.

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## CAST

### DRY DOCK CAST

HORUS.....Brennan Hall  
SET.....Herbert Perry  
SET ENTOURAGE: Banjo.....Eric Hubel, Greg McMullen  
SET ENTOURAGE: Baglamas.....Alex Hacke, Mick Barr  
HORUS ENTOURAGE: Fiddle.....Josh Henderson, Adriel Williams  
HORUS ENTOURAGE: Chapareke.....Danielle de Picciotto, Rebecca Gafney  
SET ENTOURAGE: Manager.....Tico Flores-Kyle  
HORUS ENTOURAGE: Manager.....Maurice Johnson  
SET ENTOURAGE: Trainer.....Arnold A. Sidney, Jr.  
HORUS ENTOURAGE: Trainer.....Byron Michael Howard  
SET ENTOURAGE: Bodyguard.....Steven Carl Fallis, Ramon Aleman  
HORUS ENTOURAGE: Bodyguard.....Andre Maurice Irving, Roy James Wilson  
DSNY WORKER (Hose).....Majda Puaca  
DSNY WORKER (Truck).....Dean Morris  
DSNY WORKER (Drive Shaft).....Femi Olagoke  
DSNY WORKER (Lifter).....Jonathan Dewberry, Douglas Stirling,  
Matthew Streeter, Reginald Wilson, Kevin Lipps, David Smith  
DSNY WORKER (Horns).....Trent Miller, Kevin JeanBaptiste, Ladun  
Thompson, William Lang, Sebastian Vera, Mark Broschinsky, James Rogers  
Basenji (Bingo).....John-Michael Ekeblad  
Falcon (Rain).....Dawn Animal Agency

### TAXI GARAGE CAST

GARAGE MANAGER.....Bobbi Starr  
MANAGER'S LOVER.....Taylor Starr  
MECHANIC 1.....Pablo Silva  
MECHANIC 2.....Magno Gama  
AUTOWORKER 1 (Bottom).....Jefferson Bare  
AUTOWORKER 2 (Top).....Wilfredo Roldan  
AUTOWORKER 3 (Int. Crown Vic Crowbar).....Craig Machado  
AUTOWORKER 4 (Instrument Maker).....Stephen Mack  
AUTOWORKER 5 (Instrument Maker).....Stuart Wright  
AUTOWORKER 6.....Jade Archuleta-Gans  
PLATER 1.....Karren Karagulian  
PLATER 2.....Bill Johnson  
PAINTER.....Kanoa Baysa

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## CREW

Written and Directed by.....Matthew Barney  
Music Composed and Directed by.....Jonathan Bepler  
Produced by.....Matthew Barney and The Laurenz Foundation  
Assistant Director.....Sarah Gyllenstierna  
Producer.....Mike Bellon  
Producer.....Blake Ashman-Kipervaser  
Director of Photography.....Peter Strietmann  
Production Design.....Matthew D. Ryle  
Lighting Designer.....Chris Winget  
Camera Operators.....John Chater, Claudia Raschke, Ryan Samul  
Technical Supervisor.....Chris Seguine  
Production Design Team.....Kanoa Baysa, Jade Archuleta-Gans,  
Michael Branning, David Smith, Kevin Lipps, Stuart Wright, Adam Cowell,  
Chris Wawrinofsky, Tyler McPhee, Nick Broujos  
Studio.....Keith Riley, Katie Bel  
Assistant Composer.....Will Gardner  
Music Assistant.....Brenda Goldstein  
POC.....Jenny Kern  
Costuming.....Nelly Zagury, Anna Maria Diaz-Balart  
Make up.....Christine Herbeck  
HMU assistant.....Maggie Lawrenson, Marissa Masella, Akane Awaji  
SFX Make-Up.....Josh Turi  
SFX Assistant.....Greg Pikulski  
Crowd Leader.....Tony Gerber  
1st AC.....Laura Nespola, Caitlin Strom, Rebecca Arndt, Corey Gegner  
Steadicam.....Aaron Brown  
Location Sound Recordist.....Gabe Cyr  
Boom.....Kristian Borysevich, Kevin Kniowski, Andre Logan, Brion Snyer  
Musical Group Leader.....Gelsey Bell, Geoff Gersh, Randy Gibson,  
Algis Kizys, Daisy Press, Megan Schubert, Peter Scisioli, Sarah Small  
PA Group Leader.....Jason Beaucourt, Joe Bender, Thomas Carey,  
Owen O'Leary, Octavia Pride, Jordan Rathus, Dave Shelley  
Still Photography.....Hugo Glendinning, Stephen Mallon  
Interns.....Oliver Agger, Alessia Arregui, Alexandre Degardin, Ruby Gerber,  
Yvedy Merveille, Nicole Mourino, Andy Slemenda, Kristina Mary Wagner,  
Sena Wataya, Henry Zaballos

## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST



MARK DAVIS

### **Brennan Hall** (*Horus*)

Brennan Hall, an American countertenor based in New York City, has made his professional debut singing as a soloist with the American Bach Soloist, under the direction of Jeffrey Thomas. Hall was heralded by the San Francisco *Classical Voice* for his "...silky vocal production and suave presentation...and admirable musical intelligence." He has performed the title role in Phillip Glass's *Akhmaten* with the Indianapolis Opera Company and the Jacobs School of Music. He also sang the roles Willie in *Small Box*, a new one-act opera by Bruce L. Pearson and Herman Whitfield III, and the Sorceress in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. He has appeared in scenes as Sesto (*Giulio Cesare*), Orfeo (*Orfeo ed Euridice*) and Malcome (*La donna del Lago*). Hall's concert work as a soloist includes Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*, Handel's *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus*. He is a frequent soloist for the Bloomington Bach Cantata Project and the Bloomington Early Music Festival.



PETER SCHEIDEMANN

### **Herbert Perry** (*Set*)

Herbert Perry is an internationally acclaimed artist who has appeared in major roles with leading opera companies throughout the world. With the Metropolitan Opera, Mr. Perry has performed the title roles in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Leporello*, and *Don Giovanni*, and the role of Colline in *La Bohème*. He has performed with the Lyric Opera of Chicago in the roles of Giorgio/Walton in Bellini's *I Puritani*; with the New York City Opera in the roles of Timur in *Turandot* and the title role in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. He performed Mephistopheles in Gounod's *Faust* with the Edmonton Opera, and Don Alfonso in *Così fan Tutte* at the Vancouver Opera. With Opera Theater of Pittsburgh, Mr. Perry sang the title role in Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*, and the role of Stephan Kumalo in Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars* at Virginia's Art Festival. He also sang the roles of Fafner and Hunding in Wagner's *Das Rheingold / Die Walküre* at Long Beach Opera. He made his Lincoln Center Festival debut as Vasco de Gama in Philip Glass' *White Raven*, directed by Robert Wilson; and performed with the Tokyo Philharmonic and Amsterdam for VARA Radio in John Adams' *El Niño*. He has appeared with Opera de Nice in the title role of *Le Nozze di Figaro*; and as Nick Shadow in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* at Opera Montpellier, Staatstheater Stuttgart, Teatro Real in Madrid, Teatro Massimo Bellini in Catania, and the Salzburg Festival in Austria. His performance in Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* at Opera de Lyon is available on DVD (EMI). He appeared on public television as Leporello in Peter Sellars's *Don Giovanni*, also available on DVD (EMI), *Live from Vienna*. In 2010, Mr. Perry had the privilege to work with Matthew Barney and Jonathan Bepler in the staging of KHU and appears in the role of Set in *River of Fundament*. He is currently singing with The Paris Opera.



ERIC SHIERS

### **Taylor Starr** (*Manager's Lover*)

Jasmine Washington, born February 7, 1988, is delighted to be making her theatrical debut in Matthew Barney's BA. Jasmine grew up in Granada Hills, California, and has been performing in the adult industry for the past five years with numerous film credits under the stage name of Taylor Starr. Jasmine was recently married and is expecting her first child. She has several business ventures in the works in the adult industry and in real estate. She is also looking to open a hair salon in the near future.

## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST



CHRIS CUFFARO

### **Bobbi Starr** (*Garage Manager*)

Recognized by fans and critics alike for her hardcore and intense performances in adult video, Bobbi Starr is an AVN Award, X-rated Critics Organization and Cyberspace Adult Video Review award winner. A classically trained and former professional concert oboist, Starr's schedule is packed with shoot dates, appearances, and writing commitments. She has been featured on the mainstream websites Focusfeatures.com, Spike.com, and Slashfilm.com, and is a contributor to popular metal blog Metalsucks.com. Her credits also include an appearance in the Nerdcore 2009 and 2010 calendars and a nomination for Wired.com's Sexy Geek. More recently, Starr has spoken at Colby College, shared her experiences in mainstream books and magazines about the porn industry, and contributed a photo essay to photographer Jim Herring and editor John Long's upcoming book collaboration, tentatively titled *Alt Fem*. During a recent AVN Adult Entertainment Expo and AVN Awards Show, Starr wrote daily dispatches for the *Las Vegas Weekly*, giving the newspaper an insider / new journalism / gonzo point of view. She wrote an article on misogyny in the A5 release of art-porn magazine *Richardson Mag* and contributed a short story to a forthcoming book about the secret life of a former photographer of the Associated Press, titled "One Night Stand." CNBC has named Starr one of the 12 most popular stars in porn, noting her multiple awards, including her 2012 AVN Female Performer of the Year Award. She also produces, directs, and appears in the content for her site, BobbiStarr.com, for world-renown BDSM content creator Kink.com via Electrosluts.com and gonzo pornography distributor Evil Angel. Follow her life and her adventures through her prolific blog on BobbiStarr.com



### **Pablo Silva** (*Mechanic 1*)

Pablo Silva was born in Sao Paulo in 1975 and raised in Rio de Janeiro, where he began training in Jiu Jitsu in 1990 with Master Ralph Gracie and Master Roberto Gordo Correa. He was awarded a black belt by Master Gordo in 2004 and began teaching in Brazil and the US. He has competed internationally and won Brazil's Novo Leblon and Copa Serrana de Jiu Jitsu. In 1997 he was the US Open Champion. With 23 years of experience, Silva currently holds a third-degree black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. In 1998, Silva received a scholarship to the Los Angeles Music Academy, where he holds a degree in drums. Silva grew up in a musical family and began playing the drums at age 10, influenced by his father and stepfather, both professional drummers; his mother, a singer; and his brothers, also drummers. He has toured and recorded with many artists, including Tim Maia, Danilo Caymi, Elza Soares, Fernanda Abreu, Farofa Carioca, Sandy, Familia Lima, and Airto Moreira e Flora Purim, performing in live concerts, television appearances, and jazz festivals all over the world.



### **Magno Gama** (*Mechanic 2*)

Born in 1980, Magno Gama is greatly revered as both a fighter and professor in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. With his Renzo Gracie-trained black belt, Magno Gama is able to offer his Jiu-Jitsu knowledge at his own school. Referring to himself as a little guy, Gama enjoys this form of fighting because it values understanding where the human body is vulnerable rather than brute force. His teaching skills have been described as very personable and technical. Located in Astoria, Queens, Gama's branch of the Renzo Gracie Academy offers training in both gi and no-gi Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu six days a week. "For me there's no other meaning in my life than Jiu Jitsu...there's nothing I'd rather do, there's nothing else I want..."

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## RIVER OF FUNDAMENT

Set across the American landscape, the film *River of Fundament* is an epic story of regeneration and rebirth, whose multifaceted protagonist is revealed as three manifestations of an automobile in the exterior realm, and aspects of four human characters in the interior. Loosely based on the 1983 Norman Mailer novel *Ancient Evenings*, with an ancient Egyptian protagonist who sought reincarnation three times in hopes of achieving immortality, *River of Fundament* borrows its structure from Mailer's text, corresponding to the seven stages the Egyptian soul undergoes in its journey toward new life. Conceived as a nontraditional opera written in collaboration with Jonathan Bepler, the film combines documentary footage of three live acts performed in outdoor environments in Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York, with live-action cinema, largely set in a careful re-creation of Mailer's Brooklyn brownstone apartment where the late author's wake is underway.



Production still, Usermare



Production still, Norman I

Mailer's protagonist, the nobleman Menenhetet I, uses magic and trickery in order to become reincarnated three times in the womb of his wife, who then becomes his mother. In each attempt, the undead Meni must cross the river of feces to attain new life, with the goal of changing his corporeal status from that of nobleman to pharaoh. In his third and final attempt to transform, Menenhetet III becomes stuck in the womb, failing to reincarnate. In *River of Fundament*, Barney recasts "Norman" in the role of the protagonist, as he endures two rebirths, failing in the third, in hopes of attaining a higher status among the ancestry of Great American Letters. The looming spirit of Hemingway haunts Norman as he transitions from one body to the next.

The film unfolds in three parts, each including one of the live acts that follows the narrative of the automobile. Aspects of the protagonist's will and desire for transformation are put into action in the outdoor productions that are performed in REN (Los Angeles, 2008), KHU (Detroit, 2010) and BA (New York City, 2013), involving the 1967 Chrysler Imperial from *Cremaster 3*, a 1979 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am, and a 2001 Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor. River and thoroughfares dominate the landscape, evoking the river of feces described in Mailer's novel. From the freeways of Los Angeles' car culture to the River Rouge and Detroit Rivers central to the automotive industry, and finally to New York City's East River – host to a funereal barge ferrying the Mailer apartment – man-made and natural arteries transport the protagonist on his journeys from death to rebirth.



Production still, Eulogy read by Elaine Strich

Imagined as a lavish dinner party attended by New York's cultural literati, the wake takes place inside the Mailer apartment as it is ferried down the river. Intercut with scenes from the live acts, the story of Norman's three-time journey along the river of fundament parallels that of the automobile, and is equally populated by the incestuous characters belonging to the myth of Osiris. As the story of Norman's lives is recounted to him by an elder pharaoh, Norman's widow and wives contemplate the soul's journey as a series of recitatives quoting passages from *Ancient Evenings*, as well as American authors Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William S. Burroughs.



Production still, Hathfertiti

*River of Fundament* will premiere at the Bavarian State Opera, Munich, in February 2014 in conjunction with "River of Fundament," an exhibition of sculpture and drawing at Munich's Haus der Kunst. Following the premiere, the film will tour for two years in proscenium theaters at international performance festivals. The tour will be organized by the Manchester International Festival. Written and directed by Matthew Barney. Music written and directed by Jonathan Bepler. Produced by Matthew Barney and the Laurenz Foundation. John Buffalo Mailer, Milford Graves, and Chief Dave Beautiful Bald Eagle as Norman I, II, III; Matthew Barney as the Ka of Norman, and Osiris; James Lee Byars; Aimee Mullins as The Ka of Norman, and Isis; Ellen Burstyn, Maggie Gyllenhaal, and Madyn G. Coakley as Hathfertiti; Paul Giamatti as Ptah-nem-hotep; Joan La Barbara as The Widow of Norman; Jennie Knaggs as Nephthys; Herbert Perry and Eugene Perry as Set; Brennan Hall as Horus; Stephen Payne as Usermare; with musical performances by Elaine Strich, Shara Worden, Belita Woods, Lila Downs, Dr. Lonnie Smith, and Mystic River. The film is approximately 5 hours 15 minutes with two intermissions.

## THANKS TO



Schaulager® Münchenstein/Basel, Herzog & de Meuron, Architects

### Special Thanks to the Laurenz Foundation

Laurenz Foundation, which funds Schaulager, was established in 1999 by Maja Oeri and Hans U. Bodenmann in memory of their son Laurenz Jakob. The Foundation primarily supports the fine arts. Within this field, the aims of the Foundation are explicitly broad and embrace a wider range of activities. The Foundation's primary and most renowned undertaking is the construction and operation of Schaulager, a research facility combining the storage and display of modern and contemporary artworks situated in Basel / Switzerland. Since its opening in 2003 the building, designed by the architects Herzog & de Meuron, has housed the Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation collection. Works in Schaulager are not dismantled and packed up for storage as in a traditional depot; instead they are available for immediate viewing, for conservation, research, and teaching. Thus, Laurenz Foundation supports exchange between professionals and scholars in the field of arts, it organizes contemporary art exhibitions and projects, and it funds two professorships at the art history department of Basel University: the Laurenz Assistant Professorship for Contemporary Art, and the Schaulager Chair for Art Theory.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



## RIVER OF FUNDAMENT

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Munich  
2014

front cover: *ANCIENT EVENINGS: Ba Libretto*, 2009  
inside front cover: *SEKHEM: Horus*, 2008  
back cover: *Rouge Battery* (detail), 2013

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