



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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Photo: Katrina Barber

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## **Artist Ekene Ijeoma will present *Deconstructed Anthems: Massachusetts* in the Cyclorama of Boston Center for the Arts**

BOSTON, MA — Artist [Ekene Ijeoma](#) presents the Boston premiere of his deeply moving installation and performance *Deconstructed Anthems: Massachusetts* in the historic Cyclorama at Boston Center for the Arts (BCA) daily from Tuesday, February 13 through Saturday, February 17, 2024, with a series of free, special performances by different musicians each evening from 7–8 p.m. *Deconstructed Anthems*, is a series of site-specific compositions, instruments, performances, and installations that portray mass incarceration in the U.S. using data from the U.S. Department of Justice and other sources. Ijeoma programmed an algorithmic composition that sonifies the over 1.5 million (disproportionately Black) people who were removed from their communities from 1925 to today by repeating the *Star-Spangled Banner* while removing notes at the increasing national incarceration rates and regional racial disparities. *Deconstructed Anthems* has been performed by musicians like Kris Bowers, Ambrose Akinmusire, and Burniss Earl Travis at The Day for Night Festival (2017), Kennedy Center (2018), The Arts Club of Chicago (2019), and Bemis Center for Contemporary Art (2021).

*Deconstructed Anthems: Massachusetts* will be presented as a solo exhibition in the Cyclorama at Boston Center for the Arts. The installation features a custom piano retrofitted with hardware and software programmed to hold down keys at the same rates in the composition as a pianist is playing it. The piano will be performed by a number of musicians over the course of the exhibition. The installation also



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includes hundreds of drawings of hundreds of iterations of the composition generated from Ijeoma's custom software.

For BCA, this installation is the first step in the pursuit of reimagining how the historic Cyclorama can be used to present bold works of contemporary art. The BCA Cyclorama was originally constructed 140 years ago to house the panoramic painting of the Battle of Gettysburg, commemorating a pivotal battle of the Civil War fought to end Black enslavement. Given the historical context of the venue, exhibiting *Deconstructed Anthems: Massachusetts* within the BCA Cyclorama serves to further offer a striking juxtaposition between the prized dream of individual freedom and justice the United States espouses, and the stark reality of injustice and systemic oppression that remains to this day.

*"In Deconstructed Anthems, Ijeoma uses data, sound and silence as his media to engage audiences viscerally with the magnitude of the numbers around incarceration of Black people in America. It is a piece that intertwines histories, oral traditions, and epic scale, which should be deeply resonant in the historic BCA Cyclorama."*

— Randi Hopkins, Director of Visual Arts, Boston Center for the Arts

The exhibition is free and open to the public to experience on Tuesday, February 13 from 5–9 p.m., Wednesday, February 14 through Friday, February 16, from 3–9 p.m., and Saturday, February 17, from 1–9 p.m., with special performances by different musicians each evening from 7–8 p.m. Performers will include [James Francies](#) (piano), [Jeremy Dutton](#) (drums), and William Mabuza (bass). They will be joined by special guest Angel Bat Dawid on February 15. For more information about performance times, visit [www.bostonarts.org](http://www.bostonarts.org).

The exhibition was supported by Wave Farm, MAP Fund, NYSCA, and MIT CAST.

## ABOUT EKENE IJEOMA

Ekene Ijeoma is an artist, designer, researcher, and educator who lives and works between his studio in Brooklyn, NY, and his lab, Poetic Justice Group, at MIT in Cambridge, MA.

His work has been commissioned by MIT Museum (2022), Exploratorium (2021), Van Alen Institute (2021), The Kennedy Center (2019, 2017), Museum of the City of New York (2019, 2018), Day for Night Festival (2017), Panorama Festival (2017), Pratt Manhattan Gallery (2017), Google (2016), The Storefront for Art and Architecture (2015). His work has also been presented by the Onassis Foundation (2022), the Contemporary Art Museum of St. Louis (2021), the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art (2021), the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (2020), the Contemporary Art Museum of Houston (2020), Annenberg Space for Photography (2016), Neuberger Museum of Art (2016), and Museum of Modern Art (2015).

His practice has been supported by New York Foundation for the Arts (2022, 2016), New York State Council on the Arts (2021), Creative Capital (2019), Map Fund (2019), Wave Farm (2018), and The Kennedy Center (2017).

He studied Information Technology (BS) at Rochester Institute of Technology (2006) and Interaction Design (MS) at Domus Academy (2008) in Milan, Italy. In 2019 he was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Media Arts and Science at MIT and founded the Poetic Justice Group at MIT Media Lab.



His works have featured musicians including (in order of appearance): Kris Bowers, Ambrose Akinmusire, Burniss Earl Travis, Kalia Vandever, Melanie Charles, Joel Ross, Baba Don Babatunde, Neil Clarke, Lakecia Benjamin, Mr. Fitz, and Keyon Harrold.

Learn more about Ekene Ijeoma at [studioijeoma.com](http://studioijeoma.com).

## ABOUT BOSTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Boston Center for the Arts (BCA) supports working artists to create, perform, and exhibit new works; develops new audiences; and connects the arts to community, and has for over five decades engaged the creative community for public good. While the organization's physical residence is in the historic South End, BCA touches every part of Boston's cultural ecosystem. A leading force in the city's cultural community, BCA has supported thousands of individual artists, small organizations, and performing arts companies, who add depth and dimension to the Boston arts ethos. Through residencies and programming, BCA serves as an epicenter for an expanding cohort of artists working across all disciplines, and has catalyzed careers by providing fertile ground for experimentation and artistic risk-taking.

To learn more about Boston Center for the Arts, visit [bostonarts.org](http://bostonarts.org).

## NEED TO KNOW

Free and open to the public:

Tuesday, February 13, 5–9 p.m.

Wednesday, February 14 through Friday, February 16, 3–9 p.m.

Saturday, February 17, 1 p.m.–9 p.m.

Public performances each evening from 7–8 p.m.

Public performers

February 13–15:

[James Francies](#) (piano)

[Jeremy Dutton](#) (drums)

William Mabuza (bass)

They will be joined by special guest Angel Bat Dawid on February 15.

The Cyclorama at Boston Center for the Arts

539 Tremont Street,

Boston, MA 02116

[Link to BCA website page](#)

[Link to main image](#) (photo credit: Katrina Barber)

[Link to additional press images](#)

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