

Choreographed and Produced by Laura Karlin

Dancers:

Kathleya Afanador  
Russell Berryman  
Zach Biergan  
Laura-Galen d'Amato  
Liz DeSantis  
Risa Fujita  
Emily Hahn  
Yvonne-Marie Sain  
Satya Stainton

Stage Manager: Genevieve Noriega  
Assistant Stage Manager: Eric Neuberger  
Lighting Designer: Benjamin Evans  
Set Designer: Laura Karlin and Kate Shearman  
Set Construction by: Tim Ostrander and Fritz Bernstein  
Master Electrician: Ford Sellers

Thesis Committee Members:

Supervisor: Jumay Chu  
Advisors: Debra Fried, Jim Self

Special thanks to:

Galen – I am eternally grateful for everything.  
Kate – for the design sessions in Zeus and for the camera work  
Ben 'Manbeast' Evans and Genevieve 'Marry Me' Noriega  
Fritz and Tim in the scene shop – for being just so cool  
Debra Tennenbaum – for warehouse runs and help with the sheet  
Sweet Annie (and Mike) – for the lovely flowers and chats  
Chris – for spirals  
Mim and Pater, the Parental Units – for parenting good  
TK – for pie and music editing

This show is dedicated to Miriam Henderson.

**When She's Gone**

Section 1: Procession

Music: Morphine

Section 2: By the Window

Music: Treat Her Right

Section 3: Ain't No

Music: David Eugene Edwards

Section 4: Weeping Women

Music: Imogen Heap

Section 5: Good Night, Ladies

Music: Lou Reed

Section 6: Transition

Music: Morphine

Section 7: When You Go

Music: Morphine

Section 8: Mapping Memories

Memories created by the dancers

Section 9: It Used To Be This Way

Music: Radiohead

Section 10: Offering

Music: Yo-Yo Ma and Edger Meyer

Section 11: How Could You Take My

Music: Brian Wilson

## Program Notes

I recommend you read these notes after the show, after you have watched the dance and brought to it your own experiences.

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The choreography was conceived with many ideas and themes, and developed primarily as a series of improvisations among the aesthetic, the thematic, and the logistic. It is not meant to be experienced as a tidy narrative or as a polished exploration of a subject as vast as grief or loss. Rather, it is a continual thought pattern, a riff of ideas. It is less a composed symphony and more a jazz improvisation. A number of musicians gather to jam. One musician begins and sets a theme. This piece began that way, with an image that I thought was funny and with a piece of music that made me think of a dysfunctional post-funeral gathering. After the first musician has set a theme, there are a thousand phrases that can be picked up and jammed on. The composition that emerges is but one possible offering, and it is based on the musical decisions made by the players. The piece that developed out of my initial inspirations came about through a consistent navigation through different points of interest, technical possibilities and limitations, dancers' schedules, chance, and what now seem to be arbitrary decisions (though at the time, they felt more thoroughly and seriously considered than I care to admit).

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In my conception, grief is often a progression of jagged stages that can loop back, spiral in and, with luck, reach a fleeting moment of peace that allows for a sustainable internalisation of the loss. As we open out of our own grief, our own bodies, our own memories to allow others contact with these things,

we are able to bear other people's weight, to map memories, to ask for and to receive support, and to allow ourselves to be changed but not destroyed by loss. The dance progresses (loosely) from an inability to move out of one's own body/grief, through attempts to do so, to some sort of beginning of a resolution.

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As I developed the structure of the piece, the stage set-up became a central device. It begins backward, behind a house, and then whirls us into a living room, a domestic space of grief and fractured relationships. The domestic space begins to decompose, and the stage set-up becomes less literal, as the sheet replaces the clothesline. I repeatedly drew diagrams of the stage involving the large sheet as a dividing line. Memory is an integral part of grief and release, and I view the sheet as a way to explore memories on stage. During the duet in 'It Used To Be This Way', two people in front of the sheet continually correct or manoeuvre each other, as if recreating something they had done a long time ago. At the same time, there is a person behind the sheet remembering the duet, but without a second person.



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I looked at several paintings in Picasso's 'Weeping Women' series, painted in the late 1930s. I was inspired by how profoundly grief is depicted. The warped planes of the faces reminded me to use the expressive qualities of the dancers' faces, which can often be blank or neutral. In the sections 'Weeping Women' and 'Good Night, Ladies' especially, the exaggerated grimaces

and the manipulation of faces were inspired by Picasso's cubist distortion. I also used cubism in the structure of the 'Weeping Women' section; the dancers are all manifestations of different angles of a woman sitting with legs crossed on a sofa, numb and sad. That position is inherently a very static, front-facing posture, but in rehearsal, we found ways to roll it on the floor in different directions, to invert it, and to show as many angles as possible. (Many thanks to Galen for the improvisation session which gave rise to this idea.)



The tears that Picasso uses in many of his 'Weeping Women' paintings are simple, elegant and animated. The line that traces down the face is a reminder of the tear's progression, and it looks as if it is now ingrained on the skin. In the 'Weeping Women' section, the women draw tears onto one another, and they also draw tears out of each others' eyes into the air.

The drawing of tears and the manipulation of others' faces are associated with the way people often project their own conceptions and experiences of grief onto others. At one point, four dancers create tears and postures of grief for another. While active only moments ago, she becomes passive in her experience and allows others to move her through a template of expression and to determine her progress.

Early on, the idea of funerary ritual was much more central than it eventually came to be at the end of the process. Other themes developed more fully, but there are still references to ritual, in particular to both the numbness and the display of

grief that rituals allow. The idea of ritual is especially present in the form of two hieroglyphs which inspired a lot of the movements.



The Egyptian hieroglyph for *iakbyt* ('mourning woman'). The uplifted, dignified posture and the rigid stance inspired the use of stiff, ritual gestures, especially in the beginning of the piece.



Sacred bundles were offered during Mayan funeral ceremonies. They contained either symbolic or actual cremated remains of the dead, and were held out for the gods. The section 'Offering' was partly inspired by the idea of offering to other people not just a literal bundle, but one's own vulnerability. In this section, to offer is to open oneself to others as part of the grieving process. While opening up is never perfect or complete, it begins to happen.

#### Images:

Egyptian hieroglyph reproduced from a website by Vivienne Morgan, [www.vivart.co.uk](http://www.vivart.co.uk).

Picasso, Pablo. *Geurnica [étude]* and *La Femme Qui Pleure*. 1937. Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid. Reproduced from The Online Picasso Project.

Mayan noblewoman, limestone relief from Yaxchilan, East Chiapas, Mexico, circa AD 750-850. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.