

Mementos Mori

Created by Manual Cinema

Directed by Julia Miller
Puppet design by Drew Dir
Choreography by Sarah Fornace
Music and sound design by Kyle Vegter
Costume design by Mieka van der Ploeg

DATES: OCT 18—21 at 7:30pm
OCT 20 at 10pm

LOCATION: BAM Fisher (Fishman Space)

RUN TIME: Approx 1hr, 25mins

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Mementos Mori

Written by

Manual Cinema Artistic Directors:

**Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, Julia Miller,
Kyle Vegter, Ben Kauffman**

Director

Julia Miller

Puppet Designer

Drew Dir

Associate Puppet Designer

Lizi Breit

Original Music & Sound Designer

Kyle Vegter

Costume Designer

Mieka van der Ploeg

Mask Designer

Julia Miller

Choreographer

Sarah Fornace

Stage Manager and Live Video Editor

Mariana Green

Production Manager

Mike Usrey

Company Manager

Shelby Glasgow

Sound Engineer

Jonathan Schenke

CAST

Puppeteers

**Lizi Breit (Laura), Linsey Falls (Mel),
Diane Maire (Anna Francesca),
Sara Sawicki (Lady),
Sharaina Latrice Turnage (Marie)**

Musicians

**Deidre Huckabay (Flute, Vocals),
Michael Hilger (Synthesizer, Guitar,
Vocals), Alex Ellsworth (Cello),
Maren Celest (Vocals)**

Live SFX

Maren Celest

MUSIC CREDITS

Make Yourself Comfortable

Written by **Bob Merrill**

Produced by **Kyle Vegter**

Arranged and Performed by

**Maren Celest, Michael Hilger,
Alex Ellsworth, Deidre Huckabay**

The Stars Will Lead Me to You

Written by **Ben Kauffman**

Produced by **Kyle Vegter**

Performed by **Ben Kauffman,**

**Kyle Vegter, Michael Hilger,
Deidre Huckabay, Alex Ellsworth**

ABOUT *Mementos Mori*

Since 2010, Manual Cinema has been creating works of live performance that combine handmade shadow puppetry, cinematic techniques, and innovative sound and music to tell immersive stories. Using vintage overhead projectors, multiple screens, puppets, actors, live feed cameras, multi-channel sound design, and a live music ensemble, Manual Cinema seeks to transform the experience of attending the cinema, imbuing it with aliveness, ingenuity, and theatricality.

The story of *Mementos Mori* was written collaboratively by the five artistic directors of Manual Cinema, who were interested in creating a piece responding to how modern technology—particularly smartphones and social media—has shifted our relationship with presence and absence, death and dying. The idea was for the piece to follow multiple characters whose stories would unfold this theme in different ways, and that one of these characters would be Death herself. After development workshops at the University of Chicago and the Almanack Arts Colony, *Mementos Mori* received its world premiere at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in 2015. Since then, it has toured nationally and internationally, including at the Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival in the Netherlands. As Manual Cinema frequently does, it returned to the piece in 2017 to revise, refine, and update the storytelling.

Creating any Manual Cinema show is a complex process, and the scope of *Mementos Mori*'s story posed particular challenges. *Mementos Mori* uses close to 500 different shadow puppets and slides over the course of the show. Since there is little to no dialogue, nearly every second of the performance is sound designed and scored with original music. In the beginning stages, Manual Cinema's creation process looks similar to that of an animated film—the story is rendered into storyboards, and simple animatics are created for the composers to begin scoring. A “demo” version of the show is cut together like the first cut of a film. Once actors, puppeteers, and musicians are added to the mix, the process transforms into a theatrical production, as the artists explore how to execute the complex choreography and intricate sound world in a live context.

Screens are ubiquitous in our everyday lives, but in Manual Cinema the imagery of the screen is the product of live humans executing physical tasks with virtuosity in real time in the same space as the audience. The aim of any Manual Cinema show is to take the visual and sonic vocabulary of film and television—a vocabulary that, growing up saturated by media, we all share—and use it to explore themes and stories that are weird, powerful, human, and theatrical.

Who's Who

Manual Cinema

Manual Cinema is a performance collective, design studio, and film/video production company founded in 2010 by Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, Ben Kauffman, Julia Miller, and Kyle Vegter. Manual Cinema combines handmade shadow puppetry, cinematic techniques, and innovative sound and music to create immersive stories for stage and screen. Using vintage overhead projectors, multiple screens, puppets, actors, live feed cameras, multi-channel sound design, and a live music ensemble, Manual Cinema transforms the experience of attending the cinema and imbues it with aliveness, ingenuity, and theatricality.

Manual Cinema has been presented by, worked in collaboration with, or brought its work to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC), BAM, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Kennedy Center (DC), Under the Radar Festival (NYC), La Monnaie-DeMunt (Brussels), Noorderzon Festival (Netherlands), Kimmel Center (DC) The O, Miami Poetry Festival, Tehran International Puppet Festival (Iran), Davies Symphony Hall (SF), Ace Hotel Theater (LA), and elsewhere around the world. They have collaborated with StoryCorps (NYC), Erratica (London), Belgian Royal

Opera (Brussels), Hubbard Street Dance (Chicago), Pop-Up Magazine (SF), Nu Deco Ensemble (Miami), *New York Times* best-selling author Reif Larsen (NYC), and three-time Grammy Award-winning eighth blackbird (Chicago).

In 2017, the company will have debuts in Australia, France, and Germany, and will return to the Edinburgh Fringe with *Lula del Ray*.

Puppeteers

LIZI BREIT

Laura, Associate Designer

Lizi Breit is a Chicago-based artist working primarily in illustration, animation, sculpture, and performance. She has been working with Manual Cinema since 2011 and is currently serving as associate designer. She is an artistic associate with the Neo-Futurists and a former member of Blair Thomas & Co. lizibreit.com.

LINSEY FALLS

Mel

Linsey Falls is pleased as punch to be mixing it up with Manual Cinema again! His past Chicago productions include Manual Cinema's *The Magic City*; the weekly show *That's Weird*, *Grandma* (Barrel of Monkeys); *Lyle Finds His Mother* and *The One and Only Ivan* (Lifeline Theatre); *Fight City*, *Hotel Aphrodite*, and *Namosaur* (The Factory Theater); *Slaughter City*, *Drumming in the Night*, and *Debris of the Prophet* (Prop Thtr); *A Summer's Day* and *Blue Planet*



Photo: Marc Perlish

(Akvavit Theatre); *The Sign of the Four* and *Frankenstein* (City Lit Theatre); *Ghosts of Treasure Island* (Adventure Stages Chicago); *Henry V* (Promethean Theatre Ensemble); *Lolita de Lares* (Urban Theater); and *The Black Slot* (AstonRep Theater Company).

KASEY FOSTER

Lady (understudy)

Kasey Foster has been performing, producing, and directing in Chicago since 2004. She recently returned from a tour with Lookingglass Theatre (*Moby Dick*), where she is now an artistic associate. Foster has appeared regionally at South Coast Rep (CA), Arena Stage (DC), The Alliance (GA), Berkeley Rep (CA), and most recently in Chicago with Lookingglass' *Treasure Island* and Manual Cinema's *Mementos Mori*. Foster is represented by Gray Talent Group. She sings with the Chicago bands Grood, Babe-alon 5, Old Timey, and This Must Be the Band. She has directed/choreographed over 30 original works, and produces an annual series called *Dance Tribute*. Thanks to you for supporting the arts. They make everything better.

DIANE MAIR

Anna Francesca

Diane Mair is a Chicago-based actress, circus artist, and puppeteer. Her past productions with Manual Cinema include *Mementos Mori*, *My Soul's Shadow*, *Radio Cinema* (in collaboration with Third Coast Audio Festival), and *Monday or Tuesday* (performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra). Other

credits include *H2O* (Off Broadway with Ground Up Productions and regionally with the Contemporary American Theatre Festival); *Sense and Sensibility* (Repertory Theatre St. Louis, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Chicago's Northlight Theatre); as well as work with the Long Wharf, Michigan Opera Theater, and Victory Gardens Theater. Chicago credits include productions with First Folio Shakespeare, The Gift, Remy Bumppo, Dog & Pony, Redmoon, The Actors' Gymnasium, Light Opera Works, and TASK Clown Theatre. She is a graduate of Northwestern University and a proud member of Actors' Equity.

SARA SAWICKI

Lady

Sara Sawicki is a Chicago-based theater artist. In addition to touring with Manual Cinema, she works nationally with the Center for Performance and Civic Practice. Other recent projects include work with NetherRealm Studios (*Harley Quinn & Cheetah*, cinematic performance capture on *Injustice 2*); Actors Gymnasium (youth circus co-director and writer); *one step at a time like this* in collaboration with Chicago Shakespeare Theater (performer); For Youth Inquiry (company member, director, performer, teaching artist); and Sojourn Theatre (associate artist, performer, director).

SHARAINA LATRICE TURNAGE

Marie

Sharaina Latrice Turnage is from the southside of Chicago. She is making her debut at Manual Cinema and couldn't

be more thrilled to work with such an amazing company. Turnage received her BA from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville where past credits include *Mayme (Intimate Apparel)*, *LaWanda/Topsy Washington/Normal Jean (The Colored Museum)*, and *Bernice (Servy N Bernice 4ever)*. Other recent credits include *Los Milagros* (Free Street Theater) and *Grey Area* (FYI). Turnage has researched and performed the historical theatrical work originally done by slaves *Du Theater* in Suriname, South America, and was one of the first actors to perform *Du Theater* in the US. She thanks her family and close friends for their constant support. "The greatest pleasure in life is DOING what people say you CANNOT do."

Musicians

MAREN CELEST

SFX, Vocals, Company Member

Maren Celest is a multimedia artist, burrito lover, and vagabond collaborator. Originally from middle-of-nowhere, Michigan, she attended school in London, has lived in Oakland, CA and Chicago, IL, released two full-length albums and a 7" EP. She has had her photographs published internationally (*Levi's*, *CZE Magazine*, *Hope & Anchor's Paris Exhibit*, *Firehouse Collective Exhibit*, among others), nurtures an ongoing solo project, and is working towards combining her passions in motion pictures.

ALEX ELLSWORTH

Cello

Alex Ellsworth is active in a wide range of genres including contemporary and traditional classical, rock, and chamber pop, experimental performance art, and anything else he can get his hands on. His eclectic musical experience has included performances at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland, Symphony Center in Chicago, and at the International Musikinstitut in Darmstadt, Germany. Ellsworth is a cellist with Civic Orchestra of Chicago, music director of the children's orchestral program M.U.S.I.C. Inc., and a founding member of the contemporary performance ensemble Mocrep.

MICHAEL HILGER

Guitar, Synthesizer, Vocals, Company Member

Michael Hilger is a composer, sound designer, and multi-instrumentalist based in Chicago. His sound design and composition credits include Redmoon Theater's *2012 Youth Spectacle*, Manual Cinema's *Show & Tell*, the short film *KEPT* by Kacey Meyer, *Amygdala Rest* by Erasing the Distance, and Mariko's *Magical Mix*, a collaboration between Hubbard Street Dance and Manual Cinema. He has produced two EPs with THIN HYMNS, a group he founded and fronts. He is currently working on new music and performing solo under the name Michael Albert.

DEIDRE HUCKABAY

Flute, Vocals

Deidre Huckabay is a Chicago-based performer, writer, photographer, and event producer. She is a flutist and has toured Europe, Latin America, and the US. She performs with the Eastman BroadBand and Manual Cinema, and has recorded for Urtext and Bridge Records. Huckabay is co-owner of the classical cassette tape label Parlour Tapes+. Originally from west Texas, she holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music and Duquesne University.

Creative Team & Staff

DREW DIR

Co-Artistic Director, Puppet Designer

Drew Dir has worked as a puppeteer, playwright, dramaturg, and director in Chicago and London. Most recently, his short play *The Lurker Radio Hour* was voted best production at Collaboration's Sketchbook 8 at the Steppenwolf Garage; his Sketchbook plays have been called "daring" by the *Chicago Tribune* and "ballsy" by *Time Out Chicago*. He holds an MA in text and performance studies from King's College London and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Currently, Dir is resident dramaturg at Court Theatre and a lecturer in theater and performance studies at the University of Chicago.

SARAH FORNACE

Co-Artistic Director, Choreographer

Sarah Fornace is a director, puppeteer, choreographer, and narrative designer based in Chicago. She is a co-artistic director of Manual Cinema. Outside of Manual Cinema, Fornace has worked as a performer or choreographer with Redmoon Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre Company, Court Theatre, Steppenwolf Garage, and Blair Thomas and Co. Most recently, she wrote the story mode for the video game *Rivals of Aether*. In 2017, she directed and edited the first episode of the web series, *The Doula is IN*. In 2016, she directed and devised an "animation" production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with Rokoko Studios for *HamletScen* at Kromborg Castle in Elsinore, Denmark.

MARIANA GREEN

Stage Manager, Live Video Editor

Mariana Green is a Chicago-based teaching artist and freelance stage and production manager. She works with performance companies For Youth Inquiry (FYI) and Erasing the Distance (where she is also a company member), that provide access to mental and sexual health. She is also company member of Barrel of Monkeys, where she performs and teaches writing and performance to young people throughout the Chicago public schools. A founding member of the performance collective FEMelanin and proud bi-racial queer person, she also devises theatrical experiences that lift up and spark dialogue among the voices of the oppressed.

BEN KAUFFMAN
Co-Artistic Director

Ben Kauffman is a composer, director, interactive media artist, and co-artistic director of Manual Cinema. His work has been shown at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion (Chicago), Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (Chicago), and CUNY's Baruch College (NYC). He has lectured and given workshops at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York University, and Parsons The New School of Design. His past composer/sound designer credits with Manual Cinema include *Lula del Ray*, *Ada/Ava*, and *The New York Times* documentary *The Forger*. He holds a master's degree from New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP).

JULIA MILLER
Co-Artistic Director, Director

Julia Miller specializes in the tactile and movement arts. She is a director, puppeteer, and puppet designer. Manual Cinema provides her with an outlet for many artistic impulses, including but not limited to breathing life into the inanimate, making delicate small things, and telling stories without words. She holds a BFA in theater arts from Boston University and has studied mask, clown, and devised theater under Teatro Punto, Familie Flöz, and Double Edge Theatre.

MIKE USREY
Production Manager

Mike Usrey has mixed sound in around a hundred venues worldwide, from large outdoor festivals to theaters and clubs. He toured internationally for three years with the band Dark Dark Dark (Minneapolis, MN) as front of house engineer. He has also toured with the bands Pillars and Tongues (Chicago, IL), A Hawk and a Hacksaw (Albuquerque, NM), Royal Canoe (Winnipeg, MB Canada), and Pattern is Movement (Philadelphia, PA). He has been the front of house sound engineer for Manual Cinema since 2014

MIEKA VAN DER PLOEG
Costume Designer

Mieka van der Ploeg has designed costumes for many Chicago theaters, including Lookingglass Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, The Hypocrites, Chicago Children's Theatre, About Face Theatre, The House Theatre, Next Theatre, Griffin Theatre, The Building Stage, Albany Park Theater Project, Dog and Pony Theatre, and Manual Cinema. She is proud to be an artistic associate at About Face Theatre. She has received two Jeff Award nominations for *Golden Boy* (Griffin Theater) and *Mr. Burns* (co-designed with Mara Blumenfeld, Theater Wit).

KYLE VEGTER

Co-Artistic Director, Original Music & Sound Designer

Kyle Vegter is a composer, sound designer, theater artist, and managing artistic director of Manual Cinema. As a composer he's been commissioned by such groups as TIGUE, The Chicago Symphony Orchestra's MusicNOW series, the Chicago Composer's Orchestra, and Homeroom Chicago. His music production credits span genres, and include recent releases by Thin Hymns, Spektral Quartet, Tim Munro (of eighth blackbird), and Color Card. His past composer/sound designer credits with Manual Cinema include *Lula del Ray*, *Ada/Ava*, *FJORDS*, *Mementos Mori*, *My Soul's Shadow*, and various other performance and video projects. He has been an artist in residence at High Concept Laboratories and co-founded Chicago's only contemporary classical music cassette label Parlour Tapes+.

Additional Credits & Special Thanks

Mementos Mori was developed in part at the Almanack Arts Colony on Nantucket, MA, the Summer Inc. Residencies with Theater and Performance Studies at The University of Chicago, and the National Museum of Health and Medicine Chicago.

Manual Cinema would like to thank: The Almanack Arts Colony, The Atlantic Foundation, The National Museum of Health and Medicine Chicago, Caitlin Doughty, The University of Chicago, Laura Colby, and the entire Elsie Management team.



Photo: Drew Dir



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