



**DANCE ENSEMBLE/
ACTIVATE**

**WHEN THE
ELEPHANT
COMES CRASHING
THROUGH THE
ROOF**

**APRIL 25-28, 2013
FLANAGAN THEATRE
THURSDAY-SATURDAY 7:30 PM
SUNDAY 2 PM**

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**Concept: Celeste Miller & Justin Thomas
Music: Chip Epstein**

This seventy-five minute performance will run without intermission.

Please turn off all cell phones and pagers.
No photography permitted.



When the Elephant Comes Crashing through the Roof

“... and everyone hoped, though they knew it could not be true, that somehow the sight of an elephant would deliver them.” – Kate Dicamillo

Concept by Celeste Miller & Justin Thomas

Choreography, text and direction by Celeste Miller

Music by Chip Epsten

Scenography by Justin Thomas

Costumes by Erin Howell-Gritsch

Technical Direction and Engineering by Erik Sanning

Lighting by Ben Doehr '15

Choreography assembled from movement material generated by the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 Ensemble through improvisational research methods.

Additional text adapted from *The Magician's Elephant* by Kate DiCamillo and *Tales of a Dalai Lama* by Pierre Delattre.

PROGRAM NOTES

CELESTE MILLER

“Things are not always what they seem.”

As a choreographer, I work with the relations of movement and text, body and spoken word. Highly influenced by the writing methods of artists like Kathy Acker, William Burroughs, and John Cage I create choreoscripts for performance. I also write movement scores called “Dances that Will Never Be Danced” some of which can be found here <http://dance-stigate.blogspot.com>

My process involves working with performers as ensemble members. During the rehearsal process performers are given movement prompt assignments or movement scores that they translate into personal expression. Their generative movement material is the core movement material from which I stage the text and choreography. Bodies in time and space. Bodies that move and speak. Voice not separated from body. Where is your mind? In your body. Avoiding the decapitation that separates mind and body.

For *When the Elephants...* I have experimented with truths; using collage, cut-up and aleatory techniques. It is true that there was a woman named Charmion, born Laverie Cooper in 1875. She rose to fame in the Vaudeville circuit, as a strongwoman and aerialist most known for her famous disrobing act that was filmed by Thomas Edison in 1901. Charmion, and other women performers of the time were experimenting with nudity in performance. Their bodies displayed as museum pieces. Their work is the precursor to striptease and burlesque.

There is truth in William Dugan’s story. He was born in Moultrie, Georgia in 1899 and he ran away to join the circus in 1911. Some accounts have him working for the Sparks Brothers Circus, which would mean that he worked with the elephant, Big Mary. The story of Big Mary’s demise in 1916 is documented in news accounts and oral histories of the time. It is true that William returned to Moultrie. It is true that he bought the Pan American Animal Exhibit, acquiring a baby elephant named Nancy. It is true that William’s grave marker is a life size replica of Nancy carved out of Georgia marble.

It is true that Kate DiCamillo wrote a story about an elephant that crashed through the roof of an opera house. It is true that Pierre Delaterre wrote a short story about the compassion of elephants. It is true that the famous ballet choreographer George Balanchine was asked to write a ballet for fifty elephants and fifty ballerinas and the composer Igor Stravinsky agreed to write the music only if the ballet were for “very small elephants”.

It is true that I have been fascinated by small elephant stories for a while now. It is true that this is my second production constructing them. It may be true that I am not done yet.

Justin asked me what the appearance of an elephant meant to me: I said, “An opportunity to reflect on “*What if? Why not? Could it be?*” Three questions that as an artist, a teacher and a citizen I consider essential.



JUSTIN THOMAS

It was early August of last year when Celeste and I began working on this production. Celeste brought to me two stories: The first, *The Magician's Elephant*, is a children's novel about a young boy in search of his long-lost sister, and over that search he learns to believe in the magical, that "things are not always as they seem. . ." In essence, he learns to believe, to have faith that there is beauty in the world. The second story is the true story about a strong-woman and trapeze artist name Charmion. Charmion, who performed around the turn of the 20th century, was an amazing woman who had the courage and the perseverance to follow her heart and perform what she loved (regardless of how the rest of the world viewed her).

The stories immediately resonated with me as an arts educator who continues to witness the arts-funding pinch of both federal money and cultural capital in this country. I am tired of the argument that there are limited funds and that the privilege of art is secondary to the need for research to save lives, but this argument is at the very heart of how art is viewed in this country. In the United States, Art=Entertainment. Art is not only entertainment. It doesn't exist solely for us to escape the stress of our daily lives. It exists to inspire and awake that which is within us.

While there is value in the escapist-entertainment prevalent in film, television, and video games, the stories Celeste handed me at our first meeting demonstrate exactly why art is so important for our culture today. Charmion's story reminds us that we are all unique, beautiful, and powerful. Her story reminds us that we should not be afraid to embrace our hearts and our minds to achieve our goals. *The Magician's Elephant* reminds us that the magical can and does happen in daily life. The combination of these two stories led our collaborators down a winding, tangled road of brainstorming, creation, and destruction to achieve the visuals you are about to see. It is my hope that this production will inspire you as the source material has inspired us: to have faith in the magical and to embrace the beauty and power you possess within yourselves to go forth and create.

Sit back and experience what happens when the elephant comes crashing through the roof.

DANCE ENSEMBLE/ACTIVATE

Dance Ensemble/Activate is a student performing ensemble directed by Celeste Miller of the Department of Theatre and Dance. In this course Ensemble members engage in the development, rehearsal and production of contemporary dance works choreographed by faculty, guest artists and students. Exposure to diverse choreographic approaches provides Ensemble members with the opportunity to expand their technical, stylistic and interpretive range. They gain collaborative skills through improvisation technologies and the contribution of movement material to certain choreographic projects. Dance Ensemble performances range from full produced programs, low-tech productions, community dance projects and site-specific events.

Director Celeste Miller invites dancers from a variety of backgrounds, actors, circus artists, martial artists and other movers to consider participation in the Ensemble. If you are interested in *Dance Ensemble/Activate* attend the Audition/Informational Workshop offered at the beginning of each semester. Registration for Ensemble is during add/drop.

The cast for Spring 2013 Dance Ensemble/Activate is listed below.

Gigi Dichosa '13 (Prudencia Santa Maria Carmen de la Rosa DeJesus Constanza, a.k.a. Abuelita) I am senior GWSS major. I have various experiences in dance and theater extending from courses to performances. In Grinnell I have participated and taught Latin dance at cultural events and courses. Last year, I was a guest performer in *Traditions & Encounters* directed by Celeste Miller. This is my first time being involved in *Dance Ensemble/Activate* and I am happy to be involved in a group that enjoys dance as much as I do.

Rosie Fuqua '16 (Human Boomerang) is a first year from Colorado. She started dancing when she was two, training primarily in ballet and jazz, and this is her second semester with the Grinnell College *Dance Ensemble/Activate*. After an amazing experience in the fall, she is so excited to be back creating with all these wonderful dancers.

Devon Gamble '15 (Fortune Teller) is a second year GWSS major from Maine. She was part of last spring's Dance Ensemble production of *Now You See Me* and has enjoyed creating and laughing with this semester's smaller cast. She feels lucky to have been able to work with such talented crew of dancers, directors, musicians, and designers to create this unique circus of elephant enthusiasts. If you were to ask her to actually tell your fortune, she would say that ultimately you will get there, even if it takes an elephant crashing through the roof to do so.



Teddy Geiger '15 (William Dugan) is a Biochemistry major. This is his third performance with *Dance Ensemble/Activate*. Teddy loves working with Text and Movement and was excited to have had the opportunity to help expand the elephant stories this semester. He says that “The reason why I work with dance is when we get to look behind what we are doing to what we are feeling. We can explore those emotions to make something beautiful. And I felt like we made something beautiful with the elephants this time.” He would like to thank everyone who has put so much hard work into this performance.

Geovanni Gomez '15 (Sword Dancer) has nothing but love for *Dance Ensemble/Activate* for helping him get in touch with his creativity and imagination. Besides the Ensemble, Geovanni writes creatively and enjoys meditation. He hopes you enjoy the show!

Cedric Hakeem '15 (Illusionist) is a second year English major from Chicago. He performed in *Broken Mirrors* last spring semester and plays football. This will be Hakeem's first time dancing on stage. He feels this form of performance will enhance his acting and football abilities. Admittedly, Hakeem is not the best dancer, but he remains optimistic and is determined to please the audience.

Alex Krempele '13 (Ringmaster) is a fourth year History and Education major here at Grinnell College. While he doesn't fancy himself a dancer, he is trained in circus arts skills like juggling, unicycling, magic, fire breathing, knife throwing and more. It is his life calling to make people laugh and smile, reminding everyone he meets that each day is special and beautiful. Next year he will be in Nanjing, China teaching English in a local middle school. Lastly Alex would like to thank the amazing cast for opening his eyes to the infinite possibilities of movement and dance. It is an honor and privilege to end his theatrical career at Grinnell College with such an amazing and talented group.

Ivy Kuhn '16 (Shimmering Maypole Dancer) is a first year from Minnesota. She has previous experience in musical theater, ballet, and belly dancing. Ivy was involved with last semester's *Dance Ensemble/Activate* and has loved the imaginative process and people involved in creating this magical act. She will forever think of elephants in a new light.

DANCE ENSEMBLE/ACTIVATE

Yasmina Lembachar '15 (Charmion) Dance Ensemble has slowly helped Yasmina unfold the wings of her own baby elephants, trapped far too long in her 19 year old body. She is a second year from Morocco and Grinnell has been a roller-coaster ride, with *When the elephant comes crashing through the roof* being the highest and most enjoyable loop she's been through so far.

Dakota Maxwell-Jones '13 (Penguin Gymnast): Is a senior Anthropology major from Los Angeles, CA. She has always had an interest in dance and trained in gymnastics for a number of years. "For my last year at Grinnell, I wanted to engage with movement and understand what it means in differing contexts. Doing ballet and modern dance at Grinnell this semester has been beautiful and insightful. This is my first time participating in *Dance Ensemble/Activate* and I'm so excited to be a part of something so creative! Get it, get it!"

Wanjie "Wendy" Ren '13 was called away to her homeland of Nanjing China during the rehearsal process. However, she was a very important contributing member of the Ensemble in the creation of *When the Elephants Come Crashing through the Roof*. This was Wendy's third semester as a member of *Dance Ensemble/Activate*. Prior to college Wendy did belly dance, and at Grinnell she started doing ballet, Javanese dance and modern dance. She hopes that she will be able to carry out her passion for dance after college. We wish her well. We hold her in our hearts as we perform tonight.

Lauren Sheely (Pirouette Tight Rope Walker) is a third year Theatre major. This is her second semester with *Dance Ensemble/Activate*, and she has been involved in a number of both mainstage and student directed productions while at Grinnell. When she runs away to join the circus, she plans on learning how to juggle while pirouetting on a tightrope. She reasons that this will help her conquer her fear of heights. She would like to thank the ensemble for their continued enthusiasm, and Celeste for creating a space to play every weekday afternoon.

Dilan Ustek (Chocolate Girl) is a third year Computer Science major. She started dancing for the first time this semester by taking ballet and joining *Dance Ensemble/Activate*. This will be her first show ever. She is thrilled to be dancing with such an amazing ensemble of people!



Jill Wielgos '16 (Fire-eating Lion Tamer and Charmion's daughter) is an undeclared first year. She performed in *Small Elephant Stories* with Grinnell College *Dance Ensemble/Activate* last semester. She's had an amazing semester goofing around and making beautiful movement with a fantastic cast.

Benji Zeledon '14 (El Brujo) has been with *Dance Ensemble/Activate* for two semesters now. Originally from the city of Miami, Florida, he has had previous experience in various high school productions and stage crew here in Grinnell, Benji looks to continue his performance career with this show and make it a memorable one. He would also like to thank everyone for coming and hope you all enjoy the show!

GUEST ARTISTS

Normando Ismay (percussionist) is a visual artist, musician and bilingual storyteller originally from northwest Argentina. He is currently transitioning from his long time residence in Atlanta, Georgia to Grinnell, Iowa.

Ayla Favati '13 (vocalist) is a senior music major from Davenport, IA. She has belonged to the Grinnell Singers and Collegium Musicum as well as the a cappella student group Con Brio, and participates in the theater and dance departments at Grinnell. Currently, she is busy preparing for her senior recital and figuring out life after Grinnell. She enjoys attending the Dance Ensemble performances and is thrilled to be a part of their newest production!

Celeste Miller (Choreography, text, direction) Celeste is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance here at Grinnell College. She has made her career as a solo performer, choreographer, writer, community arts *animator* and educator. Her performance style is a combination of spoken word and movement that plumbs narrative for physical imagery in juxtaposed connections with words. Miller toured widely as a soloist from 1983 -2003, creating over fifty-five original text & movement works. During this time her work also included extensive dance in community projects like *The Nurses Project: To Celebrate and Honor the Nurses of Cape Ann*, funded by the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation; and *Big Sky Spinning* funded by the American Festival Project. In 2004 she shifted her focus from extensive solo touring to more extended research on artistic projects, writing, commissions, movement design for theatre productions and teaching. She is pleased to have recently accepted the assistant professor of Theatre and Dance position at Grinnell that allows her to combine her love for teaching with her investigation of dance as a performing art, cultural practice, political act and a method for the embodiment of ideas and beliefs.

Miller holds an MFA in dance from Hollins University/American Dance Festival. She is the recipient of numerous grants, fellowships and commissions for her performance and choreographic work including the National Endowment for the Arts Choreography Fellowship, Atlanta Mayor's Fellowship in the Arts, and Individual Artists awards from arts councils in Massachusetts, Georgia and Maryland. Commissions for her work have come from Dance USA/National College Choreography Initiative, Boston Dance Umbrella, American Festival Project, New Orleans Ballet Dance Collective, Emory University, Grinnell College, and others. Her choreography for theatrical productions includes work with Seven Stages Theatre, The Gloucester Stage Company, Synchronicity Performance Group and Horizon Theatre.

Chip Epstein (Composer) composes for film, dance, theater and television. His scores have been performed throughout the United States and Europe. He worked for many years composing works for puppetry artist Janie Geiser. Additional theatrical work includes projects with 7 Stages Theatre, including two with director Joseph Chaikin. Film work includes *Lives for Sale*, a PBS documentary examining sex trafficking directed by Gayla Jamison. Recent projects with Celeste Miller include *The Annunciation: Mary says*



“no” which premiered at the American Dance Festival, and *If Bricks Could Move*, a collaboration with scientists funded by the Center for Chemical Evolution and Emory University. Epsten and Miller are co-founders of the experimental ensemble *Big If Dance Experiments* – dancers, actors and musicians exploring scientific concepts through improvisational scores. As a violinist Epsten performs in Atlanta with the *Imperial Opa Circus* and *Oy Klezmer*. He plays with various classical ensembles, including the Albany Georgia Symphony. Epsten is a recipient of the Atlanta Mayor’s Fellowship in the Arts.

Justin Thomas (Scenography) Justin is an Assistant Professor of Theatre and Design here at Grinnell College, where he has the ability to focus upon his two great passions: teaching and making theatre. Justin’s courses run the gamut of theatrical design and technology, theatre history, and literature. He particularly enjoys teaching his first-year tutorial, “Staging Revolution,” which uses dramatic texts as a way to examine human rights abuses in world history. Justin’s professional scenic and lighting designs have been featured throughout India, Bangladesh, Russia, France, and across the United States in venues both large and small. Justin designs for a variety of performance styles from modern dance and ballet, to Shakespearean tragedy, children’s theatre, and contemporary musical theatre. Such collaborations have offered Justin varied and exciting experiences that enrich the teaching and mentoring of his students.

Erin Howell-Gritsch (Costume Design) has designed costumes for over 100 productions, beginning with the Des Moines Ballet in 1989. She has designed costumes at Grinnell College since 1999, where she is the resident costume designer, and has taught Introduction to Technical Theatre and Costume Design. She has also taught at Cornell College, where she designed productions of *Polaroid Stories*, *Story Theatre*, *Tartuffe* and *Our Town*. Erin’s work has also been produced at the University of Iowa (Theatre, Dance, Playwright’s Festival, and Black Action Theatre), Riverside Theatre, RT Shakespeare Festival, and RT Young People’s Company, Graffiti Theatre, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, and Hurley Dancers. Erin holds a Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Design from the University of Iowa and a Bachelor of Science from Iowa State University.

ARTISTIC AND PRODUCTION DESIGN TEAM

Erik Sanning (Technical Direction and Engineering) is a 1989 graduate of Grinnell College. He spent the first two years after graduation working as the Technical Director/Lighting Designer for Ballet Iowa. In the summer of '91, Erik was able to return to Grinnell as the Technical Director for the Theatre Department. In addition to his work with the Theatre Department, he is also one of the founding members of Grinnell Productions, a semi-professional theatre company that was based here in Grinnell. Erik has also been a member of IATSE, the professional stagehands union, since 1990.

Ben Doehr '15 (Lighting Designer) is a second year Chemistry & Economics double major and Policy Studies concentrator from San Diego, CA. He has been involved in the Grinnell Theater department since he first arrived on campus in 2011 by designing and running theatrical productions, including *Pitmen Painters*, *Broken Mirrors*, *Small Elephant Stories*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, and *tRADitions and enCOUNTers*, among others.

Carly Lowe '12 (Fifth Year Intern) She loves working in the scene shop and has been involved in a number of shows at Grinnell, including *Stovepipe*, *The Pillowman*, *100 Nights' Dream*, *Women of Troy* and *Sunday In The Park with George*.

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Alex Bazis '14 (Stage Manager)

Emma Thomasch '16 (Assistant Stage Manager) is a first year student and an intended English major from Muttontown, New York. She began working backstage for theater in her freshman year of high school, and is thrilled to be continuing her involvement with the arts here at Grinnell.



Stage Manager Alex Bazis '14
Rehearsal Stage Manager Emma Thomasch '16

Light Board Operator Daniel Nanetti-Palacios '16
Sound Board & Projection Operator Mary Adams '15

Wardrobe Crew Chief Alice Nadeau '13
Wardrobe Crew Kate Whitman '14
 Keilah Courtenay '13

Stage Crew Ben Vaughn '15
 Ian Saderholm '15

Poster & Program Design Stephanie Micetich

THEATRE STUDENT STAFF

ADMINISTRATION

Production Stage Manager

Brenna Ross '13

FRONT OF HOUSE

Front of House Manager

Abbi Butterfield '13

Front of House Staff

Anna Banker '15
Abbi Butterfield '13
Teddy Hoffman '14
Mackenzie Higgins '15

Lorraine Blatt '14
Kate Doyle '13
Alex Krempely '13
Anika Manzoor '13
Anthony Wenndt '15

COSTUME STUDIO

Costume Storage Coordinator

Alice Nadeau '13

Stitchers

Devon Gamble '15
Alice Nadeau '13
Carly Riley '13

Shannon Kelly '13
Maria Richardson '15
Brenna Ross '13

SCENE SHOP

Properties Storage Coordinator

Brenna Ross '13

Scene Shop Staff

Addie Asbridge '13
Ben Doehr '15
Alex Hsieh '14
Brenna Ross '13
Caleb Sponheim '15

Leslie Bean '13
Adam Glassman '13
Nora Kostow '13
Ian Saderholm '15
Kathryn Vincent '13
Liz Holmes '13



*Please check back for Fall Performances
www.grinnell.edu*

Audition/Informational Workshop for Dance Ensemble/Activate fall 2013 will be held on September 5, 4:30-6:30 in the Bucksbaum Dance Studio. Register during add/drop.