

The Grinnell College Department of Theatre and Dance presents

small elephant stories

Dance Ensemble/Activate
Celeste Miller, director



December 7-9, 2012

Faulconer Gallery

Bucksbaum Center for the Arts

Performances: 6:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday

2:00 p.m. Sunday

GRINNELL COLLEGE



This sixty minute performance will run without intermission.

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



small elephant stories

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

Conceived and directed by Celeste Miller

Choreography assembled from material generated by the ensemble
through improvisational research methods.

Our Family, ElephantiDNAe choreographed by Ana Novak '14

Lighting Designer Ben Doehr '15
Stage Manager Rachael Andrews '16

Text: Celeste Miller

Additional Text adapted from Kate DiCamillo, “The Magician’s
Elephant”; Pierre Delattre “Tales of a Dali Llama”

Music: Ana Alcaide, Ezio Bosso, Chip Epsten, Zoe Keating,
Henry Mancini, Meredith Monk, The Instruments, Astor Piazz-
zolla, Denis Plante, Elvis Presley, Steve Reich, Igor Stravin-
sky, Rachel Yamagata. “Blue Moon” arrangement by Gaelyn
Hutchinson

Small Elephant Stories

Introduction

Where we meet Charmion and her travellers

The Stories

A Baby Elephant in Moultrie, Georgia

The Dali Llama and the Compassion of the Elephant

A Ballet for 50 Elephants and 50 Ballerinas

An Elephant Never Forgets

The Wish of a Molecule

Three Fragments: When an elephant comes crashing through the roof

Our Family, ElephantiDNAe (Choreographed by Ana Novak)

The World Shifts

Special Thanks

Special Thanks: Keilah Courtenay, Eleanor Griggs, Erin Howell-Gritsch, Normando Ismay, Alice Nadeau, Craig Quintero, Brenna Ross, Erik Sanning, Justin Thomas, Tilly Woodward, Lesley Wright, to my students in “Movement for the Performer” and “Contemporary Dance” for your curiosity and inspiration; and to the Falconer Gallery and the Department of Theatre and Dance.



In 2010 I was living in Atlanta and working on a dance commissioned by the Center for Chemical Evolution exploring molecular self-assembly, while at the same time I was playing with imagery from a book, *The Magician's Elephant* by Kate DiCamillo. Elephants and molecules began to merge. This often happens with my work. It's how Charles Darwin ended up in a piece about the Virgin Mary. But that's another story.

When I came to Grinnell in the Fall of 2011, I decided to give the molecules and the elephants a rest for awhile, but I kept coming across small elephant stories – random web links would pop up, random comments by people around me, books that would jump out at me (literally fall off the shelf in a bookstore as I walked by).

The ingredients for a new work were building up. I couldn't keep this quiet any longer. So here we are.

This fall Dance Ensemble/Activate explored *Small Elephant Stories* gathering a random assortment of stories, devices and sites.

Craig Quintero – the designer of this performance site that we inhabit, *we are all in this together*, responded with a generous “yes” when I asked him if the Fall Dance Ensemble/Activate performance could happen here following his production of *hand to mouth*. (Ingredient: the space)

Theatrically, I needed a device, via character, that I thought might inhabit this world. I came across Charmion, a strongwoman and trapeze artist who performed in vaudeville at the turn of the 20th century. Thomas Edison made a film of her famous “trapeze disrobing act” in 1901. (You will see it tonight) I speculated on Charmion as a force that might hold together a group of people needing small elephant stories.

I discovered Charmion during a blue moon google search, so another ingredient that had to come in: Blue Moon.

Though not a southerner by birth, I have lived there long enough to get caught up in the lore and a small elephant story from Moultrie, Georgia was shared with me.

Choreographer George Balanchine, composer Igor Stravinsky and the ballet for 50 elephants and 50 ballerinas is of course legendary.

I found the Dali Llama story about elephants reacting violently when intentionally injured by humans.

Ana Novak and I have been talking about the inspirations for creating dances that can come from science (biology in particular) since we worked together last Spring. Add another ingredient!

Collage these all together and you have this production of *small elephant stories*.

There are many more elephants waiting in the wings. They will fall through the roof when Justin Thomas and I collaborate in the spring on *When the Elephant Comes Crashing through the Roof*

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.

Choreographer Notes: Ana Novak

Our Family, ElephantiDNAe came from an interest in combining dance and science in a way that both explored a scientific topic whilst creating visually compelling movement. Photos, diagrams, videos, and descriptions of the scientific processes of DNA, specifically DNA replication, were all used as inspiration in the movement that was created. I found this “small elephant story” relevant to include because it explores the minuteness that is DNA in addition to its elephant-like role in today’s society. This study with the Dance Ensemble was done in light of further exploration I intend to realize by combining in depth scientific research with dance to showcase my work. In doing so, I hope to bring together a larger audience that will be able to learn a new and intricate concept while also enjoying a movement-based performance.



Eva Dawson '14 is a third year English major. She's taken several dance classes at Grinnell and taught a dance/movement class to elementary school students at the Grinnell Arts Council this past summer. This is her first semester in Dance Ensemble and if she could, she would spend all day every day in the studio with these dancers.

Rosie Fuqua '16 is a first-year from Colorado. She has trained in jazz and ballet for many years, but this is her first experience in modern, and first time dancing at Grinnell. To be part of a show that is such a collaborative effort is an incredible experience, and for that, she is grateful.

Teddy Geiger '15 is a second year and his previous performances at Grinnell include Dance Ensemble, Spring '12 and Neverland, Fall '11. His performative focus switched from musicals and one acts to movement in dance after his arrival at Grinnell. He says that "Movement can express ideas, feelings, concepts, whatever you can imagine by breaking it down into a simple movement phrase. The beauty comes from when these phrases are filled with emotion and meaning and the concept is no longer explicitly being expressed, but rather the essential form behind it."

Geovanni Gomez '15 This is Geovanni's first theatre/dance involvement at Grinnell. How exciting! Before this I was in various musicals (non-singing roles thankfully) and plays in high school. My involvement in the piece is inspired by trying to find a way to express the beautiful phenomena of biology through movement and dance.

Madeline Hardt '16 My name is Maddie and I am a first year from New York. I started dancing when I was eight, and my favorite types are modern and tap. I loved working with Dance Ensemble and am excited to be in a show that doesn't involve fake eyelashes.

Gaelyn Hutchinson '12

Furu ike ya	The old pond
kawazu tobikomu	A frog jumped in,
mizu no oto	Kerplunk!
--BASHO	--trans. GINSBERG

Tiana Jones '16 I have been really excited to be a part of something where everyone from various backgrounds is accepted. I danced for three and a half years before this, and was a part of many theatre dance ensembles in high school. I have really enjoyed the progression of this piece, and am really impressed by how much the cast's input and ideas are really thought about and incorporated.

Ivy Kuhn '16 As a first year, I feel fortunate to have been welcomed into such a kind and creative environment. I have previous experience in ballet, belly dance, and musical theater. This has been a great semester of playing and creating with other dancers!

Yasmina Lembachar '15 second year from Morocco. I have done modern dance, hip hop and some ballet when I was younger, but this is my first actual performance in Grinnell. Being part of *Small Elephant Stories* gave my Grinnellian experience the magic it lacked.

Minna Montgomery '16 I am from Fairfield, IA, and dance has been a huge part of my life for the past six years. My focus so far has mainly been ballet and modern dance, but I am excited to branch out and try new genres in Dance Ensemble at Grinnell.

Wanjie "Wendy" Ren '13 is a senior from Nanjing, China. She did belly dance prior to college and started doing ballet and modern dance at Grinnell. Last semester, Wendy participated in the Spring Dance Ensemble Production *Now You See Me* and fell in love with this lovely group. She hopes she will be able to carry on her passion for dance after college.

Sofia Tedesco '14 I am a third year biochem major here at Grinnell. This is the first time I have been involved in dance and I couldn't have asked for a better group of people to spend my afternoons with, creating an awesome show!

Yani Wang '15 I am a third year theater major student. This is officially the first show for me in Grinnell. The process of dancing with Dance Ensemble is a fantastic experience for me, I enjoyed working with everyone!!



Jill Wielgos '16 This is my first year at Grinnell and my first time performing with the dance department. I started dancing when I was four and have studied ballet, jazz, modern, pointe, and lyrical. I feel lucky to have had the chance to challenge myself creatively with Dance Ensemble and be inspired by the entire ensemble!

Benjamin Zeledon '14 is a third-year Political Science major from Miami, Florida. This is his first dance performance at Grinnell College. This past year he worked on the run crew for *Hand to Mouth* and has had a play of his performed at GIT. Outside of that, he spent the past two summers teaching stage combat to middle school children and is really just happy to be here.

Musicians

Leah Meyer '15, a sophomore at Grinnell College, has been playing the violin since she was seven-years-old and has been singing since she could talk. She enjoys playing old-time fiddle, rock n' roll, singing folk and jazz songs with her friends and family.

Crew & Production & Design Team

Ahmed Al-Khafaji '13 (running crew) I'm a senior and I enjoy theater and have taken several classes in that field: "Introduction to Performance Studies", and "Advanced Performance Studies", "Fundamentals of Acting" and "Modern Dance Technique". I have also participated in one-act performance. I'm considering changing my major to theater if they allow it!

Rachael M. Andrew '16 (Stage Manager) is a first year and prospective physics and theater major here at Grinnell College. She hails from Platteville, Wisconsin. She is pleased to have had the opportunity to assist direct on this semester's production of *Waiting for Godot*. She has also worked with the Platteville Community Theater and the University of Wisconsin Platteville's Heartland Festival both on the stage and off. She hopes you enjoy the show!

Matt Bachtell '14 (Soundboard Operator) Matt is a 4th year Physics major. While he has no previous tech experience at Grinnell, in high school he ran sound for two musical productions (*Into The Woods*, and *Brigadoon*), with three years' experience on building and run crew in the technical theater department.

Keilah Courtenay '13 (Rehearsal Stage Manager)

Ben Doehr '15 (Lighting Design)

Celeste Miller (Director, Choreographer) is a solo performer of text & movement works, choreographer, animator of dance-based community projects and artist educator. Her work has been produced nationally by theatres, galleries and arts organizations that include PS 122, Symphony Space and Dia Foundation in New York City, Moming in Chicago, Highways Performance Space in Los Angeles and the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. Her most recent large-scale project, *The Annunciation, sort of, Mary says: No* premiered at the American Dance Festival and was produced at 7 Stages Theatre in Atlanta. She has received numerous grants and awards for her work including the National Endowment for the Arts Choreography Fellowship, Atlanta Mayor's Fellowship in the Arts, New Playwright's Award from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and a nomination for the CalArts Alpert Award in Choreography. Celeste currently teaches in the Department of Theatre and Dance at Grinnell College. She holds an MFA from Hollins University/American Dance Festival. www.celestemiller.com



Kitt Nika '16 (Lightboard operator)

Ana Novak '14 (Choreographer *Our Family: ElephantDNAe*) is a third-year biology major from Milwaukee, WI who is performing with Dance Ensemble for the second time. Ana has always been interested and intrigued by the relationships between science and dance and is eager to share this exploration in her choreographed "small elephant story". She would like to thank Celeste and the entire cast for an inspiring, creative and memorable dance-filled semester.

Brenna Ross '13 (Wardrobe and Run Crew) is a senior theatre and physics double major from Davenport, IA. She is thrilled to be involved with such an exciting production.

DANCE ENSEMBLE/ACTIVATE Spring 2013 THE 205

Audition/Informational Workshop for the Dance Ensemble/Activate spring production, *When the elephant comes crashing through the roof* will be held on January 31st from 4:30-6:30 in the Bucksbaum Dance Studio. Dancers, actors, musicians, and movers from a variety of backgrounds are encouraged to attend the workshop and find out more. For more information contact Celeste Miller. millerce@grinnell.edu

Production Staff

Stage Manager	Rachael M. Andrew '16
Rehearsal Stage Manager	Keilah Courtenay '13
Light Board Operator	Kitt Nika '16
Sound Board Operator	Matt Bachtell '14
Costume Crew Chief	Devon Gamble '15
Run Crew	Ahmed Al-Khafaji '13
Wardrobe & Run Crew	Brenna Ross '13
Poster & Program Design	Stephanie Micetich



ADMINISTRATION

Production Stage Manager

Brenna Ross '13

FRONT OF HOUSE

Front of House Manager

Abbi Butterfield '13

Front of House Staff

Anna Banker '15
Kate Doyle '13
Mackenzie Higgins '15
Shawn Peters '14

Abbi Butterfield '13
Alex Krempely '13
Ana Novak '14
Anthony Wenndt '15

COSTUME STUDIO

Costume Storage Coordinator

Alice Nadeau '13

Stitchers

Devon Gable '15
Alice Nadeau '13

Shannon Kelly '13
Maria Richardson '15
Carly Riley '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
Colin Wong '14



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