

CAL PERFORMANCES
AT HOME

LIVE-STREAM PERFORMANCES

Thursday, December 17, 2020, 5pm

Friday, December 18, 2020, 7pm

Saturday, December 19, 2020, 1pm

Manual Cinema's *Christmas Carol*

A Cal Performances Co-commission

Production Credits

A Manual Cinema Production

Adapted from the novel by Charles Dickens

Written by the Manual Cinema Artistic Directors:

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

Storyboards: Drew Dir

Original Music and Sound Design: Ben Kauffman and Kyle Vegter

Puppet Design: Drew Dir with Lizi Breit

Puppet Build Assistants: Sarah Fornace and Julia Miller

Outside Eye: Sarah Fornace with Julia Miller

Additional Video Puppetry: Drew Dir

Costume Design: Maddy Low

Set Design: Julia Miller and Kyle Vegter

Aunt Trudy Lighting Design: Andrew Morgan

Violin Performance: Amanda Bailey

Technical Director and Sound Engineer: Mike Usrey

Stage Manager, Video Mixing, and Live Sound Effects: Shelby Sparkle

Streaming and UX: Ben Kauffman

Production Manager: Julia Miller

Creative Producer: Laura Colby, Elsie Management

CAST

Lizi Breit (Puppeteer)

Sarah Fornace (Puppeteer)

Ben Kauffman (Keys, Piano, Lead Vocals)

N. LaQuis Harkins (Aunt Trudy/Puppeteer)

Julia Miller (Puppeteer, Live DP, News Anchor)

Kyle Vegter (Cello, Keys, Bass, Vocals)

Manual Cinema is an Emmy Award-winning performance collective, design studio, and film/video production company founded in 2010 by Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, Ben Kauffman, Julia Miller, and Kyle Vegter. The company combines hand-made 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 liveliness, ingenuity, and theatricality. The company received an Emmy Award in 2017 for *The Forger*, a video created for the *New York Times*, and was named Chicago Artists of the Year in 2018 by the *Chicago Tribune*.

Manual Cinema has been presented by, worked in collaboration with, or brought its work to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the Under the Radar Festival (New York City); the Kimmel Center (Philadelphia); the O, Miami Poetry Festival; Arts Emerson (Boston); the Yale Repertory Theatre; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; the Kennedy Center (Washington, DC); the Ace Hotel Theater (Los Angeles), La Monnaie-DeMunt (Brussels); the Noorderzon Festival (Netherlands); the Tehran International Puppet Festival (Iran); the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Saudi Arabia), the Hakawy International Arts Festival (Cairo), the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and elsewhere around the world. The company has also collaborated with the three-time Grammy Award-winning Eighth Blackbird and Hubbard Street Dance (Chicago); the *New York Times* and StoryCorps (New York City); Pop-Up Magazine (San Francisco); Nu Deco Ensemble (Miami); the *New York Times* best-selling author Reif Larsen; NPR's *Invisibilia*; *Topic* magazine; the Grammy Award-winning Esperanza Spalding; *Erratica* (London); and the Belgian Royal Opera (Brussels).

For more, visit www.manualcinema.com.

Lizi Breit (*puppeteer, puppet design*) 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. Breit is an artistic associate with the Neo-Futurists and a former member of Blair Thomas & Co. Her internet self lives at www.lizibreit.com.

Drew Dir (*co-artistic director*) is a writer, director, and puppet designer. Previously, he served as Resident Dramaturg of Court Theatre and as a lecturer in theater and performance studies at the University of Chicago. Dir holds a master's degree in text and performance studies from King's College London and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

Sarah Fornace (*co-artistic director*) is a director, puppeteer, choreographer, and narrative designer based in Chicago, and a co-artistic director of Manual Cinema. Outside of Manual Cinema, Fornace has worked as a performer and/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, Fornace 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.

N. LaQuis Harkins (*Aunt Trudy*) was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois and is a graduate of Howard University. Since her initial work in *Rhyme Deferred* with Hip-Hop Theatre Junction, Harkins has been involved in Chicago productions including *Repairing a Nation*, *How We Got On*, and *Blues for an Alabama Sky*; in Manual Cinema's own *No Blue Memories*; and in various commercials and independent films. She recently produced her first short film, *Kayla's Light*, about a family in Chicago dealing with tragic loss. Harkins is grateful and honored to return to work with the magical Manual



Cinema for such a delightful and modern twist on a classic.

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

Maddy Lowe (*costume designer*) is a costume designer, puppeteer, and performer from Illinois. Past costume work includes Manual Cinema's *Frankenstein*, Rough House Theater's *Cicada Summer*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, and *Bloomsday* at Remy Bumppo; *The Secretaries* with About Face; and several productions at Lookingglass Theatre. When not sewing and

gluing things together, Lowe co-curates *Nasty, Brutish & Short*, the quarterly puppet slam at Links Hall. Her original performance work has been seen around Chicago in living rooms, bars, DIY spaces, and various theaters. Lowe is a graduate of Northwestern University and the School at Steppenwolf.

Julia Miller (*co-artistic director*) is a director, puppeteer, and puppet designer. With Manual Cinema, she has directed *Mementos Mori* and *The End of TV* and created original roles in *Frankenstein* (The Creature/Elizabeth), *Ada/Ava* (Ada), *Lula del Ray* (Lula's Mother), *The Magic City* (Helen), and *Hansel und Gretel* (Hansel). In Chicago, she has worked as a performer and puppeteer with Redmoon Theatre and Blair Thomas and Co. Miller spent several years training in devised theater, clown, and mask with Double Edge Theatre and Carlos García Estevez, as well as at the Accademia dell'Arte in Arezzo, Italy. She is a co-producer and director of several episodes of the new web series *The Doula is IN*.

Andrew Morgan (*Aunt Trudy lighting design*) has been working professionally as a director, cinematographer, and editor since graduating

from Columbia College Chicago in 2008. In 2009, he formed Little Cabin Films with friend and business partner Nick Nummerdor. As co-director and producer of *Vannin'* (2013), Morgan saw his first feature film go from conception to successful distribution via streaming services such as Amazon Prime. Morgan has also acted as a producer, director, and cinematographer on two short documentaries—*North Branch* (2018) and *Hill Climb* (2017)—that both focus on unique aspects of Americana. His most recent documentary, *Sleeze Lake: Vanlife at its Lowest & Best*, will screen at CUFF & SF-DOCS. Most recently, Morgan found himself as director of photography for Manual Cinema's shadow puppetry material to be included in the 2021 release of Monkey Paw Productions' *Candyman*, directed by Nia DaCosta.

Shelby Sparkle (*stage manager*) is grateful to have the opportunity to work on this gorgeous production with these amazing humans during these uncertain times. Sparkle has been with Manual Cinema for four years, stage managing several touring productions that have taken her across the United States and around the world, while also overseeing these touring operations as company manager. Before joining Manual Cinema, Sparkle stage-managed plays all over Chicago with companies including Sideshow Theatre Company, Lifeline Theatre, and the Strange Tree Group. She then went on to stage manage all over the country, including for various experimental theater projects with graduate students at the A.R.T. Institute, school touring productions with ArtsPower, and an opera with Dell'Arte Opera Ensemble. But nothing has brought her as much joy as working and traveling with the incredibly talented artists, puppeteers, and musicians of Manual Cinema.

Mike Usrey (*technical director and sound engineer*). “That may be the most important thing to understand about humans. It is the unknown that defines our existence. We are constantly searching, not just for answers to our questions, but for new questions. We are explorers. We explore our lives day by day, and we explore the

galaxy trying to expand the boundaries of our knowledge. And that is why I am here: not to conquer you with weapons or ideas, but to co-exist and learn” (Benjamin Lafayette Sisko).

Kyle Vegter (*co-artistic director*) is a composer, producer, and sound designer, and the managing artistic director of Manual Cinema. As a composer of concert music, he has been commissioned by groups including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's MusicNOW series, the Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Tighe. Vegter's music and sound design for theater and film has been seen worldwide and commissioned by the *New York Times*, NPR's Invisibilia, Topic (First Look Media), the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, StoryCorps, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Poetry Foundation, Hubbard Street Dance, the O, Miami Poetry Festival, and others. His past composer/sound designer credits with Manual Cinema include *Lula del Ray*, *Ada/Ava*, *Fjords*, *Mementos Mori*, *The End of TV*, and various other performance and video projects. Vegter has been an artist-in-residence at High Concept Laboratories and co-founded Chicago's only contemporary classical music cassette label, Parlour Tapes+.

CREDITS

Manual Cinema's Christmas Carol was made possible by the contributions of co-commissioners: Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley; COCA – Center of Creative Arts; College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University; Kahilu Theatre; Krannert Center for the Performing Arts/University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Millersville University – The Ware and Winter Centers; Moss Arts Center, Virginia Tech; Stanford Live; Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Arts & Issues; Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts at California State University, Northridge; Williams Center for the Arts, Lafayette College; and Writers Theatre, with substantial in-kind commissioning support from Marquee TV; additional commissioning support from South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center, and support from the Newman Center for the Performing Arts at University of Denver.



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Video Stream delivered by Marquee.

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