

Saturday, November 22, 2025, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Manual Cinema

The 4th Witch

A Manual Cinema Production and Cal Performances Co-Commission
(Bay Area Premiere)

Concept and Direction by Drew Dir
Devised by Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, and Julia Miller
Original Score and Sound Design by Ben Kauffman and Kyle Vegter
Storyboards and Puppet Design by Drew Dir
Lighting Design by David Goodman-Edberg
Costume and Wig Design by Sully Ratke
Silhouette Masks by Julia Miller
Costume Assistant: Griffin DiStasi
Puppet Build Assistant: Caitlin McLeod
Sound Engineer: Mike Usrey
Stage Manager and Board Operator: Kyle Vegter
Creative Producer: Laura Colby

CAST

PUPPETEERS

Leah Casey (*Witch*)
Kara Davidson (*Witch*)
Sarah Fornace (*Girl*)
Julia Miller (*Lead Witch*)
Jeffrey Paschal (*Macbeth*)

MUSICIANS

Erica Kremer, *cello and vocals*
Lucy Little, *violin and vocals*
Alicia Walter, *keys, guitar, and vocals*

*This performance will last approximately 65 minutes
and be performed without an intermission.*

*The 4th Witch received lead commissioning support from
Spoleto Festival USA with co-commissioning support from ArtsEmerson (Boston, MA)
and Cal Performances, University of California (Berkeley, CA).*

*Cal Performances is committed to fostering a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for all—
one that honors our venues as places of respite, openness, and respect.
Please see the Community Agreements section on our Policies page for more information.*



Above: *The 4th Witch*, Girl and Witch (Sarah Fornace and Julia Miller)

Below: *The 4th Witch*, Macbeth Army



Manual Cinema's *The 4th Witch* is a fantastic new tale, inspired by elements of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in which a girl escapes war and flees into a dark forest. Told through shadow puppetry, actors in silhouette, and live music (without dialogue or narration), *The 4th Witch* begins on the eve of an invasion of a small town by the local warlord, Macbeth. The girl flees the invading army and escapes into the nearby forest. Orphaned

and exiled, she is rescued by a witch, who adopts her as an apprentice. As she becomes more skilled in witchcraft, her grief and rage draw her into a nightmarish quest for vengeance against the warlord who killed her parents: Macbeth.

The 4th Witch, an inversion of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, explores themes of grief, war, generational conflict, and cycles of violence through the collateral damage left behind on the battleground.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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 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 live music, Manual Cinema transforms the experience of attending the cinema and imbues it with liveness, 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*. The group's shadow puppet animations are featured in the film remake of *Candyman*, directed by Nia DaCosta and produced by Jordan Peele's Monkeypaw Productions. Recent productions include *Leonardo! A Wonderful Show about a Terrible Monster*, based on books by Mo Willems; an adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (co-produced by Cal Performances); and a revamped production of *The Magic City*, based on Edith Nesbit's 1910 novel. In 2023, Manual Cinema completed production on its first self-produced short film, *Future Feeling*, and the

group toured with folk rock band Iron & Wine the following year. The company's newest production, *The 4th Witch*, an inversion of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, premiered at the Spoleto Festival in June 2025.

Manual Cinema has toured throughout North America and to four continents. Highlights include Under the Radar/The Public Theater (New York City), and the Adelaide Festival (Australia), Santiago a Mil International Theatre Festival (Chile), Edinburgh Fringe Festival (Scotland), and Tehran International Puppet Festival (Iran). The company has received commissioning support for new works from Cal Performances, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Kennedy Center, ArtsEmerson (Boston), the Spoleto Festival (USA), The Poetry Foundation, and La Monnaie de Munt (Belgium). Manual Cinema has also received grant support from the National Theater Project, US Artists International, and ArtsCONNECT.

Follow Manual Cinema at www.manual-cinema.com, @manual_cinema, and via Patreon.

PUPPETEERS

Leah Casey (*Witch, Puppeteer*) is a Chicago-based actress, dancer, and writer. When not on stage, she can be found lending her voice to all manner of audiobooks, or with the

cast of *Project STELLAR*, a science fiction podcast about a group of crazy kids who have close encounters of the awesome kind. Chicago credits: *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Grease*, *Cinderella* (Drury Lane), *A Christmas Carol* (Writers Theatre/Manual Cinema), *Leonardo and Sam* (Chicago Children's Theatre/Manual Cinema), *Frankenstein* (Court Theatre/Manual Cinema), *For Colored Girls...* (Court Theatre), *Romeo and Juliet* (Teatro Vista), *STORM* (Walkabout/Moonfool). Casey is represented by the dedicated team at Shirley Hamilton.

Kara Davidson (*Witch*, *Puppeteer*) is a playwright, director, performer, puppeteer, and teaching artist, as well as Director of New Works at the Paramount Theatre in Aurora, IL. Previously, she was Producer of the NOW Lab with the Omaha Playhouse in Nebraska and a co-director of The Lab Chicago, an incubator for new works in a variety of genres. She holds an MFA in writing for stage and screen from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and earned her BA in theater performance from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Davidson has been performing with Manual Cinema since 2015, and previous touring shows with the company include *Ada/Ava*, *Lula del Ray*, *The Electric Stage*, *Pop Up Magazine*, and *The End of TV*; she was also a puppeteer for the 2021 feature film *Candyman*. Davidson volunteers as a teaching facilitator with the Chicago-based A.B.L.E. Ensemble, which creates theater and film projects for, with, and by individuals with Down syndrome and other intellectual and developmental disabilities. As a performer, she has worked with Lookingglass Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, the House Theatre of Chicago, the Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Nebraska Repertory Theatre, among others. Her video game credits as a motion capture performer include *Injustice 2*, *Mortal Kombat 11*, *Mortal Kombat 1*, *Call of Duty*, and *Black Ops: Cold War*.

Sarah Fornace (*Girl*, *Puppeteer*, *Co-Deviser*, *Co-Artistic Director*), a co-artistic director of Manual Cinema, is a director, puppeteer, choreographer, and narrative designer based in Chicago. Outside of Manual Cinema, she has worked as a performer or choreographer with Redmoon Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre Company, Court Theatre, Steppenwolf Garage, and Blair Thomas and Co. Most recently, Fornace 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.

Julia Miller (*Lead Witch*, *Puppeteer*, *Co-Deviser*, *Silhouette Masks*, *Co-Artistic Director*) is a director, puppeteer, and designer. With Manual Cinema, she has directed *Mementos Mori* and *The End of TV* as well as created original roles in *Frankenstein* (The Creature/Elizabeth), *Ada/Ava* (Ada), *Lula del Ray* (Lula's Mother), *The Magic City* (Helen), *Hansel und Gretel* (Hansel), and *Leonardo!* (Sam). 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, Carlos García Estevez, and at the Accademia dell'Arte in Arezzo, Italy.

Jeffrey Paschal (*Macbeth*, *Puppeteer*) is originally from a town called Corning in upstate New York. In 2012, he moved to Chicago to study at Northwestern University, where he majored in theater. There, Paschal was involved with several theater productions, including *Fabulation* directed by Jerrell Henderson and *Anna in the Tropics* directed by Henry Godinez, as well as directing and producing several short films through the school's RTVF program. Paschal graduated

from Northwestern in 2016 with a BS in theater. He currently lives in Chicago and is represented by Gray Talent Group.

MUSICIANS

Erica Kremer (*cello and vocals*) is a cellist, pianist, and songwriter based in Brooklyn, New York. Having recently received her master's degree under cellist Edward Arron, she is building a music career tailored to her interests of democratizing classical music, blurring genre and cultural lines, and making music on her own terms. Refusing to be put in a box, Kremer has performed and toured as a former member of the Carriola String Quartet, holding a residency with Sinfonia Gulf Coast; as a rock and roll cellist, across the country, in the Black Jacket Symphony; and as a folk musician featured in the Ocracoke Festival, as a part of Saltare Sounds.

Lucy Little (*violin and vocals*) is a musician, improviser, composer, and audio producer currently based in New York City, but with deep and loving roots in Chicago, where she lived for 10 years. As a composer, Little has written and recorded scores for theatrical productions and podcasts, including for the Audible Original plays *Daddies* (2022) and *Marrow* (2023). As a performer, she plays violin with the Chicago-based indie rock and folk project Half Gringa, has an electro-acoustic solo project, and has performed with musicians from around the world, including with singer/songwriters Aisha Burns, Dani Larkin, MICHA Música, and Afarin Nazarijou. Little holds a master's degree from the New England Conservatory and a bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago, and is a US Fulbright alum and a 2022 OneBeat Fellow.

Alicia Walter (*keys, guitar, and vocals*) is a singer-songwriter, composer, and pianist from Chicago. Known for her "near-cosmic



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voice” (*WIRED*) and a “stratosphere of song-writing all her own” (*Consequence of Sound*), Walter has released two celebrated albums under her own name: *Right Noise* (BIG EGO Records, 2023) and *I Am Alicia* (Sooper Records, 2021). In 2024, she performed in venues across the US and Europe, most recently alongside artists Veronica Swift and Danielle Ponder. Her music has been featured in nationally syndicated television shows including *All Rise* and the NBC drama *This Is Us*. Walter rose to acclaim as bandleader of the beloved Chicago-based art rock group Oshwa.

STAFF AND CREATIVE TEAM

Laura Colby (*creative producer*), recipient of NAPAMA’s 2016 Liz Silverstein Award, secures funds to create new work via Elsie Management (which she founded in 1995). In 2020, Colby served as Creative Producer for the creation and delivery of Manual Cinema’s *A Christmas Carol*—a show that was streamed for 24 performances in December 2020 (including here by Cal Performances), during the height of the pandemic closures. She served as Managing Producer for LaTasha Barnes’ *The Jazz Continuum* and Monique Martin’s *Minty Fresh Circus*. Colby’s podcast, *The Middle Woman, A Roadmap to Managing the Performing Arts*, is available on all podcast platforms. www.elsiemanager.org.

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

Griffin DiStasi (*costume assistant*) (they/he) is an illustrator, maker, voice actor, and circus artist who has been spending the years since graduating from the University of Illinois with a degree in mechanical engineering working to marry engineering and art any way they can. Their work spans from poster design and comic illustration to rigging and puppet design, and they are thrilled to be working with Manual Cinema for the first time.

David Goodman-Edberg (*lighting designer*) is a Chicago-based lighting designer working in the realms of dance, theater, and architectural design. He has designed and toured with such companies as Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre, Eisenhower Dance Detroit, Visceral Dance Chicago, and Water Street Dance Milwaukee, and lit works set on companies including Chicago Repertory Ballet, Chicago Tap Theater, Joel Hall Dancers, and Thodos Dance Chicago. In theater, he has designed with puppet- and object-oriented companies such as Rough House and Cabinet of Curiosity as well as with Adventure Stage, Akvavit Theatre, Factory Theater, The Gift Theater, Organic Theater, Red Tape Theater, The Syndicate, and Trap Door Theatre. In the field of architecture, he has lit pieces at the art space 6018|North and worked as an assistant/associate designer for projects at various Universal Studios theme parks (Beijing, Hollywood, Orlando, Osaka), Disney Shanghai, and several Margaritaville restaurants. dglxdesign.com.

Ben Kauffman (*original score and sound design, co-artistic director*), Co-Artistic Director of Manual Cinema, is a composer, director, and interactive media artist. His film and interactive work has been shown at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion (Chicago), the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (Chicago), and CUNY’s Baruch College (New

York City). He has lectured and given workshops at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York University, and Parsons School of Design. His past composer/sound designer credits with Manual Cinema include *Ada/Ava*, *The End of TV*, and the *New York Times* documentary *The Forger*. He holds a master's degree from New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP).

Caitlin McLeod (*puppet build assistant*) is a Chicago-based costume, scenic, and puppet designer. Recent design credits include *Romeo and Zooliet* (St. Louis Shakespeare), *Fat Ham* (Virginia Stage Co), *The Little Mermaid* (Drury Lane), *Lavender Men* (About Face), *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Virginia Stage Co.), *The Dream King* (Teatro Vista), *Trouble in Mind* (Timeline), *The Seagull* (Steppenwolf), and *Exquisite Corpse* (Rough House). Craftwork credits include the Goodman, the Kennedy Center, Lookingglass, and Northlight. McLeod is a co-curator of NBS: Chicago's Puppet Slam; a company member of Rough House; and project manager of the Chicago Puppet Studio. Instagram @CaitlinMcLeodDesign.

Sully Ratke (*costume and wig design*) is a multidisciplinary visual storytelling artist with an appetite for compelling language, mystery, whimsy, and spiritual philosophy.

Mike Usrey (*audio 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 coexist and learn."

—Benjamin Lafayette Sisko

Kyle Vegter (*stage manager and board operator, original score and sound design, co-artistic director*), Managing Artistic Director of Manual Cinema, is a composer, producer, and sound designer. As a composer of concert music, he has been commissioned by such groups as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (for its MusicNOW series), the Pacific Northwest Ballet, and TIGUE. 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+.

Representation

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