Good Death: A Community Conversation

Jasmine Lake

Western Michigan University, jasmine.r.lake@gmail.com

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I would also like to thank and acknowledge Mikala Hansen and Adam Pasen and my assistant director, Brandon Bierlein, who were all an integral part of the crafting and refining process. Thank you to Kathryn Korak for her work as Production Assistant, all of the dramaturges and again, to the entire cast, designers and crew for all of your dedication, talents, patience and incredible work on this show. - Kelli Simpkins

COMPANY MOMENT

PART ONE:
(in order of appearance)

NARRATORS: TORI BLADE, KENZIE ROSS, THERESE ANDERBERG
DR. JACK KEVORKIAN: ETHAN HEDDE\N
LJUBISA DRAGOVIC: CHAD SUTTON
MICHAEL BETZOLD: DARREN JOHNSTON
JACK LESSENBERRY: JOE RUSSELL
MIKE WALLACE: LOUIS SALLAN
JOHN SKRZYNISKI: FRANK WILLIAMS
DANIEL LEMISCH: MAX WARDLAW
JUDGE COOPER: CRYSTAL LUCAS-PERRY
MELODY YOUK: JENNA D'ANGELO

PART TWO:

CAROL LOVING: JASMINE LAKE
LYNN MILLS: TORI BLADE
NICK LOVING: FRANK WILLIAMS

*INTERMISSION
COMPANY MOMENT
Original song: written and performed by Crystal Lucas-Perry

PART THREE:
DEREK HUMPHREY: LOUIS SALLAN
JEAN HUMPHREY: JENNA D'ANGELO
ANN MAXWELL: KENZIE ROSS
DEANNA AIKMAN: THERESE ANDERBERG
DIEDRE BROWN: JANAI TRAVIS
HUSBAND: FRANK WILLIAMS

PART FOUR:
NORM LANGELAND: MAX WARDLAW
JENNA: JANAI TRAVIS
LISA: THERESE ANDERBERG
RABBI SPIVAK: JOE RUSSELL
DAVID MARKER: DARREN JOHNSTON
DD WILLIAMS: CRYSTAL LUCAS-PERRY
ELAINE TAYLOR: THERESE ANDERBERG
GRACE MANNION: JENNA D'ANGELO
Original song: written and performed by Tori Blade

PART FIVE:
BRYAN MANUELE: JOE RUSSELL
GRACE MANNION: JENNA D'ANGELO
ELAINE TAYLOR: THERESE ANDERBERG
POETESS: JANAI TRAVIS
DD WILLIAMS: CRYSTAL LUCAS-PERRY
FRANK WILLIAMS: HIMSELF
DAVID MARKER: DARREN JOHNSTON

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a community conversation

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Kelli Simpkins**

Project Consultant
Leigh Fondakowski**

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Joshua D. Reid*

Costume Designer
Kathleen MacKenzie

Lighting Designer
Kaitlyn Anderson*

Sound Designer
Ben Bauer*

Stage Manager
Emily R. Cherry*

*It is with great pride that we recognize the creative efforts of our students.
**Guest artists from the Tectonic Theater Project
The WMU Department of Theatre has been honored to host the Tectonic Theater Project over the past six months in an extraordinary residency. Good Death has been collaboratively created by the company under the artistic leadership of Kelli Simpkins and Leigh Fondakowski. Following four months of research, our students and their directors came together to devise a piece of theatre that reflected the words, hearts and minds of those they have interviewed. This work has empowered our students to be creative partners and true theatre artists, moving beyond their traditional roles and training to be part of an exceptional ensemble.

Through the research and the rehearsal process, through classes and workshops, artists of the Tectonic Theatre Project have provided our students an invaluable educational experience and artistic opportunity. We thank WMU’s Visiting Artists and Scholars Program and our generous anonymous donor for making this possible.

This production contains flashing and strobe-effect lighting. Please be aware that actors move throughout the space during the performance.

Out of respect for the actors and those seated around you, PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONES AT THIS TIME AND REFRAIN FROM TEXTING IN THE THEATRE.
The process of creating this play began in April 2009, when my colleague, Leigh Fondakowski and I, came to Kalamazoo to cast this show and pick a subject matter that theatrically excited the students. They initially chose Dr. Kevorkian as that subject. We then launched them into the research phase of the process. Over several months, the designers, performers and dramaturges researched Dr. Kevorkian and the 1999 trial transcripts of his last trial. They heavily researched euthanasia and its history. And finally, they began doing the interviews themselves. As they interviewed the people close to the Kevorkian story, the story began expanding into the community itself: the community who dealt directly with death and dying, the terminally ill community and the spiritual community. The interviews were transcribed and all of the research thoroughly complied.

We came back the last week of August to begin our work. We began with a research phase to become intimately acquainted with all of the source material. During that first week, we also saw all of the design presentations. Then we got into the theatre and began our “moment work,” which is a structural way to analyze theatrical beats of time and to write performance for the stage, utilizing the strengths of the theatre: its elements. We made over 100 moments and then we broke into groups and the students began crafting specific sections of the play and presenting them. The refining period followed: cutting, editing, adding and trying to find the most theatrically compelling narrative. Needless to say, many voices that we loved could not fit into the piece but they remain with us. This play is the result of the performers, dramaturges, playwrights and design team. I am incredibly proud of all of them and thank you for being a witness to their beautiful work.

I would like to thank the following:
Joan Herrington: For bringing me in for this ambitious project and for all of your support and input.
Leigh Fondakowski: For your expertise, talents and guidance that were invaluable to this piece.
The cast, design team and stage management: For all of your amazing work, patience, dedication and understanding. You are an inspired group and I have been changed by working with you.
Faculty: For your willingness to support any idea, no matter how outrageous, we had and making everything feel easy.
The interviewees: For sharing your lives and stories and time with us. Your interviews have been gifts to all of us.
My two A’s: Amy and Anna.

Kelli Simpkins
WHO'S WHO

THERESE ANDERBERG (Company) Previous Credits: Cheryl, *Little Airplanes of the Heart*; Woman, *Power Lunch*; Soldier/Soloist, *Mother Courage and Her Children*. Future Plans: Graduate and then move to New York!


BEN BAUER (Sound Designer) Previous Credits: Sound Designer, *Our Lady of 121st Street*; Master Electrician, *Picnic*. Future Plans: Light design *Chicago* in the spring, complete undergrad and attend graduate school for a Master's in Lighting Design.

BRANDON S. BIERLEIN (Assistant Director) Previous Credits: Director, *Life Under Water*; Ensemble, *Fuse 1*. Future Plans: Light design *Chicago* in the spring, complete undergrad and attend graduate school for a Master's in Lighting Design.


EMILY R. CHERRY (Stage Manager) Previous Credits: Stage Manager, *The Donkey Show*; Asst. Stage Manager, *West Side Story*; Asst. Stage Manager, *North Star*. Future Plans: “The future is something which everyone reaches at the rate of 60 minutes an hour, whatever they do, whoever they are.” - C.S. Lewis

JENNA D'ANGELO (Company) Previous Credits: Chorus, *Oedipus*; Lucy, *Dracula*; Maggie, *Den of Thieves*. Future Plans: I plan on auditioning for grad schools at U/RTAs and/or moving to LA after graduation! And always, always be happy.

JUSTIN GARASCIA (Dramaturg) Previous Credits: Alan, *Picnic*; Ensemble, *Fuse 1*; Sam, *Little Airplanes of the Heart*. Future Plans: Finish up at WMU then take on either grad school or one of the coasts.

MIKALA HANSEN (Dramaturg) Future Plans: Continue writing plays, ideally in a company-based environment, and hopefully not starve to death.


CRYSTAL LUCAS-PERRY (Company) Previous Credits: Mother Courage, Mother Courage and Her Children; Norca, Our Lady of 121st Street; Berthe, Pippin. Future Plans: To do whatever makes me happy and to always have theatre as a part of my life.

ADAM PASEN (Dramaturg) Future Plans: Adam plans to finish his doctorate and then move to a major city to take his shot at writing and acting.

JOSHUA D. REID (Scenic Designer) Previous Credits: Sound Designer, Mother Courage and Her Children; Co-Scenic Designer, Picnic; Lighting Designer, Our Lady of 121st Street. Future Plans: Graduate school, work in regional theatres or Broadway, international theatre companies.

KENZIE ROSS (Company) Previous Credits: Jolly, Jolly; Danita, Baby Food; Lorraine, Little Airplanes of the Heart. Future Plans: To continue learning and playing in the theatre!

JOE RUSSELL (Company) Previous Credits: Pinky, Our Lady of 121st Street; Chorus, Oedipus; Ensemble, North Star. Future Plans: To give my parents a big fat hug.

CAIT RYAN (Dramaturg) Previous Credits: Gladhand, West Side Story; Christine, Picnic. Future Plans: Graduate and go wherever the wind takes me.

LOUIE SALLAN (Company) Previous Credits: Chaplain, Mother Courage and Her Children; George, Moon Over Buffalo; Michal, The Pillowman. Future Plans: Finish up my last incredible year at WMU, then I would like to continue my training and aspirations at grad school. Then... who knows!

CHADWICK R. SUTTON (Company) Previous Credits: Slave, Oedipus; Walker Harris, Two Rooms; Jake, North Star. Future Plans: To continue learning. To have never-ending happiness.

JANAI TRAVIS (Company) Previous Credits: Manto, Oedipus; Relia, North Star; Joan, Sexual Perversity in Chicago. Future Plans: To graduate 2010... and journey off to grad school allowing the light and love of God to shine through me.

MAX WARDLAW (Company) Previous Credits: Moon, References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot; Ensemble, Mother Courage and Her Children. Future Plans: Graduate and move to New York.

FRANK R. WILLIAMS (Company) Previous Credits: Actor 4, Seven Passages; Rooftop, Our Lady of 121st Street; Creon, Oedipus. Future Plans: Grad school or move to NYC with my mother to pursue Broadway, followed by being a movie/TV star.
LEIGH FONDAKOWSKI was the Head Writer of The Laramie Project and has been a member of Tectonic Theater Project since 1995. She is an Emmy nominated co-screenwriter for the adaptation of The Laramie Project for HBO. Her latest work, The People's Temple, has been performed under her direction at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Perseverance Theater, American Theater Company and The Guthrie Theater, and received the Glickman Award for Best New Play in the Bay Area in 2005. Another original play, I Think I Like Girls, premiered at Encore Theater in San Francisco under her direction and was voted one of the top 10 plays of 2002 by The Advocate. Other directing credits include: Gerda's Lieutenant by Ellen Reeves and Bennett Singer (Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts), 3 Seconds in the Key by Deb Margolin (San Francisco Playhouse), The Laramie Project (Berkeley Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Perseverance Theater), La Voix Humaine by Jean Cocteau (Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh). Leigh is a 2007 recipient of the NEA/TCG Theatre Residency Program for Playwrights and is developing a play about 19th century actress Charlotte Cushman with Tectonic Theater Project. She is a faculty member in the Master's in Contemporary Performance program at Naropa University and will hold a Visiting Chair position this spring at the University of Minnesota.

KELLI SIMPKINS is incredibly privileged to be involved with the creation of GOOD DEATH. She has been a company member of Tectonic Theater Project for a decade and is one of the original creator/performers of The Laramie Project (Off-B'Way, Denver Center, Berkeley Rep, La Jolla Playhouse). As a performer, she was last seen as Maze Carrol in Itamar Moses' Celebrity Row at ATC (d/David Cromer). Recent theater credits: Fair Use (d/Meredith McDonough) and Good Boys and True (d/Pam McKinnon), both at Steppenwolf Theatre; Execution of Justice (d/Gary Griffon) at About Face Theatre; The People's Temple (d/Leigh Fondakowski) at The Guthrie, Perseverance and Berkeley Rep; and One Arm (d/Moises Kaufman) at Steppenwolf. She spent four years working with Kaufman as a dramaturg/performer on 33 Variations before it premiered. Current projects include performer/dramaturg/performer on Casa Cushman, a play about Victorian actress Charlotte Cushman and dramaturg for Gerda's Lieutenant. FILM/TV: A League of Their Own, Chasing Amy, Law & Order: C.I. and HBO's The Laramie Project (Emmy nomination: Ensemble Writing). She is a certified Tectonic teacher and has taught and developed work for several years.

TECTONIC THEATER PROJECT is an award-winning company whose plays have been performed around the world. The company is dedicated to developing innovative works that explore theatrical language and form, fostering an artistic dialogue with our audiences on the social, political and human issues that affect us all. In service to this goal, Tectonic supports readings, workshops, and full theatrical productions, as well as training students around the country in their play-making techniques.

Tectonic Theater Project was founded in 1991 by Moisés Kaufman and Jeffrey LaHoste. Tectonic refers to the art and science of structure and was chosen to emphasize the company's interest in construction - how things are made, and how they might be made differently.

Its groundbreaking plays, The Laramie Project, Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde, and I Am My Own Wife, have sparked national discourse about their subjects and have inspired artists and audiences worldwide.
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Assistant Director................................Brandon S. Bierlein
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Kailin Kenerly, Anna Mundo, Peter Noreen
Max Rasmussen, Joe Siebert, Chelsea Waddles
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Scene Shop Foreman.................................Rob E
Carpenters....................................Alicia Barker, David Benge
Jesse Bires, Malcolm Campbell, Jeffrey Chaney
Sara Davidson, Trevor Frederikson, Kyle Moore
Billy Ossos, Jacob Potter, Steve Rafferty
Charles Schaefer, Chelsea Wolocko
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Painters........................................David Benge, Macy Hagan
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Properties Master.................................Erin Hemming
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Stitchers.......................................Kristen Ahern, Evan Andrews
Malcolm Campbell, Kristal Firman, Felicia Genther
Brandy Hunt, Aurora Klok, Sara Tomaszewski
Leandra Watson
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SPECIAL THANKS

The company of Good Death would like to thank the many people who contributed to the research of this piece by sharing their personal stories and professional perspectives. We appreciate your time and are honored to be bringing your stories to the stage.

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David & Sandy Rozelle
Jerome & Yvonne Schaefer
Martin F. Schug
John & Terry Seibert
Craig Sloan
Ann Smith
Robert & Carol Payne Smith
Linda Stieve & Dan Coyne
Eileen Treppa

LEADING PLAYERS
Mary Tyler
Bill & Carrie Venema
John & Alisande Voss
John & Helen Wattles
Arthur Welch
Roger & Molly Williams
Fay Woolrich
Raoul & JoAnn Yochim
Joyce Zastrow
Marianna Zeman
Lawrence & Raye Ziring
Anonymous

SUPPORTING PLAYERS
Shirley Bach
John & Jane Nelson-Holmes
Judy Jolliffe
Thomas & Gail Kasdorf
Robert & Emanuelle Nagler
Joseph & Katherine Ulrey
Anonymous

CHORUS & CREW
Barbara Andrews
Thomas & Laurel Andrews
Bill & Jeanette Appel
Chet & Jo Arnold
Jeffrey Bell
Mark & Michelle Berg
Corinne Cummins
Lois Davis
Carl Doubleday
Ed & Nancy Giffels
James Heaton
Linda & Joseph Kanamueller
Jean Kenz
Sallie Kittredge
Nelly Kurzmann
Robin Marshall
Purdence McCabe
James & Donna Menchinger
Monica Nahm
Barbara Reed
Barbara Rensenhouse
Helenan & Stanley Robin
Dan & Joyce Shehee
Lois Stegman
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- Pacifica Quartet Performs Beethoven
  Friday, September 25, 2009, 8:00 pm
  Dalton Center Recital Hall, WMU

- Esperanza Spalding
  Saturday, October 3, 2009, 8:00 pm
  Dalton Center Recital Hall, WMU

- Bel Canto: The World of Paganini
  Friday, October 23, 2009, 7:30 pm
  Wellspring Theater, Epic Center

- Electric Don Quixote
  Saturday, November 14, 2009, 8:00 pm
  Dalton Center Recital Hall, WMU

- Lionel Loueke Trio
  Friday, December 11, 2009, 8:00 pm
  Dalton Center Recital Hall, WMU

- Meredith Arwady: A Program of Song
  Friday, January 22, 2010, 8:00 pm
  Dalton Center Recital Hall, WMU

- Ben Allison & Man Size Safe
  Friday, February 12, 2010, 8:00 pm
  Dalton Center Recital Hall, WMU

- Juilliard String Quartet
  Friday, February 26, 2010, 8:00 pm
  Dalton Center Recital Hall, WMU

- Intimate Voices: Enso String Quartet
  Friday, March 12, 2010, 7:30 pm
  Wellspring Theater, Epic Center

- Postcard from Heaven: Music for Flute, Viola and Harp
  Friday, April 9, 2010, 7:30 pm
  Wellspring Theater, Epic Center

- Chopin in Paris
  Tuesday, April 27, 2010, 8:00 pm
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2009-2010 Season

Fiddler on the Roof
SEPT. 25 - OCT. 10
Civic Auditorium | Musical

Twelfth Night
OCT. 9 - OCT. 24
Parish Theatre | Comedy

It's a Wonderful Life
NOV. 27 - DEC. 13
Civic Auditorium | Holiday Musical

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee
JAN. 15 - JAN. 30
Parish Theatre | Musical

Mark Twain's
Is He Dead?
JAN. 29 - FEB. 13
Civic Auditorium | Comedy

Voice of Good Hope
FEB. 19 - MAR. 6
Parish Theatre | Drama

All My Sons
MAR. 26 - APR. 11
Parish Theatre | Drama

Dixie Swim Club
APR. 2 - APR. 17
Civic Auditorium | Comedy

Jekyll & Hyde
MAY 14 - MAY 29
Civic Auditorium | Musical

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Feb 19 & 20 | I Wanna Text You Up or Same Text Marriage
Mar 26 & 27 | Kalamazooological Society
Apr 16 & 17 | Tilt-A-Whirled Economy
May 21 & 22 | American Idle Hands

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2009-2010 SEASON SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER 20, 2009
Wellspring Dance Day, Fall*

NOVEMBER 13-15 & 19-21, 2009
Fall Concert of Dance

FEBRUARY 26-28, 2010
Midwest Regional Alternative Dance (RAD) Festival

MARCH 7, 2010
Wellspring Dance Day, Spring*

APRIL 15-18, 2010
Spring Concert of Dance

MAY 15, 2010
Student Concert of Dance

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9 Parts of Desire
by Heather Raffo
Actor and playwright Heather Raffo opens a dialogue between the east and the west in this profound and impassioned look at the lives of contemporary Iraqi women.
Sept. 24 - Oct. 4, 2009

Good Death
WMU theatre students, in collaboration with members of the acclaimed Tectonic Theater Project create an original play based on thought-provoking research and interviews with the Kalamazoo community on death and dying.
Oct. 8 - 17, 2009

Five Women Wearing the Same Dress
by Alan Ball
The wicked and witty collide in this uproarious comedy by Alan Ball as five renegade bridesmaids bicker, banter, and form a connection that celebrates the spirit of women in all their differences.
Oct. 29 - Nov. 8, 2009

Carousel
by Richard Rodgers & Oscar Hammerstein II
Rodgers and Hammerstein’s classic American musical combines passion and danger to tell a story of redemption and the power of love.
Nov. 12 - 21, 2009

Late Night Broadway
Join the graduating seniors of our renowned Music Theatre Performance program as they present a cabaret evening of New York show tunes with Broadway star Julia Murney.
Dec. 3 - 5, 2009

Eurydice
by Sarah Ruhl
Sarah Ruhl crafts an arresting and inventive retelling of the Orpheus myth, approaching the love story with comic audacity, magical surrealism, and devastating pathos.
Jan. 28 - Feb. 7, 2010

As You Like It
by William Shakespeare
Love in all its guises and the wit and beauty of Shakespeare’s language provide this romantic comedy with a sense of whimsy and delight.
Feb. 18 - 26, 2010

Chicago
by Fred Ebb, Bob Fosse, & John Kander
Kander and Ebb’s sexy, sophisticated, and stylish musical about murder, corruption, greed, and showbiz brings all that jazz to the stage.
Mar. 18 - Apr. 2, 2010

Tambourines to Glory
by Langston Hughes
Harlem Renaissance luminary Langston Hughes brings us this gospel play with music about a friendship put to the test when two women’s interest collide in a Harlem church.
Apr. 8 - 18, 2010

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