An MFA Thesis Project
Written and Conceived by Danielle Levin

April 15, 16 & 17 at 6:30 p.m.
Presents

WHOLE CLOTH

An MFA Thesis Project
Written and Conceived by Danielle Levin

Direction and Development by
Molly Aaronson-Gelb

Featuring
Nancy Carlin, Lucas Hatton, Danielle Levin

Stage Directions Read by
Jennifer Grace
Embroidery
Tasá Gleason

Scenic and Projection Design Collaborator
Ian Wallace

Contains adult themes and language
Program Notes

A few years back I hosted my first Passover seder. I didn’t grow up with seders … or with religion of any kind. In fact, I was fairly suspicious of religion. But, somehow the idea of a seder appealed to me.

My friends piled into my too-small living room, and I pieced together an extremely reform online Haggadah from a woman who calls herself the “Velveteen Rabbi.” I fed them matzoh lasagna … with sausage. And also cake, as if to say, with some caution: I’m Jewish, but I’m not very Jewish.

That first seder taught me a whole lot and became an annual tradition with my friends. I absolutely loved the rituals that we practiced that April night and the stories behind them as described in our Haggadah. I loved the theatricality of my religion … my religion — for the first time it felt like a part of me.

That same year, I was at a family gathering when a cousin began to tell me stories about Elke Schiff, my great-grandmother — these arresting, incredible stories of her life back in Minsk. Elke was someone whose name, at that point, I didn’t even know. She died a month after I was born. I knew her only as “Bubbe” and a face on my grandparents’ hallway wall.

Elke’s was a story that wasn’t mine, but it belonged to a woman who knew me, who once held me in her arms, even if I didn’t know her. A woman of my blood. She … felt like a part of me.

In the years since, I’ve had some s**t go down related to genetics. And that? Yeah, that’s a part of me too.

As an only child, growing up relatively far from extended family, I hadn’t felt a part of something bigger. But now, with these revelations — comforting, fascinating, horrible — a history and a sense of belonging began to take shape, to well up behind me. And I began to write a play.
What you’ll see tonight is a piece that’s in its first stages of development: a “Workshop Presentation.” I hope to continue to shape it into a real-live stage-play one day when that’s a thing we do again. This presentation is the beginning of a road, not the final product. I’m extraordinarily excited to have you here at the journey’s beginning. Thank you very much for joining me!

– Danielle Levin

About Ansky:

The text of the questions from Ansky’s Ethnography Questionnaire are taken directly from Nathaniel Deutsch’s translation in his book *The Jewish Dark Continent: Life and Death in the Russian Pale of Settlement*.


There’s a lot out there about (the real) Ansky. I heartily encourage you to take a look at Gabriella Safran’s very readable book: *Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk’s Creator, S. An-Sky*, which provided inspiration for many ideas in this piece.


THE CAST

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<th>Role</th>
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<td>Elke</td>
<td>Nancy Carlin</td>
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<td>Ansky</td>
<td>Lucas Hatton</td>
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<td>Danielle</td>
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Stage Directions                     Jennifer Grace
THE CAST

Nancy Carlin (Elke) has performed and directed extensively in regional theaters, including A.C.T., Berkeley Rep, Cal Shakes, and OSF. A lecturer with SJSU and UC Berkeley, she holds a BA in comparative literature from Brown University and an MFA in acting from A.C.T. Carlin co-authored the musical, Max Understood and can be seen in the soon to be released Eleanor Coppola film, Love is Love is Love.

Jennifer Grace (Stage Directions) received her BA from Kansas State University in 1997. She has been working as a professional actor since, most notably in a record-shattering run as Emily Webb in Tony award-winning director David Cromer’s critically acclaimed production of Our Town, which she performed in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles, opposite actors such as Michael Shannon, Helen Hunt and Michael McKean, and for which she was recognized with a Theatre World Award for Outstanding Off-Broadway debut.

Lucas Hatton (Ansky) has performed on myriad regional stages in Chicago and the Bay Area. He also appears in several 2K video games. Currently, Lucas teaches performance studies and social justice at San Jose State University and is a co-founder of Davis Repertory Theatre.

Danielle Levin (Danielle) is an actor and dialect coach, who has been seen in the Bay Area at Marin Theatre Company, CentralWorks, Shotgun Players, and Crowded Fire, Aurora Theatre Company, Center REPertory Company, Just Theater, SF Playhouse, TheatreWorks, and Word for Word. Danielle is an Associate Artist with TheatreFIRST, Symmetry Theatre Company, and PlayGround SF. Her interests lie in devised performance that communicates using surprising visual elements and unusual use of language. She is a graduate of the University of Chicago. Whole Cloth is her MFA thesis project.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Molly Aaronson-Gelb (Direction and Development) is the founder and Co-Artistic Director of Just Theater, for whom she directed many plays including Cry it Out, We Are Proud to Present a Presentation…, A Maze, and Far Away. She directs in the Bay Area. She is a member of the Lincoln Center Director’s Lab, and holds an MA in Performance Studies from Northwestern University. She is the Drama teacher at The College Preparatory School in Oakland and Mother of a theater-loving five-year-old.
Ian Wallace (Scenic and Projection Design Collaborator) is excited to get to help bring Danielle’s beautiful text to life. Previous designs for UC Davis include Flora the Red Menace, The Threepenny Opera and Peter and the Starcatcher. In addition to lecturing at UC Davis, Wallace is also a Professor and Department Chair of Theatre and Cinema Arts at Folsom Lake College.

Tasá Gleason (Embroidery) has been designing and creating costumes for dance and theatre for many years. Her work has been seen in Seattle, the greater Bay Area, New York and has toured internationally. Gleason has a background in draping and construction and holds an M.F.A. in Dramatic Arts, Costume Design from UC Davis, and a BFA in Dance Performance from Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle WA.

SPECIAL THANKS
UC Davis: Mindy Cooper, Margaret Laurena Kemp, Maggie Morgan, Sven-Erik Rose, Susie Owens, Myke Kunkel, Patrick M. O’Reilly, McKayla Butym, Megan Kimura, Michael G. French, Jennifer Grace, Verónica Díaz-Muñíz, Barnaby Tree O’Rorke.

Care and Feeding: Jessica Heidt, Carrie Paff, Hillary Casper, Colin MacNaughton, and all the Frenz, Jon Arkin, Lorna Gill, Katie Rubin, Oona Hatton, Jon Tracy, Michelle Howard, james g. dashe + oliver day, Susannah Martin, Christopher Lee Douglas, Jonathan Spector, Maisie Spector-Gelb.

And Family: Carol and Martin Levin, Pieter Hartsook, Sonja Sutherland, Susan Hoffman, Michael Hoffman, Irene Alperstein, Daniel Schiff, Roberto Lewis, and the Levins and Schiffs, their ancestors and descendants, including, of course, Max and Elke.

UC Davis Department of Theatre and Dance Staff
Production Manager Susie Owens
Asst. Technical Director Myke Kunkel
Facility Manager/Audio Specialist Megan Kimura
Master Electrician Patrick O’Reilly
Costume Shop Foreman McKayla Butym
Marketing and Public Relations Michael G. French
UC Davis Department of Theatre and Dance Faculty
Larry Bogad, Chair, Performance Studies
Mindy Cooper, Acting, Musical Theatre
David Grenke, Dance
Lynette Hunter, Performance Studies
Margaret Laurena Kemp, Acting
Maggie Morgan, Costume Design
Jon D. Rossini, Performance Studies

Lecturers
Stuart Carroll, Ballet
Mary Beth Cavanaugh, Movement
Paul Gordon, Granada Artist-in-Residence
Pamila Z. Gray, Lighting
Michele Apriña Leavy, Acting
Curtis Moore, Granada Artist-in-Residence
Steven Schmidt, Instructor, Production Management
Ian Wallace, Visual Design

Arts Administration
Karen Ostergard, Chief Administrative Officer
Barbara Olivier, Undergraduate Program Coordinator
Julie McGilvray, Undergraduate Advisor
Melany Miners, Graduate Program Coordinator
Michael G. French, Arts Marketing Specialist

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE
UPCOMING VIRTUAL EVENTS

*When It Works, where are you? Invitations and shared practices*
An MFA Project by Barnaby O’Rorke
April 19, 21 & 23 at 5 p.m. PDT

*Juliet and Romeo*
A New Musical
Book by Paul Gordon
Music and lyrics by Paul Gordon and Curtis Moore
Directed by Mindy Cooper and Lisa Quoresimo
June 3-5