

The Mood Room

Big Dance Theater

30th Anniversary Season



CONTACT

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Notes from the Director

Sometimes you find an artistic soul mate in the simple act of opening a book. This is what happened to me when I read the late 20th C “plays” of visual artist Guy de Cointet. But, they are not really plays-- they are visual events with texts that bask in the hot mess of the non-narrative posing as narrative-- a state I would call living!

Here is where de Cointet and I intersect: he is devoted to detours, departures, tonal shifts, and the unconfirmed. An atmosphere of codes, exits, and non-results permeate the writing. He quotes without substantiation or reason, he is a-historic, is liberated from achieving even a glimmer of resolution, and his authorial voice is intentionally cracking. His theater is both textual and visually based, without any hierarchy for language, truth, or the answer-- and the physical objects in the texts have no stable meaning throughout the play.

No one changes; no one learns anything.

The Mood Room will work specifically from the text of de Cointet's (1982) text *The Five Sisters*. *The Five Sisters* very lightly references Chekhov's *Three Sisters* with both a hilarious disrespect – and with a recognition of the internal intention of the regret, despair and relational complexity in the Chekhov text. The departure from the original Cointet production will be the staging, choreography and visual design, as *The Mood Room* will utilize Cointet's words without any reference to his original staging or visual design. In *The Mood Room*, the stage will be framed in a curtain of pink bubble wrap, and staged using dance and the abstraction of bodies in space.

In Cointet's text, the five sisters often exit to what is referred to as a “mood room”, and my intention is to create a pre-recorded film of the sisters who are not present in any given moment on stage. With 77 entrances and exits, this will create a layer of meaning, plus a complex formal problem to design and navigate.

The piece will be one single event, performed by five self-identified women, and run approximately one hour.

Annie-B Parson

? Guy de Cointet (1934-1983)

Guy de Cointet was a French-born visual artist who first settled in New York City in 1965, where he shared a studio with Warhol's muse Viva, and then relocated his practice to Los Angeles. Coming from the Parisian world of advertising, this transgressive, enigmatic artist wrote and staged early performance pieces in art spaces and museums. These pieces were intense visual events where objects and language played a central and equal role. With elaborate sets and props, he translated his genius for collage into his linguistic investigations, and he combined his homeland's "high literature" with mundane dialogues and soap opera scenes. Cointet was part of the LA arts scene throughout the 70's, where he was known as the city's Duchamp, until his early death in 1983.

In the Art Forum summer issue of 2008 dedicated to Guy de Cointet, Marie de Brugerolle writes: "(...)a figure nearly as inscrutable as the wealth of encoded drawings and books he produced; and as uncanny as his plays incorporating snippets of television soap operas, Baudelaire, Mexican radio and conversations on the street as dialogue."

Conceived and directed by **Annie-B Parson**

Choreographed by **Annie-B Parson**

Performed by **Brittany Engel-Adams, Elizabeth DeMent, Theda Hammel, and Jennie MaryTai Liu.**

Music by **Holly Herndon** (in dialogue)

Sound Design and Re-composition by **Tei Blow**

Set Design by **Lauren Machen**

Video Design by **Keith Skretch**

Lighting Design by TBD

Costume Design by TBD

Production Manager Sarah Lurie

Associate Director and Stage Manager Ilana Khanin

Producer Sara Pereira da Silva

Tour Representation ArKtype / Thomas O. Kriegsmann

Original text by Guy de Cointet, *The Five Sisters* (1982)

Development and Touring

The Mood Room is produced by Big Dance Theater commissioned by The Kitchen and co-commissioned by Carolina Performing Arts, The Brooklyn Academy of Music, FringeArts Philadelphia, The Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN) with funds from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Princeton University's Lewis Center for the Arts, and the Wexner Center for the Arts. The Mood Room was created with additional residency support from the Atlantic Center for the Arts in Orlando.

AVAILABLE FOR TOURING THROUGHOUT **2020 & 2021**

2020 - RESIDENCIES

February 26 - March 8

April 14 - 26

May 11- 23

August 3-14

August 24-29

Atlantic Center for the Arts, Orlando

Princeton, NJ

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

Brooklyn Academy of Music, NYC

Fringe Arts, Philadelphia

2020/21 - PERFORMANCES

September Oct 1-4

October 22-24

December 1-5

Fringe Arts, Philadelphia - **PREMIERE**

The Wexner Arts Center, Columbus, OH

The Kitchen co-presented by the Brooklyn Academy of Music at BAM Fisher - **NYC PREMIERE**

January 14-16

February

Out There Festival, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

Carolina Performing Arts, Chapel Hill

PERSONNEL: 12 people

1 director; 5 performers; 1 production manager; 1 stage manager; 1 lighting supervisor; 1 sound supervisor; 1 video supervisor; 1 company manager.

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Photo by Annie-B Parson. Pictured: Elizabeth DeMent and Tina Satter

“Too little has been said of the feminism running through Big Dance Theater’s body of work, from its stagings of Anne Carson’s translation of *Alcestis* (*Supernatural Wife*), the text of Andrea Dworkin (*Sacrifice*), and Mac Wellman’s *Antigone*, to a reinterpretation of Agnes Varda’s *Cleo from 5 to 7* (*Comme Toujours Here I Stand*). This (17c) is not the first time Parson has considered women and erasure.”

[Amber Reed for The Brooklyn Rail](#)

ANNIE-B PARSON (ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CHOREOGRAPHER)

Annie-B Parson co-founded Big Dance Theater (BDT) in 1991 with Molly Hickok and Paul Lazar. With Big Dance, Parson has created numerous large-scale works for such venues as BAM, The Old Vic/London, Sadler's Wells/London, The Walker, The National Theater/Paris, Japan Society and The Kitchen. Parson has also made choreography for rock shows, marching bands, movies, museums, objects, television, augmented- reality, opera, ballet, theater, symphony orchestras, string quartets, and a chorus of 1,000 amateur singers. Her awards include the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award (2014), an Olivier Award nomination in choreography (2015), Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists Award (2014), U.S.A. Artists Grant in Theater (2012), Guggenheim Fellowship in Choreography (2007), two New York Dance Performance (Bessie) Awards (2010, 2002), and three New York Foundation for the Arts Choreography Fellowships (2013, 2006 and 2000). Big Dance Theater received an OBIE Award (2000) and the first Jacob's Pillow Dance Award (2007). Artists she has worked with, include David Byrne, David Bowie, St. Vincent, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Wendy Whelan, Anne Carson, Laurie Anderson, Lucas Hnath, David Lang, Nico Muhly, The Martha Graham Dance Co., and Jonathan Demme. Her work with David Byrne began in 2007 with his tours with Brian Eno, and then St. Vincent, and his musical *Here Lies Love*. Their most recent work, *American Utopia*, is currently on Broadway. Parson's new book *Drawing the Surface of Dance: A Biography in Charts* came out in October and is published by Wesleyan Press.

Annie-B Parson's exacting, exultant and altogether astonishing choreography often have them moving in a single, tidal wave.

—Ben Brantley, The New York Times



Photo by Ian Douglas. Pictured: Elizabeth DeMent

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Founded in 1991, [Big Dance Theater](#) is known for its inspired use of dance, music, text and visual design. The company often works with wildly incongruent source material, weaving and braiding disparate strands into multi-dimensional performance. Led by Artistic Director Annie-B Parson, Big Dance has delved into the literary work of such authors as Twain, Tanizaki, Wellman, Euripides and Flaubert, and dance is used as both frame and metaphor to theatricalize these writings.

For over 25 years, [Big Dance Theater](#) has worked to create over 20 dance/theater works, generating each piece over months of collaboration with its associate artists, a long-standing, ever-evolving group of actors, dancers, composers and designers. In March of 2014, the company premiered its latest project, Alan Smithee Directed This Play, at Les Substances in Lyon, France ahead of its return to the BAM Harvey Theater in the fall of 2014. Their production Man in a Case, which features Mikhail Baryshnikov, premiered at Hartford Stage and recently toured to Berkeley Repertory Theater, Broad Stage in Santa Monica, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

Big Dance Theater received New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Awards in 2002 and 2010; the company was awarded an OBIE in 2000 and BDT company members have received 5 other “Bessie” Awards and an OBIE award for their work with Big Dance. In 2007 the company received the first-ever Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award.

Big Dance Theater has been presented around the world at venues including: Brooklyn Academy of Music, Dance Theater Workshop, The Kitchen, New York Live Arts, The Chocolate Factory, Classic Stage Company, Japan Society, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, The Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago), Walker Art Center, Yerba Buena, On the Boards, UCLA Live, and The Spoleto Festival. Internationally, the group has performed in France, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Brazil and Germany. Most recent commissions have been from Les Substances in Lyon, Chaillot Theatre National in Paris, The Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Walker Art Center, and the Old Vic/Dance Umbrella, London.

Effortless mastery...is a rare and wonderful thing. How rewarding to experience Big Dance Theater’s display of it.

—The Washington Post

ARTISTIC TEAM

Tei Blow (Sound Design and Recomposition) Tei’s work combines live performance, video, and sound with found media. It has been featured at Hartford Stage, Dance Theater Workshop, Lincoln Center Festival, The Kitchen, BAM, The Public Theater, The Broad Stage, MCA Chicago, MFA Boston, Kate Werble Gallery, Baryshnikov Arts Center, The Wadsworth Atheneum, and other theatres around the world. In addition to Big Dance Theater, he has performed and designed for: The Laboratory of Dmitry Krymov, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and David Neumann/Advanced Beginner Group. He received a 2015 New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Award for Outstanding Sound Design, a 2016 Creative Capital Award, a 2016 NYSCA Individual Artist Grant, and a 2018 Cage/Cunningham Fellowship from Baryshnikov Arts Center. He is a founding member of Royal Osiris Karaoke Ensemble, a musical priesthood exploring contemporary mythologies of love and connection.



Elizabeth DeMent (Performer) is a New York-based performer originally from Ukiah, CA. She began her studies there with Mary Knight at the Mendocino Ballet as well as the Marin Ballet. Elizabeth graduated from the Juilliard School under the artistic direction of Benjamin Harkarvy and has worked with the Riverside Ballet Theater, Peridance Ensemble, Metropolitan Opera Ballet, Liz Gerring Dance Company, Stephen Petronio, Jodi Melnick, Patrick Corbin, Dance Heginbotham, as well as playwrights Christina Masciotti and Tina Satter/Half-Straddle. She has enjoyed performing live with St. Vincent at the Hollywood Bowl, Governor's Ball and David Lynch's *Festival of Disruption*. Elizabeth currently performs with Big Dance Theater. She has worked as associate choreographer to Annie-b Parson, Susan Stroman, and Liz Gerring. Productions include; *Here Lies Love*, St. Vincent's *Digital Witness* Tour, *Love This Giant* Tour with David Byrne and St. Vincent, and David Lang's Lincoln Center performance of *Public Domain*. She is currently working on David Byrne's Broadway show, *American Utopia* as both associate choreographer and stand-by. She has choreographed for and performed with musicians Rodrigo y Gabriela on their most recent album, *Mettavolution*. Elizabeth was honored with a Bessie Award for her outstanding performance in *17c*, presented by the Brooklyn Academy of Music. In 2019, Elizabeth became the Director of Big Dance Theater's Repertory & Creative Workshops. She will be setting work from the Repertory at Sarah Lawrence College and Cal Arts in 2020.

Brittany Engel-Adams (Performer) is a lecturer of dance at Rutgers University. She was recently awarded the Life Experience scholarship from the University of the Arts and is attending their low-residency MFA in Dance program. Brittany has danced with Ailey II, Donna Uchizono, Emily Coates, Netta Yerushalmy, Stefanie Batten Bland, Yvonne Rainer, among others. She performed across disciplines for projects like *Sleep No More* immersive theater; *The White Album* a multimedia performance piece directed by Lars Jan. She is featured in the film *Chirag* directed by Spike Lee, and is a co-star in the HBO series *Boardwalk Empire*. Brittany is currently working with Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born on a project titled "Sitting on a Man's Head."

Holly Herndon (Music) is an American composer, musician, and sound artist based in Berlin, Germany. After studying composition at Stanford University and completing her Ph. D. at Stanford University's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics, she pursued her international career.

Lauren Machen (Set Designer) was raised in Minneapolis in a home immersed in the arts. She studied Art and Psychology at Macalester College and Textiles at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has worked as a set designer for over a decade creating sets for fashion, music and advertising and has expanded her practice to include building immersive environments and creative direction. Clients include POP, Vogue, Rihanna, St. Vincent, Calvin Klein, and Nike among many others. Her personal artwork explores themes of race, identity and mental wellness.

Jennie MaryTai Liu (Performer) is an artist engaged with bodies across disciplines of choreography, video, and writing. Her work has been commissioned by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Human Resources LA, The Mistake Room, Bushwick Starr, Live Arts Exchange, the former Dance Theater Workshop, Prelude Festival, HERE Arts Center, and Incubator Arts Center. She has been a resident artist at Headlands Center for the Arts, Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, Bogliasco Foundation, Yaddo Arts Colony, EMPAC, and Brooklyn Arts Exchange, and has received grants from the Foundation for Contemporary Art Emergency Grant, MAP Fund, Jerome Foundation, and Center for Cultural Innovation. She co-founded and edited riting.org, an experiment in writing that engages with performance being made now in LA. She also regularly collaborates as a performer with Big Dance Theater, Adam Linder, and Poor Dog Group. BFA in Theater, Experimental Theater Wing, NYU; MFA in Dance, Hollins University.

Keith Skretch (Video Design) is an award-winning video designer with a knack for collaborative development and a yen for conceptual rigor. His work has been seen on dozens of stages across the US and in Canada, Mexico, and Europe, including the Brooklyn Academy of Music, REDCAT, Kirk Douglas Theatre, Freud Playhouse, The Old Globe, MCA Chicago, OZ Arts Nashville, Performance Space 122, Royal & Derngate, and Teatro Experimental de Jalisco. Skretch's installation works have popped up at spaces including Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Mistake Room, Walt Disney Concert Hall, HERE Arts Center, and OUE Skyspace, and his animations have been featured on Huffington Post, Fader, Colossal, and Gizmodo. Skretch has collaborated with artists from LA's dublab to WNYC's Radiolab, and worked as a visual designer for The Hettema Group.

He's received Bessie, Henry Hewes, and Ovation awards and was a finalist for the 2017 Sherwood Award. He holds a BA from the University of Chicago and MFA from CalArts.