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March 15-16, 2024
The Theatre at
The Christian Academy
Brookhaven PA

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PRESENTS

El Roi
Reflecting





The Word In The Wings

By: Kaya Weaver

You can read more reflections on The Word in the Wings.

Reflecting El Roi was created for Lent, a season when Christians prepare to remember the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ through celebrating Easter. The ballet uses concrete action, spatial relationships, and developing energy to explore this idea of preparation as well as the traditional lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and giving as they are found in Scripture.

"A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low…'" Isaiah 40:3-4 (NRSVUE)

In Part I of the ballet, the barre onstage clues you in that this section represents a warm-up. As dancers prepare for rehearsal by repeating familiar movements with increasing range of motion, the energy of this section gradually builds but isn't released yet. While dancers warm up, they don't know what new or challenging movements the choreographer will ask them to execute in rehearsal, but their routine prepares them for anything. In this piece the energy is held, ready for the main event, much as daily prayer or Scripture meditation prepares us to respond when God shows up in surprising ways.

"Is not this the fast that I choose: …not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly…" Isaiah 58:6-8 (NRSVUE)

Part II begins and ends with the dancers grouped in a formation together, but in the middle they spread out, each dancing her own phrase. One dancer waits in stillness amid all the movement. Each individual carves out a space, as if to be alone with God, reflecting one goal of prayer and fasting: to empty ourselves of idols and distractions so we can see God's purposes and glory. Yet solitude isn't an end in itself. The dancers return to a group formation at the end of "Prayer & Fasting;" likewise, Christians return to community after solitude in hope that time with God shapes our interactions to reflect Christ and the love God expresses through the cross--a shape which the dancers trace over their bodies to signify the intention of their prayer.

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me…to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor…" Isaiah 61:1-2 (NRSVUE)

In Part III, the energy built up in "Preparation" and cultivated in the gentler movements of "Prayer and Fasting" finally bursts forth. The dancers move in sweeping paths around the stage. The dance is punctuated by energetic turns and jumps. The release of energy indicates that "Giving" is what all the rest was for. The dancers join hands and dance close and coordinated to show that the release of energy is for the sake of blessing others. The disciplines that prepare us to respond to God's surprising activity are preparing us to give of our resources, our time, our joy and our love, for the sake of blessing others as God has blessed us.

El Roi Reflecting

Filmed LIVE at
The Theatre at
The Christian Academy
March 15 & 16
2024

Produced, Written, Directed, & Choreographed by:
Melody Mendoza

Theological Research & Programing:
Kaya Weaver & Jessica Noonan

Sound Design: Robert Stanert
Stage Manager: Randahl Williams
Lighting Design: Jon Futty

SPECIAL THANKS:
Lindsay Burns for the costume alterations
Lindsay Burns & Kelly Shea for script editing
Each volunteer who helped set-up/break-down the performance and lobby spaces.

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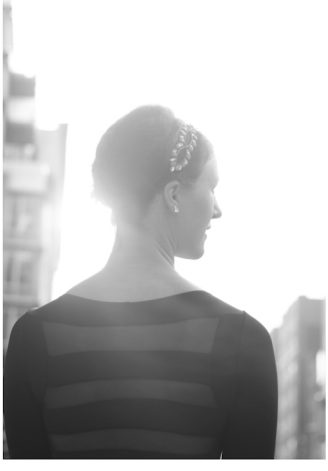
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Melody's Note

(a letter from the Artistic Director)

"In Lent we reflect, we prepare, for a week that is holy, of a God who deeply cares."

Growing up, the season of Lent was something I only vaguely knew about and if you asked me anything about it I'd say it had something to do with giving up chocolate. In creating this production I wanted to learn more about the season and why people celebrate it so devoutly. After all, Jesus is risen from the dead, so why spend 40 days being deprived of something when we can live by grace? What I learned throughout the course of developing the outline for the show and creating the script and choreography shouldn't have surprised me: Lent is about our hearts.



In giving something up, we are not enduring hardship because we have to, instead, we have the opportunity to remove something out of our life and through its absence, our hearts are prompted to connect with the Lord. This is the first year I have ever intentionally fasted, and in every moment where I've been tempted to give up, my heart gets a little nudge to connect with God and pray for situations in my life and in the lives of others that I would not otherwise have been thinking about.

The name of God, El Roi, means "the God who sees me." It doesn't traditionally have anything to do with Lent, but I chose it for the title because when we understand we are fully seen and known by God, who sacrificed His son, we can then see others through the eyes of Jesus, and pray, fast, and give as Jesus did.

I pray as you experience the ballet and the spoken word and the times of reflection that the Lord speaks to your heart and draws your closer to Him.

Melody Mendoza

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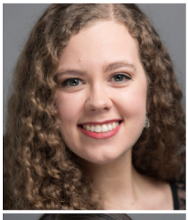
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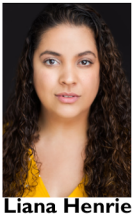


Julia Dutill
Apprentice
Joined GDT 2022



Aleksa Lawry
Apprentice
Joined GDT 2023

Scan here to learn more about our dancers.



Liana Henrie

Liana has been involved with several local theater companies around the Philadelphia metropolitan area. She has worked with New Light Theater, The Ritz Theatre, Steel River Playhouse, Facetime Theatre, and SALT Performing Arts just to name a few.Some of her favorite theater credits include: RENT (Joanne Jefferson and Mimi Marquez), Falsettos (Dr. Charlotte), EVITA (Eva Perón), Disenchanted (Cinderella), Legally Blonde: The Musical (Paulette), and Jesus Christ Superstar (Mary Magdalene).



Julianna Kocher

Julianna holds a B.M. in Harp Performance and a M.M. in Piano Pedagogy from West Chester University. She enjoys freelancing, playing for weddings, special events, and performing with ensembles, bands, and orchestras. She lives in Cochranville with her husband and their 5 children.



Brianna Marsh

Growing up in a family of 7 (often referred to as the "von Marsh Family Singers"), performing and creating was woven into the fabric of Brianna's upbringing. Brianna has performed in over 30 local community and professional theater productions. She has a B.A. in individualized studies focusing on music, theater, dance, and business. Brianna co-founded Scattered Seeds Creative Arts, through which she runs camps and classes in performing and creative arts for kids. She is a member of the band, Benson, in which she and her siblings perform original music inspired by early-2000s pop, southwestern rock, and family legacies. Brianna teaches First Grade during the day and leads worship at her church on Sunday mornings. All praise, honor, credit, and thanks to God for all of the above!

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El Roi
Reflecting

Original Concept, Script & Choreography by Melody Mendoza

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Ballet

Reflection

PRAYER + FASTING

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GIVING

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Ballet

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As you Reflect over the first section, Preparation, feel free to meditate over the following scriptures for how you are seen, known, and loved by God.

"The angel of the LORD found her [Hagar] by a spring of water in the wilderness…So she named the LORD who spoke to her, 'You are El-roi…'" (Genesis 16:7a, 13a).

"O LORD, you will hear the desire of the meek, you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more." (Psalm 10:17-18)

"The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all humankind. From where he sits enthroned he watches all the inhabitants of the earth--he who fashions the hearts of them all, and observes all their deeds." (Psalm 33:13-15)

"O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways." (Psalm 139:1)

"Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?...Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." (Matthew 6:26, 31-32)

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows." (Luke 6:6-7)

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)

As you Reflect over the second section, Prayer + Fasting, feel free to meditate over the following scriptures for how God satisfies our hunger and thirst for Him.

"He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna…in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

"How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?...But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me." (Psalm 13:1, 5-6)

"Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long." (Psalm 25:5)

"As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?" (Psalm 42:1-2)

"O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God." (Psalm 43:3-4)

"My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night." (Psalm 63:5-6)

"My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God." (Psalm 84:2)

"I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning." (Psalm 130:5-6)

"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David." (Isaiah 55:1-3)

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

"But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

"Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you…If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 6:7, 11)

"But those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." (John 4:14)

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35)

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." (John 6:51)

"Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life." (Revelation 21:6)

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