

The background of the poster is a photograph of a cemetery. In the foreground, there are several tombstones of different shapes and sizes. One tombstone has a heart and the words "Living Mother". Another has a cross and a small American flag. There are flowers and a small American flag placed on some of the graves. A large, dark tree stands on the right side of the image. The overall tone is somber and reflective.

Grave Matters

A STRUCTURED IMPROVISATION CONCEIVED AND DIRECTED BY CYNTHIA ALLAN

Live Music by
Deadeye

Good grief. It's a play about ~~death~~...life.



Dr. Cynthia Allan

Department of Communication

Welcome to the 2016-2017 season of the Pittsburg State Theatre! This is our second full season in the Dotty and Bill Miller Theater here at the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts. The facility is a wonderful and intimate space for live performance. With every production we learn more about the possibilities of this terrific new home for Pitt State Theatre!

The 2016-2017 season begins October 27-30 with *Frankenstein*, the classic tale of horror and suspense. Join us for an outstanding spectacle that asks us to consider the line between human and monster. Directed by Gil Cooper, this is the perfect show to kick-off the Halloween season.

Then, on December 2-3, we continue our tradition of Theatre Unplugged with the student-directed one-act plays produced in the Studio Theatre (entrance on Joplin Street). The Studio Theatre remains the venue for student-produced theatre offerings. This year, four of our senior theatre students will present their one-act plays.

In the spring of 2017, Joey Pogue directs the riveting political and family drama, *Other Desert Cities*. When the grown daughter of a powerful family returns home to announce the publication of her memoir, she digs up unexpected family secrets. Alternately cruel and compassionate, this sharply written drama will have you on the edge of your seat. Runs from February 23-26, 2017.

In our final production of the season, from April 27-30, the Advanced Performance Ensemble will create a newly written original work, *Grave Matters*, conceived and directed by Cynthia Allan. This production will also feature the music of local indie-folk band, *DeadEye*. Join us as we spend a few days at Restful Acres Cemetery in this play about life, loss, and lawn care.

Finally, I want to remind our patrons that the move to a new space created new opportunities for Pitt State Theatre – specifically the addition of Saturday matinees for each of our productions. This provides you with 3 evening (Thursday-Saturday) and 2 matinee (Saturday-Sunday) productions for your convenience.

I am sure the faculty, staff, and students of the Department of Communication and PSU Theatre join me in expressing our gratitude for your support and our sincere hopes that you enjoy the 2016-2017 season.

Warm regards,
Dr. Cynthia Allan

Cynthia Allan

Director's Notes

Growing up as a "preacher's kid" in South Florida, it was not unusual for my father to have 2 or 3 funeral services to oversee in a week. Funerals were a fact of life; part of the cycle all of us must follow. And even as a young child I was expected to attend the visitation and graveside services for any relative who passed away. I have the distinct memory of being 12 years old and standing in the reception line next to my grandmother's open casket as older ladies whispered to me that I looked "just like my grandmother." Even then, I recognized the absurdity of the ritual. And I was always awed by cemeteries. They had a peace and mystery about them no other place on earth had – at least until I noticed the lawn workers with their leaf blowers and mowers. So when I began thinking of a setting for my 5th original play done in the structured improvisation format, I automatically turned to one of the central places in every community – the local graveyard. A place where people work, young people hide out, a place of grief and healing, family arguments exploding in the heat of the moment, old grudges are made public, and yet all in tune with the same contradictory, absurd, funny, heartbreaking and beautiful human spirit that runs through all of life – and death, too, as it turns out. Grave Matters celebrates all of us.

I should note that the format I work in is different than that of a regular playwright. In a structured improvisation, the playwright establishes the setting and a framework of scenes or narrative that is then developed more fully by the acting ensemble. Some scenes are more structured than others, some need to be guided by a directorial hand, and yet each is performed spontaneously, in the moment, with no rehearsed dialogue. It is a most difficult way to work, and requires a level of concentration, timing, and creativity that are highly taxing. I appreciate all the many hours of work and training this ensemble of Pitt State actors put into Grave Matters. I am also deeply indebted to my music muse, Megan McCoy, for her compositional expertise and to Deadeye for being willing to play with us again. This show is, quite literally, done in the moment with only an outline to work from. We are throwing ourselves off an artistic cliff, and we hope you enjoy the fall. It was my pleasure to work with these wonderful people over the course of the semester.

Nobody Loses All The Time

by e.e. cummings

nobody loses all the time

i had an uncle named
Sol who was a born failure and
nearly everybody said he should have gone
into vaudeville perhaps because my Uncle Sol could
sing McCann He Was A Diver on Xmas Eve like Hell Itself which
may or may not account for the fact that my Uncle

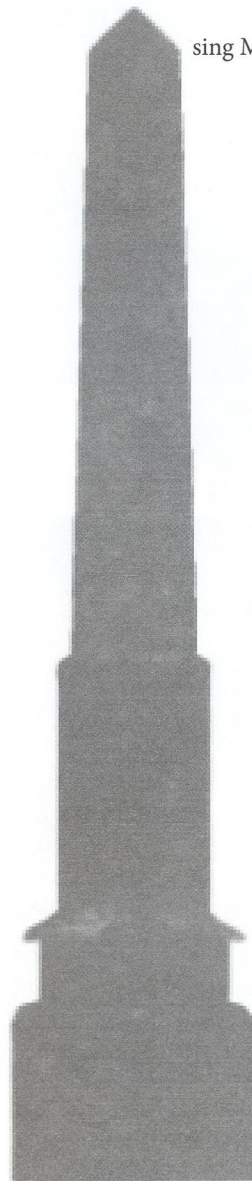
Sol indulged in that possibly most inexcusable
of all to use a highfalootin phrase
luxuries that is or to
wit farming and be
it needlessly
added

my Uncle Sol's farm
failed because the chickens
ate the vegetables so
my Uncle Sol had a
chicken farm till the
skunks ate the chickens when

my Uncle Sol
had a skunk farm but
the skunks caught cold and
died and so
my Uncle Sol imitated the
skunks in a subtle manner

or by drowning himself in the watertank
but somebody who'd given my Uncle Sol a Victor
Victrola and records while he lived presented to
him upon the auspicious occasion of his decease a
scrupulous not to mention splendiferous funeral with
tall boys in black gloves and flowers and everything and
i remember we all cried like the Missouri
when my Uncle Sol's coffin lurched because
somebody pressed a button
(and down went
my Uncle
Sol

and started a worm farm)



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The director, Dr. Cynthia Allan, laughs with her design team, Linden Little (top left) and Lisa Quinteros (bottom left) during a break between scenes.



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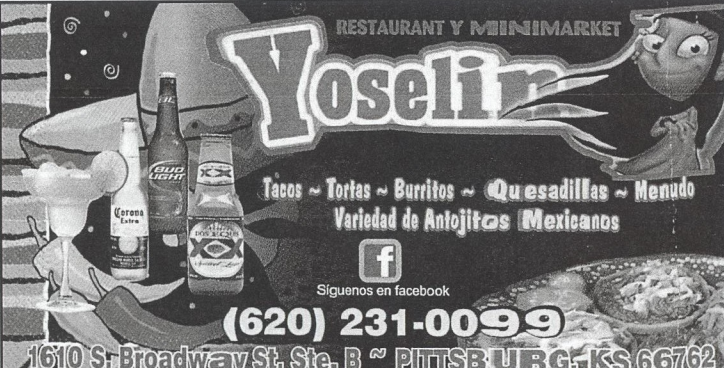
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GRAVE MATTERS

**Conceived and Directed
by Cynthia Allan *
with the Advanced
Performance Ensemble**

Set and Lighting Designer.....Linden Little
Costume Designer.....Lisa Quinteros
Original Music by.....Deadeye

THE ENSEMBLE (in alphabetical order)

Ethan Caldwell*	Ila Phelps*
Eric Davis	Megan Reed*
Krista Hightower*	Stephen Reida*
Jaley Hoyt*	Austin VanBecelaere*
Amanda Longpine*	

SETTING

Place: Restful Acres Cemetery
Time: Now, or a year ago, or next year

Scenes: Uh...this is improvisation.
You may see all or none of the following:

Cleaning Up / 3 Sisters / Patriot Son / Smith Family / Young Bob & Betty
Johnson / Careful Grandma / Seasonal Decoration / Dad's Friend / Old
Bob and Betty Johnson / College Reunion / Cleaning Up

Also possible are stories of Regret, the Runner, and Graveyard Hideout

The play is performed without intermission and runs approximately 80-90 minutes.
No flash photography is permitted during the performance. Please turn off all cell phones and electronic devices. For the comfort of other audience members, please take crying or fussy children to the lobby.

PRODUCTION and TECHNICAL STAFF

Technical Director.....Linden Little
Stage Manager.....Katia Arians*
Set Construction.....Logan Qualls*, Megan Reed*,
Alex Hermanson, Grace Hendrickson*,
Katia Arians*, Amanda Longpine*,
Austin VanBecelaere*
Props.....Lisa Quinteros, Amanda Longpine*
Music Composition.....Megan McCoy*, Alex Sheppard,
Jenna McCarty
Production Photographer.....Paige Bowman
PR/AD Manager.....Chelsea Foster
Graphic Designer / Poster Art.....April Hunninghake
Director of Theatre.....Cynthia Allan*
Production Assistant.....Amanda Longpine*

DEADEYE

Megan McCoy*, Jenna McCarty, Taylor Rea, Jennifer Murphy

Special Thanks

We especially thank everyone who provided invaluable services, materials, and support to this production and we humbly beg your forgiveness if we inadvertently left your name off the following list:

Debbi Fischer
Mimi Little
Alan Ross
Jason Huffman, Memorial Auditorium
Kaye Lewis, Midwest Regional Ballet
Mildred Cohan and the entire Pendleton Lawn Society
Shirley Sarlin. Always.
Ross Stone
Carrington Place

* denotes membership in Alpha Psi Omega, national theatre honor society

Lisa Quinteros

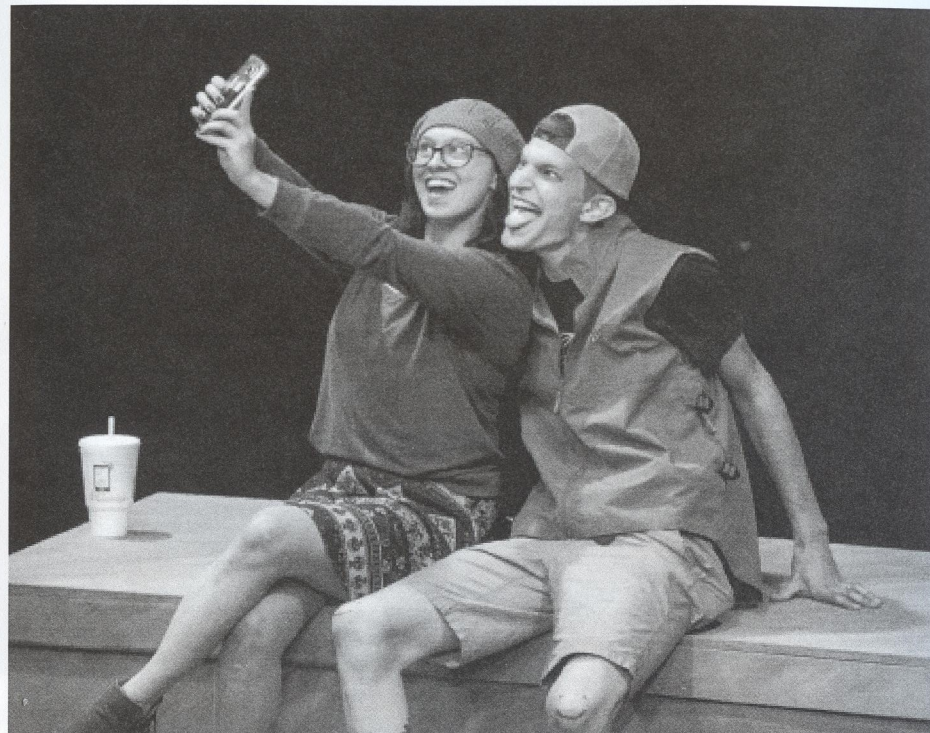
Costume Designer & Props

I really enjoy doing props and costumes when we have devised performances because it's a chance for me to do something a bit different. For every one prop or costume you see onstage, there are five more items backstage waiting their turn to help advance the persona of an actor, to help support whatever reality they have chosen to create for the evening. It's like a big, interesting garage sale backstage and I have fun collecting all the different accessories, clothes, and (frankly) junk that is US. With humanity comes a large portion of STUFF, and the detritus of our lives is part of what defines us. As you watch the show tonight, there will be something you will relate to, I am sure, and will smile and think, "Oh yeah, my grandma used that..." or "I remember that! We did that same thing!" or "Hahaha! That's my mom!" Whatever the situation, person or item, we are all often more alike than we think, especially when contemplating death, loss or memory. I hope that what our crew has chosen relates to you in some way.... just like it will to our cast!

Props to Amanda and Katia for their excellent acquisition of...props!



Krista Hightower and Amanda Longpine showcase their characters' individual personalities in a scene together.

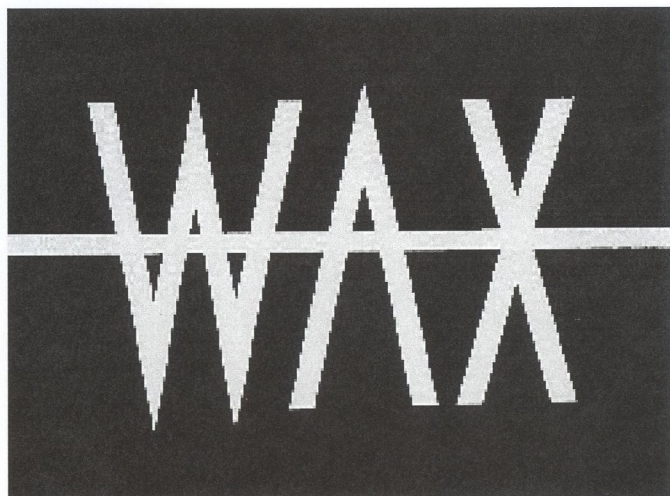


Megan Reed and Ethan Caldwell's characters, unruly teens who managed to escape their school field trip group, cheese it up for a selfie in the middle of a... graveyard?





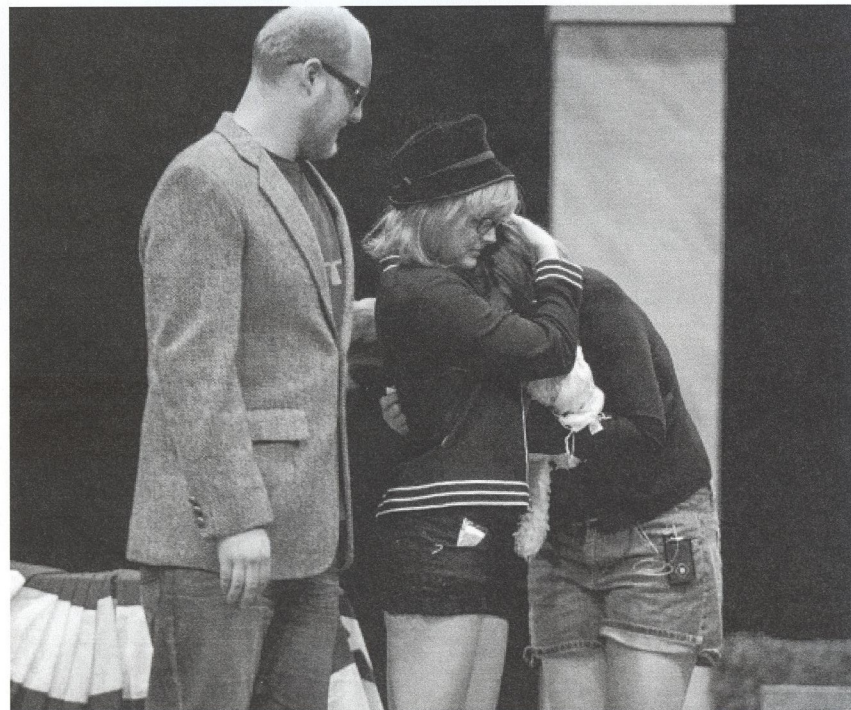
As a rag-tag family unit, the cast comes together for a funeral scene.



Linden Little

Set/Lighting Designer & Technical Director

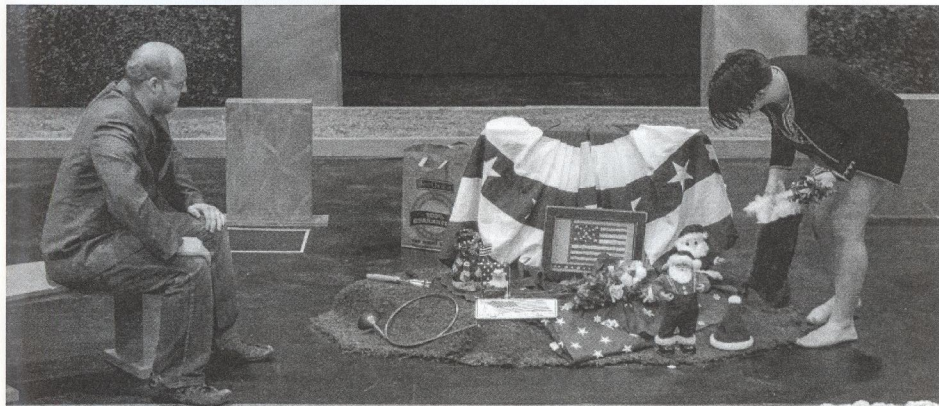
This production is the first devised work that I have had the opportunity to work on. It definitely requires a different kind of thinking when approaching the design. Here, the designer's task is to create an environment with enough substance that the actors can easily leap from moment to moment without interruption. The design is static, with items from everyday life brought into the space. This helps maintain our focus on the variety of situations that can and do take place in a cemetery. Ultimately, the design acts as a springboard for the daring ensemble to dive into the unknown.



Austin VanBecelaere watches on as Jaley Hoyt consoles Krista Highower's character.



Megan Reed speaks to Jaley Hoyt while Ila Phelps watches on in frustration.



Austin VanBecelaere watches in annoyance as wife Ila Phelps decorates their late son's grave for the holidays.



The cast comes together during a scene, listening intently to the words of Austin VanBecelaere.