

## **A Note from the Creators**

by Amy Nostbakken and Norah Sadava

*Now You See Her* was first conceived in 2015 when a woman in her sixties approached us after a performance and said, 'I remember the day it happened: I turned a certain age and suddenly I became invisible.' This simple truth struck a chord. We couldn't shake the question: how does this happen?

The erasure of women has a long history. It is a reality that continues to reverberate across this seemingly progressive, pluralistic country. With this play, we wanted to listen to and present stories that normally never find a stage. To stand up on our chairs and scream about the millions of ways that women have been, and still are, silenced.

Once we began to research and cast the show, we knew it would have to be authored by all of us. Every woman's experience is personal and nuanced; we seem to disappear on many levels at the same time in different ways. So we set out to co-author a play with six women.

Attempting to build a platform from which multiple voices can speak in an honest and safe way is not easy. It's inspiring, beautiful, and a laugh riot, but it is also a major challenge. The construction relies on patience, sweat, love, rigour, and years of commitment from many people who are willing to take massive risks. Every collaborator devoted themselves completely to this challenge. Witnessing each artist bravely expose their truth in the creation of *Now You See Her* was a profound gift. We hope that in turn these truths will amplify voices left unheard and illuminate stories left unseen.

## Performance History

*Now You See Her* was originally presented in co-production with Quote Unquote Collective, Nightwood Theatre, and Why Not Theatre at Buddies in Bad Times in Toronto, November 2018.

Directed by Amy Nostbakken and Norah Sadava  
Created and performed by Lisa Karen Cox, Maggie Huculak, Raha Javanfar, Amy Nostbakken, Norah Sadava, and Cheyenne Scott

Choreography – Orian Michaeli  
Composition – Amy Nostbakken  
Dramaturgy – Lisa Codrington and Falen Johnson  
Set, Prop, and Costume Design – Jung-Hye Kim  
Assistant Costume Design and Head of Wardrobe – Sim Suzer  
Head of Props – Kira Duff  
Lighting Design – André du Toit  
Video Design – Kaitlin Hickey and Lily Ross-Millard  
Sound Design – James Bunton  
Additional Composition – Motion, DJ L'Qenz, and Raha Javanfar  
Creative Contributors – Émilie Monnet and Natasha Mumba

Production Manager – Suzie Balogh  
Technical Director – Adrien Whan  
Stage Manager – Tara Mohan  
Assistant Stage Manager – Emily Maxwell  
Live Sound Engineer – Amy Fort

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## Notes on Performance

### Movement

The performance style in *Now You See Her* shifts between two worlds: individual characters in their own environments and the more abstract, highly choreographed chorus pieces.

Each character's movement style is based on an understanding of that woman's history, the layers of visibility and invisibility she deals with in her life. While she is inhabiting a naturalistic world, the chorus manifests her inner state through physical patterns and attitudes that contrast, colour, and contextualize. The chorus becomes Jennie's anxiety and her loneliness or Joanne's internal army of strength. The ensemble also fulfills more literal roles: Flo's backup dancers, Dez's girlfriend, or Kate's colleagues at a conference.

The play is structured around the four seasons, beginning in spring, moving through summer, fall, and winter, and coming back around to spring. Each season contains an ensemble piece correlating to a different phase in a woman's life. Spring is a dance of birth, summer breathes sex, autumn rages in hot flashes against the inevitable fall, and winter is death.

Orian Michaeli's group dances present women moving together in harmony to create a vision of a natural cycle. But outside impositions (violence, erasure, dismissal) cause damage to the natural order of things. When we return to spring at the end of the play, it's all fucked up. Twisted and warped. One woman has been erased, and her disappearance destroys the group and the cycle. We are in chaos. It's clear that we cannot proceed like this. The audience is left with the question: what needs to be done to make women visible?

## Music

In this play we use music as much as text to tell the story. This includes both live and recorded arrangements, acoustic and electric instruments, sound bites, samples, voice manipulation, vocoders, drum machines, and a-cappella song.

The musical narrative follows the four seasons. We open in spring: staccato voice and plucked violin. Summer is a syrupy moan-song and drum beats. Fall is vocoder with synthetic techno rhythm. Winter is the wind. Like the movement, the a-cappella voice of the chorus is another tool to express the inner workings of a character. Kate's suppressed rage becomes a stretched-out howl, Jennie's claustrophobia is an anxious song cycle on loop, Joanne's self-doubt is the rhythmic breath of the chorus behind her. Flo's story is set on a concert tour, so this character's life is most often expressed through her songs and how she sings them.

## Notes on Performance Style

The performance style of the play, in line with its characters, is extremely varied. Each woman inhabits her own distinct world. Kate is highly expressive and humorous, while Jennie exists in a silent, screen-based universe. Flo lives in the hypermasked, hypersexualized world of pop music, which is dismantled in her third act. Dez is a bubbling ball of energy who confides in the audience unabashedly. Joanne is a blunt, incisive writer who articulates her ideas with the wit of her pen. All women speak straight to the audience; their address is honest, truthful, and direct.

Darya inhabits her own particular universe. The narrator, the fool, the liberated woman (a myth), she sits outside the story, outside (his)tory, and she comments upon it all in heightened