

*The Memory Place* presents....

# MAINTENANCE



written + directed by Faith Hart

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Gráinne Ortlieb..... as the TRASH PROPHETESS

Kamari Saxon..... as the GARBAGE MAN

written + directed by Faith Hart

presented by Pivot Arts' The Memory Place, curated by

Julieanne Ehre + Eli Newell

stage management by Ashley Alexander

costume design by Saskia Bakker

wrangled, modeled, provoked, + loved into being by Sam

Linda

## director's note

in her *New York Times* feature of the American home death movement “*The Movement to Bring Death Closer*”, Maggie Jones writes, “**If death practices reveal a culture’s values, we choose convenience, outsourcing, an aversion to knowing and seeing too much.**” this conviction has tendrils that touch so many other facets of modern life: our empirically ineffective criminal justice system that equates justice + safety with an “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” approach, the hyper-medicalization of death + funeral industry, and the climate crisis being just three immediate examples in my mind.

while it’s now a relatively unquestioned fact of life, the sanitation system as we know it today was not established until the late 1800s. in the mid 20th century post-war economic boom, corporations invented the modern notion of disability and single-use waste to sell more products and cement their market relevance. never before had products been explicitly designed to be discarded.

throughout the process of creating *MAINTENANCE*, I’ve become haunted by an image of myself, standing atop a pile of everything I’ve ever thrown away. I wonder how my consumption would change if I was viscerally confronted with what is already true: that almost everything I purchase will outlive me. through theatre we attempt to make visible the invisible. we map our interconnectedness. we remember there were times before this + we imagine new ways of being. we twirl with questions even if we have no answers. we see what around us is invented + try to invent something better.

I have a million questions. who and what have we discarded? what responsibilities have we outsourced for the sake of convenience and is there a cost? would we be willing to forfeit that convenience for a healthier, more just world? how do we reconcile our waste? whose sacrifices make our comfort possible? how do we shift our culture’s values to honor + re-dignify the labor of those who make the gears of the world turn?

I’m deeply grateful for the incubator of Pivot Arts and for *The Memory Place’s* work around cultural memory. *MAINTENANCE* aims not only to *preserve* cultural memory as it relates to the history of sanitation, but also to *create* a current sense of memory that acknowledges the labor always unfolding around us. waste anthropologist Robin Nagle suggests that the idea of disposability reflects a culture’s changed relationship to time— that the caliber of our waste allows us to move at a certain, modern speed. thanks for slowing down with us.

**MAINTENANCE** is an interdisciplinary collage, made up of original writing and found texts from non-theatrical sources such as manifestos, articles, radio journalism, and first-person accounts from sanitation workers, including:

- + Mierle Laderman Ukeles | “**CARE**” Manifesto & Project Proposal (1969)
- + Mierle Laderman Ukeles | “**WHY SANITATION CAN BE USED AS A MODEL FOR PUBLIC ART**” (1984)
- + Mierle Laderman Ukeles | “**Who Cares?**” Keynote Address at NYU Discard Studies Conference (2022)
- + Tom Finkelpearl, Dialogues in Public Art (MIT Press) | “**Interview: Mierle Laderman Ukeles on Maintenance and Sanitation Art**” (2001)
- + This American Life | **Episode 249: “Garbage”** (2003)
- + StoryCorps | “**We Go Up Together Or We Go Down Together**” (2022)
- + Martin Luther King Jr. | “**I’ve Been to the Mountaintop**” Speech (1968)
- + NPR Throughline | “**The Litter Myth**” (2019)

Most prominently featured are the words of **Mierle Laderman Ukeles**, the former artist-in-residence at the New York Department of Sanitation who birthed the notion of “maintenance art” in her 1969 manifesto, “*CARE*”. Ukeles challenged the male-dominated art scene, championed the artistry inherent to mothering and posited that the work it takes to maintain structures is just as creative + vital as the work it takes to develop them. Other notable projects of Ukeles’ include *Touch Sanitation*—a longform performance effort, in which Ukeles shook the hand of all 8,500 NYC Sanitation employees saying to each, “Thank you for keeping New York City alive”— and *Seven Work Ballets*, a collaboration with drivers of heavy-duty municipal vehicles to create performances in which the vehicles functioned as dancers. this piece is dedicated to her!

