

Guide to Last Shelter

Last Shelter is a dance work that has been created by a choreographer called Jeanine Durning with Candoco's dancers. It is a new piece but it is based on an idea that Jeanine Durning has been working on since 2009. This idea is called nonstopping.



What is nonstopping?

Jeanine Durning gives the dancers some instructions to make them move and speak without thinking about how they are moving or what they are saying. Here are some examples of the instructions;

- start before you're ready
- what you are doing is the thing
- don't search for it
- listen to yourself and your music
- see yourself from the outside
- include more, notice more
- be where you are, not where you want to be
- leave the past behind
- there is no there to get to

This means the dancers have to keep noticing what's going on around them and make quick decisions about what to do or say next. They have to keep going even if they think they doubt themselves or think they might fail. They are nonstop moving and nonstop speaking.

Have you ever heard the saying 'life is about the journey, not the destination'? The idea of nonstopping thinks about dance as 'being on the way', never arriving but always in the process of becoming.



Last Shelter will be different every time it is performed

Jeanine has given the dancers a set of tasks, she calls these 'micro scores'. These tasks deal differently with time, space and how the performers relate to one another and the objects in the space. The dancers have clear instructions and must pay attention to the task but they can make their own choices. Jeanine says "anything is possible but not anything goes".

So, the tasks are fixed but the way the dancers respond to the tasks will change every time they perform. They must carry out the task and, at the same time, be aware of what is happening around them. They do all of this while practicing the idea of nonstopping.



The use of objects

You will notice some very ordinary objects on the stage (table, chairs, rug) mixed with objects you usually find in a theatre (microphone and stands, big speaker).

Each object makes the dancer move differently, for example, the chair bends or lifts the body up. When you place some of the objects together, they can create a dramatic situation, for example, two people sitting at a table. The objects also break the space up or make the space feel different, for example, the table in a vertical position on its two legs.



You might notice that the dancer moves the object but that the object also moves the dancer in a very particular way. The object can provide freedom or get in the way and the dancer needs to deal with both.

As someone in the audience, you might think that an object has a certain meaning or purpose but this meaning or purpose quickly changes. You can't hold on to what you think the object is 'about'.

How do the dancers know what to do?

Jeanine has set the micro scores in a general order. But the dancers are always noticing where they are in the order, while being aware of what's going on at that moment. Some micro scores can happen out of order or at the same time which changes the piece for each performance.

The beginning of some micro scores is set by how an object is placed on the stage, for example, the table on two legs, or the table on all four legs, or the microphone stand being passed among the group.



Some micro scores happen 2 times during the work (push/pull and decision-making) and most scores can be used individually, in duets (2 people), or trios (3 people).

Below are the instructions given to the dancers for each micro score in Last Shelter.

Setting up the space with the objects

Choose where to place the objects in the “playing” space (on the stage). Make decisions together about where the objects will be the space for the first situation to happen.



Entering a situation

The objects in a specific location suggest a theatrical situation.

Decide to enter into it or not.

Nonstop speaking at the microphone

There are three micro scores that the dancers can choose from when nonstop speaking at the microphone.

- 1) Receiving the word - tracking the movement that's going on around you and trying to say what's happening
- 2) I want - the performer speaks nonstop but each sentence begins with 'I want'
- 3) I notice - the performer speaks nonstop but each sentence begins with 'I notice'



Object game

Moving the objects and yourself in relation to the other objects, yourself and the other dancers. No delay in how or where you move the object.



Music

Using the upright table position as an edge to play against, listening to yourself and your movement as music. The body is a music machine. You are connecting with the basic need to move. Don't search for it.

Push/Pull

Once the table is brought back to all four legs, all the dancers go to the table and begin push/pull.



Push/pull is a natural and constant force in the body and the dancers are working on activating that force and making it visible. I pull myself toward you, I push you away. This force in relation to someone else's desire creates unpredictable situations.

Repetition accumulation

Once the mic stand is placed in the space, the dancers start repetition accumulation. Aware of what others are doing, everyone starts moving at the same time with speed, intention, and precision. At the same time as moving forward to the next movement, you have to track the movement that you have just done. At any point, if you feel you cannot track the movement, you raise your hand to say “stop”. Everyone must follow by showing “stop” with their hand.



This micro score requires the dancers to think on their feet and not doubt themselves.

Decision-making

The table is replaced on its four legs, you must come together at the table. Once there, immediately start making decisions about your movements, in relation to one other person. Don't hold on to the decision but allow it to change based on the relation to the other person. Before you can think about whether you are making a decision, your body is already doing it. There is no better decision than what your body is already doing. When you feel you are not making decisions but just moving, you should exit the space.

Experts

Anything I do, I am an expert at. It's a game at accepting the movement that comes up. Repeat yourself to learn what you are an expert at. Listen to the music of the movement. Be confident and step up to it rather than slide into it. Focus on noticing the movement you are doing. As soon as someone stops, the other person begins.

0 to 100

Starting from a neutral (0) standing place, notice the need you have to move. Always be ready to move. As soon as you move/act, energetically go from 0 to 100. This movement makes visible where the energy is moving through your body.



The ending is also a beginning

- 1) Building a temporary shelter
- 2) nonstop speaking about the universe and the beginning of time (storytelling, facts, religion, fairytales)
- 3) solo or duet playing your own body and each other as music

Music and sound in Last Shelter

The music you will hear isn't a song or a melody, it is a collection of different sounds. Some sounds you will recognise as instruments, like a trumpet or a piano. Others are more unusual and might sound like whirring or knocking. Sometimes there is total silence. At about 26 minutes there is a loud deep sound that becomes louder and more intense. You can feel it in your chest. To read more about the sound in Last Shelter, have a look at our written conversation between Tian (composer) and Anna (dancer).

Speaking in Last Shelter

Speaking usually happens in the second half of a performance of Last Shelter but not always! It depends how the dancers respond to the micro scores. You might hear all the words or you might miss some, you might not be able to understand the sign language that Anna uses to speak. Don't worry if you don't catch it all, trust your experience of what is happening and don't try to understand it.

Design and lighting in Last Shelter

The design is very simple. There are 9 bright fluorescent lights across the stage, a grey dance floor and a grey curtain at the back of the stage. The curtain is pulled up in the middle to reveal a blue velvet curtain. There are moments when the lights go low and the stage becomes dark. This doesn't last very long.