

## RVarT Review

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# EVERY BRILLIANT THING



### #7 People Falling Over

A Theater Review by Julinda D. Lewis

Presented by: The Illuminated Stage Theatre Company

At: The Perkinson Center for the Arts and Education, 11810 Centre Street, Chester VA  
23831

Performances: September 17 – October 3, 2021

Ticket Prices: \$40. \$25 for students.

Theatre Company Info: (804) 452-7011 or <http://www.illuminatedstage.org>

Venue Info: (804) 748-5555 or [info@perkinsoncenter.org](mailto:info@perkinsoncenter.org).

The spanking new Perkinson Center for the Arts and Education (opened November 2020) hosted the first performance by its new resident theater troupe, the Illuminated State Theatre Company (Artistic Director Julie Fulcher-Davis) and it was everything you could have hoped for.

September is National Suicide Awareness Month, and **EVERY BRILLIANT THING** is a special show, quite unlike any other you are likely to encounter. Written by Duncan Macmillan with Jonny Donahoe, the one-actor play walks us gently through one person's journey through the pain of her mother's depression and suicide. Tender, warm, and at times surprisingly humorous, **EVERY BRILLIANT THING** is a rich and relevant theatrical experience. Written initially as a short story authored by Macmillan, it grew into a monologue, and finally, with the collaboration of Donahoe, grew into a full-fledged play that premiered in 2014, with successful runs at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, in London, and in New York.

### **#1. Ice cream**

### **#10. Kind old people who aren't weird and don't smell bad**

At a loss as to what to do on finding that her mother has been hospitalized because she can't think of a reason to live, the young 7-year-old daughter stands outside her father's study, waiting to see what record he plays. If it sounds like the notes are falling downstairs, she knows to stay away. When she hears the jangling, discordant sounds on the other side of the door, she heads downstairs to fend for herself. What results is the beginning of a list of things worth living for. By the time her mother comes home from the hospital, the list has grown to eight pages. She continues to add to it through high school, college, and into adulthood.

### **#23. Batman**

### **#24. Spaghetti with meatballs**

Louise Keeton, who stars as the otherwise unnamed Narrator, quickly established a rapport with the audience at Sunday's matinee. The script calls for audience participation, and Keeton flows seamlessly from narrating the play to performing

the role of the daughter, calling on various audience members to join her onstage for coached or spontaneous roles as the family Veterinarian, her Dad, a university Lecturer, her college boyfriend (and later husband) Sam, and her elementary school guidance counselor Mrs. Patterson. Keeton is so engaging that no one refused her offer to join her onstage. Some were given lines, others were required to improvise, and it all came together to create theater magic.

### **#319. Laughing so hard you shoot milk out of your nose**

### **#521. The word “phlegm”**

For this uniquely interactive and immersive production, each audience member was offered the opportunity, on entering the building, to write a few words on a Post-It note and share it on a white board. We also received a pair of numbered strips, each containing an item from the list. Mine were #7. People falling over, and #996. Really good oranges.

### **#823. Skinny dipping**

### **#993. Having dessert as a main course**

Keeton inhabits this role like a well-worn sweater. Whether narrating the story of having her childhood pet euthanized, or reading the Samaritans’ Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide [<https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/media-guidelines/media-guidelines-reporting-suicide/>] she is fully present, and we are right there with her. What a wonderful vehicle for Keeton; I’ve never seen her stronger: sweet, sentimental, vulnerable, insightful, warm, reflective, caring. Each emotion is treated with integrity.

### **#999. Sunlight**

### **#2000. Coffee**

Remarkably, Keeton and director Julie Fulcher-Davis have struck a balance that invites humor to naturally inhabit the scenes. This ebb and flow prevents **EVERY**

**BRILLIANT THING** from becoming, well, depressing and morbid. Driving in the car with her dad, on the way to the hospital to visit her mother, the little girl keeps asking “why.” The audience member selected to participate in this scene as the Dad delivered his lines with just the right cadence and inflection. In another car scene, we are reminded that “In order to live in the present we have to be able to imagine a future that is better than our past.” There are many quirky and endearing touches, such as the family’s tradition of gathering around the piano in the kitchen to sing soul songs.

### **#2005. Vinyl records**

### **#9995. Falling in love**

Fulcher-Davis, who is also credited with the set and costumes, has kept things simple yet elegant. A straight-backed chair and a comfy chair, a bookcase with books, a lamp, and a record player occupy a platform centerstage. There are a couple of chairs on one side, and a kitchen table that doubles as a piano on the other side of the stage. A large screen provides a home for beautiful projections that enhance the dimensionality of the space. Wonderful music accompanies each scene and shows off the venue’s top-notch acoustics, while Gretta Daugherty’s lighting is subtle and effective.

### **#777,777. The prospect of dressing up as a Mexican wrestler**

### **#826,979. The fact that Beyonce is Gustav Mahler’s eighth cousin, four times removed**

I’ve seen this play before, performed by a male actor, and in all honesty it feels entirely different. Looking back at the review I wrote of Chris Hester’s performance at the HATTheatre in March 2019, I would not change a word of what I said then, but Keeton brings a whole new set of feelings and nuances to the role. At this writing, there is only one more weekend left, and I highly recommend get a ticket. You won’t regret it.

### **#1,000,000. Listening to a record for the first time**

## END SCENE

### EVERY BRILLIANT THING

#### Cast:

Louise Keeton

#### Creative Team:

Directed by Julie Fulcher-Davis

Written by Duncan Macmillan with Jonny Donahoe

Stage Manager: Hannah Hoffert

Lighting Designer: Gretta Daughtery

Set & Costumes: Julie Fulcher-Davis

Light Board Operator: Hannah Hoffert

Sound Board Operator: Zach Birnbaum

Backstage Coordinator: Lanham Hoffert

Technical Advisor: Jon Shelley

#### Run Time:

Just under an hour and a half with no intermission.

#### Performance schedule:

Fri, Sat @8:00PM Sept 24 & 25, Oct 1 & 2

Sun @3:00PM Sept 26 & Oct 3

**Tickets:**

\$40. \$25 for students

**Photos:** (Credits not available at the time of publication)





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September 26, 2021

In "A Second Look"

### [THE PINK UNICORN](#)

July 31, 2021

In "LGBTQIL"

### [I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE](#)

September 12, 2021

In "Comedy"



#### **Author: jldances**

Julinda D. Lewis is a dancer, teacher, and writer, born and raised in Brooklyn, NY and transplanted to Richmond, VA. A retiree from both the New York City and Richmond City Public School systems, she is currently an Adjunct Instructor for the Department of Dance and Choreography at Virginia Commonwealth University, and holds the degrees of BS and MA in Dance and Dance Education (New York University), MEd in Early Childhood Education (Brooklyn College, CUNY), and is currently working on her dissertation in Educational Leadership (Regent University). Julinda is the Richmond Site Leader for TEN/The Eagles Network and the East Region Coordinator for the International Dance Commission and has worked in dance ministry all over the US and abroad (Bahamas, Barbados, Haiti, Jamaica, Kenya, Puerto Rico). She is licensed in dance ministry by the Eagles International Training Institute (2012), and was ordained in dance ministry through Calvary Bible Institute and Seminary, Martinez, GA (2009). [View all posts by jldances](#)



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