

Love is a Place: An e e cummings' poem, in the style of Mummenschantz

The stage is empty, black. The upstage wall is a projection screen so that the audience can see close-up images of the performers' expressions. There are two performers, representing LOVER and BELOVED. They can be both male, both female, one of each gender, or indeterminate. Both are wearing black leotards and tights, black jazz shoes, and white gloves. Their faces are painted black as well. Either as headdresses or at chest-level they are wearing digital tablets with displays that represent their expressions, though most are conveyed with body language.

The lights come up, warm, soft, romantic. There is no sound.

LOVER and BELOVED are standing in center stage. The images on their tablets are simple heart shapes. They are facing forward at first, then, as one, pivot to face each other.

LOVER reaches out and touches BELOVED over their heart.

BELOVED nods and smiles and returns the gesture.

Both hearts on the tablets turn red.

LOVER touches BELOVED over the eyes, and then touches their own wrist. Their tablet reflects EYES and then a CLOCK. They are attempting to convey "Watch and wait."

BELOVED is unsure they understand. They stand akimbo and cock their head. *Their tablet displays a question mark.*

LOVER nods. LOVER goes into a thinking stance. LOVER mimes reading a book.

BELOVED suddenly understands; *their tablet displays a lightbulb.*

LOVER repeats the heart gesture. So does BELOVED.

LOVER sketches a square on the ground, in classic mime style, then steps into it. They touch their own chest over their heart and then mime digging a hole and planting their heart in the ground and waiting...

And waiting...

The display on LOVER's tablet is a ticking clock.

LOVER mimes RAIN followed by SUN.

LOVER's tablet displays each in turn.

LOVER mimes a plant growing up from the ground.

LOVER's tablet displays a blooming flower.

LOVER touches their heart, then mimes looking at the flowering plant, then touches their heart again.

LOVER's table displays a plant with a heart growing from it.

LOVER reminds us of the shape of the square. LOVER leaves the square. LOVER nudges BELOVED.

BELOVED expresses confusion. *Their tablet displays a question mark once more.*

LOVER offers his hand to BELOVED.

BELOVED is reluctant.

LOVER coaxes BELOVED.

BELOVED acquiesces and places their hand in LOVER's.

LOVER leads BELOVED across the stage to the square.

LOVER redefines the square and invites BELOVED in. LOVER touches BELOVED's heart and then their own heart, and then the plant. BELOVED echoes the gesture. LOVER mimes planting a flag in the space.

Both tablets display a globe with a flag with dual hearts.

The lights change. The projection screen becomes a series of landscapes and iconic locations, some are nonspecific – beaches, mountains, fields, etc. Some are cities and landmarks.

LOVER and BELOVED walk a maze on the stage in improvised patterns. It is half dance, half a random walk. Sometimes LOVER is the leader. Sometimes BELOVED leads. *Their tablets alternate between three symbols – and only three: a heart, a question mark, and a thumbs-up sign.*

As their walk continues, their pattern begins to spiral, and lights begin to spin. *On the screen, the landscapes zoom out to become a starscape, and eventually we realize LOVER and BELOVED are walking their journey through space, hopscotching from place to place on stage as their tablets show different constellations.*

Finally they end up back where they started. They face each other, center stage, palm to palm, *and the projection screen displays the text of e e cummings' poem LOVE IS A PLACE.*

love is a place
& through this place of
love move
(with brightness of peace)
all places

yes is a world
& in this world of
yes live
(skilfully curled)
all worlds

LOVER and BELOVED face the audience, and their tablets display linked rainbow hearts.

After a moment the projection screen fades out the poem, and also displays the hearts.

And then everything goes black.