

Self-Care Guide:

Bluets

by Maggie Nelson

Adapted by Margaret Perry

This document has been designed to support audiences attending performances of Bluets between 17 May 2024 – 29th June 2024.

For some of us, we need more context of what we are about to see to feel safe, so we've created this document for those of us who would be comfortable with more information. We hope the information and resources in this document will help audiences experiencing the show, and support planning for anyone who may be concerned about their visit.

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About the Show

“Suppose I were to begin by saying that I had fallen in love with a colour.”

Bluets is a story about depression and desire, pleasure and pain, and a person possessed by a lifelong obsession with the colour blue. Communing with artists like Joni Mitchell, Derek Jarman, Andy Warhol and Billie Holiday, blue is their constant companion as they navigate the devastating pain of a life-altering heartbreak.

Based on acclaimed author **Maggie Nelson**'s unique and electrifying book, *Bluets* is an adaptation by playwright **Margaret Perry** (*Paradise Now!*, *Porcelain*, *Collapsible*), directed by **Katie Mitchell** (*Little Scratch*, *Anatomy of a Suicide*).

Age Guide: 16+.

Content warnings

- Flashing lights
- Sexual content
- Depictions of pain
- Depression
- Suicidal ideation and suicide
- Alcohol use and smoking cigarettes
- Use of swear words

We have attempted to highlight all the points at which these are present.

WARNING: The following section of this document contains information

which may give away aspects of the plot.

Sensory Synopsis

KEY:



Where you see this symbol, we are alerting you to moments that might be **emotional**.



Where you see this symbol, we are alerting you to moments that might surprise or shock you, such as **sudden movements**.



Where you see this symbol, we are alerting you to **flashes of light or sudden/extreme lighting changes**.



Where you see this symbol, we are alerting you to **loud noises or changes in music/sound**.



When you enter the auditorium you will see three tables with items, three cameras and three television screens.



There is a large blue screen hanging above everything near the centre of the stage.



Actors and Stage Managers move at the back of the stage.



There are bottles of whiskey visible on the tables.



The lights in the auditorium get darker to signal that the performance is beginning.



The large blue screen turns off.



Quickly pulsing piano music plays.



The actors move towards the front of the stage.
They each stand next to one table.



Throughout the play Stage Managers move the objects around the stage.
They move quickly.



Throughout the play lights above the television screens turn on and off at different paces.
These are sometimes still and sometimes swipe across.

MOVEMENT 1: “BLUE” BY JONI MITCHELL PRELUDE



The three television screens on stage turn on and off throughout the performance.
These screens show settings such as a river, kitchen or street.
The images are sometimes still and sometimes moving.



The actors appear to be recording live what is shown on the large screen hanging in the
centre of the stage.



Frantic and ominous music plays throughout the play.

1



We see a closeup of a bottle of whiskey on the large screen.



The actors each pour themselves a glass and drink the whiskey.



The actors speak into microphones.



The actors speak in turn, often in incomplete sentences.



The actors pick up polished rocks.
We hear them click together.

2



There is smoking on stage and on the large screen.



A light turns on illuminating a large, covered display box onto the left side of the stage.



There is mention of nipples in this scene.



A car beeps, unlocking.



Blue by Joni Mitchell plays.

3



We hear the sounds of an underground station.



We hear the sound of waves.



There is mention of sex in this scene.



There is mention of magic in this scene.

4



We see a closeup image of liquid dripping from an actor's mouth.



We hear a glitching sound.



We hear police sirens.

5



There is mention of illness in this scene.

6



There is mention of angels in this scene.



Oral sex is alluded to in this scene.



There is mention of sex in this scene.



There is swearing in this scene.



There is a knock as keys are thrown on a table.

MOVEMENT 2:

“LADY SINGS THE BLUES” BY BILLIE HOLIDAY

7



We see a swimming pool.
We hear a splash.
Then we see underwater as if someone is swimming.



Lady Sings the Blues by Billie Holiday plays



We hear a pulsing.



We hear the splash of a swimmer getting out of the pool.



We hear a hairdryer.



There is mention of madness in this scene.



We hear a voice over of a podcast host.



There is mention of death in this scene.



We hear the beep of a supermarket self-checkout.



Plastic shopping bags rustle in this scene.



There is mention of AIDS in this scene.



There is mention of cancer in this scene.



17:27 We hear a scratching, guitar chug.

8



We hear brief, distorted music



There is mention of pregnancy in this scene.



We hear the clink of glass on a wooden surface.



We hear a voice over of a podcast host.



The actors each pour themselves a glass and drink the whiskey.



There is mention of Isaac Newton poking metal rods into his eyes in this scene.



The actors pour themselves a glass and drink the whiskey.



There is mention of sex in this scene.

9



We hear distorted jazz singing.



The actors pour and drink whiskey in this scene.



There is mention of suicide in this scene.



We hear audio from a Derek Jarman film.



21:03 The large screen hanging in the centre of the stage turns blue.



21:53 An image of an actor returns to the screen.



A light clicks off.



We hear abrupt, dizzy music that punctuates the change in setting.



We hear police sirens.



The word “horny” is used in this scene.



There is mention of love in this scene.



We hear a voice over of a podcast host.



We hear the sounds of the London underground.



We hear a ticking clock.

10



We hear a mobile phone ring.



There is mention of a friend being seriously injured in an accident in this scene. It includes description of her injuries.



There is smoking in this scene.



Part of this scene takes place in a hospital room.



We hear beeps of medical machinery.



We see a hand with dressings around it and a cannula.



We hear a fast drum beat.

THIRD MOVEMENT: "RED DIRT GIRL" BY EMMYLOU HARRIS

11



We see a swimming pool.
Then we see underwater. It is as if someone is swimming.



We hear distorted strings.



There is swearing in this scene.



We hear a hairdryer in this scene.



There is descriptions of reconstructive facial surgery in this scene.



We see two actors holding hands in this scene.



There is mention of pain in this scene.



We see a swimming pool.
We hear a splash.
Then we see underwater as if someone is swimming.



We hear distorted music.



Someone is described as being a lover in this scene.



Part of this scene takes place in a hospital room.



There is mention of grief in this scene.



We see a hand with dressings around it and a cannula.

12



There is mention of picking at a scab in this scene.



There is mention of Viagra in this scene.



The word “penis” is used in this scene.



An interview with Catherine Millet talking about her memoir ‘The Sexual Life of Catherine M’ plays on the large screen in the centre of the stage.
This interview is in French with English surtitles.



There are descriptions of genitals in this scene.



There is swearing in this scene.



French music plays.



There is a depiction of masturbation in this scene.



We see a close-up of a person's hand in their own pants on the big screen in the centre of the stage.



There are description of sexual acts in this scene.

13



A leg shakes on the big screen in the centre of the stage.



Part of this scene takes place in a hospital.



There is mention of pain and paralysis in this scene.



We hear echoing whistles and birdsong.



We see flowers blooming at high speed.



There is mention of being sad in this scene.

14



There is mention of crying in this scene.



There is mention of love in this scene.



We hear the “ding” of a text message.



We hear traffic noises.



We hear music with an inconsistent beat.



We hear the sound of people in a noisy bar.



There is drinking in this scene.



There is mention of the police in this scene.



There is description of suicide by shooting in this scene.

15



We hear a rushing sound.



We see fish.



We hear a voice over of a museum audio guide.



There is mention of bleeding in this scene.



A light turns on illuminating a large, covered display box onto the left side of the stage



Part of this scene takes place in a therapist's room.



There is mention of lying in this scene.



We hear a ticking sound.



We hear eerie music with a driving beat.



We hear sounds from the London Underground.



There is mention of love in this scene.

17



Part of this scene take place in a hospital.



We see a hand with dressings around it and a cannula.



We hear a scraping sound as the scene goes between the present moment and a flashback to a memory.



There is mention of blood clots in this scene.

FOURTH MOVEMENT: "BLUE" BY LUCINDA WILLIAMS

18



We hear music that cuts in an out and a high tone.



We hear distorted traffic noises.



There is a description of a sex act in this scene.



There is a closeup of one person's hand going into another person's trousers.



We see clips from the 1936 film *Rose Hobart*.



There is drinking alcohol in this scene.



We see a river.



We hear the waves.



We see a swimming pool.
We hear a splash.
Then we see underwater as if someone is swimming.



We hear drumming and distorted chanting that gets louder and more frantic.



We hear a scraping shriek.

19



We hear a hairdryer.



Part of this scene takes place in a hospital.



There is mention of overwhelming sadness in this scene.



There is mention of suicide by shooting in this scene.



We see a river moving quickly.



We hear the river water.



We hear street noise.



There is mention of death in this scene.



There is mention of insanity in this scene.



We hear a bell ding as a door to a bookshop opens.



There is mention of depression in this scene.



We hear voice over of an art gallery audio guide.



50:03 There is a second mention of suicide by shooting in this scene.



We hear river water moving quickly.



There is mention of masturbation in this scene.



There is implied masturbation on the large screen in the centre of the stage.



We hear river water moving quickly.



We see an empty hospital bed.



There is swearing in this scene.



There is mention of sex in this scene.



We see a hand with dressings around it and a cannula.



We hear echoing tones.

20



There is reference made to suicide in this scene.



There is mention of group sex in this scene.



There is drinking alcohol in this scene.



There is mention of depression in this scene.



We hear river water moving quickly.



We hear a clinking sound.



There is mention of death in this scene.



There is mention of suicide by drowning, cutting and shooting in this scene.



There is description of preparing for suicide in this scene.



MAGGIE jumps into the Thames to take her own life.



We see faces underwater.



We see emergency vehicle lights flashing.

FIFTH MOVEMENT: "BLUE" BY JONI MITCHELL (REPRISE)

21



We hear birdsong.



There is reference to sex in this scene.



We hear Blue by Joni Mitchell sung by John Kelly.

22



There is mention of sobriety in this scene.



We hear creeping chords.



There is discussion of injury and paralysis in this scene.



We hear sounds of the London underground.



MAGGIE turns off a bedside light.



We hear a car accelerate.

23



We hear crashing sea waves.



We see someone swimming in the sea.



There is mention of death in this scene.



There is mention of sex in this scene.



We hear gentle piano music.



The light slowly fade to signal the end of the play.

Curtain call.

THE END

Helplines & support

There are references in the show to mental health and sexual violence.

If you're affected by the play's themes and need support, or just want someone to chat to, you can call:

[Contact Us | Samaritans](#) on 116 123

If you don't need immediate support but would like to learn more about services that may be available for yourself or someone you know, we'd recommend looking to Mind:

[Depression - Mind](#)

[Useful contacts - suicidal feelings - Mind](#)

Self-care suggestions

If you're concerned about attending the play, there are a few things we'd suggest that might help.

Before the show

Read the content warnings on the website and in the pre-show emails. Engage with us at the theatre if you have more specific questions about the text, or form of the production:

Box Office 0207 565 5000

stagedoor@royalcourttheatre.com

Come with a friend

It might be worth seeing if you can book to see the show with a friend, family member or someone you trust.

After the performance

If you've found the show distressing, we'd suggest talk to someone you're with, calling a friend, or contacting one of the support services listed on the previous page.

Thanks & about self-care

In writing this document, we were inspired by recent approaches taken by several other companies. We are grateful to everyone whose work has informed our own approach, but especially the Self-Care Guide created for Nouveau Riche's production of *For Black Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When the Hue Gets Too Heavy* by Ryan Calais Cameron at New Diorama Theatre and Clean Break's production of *Typical Girls* by Morgan Lloyd Malcolm at

Sheffield Theatres. As that document explains:

'The concept of self-care comes from the Black Feminist movement. Self-care is a choice to listen to our needs and look after ourselves, so we are able to keep going and live our best lives, despite the difficulties we experience in life and how they make us feel.'

Finally, our thanks to you for reading this, and for coming to the play – if you choose to.