

The Mourning Show
by Hank Graham
Spring 2024

Who?

Producer(s): Josephine Stark
Directors(s): Beza Tessema, Hank Graham
Stage Manager(s): Maya Li
Preferred Contact Email: josephine.stark@yale.edu

What?

BRIEF(!) Synopsis of show: It's like Wendy Williams if she was living through the apocalypse

When?

Date of First Rehearsal: Some time in the first week after November Casting Cycle
Current Tech Week Dates: 4/13-4/23
Performance Dates: April 24-26
Overall Dates (First Rehearsal to Last Performance): 11/12/23 – 4/26/24

Time Commitment

Weekly Estimated Time Commitments (in Hours): 1-2 hours/week (fall); 5-6 hours/week* (spring), 1-2 hours/week+ (spring)

*Lowell, Nora, Daphne

+Guests, production assistants, etc.

Content Warnings

This includes text/dialogue, themes, intimacy, violence, and anything else that you think is appropriate to list here.

- Discussions of death of a sibling
- Mentions of suicide

Audition Expectations

One round of auditions! Group auditions that include readings from the play provided in this packet.

Audition Location(s)

Nick Chapel Theater (in Trumbull basement– enter through entrance to dining hall)

THE MOURNING SHOW: AN AUDITION PACKET

Thank you so much for your interest in auditioning for *The Mourning Show*. This packet has information about the show, the process for our production, and what to expect at auditions. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to producer Josephine Stark (josephine.stark@yale.edu) or directors Beza Tessema (beza.tessema@yale.edu) and Hank Graham (hank.graham@yale.edu). If you're interested in working on our show in a technical capacity, please reach out to Josephine Stark. We're really looking forward to seeing you in auditions!

ABOUT THE SHOW

Lowell Matthews, former child star and host of tv's hottest morning talk show, returns to the air for the first time in two weeks after the death of his former co-host and twin sister, Laurel. He's doing fine—fabulous, really—just so long as nobody brings her up. Honestly, if he could just have a couple more weeks to process what happened, he'd feel almost back to normal. But reruns are boring and ratings are slipping, so Lowell finds himself back at work acting like nothing is wrong, even as the show unravels around him live on air. A play about work-life balance.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Lowell Matthews, *TV Talk Show Host*

Nora, *Producer*

Daphne, *Former Production Assistant, now Lowell's new co-host*

Todd, *Production Assistant*

Eric, *Makeup Artist*

Jack Teller, *Comedian-turned-movie star-turned activist*

Sunday Davis, *Celebrity food influencer and owner-proprietor of Mellttt*

Danielle Michelle, *Winner of the last season of "Paradise Lost... and Found"*

Sybil, *Field Reporter*

Kody and Kady Kirby, *The Teetotaling Twins*

Agnes, *An AP*

Laurel Matthews, *Lowell's twin sister*

REHEARSAL PROCESS

This production is a senior thesis in Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies for Hank Graham and Beza Tessema. This will be a very collaborative process; the research we are doing pertains to collaboration and the process of play development. In the fall, rehearsals will focus on ensemble building and getting everyone on the same page about the tone of the show. In the spring, we will throw away the script for a while and rebuild it communally through improvisation games and exercises.

Many of the characters in this show appear only once, as guests on *Mornings With Lowell Matthews*, which is a daytime television variety comedy talk show akin to *Wendy Williams* or *Ellen*. The time

commitment for playing these characters will be low, and rehearsals will focus more on building the scenes through improvisation. **Interested in or have experience in sketch comedy/stand up/improv? We want you!**

PRODUCTION TIMELINE

NOVEMBER 8-10- Auditions

NOVEMBER 12- Casting day!

NOVEMBER 13/14- Readthrough/set rehearsal times

NOVEMBER 17-27-November Break

NOVEMBER 12-DECEMBER 18- Rehearsals!

DECEMBER 21-JANUARY 16- Winter Recess

JANUARY 17-APRIL 13- Rehearsals!

APRIL 13-23- Tech Rehearsals

APRIL 24-26- Performances!

AUDITION INFORMATION

ALL AUDITIONS WILL BE HELD IN THE NICK CHAPEL THEATER IN TRUMBULL

THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE ROUND OF AUDITIONS!

- All auditions will be group auditions. Please sign up for one 1-hr slot on either Wednesday, November 8 or Friday, November 10.
- Actors will be asked to read scenes from the play together (found in the back of this packet) in various configurations.
- Have fun with this! We are looking for funny people who are willing to make big choices.
- If you have any experience with or interest in improv/stand up/sketch comedy, this is the show for you! The rehearsal process will consist of a lot of improvisation and rewriting of the scenes to tailor them to our cast and our production. We are looking for people who are willing to be big contributors to these exercises and who aren't afraid to make bold choices!

*IF NONE OF THE AVAILABLE TIME SLOTS WORK FOR YOU, EMAIL josephine.stark@yale.edu AND WE WILL SET UP AN ADDITIONAL TIME SLOT OR ARRANGE FOR YOU TO SEND IN AN AUDITION VIDEO INSTEAD.

SCENES FROM *THE MOURNING SHOW*

- Please prepare to read as many of these scenes as you would like. **There is no need for memorization!** We may ask you to read any of these scenes in any character configuration.

LOWELL & NORA & DAPHNE

NORA

Lowell, I had one more thing.

Um. I know I'm kind of springing this on you, so I'm sorry in advance.

But the network is gonna want us to do a tribute episode. For Laurel. Pretty soon, too.

LOWELL

Oh I can't do that.

NORA

I don't think we have much of a choice.

LOWELL, *nonchalant*

Nora, I can barely bring her up without falling apart. That show will be shit.

NORA

It's scheduled for next Monday.

LOWELL

That's cruel.

NORA

But for today all they want you to do is say something VERY BRIEF about Laurel's uh suicide.

LOWELL

Her what?

An assistant runs on with a flyswatter. They try to kill the fly, to no avail.

NORA

I think it can just be something really quick at the beginning, but we're gonna put the hotline on the bottom of the screen and

LOWELL

She didn't- What?

(Yelling out) I still need my coffee! *(He takes out another pill.)*

Nora. Laurel didn't kill herself.

NORA

What?

LOWELL

She fell in the shower. Far less noble.

DAPHNE

I read in *Insider* that-

LOWELL

Okay, well, I was at the funeral, so.

(Yelling out) CAN SOMEONE PLEASE GET ME A COFFEE?

Are people saying that Laurel killed herself?

DAPHNE

Oh I also read somewhere that it was a drug overdose!

LOWELL

I'm sorry, *what?*

NORA

Daphne.

DAPHNE

Sorry....

LOWELL

Laurel's been clean for almost ten years now.

NORA

Lowell, don't worry. The news cycle moves fast.

LOWELL

Making up rumors about my sister's death isn't really *news*, Nora.

NORA

Didn't she fall off the wagon last fall? After everything came out about Jed?

LOWELL

For a week and a half. That doesn't even count. She was sober.

DAPHNE

<"Hollywood Sober"...>

Lowell swallows the two pills in his hand dry. He starts to cough.

NORA, yelling out

SOMEONE GO GET LOWELL'S COFFEE!

ON IN FOUR.

DAPHNE

I can just get it.

LOWELL

No! You just keep getting ready.

DAPHNE

I am ready.

LOWELL, to Daphne, coughing

Fine- could you...?

DAPHNE

I'm on it.

Daphne runs off to get Lowell's coffee. He paces around the stage.

NORA

Lowell, I'm sorry-

LOWELL

I don't wanna talk about it.

NORA

I'll have them take out the hotline graphic.

LOWELL

Uh, YEAH.

NORA

Okay.

LOWELL

What did Daphne say earlier? "Hollywood sober"? What does that even mean.

NORA

Lowell. Are you going to be okay to do the show?

LOWELL

Laurel was not on drugs! She didn't kill herself! She was happy! Why would she— She had a great life! I mean, hello!

Okay! Moving on! Never mind!

We're all good. Let's do the show.

Don't look at me like that.

NORA

I'm not looking at you like anything.

LOWELL

You're looking at me like I'm crazy or like I'm in denial or, And I don't know what tabloid trash you're reading that's trying to turn my grief into clickbait, but I am *not* in denial, I actually think I'm in bargaining, which comes later than denial, and honestly, considering I had to come into work two weeks after my *sister* died, I think that's a pretty good place to be right now, and if you could just give me a year or two to stop and think maybe I could start feeling like myself again.

But you all wanted me back today, so here I am, and I would really appreciate it if everybody could just pretend that everything is normal.

DAPHNE

NORA

Daphne, how are you feeling?

DAPHNE

I almost feel better, I think.

LOWELL

Good.

DAPHNE

I think it was probably the lobster. In the ice cream.

NORA

Yeah...

Beat.

DAPHNE

So what's next?

NORA

Daphne, I think you should take a breather.

Maybe you should go home.

DAPHNE

No. I've got this. I can power through.

NORA

You just threw up on the floor.

DAPHNE

I'm fine.

NORA

Daphne—

DAPHNE

Who's next?

LOWELL

It's the twins.

DAPHNE

I can do the twins!

LOWELL

See! She wants to do the twins!

NORA

Lowell!

DAPHNE

I'm fine!

NORA

Honey, you're not fine. Go home.

DAPHNE

No, really. I feel much better now.

I can do the interview.

LOWELL

She feels much better now!

NORA

Lowell, stop it! Daphne. Go backstage. Take a breather. Go home if you need to.

DAPHNE

Nora, please.

I worked really hard for this. I'm fine.

NORA

You'll have another chance tomorrow.

Lowell's gonna do the interview today.

DAPHNE

Nora-

NORA

I'm sorry.

Beat.

DAPHNE

Okay. Yeah. I'll sit this one out.

I'm sorry. *(She exits.)*

JACK TELLER

LOWELL

And, you play the lead role, but you also wrote *and* directed the project. Can you tell us a little bit about the movie, for those of us in the audience who haven't seen it yet?

JACK TELLER

Well, no spoilers, but the film is about— well, it's kind of complicated.

On the surface, you know, it's a story about an artist, one who's kind of lost his way, so he goes to, he goes on this really sort of introspective journey through, you know, these beautiful foreign countries, and he's on the beach and stuff, just sort of trying to find himself, you know?

LOWELL

Kind of like an "Eat Pray Love" for men.

JACK TELLER

Exactly! I thought we needed something like that.

But underneath all of that, it's really about making change, in yourself, in your community. So it feels awesome to get to see how that's coming off the screen and into the real world.

DAPHNE

Right. And speaking of making positive changes in your community, you're really here to tell us all about your new charity that has come out of your experiences making *Oasis*, can you tell us about that?

JACK TELLER

Yeah, yeah, of course.

So, while we were on location shooting for the movie, we stayed in several different towns, which I noticed really struggled with water insecurity. Now, I didn't even know that that was a thing. I mean, these communities are right by the ocean, how could they struggle with water? But they do. And then I did my research, and I realized that over a *million* individuals in this country don't have access to water on a regular basis. Kids right here at home!

And I thought to myself, somebody needs to *do* something about this.

And that person is me.

So that's when I started Cruising for Kids.

LOWELL

And what does Cruising for Kids do?

JACK TELLER

Cruising for Kids sponsors kids living in landlocked communities on one-week, all-expenses-paid luxury cruise experiences.

We spent a long time thinking about the most efficient way to give kids access to water. And we realized that most of the communities that are affected by water insecurity are really far from any major water source. So, since we can't bring the water source to the kids, we decided to bring the kids to the water source. We wanted to give them the opportunity to see just how much water is out there, if they really look.

DAPHNE

Wow.

DANIELLE MICHELLE

DANIELLE

Yeah! You know, it's been so great, really.

Fashion has always been a passion of mine—<oh! That was a—didn't mean to rhyme there!>— so I was so excited when people really supported me after I was on the show.

And with all that's been going on, you know, with me recently. Everybody's just been so supportive. With me and Lars, you know.

Beat.

DAPHNE

Well, I *love* your brand. My dress today is *Jean*.

DANIELLE

Oh my god I love that!

LOWELL

And *now*, you've created a whole new brand, called *Crunch*, that sells wellness products that are meant to. "Recenter the Mind in all aspects of your health."

(Applause.)

DANIELLE

Yes, I'm very excited about it.

DAPHNE

So you're an influencer, a fashion designer, a wellness guru— I mean, what don't you do?

DANIELLE

Eat meat. *(She laughs forcefully.)*

No. Obviously, you know, I've had a lot of free time, and I've had to do a lot of work, you know, on myself in the past couple of months. So this wellness brand was more of a personal journey for myself, you know. A way to heal.

(Beat.)

From, you know, what happened to me.

LOWELL

So, what kind of products do you sell through *Crunch*?

DANIELLE

All kinds. Anything you can think of that is meant to help you feel good about yourself, we sell in our store. We've got lots of beauty products, supplements, you name it. And everything is totally organic, fair trade,

DAPHNE

Cruelty-free,

DANIELLE

WELL,,,! legally we can't put that on the label quite yet, but we're looking to transition to an entirely cruelty-free model by the end of this year.

DAPHNE

oh.

DANIELLE

Anyway, so, you know, it's all organic, fair trade, so it's good for your body, for your mind, for the environment. It's really meant to be, you know, *Holistic Wellness*.

DAPHNE

That's great.

LOWELL

Alright, and you brought some of your *Holistic Wellness* products here for us to try today, is that right?

DANIELLE

Yes, so, today, we're going to be trying our ayahuasca-infused clay mask, which has been absolutely blowing up on social media. And what's great about this is that not only does it cleanse your skin, it's got a couple of fun Medicinal Properties that really make you feel super energized as soon as it goes on.

DAPHNE

And how long does it stay on for?

DANIELLE

This one is super fast-acting, so it only takes like 5 minutes.

A lot of our customers say they like to use it in the afternoon, like at work, as a sort of reset button for the day.

Now, I'm legally obligated to tell you all, because we've just been in <a little hot water> with some lawsuits, that this product is—what is it— that this product

“has not been evaluated or approved by the Food and Drug Administration and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.”

Unless you count a bad day as a disease!

Beat.

DANIELLE

Oh my god guys it's super safe. I promise. *(To the audience)* It's organic!

I use this one every day.

Okay. Let's just apply it to the rest of our faces— alright, doesn't that feel great?

DAPHNE

It feels very soothing.

LOWELL, *yelling off*

Can someone start a timer for 5 minutes?

DANIELLE

And now we just— yep.

(They all sink into their chairs with a satisfied sigh.)

DANIELLE

Paradise.

THE TEETOTALING TWINS

LOWELL

Here all the way from Iowa,
please welcome the internet's favorite Teetotaling Twins, Kody and Kady Kirby.

Applause, two teenagers come on stage. They hug Lowell before sitting down in their chairs.

LOWELL

Hey guys! How are you?

KODY

Great, thank you.

KADY

How are you?

LOWELL

I. am. fabulous!
Welcome back to the show!

KADY

Thank you so much for having us back!

LOWELL

Of course! So glad to have you!
So, the last time we had you on, you were absolutely blowing up on the internet.
Your act, the Teetotaling Twins, went absolutely viral when you all were just, what? 8 years old?

KADY

8, 9? We were somewhere around there when it really started to take off.

A video appears on the back screen.

LOWELL

So this is, I believe, the video that made you all famous, is that right?

They watch the video, in which two kids of 8 or 9 yodel and dance around in a kitchen or something. It's very homemade and very Cute.

Kody buries his face in his hands.

KODY

<Oh my goodness, where did you get that!>

KADY

He's embarrassed.

The video ends.

LOWELL

Kody, I don't know why you're embarrassed. You do know that all of these are on the internet, right?

KODY

Oh my goodness. I haven't seen that one in a *long* time.

LOWELL

How did you get into yodeling?

KADY

Well, it's kind of a family thing.

KODY

We're all really into music, so it was kind of just natural for us to pick it up.

LOWELL

It's a family thing! That's so cute!

So, who taught you all to yodel?

KODY

Our grandfather. Poppy used to compete in yodeling competitions when he was young, (*A picture of their grandfather appears on the back screen*) about our age now—Yep, that's him up there, way back then—

KADY

And so he really passed his love of music on to us, and it just really took off.

LOWELL

And so do you still yodel?

KODY

Occasionally.

KADY

We like to compete sometimes, like in the state fairs and stuff. We went on a quick summer tour when we were in middle school, but that was right at the end of all of the stuff about us on the internet.

KODY

Now we're just normal high school students.

LOWELL

And what grade are you in?

KADY

We're sophomores.

LOWELL

Sophomores, wow.

KODY

Yep.

LOWELL

And you two have moved from performing into the world of science, is that right? *(A picture of the twins at the science fair shows up on the back screen.)*

KODY, *burying his face in his hands*

<Oh my god!>

LOWELL

So I hear that you two are the Iowa Region 9 science fair champions?

KADY

Yep.

LOWELL

What was your project about?

KADY

I think that picture was from an experiment we did where we used dynamic wavelength spectroscopy using a parametric generator.

Beat. Lowell gives the audience a bewildered look.

LOWELL

I have no idea what that means!

KADY, *laughing, self-conscious in the way of a too-smart teenager*

It's for, like, lasers and stuff.

LOWELL

What can't they do!

Applause.

LOWELL

(Over the applause) Yeah let's hear it for science!!!

(Applause dies down)

And, so do you two always compete together?

KODY

Pretty much. It's worked for us so far.

LOWELL

How many science fair ribbons have you won?

KADY

I think, 8 or 9?

KODY

Those are only the first place ones.

LOWELL, *to the audience*

And those are only the first place ones!

The twins laugh.

LOWELL

That's incredible, wow. Really incredible.

KADY

Yeah, we have a pretty good partnership going on.

KODY

People tell us we have this twin telepathy thing going on.

KADY

Our teachers have actually made us take our tests in different rooms because we kept getting the same scores on them, they thought we were cheating. Then when we kept getting the same scores, some of them were convinced we were actually using telepathy.

KODY

Oh yeah! That was crazy!

(Lowell falls silent. A beat.)

(A picture of the twins singing at Christmastime shows up on the back screen.)

LOWELL

Oh, so that's— tell me about that photo?

KODY

That's us singing at a nursing home over Christmas.

LOWELL

So you're still singing together, huh?

KADY

We don't do it as much anymore, but we like to do it on special occasions.

KODY

Holidays, city council meetings, things like that.

LOWELL

That's fabulous. That's really amazing.
So you still sing, you compete in science fairs, is that all?

KADY

Well, Kody plays on the soccer team. And I swim.

LOWELL, *ironic*

And you both have solved world hunger, and made world peace.

KODY

Not yet! Not yet.

LOWELL

Well, wow. You two are just extraordinary.

KODY

It's mostly her.

KADY

That's not true!

KODY

She's the brains. I'm just the eye-candy.

KADY, *rolling her eyes*

Oh my god.

He is just as much of the team as I am.

KODY

I wasn't saying I wasn't!

KADY

You just did!

KODY, *to Lowell*

We're a team.

KADY

As obnoxious as he can be, I don't know what I'd do without him.

SYBIL

NORA

Sybil, it's really loud on our end. Where are you?

SYBIL

Oh! I'm in the middle of gridlock traffic on the San Fernando bridge leading out of the city.

Beat.

NORA

What?

SYBIL

I said I'm in the middle of-

LOWELL

Why is there gridlock traffic?

SYBIL

One of the powerlines fell over because of the storm. It's blocking, like, half of the lanes. It's getting really really bad. People are trying to get out of here as soon as they can.

LOWELL

Oh my god?

NORA

Are you okay?

SYBIL

I'm great! Just really really wet.

Well, I'm actually a little scared.

The storm is getting pretty bad.

I think I'm just spooked because my mom went to a psychic once and she said something about this. I don't know.

LOWELL

Sybil, have you found anyone to interview yet?

SYBIL

No! Nobody's outside right now because it's so rainy.

NORA

We're really going to need you to find someone fast. We might have to move the segment up.

SYBIL

Oh I don't know if I can do that. I don't see anybody out here.

Wait a second, wait a second, something's happening.

People are getting out of their cars now.

NORA

Go talk to them.

SYBIL

I don't know, they're all walking towards-

Oh my god! Wait-

NORA

You found someone?

SYBIL

What the-

NORA

Sybil? What's going on?

SYBIL

I think somebody's about to jump-

LOWELL

Oh my god!

NORA

Sybil?!?

SYBIL

Wait! He's good! False alarm!

I thought somebody was about to jump off the bridge. He's fine. He's getting down.

NORA

Okay, that's great, Sybil, but we can't show that on tv.

LOWELL, to Nora: *what the fuck is wrong with you?*

Oh my god?!

NORA

You've gotta get us something quick.

SYBIL

I've been trying. It's really hard. Nobody wants to talk to me.

NORA

Make them talk to you!

SYBIL

I can't! I've resorted to knocking on car windows like a roadside orange salesman. People look at me like I'm some kind of ghost.

It's really bad out here! I think I should get back inside!

NORA

I don't care how bad it is. I don't care if you're interviewing someone in the middle of a goddamn hurricane, Sybil!

SYBIL

Okay, okay, it's just

LOWELL

You've got this, Sybil!

SYBIL

Okay! I'll try my best! I'll have Peter let you know when- *(A stop sign flies in and hits her across the face. Blackout on her side of the stage.)*