

# Dzieci



“We would like to have wings in order to fly toward God,  
but it is not forbidden even to limp in that direction.”

## **Dzieci Creative Interactions**

How can the arts serve hospitals and other institutions, and where is renewal to come from for beleaguered staff? Dzieci addresses these needs in unique and creative formats.

The Dzieci Creative Interaction is essentially an improvisational, celebratory event. Structured to fit the parameters of space and time, we rely on the group's expertise in clowning, acrobatics, choral singing, and trust exercises to establish a bond with our audience, ultimately empowering them to join in the creative process.

Interactions are non-verbal. This allows for a contact that bridges all cultures and ages, as well as special needs audiences.

The following list represents institutions served by our creative methodologies: Manhattan Psychiatric and Rockland Psychiatric Centers, Lorton Reformatory, Gallaudet University for the Deaf, United Cerebral Palsy, Stony Lodge Hospital, Montefiore Medical Center, Cabrini Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation, The Associated Blind, Children's Hope Foundation, International Rescue Committee, Federal Employment Guidance Services, and Hospital Audiences, Inc.

## **Comments from Staff and Clients**

"We were quite impressed by the sensitivity and skill Dzieci demonstrated working with a diverse and challenging population that included children, adolescents, and adults being treated for acute psychiatric disturbances. We were particularly struck by the gentle and creative way in which the group engaged patients, demonstrating respect for ambivalence, mirroring fears, anxiety and sadness, guiding the patients through to a place of connection and healing. Through non-verbal metaphors, a safe space was communicated which allowed heavy defenses to melt and enabled individuals to relate in a more genuine manner.

Afterwards, patients expressed a sense of having felt valued and special. Testimony to how skillfully Dzieci creates bridges between territory that is often isolated, often forgotten.

The after effects have been very deep, creating a sense of community with both the staff and patients that is often missing"

-Eileen Leith, Activities Director and Art Therapist, Stoney Lodge Hospital

"Every time the group has come to Cabrini Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation, they have provided magical, multi-sensory activities and therapeutic contacts that had a profound impact on residents and staff alike. One such instance that stands out in my mind was when the group physically lifted a disabled resident from her wheelchair and carried her as if she were floating on water. I have been unable to erase that image from my mind; and hope I never forget it. Other residents respond to this work in ways that more traditional supportive techniques are unable to foster."

-Oscar Correale, CTRS, Director, Therapeutic Recreation, CCNR

"I felt that they were on a boat searching for new land and they found us!"

-Child, age 9, Stoney Lodge Hospital

## **Dzieci Para-Theatrical Workshops**

Dzieci offers rigorous Para-theatrical workshops specially designed for such diverse clientele as: clergy, arts therapists, seminarians, students, psychiatric patients and staff, youth in crisis, drug rehab, geriatrics, and actors.

The workshops are non-verbal, with guidance gently provided by the ensemble through sound and gesture. Each event begins with a theme based on a specific inquiry, and flows in accordance with the nature of the participants, towards the conscious creation of creative community.

Past themes have included: *In the Country of the Blind*, where blind and seeing participants worked together in absolute darkness; *The Hero's Journey*, employing tribal rites and archetypal narrative; *Circle of Fire*, exploring Native American ritual; and *Maraton*, a 24 hour total immersion in ritual ceremonial creation.

Workshops can be adapted for small or large groups, in short or long term sessions.

Following are examples of some workshop offerings and illustrative testimonials from clients served.

### **Sacred Theatre**

Through physical, vocal, and ensemble exercises, and vigorous ritualized confrontation with personal obstacles, participants are brought to the axis where theatre and spirituality converge; where attention is strengthened and presence is demanded.

### **The Holy Fool**

The Trickster and The Fool are alive within us. Through trust, relaxation, and improvisation, we discover a practice of service through the healing power of anarchy and laughter.

### **Art in Service**

The "Gift" is only honored when it is sacrificed to something higher. This workshop is specifically designed for those with a talent, who wish to actively engage the question, "What do I serve?"

### **Presence**

Facing a real teacher, we are brought to a place of stillness and attention. Some say we are brought "home". For those who have an aim to be leaders, presence is an essential quality to develop and refine. In this program, we meticulously study a most illusive and fascinating subject:  
The Self.

## Participant Experiences

"My experience totally defies words... it allowed for a sharing and intimacy that I find lacking in my day to day. The use of movement and sound was transformative on a kinesthetic and visceral level."

-Lisa Lerner, participant, *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*

"It melted me, humbled me, destroyed my ego and pride, ripped my heart open, and changed me forever."

-Krystyna Sanderson, participant, *The Hero's Journey*

"We had a great time working with your group. There was so much laughter and many things learned in those two days. We are grateful for your passion for what you do and commitment to finding the sacred through ritual! Thank you so much and God bless you!"

-Rev. Brent McDougal, Institute for Clergy Excellence

"Inspiring work, excellent execution."

"Wonderful non-verbal end to the conference."

-Participant evaluations, 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Spirituality and Psychotherapy, *Movement and Repose* workshop

"Please accept my deepest gratitude. Just for the opportunity to spend 24 hours shedding my long held anxieties, doubts and cynicism was priceless.

You were so generous with your hearts, energy, focus, passion and more."

-Reiko Aylesworth (FOX Television's "24"), participant, "*Maraton*"

"Truly one of the most amazing things I've experienced as a person or actress.

Today, I found myself feeling unafraid to take risks no matter where I was.

The normal daily fears of people and places occurred, but the filter to which I would adjust my voice and behavior seemed to have gone away.

I only hope others can fully realize themselves as I have."

-Judy Mair, participant, "*Maraton*"

"My God what an awesome and profound experience!"

-Mark Sklawer, Director of Body Temple, participant, *Maraton*

"Dzieci is a wonderful example of the spiritual intensity possible when theatre engages the age-old mysteries of faith and the human experience. We at the Cathedral found the very stones our monumental building coming alive through their presence."

-Canon Tom Miller, Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York City

"I don't know any other group, which combines music, drama, dance, and spirituality in the way that they do."

-Rev. Dr. Daniel Meeter, Pastor, Old First Reformed Church

"Your work persists as a point of radiance for me."

-Antero Ali, Director, Paratheatrical Research Center

**TOM F. DRIVER**  
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To Whom It May Concern,

The extraordinary theater group, which calls itself Dzieci, was wholly unknown to me until the ensemble showed up one Sunday morning at the Jan Hus Presbyterian Church in Manhattan in a performance of their "Fools Mass", so wonderful, so authentic in its combination of the ridiculous and the sublime that it became our mode of worship on that day.

My professional life has been devoted to theater, theology, and the study of ritual\*. I was astonished by the insight and skill with which Dzieci brought together these concerns, and equally surprised that I had never heard of the group before. I've since learned that they have been involved in a slow process of gestation, so to speak. Only recently are they beginning to emerge from the womb of their formation process to continue their growth in public. They will never be "fully grown," for theirs is a theater of continual discovery and of a kind of growth that is (all at once) moral, spiritual, and aesthetic.

Following my initial experience of Dzieci in performance, I was invited to meet with them and share some of my ideas and facilitate their discussion of the group's aims and methods. From the two such sessions we have had so far, I have gained very high admiration for the group's dedication to its work and for its fearlessness in approaching the most complex matters of rehearsal and performance in relation to spiritual process. Through their founding director, Matt Mitler, they have been led to build upon the work of Jerzy Grotowski, than whom there was no greater explorer of this territory in the 20th century. In Mitler, and in Dzieci, fearlessness is combined with a humility of spirit that is rare in theater. For this reason, Dzieci, which means "children", is an apt name for them.

In their own way of thinking, Dzieci is an ensemble devoted to the idea that theater is essentially a form of "communion". It uses theater work to seek an ever greater understanding of what it means to share, to give of oneself in performance. Through years of what I have called "gestation," the group has formed a core of artisans from dance, directing, music, movement and management. The work of this extraordinary mixture of persons has a strong impact on everyone who participates in it. The effect on an audience is exhilarating and deeply satisfying, as I can testify because I saw their work in performance before I had ever heard of them.

Dzieci's work is very important to the theater. It must be supported. It is uncommon to find theater, which strives to be necessary. Because Dzieci does, it deserves your assistance."

Sincerely,  
Tom F. Driver

\*Author: "Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual



<http://dziecitheatre.org>