

MAKBET: A Wicked Work in Progress



PHOTO BY JUDY JANDA

Matt Mitler (center) rehearses for *Makbet* with the Dzieci theater group.

By Cristin Flanagan

A group of ten men and women in sweats are seated cross-legged in a meditation circle. Suddenly a blonde thrusts her body across the circle and shouts, "What is thy name?" The man she addresses leaps forward and stabs back with the same shout, "What is thy name?" The question continues traveling around the circle until everyone has said the line. This is not some new-age self-awareness ritual or group therapy, or at least not exactly: it is Theatre Group Dzieci's rehearsal for *Makbet*, a gypsy retelling of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's classic tragedy.

Countless acting troupes have staged adaptations of *Macbeth*. Recent interpretations read the play as a modern parable on fascism; a James Bond-esque adventure; and even a Bollywood musical. Coming up with an original performance of such a well-thumbed classic challenges actors and directors alike, but the Theatre Group Dzieci faces off with the age-old tale of sound and fury, and hopes to conquer it with gypsy cunning.

The Theatre Group Dzieci's methods are unusual: all the actors first learn all the lines by repeating them orally before they even look at a script. When they finally perform *Makbet* for an audience, there will be no single actor starring in the role of Makbet or Lady Makbet. Instead, having memorized all the lines, the troupe's members will jump in and take over roles at random. If an actor is not cutting it in his or her role, any other actor may step in and take over. Every actor will try to play all the main characters at least once per enactment; nothing else is required. These are the rules of Theatre Group Dzieci.

Birth of Dzieci

The controlled chaos of the Theatre Group Dzieci is the brainchild of Coop members Matt Mitler and Yvonne Brecht (Note: this is her stage name; she is registered in the

Coop system as Yvonne Brechtbuhler). Dzieci was first conceived over ten years ago when Brecht attended one of Mitler's workshops, then approached him with the idea of starting the troupe. Brecht, who had recently immigrated to the United States, was looking for a community of actors in experimental theater, and a teacher to continue the acting training she had started in her native Switzerland. Mitler, who had trained in an avant-garde method known as "poor theater," embraced the idea and became the company's director.

Poor theater is a school of acting that shuns elaborate set designs and props, or the *spectacle* of theater, instead focusing on the interaction between the actor and the audience. For Dzieci's stripped-down performance of *Makbet*, there will be no stage and no physical separation between the audience and the actors, says Mitler.

"...the Theatre Group Dzieci faces off with the age-old tale of sound and fury, and hopes to conquer it with gypsy cunning."

An independent film actor and director, as well as a Pokemon voice-over actor, Mitler was not only trained in acting with poor theater creator Jerzy Grotowski's Polish Theatre Laboratory, but also in existential psychology under R. D. Laing. With so many disparate influences under his belt, Mitler has led Dzieci's evolution into a unique theatrical experiment.

"We return to silence often. We do not seek applause... We commit to not knowing. We destroy what we create. We wear funny teeth." In a unique combination of the holy with the profane, Dzieci's performances mix chanting, acrobatics, and theater with members costumed as medieval fools, ragamuffins, or traveling gypsies.

Dzieci Lifestyle

The theatre group's mission statement calls Dzieci a "search for the sacred through the medium of theatre." While Dzieci appears to be an acting troupe to the casual observer, it's actually incorporated as a church. Dzieci's founders and members insist that it's a philosophy that informs the rest of their lives, with service playing leading role as a cardinal virtue.

Dzieci is "more dedication than skill," says Music Director and Coop member John Norman. Members commit to regular performances for hospitals and hospices, as well as for temples, churches, and sweat lodges. Dzieci's audiences have even included the Benedictine sisters of the Abbey of Regina Laudis. Mitler says clergy and healthcare workers are often attracted to Dzieci's frequent workshops, as they connect with the spirit of the group's work.

Always emphasizing the spiritual side of their acting, Dzieci rehearsals start with a meditation circle. The circle is to draw the actors attention to their bodies, and create a place of stillness for them to return to, says Mitler. Dzieci's public performances similarly start with a chant or song performed with the audience, to draw the audience into the performance. Actors also mingle in the audience, further blurring the line between performers and observers.

Band of Fools

An architect, several teachers, more than a few experienced actors, even an ordained practitioner of Santeria, make up the motley crew known as Dzieci. Dzieci's members are as eccentric as you might expect from a traveling band of gypsies and self-proclaimed fools.

Dzieci's members have varying levels of experience and talents. Coop member John Norman joined Dzieci eight years ago, and is currently the group's Music Director. With a Bachelor of Arts in Performing Arts from Oakland, he's also the Operations Manager for Ripley-Grier Studios, where Dzieci rehearses. "We're all seekers of some sort," says Norman.

Long haired and bearded, Golan Reinitz came to Dzieci from clown school; with a background from both Clown Lab and New York Goofs Ultimate Clown School, Reinitz takes his clowning seriously. During Reinitz's first three months as a member of Dzieci, he performed at the group's *Fools Mass*, but lacking any formal voice training, played a mute in the primarily musical production.

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PSFC APRIL 2008 GENERAL MEETING Tuesday, April 29, 7:00 p.m.

- Items will be taken up in the order given.
- Times in parentheses are suggestions.
- More information on each item may be available at the entrance table at the meeting. We ask members to please read the materials available between 7:00 & 7:15 p.m.
- Meeting Location: Congregation Beth Elohim Social Hall (Garfield Temple)
274 Garfield Pl. at 8th Ave.

AGENDA:

Item #1: The 401(k) Plan (10 minutes)

Proposal: "That the Coop establish the Park Slope Food Coop, Inc. 401(k) Plan and Trust. The Coop will pay administrative costs but will not contribute any other funds to the 401(k) plan. Employee accounts will be funded solely through employee contributions."

The administrative costs to the Coop are expected to be less than \$4,500 the first year and less than \$3,000 in subsequent years. Because the cost of this benefits program is low, a benefit costing this much would ordinarily not be brought to the General Meeting. However, legal corporate resolution requirements mean that it must be enacted at the GM. Please note the reason the Coop will not be contributing funds to the individual employee investment accounts is that the Coop is already committed to contributing to the existing defined benefit pension plan.

—submitted by the General Coordinators

Item #2: Creating a Bike Committee (25 minutes)

Proposal: "Proposal for the creation of a bike committee" The ad-hoc Park Slope Bike Committee proposes the creation of an official Bike Committee to improve bicycle parking (via valet bike parking), provide information and bicycle-related resources and products to members, and act as a contact for bicycle-related issues at the Coop.

—submitted by Josh Gosciak

Item #3: Bottled Water (55 minutes)

Proposal: "That the PSFC discontinue selling bottled water" Because selling bottled water violates our mission—polluting the environment and handing over public resources for private gain—we resolve to discontinue selling bottled water. Selling bottled water undermines support for and confidence in the public water system, which distributes our most precious common resource equitably. Plastic bottles pollute the environment, required oil and lots of water to produce and fuel to transport. They take up landfill space where toxins can leach into the water table. Selling bottled water allows corporations to exploit public resources for private gain. Bottled water is an unnecessary expense to the consumer. Unloading and schlepping bottled water is backbreaking work and shelf space could be better used.

—submitted by Susan Metz, David Barouh, Lew Friedman

Future Agenda Information:

For information on how to place an item on the Agenda, please see the center pages of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*.

The Agenda Committee minutes and the status of pending agenda items are available in the office and at all GMs.

How to Contact the Disciplinary Committee



The Disciplinary Committee is responsible for the review, investigation, and disposition of all submitted complaints of member misconduct.

If you would like to submit a complaint, please contact us.



Email: foodcoopDC@gmail.com



Letter Drop Off: Written reports may be left in the **DC mailbox** located to the left as you enter the Membership Office.



By US Post: **Park Slope Food Coop**
Attn: **The Disciplinary Committee**
782 Union St Brooklyn NY 11215



Voicemail: **888.922.2667, ext 86**

Thank you





PHOTO BY JUDY JANDA

A Dzieci Makbet rehearsal

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Performances

Fools Mass, perhaps Dzieci's signature work, has been performed each December in New York since 1998. Often performed in churches, *Fools Mass* tells the tale of a group of village idiots who decide to perform their own mass when their pastor dies, and includes hymns and chants.

For the past three years, the Theatre Dzieci has intermittently worked on *Makbet*, while also performing *Fools Mass* and other pieces. Dzieci also recently debuted its first public performance of *Cirkus Luna!*, self-described as possibly 'the worst circus act ever to perform in public.'

The seemingly inept acrobatics of *Cirkus Luna!* and loosely coordinated battle scenes in *Makbet* require agility. In rehearsal, the years of experience of members like Mitler and Brecht shine through, as they perform their roles with a necessary tension, but also an ease in their skin that some of the newer members are still working to project.

Future Performances

Mitler hopes *Makbet* will

lead to future performances of Dzieci's next project, *Ragnarok* within the year. *Ragnarok*, the Nordic myth of Armageddon and ensuing rebirth of the world, Mitler feels, seems like a natural progression following *Makbet*. Says Mitler, "the next beat of the story is a new beginning; out of an energy of destruction, something good arises."

To See Makbet

If you haven't yet witnessed the Dzieci ensemble in action, *Makbet* will be unlike any rendition of *Macbeth* you've experienced. Audience members who have seen Dzieci's *Makbet* before are still in for a surprise, as all Dzieci's performances are constantly evolving, and a continuous work in progress.

Dzieci's *Makbet* will be playing on May 1st, at 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.; and May 2nd and 3rd at 7:00 p.m., at the John Street Church courtyard, at 44 John Street in lower Manhattan. For admission, there is a suggested donation of \$10. Call 718-638-6037 for more information. ■

The Environmental Committee has a blog!

Please visit often for timely news and information from the PSFC Environmental Committee.



We're blogging about our activities at the Coop, as well as environmental events of interest at the Coop and beyond.

Find us at:
<http://ecokvetch.blogspot.com/>

Coop Job Opening: Receiving/Stocking Coordinator Late Afternoons, Evenings & Weekends

Description:

The Coop is hiring a Receiving/Stocking Coordinator to work late afternoons, evenings and weekends. The evening and weekend Receiving/Stocking Coordinators have a lot of responsibility overseeing the smooth functioning of the store and supporting the squads. They work with the Receiving squads, keeping the store well-stocked and orderly and maintaining the quality of the produce. At the end of the evening, they set up the receiving areas to prepare for the following day's early morning deliveries.

We are looking for a candidate who wants a permanent afternoon/evening/weekend schedule. The ideal candidate will have been working on a Receiving workslot for the Coop. Because fewer paid staff work evenings and weekends, it is essential that the candidate be a reliable and responsible self-starter who enjoys working with our diverse member-workers. You must be an excellent team player, as you will be sharing the work with one to several other Receiving Coordinators. You must have excellent communication and organizational skills, patience and the ability to prioritize the work and remain calm under pressure. This is a high energy job for a fit candidate, and you must be able to lift and to work on your feet for hours. The job will include work in the walk-in coolers and freezer.

Hours: 35-40 hours per week, schedule—to be determined—will be afternoon, evening and weekend work.

Wages: \$21.64/hour.

Benefits: —Health and Personal time
—Vacation—three weeks/year increasing in the 4th, 7th & 10th years
—Health insurance
—Pension plan

Application & Hiring Process:

Please provide a cover letter with your résumé as soon as you can. Mail your letter and résumé or drop it in the mail slot in the entryway of the Coop. Please state your availability.

All applicants will receive a response. *Please do not call the office.*

If you applied previously to another Coop job offering and remain interested, please reapply.

Probation Period:

There will be a six-month probation period.

Prerequisite:

Minimum of six months' membership in the Park Slope Food Coop.

Applicants who have not previously worked a Coop shift in Receiving should arrange to work in Receiving.

We are seeking an applicant pool that reflects the diversity of the Coop's membership.

Coop Job Opening: Receiving/Stocking Coordinator Monday-Friday

Description:

The Coop is hiring a Receiving/Stocking Coordinator to work primarily in the dairy and refrigerated foods department. We are looking for a perishable foods specialist who is passionate about food and knowledgeable about dairy, soy and vegetarian/vegan products. Perishable items require a great deal of attention to detail. Good math skills are essential for checking invoices from small suppliers.

We are looking for a candidate who wants a Monday through Friday schedule. The ideal person will have been working on a Receiving workslot for the Coop. It is essential that the candidate be a reliable and responsible self-starter who enjoys working with our diverse member-workers. You must be an excellent team player and display exceptional communication and organizational skills, patience and the ability to prioritize the work and remain calm under pressure. This is a high energy job for a fit candidate, and you must be able to lift and to work on your feet for hours. The job will include work in the walk-in coolers and freezer.

Hours: 35-40 hours per week, Monday – Friday

Wages: \$21.64/hour

Benefits: —Health and Personal time
—Vacation—three weeks/year increasing in the 4th, 7th & 10th years
—health insurance
—pension plan

Application & Hiring Process:

Please provide a cover letter with your résumé as soon as you can. Mail your letter and résumé or drop it in the mail slot in the entryway of the Coop. Please state your availability.

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Applicants who have not previously worked a Coop shift in Receiving should arrange to work in Receiving.

We are seeking an applicant pool that reflects the diversity of the Coop's membership.