

Dzieci

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Theatre Group Dzieci A Ministry to Ministers

The path of service takes great diligence. It is not uncommon to lose energy, equilibrium, and even at times, faith. This is as true for the individual who leads as it is for the community at large. Theatre Group Dzieci has made a commitment to minister to these leaders, and to the communities they serve. This ministry is available to all and everyone.

For decades, Dzieci's company director Matt Mitler has been refining a methodology that renews and deepens community through subtle work on attention and presence and through dynamic physical encounters that both challenge and affirm. Integrating elements of experimental ensemble theatre, humanistic psychology, movement, meditation, and sacred ceremony, Matt and the Dzieci troupe peel away encrusted layers of personality and habit to reveal the essence and universality of the individual. Cultivating expansion, expression, and intimacy, in an atmosphere that supports and encourages, participants are guided towards a more authentic and inspired way of being, and an opening to a higher ground, a greater mystery.

Dzieci crafts the ideal program for each community that it serves, ranging from one-on-one sessions, to intensives that can take the space of a few hours, a day, or multiple days, to extended residencies and retreats. Dzieci also offers return visits for continued processing and renewal of the creative relationship.

With a foundation in sacred theatre and a practice of art as a vehicle for transformation, Dzieci is uniquely qualified to serve leaders, teachers, healers, and all the communities they minister to. Dzieci has created workshops for the Archdiocese of Erie and of Hartford, the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, Union Theological Seminary, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, the Institute for Clergy Excellence, the Heart of the Healer Foundation, the Annual Conference on Spirituality and Psychotherapy, the National Conference for Arts Therapists, and the Parliament for the World's Religions.

The Abbey of Regina Laudis, which Dzieci has had a relationship with for the past ten years, recently invited us to create a Passion play with their community for Holy Week.

We invite them to speak on our behalf:

The Experience of Dzieci Preparing the New Education Deanery
in the Reading of the Passion of Our Lord According to St. Matthew

+PAX

Dear Matt and Dear Dzieci all ~

In a natural and gentle way, you helped us open to ourselves and to every member of the New Education Deanery, so that together we entered into a real experience – a timeless moment – fluid, seamless. I cannot think of another time in my life when I could say I have experienced Communion. I cried for the joy of what you opened in us. ~ Sister Judith

Working with you on the Passion was an occasion for us to be revealed one to another in new ways, and we were made new in our relationships. ~ Mother Ozanne

Thank you so much for your gifts to us. I have never felt such a profound experience of the passion, its drama and urgency. It was poignant, real, and still fun. ~ Sister John Mary

I can't tell you the depths from which I am grateful, and can only respond to such a gift by asking for more. ~ Sister Elizabeth

We experience Christ's Passion in our daily Mass and daily lives. Your work with us – in service to us – expands our ability to be present to each other as we live out this mystery. ~ Sister Alma

I had no real acting experience before working with Dzieci, and so I expected that they would help me to learn how to act. Instead, I found that I did not have to go far to find what I was looking for, that the expression was waiting within me and Dzieci helped me find it. Dzieci was intensely dedicated to being in the moment with me, to bring the work to life, to bring my life into the work, so that it became a living expression, and not just a good show. I am infinitely grateful for the expansion of heart and soul that I experienced by working with Dzieci. They are a gift to the world. ~ Sister Maria Evangelista

Working with Dzieci to create a dramatic presentation was an experience of liberation for our community. They supplied the energy and truth to help us risk our own act in truth. This was an experience for me of what Peter Brook called "Holy Theater". ~ Sister Esther

I thought Dzieci was going to teach me how to act. I thought they would provide choreography for our Benedictine community's liturgical play. Yet through the acting, they taught me how to be a deeper human being. In developing the choreography, they opened a new way for me to interact with my community members. The exercises through which the Dzieci ensemble guided us broke through ingrained relational patterns and facilitated a vulnerability that brought us into unexpected levels of communion with one another. They left me with a desire to be released from my habitual responses in order to be truly attentive to whom and what is before me; to receive and respond with awareness and compassion. The clear dedication, professionalism and compassion of each Dzieci member built a sacred space through which the liturgical play became a vehicle of transformation for both presenters and congregation. Thank you Dzieci, for pouring yourselves into the creation of the Passion. I felt we were all engaged in redemptive work – of the narrative itself, our community, the Church, the world, and my own heart. ~ Katie, Postulant

Sample themes for retreats and workshops:

Sacred Theatre: Through physical, vocal, and ensemble exercises, explorations in ritual and ceremony, and vigorous confrontation with perceived personal blocks and barriers, 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 all of us. The Fool is an archetype that holds universal wisdom, crosses mutable boundaries, and speaks truth in a way that is accessible to all. Through trust, relaxation, and improvisation, we discover a practice of service through the healing power of anarchy, laughter, and simplicity.

Art in Service: We all have a gift, something unique that we bring into the world. But this “gift” is only honored when it is sacrificed to something higher. This workshop is specifically designed for those who 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 leaders or healers, presence is an essential quality to develop and refine. In this course, we will meticulously study a most illusive and fascinating subject: The Self.

Workshops can be designed for any length of time or number of participants. Dzieci performances may be arranged to spark further study. Fees are always flexible.

“I invited Dzieci to spend a year at New Brunswick Theological Seminary as our Artists-In-Residence. During this year they used theatre with faculty and students as a way of “breaking-through” academic paradigms for knowing, inquiry, and encounter. Their work with faculty in particular is too complex to be easily summarized, but, at its core, their ways of engaging enabled us to enter a variety of liminal spaces that brought us into deeper knowledge of and expression with one another. Our work/play with Dzieci was about bodies and more than bodies. It was about human experience and more than human experience.

In the end, I would describe what happened with and for our faculty as being taken up into the relationality of the divine in such a way that our own relationality was strengthened by a power not our own, and also, our own.”

~ Renee House, Dean, and Associate Professor of Practical Theology,
New Brunswick Theological Seminary

“Dzieci is a wonderful example of the spiritual intensity possible when theatre engages the age-old mysteries of faith and the human experience.”

~ Canon Tom Miller, The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine

“Moving easily between the sublime and the ridiculous, drawing its audience through laughter toward participation and contemplation, [Dzieci’s] work resists being categorized as either theater or religion, becoming both at once in an event experienced by many as transformative.”

~ Encyclopedia of Religion: Modern Western Theater

For further information, please contact Matt Mitler at 718 638 6037 or
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