

On Shakespeare and Shipping Containers

People have asked: Why Macbeth? Why gypsies? Why a shipping container???

The Eastern European Roma motif came about as a study of Trickster mythology (Dzieci also has a production based on the Nordic saga of Ragnarok, with Loki as a key figure). This was immediately after 9/11 and we felt a deep need to explore this particular archetype, and the concept of "Holy Destruction".

Work initiated with improvisations, street actions, and hospital visits, challenging but ultimately freeing. Continuing to follow this thread, we began to explore text with our new-found characters. We prefer text that is out of reach: Milton, Melville, The Bible, and naturally, Shakespeare. Macbeth was proposed, it is certainly a tale of destruction, but it's also a tragedy. How is that possible? We chose to approach that inquiry the way we do all of our work: with compassion.

The improvisational form, with actors spontaneously switching roles, began as an acting exercise, in keeping with the Trickster spirit, but it created such enormously high stakes that we were compelled to continue working this way; aiming to meet the challenge, not overcome it.

Dzieci has always gravitated towards spaces that serve as a partner, that have a demand, on us as well as our audience, to pull us together, as a community. We've performed Makbet under a full moon in a cemetery. We've done it in the crashing surf of the Atlantic Ocean. We became acquainted with Sure We Can about four years ago. They were looking for artists who resonated with their mission of empowerment and inclusivity and we were looking for an inspiring location, and a worthy community to serve. Kismet.

Scouting the location, we settled on a shipping container; it seemed perfect for both Tricksters and Makbet. We gave it a try and found that the requisite intimacy forced us to act more truthfully than we ever had before. And even though we'd performed the piece with as many as eight actors, only three could fit here. Which also raised the stakes.

We've worked Makbet at Sure We Can every fall since that first experiment, trying out different seating configurations, exploring sound possibilities within the ringing metal walls, tearing apart the show and putting it back together again. And now we're finally ready for a full run, which will commence next week.

As our riotous clan of tricksters brings a fierce and fiery vitality to the drama, the space itself provides an opposing force of cold steel containment. That's a pressure cooker. And for us, that's good theatre. Please consider further support for this endeavor, which in turn supports all Dzieci endeavors.