

On Shakespeare and Shipping Containers

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

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

Work commenced with improvisations, street actions, and hospital visits, many posed challenges but all were ultimately freeing. Continuing to follow this thread, we began to explore text with our new-found characters. We prefer text that is somewhat out of reach: Milton, Melville, The Bible, and naturally, Shakespeare. Macbeth was proposed, it is certainly a tale of destruction, but it is 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 in this way; aiming to meet the challenge, not to overcome it.

Since our inception, Dzieci has always gravitated towards spaces that serve as a partner, that have a demand, on us as well as our audience, to unite us, 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. About six years ago, we became acquainted with Sure We Can, an adventurous non-profit in Bushwick. 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 (one of many); it seemed perfect for both Tricksters and Makbet. We gave it a try for one single performance 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 changing parts, only three could realistically fit this space. 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 this year, we are pleased to announce that our annual offering is being presented by the FringeNYC + FringeBYOV. Hallejuah!

As our riotous clan from the Old Country bring their fierce and fiery vitality to the drama, the space itself provides an opposing force of cold steel and containment. That's a pressure cooker. And for us, that's good theatre. We invite you to join us.

Matt Mitler 2018