

Stacy Klein and Maria Shevtsova

## Covid Conversations 4: Stacy Klein

The ecology of the rural setting in which Double Edge Theatre lives and works is as integral to its artistic work as to its principles of social justice, and these qualities mark the ensemble's singular profile not only in the United States but also increasingly on the world theatre map. Stacy Klein co-founded the company in Boston in 1982 as a women's theatre with a defined feminist programme. In 1997, Double Edge moved its work space to a farm that Klein had bought in Ashfield, Massachusetts, commuting from there back to Boston to show its productions. Within a few years, Klein and her collaborators were acutely aware of their separation from the local community, which necessitated a change of perspective to encompass personal and creative engagement with local people and to develop audiences within the area, while not losing sight of their international links. Carlos Uriona, formerly a popular-theatre activist from Argentina, had joined Double Edge and facilitated the local immersion that ultimately became its lifeline, most visibly during the Covid-19 pandemic, as Klein here observes. Klein, who had been a student of Rena Mirecka in Poland (starting in 1976), has maintained her friendship and professional relations with this founding member of the Teatr Laboratorium led by Jerzy Grotowski, inviting Mirecka to run workshops at the Double Edge Farm. Collaboration with Gardzienice (also from the Grotowski crucible) through the Consortium of Theatre Practices (1999–2001) extended Klein's Polish connections. She expanded her research on community cultures in Eastern and Central Europe and developed these experiences in her probing, distinctly imaginative explorations of theatre-making, while taking a new approach to participatory theatre-making in Ashfield. Her highly visual and sensual compositions are driven by her sense of the fantastic, no more strikingly so than in Klein's Summers Spectacles, which are performed outdoors, in concert with the Farm's natural environment – fields, trees, water, birds, animals, and heaven's firmament. Double Edge's profound commitment in the past decade to what it now terms 'living culture' and 'art justice' has taken root in multiracial collaborations, primarily with the indigenous peoples of Western Massachusetts. This Conversation took place on the winter solstice, 21 December 2020, a date that Maria Shevtsova, Editor of *NTQ*, had chosen symbolically. It was transcribed by Kunsang Kelden and edited by Shevtsova. Many thanks are extended to Travis Coe of Double Edge for assembling with such loving care the photographs requested.

*Key terms:* Double Edge Theatre, magic realism, community, indigenous peoples, Ohketeau Cultural Centre, 'living culture', 'art justice'.

**Maria Shevtsova** *What I wanted to ask you first of all is where you were when the Covid pandemic first broke out. Were you on the Farm? Were you touring? How did you react to it?*

in the sense in which Double Edge uses the term below (Figures 1 and 2).]

*So you had one night and one performance only?*

**Stacy Klein** *We were in Albuquerque in New Mexico, at the beginning of our three-month tour of *Leonora, la maga y la maestra* [premiered 2018]. We had performed one night and, then, on the next day, they said that their state was going into lockdown, and we had to leave. [This production is not to be confused with *Leonora's World*, also of 2018, which is a separate outdoor performance but not a 'spectacle'*

Yes, one night in Albuquerque and then we got plane tickets home. We dejectedly came home.

*And what did you do in that dejection? Did you go back to work? Back to rehearsing, to training? Or did you take time off to think about the situation?*

When we got here, we tried to figure out the safety situation. We started working with our



**Figure 1.** Stacy Klein. Rehearsal of *Leonora's World*. Photographer: Kim Chin-Gibbons. Courtesy of Double Edge.

local doctor, who he told us, 'You could quarantine together because you've already all been on aeroplanes.' So we did. We started having meetings and trying to figure out how we could survive financially because we had lost at least half the money of the tour.

*Well I think this matter of money loss is a big question for all performers these days, isn't it? And, of course, the big theatres have to ask the same question. How are all theatres going to survive during the Covid period – and after it, too? The economics of this is completely ruinous, as everybody is fully aware. But such is a plague, and it's not going to get up and walk away. Nor does it discriminate in any shape or form – it can hit anyone, at any time.*

*How was the actual Ashfield community? Were there any cases of Covid? Was it being closed off in some way? Or did you feel that being in a rural context, which is where you live and work, was safe? Or did you find that being in a rural community was not necessarily a guarantee that you'd be OK?*

We found a lot of support in our community in many ways. It helped us financially and with safety things. It was really a great experience. In the early times, there was only one case of Covid in Ashfield, and it kind of locked itself down as a community. We were pretty isolated in some ways, and in some ways we had more contact than anybody else because we had our whole group of almost twenty-five people together. We worked [socially] distanced and outdoors because it was the middle of March, so it was starting to be reasonable weather-wise.

*Spring, indeed. Twenty-five people in Double Edge today – the company has grown! Do they all live in the nearby area? Do some of them commute from towns other than Ashfield?*

I think everybody lives in Ashfield, actually,

*Oh that's fantastic for ensemble cohesion. That's a real achievement. You know, I was looking at our interview of over eleven years ago, when I came to*



**Figure 2.** *Leonora's World*. Left to right: Travis Coe, Cariel Klein, and Jennifer Johnson. Photographer: Kim Chin-Gibbons. Courtesy of Double Edge.

*the Farm – it was in November 2009, as I recall [NTQ 105 (2011)] – and I was struck by how interesting our discussion was, so I am thinking of this Conversation as a follow-up of a kind, an exploration of what has happened in the intervening years and where Double Edge has gone. I'll be asking you mostly about your recent work, but my intention is to have this and my earlier discussion with you complement each other.*

*I think that these 2020 NTQ Conversations – four of them now, all intentionally centred on directors brought up and living in the United States, (yes, and 2020 is the year of the Presidential elections) – will be really important archives, leaving traces of history for the future and particularly for the Covid generation. Who knows what is going to exist afterwards and what, if anything, will replace the theatre that we know now.*

*I want to hear about how you spent the summer months. Normally, you do what you call your Summer Spectacles, and I believe from our contact with each other during this summer that you were preparing one of these outside spectacles, on the Farm's grounds, where they are usually held. I'll*

*ask you what you called it soon, but can you first tell our readers what this particular spectacle did and how you managed it? For example, let's talk first of all about social distancing, and then we can talk about the artistic approach and content of the work. How did you organize it ?*

The content and the organization of this year's spectacle (2020) were really thought through together, for many reasons. What I came up with was the idea that there would be three groups of twelve to fifteen people in each group who would go around and see five scenes. They would see the spectacle in rounds. The performers repeated their scenes, so they did three rounds of them: two scenes in one round, two scenes in another round, and one scene in the third.

*How long did the entire performance take?*

We would go to the other side of the farm, not stopping in the barn as we usually do, where we'd have an indoor piece. We eliminated the

indoor piece, and we'd go and see three scenes in the dark. The first part was in the light and the second in the dark. It required us to make new paths in the farm grounds so that audiences would not come into contact with each other. They started all together in the beginning, seated six feet apart in these groups, unless they were a family unit, to receive instructions, which Adam [Bright] and I gave. He was the executive director of Double Edge.

*I remember him very fondly.*

Yes, he said the same about you. So, then, it was about an hour and a half. We also did this so that we could rehearse separately. We got back together as a group over time. The scenes were small because of all the babysitting needs and all the problems of rehearsing during Covid. There were two Double Edge actors per scene, plus one, two, or three students in each scene. We had one or two guest collaborators with whom we've been working for years. All in all, it was a limited group. Usually we have about forty people in [the cast of] a Summer Spectacle, but for this one we only had about twenty-five.

*Was the audience smaller than your normal number of spectators?*

Oh yeah, we have at least a hundred people in our audience, and they're all in one group. They're not divided into groups. So that was challenging.

*I can imagine. How did everybody – audience and cast – feel? Were they happy enough with it? Or did they feel despondent that there was something sorely lacking?*

Well, I'll tell you something – the audience was so grateful. We called it a love letter to our community. They supported us to have something, whatever it was, and their love, their gratitude, during it was unbelievable. It was like we were a lifeline. For me, as a director, it was a disaster. But, on the other side of that, I have never felt so moved by an audience. We performed for three weeks, so *that* was really amazing. One audience member after another said, 'This is the best thing

you've ever done!' Which is only because it was so necessary, especially when we're not just talking about pandemic exhaustion but our whole society's exhaustion. Our audience, being people who are worn down by the government, and fascism and racism, really can't take it any more amidst the pandemic. So we're really talking about something that was connective, and the people got to see each other's faces. They were masked, but the actors were not masked; they were distant – fourteen feet [away].

I was masked, because I was leading part of the audience. They actually got to see the Double Edge actors, whom they've come to know. The other thing that was interesting was that half of the audience was a new audience, which is crazy because we have thousands of people in the summer now.

*Where were these new spectators from?*

I think there were a lot of people who were quarantining with their friends or families, who were Double Edge people. And so they could come for the first time because we had discouraged our elderly audience from coming. We have a huge elderly audience and we also have people who take wheelchair-bound people around. We've really developed our access, but we discouraged that particular group from coming for safety reasons. So there was space [for newcomers]. It was really incredible.

I'm really glad to talk about it in retrospect because it was so hard at the time. There were two new scenes in this performance; everything was based on the material of the last eighteen or twenty years of spectacles. One was from *The Bacchae*, which is going to be our fortieth anniversary performance in 2022 (Figure 3); I am reworking it so that the women's rites will be at the forefront instead of being talked about by a random man from the chorus.

I did not want to have just the past and the present, but also the future. So I had that *Bacchae* scene, and then a scene that was based on flying, which could go into a number of different performances. The problem was that I could not rehearse these two scenes very

much because we had to get everything else together for the rounds. Everything had to be exact, timing-wise, because it was in rounds. [This meant that] all the scenes had to take the same time, otherwise we would have ended up with the audience jumbled together. So I thought 'Oh, you know, I don't have time to rehearse these two new scenes.' It took waiting until the end [of the three weeks] to feel satisfied with [what we had done].

*It sounds as if it was something that you would do anyway – a collage structure, pieces structured side by side in juxtaposition against each other, some being 'recycled' from before, and so on. Is that right? Was it like that?*

Well, not really, but it did have a kind of theme, which I consider to be about possibility – about possibility being created out of impossibility. Normally we have at least a theme, and we usually have a story. *Once A Blue Moon (Cada Luna Azul)* (2015) was a story about Carlos [Uriona] in the military dictatorship, and somebody looking back on his no longer viable town, which had been flooded [deliberately] by human intervention. That was the story that year. And we did *The Odyssey* (premiered in 2011) and *Shahrazad, A Tale of Love and Magic* (2013). *We The People* (2017) was more of a collage of different courageous people living in the Western Massachusetts area, among them W. E. B. Du Bois, one of the founders of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], and Lucy Stone, who was an early suffragist. Yet there was still a story in *We The People*.

The 2020 spectacle was based on Double Edge's work. The story was Double Edge. It was like a look at Double Edge from the 1990s up to now. In some ways that was part of this summer's work's success because what people needed, and what we needed, was to connect as who we are – the pain that we were experiencing and the ability to fly both in the imagination and in aerial performance.

*I didn't mean by saying that you do collage and that there wasn't a narrative or a narrative thread.*

*I just wondered whether there was less of a story, but you've answered: you've said, 'No, it really wasn't less of a story because we were the story.' That was the story. How different would this self-reflexive one have been from something as magical as, say, *Firebird* (2010). Would you say, as a director – and a choreographer too – that this current work, years later in 2020, had a rather different character?*

It did, it definitely did, Maria. I had to put aside my director, really. There wasn't anything I did in this performance where I could say, 'I can't believe I did that.' Everything I did had to be based on the known of my work for safety reasons and because of time. But really, I would say, 90 per cent because of safety for the cast and the audience. I want to believe that, as a director, I'm seeking something unknown – every work that I do is something unknown – but this [spectacle] is definitely the known. And, when I say 'possibility out of impossibility' or 'flight', it's not that I don't know the possibilities or the flight, or the scenes, the material, the music. In this one, it's all about deeply sharing possibilities with the audience. So in some way, this is the least ego-filled work that I have done in my life.

*How would you describe this 'least ego-filled'? I never think of your work as being full of ego.*

When I started *The Bacchae* scene, I was thinking, 'OK, we're going to find out what these women's rites were.' That's what I needed to find out. So that's what I mean by 'ego': something that I needed to find out, and then, of course, that would be shared. I wouldn't hold on to it. That couldn't work this year because of the rounds, and I only had two major Double Edge actors in the *Bacchae* scene. Other people were in other scenes in the rounds, and I couldn't say to the other two scenes, you know, I'm going to take everybody who's good and put them in that single one. Music-wise, it had to be very limited. Dance-wise, very limited. I could not work on discovering women's rites from around the world. So, there were three songs. There was a dance. There was a hill. I wanted to make this part of the spectacle as a women's scene, and use only a little from *The Bacchae*.



**Figure 3.** *6 Feet Apart, All Together*. Photographer: Kim Chin-Gibbons. Courtesy of Double Edge.

I said to the audience: ‘You know, there’s the past – all of Double Edge’s history; there’s the present – what’s going on now; and we have a future scene that is going to be presented in two years’ time.’ People weren’t looking for questions. They were looking for love, basically – for human connection.

*Love, connection, and I was going to add another word – reassurance.*

Reassurance, yes. The fact that we could still fly on a pole in the air and still run around the field – *that*, for the audience, was reassuring. I needed to be focused on that experience. In some ways, it was very, very alive, because it was all about us and the audience together.

*That’s exactly what an ensemble theatre is, isn’t it? Exactly that. So, here, finally, is the question I have held back: what did you call this Covid Spectacle?*

*6 Feet Apart, All Together* (Figure 4).

*Brilliant! Let’s put a perspective on it from what you called the Double Edge past. When I was looking at photographs of *Once A Blue Moon*, which I haven’t seen live, what struck me as being startlingly beautiful about that work – and it’s even clear from the photographs – is the unexpectedness of some of the visual imagery. I think you’re a very visual director and what was striking was that, suddenly, beside a tree in long grass was a woman playing a harp. Somewhere else there’s a wooden circle and a body standing against it, as if the wheel were turning. People are flying, which is almost like a signature piece for you – someone is always flying somewhere. Then there’s the sheer beauty of how you incorporate your habitat in the visual structure of the performance that you offer your audience – the actual landscape in which you live as a company, as an ensemble.*

*Something like *Once A Blue Moon* strikes me as a spectacular piece in the best sense of the word ‘spectacular’ – meaningfully eye-catching, full of surrealistic undertones, full of unexpected discoveries, full of exciting moments. Its dramatic quality emanates from the way you place and coordinate*



**Figure 4.** *6 Feet Apart, All Together*. Left to right: Milena Dabova, Andrew Todd, and Cariel Klein. Photographer: Kevin Gutting, *Daily Hampshire Gazette*. Courtesy of Double Edge.

*the visual material. This is the collage, the montage part of it, as I see it – how you arrange those images through which you still tell a story. It’s not in a linear storyline, it’s broken up; and visual imagery made with collage is a very powerful kind of artistic device.*

Once *A Blue Moon* was in 2015, whereas in 2020 the atmosphere had changed enormously, hadn’t it? I don’t think you can do a euphoric piece like that in 2020, with Covid sitting on top of everybody. In many ways, the actual form and performance qualities of *6 Feet Apart, All Together* sound as if it is a much more sober production, and a more contemplative one. I wouldn’t say it was a retrospective, because you’ve got an opening into the future, but it might be a kind of summing-up. Is that right to say or not, since I haven’t seen this 2020 work?

I think so. You were describing *Once A Blue Moon* (*Cada Luna Azul*) perfectly, and part of its drama was that, in that performance, everybody was dancing together, the audience

as well as the actors. There was a parade like a Mardi Gras. None of that is possible now. We really had to insist that the audience remain six feet apart, even if there were only fifteen of them. We had two people with each group, who were saying that, unless you’re a family unit, please stay six feet apart. We were very serious about it. It was the exact opposite of our inviting and pushing people to dance with strangers in 2015. We had a parade even in *We The People*, which was less of a montage than usual, and everybody was invited to sing ‘Watch That Star’. For eighteen years, until this year, we had some big final song at the end of every performance, everybody kind of danced [on their way] to the pavilion, or to someplace to get drinks together. We had a celebration, which usually lasted an hour.

This year, in my opening speech, I said, ‘I’m sorry, we can’t invite you to gather together. What we’re going to do is escort you out with a song at a distance: show us your love.’ What

happened was that people in the scenes in the field, or wherever else they were, were led into the courtyard where the *Odyssey* boat was. Carlos started singing 'Adios', a rousing song, and the audience would go to their cars. Well, everybody in the cast all over the farm was singing 'Adios'. But the audience wasn't being led to a place [that we use for gathering] but to the parking lot, where they would get into their cars and the cars would drive by where Carlos and others were on the boat, singing. So it *was* distanced. And they honked their horns. Like that, it was very together, even though it was apart. It was nothing like a gathering with some wine and all that. I think you're exactly right to ask about the difference.

*I suspected it would have to have been a very different event this year because that's the way an artist works. An artist needs to adapt. The theatre is not just an aesthetic piece. It is made in time, in space, and it's made with people, and it's made in relation to other people. It is a social phenomenon through and through. This is something I've been teaching and writing about my entire life. I call it the sociology of the theatre, which makes people bristle because they think that the sociology of the theatre can only be about audience statistics, but of course, it's not. It's about perceiving and explaining how theatre is in the moment of given time, in the now of time, which is social and cultural time: it is not abstract time.*

*What your account of 6 Feet Apart indicates is that you had really adapted your resources to the social circumstances in an intelligent and unpretentious kind of way. And the audience saw that, and respected it. Really, it's a wonderful achievement. Most people are trying to respond to the Covid pandemic mechanically, with computers. I have ambivalent feelings about this kind of so-called togetherness.*

I really do agree with you. I have to add that, by summer time, the audience was saying, 'We're so glad not to see something on Zoom.' For me, I guess the whole thing is about being live, although I have to say that we did a twelve-camera video capture of *Leonora, la maga y la maestra* in October 2020 at Montclair State University, with which we collaborate

frequently. Jed Wheeler is the producer there. We had premiered *Leonora, la maga y la maestra* with an audience at Montclair in February 2018. It was part of Women Innovators at PEAK Performances, which was a major and prestigious year-long season that Jed Wheeler had for women innovators; and I insisted on finishing our performance in record time so that I could be included in that year's selection. I had seven months to get the work done, but everybody at Double Edge wanted to be included in that season, so we worked really hard. We got a great review in the *New York Times*!

I was worried about doing the October 2020 video capture because we didn't have any editing rights; it was done for PEAK HD/ALL ARTS New York-New Jersey, a PBS [Public Broadcasting Service] entity. Doing the capture seemed important because it would reach all the people who had missed out because our tours were cancelled; and also touring with fifteen or sixteen people right now would be very difficult. It was hard before but right now it would be impossible. So Jed thought that this performance had to be part of his PEAK HD material.

We were their first experiment after Covid-19 was announced. We worked just as we would when setting up a production anywhere. The performance work was ready to go, but the lighting design had not yet been finalized for the video capture, and M. L. [Mary Louise] Geiger gave us a brilliant lighting design. I added an aerial part because *Leonora's* paintings are full of flying people. Cariel – Carlos's and my daughter – is also in the ensemble now. She's the Associate Producer and a circus artist, so she is primarily responsible for the growth of our flying. I opted her to be in ongoing collaboration with Double Edge.

We were pretty excited, and Jed's team was nervous about safety, although we knew how to deal [with things] safely precisely because we had already performed with an audience [so knew what to be careful of]. Then the cameras came in and I was asked see how to juxtapose what each camera should be looking at. There were twelve of them, and I was nervous about that because I had never

worked with cameras before. Then, as I started, it came to me that the process was the same as my process as a director – what you call ‘collage’ and I call ‘juxtaposition’. So I was thinking, ‘Oh, this goes with this, this goes with this, this goes with this.’ I had only thought of the process [as being] like painting, but now I realized that I was editing. That’s exciting and it actually took my vision further – and I’m not just talking about whatever the work ends up being.

It was live, in a way, working with the actors and the crew, but there was no audience: the audience was the camera. [It was] interesting but not the same – rather like dancing on digital, although I don’t want to cast aspersions on my friends who are doing this; it’s just not really for me. I appreciate filming something I’ve made live. We’re doing a lot of mentorships right now and they’re on Zoom; and that’s interesting because we can work with somebody in Minneapolis, helping them to develop their own work. But that’s as far as I can take Zoom.

*So you’ve got two versions of Leonora, la maga y la maestra, so to speak. Would you say that the October 2020 version was specifically a command performance?*

Jed had video-captured the live performances of his 2019 season, but they were captured during performances with audiences present – this was before Covid. And this meant that the cameras were stationary. Jed was really upset for us when I had told him that we had been sent home from Albuquerque in the middle of our tour, and he showed his support by doing a podcast about what we were doing, saying that our community was great and that what we were doing in the [Covid-bound 2020] summer was amazing. I suggested he should see *Leonora* again with our new lighting, since he had complained about our lighting for the *Leonora* he had seen in Montclair in 2018. So he said, ‘Why don’t you come back and we will do it *without* an audience, and we’ll be able to move the cameras around, this time.’ So we did. There were two camera people present; the rest of the cameras were operated in another room, however that works.

The two camera people moved around, which they wouldn’t have been able to do with an audience there. Safety was upheld. We couldn’t even have our own collaborators in the room. We had to be Covid-tested, and there were a lot of very strict protocols.

*What were the main artistic features of this second version, and how does its composition compare with the 2018 live-to-audience production both at the Farm and at Montclair?*

The space in the barn at Double Edge is small and, as a consequence, the audience was close up to the actors, which was great for connection but did not open out the perspectives of the whole piece. The space at Montclair, by contrast, was spacious, allowing ample physical movement, which the piece needs, as well as a view of the whole visual composition and the full impact of the polyphonic sound design. At the same time, it gave a sense of intimacy.

This spaciousness was completely lost in the video capture; the fine integration of sounds, music, and movement that we had carefully worked on was not really there. An important movement duet was cut, possibly because twelve cameras generated too much material for the editors to choose from; and the beautiful scene of billowing silk with *Leonora* at its centre that you admire had gone (Figure 5).

*Ah, it seems that you, the director, were put at a great disadvantage by not having editorial rights. I can certainly see why you had been worried about not having them, as you indicated when you began to talk about the capture. I am going to hazard a guess and say that what, from an artistic point of view, could seem to be the weaknesses of the capture was not a directorial problem but a technological one. Or perhaps I should shift my words slightly and suggest that the problematical aspects of this captured version stem from the fact that editing decisions were made technologically rather than artistically.*

*Editing is very delicate work, whether visual, aural, or verbal; and the issue of editing rights in our tech-filled digital age is crucial for artists. But let us go back to your in-the-flesh live*



**Figure 5.** *Leonora, la maga y la maestra*. Jennifer Johnson and Carlos Uriona. Photographer: David Weiland. Courtesy of Double Edge.

*performances. How do you distinguish between your outdoor spectacles – the Summer Spectacles – and a production like The Grand Parade? The word ‘parade’ in the title might suggest that it was shown outdoors. What was it? I have to ask you, since I do not know it.*

*The Grand Parade* was an indoor work, premiered in 2013, and it toured for three years. ‘The Grand Parade’ is the name of a Chagall painting.

*Yes, I realize, but you referred earlier to parades in your work, and I believe you have done some in the streets of your town. You don’t necessarily use the word ‘parade’ in titles. Was the Ashfield Town Spectacle a parade?*

*It included a parade. Scenes were all over town, and then we got together on the town common and danced with the entire town, and then we paraded to the lake, some paraders continually dancing. We were led in the parade by hay carts with different puppets in them. A pretty amazing number of people came. Then we did a scene on a boat going*

*across the lake and we had Cariel flying over the lake as a blue heron, which alluded to the blue heron that lives on the Farm and appears of its own accord in our performances.*

*Very beautiful.*

*Maria, I know that we like to confuse people, but I guess it’s your job to un-confuse them. Unfortunately, the Chagall painting that we chose was called ‘The Grand Parade’. It has confused everybody, but, in a sense, it was a parade through the twentieth century. In that sense, it wasn’t a physical parade, it was a parade through time.*

*Exactly, and it was one of the indoor performances. OK.*

*And it toured more than anything of ours has toured, except for *Leonora, la maga y la maestra*, which we were going to tour for three months, but the tour was cancelled.*

*Since we’re on the subject of touring, where did you tour *The Grand Parade*?*

It toured to two places in Norway. It toured to Baltimore and Chicago, and opened at the Arena Stage in Washington, DC. It toured to Arts Emerson in Boston and to the Golden Mask in Russia in 2013.

*Yes, I remember seeing its name, since I go to the Golden Mask Festival in Moscow every year, and I was surprised, given that this festival assembles works from all over Russia, while works from outside Russia have many other festival platforms. My dates there did not cross with yours.*

Yeah, we were only there for four days: they got us in and out of there. They didn't want to spend any money on hotels.

*Well, that's how it goes in most festivals that I know and attend across the world. And the Golden Mask doesn't make money.*

Yeah, I know. The Golden Mask showing makes for an interesting story because they were not happy with the performance, largely because of our perspective on the Cold War, which, everybody was saying, in America as well as Russia, was over: 'Oh, why are you referring to the Cold War? The Cold War is over.' This was in 2013.

*In my view, it's never been over.*

Right! I know that too, which is why I made the performance like that. But people were saying, 'You Americans, you always . . . blah, blah, blah, blah.' And then there were people who said, 'This is a dead subject.' Then, two years later, Americans were saying that the Russians were taking over our elections. I mean, to me, it's crazy. This has happened to me before: 'Why do you have to do something about the Holocaust? There's no anti-Semitism any more.' And then people get shot in a synagogue. I think people are in denial about history, generally speaking.

Actually the performance was about something much more. I have always thought, since I first went to Poland in the 1970s, how similar Russia and the USA were, but how differently they enact their restrictions on people's freedom. But both seem pretty successful in doing this, in some way. The question of the

US-Russia relation was interesting to me because of Chagall. Chagall was exiled all his life. He was Russian. He was a Russian Jew. He wasn't a Jew from New York City.

*As far as I know, he was thought to be very Russian in his Jewishness.*

Very Russian, and so, for me, it was interesting how these aspects influenced each other and how they could embrace and also dislike each other; and the whole notion of exile is really important.

The actors only sang in this performance, while spoken words came from radio and television broadcasts and also digitally. The production started [its historical 'parade'] from 1905, with talkies, and ended with 9/11. It is all about the media and how the media informs our lives. The actors try to live in concert with that history and also to break their identities free. People don't see how the media are overtaking their lives.

A similar kind of denial happened over a piece I created in 1983, *Blood Rubies*, which was about the abuse of the Catholic Church: it concerned the abuse of women, domestic violence, and church violence. People were horrified by that performance. It was a very angry one, but people were horrified by it. Then, a couple of years later, everything started coming out about abuse in the Catholic Church, but I had been practically tarred and feathered for that work. I don't care any more whether people think I'm a crazy radical. I tried to tone down my whole thing about women, continually being attacked and degraded for years, and now that a man who had allegedly sexually assaulted other women became my President, I am not going to fade out. I'm free from having to tone myself down any more. Forget it.

*I think it takes a lifetime to work through these things and finally say, 'You know what, you can't touch me. I am the person I am and, thank God, I am that person.' And that's it. End of story. And then we can be free of everybody who tries to imprison us according to their image. It's very important for women to learn how to liberate themselves.*

Yes, totally.

*The kind of abuse regarding a person's very being that I am talking about does not just happen accidentally. For years, money making, greed, social and psychological control, which fuels disregard for human beings, as for the planet – hence its rampant destruction – go hand in fist. Capitalism, as we know it, breeds class distinction; and class prejudice, which is linked to class hatred, permeates sexism and racism. I don't think for a moment that racism, while it is certainly endemic – and insitutional as well as institutionalized – is only about skin colour. It isn't just the colour of your skin. It's also about social class, social position, and perceived social status. Are you a working-class or an otherwise 'outsider' Black person? Or are you a Black person who enjoys economic and/or political advantages? Do you work with Trump at the White House? Are you a partner of a law firm? Or are you down and out and in the streets? There's a big, big difference.*

Oh, yeah, we talk about that at Double Edge all the time.

*Ah, these are major issues today and they need to be properly discussed and acted on, and blatant injustices have to be eradicated. But we need to get back to parades and their particular kind of display. What are some of the features of yours? Presumably, you have stilt-walkers, for example.*

Yeah, and people flying, and the trees are part of the parade.

*People flying, musicians playing, people singing, and you'd presumably have the townspeople following you back to Double Edge on foot through the parade.*

Well . . . not always. Take *Ashfield Town Spectacle and Culture Fair* (2017). It was all over the town (Figure 6). There was a scene in the cemetery, there was a scene in the Town Hall, there was a scene on the commons, there was a scene somewhere else, and so forth. There



**Figure 6.** *Ashfield Town Spectacle*. Photographer: Bill Hughes. Courtesy of Double Edge.



**Figure 7.** Community Day, 2019. Hannah Jarrell and Andrew Todd with community members. Photographer: Kim Chin-Gibbons. Courtesy of Double Edge.

were people, actors, walking on the streets, looking, and relating to the history of the town.

*Is this phenomenon of parading in the town part of the beginning of Double Edge's history with the town? I am suggesting that the Farm is Double Edge's space and so having audiences come there is a different matter from sharing town space. Double Edge is a more intimate space – not public in the way that the town is public. Audiences coming to the Double Edge Farm are offered spectacles by the water with all these wonderful, magical, and sometimes completely ecstatic scenes that you can create. You are offering your home, in which you dream.*

You have put together the parade with home, and I would add 'community'. I think that the parade may have been the culmination of explorations concerning mine and Carlos's different histories. I had been working on a ten-year project from 1988 to 1998 whose

research was mainly concerned with Jewish communities in Central Europe. The project was *Republic of Dreams* and the research was across five Central European countries: Ukraine, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania. It included oral history, singing liturgical songs in the synagogue as a way of connecting, many community gatherings, eating and drinking with groups of people, and training future artists. Our approach was influenced by Rena Mirecka, but it was developed with some connecting link to Gardzienice's idea of expeditions. [Stacy Klein's initial contact with Gardzienice was in 1985; see NTQ 105 (2011).]

When we came to Ashfield, we tried some of those things. Music gatherings – it wasn't for Ashfield, [they were more suitable for a] different community. We quickly realized that we could not just transplant something from a different culture on to our community here. We had to find out how to connect with *this* community (Figure 7).

*Connecting with the community wouldn't have been easy. You came from Boston, you bought a farm, you were outsiders. You were coming into a community that had a history from 1743 when two African Americans, first land track settlers, put their roots down here.*

Before that, like 10,000 years!

*You're referring to the indigenous peoples of the area and so also to the Nipmuc Nation, and we'll be talking about this aspect in a minute. There were also other communities in this region long before colonial settlers came and imposed. But here you were, arriving in the country – city slickers, they might have thought of you as.*

Oh yeah, we were called 'the City'.

*Then, for three years, you commuted between Boston and the Farm, and it wouldn't have looked good. Local people would have seen that as not making up your mind. Who are you? The question then is: How did you start building relations with the existing community to the point where we started this Conversation, when we talked about how wonderful the community was and how supportive of you in 2020? What did you do to build relations? One of my thoughts was parades, or a form of them. I take it that the Summer Spectacles were – and continue to be – a way of involving the community physically and more viscerally in your artistic work?*

In 1997, we opened the Barn with the last work of *The Song Trilogy*. [This cycle ran from 1987 to 1999.] We got an audience. Carlos was here by then, and he would call people up on the phone and ask them to come. The piece really had nothing to do with anybody here. It was being made to premiere in Boston. Carlos could get people to come, but we weren't doing anything related to the community. We had started to make some inroads by hiring local people to help us with building. That was the first thing.

*Very important too.*

We started doing the Consortium for Theatre Practices, which was a collaboration with Gardzienice [1999–2001], where we would

take our students – maybe ten students – and they would have ten students. We did the first collaboration for three weeks in Gardzienice. The second one was in both places; the students went back and forth [between the USA and Poland] but we did not. We started working with them outside. This led to the third year of our doing an outdoor performance. There were three scenes: one by the pond, one in the field and, I think, one in the Barn. It was the *Saragossa Manuscripts* (2002), which was great because we could do different scenes that didn't have a narrative except for how its main figure went through different realities. And I love that book [*The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* by Jan Potocki, written at the turn of the nineteenth century] because it's what I believe about reality. *Saragossa Manuscripts* basically came out of Carlos and me combining our work – his street theatre, very popular music, percussion.

*You mean people's theatre.*

Yeah, and our ensemble work and also our much more intimate, one-on-one gatherings with community members. We did this work first with our students from the Consortium. Then, when we started doing performances outdoors each year, we would have gatherings afterwards and so, even if people didn't totally get it [what we were doing], they would be able to commune with us. That whole Summer Spectacle project came out of this partnership between Carlos and me, while Matthew Glassman, an ensemble member who came in 2000, worked with us in developing it more fully (Figures 8 and 9). Alongside of this, we were growing into the town, living in town, the kids were going to school in town, and we were hiring only local people. Eventually people would come from outside and stay in the bed and breakfast in town. The bed and breakfast 'industry', let's say, started growing restaurants; there's a general store now, and there's lots of development in Ashfield. Right now, we're the largest business in Ashfield, Maria.

*I'm not surprised, given that rural communities are generally dying, aren't they? I mean, small*



**Figure 8.** Ashfield Town Spectacle. Photographer: Bill Hughes. Courtesy of Double Edge.



**Figure 9.** 6 Feet Apart, All Together. Left to right: Carlos Uriona and Matthew Glassman. Photographer: Ben Tobin. Courtesy of Double Edge.

*subsistence farming is dying while the big mega-farms, the industrial farms, are swallowing them up. So I'm not surprised in the slightest that you have become the biggest enterprise in the town. Is this partly what you mean when you talk somewhere, I can't remember where, about the power of art – theatre in your case – to transform the community? Is it this developmental, economically and socially developmental aspect that you are talking about when you talk about transformation? I take it that you also see this as a cultural transformation: people discovering something about the world of mixed arts, of the visual arts, music, word, and more, and your geographic space, your outdoors, for instance – that is the form of theatre that you do. I am tempted to think of your form of theatre as in part ecological – certainly insofar as you fully integrate your natural environment in the very aesthetics of your outdoor performances. The environment is not just a back-drop.*

I call everything that you have just said part of 'living culture'. Living culture, as in the culture of the whole community. It starts with the art and the imagination and it goes from there – like the fact that people see that art and theatre are not just about some people getting up and talking about something that is not theirs, that has nothing to do with them, that they fall asleep in. You know, the first time that our main contractor, whose family has been here since whenever, came to a performance was when we had to drag him to one – Adam dragged him in. He had been working with us since we got to Ashfield – a beautiful guy, Ray Gray. It was *The Odyssey* and, when the sailors turned into pigs, and they literally did – the sailors dropped off the back of a roof, and out came the pigs – he couldn't believe it! He could not believe it! He just started laughing, and he's a very circumspect guy; you would never know what he was thinking.

He was laughing so hard that he had to move away.

*That's hilarious. Real pigs flying out, he didn't expect that, did he? I bet nobody did!*

Oh my God, no! And Ray Gray is a farmer. Every year after that, he says, 'I miss the pigs.' People think that we just work a couple of hours a day and then we're finished. They have no idea what a culture of theatre is, but now they're part of it. Ray worked so hard on the *Ashfield Town Spectacle*. He dug up every old machine to put all over town, like Ashfield's original fire hose that people had to walk to a fire. It was unbelievable. He got a crane – his crane – and we lifted somebody up from the audience in this crane over the street: it became theirs. They own it, and they're part of creating it. So that is what a living culture is to me, as opposed to getting people into buildings and charging a huge amount of money, which has nothing to do with the person except that they are being entertained.

*Would you accept the appellation 'community theatre' for this kind of work?*

I don't mind, but I prefer 'living culture'. It definitely is community theatre, but I don't use the term because it has been so horrifyingly abused: it has ended up being an excuse to gather socially, but it doesn't actually have a cultural element. The cultural element has to be engaged. That, to me, is the difference. And that's the growing problem in our century: we aren't using our creativity as humans with each other. We're very separated.

*Community theatre has been very instrumentalized. It has also been exploited by NGOs. I can't bear those institutions because I think that, by coming from foreign institutions, usually big or influentially 'big' institutions and, basically, telling groups of people, existing communities, what to do, they destroy the sense of the living togetherness in which culture is formed and where people create together, in time and place and space.*

*I can see why you would prefer to use 'living culture'. Before I move to the Nipmuc, can I ask you one last question that concerns Carlos's role?*

*When preparing this interview, I suddenly thought, why did it take you so long to liberate Carlos? That might sound like a shocking question, and I am asking it in this rather shocking way because it seems that not until Cada Luna Azul, and thus around 2015, does Double Edge seem to have released Carlos's Argentinian life and his Argentinian culture: his Spanish-speaking and Spanish-singing culture, his knowledge of the Argentinian streets, and his work as an activist in Argentina.*

You're right and you're wrong. *The Garden of Intimacy and Desire* cycle, which we call *The Garden Cycle*, was all about Carlos.

*What year did it begin?*

*The Garden Cycle* started in 2000. The character that he played in *Relentless* (2001), which was part of *The Garden Cycle*, was based on Jacobo Timerman's [autobiographical] *Prisoner Without A Name, Cell Without a Number* [1981]. It's brilliant. He was a journalist talking about his experiences of torture by the military dictatorship, in the cells. All of Carlos's texts are from that book, spoken in Spanish and English. The next thing that we made was *The UnPOSSESSED* (2003), based on *Don Quixote*, where he also used Spanish, considering this work to be part of his history.

The next thing we did was Bruno Schulz, *Republic of Dreams* (2007), where Carlos played Bruno Schulz's father. We were investigating how this Schulzian magic realism and the Latin American magic realism worked together. The last part of *The Garden Cycle* was *The Disappearance* (2008), in which he basically played a man who had faked his own disappearance. It was based on a true story in Belgium. He didn't speak in it in Spanish, but he used the idea of disappearing – all who had disappeared in his country – as the basis of his work in this performance.

At the same time, we were starting our Chagall cycle with outdoor pieces like *Firebird* and the indoor *The Grand Parade*. *The Grand Parade* also had a piece about military dictatorship in it. I said, 'Carlos, now we're going to do something that's really just based on your story,' because, Maria, it was very hard for



**Figure 10.** *Once A Blue Moon (Cada Luna Azul)*. Milena Dabova and Carlos Uriona. Photographer: David Weiland. Courtesy of Double Edge.

Carlos to face that story directly on the stage. And really, literally, it took those ten years to be able to build up the strength to face it directly. It was really hard. It was a performance about memory.

*I can empathize with that totally, I really can.*

It's like he was accruing the strength with each of these pieces until, finally, he could do it in *Cada Luna Azul*. We brought in Carlos's older son and his son's wife: Carlos's older son is a percussionist and his wife is a singer, and they composed all the music. The experience was really deep. We wanted *Cada Luna Azul* to have very authentic music from the region.

*Well, you know what really struck me – remember that I have not seen Cada Luna Azul and these were just production photographs that I had looked at. They weren't videos. The difference in Carlos physically really hit me between the eyes. There was something much more relaxed about him, more flexible. The movement was freer, and I*

*suddenly thought: 'Carlos liberated.' He was different from how I saw him doing those earlier pieces that you refer to, or the bits of them that I saw. I'm talking about a different quality, a different atmosphere.*

*It could be the music itself that impels this quality and atmosphere, because the music and Bruno Schulz in the other piece that you're talking about were, nevertheless, Eastern European. Whereas here, in Cada Luna Azul, I didn't see Eastern Europe any more. I saw Latin America, and I saw it in Carlos's body (Figures 10 and 11). Then I suddenly thought, 'Of course! He was a street-theatre performer. Of course!' And then all sorts of 'of courses' snapped into place. I thought I must dare to ask you this question.*

And that's why we continued in *Leonora*. Carlos, here, is basically playing himself.

*While he's playing Alejandro Jodorowsky.*

He's playing Jodorowsky, although we quickly got to a point where we ditched

Jodorowsky, and Carlos was just playing himself. Leonora was mentoring, he was recalling his own mentorship. I think it's much better since we ditched Jodorowsky.

*I think this is a kind of burgeoning that almost heralds a new spring. I see this as something of a major turning point for Double Edge. You might find what I am saying very curious, coming from someone who hasn't been able to see much of your work these last years. Even so, it hit me like, like, like a bomb – the thought that something had been resolved in and through this particular work, and that, perhaps, you would take it into the future of your theatre. Who knows? We can't tell any more about the future because of Covid. Covid, at least at the moment, today, 21 December, in the shortest day of the calendar year, almost forbids any talk about the future, even though we're all worrying about the future.*

I would like to add a coda here concerning Jennifer [Johnson]. I don't know if you remember her.

*I do, and I know she plays Leonora.*

She had a similar kind of liberation with Leonora. The two of them, Carlos and Jennifer, are a force now to be reckoned with. I think you can probably see both of these things happening in Leonora.

*I needed to have you talk about this liberation so that I could follow the idea through a little bit. But the real thing, of course, will be seeing it live. That will be the real thing. Thank you for that insight.*

*I'm just going to move to the last part of this Conversation, which concerns the indigenous peoples of Western and Central Massachusetts. In August 2020, I looked at the two podcasts from Double Edge that featured the Ohketeau Cultural Centre. I watched with great attention and wanted to ask you what had stimulated your partnership with indigenous groups.*

We had started working on the *Ashfield Town Spectacle* and started researching the history of the indigenous people of our area.



**Figure 11.** *Once A Blue Moon (Cada Luna Azul)*. Carlos Uriona. Photographer: David Weiland. Courtesy of Double Edge.



**Figure 12.** *Ashfield Town Spectacle*. First People Ceremony. Jasmine Rochelle Goodspeed of the Nipmuc (left), and Rhonda Anderson, Inupiaq-Athabaskan (right). Photographer: Bill Hughes. Courtesy of Double Edge.

We worked with the Ashfield Historical Society and gathered a great deal of information. One of the things we found out was that the first settlers of Ashfield were African American freed slaves who were given a tract of land: you have already referred to this. The second thing was that the first two women ever elected to public office in the United States – this was in 1855 – were from Ashfield. Amazing, right? The staff of the Ashfield Historical Society refused to acknowledge that there were any indigenous people in Ashfield. They said that they were just migrants.

#### *Migrants from where?*

Migrants, you know, people who were just moving through here. I don't know. 'Migrants' was the word they used, but I didn't think it made sense, so we started researching. We found Rhonda Anderson, who is a Native Alaskan Inupiaq-Athabaskan. She was raised here and has lived here all her life. Because we

wanted to learn, she told us to go to little lectures that were happening here and there. We asked her to suggest someone who could tell a Nipmuc story during the *Ashfield Town Spectacle*, so Jasmine Rochelle Goodspeed did that, and then circled the Ashfield Lake in homage – because water is life (Figure 12).

We were introduced to Larry Spotted Crow Mann, who is a Nipmuc elder. He came to one of our gatherings 'Art and Survival', and sang healing songs (Figure 13). We asked Rhonda and Larry what they needed so we could do something to redress this disappearance, this invisibility, in Ashfield. You can say that freed slaves founded the town, but this does not acknowledge the area's 10,000 years of history.

They said that they needed space that was not institutional space, explaining that they had no place but the universities 'for our people to gather and do their traditional things – traditional plants, medicines', and other cultural practices. Double Edge decided



**Figure 13.** Larry Spotted Crow Mann. 'The Living Presence of Our History', Part III. Photographer: Aurora Lee. Courtesy of Double Edge.

to donate a barn that we were renovating so that it could become an autonomous indigenous space, which they would run. This Ohketeau Cultural Centre took three years of work after the *Ashfield Town Spectacle* in 2017. It has opened and is active – the only indigenously owned and run cultural centre in the whole of Western and Central Massachusetts.

We are the Ohketeau's fiscal sponsor, which means that we're helping administratively and with getting grants. They need to speak for themselves. We also want to teach the people in Ashfield and beyond that the Nipmuc and other Nations are still *here*: they weren't completely exterminated. As the new US Secretary of the Interior said yesterday, 'You tried to exterminate my people, but we're still here.' The Centre and Double Edge joined forces to create an educational series about the indigenous peoples of this region titled 'Living Presence of our History' (Figure 14). We are also collaborating artistically.

*Do you know how many Nipmuc live in Ashfield and the immediately surrounding area?*

In Ashfield – no. There are larger groups in Western and Central Massachusetts. There's a big community in Springfield and a pretty substantial one in Worcester, and because of this population the gatherings at the Ohketeau Cultural Centre are full.

*Are there also African American groups in the Ashfield area? I seem to remember from my years in the United States that there's an African American community in Springfield – quite large, I seem to remember. Is that right?*

African American and Latinx. ['Latinx' is the term inclusive of all genders that replaces 'Latina' and 'Latino'.] Springfield is where we performed *Cada Luna Azul* in a park, where audiences followed us around. It was incredible. There were so many people that they couldn't hear us – about 800 people!



**Figure 14.** Ohketeau Day. Andre Strongbearheart Gaines Jr. leading a brain-tanning workshop. Photographer: Kim Chin-Gibbons. Courtesy of Double Edge.

*Do you have direct working relations with African American and Latinx artists? Do some work with Double Edge? Do you ask them to be teachers? Do they come as students? To workshops?*

Well, Travis [Coe] is Afro-Latinx. He came from New Jersey and he's now our Associate Artistic Director. Carlos and I started mentoring him when he was an intern and he quickly became part of the ensemble. He's been here for five years – a brilliant, super-talented young man. I directed his solo piece *SUGA*, and James Baldwin's novel *Giovanni's Room* was our guide (Figure 15). Travis was exploring his background, his relations with his father, and queer performance. We worked, just the two of us, for over a year, training and improvising, and bringing up part of his life through movement.

*One can do solos in Covid times. It's collective, ensemble work that's hard to do in such times, yet what you are indicating is that Double Edge hasn't folded up. It's alive, well, and busy working. Tell me about your residencies.*

Baraka Sele became one of our three Art Justice consultants around four years ago and also wrote and created with the ensemble and me our new mission values and case statement. Our current residencies include Shey Rivera, who is creating *Antigonx*, which we have planned for 2022, our fortieth anniversary festival. [*Antigonx* refers, of course, to *Antigone*, while 'x' echoes 'Latinx'.] There is Deidra Montgomery, a musician who took up a residency and who is now one of the composers for our future *The Bacchae* – and a performer in it.

We also have a larger partnership with Ebony Noelle Golden, who is the head of Betty's Daughter Arts Collaborative, based in Harlem. She began doing artist residencies with us five years ago (Figure 16). Together we launched the Art and Survival Fellowship, a three-year learning programme; we will premiere her Afro-feminist piece *In the Name Of* along the stream at Double Edge. We have hugely developed in these past five



**Figure 15.** *SUGA*. Travis Coe. Photographer: Kim Chin-Gibbons. Courtesy of Double Edge.

years as far as collaboration is concerned, and it's been very exciting. We got a large grant to finish buildings, so we now have spaces for other people and be more than a little cocoon.

*I won't recognize the place, Stacy.*

Oh, you won't, it's amazing.

*You're going to have more studios for people to work in and have much more of a studio-style development, which is very important for everybody's artistic development, as it also is for introducing your audiences to new perspectives. It's vital to bring out the tremendous interconnection between the art work that you are doing and the social and cultural frame that feeds and transforms it while the art transforms the social frame.*

Absolutely. It's a pleasure to talk with you – someone who understands the essential relationship between art and Art Justice. [Klein is here referring to Double Edge's particular understanding of the latter phrase, as

articulated in the company's April 2021 Case Statement: 'Our dedication is to face isolation and erasure; to face despair and pain that can translate into personal incapacity and political paralysis. To uplift. We call this "Art Justice".']

*Thank you very much, Stacy, for this conversation. I am so glad that we were able to catch each other again.*

#### **Coda: Five Months Later (28 May 2021)**

Stacy Klein and the Editor of this journal spoke again, briefly this time, about the upcoming performances of *Howling at the Moon*, an outdoor production around five fires held in June 2021, as well as *Memories and Dreams*, a Summer Spectacle scheduled for July to August of the same year.

**Stacy Klein** *Howling at the Moon* is a co-production with the Ohketeau Centre, featuring Larry Spotted Crow Mann. Its theme is ancestry, starting with Larry's ancestry, followed by the ancestry of four Double Edge performers,



**Figure 16.** Ebony Noelle Golden in residency at Double Edge Theatre. Photographer: Kim Chin-Gibbons. Courtesy of Double Edge.

each different. Each story unfolds by a fire in five different places on the Farm, one fire for each story (Figure 17). This is an experimental work for us because it delves into the personal lives of the actors, which we have never done before in such an explicit way.

*Memories and Dreams* is our twentieth Summer Spectacle and an important event for us because it is both an anniversary as well as a Covid piece, much of it having been composed during Covid; and it is also a Covid piece in that it takes stock and looks at Double Edge's past, while summoning up the future (Figure 18). It is also my first shared direction. Jeremy Eaton, who has been with Double Edge for fifteen years, directs the first part, and I the second. Jeremy's work begins outside in the light, whereas I begin mine indoors, where it is darker, and then it goes outdoors, under the moon.

**Maria Shevtsova** *Oh, so you will command the moon to appear! Now there's magic!*

Well, it will appear for some of the three weeks of the spectacle, but it cannot perform for the whole of that time! The spectacle's last scene is a women's rite on the pond, which, in the dark, looks like a lake. It anticipates *The Bacchae*, which I intend to have ready for our fortieth anniversary festival in the summer of 2022.

*Why is it imperative for you to stage The Bacchae?*

Double Edge's very first production was *Rites* (1982), a modernization of *The Bacchae* set in a women's toilet, which is a women-only private place. I always knew that, at some point, I would return to this marvellous ensemble play – for me, the best play, ever. Double Edge was founded on the principle of ensemble and I wanted to develop the ensemble idea with the women of the company. It has to do with women's aspiration for liberation.



**Figure 17.** *Howling at the Moon*. Larry Spotted Crow Mann. Photographer: Kim Chin-Gibbons. Courtesy of Double Edge and the Ohketeau Cultural Centre.



**Figure 18.** *Memories and Dreams*. Deidra Montgomery, Amanda Miller, Ewa Timingeriu, and Cariel Klein in rehearsal. Photographer: Aurora Lee. Courtesy of Double Edge.