‘The Grand Parade’ Comes to Trinity College Oct. 3-5

Double Edge Theatre journeys to Hartford with its panorama of 20th Century U.S. history

So it's not surprising that the Double Edge troupe hits the road on a regular basis. Its current show, *The Grand Parade*, traverses time and space. This historical overview of the United States, from world wars to popular entertainment to the moon landing and political assassinations, had its premiere last year at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., following workshops and previews in Baltimore and Chicago. This past March, the production traveled to the Gold Mask Festival in Moscow.

From Oct. 3-5, you can see *The Grand Parade* for free at Trinity College in Hartford.

"We've been working on setting this up for at least six months," says Double Edge artistic director Stacy Klein. "We already have a relationship with Trinity. We've performed there twice before. Now we're trying to set up something where we collaborate on a regular basis." The interaction doesn't just mean Double Edge coming to Trinity. Some of the college’s students will be venturing out to the farm in Ashfield for workshops.

"All our residences are done with a longterm idea," Klein says. "Hartford is close by. There are hundreds of people coming to see the show who have seen us in Ashfield. We'd like to be more regional in that way."

Klein founded Double Edge in 1982 when she was studying and teaching at
Tufts University. Head designer Carroll Durand also goes back to the company's beginnings. The troupe's "Master Actor/Ensemble Leader," Carlos Uriona, joined up in 1996 while actor/Executive Director Matthew Glassman (a Trinity College alum) has been with Double Edge since 2000. Such longevity and loyalty gives a special depth to Double Edge productions. The company works patiently and painstakingly on its scripts and special effects, and is known for multi-media spectacles that can involve projections, dance, puppetry and acrobatics.

A dozen company members are needed to bring The Grand Parade to Hartford: six actors (also billed as "co-creators"), two "auxiliary actors," four musicians and two technical operators to handle lights and sound. The actors are active throughout the performance, though they never speak. "They sing, they fly, they give images to the history," Klein explains. But the narrative is handled through snippets of media coverage. "It's essentially a journey through the 20th century — imaginatively and realistically. What it looked like on the ground, and in the clouds." Those visions are anchored by imagery taken from the paintings of Marc Chagall, whose work will inform an entire trilogy of Double Edge productions of which The Grand Parade is the first part.

"We're happy to be doing it right now," Klein concludes, "with so much going on in the world. There's been some controversy. Some people think we're presenting the 20th century with too much war. Others think we're not being opinionated enough. The majority are moved by it."

The Grand Parade

Presented by Double Edge Theatre, 7:30 p.m. Oct. 3-5 at Austin Arts Center, Trinity College, Hartford. Free, but tickets are required. (860) 297-2199, trincoll.edu
Double Edge Theatre may call their Ashfield farmstead home, but they are a world-class, and world-traveling, company. Their latest production—that is, not counting their annual farm-spanning summer spectacle—was premiered at Washington, D.C.’s Arena Stage last March and went on to perform in Russia. The show makes its first, and perhaps last, New England stop this weekend, not in the theater’s home territory but in nearby Hartford.

The Grand Parade is a kaleidoscopic tour of the century’s high and low points—the company calls it “a work of memory, memorial, and celebration”—from World War I to Vietnam, silent movies to space odysseys, disco to AIDS. Rooted in Double Edge’s distinctive movement-theater style, the piece is framed as a circus and inspired by Marc Chagall’s dreamlike images, including his trademark flying people and animals.

There’s no spoken dialogue, but plenty of sound, from music composed by guest artist Alexander Bakshi and songs from diverse cultures, to archival radio and TV clips and sound effects delivered both vocally and with homemade percussion. The 10-member ensemble, accompanied by a four-piece band, is airborne as often as not, swinging from trapeze and silk. Indeed, as one D.C reviewer put it, “the sheer air traffic control that has to take place with actors constantly changing clothes or jumping on swinging things or dancing is admirable.”

Oct. 3-5, Austin Arts Center, Trinity College, Hartford. Admission free but tickets required. Reservations at (860)297-2199 or trincoll.edu/Arts/Pages/AustinArtsCenter.aspx.