Double Edge Theatre's annual 'spectacle' in Ashfield is 'magical demonstration of human potential'

By Cori Urban | Special to The Republican on July 13, 2016 at 11:29 AM, updated July 13, 2016 at 11:30 AM

Milena Dabova performs in the "rainforest" at Double Edge Theatre in Ashfield. Photo by Maria Baranova

ASHFIELD –You don't have to take a seat for this show: Double Edge Theatre's annual Indoor/Outdoor Traveling Spectacle takes the audience on a traveling journey around its 105-acre Ashfield farm.

With inspiration drawn from myths and classical literature, the performances lead the audience along the pastures, pond, river and hills of the farm as well as inside the barn. This site specific performance shares elements of Double Edge's visceral and visual theatricality -- aerial work, circus technique, puppetry, live music, movement and dance.

The next production will be its 14th annual indoor/outdoor traveling spectacle, "Once a Blue Moon -- Cada Luna Azul," with previews July 15-17 and performances on July 20 to Aug. 22, (most Wednesday through Sunday) at 8 p.m., rain or shine.

"There is nothing like Double Edge and particularly this performance," said Stacy Klein, director and co-creator of the performance. "It is a magical demonstration of human potential and the possibilities that we can achieve when we work together and share a culture and participate in the creation of that culture. In a world of violence and alienation, [Double Edge] is a force of imagination and spirit and joy."

"Once a Blue Moon" is the first Latin American-based spectacle in Double Edge's history, taking inspiration from Alejandro Jodorowski's "Where the Bird Sings Best," Lawrence Thornton's "Imagining Argentina," Isabel Allende's "Eva Luna" and works of Jorge Borges, Gabriel Marquez, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz and Marcel Camus. The highly visual and imaginative performance includes expansive murals and colorful settings by local and international artists.
The performance follows a traveler (played by Carlos Uriona) who returns to his hometown of Agua Santa after many years. He evokes the memories of his past and the stories of the town's colorful inhabitants as well as the events leading to his departure.

It is a story of memory, culture and song, imbued with the excitement of Latin American carnival.

The story reflects an increasingly universal situation in which "progress" displaces people, in this case causing a flood.

"I am not just playing the lead, but the performance is based on my personal past to a great extent," Uriona said. "I'm proud to see that my personal story/history is being enacted by my theatre."

The production reflects "the dark history" that he experienced in Argentina in the 1970's and early 1980's. But it is not just telling it as a memory of the past. "This telling is being tested by the parallel that somehow there is something atrocious going on now with all of the violent tensions that are being displayed in this country and the rest of the world. A parallel danger," he said. "I don't need to tell this only as an attempt to satisfy an aesthetic desire, but to respond to my inner voice that keeps telling me: 'You know about all this! Do something to help!'"

During the production, audience members, traversing the landscape, encounter and mingle with the townspeople of Agua Santa.

"Each production of Double Edge reflects at its roots the story of the group. This is the first time since that the Summer Spectacle performance group has developed a story and a performance not from a classic text, but from the experience of the group itself," said Uriona, lead actor and co-creator of "Once a Blue Moon (Cada Luna Azul)."

The Double Edge Ensemble is composed of 11 artists and three associate artists from throughout the United States and from England, Bulgaria and Argentina who have been working together from 8-34 years creating original performance. Based in Ashfield, the group members lead the art, the training, the producing and the board of the theatre.

"As with all of our spectacles, guest and resident artists, apprentices and emerging immersion artists from around the world (this year Chile, Guinea and Brazil) round out the summer cast and crew of 30," Klein said.

"I believe that the deep and serious commitment of all the performers -- both the longtime Double Edge Ensemble members and the young people new to our process -- to intertwine their work in the theatre with their daily lives and to share that with each other and with the audience makes the experience extremely rich," Uriona said. "The performers believe in what they are doing, thus they believe in the story that they are telling, and that allows the audience to suspend their disbelief and embark themselves into a collective journey into the story, the landscape, the weather. This is not an ordinary, everyday happening; we're creating something magical."

Double Edge Theatre is located at 948 Conway Road in Ashfield.

Music for the production is by Argentine guest artists Manuel Uriona and Micaela Farias Gomez.