Performing Arts Series:
Stories of Surviving COVID-19 —
Double Edge Theatre

“We believe the way to move through these times is six feet apart and ALL TOGETHER.”
By Stacy Klein and Carlos Uriona
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Above: A scene from the Double Edge Summer Spectacle We The People. Photo: David Weiland.

After a technical residency at Arts Emerson in March, Double Edge Theatre had embarked on a four-city tour in the US, with performances and workshops scheduled in Austin, Albuquerque, Orange County, and Detroit, along with engagements to perform in the UK and Norway in June. This tour had been planned for over two years and was cut short due to COVID-19. We scrambled to make it back home to Ashfield on March 13th. Stacy Klein, Double Edge founder and artistic director, had this to say about the turn of events.

Amidst the difficult and often heart wrenching news relating to the effects of COVID-19 on our way of life, and the disheartening lack of ethical leadership guiding us, it feels important to acknowledge those who are stepping up and showing the spirit of Community which can re-define and re-direct our course.

Our Community, locally, regionally, and even internationally, has come forward with resounding efforts to acknowledge and support DE at this time. This support is not only for the members of the ensemble and company who make up the theatre, but for the people who we work with from Art to Art Justice and the programs that are part of our Living Culture.

In the face of these times, we have seen that in times of disaster, the people in our constellation are ethical, sensitive, and creative.

Since we arrived back from our cancelled tour, we have been embraced by the generosity of our community — here in Western MA and all over the country and the globe.

Locally, Double Edge is grateful to those lending their hand to us, including John Howland, president of Greenfield Savings Bank, who gave us advice and helped us with processing our Payroll Protection Program loan, enabling us to keep paying our ensemble and most of our staff. We have also been working with Yves Salomon-Fernandez, president of Greenfield Community College, on expanding our partnership of Arts and Humanities Innovation in our rural Franklin County, teaching experimental theater...
online and planning a joint Spectacle next year. A podcast is also planned with theater chair Tom Geha to discuss our work with the students there. Individuals from the community have extended their hearts and support to us, renewing pledges and memberships at every level. We do not take lightly the economic crisis we face — but our community remains committed in every way possible to ART – LIVING CULTURE – ART JUSTICE.

As we dare to look forward and plan and think of what the future might look like and how we can begin to create the world in which we want to live, our work continues:

Double Edge is working on how to mentor youth in Franklin County and in Springfield, both online and in groups, exploring how to keep their hopes and imaginations alive during a very difficult time in which they are growing up. These programs are at the very core of our existence. Mentorships for emerging artists from around the world continue and are expanding to online and the individual creation process.

Carlos Uriona has organized a radio poetry series with Monte Belmonte on The River called “Love in the Time of Corona,” which is reaching people all over the region, with readings open to all who want to participate. The show is reaching delivery people, drivers, essential workers, and all those who need inspiration at this time.

Below: Turtle mosaic from the floor of Ohketeau (a space for Indigenous Culture). Photo: David Weiland.

Our work with the Indigenous Council at Ohketeau (a space for Indigenous Culture) continues. We are completing dedicated facilities and preparing youth programming, including film, playwriting and storytelling. The Ohketeau (‘to plant, to grow’) website is being worked on so that during this pandemic their voices can be heard. Larry Spotted Crow Mann and Rhonda Anderson are already recording for the site.

Art Justice residencies continue to be planned, possibly even as soon as the summer for Muriel Tarrant of Safe Harbors Indigenous Collective and Unbound Bodies Collective.

This week Jed Wheeler, executive director of Peak Performances in Montclair, NJ, recorded a podcast interview with Stacy Klein to discuss the intersection of hope with art and community, which Double Edge describes as Living Culture. Our touring plans for the 2020-21 season are in full swing for multiple tours of Leonora & Alejandro, Leonora’s World, and SUGA. We have just heard from the PIT Festival in Norway that we will perform at the Festival in 2021 (the June 2020 Festival was postponed)!

And finally, we are dreaming of a “physically distant, socially together” Summer Spectacle — one that will have small groups of people wander through the beauty and wonder of the Farm, with artwork and the environment combined with small scenic elements and storytelling by the ensemble. We believe the way to move through these times is six feet apart and ALL TOGETHER. We see that this is possible. We are moved. By the many, many examples of those around us and by the spirit we find in each other.