

TOTTERING BIPED THEATRE



BULFINCH'S MYTHOLOGY

About the Production

In Boston's 1850s, confirmed bachelor Thomas Bulfinch, whose translations of Greek and Roman myths were the standard for over 100 years in the West, was otherwise known for his virulent anti-homosexuality activism. He published one other book - a memorial to his deceased younger student, Matthew, beside whom he had himself buried. 'Bulfinch's Mythology' compares Bulfinch's unnameable desires with his eviscerated translations. Myth, mime, and theatre coalesce to tell the story of what was lost in translation.

"Copp offers us... the mime and movement [as] more than enough to stimulate the audience's imagination into the depths of Thomas' Bulfinch's psyche. Copp offers us psychological snapshots of flawed characters, wrapped in intrigue and mystery. The storytelling was sharp, searing and relentless, supported by sublime and precise direction by Ric Knowles and the design elements that hinted at its beautifully desolate world."

- Nina Lee Aquino Artistic Director, National Arts Centre (English)

Artistic Team

Playwright/Performer Trevor founded Tottering Biped Theatre (TBT) in 2009, a professional company emphasizing original, issue driven, and highly physical work. He has been a professional actor, dancer, director, choreographer, educator, theatre deviser and arts advocate for over 15 years. His work ranges from classical to contemporary, performing in over 40 inter/national cities and Theatre Festivals. trevorcopp.com

Director/Dramturge Ric Knowles is a director and dramaturge with 40 years of experience at theatres ranging from Mulgrave Road to the Stratford Festival. His most recent work has been with MT Space, Modern Times, Factory, Cahoots, Tottering Biped, and Pleiades theatres and with the GOAT Collective.

Scenographer Joe Pagnan is an award winning lighting and set designer, director, game illustrator, wolf parent, and adjunct lecturer at Queen's University. You can follow their escapades @j_pagnan on insta and www.joepagnan.ca. Thank you Ric and Trevor for bringing me along this wonderful adventure!

Lighting Design Echo Zhou is a Chinese-born Tkaronto based theatre artist who designs set, lighting for theatre and live performances, production and stage managing for international collaboration. She was one of the cohort members of Why Not Theatre's ThisGen Fellowship 2020. www.echozhoudesign.com

Sound Design Zach Parsons is an actor and musician that has worked with Tottering Biped extensively over the years, both acting and writing music for their outdoor Shakespeare projects, Journey to the East, and The Second Life. With TBT, he's recently dabbled in graphic design and videography as well!

Bulfinch: The Process

Ric Knowles

Creating new work is never easy. Creating work in a new, hybrid form during a global pandemic is even less so. I had worked on movement-based, physical theatre with Trevor Copp, a skilled mime artist, in the past, but I had never worked with mime, much less theatre that brought together mime, densely written text, classical mythology, and historical biography. So when Trevor approached me about working as dramaturg and director on Bulfinch's *Mythology*, I wasn't sure where to start. Literally where to start. It was late summer of 2021, in the middle of the pandemic, theatres and rehearsal halls were closed, and no-one was congregating indoors. But Trevor brought a draft of his script and a video of some mime sequences based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to my back deck in Guelph, and we worked there, outdoors, for several weeks refining, rehearsing, and merging text and movement. At the end of what proved to be an exciting and challenging process—the cacophony of which alarmed some of my neighbours enough that they called the police—we presented a rough early version of the show for feedback from a small, masked, invited, socially-distanced audience in the chapel of St Paul's Presbyterian Church in downtown Hamilton.

The audience's response was both positive and helpful, so we proceeded with plans to stage the play at the Hamilton Fringe Festival the following summer. That, of course, never happened—Covid struck again.

Nevertheless, we made revisions and refinements, hired an outstanding design and stage management team, and went into a three-week rehearsal period in the summer of 2021, showing our work to another small, masked, invited, socially distanced, and antigen-tested audience at two performances after the first two weeks, before returning to rehearsal for another intensive week and three final public presentations. The process—including the time taken for revision and reflection, the involvement of designers in the development of the work, and the chance to return to rehearsals after presenting before a select, discerning public—was exhilarating. And the show itself, I am proud to say, is arresting, well deserving of the long life and large audience that we intend for it in its future iterations.