

Dacha Theatre's newest play riffs on Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales

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Adele Lim (Rain Cloud) on tree, and Emily Huntingford (Bessie) in Dacha Theatre's "Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea." (Brett Love)

By [Gemma Alexander](#)

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Whether it's rolling dice to cast a Shakespeare play on the day of the performance or presenting a new work riffing on a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, messing with the classics is an

important strategy in Dacha Theatre's mission to engage audiences in immersive, playful theater.

So it is with Julia Izumi's "Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea," an outdoor production from Dacha, which describes the play as a sort-of retelling of "The Little Mermaid" that collides with other Andersen tales. Seattle's Dacha (rhymes with "gotcha") will perform the play July 21-Aug. 6 on the lawn behind the Glenn Hughes Penthouse Theatre on the University of Washington campus.

"I think the show particularly resonates coming out of the pandemic. 'What am I doing with my life? Who am I? How do I deal with the grief of who I maybe wish I was?' are major themes," said Kate Drummond, co-founder and co-artistic director of Dacha. "The show playfully and joyfully embraces that we all feel this way and lets us find community and laughter within the absurdity of our circumstances." In the story, a rain cloud — not a mermaid — gives up her watery lifestyle to get closer to the human she loves, as explained by a narrator named Dolan.

"As it turns out — spoilers! (not really, it's in all our marketing materials) — this is Hans Christian Andersen, trying to rewrite this story that he feels has been misunderstood," said Drummond, who is directing the production. But his new story keeps colliding with his other fairy tales and even his own life. In revisiting his sad stories about characters who don't fit in, the narrator realizes that he has brought comfort to real-world misfits.

An expert on Andersen, Dacha's dramaturge Beth Pollack helped the actors draw out the emotional truth in the story, while others on the creative team focused on bringing out what Drummond calls "fast, loud and funny fairy tale energy." Costume designer Fantasia Rose developed answers to questions like, "What should the cow wear?" and "How do you dress a rain cloud?" Sound designer Jerik Fernandez and composer Claire Idstrom developed live sound effects and music to help the audience navigate the colliding stories, while the lighting and scenic designers worked together to create a visual world for a show performed in sunlight with no curtain to drop between scenes.

“The show is incredibly fast-paced and there is a lot of direct address. The hope is that it feels like a tumble forward without space to sit and scratch your chin,” Drummond said.

Founded in 2016, Dacha’s mission is to produce devised, immersive and playful theater. “For us, ‘devised’ is kind of a synonym for ‘generative.’ Even in scripted shows like this one, we are committed to making intentional space for everyone involved in the process to create and have agency in what’s in the show, as opposed to me as the director coming in and saying here’s exactly how this is going to work,” explained Drummond. Audiences are part of this generative process as well.

Last summer, the audience wandered around the interactive “(F)Unfair” to choose their own path through the performance. “Sometimes the Rain” takes place on a lawn framed by trees and the back wall of the Glenn Hughes theater building. “We’re excited to play with the breadth of that space,” Drummond said. “Over the course of the play, the narrator falls deeper and deeper into the story, and we’re working to make that same process happen for the audience. By the end of the show, the actors will have infiltrated the audience.” Audiences’ unique responses will make each night of the run a little bit different.

Drummond says, “We are rating it formally PG-13 for some potty language. But the themes of the show are accessible for all ages. Anyone who enjoys theater that doesn’t take itself too seriously but still comes with a heartfelt nugget at the end, this is going to be their jam.”

“Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea”

July 21-Aug. 6; Glenn Hughes Penthouse Theatre lawn, University of Washington campus near the north entrance at Northeast 45th Street and 17th Avenue Northeast, Seattle; \$1-\$50 (pay what you can); dachatheatre.com. Note: Performance is 80 minutes, no intermission; no public bathrooms nearby (private facilities available on request in case of emergency). Bring your own chairs or blankets; limited seating provided for those who require chairs. Performance takes place on a grass field with one entrance on level ground without stairs. For additional accessibility requests or questions, email dachatheatre@gmail.com.
