

The word *Vertep* in the old Slavic meaning is “cave” or “secret.” In the 16th century, there was a Ukrainian folk tradition of portable wooden puppet theatres travelling between homes during the winter time. The performances could include nativity scenes, mystery plays, and local stories dabbling in politics of the day. Musicians would accompany the presentations. I am fascinated by this tradition, and portable theatres in general. Originally I was looking at something smaller and more portable, but as the project evolved, it grew into what you will experience today. I've taken the spirit of the old *Vertep* and made it into my own: part theatre and part ritual. I created this show as a tribute to my mother and her passing a number of years ago. I wanted to evoke for the audience a sense of my memory of that time.

Leslie Menagh, owner of Madderhouse textile studio, created the amazing costumes for the show, and designed a new costume for the priest.

I found all the wood panels of the viewer's room in a dumpster in Toronto, brought them to Peterborough, and asked local carpenter and musician John McEwan to build a cabinet. He created a wonderful booth that breaks down quite easily for transporting and storing.

The two incredible musicians that you hear are Zorana Sadiq and Jamie McLennan. I met them during a production of R. Murray Schafer's “The Enchanted Forest” up in Haliburton a number of years ago. As soon as I began putting *Vertep* together, I knew I that I wanted Zorana's voice on the soundtrack. We rehearsed in a church in Toronto, recording a handful of takes. Initially Jaime was there to accompany Zorana on piano, but at some point he improvised that song you hear during the film... A happy accident.

Kinnan Elliott is a graphic designer. I met her when she stage managed me in “Comedy of Errors” in High Park; she did the sketch on the front of this program after a single phone call where I described the project.

Dan English is a local filmmaker. We got together at his home one afternoon with my cardboard pieces, manipulating them by hand, and shot the film. I knew I wanted a “living woodcut” feel and that's what I'm happy to say we got. He did a great job on the edit.

Kate Story is writer, performer, producer, teacher. Her list of accomplishments is long and so has been the support that I have received on this project over the years. She made the bed and pillow, helped choose, sew and hang the drapery, provided use of her car at any given moment, made sure I was fed. Much more could be listed, but I only have one page for this program.

Michael Morritt is a musician, teacher, and filmmaker just recently returned to Peterborough. He assisted me in a moment of crisis regarding the film portion, just before opening.

Huge thanks to Artspace; I created this show as artist in residence. Also deep gratitude to EC3 and Artsweek Shift2. And Bill Kimball and Public Energy have been a major support for me and my work, including this project over the years.

Courtney Cathers was an artist, tragically taken from us too early. I had the good fortune of working with her at 4th Line Theatre some years ago; she taught me how to paint puppet eyes. Some of the puppets in *Vertep* have the eyes she painted. Every time I look at them, there is a feeling that she is looking out at the world. This performance is dedicated to her, and to the memory of all our absent dear friends and family.

