

# To Defy the Beast

Inspired by ancient Greek tragedy and Barbara Ehrenreich's book *Blood Rites: The Origins and History of the Passions of War*.

Grades 6-12, colleges and adult audiences.



A curse is upon the people. The blind prophet is called to exorcise the curse and save the community. But that means confronting the predator and refusing him the sacrificial blood.

**To Defy the Beast** is a potent fusion of theatrical imagery and brass band roots music. It unfolds like an ancient Greek tragedy populated by a mélange of larger-than-life size mask and puppet characters - the blind seer, a posse of High Sheriffs, a primordial saber-tooth tiger, a band of Neanderthals, a sacrificial goat, a hunter turned warrior chief, a phalanx of foot soldiers, a mother and her first-born son. Juxtaposed with the rough and tumble action are lyrical shadow puppet scenes.

Written, designed and directed by Marlena Marallo and Patrick Wadden, the show features music by Thomas Workman & Big Sky Ensemble. The story is based on Barbara Ehrenreich's *Blood Rites: The Origins and History of the Passions of War*. In her book Ehrenreich explores this premise: "The 'original trauma' that shaped the human response to violence...was the trauma of being hunted and eaten by animals. Here, most likely, lies the sources of our human habit of sacralizing violence: in the terror inspired by the devouring beast and in the powerful emotions, associated with courage and altruism, that were required for group defense."

**To Defy the Beast** is 75 minutes in length and presented by a core company of six performers and four musicians. In addition, seven performers are needed from the host community or presenting organization. Playing both the phalanx of Warriors and the High Sheriffs of Love, they must be available for a three-hour rehearsal prior to the performance.

Required Stage size: 40' W X 30'D,

Performance credits: Esopus Creek Festival of Mask & Puppet Theater, Saugerties, NY ~  
State University of New York at Ulster, Stone Ridge, NY, Warwick Summer Arts Festival, Warwick, NY,

