

Ophelia Speaks

by Diane Flacks

Ophélie nous dit ce qu'elle a sur le coeur dans ce monologue originalement interprété par l'auteure au théâtre Nightwood de Toronto dans le cadre du spectacle Slow Thunder.

OPHELIA: (*Sings with Danish accent. Wearing flowers, Elizabethan dress, hip wader boots.*) With a Hey Ho, the wind and the rain and the rain it raineth every day and twice on Sundays and the rain it raineth every day and so's your mother and the rain it raineth every day big finish and the rain it....hello. Who let you in here? How did you get in here?

I would like very much to clear the air. I didn't jump. I was under a great deal of stress, und, I fell. I felt as though my head and heart were being squeezed under the wheels of the wagon of good intentions like a stray tomato. I fell, simply, was not looking down but out and I fell.

What stress had I daughter of nobleman, sister of handsome young knight, beloved of a Prince? Wearer of flowers and many skirts? Player of piano, eater of chocolate creams, doer of nothing? Yes, I lived behind walls painfully erected by the squalid, filth encrusted, cockfightwatching toothless peasants. You scorn me. You hope to shame me for a choice heaped on me like so much seaweed? The stress was: I knew. And Hamlet knew I knew. And I knew he knew I knew. And he knew I knew he knew I knew. And I knew he knew I knew he knew I knew.....So sue me!! I am blessed with the knowledge of things unspoken.....and yet there I was, in anguish.

Feeling and knowing and yet shutting and locking my jaws lest sidelong and stern fatherly glances be cast my way like arrows at an open beating heart.

Could I not have interrupted his stupid little play and warned everyone? Could I not have taken the Queen aside and simply said "Hey!?"? Could I not have watched where in hell I was walking?! No. I did nothing. That's what haunts me more than my father's or brother's or lover's chain rattling, rank, and worm infested ghostly apparitions in the mist. I am tormented by my own inability to act. My paralysis was ten fold Hamlet's: "To Be or Not to Be," This is a question?! Or my father: "Neither a Borrower nor a Lender Be"—Oh please! Thank you very much for the advice now what about the bloodshed?!

I didn't say any of this of course. I kept still. I am paying for that stillness. That dense and leaden golden gilded undergarment dragging my ancestors, my sisters, my mother, my self to the murky bottom of the river of free action and free thought.

I look around me now and see women moving in the sludge—like mire of prescribed behaviour. The little ripples they make thrill me and tickle the very soles...of my feet; and once again I'd like to plunge into the river. This new river. Without my chains.

Ophelia Speaks was originally performed at Nightwood Theater in Toronto as part of a show called Slow Thunder.

Diane Flacks is a writer for Kids in the Hall, a comedy on CBC Television. She is also a performer whose one-woman show, By a Thread, will be remounted at the Tarragon Theater in Toronto and will soon be appearing on CBC.