

GODS ARE FALLEN AND ALL SAFETY GONE –

An interview with the writer and director

Selma Dimitrijevic



- Why did you decide to cast two men as the Mother and Daughter?

We were on tour with a different show for a few months and I kept observing Sean and Scott, both on and off stage, as they were behaving more and more like two members of the family. I also knew I had this play that was done couple of times in the UK and abroad, and that I really wanted to direct it at some point. So when lovely Jenny Worton at the Almeida asked us if we have anything I'd like to do for their next Festival I sent her the play and just wrote "but played by two men".

She said she absolutely can't imagine what that would look like, which is probably reason to do it - so we did.

- How did real Mother and Daughter from the community become part of the show.

My partner and then co-artistic director, Lorne Campbell, suggested it. I tried several times to shake off the idea, but it I never managed, and now it's the thing that makes the show what it is.

- What is it like to have a different pairing on stage at each venue, and what has their feedback been on the show and experience?

It's a bit scary, and therefore really exciting. We spent weeks creating this little piece of art, looking at it from all sides, stretching it, changing it, polishing it, and as when we are about to show it to the audience, we ask two people we just met sit in the middle of it all.

So far, we've had a fantastic experience with all the mothers and daughters. I am always amazed how ready all those women are to try something new together. They all say it made them look at each other a bit differently, and talk about things they never talked about before ... which is more than I ever hope for.

I missed my chance to do that with my Mum so its exhilarating to see other people do it.

- What was it about the parent/child relationship that interested you most?

Probably the fact that everyone has experience of it in one way or the other, whether it's an actual parent or a parent figure, we've all been there. I was really curious about whether I would get on with my parents if we all meet as peers? Would we even like each other? Would we have anything in common, anything to talk about?

- What made you choose the title of the play?

When I was first commissioned to write this play, I was really struggling. I just had nothing to say. I missed several deadlines and the director was emailing me weekly asking for a draft and I didn't even have an idea. I was reading John Steinbeck's novel *East of Eden* at the time, and near the beginning there is this paragraph:

"When a child first catches adults out -- when it first walks into his grave little head that adults do not always have divine intelligence, that their judgments are not always wise, their thinking true, their sentences just -- his world falls into panic desolation. The gods are fallen and all safety gone. And there is one sure thing about the fall of gods: they do not fall a little; they crash and shatter or sink deeply into green muck. It is a tedious job to build them up again; they never quite shine. And the child's world is never quite whole again. It is an aching kind of growing." (John Steinbeck)

I saw that and wrote the play in three weeks.