

Tales Within Tales – Adapting Fantasy

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Whilst magic and fantasy work well on the big (and small) screen, to my mind the theatre is a much more vibrant and exciting space to create mythic realms and tell fantastical tales. An audience comes to the theatre ready and willing to be transported to another time and place - why not take them to another world?

Adapting a story for the stage is always a fascinating challenge, but there is something truly exciting in adapting folktales and myths. Foxes and dragons and trolls brought to life with sound, light, puppetry and storytelling, being able to see them living, breathing and speaking only a few feet from you is a truly magical experience.

So when it comes to adapting a myth or folk tale for the stage, where do you begin? For my own practice, the first step is to explore the original tale as much as possible. This involves research and reading, digging into the underlying themes of the story and any variants of it. Many tales from folklore appear in similar forms across globe, with local variations and flavour. Cinderella is a classic example of this, with one of the very earliest variations of the story coming from Egypt in the first century BC.

Even in Hans Christian Anderson's tales there are riches to be found - in the variations of translation and interpretation over the years, and in some cases the tales he himself may have drawn on when writing his stories. Drawing upon this wealth of variety in fairy tales, folklore and mythology allows you to find your own tale within all the others, that version of the story which is yours - which you, only you, can tell.

When creating the story for *The Snow Queen* I drew on multiple translations of Anderson's tale, which in turn steered me toward elements of Norse mythology, Scandinavian legend and folktales of the northern lights. Absorbing all these elements and more I began to build the story of Gerda's journey, working with amazing collaborators to refine the tale into the magical adventure that appears on stage.

This method isn't the only way to do things, of course, just the way I work. But it has grown into a solid process, developed over a number of years and multiple projects. For me, immersing myself in stories helps me find the heart of *my* story and gives me the building blocks to start telling it.

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