

# Off Broadway Review: 'Museum of Memories' at The Duke on 42nd Street

By Jacquelyn Claire



Kieran Edwards (Frederick, left) and Dagfinn Tuttüren (Marcus right) in 'Museum of Memories.' Photo by Premysl Bukovsky.

The New Victory Theater presents New International Encounters Theatre's crucial and intense, *Museum of Memories*. It's a play, an installation, a repository for nostalgia, a safe harbor, an essential conversation with a friend, a weeping wall, a communal catharsis. It's an experience that shifts consciousness and evolves DNA. It's a sunny space between two dark tunnels and a vital passage along life's grief lines. Let me explain.

*This is more than a piece of theater; it is a consciousness shifter.*

The Duke has been transformed into a contained space (a room, a tomb, a menagerie) surrounded by 70 square meters of rusty drawers that create our "museum". The audience sit in two rows down the center, facing each other and the actors weave us into their story as they use the available space around us. It is inclusive. You feel like you are sharing a secret or a remembered story with old friends. Its not a space you want to leave; it holds you in a universal embrace. This production has been performed more than 330 times in 10 European countries, and these drawers hold the energy of the thousands of people who have shared in the experience as audience members over the years. You can feel that the air is thick with their residue, and you know that you are contributing yours into the heady mix. At the end of the play, you will add your thoughts into the drawers and they will go on a journey across the world.

We start with a death, the suicide of Marcus (Dagfinn Tuttüren). He is alive in the telling of his passing. As the moments from his life leave him, we catch glimpses of his journey, and so, his last thoughts become our memories of him, ensuring he will live on. For the rest of the show, we are in the sensation drenched

playground of his youth as we witness his vivid relationship with his older brother, Frederick (Kieran Edwards). It's the 1980's, our nostalgia button gets pressed and we are swamped by the flood of our own memories resonating with their personal archives. We are with them from boyhood to manhood as we peep into the window of their shared treasury of family highlights. Those ordinary stories that are elevated with time, the ones we embellish with the permission of older age, the lasting ones that rise up immediately with only the name of a person, a place, a smell, a sound.

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This delicate memorial is underscored with arresting live music created by David Hlavac. He signaled the emotional peaks and valleys of the piece and led you gently into pleasure and pain spots with a sensitive soundtrack of heart opening music.

Many different languages are spoken by the cast who have come together from all over the world, but you can understand every word. The loudest language was the unspoken communication of the body, the immortal gesture, the subtext and the breath.

This is a company of actors who have lived this story so many times on stage that the anecdotes feel so palpable, so real like they belong to them as part of their personal histories. Dagfinn Tutturén gives us a deeply arresting portrayal of Marcus' many shades. He is a lovable clown, a soft edged thinker, a vulnerable soul trying hard not to fall off his life. He was entirely captivating. You can't help but look at every moment through the lens of how he exited his life so everything is heightened and important. Kieran Edwards cushions us in comedy. He

is a skilled performer taking us to the heights of humor but then lifting us carefully over the threshold into the dark repository of grief.

Guri Glans as the different girlfriends was sunshine and Ferris wheels and effervescent sex appeal. Iva Moberg is an exquisite Modigliani masterpiece. She commands a room, holding the space with stature and sensuality, as the nurturing neighbor/teacher.

Kjell Moberg, the director, has manifested a world where we feel it is safe to go deeper into those closed up parts of ourselves, where the sadness lives. He has enclosed us in confession and left an indelible mark on our psyches. His work is magical and entirely necessary. The home he has built for us to visit feels very familiar like old faded Kodak prints of a time almost forgotten.

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Running time: 65 minutes without intermission.

*Museum of Memories* runs through January 17, 2016, at The Duke on 42nd, 229 W 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York City. For more information and tickets, click [here](#).