

The Buzz: Mari Andrejco in The Belle of Amherst in East Otis worth a special trip

Posted by [Larry Murray](#) on August 23, 2011 · [Leave a Comment](#)



As summer begins to wane, and with both the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Williamstown Theatre Festival folks already packing their cars to head back to their respective homes, the focus turns to the year-round Berkshire cultural organizations. And it is nice to see how beautifully our own Berkshire gardens have grown this summer. Local theatre is a major component of our year round entertainment, and for the past couple of weeks the Triple Shadow group in East Otis has been on a lot of people's lips. Even with blockbuster theatrical events up and down Route 7, a local group can still create a place for themselves in the summer mix. Triple Shadow has done just that with a very special *The Belle of Amherst*.

And it's not just the amazingly delicious cookies they sell as part of their presentation. When you go, you will find the performance begins in the garden where Dickinson is tending her treasures.

This natural setting is lit by sunlight, moonlight or lantern light as the weather dictates. We are no longer an audience separated by the fourth wall of a theatre, but friends gathered around her on a late summer day. When Dickinson talks about birds, we can actually hear them. And when she talks about a grass snake, we hope we don't see one. The resultant performance is haunting.

My colleague and friend Gail Burns puts it best in her review: " My old friend, Emily Dickinson. I was so glad to meet her again! She hadn't abandoned me after all, and, if I could, I would have run to embrace her. After listening to just the first few lines of *The Belle of Amherst* tears were running down my cheeks as I remembered how much Dickinson's writing had influenced me as a young woman. It was a very happy homecoming. When you go to Triple Shadow you become part of a small group witnessing an intimate experience and conversation before, at intermission, and afterward." ([Link to the full review](#))

Triple Shadow is presenting a site-specific indoor/outdoor adaptation of William Luce's one-woman play, *The Belle of Amherst*, performed by Mari Andrejco (seen in photo above) as Emily Dickinson and directed by Beth Skinner. Today we received word that their performances have been extended to Sept. 4, taking place this weekend and next on Fridays and Saturdays at 7:00 p.m. and Sundays at 5:00 p.m..

Performances are presented at Triple Shadow's Performance Barn at 621 Algeria Road, East Otis, MA 01029. It's an al fresco setting with desserts and beverages offered, and the audience is encouraged to bring their own pre-performance picnics. Many locals do just that.

It is how the play is structured that enhances its already powerful literary and dramatic theatricality. As mentioned, Triple Shadow's *The Belle of Amherst* begins outside in Dickinson's garden. As day turns to night Emily brings the audience inside both figuratively and metaphorically, exploring the deeper recesses of her mind and inspirations for her poetry. The audience experiences Dickinson's poetry as newly created thoughts reflecting our New England landscape and a quieter simpler time.

Dickinson lived a quiet life of transcendent reflection. Her poems were inspired by a circumscribed world of home, garden, and the village of Amherst. Although rarely published in her own lifetime Emily came to be considered one of America's great poets. *The Belle of Amherst* invites the audience to share her time and space both visually and viscerally. In today's fast-paced information age Dickinson's poetry offers insights into beauty, sorrow, loss, and the mystery of living.

Triple Shadow (www.tripleshadow.org) creates visual theater challenging artistic boundaries, revealing the interconnectedness between human cultures and nature. The collaborative process is intercultural and interdisciplinary, affecting audiences in sensory and subconscious ways creating new perceptions of time and memory.

Mari Andrejco (actor) trained with Sanford Meisner at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City. She has performed in Europe, Mexico, Egypt and the U.S., done stage acting, television and video, appearing as Queen Elizabeth I and Susan B. Anthony for PBS. She has worked with

Shakespeare and Company, Triple Shadow, and the Pleiades Company and has taught at the Institute for Arts in Education in the Albany schools.

Beth Skinner (director) has premiered ten productions at La MaMa E.T.C. in New York City with support from the theater programs of National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts and Massachusetts Cultural Council as well as grants from NEA Opera and NEA Presenting Program. The company has toured to Egypt, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Canada and Indonesia and collaborated with artists from Japan, China, Korea, Hungary, Romania, Indonesia, Mexico, France and Russia.

The Belle of Amherst is presented with public funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, and New York State Council on the Arts. Admission is by suggested donation of \$20. Tickets can be reserved by calling 413-269-4201.

If you are in the south of the Berkshires, East Otis is pretty easy to get to, and even from the more distant north county it is worth the drive. Meeting Emily Dickinson in her garden at the peak harvest time? What could be better than that!
