

## Heard on the street

Excuse me, do you know where Naval Pier is? You're on crack. I just gave myself asthma. Anyone's possibly bi, what's the big deal? Save yourself some trouble and get yourself a wig. I respected you more when you had candy out here. It's, like, the ultimate acid movie. Whatever he got us for dinner stained my hands yellow. I was a psychotic clown one year. Well, I'm always a psychotic clown, but you had to pay for it. No ass cracks, okay?



## Too wee, or not too wee?

Inch-high ninja figurines invade Navy Pier for a production of *Hamlet*.

By **Kate Rockwood**

Dov Weinstein makes his decision to perform Shakespeare using tiny figurines from quarter vending machines seem perfectly logical. "I saw them on the streets of New York, and they're such great little guys and I thought, Nobody's really using these to do classical theater; something needs to be done about that," says Weinstein, who has studied puppetry and Shakespeare. "There's something great about [the juxtaposition]... the heightened place that Shakespeare has in our culture versus the tiny figures."

Weinstein formed Tiny Ninja Theater and debuted his idea at the New York International Fringe Festival in 2000 with *Macbeth*—a "one-man mini-ninja operation" with the actor-director providing all movement and voices for 30 one-inch-high plastic figurines, made up almost entirely of ninjas. (Mr. Smile and Mrs. Smile played *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*, respectively, and green, glow-in-the-dark aliens served as the witches.)

After the show garnered rave reviews at the festival, Weinstein took his suitcase of ninjas on tour, performing *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* across

the U.S. and abroad. The Tiny Ninja Theater invades Chicago for the first time on Monday 9 with a one-hour production of *Hamlet*, complementing the Chicago Shakespeare Theater's full-length production of that play at its Navy Pier venue.

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Weinstein's latest tour, which started in New York and will head to London after the Chicago shows, marks the first time video projections have been incorporated into the production, allowing for an audience of up to 200 people—rather than the 10 to 30 of previous plays. (Before, Weinstein had set up shop in venues like converted garages, as well as traditional theaters, occasionally moving the seating onstage.)

When it comes to casting his plays, Weinstein pays careful attention to each figure's color as a way of indicating kinship or demarcating sides in a battle. Corambis and his son

Laertes in *Hamlet*, for example, are both pink, while Weinstein cast same-colored ninjas as the armies in battle scenes in *Macbeth*. In this show, *Hamlet* will be played by a black ninja. "You have that line about an inky cloak, and Hamlet is famously dressed in black," he says. "In that sense, the ninja fits in nicely with that theme."

But choosing the appropriate figurine is also about individual personality, he says. Take the clown figurines that play grave diggers in *Hamlet*. "The way they look is important, of course, but it's also a certain feeling you get from them... you just know when it works." Cross-casting, he says, is rare, with the characters from previous plays still packed away at home.

To make sure his ninjas have enough opportunities to take their swords out, Weinstein blended the front-loaded action scenes of the first printed *Hamlet* version with the more refined verse of the later version (which slowly builds to the final bloodbaths).

Working full time on Tiny Ninja Theater, Weinstein doesn't have definitive plans for the theater company's next play, though he's always on the lookout for his next big star. "Obviously don't pass a vending machine without checking it out."

Tiny Ninja Theater Presents *Hamlet* opens Monday 9. See Theater listings.



## Public eye

### Beyoncé and Tina Knowles

Macy's State St, Fashion Focus event

**I like your outfits!**

**BK:** Thanks. We're wearing House of Derdon. My mother has always designed the clothes for Destiny's Child, and all the time keeping asking where they could get those clothes, so we decided to do a clothing line and name it the House of Derdon because Derdon is my grandmother's maiden name, so that's the house where she caught

my mother to sew, and now my mother sews for me, and is teaching me. And hopefully I'll pass it down.

**How would describe the line?**

**TK:** It's something for women of all ages. The clothes run a wide range, like the sexy chic to jeans. We're all about fit. Would describe it as a good-fitting line.

**Favorite thing to do in Chicago?**

**BK:** Infonico Williams of Destiny's Child is from here, so I love to go over to her grandmother's house; she can cook so well. It just makes me feel like I'm home. I also love to shop here.

**What's your next single?**

**BK:** I don't know yet, I just did a

video for "Irreplacable."

**[Singing the lyrics] "To the left, to the left..."**

**BK:** [Laughs] "To the left, to the left!" Thank you! I'll actually get to see the video when we leave here. But I don't know if it'll be the next single in America. It'll definitely be in Europe.

**TK:** What would you pick?

**I also really like "Green Light."**

**[Singing the lyrics] "You're holding up traffic, green means go..."**

**BK and TK:** [Laughs]

**BK:** I like that one, too.

**So, what are you doing for dinner?**

**BK:** [Laughs] I actually have some rehearsals, but you're so cute! —Kevin Aeb